

# Some Things You Should Know While in Church.

## **How should people behave in Church? What are good "Church" manners?**

In the Orthodox Church, there are a lot of customs and traditions that are important parts of our worship. Some are cultural; some are pious customs. Some are essential; some are not. From time-to-time, we need to address some of these various etiquette issues to inform our communities how we can best understand each other and work together to worship the all-holy Trinity.

### **Sunday Dress**

Remember the time when people put on their "Sunday best" to go to church? In fact, dress clothes were often referred to as Sunday clothes. In some parts of the country, this is not common today. In fact, all too often, dress in church has become too casual. In all areas of our lives, we should offer Christ our best. And the same is true of our dress. We should offer Christ our 'Sunday best', not our everyday or common wear. And we should dress modestly, not in a flashy way that would bring attention to ourselves. Our dress should always be becoming of a Christian - especially at church.

### **Talking during Church**

Isn't it great to come to church and see friends and family members? But wait until coffee hour to say "Hi" to them. It just isn't appropriate to greet people and have a conversation with them during the services. Besides being disrespectful towards God, it is rude towards the other people in the church who are trying to worship. Talk to God while in church through your prayers, hymns, and thanksgiving, and to your friends in the hall afterwards.

### **Holy Communion:**

When receiving Holy Communion, always do so reverently. We should be very conscious that we are receiving our Lord. If receiving on the hand, the hands must

be clean and held like a throne for the Lord. After receiving, one should consume the Sacred Host before turning around to go back to the pew. Holy Communion must not be reminiscent of a cafeteria line experience, but rather of an encounter with the Lord.

**After Communion**, each person must give thanks for the precious gift received and allow the grace to fill our souls. How tragic it is to see people leave Mass right after Communion, not because of an emergency, but because they want to get out of the parking lot first. I can only think of Judas, who was the first person ever to leave Mass early. To give the Lord one hour— and usually less— for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is really not much of a sacrifice. I wonder how these same people would feel if someone left their own home in the middle of the meal without even saying, “Thank you.”

### **Handling the Holy Bread**

After taking Holy Communion and at the end of the liturgy, it is traditional to eat a piece of holy bread or antidoron - the bread that was left over after Holy Communion was prepared. While antidoron is not Holy Communion, it is blessed bread and as such, should be eaten carefully so that crumbs don't fall all over the place. After taking Communion or kissing the cross at the end of the Divine Liturgy, take one piece of antidoron (you don't need four or five pieces) and when you return to your seat or get to a place where you can stop for a moment, eat the bread trying not to drop crumbs. If you want to give a piece to someone else, go ahead and take an extra piece - don't break yours in half (it produces too many crumbs). And monitor your children as they take the antidoron and teach them to eat it respectfully.

**Gum in Church: Chewing gum is NOT allowed in church.** Mint is allowed to refresh your breath.

When arriving at Church, discard any gum in a proper container. There must be a special place in Purgatory for those who stick gum underneath the pew. (Actually, no one should even be chewing gum in church.)

**Please note:** When we removed the pews we have found a lot of sticky gum under seats. We have just installed a new carpet and the renovated pews will be installed next week, God willing. So please keep your church neat and clean.

## Snacks for Children

**Food and drinks are not allowed in church**

you can always tell where young children have been sitting in the church.

The tell-tale signs are graham cracker crumbs, Cheerios, and animal crackers.

**Please note:** Snack for babies or toddlers (0-3 years old), this is fine but only in church hall or Cry room. No snacks in church.

**Eating in the Church** leaves a lot of crumbs; the ideal is to feed your children at home before you come to church. However, we kindly ask you not to have snacks for children in Church during service while you are sitting on the pews. If you have a fussy or a hungry baby, please take him/her to the cry room or church hall. Let's preserve the Church Sacredness and Beauty

But by the time children are 4-5 years old, they should be able to make it through Liturgy without eating anything, and by the time they reach seven (the age of their first confession), they should begin fasting on Sunday morning for Communion (or at least make an attempt at fasting by cutting back on the amount of breakfast and eating "fasting"-type foods - talk to your priest about this).

For those children who get snacks, please don't feed them while in the line for Holy Communion (this applies to holy bread as well). They need to come to Communion without food in their mouths. And one last note: try to keep the snack mess down to a minimum. The floor shouldn't be covered with Cheerios! Chewing gum during Liturgy is a No-No for everyone!

### **Cry room**

**Cry Room is** designated for babies and toddlers only with their parents, and the proper age is between 1 - 4 years old. **Kids older than 4 years old** need to be in the main church sitting with their parents.

**No** children should be running in the church hall or parking lot. **It is unsafe** for them or others, they might get hurt, or bump into another child or an elderly person. **Parents are to supervise their children during social coffee hour.**

Jesus loves and welcomes children, but they do need our help. If a child is fussy, then the parent should quickly take the child to the vestibule or outside, and let the child calm down before returning. Children should not be allowed to rattle keys, drop toys, kick the pews, or run in the aisles. These behaviors are distracting to the other people and especially to a priest who is trying to give a homily. Parents simply need to be parents, using good judgment and discipline with the little ones.

**New Smoke area:**

**Attention smokers:** The area under Bell Tower is designated as the only smoking area, thank you for respecting this change. We hope you quit smoking soon.

Finally, after the Mass is concluded with the blessing, wait until the priest has proceeded down the aisle before leaving the pew. However, before leaving the pew, be sure to put the hymnal back in its rack, and pick up used tissues, bulletins, or other items; otherwise, someone else has to attend to them.

While I am sure that this list is not exhaustive, I have witnessed all of these actions as a priest. I also do not want to seem cynical or condescending, but only teach proper respect for the Mass I love to offer. Yes, we live in a very casual world where many people have forgotten proper manners and discipline.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen said that courtesy “is the homage of the heart to the sacredness of human worth” (*Thoughts for Daily Living*, p. 50). Manners, whether at Mass or in other situations, reveal the value we place on each other and God.