

## EPISCOPATE CONGRESS 1989

### Clergy Conference

#### Some Liturgical Observations

##### The Holy Table

- A. A minimal number of candlesticks should be on the altar; a variety of sizes and shapes makes it look like a fair.

The same can be said for too many hand and standing crosses; some altars look more like a shop than God's throne.

Flowers, real and artificial should not be on the Holy Table; the Old testament of offerings of first fruits is long gone and the only offering should be the Holy Gifts of bread and wine.

Flowers may be placed on the tetrapod or in front of the iconostasis. There is no occasion for which there are exceptions to this.

- B. The Holy Cup/Chalice/Potir, the diskos, star, spoon, lance should be clean and not tarnished; if replating is needed get it done. If no donor can be found or the parish cannot afford it, the Episcopate will find donors.
- C. The cloths on the Holy Table should be clean, without wax and hanging properly all around. The backside as well as the front should be finished off. God sees the back of the Holy table even if the faithful do not!
- D. The Holy Gospel book should be well-bound and not falling apart; the cover should be not tarnished. If it needs to be re-bound or re-plated have it done. If funds cannot be found in the parish the Episcopate will find donors.
- E. Electric lights of Red, Yellow and Blue may appear to be patriotic but they are not becoming the iconostasis or crosses on or around it. Keep the colored lights for the Christmas tree or the social hall. God knows the Romanian feeling of parishioners and they themselves know.

Flickering or flashing lights are more in keeping with fairs and advertizing. Please.

- F. The communion cloth should be RED. It goes with the color of the WINE which is also RED. Romanian scarves and white clothes are not to be used.
- G. The Holy Table is not an extension of your office. Books, tablets, pencils and ball-points, lists of names should not become part of a permanent library on the Holy Table.
- Eye-glasses and personal objects do not belong on God's throne, either.

#### **The Proskomedia Table**

- A. This table is where the Holy Gifts are prepared and care for it should be like that for the Holy Table. It should have clean covers and not be cluttered with artificial flowers, extra crosses, books, etc.
- This table, as the Holy Altar should have a cloth large enough to cover the entire table. Normally these are not used daily but dust and insects are always present in the altar.
- B. The only icon prescribed over the Table of Preparation is that of the Nativity of our Lord. The "Last Supper" by da Vinci is not appropriate.

#### **Iconography**

- A. The Church has her rules for iconography and they do not include the pictures from "K" Mart with double images; nor those of Roman Catholic or Protestant origin.

The Episcopate has a Department of Liturgical Art and should be consulted for iconography on any scale. Not all friends who do "pirography" or paint are also "iconographers".

#### **THE FAITHFUL AND DONATIONS**

Some of us think that if we have new articles in the altar that we are also renewing the faithful spiritually; that the more "new" objects we have the more certain we are that there is faith!

Some objects can be replated; some are old but still able to be restored.

Beware of buying from foreign countries. Too often the objects are mass produced and the prices are ridiculous. Within a few months they often need plating, not to say, "replating".

There are artisans and others who will make beautiful chalices and objects that will LAST and need not be replated if they are of good quality from the beginning.

Donors will pay for something good if it is indeed good.

Not everything that comes to the altar need be accepted. Here we are very vacillating; instead of keeping to the acceptable to the Church we bow to the whim and pressure of this and that person so as not to "hurt" them. In fact, we corrupt the traditions and the order of the Church.

Do not put every cross and icon and flowerpot and scarf on God's throne.

If you are unwilling to anger some one wait until the Bishop comes and put the problem on his shoulders.

#### **Vestments of the Clergy and Altar Servers**

- A. The priest's vestments should match and be clean; there is nothing more disgusting than filthy vestments, worn out at the collar, cuffs and belt. The faithful are repulsed to see such clothing worn by their priest at the Holy Table or at weddings, funerals and baptisms.
- B. Symbols: there has been some discussion about certain symbols on the vestments including that of the Triangle.

Having spoken with a priest with a Doctorate in Art and Church history he has verified that the Triangle is not a symbol of the early nor middle age Church but is of very recent usage. What the origin is and whether it is from a Masonic influence or not is not the issue.

Preference should be given and stick to the cross, iconographic representations and avoid symbols which are not truly part of the Church's permanent tradition.

- C. Traditionally, the Church does not favorite colors for the seasons but only those which are bright and those which are not bright.

Color schemes such as "blue" for the Birthgiver of God; "green" for the Pentecost period; purple or black for the fasting periods are outside influences.

Red for the martyrs and during the fast is appropriate; gold or white during the bright seasons is fitting.

For funerals, black is to be avoided as a "non-color". Artistically speaking "black" is the absence of light and in the Orthodox Christian faith there is always some light...red, purple, blue.

In the case of funerals, however, lighter vestments and white can be worn. "Least you be like those without hope!"

- D. The servers in the altar should wear appropriate vestments: whether they wear a cassock like outfit or the traditional stichar, they should be clean and repaired. Youngsters are not easy on clothing, and church vestments are no exception.

#### ALTAR ATTENDENTS

- A. Those who serve the altar should be of an age when they can respond to the commands of the serving clergy.

There is nothing more wonderful than a priest with servers fetching his own censer, lighting candles, bringing the "zeon", etc.

The altar is not a crib nor a child-sitting area of the church. Age is important and attitude is paramount.

Little children are not pious because they are little but because they are taught; the same, teens and married men are not impious because they are mature or married.

- B. Attendants should be on time to serve and know by the Previous Sunday if they are expected to serve. To say that "if they really want to serve they will come" is not good order in the altar. Schedule the servers and don't make a game of holy things.
- C. Take time to teach the servers what you want done; don't fuss and blame them if you have not taught them well enough so that can ANTICIPATE what you need.

- D. Also, be kind to the attendents and teach them what it means to be in the altar; remember your own seminary days and the joy of serving before ordination.

If a server is late due to the fact that his parents have not brought him in time talk to them and invite them to come on time so as not to embarass their son in entering the altar late.

### Apostle Reader

- A. The reader of the Apostle has a very important public role in the service and the proper reading/chanting is essential to the Liturgy of the Catechumens.

The person should be clean and dressed clean with a good appearance.

- B. Because a person can read and speak does not automatically make a reader. Time must be taken to teach how to:

1. enunciate the words
2. properly pronounce the words, especially biblical names
3. read slowly for understanding not for show
4. know how to read the Prokimenon and the Alleluia verses

- C. It is still preferred to have the Apostle sung with a simple chant but not a melody.

The same is true for the Prokimenon and Alleluia verses which are not sung to a melody but are chanted according to the tone. If the reader cannot sing the tone than a plain recto-tono is better than some made-up melody.

- D. The Prokimenon is given with the proper Apostle Book. If there is no cantor or choir (choirmember) to repeat the Prokimenon the reader should do it and follow it with the Prokimenon verse.

1. Prokimenon
2. Repeated
3. Verse
4. Prokimenon
5. first part of Prokimenon
6. conclusion of "

- E. The Alleluia is not a conclusion to the Apostle; it is an introduction to the Gospel and therefore cannot be omitted.

This is the time when the censuring is done; it prepares the faithful by censuring the altar and them before listening to God's Word.

The censuring does not take place during the reading of the Apostle. To do so disturbs the attention of the faithful let alone that of the priest. There is ample time to cense during the Alleluia verses.

- F. Priest: Peace be to you, reader.  
Reader: And to your Spirit.  
Choir/Cantor: Alleluia 3 times  
Reader: Alleluia verse  
Choir/Cantor: Alleluia 3 times  
Reader: Alleluia verse 2  
Choir/Cantor: Alleluia 3 times

Should more time be necessary, the triple Alleluias may be repeated.

### Reading of the Holy Gospel

- A. The Sunday Liturgy Gospel is read facing the people from between the Holy Doors. However, when the Bishop is present, the reader faces him toward the altar.

The reading must be slow and clear, enunciated and well sounded.

We must guard against reading the Gospel as though it were too familiar to us. Each reading is fresh and new, full of power and grace.

In the old days, the very announcing of the words of the Gospel was a holy act; to repeat the words is to make them present to us and us present in their sound; we are transported in holy time to our Lord's presence and his own words and actions.

Of course, let us guard against operatic presentations and pomposity. God is great but he also is not deaf.

- B. If a stand is used or whether the Holy Gospel is held by the priest, it should be well situated and not be held at an incorrect angle or slide.
- C. If the altar servers are present with the fans and candles they must be taught the seriousness of the moment and not be foolish in front of the congregation.

## The Holy Gifts

The final observation at this time is among the very important ones.

A. BREAD The condition of the holy bread we offer to God is in the majority of cases unacceptable.

Usually it has been frozen and smells like food from the freezer.

It is dry and falls apart when cut.

The seal is indistinguishable and some even scrape the sign ICXCNIKA on it with the lance!

The bread is often made by bakers whose hands are soiled with animal and fats and oils; seeds of various kinds are sometimes found in the bread: "A pure sacrifice, indeed!"

There must be some pious soul in the parish who can make fresh bread each liturgy. Whether male or female...better and Orthodox Christian than a stranger who prepares the gifts for the parish!

Some Orthodox Dioceses in the parishes have a list of those faithful who prepared the bread. It is not only a "pious" thing as though it is "nice". Our sacrifice must be good and acceptable as the BEST, not the most pragmatic.

B. WINE The color of the wine is to be RED. It must be pure grape wine and not "port" which has additives nor any wine which has anything added.

If homemade wine is offered it must be sweet enough to have the "zeon" added and not be sour. If you, the priest, personally like sour wine, take it home with you or use it for the post-communion for the faithful.

White wine is not acceptable: "Out of his side poured blood and water" we say and do at the Proskomedie. Water is clear and blood is red. White wine is not part of the Orthodox tradition.

While it may have been that red wine was hard to come by in Romania, at this time, wine is purchased and a return to the tradition of the Church should be restored.

## Apologia

In 1990, God willing, it will mark the tenth anniversary of my consecration and it was and is my intention to distribute a thorough statement on the Liturgical Practices in our Episcopate.

Through the years, the Archbishop reminded the clergy that while some practices differed from Province to Province, nevertheless there is definite uniformity in very essential areas.

I have noticed many things through these past 9 plus years and, at times being an auxiliary said nothing; at others being ruling Bishop refrained from embarrassing the serving clergy.

Now, however, I cannot close my eyes to the conditions mentioned and expect to see cooperation to put the holy altar in good order.

Do not invite me to serve unless the above are met; Do not expect me to close my eyes to disregard for those very basic aspects of the Divine Liturgy, and in particular I refer to the holy gifts of bread and wine.

While these things may not appear as so important, I beg to differ from those who would so think. These are of the primary importance and those which can please or be unacceptable to God.

In America, money and time are in abundance; materials goods are available to the service of God.

As stewards of the Holy of Holies, wherein the Old Testament High Priest went but once a year, you and I are privileged to be ever present and whenever we choose.

How strong a fire will be for our cleansing in failing to attend to "THE HOLY THINGS ARE FOR THE HOLY."

*+ Nathaniel*  
+Nathaniel, Bishop