

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

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WELCOME TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

St. Gregory Palamas Orthodox Church is a parish community of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey of the Orthodox Church in America [OCA] under Archbishop PETER. The OCA is a canonical Orthodox body, with full representation at the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops, presided over by His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIOS.



Perhaps you are unfamiliar with Orthodox Worship?

As our guest, we do not expect you to feel like you must "do the right thing". We would rather that you be comfortable, and enjoy praising God with us. Our custom is to stand for worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day, which for us is always a celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. Standing is a posture of respect for the Lord and His Resurrection; it is a posture which expresses enthusiasm, and joy. But some people do sit during the singing of Litanies. We also sit during the sermon and the announcements. (We kneel at weekday services, especially during Great Lent).

If for reasons of poor health or age you find it difficult to stand, please feel free to sit. It would be appropriate to stand, however, during the brief periods that the **Gospel Book** is brought out from the altar, or when the **Holy Gifts** are outside the Altar area.

To many who have been raised on Roman Catholic and Protestant rites, our Orthodox Liturgy at first may seem somewhat "foreign". That is because our rites retain many elements which have been preserved for us since the days of the Apostles. Those features having been lost by the Western denominations, now ironically seem "unscriptural", "oriental" or "exotic" to some visitors. But they are in fact **almost all Biblical in origin**. Revelation 4 & 5, for instance, describes Heaven's worship in terms of primitive earthly Christian worship. The service depicted in that New Testament passage is strikingly similar to modern Orthodox worship. If it seems "oriental", we need to remember that Christianity is in fact an "oriental religion".

Our usage of incense, lamps, vestments, ritual gestures, chanting, and so on all goes back to the days of Jesus and His Apostles. Even some of the melodies go back to Bible times. The Scriptures tell us Jesus and the first Disciples were all at home in the Jewish Temple and Synagogue, where, at God's command, those customs originated. History tells us the early Christians, guided by the Apostles, incorporated these features into their worship.

The modern Orthodox Liturgy dates back to the late fourth century (the 300s A.D.). That means the service you are attending today is basically the same as one you would have attended in an Orthodox church over 1,600 years ago! We feel very much "at one" with early Christianity

Correctly speaking our church building is known as a **Temple**. It is the place where the

Lord's Offering of His One Sacrifice is made present and pleaded by Him in our midst. The Temple is divided into two parts: the congregation and choir take their place before the **Iconostasis**. The **Altar area**, on the other hand, is reserved for those with a special Ministry to perform there. By its very nature, that **set-apart space** is considered *off limits* to all but those who must enter it to perform some special Liturgy (i.e., ministerial function.)

Orthodoxy has a highly developed feeling for holiness. We are quite aware that the very concept of *holiness* implies special places, special times, and specially consecrated people.

The Iconostasis is a wall joining the two halves of the Temple, and symbolizes the point at which Heaven and Earth meet Christ, the Mediator between God and humankind. The **icons** on it, and elsewhere, likewise signify that point; we think of them as **windows into heaven**.



If you are a visitor from a denomination which uses liturgical rites, you will be familiar with many elements in the Orthodox service. All traditional Christian liturgical rites have a common “shape”, for all are “descended” from a universal basic “order of service” found in all areas of the early Church. Like those other rites, the Orthodox Liturgy is divided into two major parts. **The Liturgy of the Word** followed by **The Liturgy of the Eucharist**.

The Liturgy of the Word begins with opening prayers and hymns, followed by the proclamation of the **Epistle** and **The Holy Gospel**, the Sermon. The first part of the service closes with **The Prayers of the Faithful** (“The Litany of Fervent Supplication”).

The Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with a solemn procession of the Bread and Wine, from the table where the elements are prepared to the Holy Table. This procession is known as the **Great Entrance**.

Shortly after the Great Entrance we sing the **Nicene Creed**, after which the **Great Thanksgiving or Anaphora** begins with the familiar dialogue “Let us lift up our hearts...We lift them up to the Lord...Let us give thanks to the Lord...It is meet and right...” During this prayer **Holy, Holy, Holy** is sung, and **The Lord’s Words of Institution (“This is my Body...This is my Blood”)** are recited, and the Gifts are elevated in a gesture of Offering.

The Holy Spirit is then invoked in a prayer known as the “**Epiclesis**”, meaning “the calling down” in Greek. It is so named for in this prayer the priest asks that the Holy Spirit may “come down upon us and upon these Gifts, to make the bread and wine the Body and Blood of Christ. We respond with a solemn “Amen, Amen, Amen.”

After the **Anaphora**, we sing the **Lord’s Prayer**, and then we participate in the **Communion in**

the Holy Gifts. The service ends with the Blessing.

At the end of the Liturgy it is our custom to go forward and kiss the Lord’s Cross, and to receive a piece of blessed bread known as the *Antidoron*. This little rite is a remnant of the *Agape or Love Feast* eaten in connection with the Eucharist in the primitive Church. All are welcome to eat the Antidoron --- **it is not Holy Communion**.



Who may receive Holy Communion?

Only Orthodox communicants prepared for Communion by strict fasting and confession of sin should approach the chalice as communicants in the Holy Mysteries. We believe that to receive Holy Communion is to make a public declaration of Faith. It is a gesture which speaks as loud as words. It says, “I believe in everything you people are doing here, and stand for. I firmly profess to the Orthodox Faith.”

Most Western denominations no longer believe there is a necessary relationship between “being in Communion” and “receiving Communion”. As a result, some people are occasionally “put off” by Orthodoxy’s insistence, in accord with the Church’s consistent practice since the first century, that “receiving Communion”, “communion in the Faith”, and “being in Communion” all necessarily imply each other.

What We Believe:

If this should seem to anyone “exclusive”, we must hasten to stress that Orthodoxy **excludes no one** from the Communion of the Church. Anyone who does believe in everything we stand for may become an Orthodox communicant. The process is as follows: after a period of instruction, one makes a solemn

profession of the Orthodox Faith, followed by **Baptism and Chrismation**. Chrismation is the Sacrament of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. If a person has already been baptized outside the Orthodox Church, they may be received by Chrismation alone.

If you have any questions the priest and other members of the Parish will be glad to answer them for you.

Please do join us in the Parish hall after Liturgy for Coffee, refreshments, and getting to know one another.



Directions:

From Interstate 78 (Near Clinton):

1. Take **NJ Route 31 North** from I- 78 approximately 5 miles to fourth stop light which will be Sanitorium Road on Right in Glen Gardner. This light is just after Rod’s Hot Dog stand on the left.
2. Take **RIGHT** at light onto Sanitorium Road.
3. After a short distance (1 block) make the first **RIGHT** onto Main Street
4. Follow Main Street to Church Street where you will see our church ahead on the left.

From North of Glen Gardner (Washington).

1. From intersection of Routes 31 and 57 in Washington, follow **Route 31 South** approximately 3 miles to second light in Glen Gardner (second light south of Washington).
2. Turn **LEFT** at stop light onto **Sanitorium Road**. If you pass Rod’s Hot Dogs on right, you missed turn.
3. After a short distance (1 block) make the first **RIGHT onto Main Street**
4. Follow Main Street to Church Street where you will see our church ahead on the left.