

A Warm Welcome
And
Brief Orientation
To
St. Anna's Orthodox Church



Some very noticeable, but not terribly important, things you will observe in an Orthodox church, and some things that you might not, but are important:

Immediately obvious: Icons

Icons are representations (and reminders) of certain events central to the Church, or of certain saints. The Orthodox Church honors saints beyond number, some even without name (such as groups of many martyrs). Therefore, there are many icons; and many people have their "favorite" icons, saints, etc. Some things of importance about icons:

- They do NOT attempt to be "naturalistic." They convey a "spiritual" element beyond the "naturalistic", and it is their spiritual communication that is important to the believer.
- Making an icon is a spiritual event. It is done with great prayer and devotion, follows certain traditional rules of composition and color, and typically requires many years of practice.
- We revere icons, typically by bowing before them and kissing them. This essential Orthodox practice is often misunderstood. This is NOT IDOLATRY. We do not offer "adoration" to the icon. We believe that the icon is a representation of the event or person it commemorates, and that when we reverence the icon we are offering reverence to the event or person it represents. The icon facilitates our feelings of humility and love toward the event or individual represented. (It is of some importance to note that the Orthodox do NOT represent God the Father, as He has never revealed Himself to man. We DO represent the Savior (God the Son) as HE DID reveal Himself to us when He became man. And the Holy Spirit is

represented in the icons as, for example, the dove in the icon of the Theophany (the Baptism of our Savior) and the tongues of fire in the icon of Pentecost (Whitsunday).

Immediately noticeable but not a cause for discomfort of strangers:

- Long services (people come and go, inconspicuously, as desired)
- No pews
- People standing, although sitting whenever tired. We ask that you follow the example of parishioners as to standing and sitting during the services, men on the right and women on the left — all dressed modestly and appropriately. The tradition of the Church is that of standing during the services. The aged and those who are ill are exempted from standing.
- Women with head coverings and no pants
- Everyone dressed modestly
- No décolletage
- Liturgical chant (singing) with no instruments

All these have a basis in tradition and Scripture, which are very important to the Orthodox, and they serve to keep good order in order to limit distractions in our service of instruction, worship, and prayer.

Not immediately noticeable, but important to know:

- Communion is given ONLY to established members of the Orthodox Church in a relationship with a valid Bishop (Apostolic Succession). Therefore, unlike many churches, we cannot offer sacraments, especially communion, to others.
- Antidoron, blessed bread, is distributed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy to those Orthodox Christians who have fasted and did not receive Holy Communion. You may come forward to venerate the cross held by the clergyman and introduce yourself to him: however, the priest will not give antidoron to non-Orthodox.

We believe this is in no way "punitive" to other faiths, or denominations, but that unwavering adherence to our doctrine and principles, based on the scriptures, the interpretations of the Fathers of the Church, and the Church Councils, is what makes the Church "worthwhile." In other words, if doctrine and principles are negotiable or proper subjects for revision according to changing social conditions, they lose their eternal and transcendent authority. For our own part, we, also, do not expect to receive the sacraments from other churches.

Comparison of Some Christian Beliefs and Practices

Doctrine or Sacrament	Orthodoxy	Roman Catholicism	Protestantism
Baptism	Early in infancy, conferring full membership thenceforth	Early in infancy, transitional status pending confirmation	Individual choice
Holy Communion	From infancy, given by priest to every individual in good standing with Church	Variable—taken by priest <i>on behalf</i> of congregants, or given without regard to relationship to Church	Varies widely in each denomination—generally no pre-existing relationship to Church a prerequisite
Holy Unction	Sacrament of healing and forgiveness of the sick	Originally administered only when one was about to die. Now used for the sick also	Not used
Confession	Obligation of every believer in the presence of God and the priest	When done, done anonymously to a priest	Personal, without participation of clergy
Change of the consecrated bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ	Entirely mysterious, wrought by God and undefined by doctrine	Follows specific guidelines, timing during liturgy, etc.	Not doctrine. A "representation" only
Virginal conception & birth of Christ	Entirely mysterious, achieved by the Holy Spirit. No interest in birth process. Scripture is sufficient	Doctrinal elaboration by Church, expanding on scriptural evidence	Regarded as a human event of a divine process. Doubted by many Protestant ministers.
Chronology of the New Testament Church	Established at Pentecost, per Acts of the Apostles, uninterrupted since	Separated from Orthodoxy in 1054 over dispute regarding papal primacy	Derivatives traceable principally to the Reformation
Sources of doctrine	The Apostolic Teaching in Scripture and Tradition, illuminated by the Church Fathers and	Orthodoxy, with minimal interest in Church Fathers, but much elaboration by Vatican	Scripture, understood principally by personal interpretation

	Councils		
Doctrine or Sacrament	Orthodoxy	Roman Catholicism	Protestantism
Role of priest	Normally married (monastic priests are not), leader of a parish and the agent <i>through whom</i> God works. NO powers except direct from God under the Church's hierarchy	Normally single (celibate). Powers and duties specified by Church hierarchy	Variable. In some cases highly structured, in others, locally determined. The priesthood not accepted as a doctrine in many denominations.
Language of worship services at St. Anna	English is used for all services. Greek and Slavonic is used only for the Gosepl reading during the Liturgy.	Originally, only Latin. Now the vernacular, but Latin is making a comeback	The language of the local population

Brief Life of



Saint Anna

Honored on her Name's day, the Dormition of St. Anna:

August 7th (Civil Calendar) / July 25th (Liturgical Calendar)*

According to tradition, Anna, the grandmother of God, lived for sixty-nine years, and her spouse Joachim, for eighty; according to one account, Saint Joachim died two years before Saint Anna. The Theotokos had been orphaned of both her parents already when she was eleven years of age, while she was living in the temple. Saint Anna is invoked for conceiving children, and for help in difficult childbirth.

*The Church uses the Julian (Old) Calendar rather than the New (Gregorian) Calendar. There are a number of reasons for retaining this practice, one of which is that it preserves the relationships among many of the important Church events.

We would be delighted to know you better. Please feel free to attend our services as you desire.

Typical Weekly Services:

- Tuesday 7:00 pm—Canon to Ss. Joachim and Anna
- Saturday 6:00 pm—Great Vespers
- Sunday 7:30 am — Matins: 9:30 am – Divine Liturgy

There are many additional services for special occasions. These may be found in our church calendar, which in turn can be found on our website: www.homb.org/stannas

There is a meal in the Church hall following the Divine Liturgy. All are welcome.

Clergy:

Father John Fleser, Archpriest

[617] 413-8612 (mobile)

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Father Dimitry Kukunov, Assistant Priest

Father Otari Deisadze, Deacon

Fther Yakov Tseitlin, Deacon

