

Russian Orthodox Church Etiquette /

Expected Behaviour in our Cathedral

Cell Phones - Switch them OFF!

Please switch off cell phones or put them into silent/vibrate mode BEFORE stepping into Church. If your cell phone does go off accidentally then do not answer it in church and start speaking loudly. To prevent the noise of the call interfering the service you should answer the call (accept it), but do not start speaking until you have stepped away (outside or in the narthex). Walk out of the church quietly and calmly. Do not sprint/dash out of the church when this happens. Make the caller wait. You can also try to cover the phone with both hands to minimize the sound as another option. Usually one incident like this will make you remember to always switch off before stepping into church.

No Photography without Permission

During services photography is not allowed unless a special permission/blessing has been received from the Rector or Cathedral clergy.

Confession Before Communion

All Orthodox Christians are welcome to have Communion at the Cathedral **provided they have Confession the night before receiving Communion**

. Confession can be heard by the Cathedral clergy or with your own parish priest/spiritual father. It is not acceptable to ask the Cathedral clergy for Confession during the Liturgy unless you are extremely frail, ill or disabled. It is tradition in the Russian Orthodox Church to have Confession prior to Communion and we ask all our Orthodox guests to honor this practice. "Prior to" Communion doesn't mean 6 or 12 months ago or even two weeks ago. Also, insisting at the Holy Chalice that you have a blessing from your spiritual father to have Communion without the necessary preparation is unacceptable.

Standing vs. Sitting

The traditional posture for prayer and worship in the Orthodox Church has been to stand. Our Cathedral has no pews, except at the back (reserved for the elderly and disabled). When should you definitely stand? First of all, it is fully acceptable (even preferable) to stand for the entire service if you can. But always during the Gospel reading, the Little and Great Entrances, the

Anaphora, the distribution of Holy Communion, whenever the priest gives a blessing, and the Dismissal. It is never wrong to stand in church.

Lighting Candles

Lighting candles is an important part of Orthodox worship. We light them as we pray, making an offering to accompany our prayers. Orthodox typically light candles when coming into the church, and that is usually the best time to light them, but there are times when candles should not be lit. It is not proper to light candles during the Epistle or Gospel readings, during the Little or Great

Entrances, from the Creed to the end of "It is Truly Meet" (The Eucharistic Canon), "Our Father"; and during the sermon.

Entering the Church (Late)

The time to arrive at church is before the service starts. If you arrive after the Divine Liturgy begins, try to enter the church quietly, and observe what is happening. If the Epistle or Gospel is being read, or the Little or Great Entrance is taking place, or if Father is giving the sermon, stay in the back until it is concluded. Try not to interrupt the Liturgy with your entrance.

Lipstick

Have you ever looked at an icon in just the right light and seen the lip prints all over it? It's disgusting, isn't it? In fact, it's downright gross. Lipstick may look fine on lips, but it looks horrible on icons, crosses, the Communion spoon and the priest's or bishop's hand. Icons have been ruined by lipstick; and even though the cross can usually be cleaned after everyone venerates it, it just isn't considerate to others to impose your lipstick on them. What is the answer? If you insist on wearing lipstick to church, blot your lips well before venerating an icon, taking Communion, or kissing the cross or the priest's or bishop's hand. Even better, wait until after church to put it on.

Venerate Icons

When venerating (kissing) an icon, pay attention to where you kiss. It is not proper to kiss an icon in the face. Pay attention to what you are doing. When you approach an icon to venerate it, kiss the gospel, scroll, or hand cross in the hand of the person in the icon, or kiss the hand or foot of the person depicted. As you venerate an icon, show proper respect to the subject depicted in the icon.

Talking During Church

Isn't it great to come to church and see friends and family members? But wait until AFTER the service to talk to them. It just is not 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 our outside afterwards.

Kiss (Don't Shake) the Priest's or Bishop's Hand.

Did you know that the proper way to greet a priest or bishop is to ask his blessing and kiss his right hand? How do you do this? Approach the priest or bishop with your right hand over your left hand and say "Father (or "Master" in the case of the bishop), bless." [He will make the sign of the cross, and place his right hand over yours.] This is much more appropriate (and traditional) than shaking their hands. After all, the priest and bishop are not just "one of the boys," they are the ones who "bless and sanctify" you and who offer the Holy Gifts on your behalf. When you kiss their hands, you show respect for Christ, whom they represent. So next time you greet your priest or bishop, do not shake his hand, ask for his blessing.

Dress Code:

Children:

Athletic shorts, cutoffs, and spandex shorts are never appropriate church wear (for children or adults). Shoes should be clean and tidy. No T-shirts with any kind of excessive writing on them ("This Bud's for You" is definitely not acceptable).

Women:

Dresses should be modest. No tank tops or strapless dresses that would expose the back or low cut at the front. No mini-skirts. Skirts should be at knee or lower. If women wear pants to church, even though this is not preferred, should be dress pants (not jeans or leggings, etc.). Shorts of any type are not acceptable. Head coverings should be worn.

Men:

Coat and tie are not mandatory, shirts should have collars and should be buttoned to the collar (the actual collar button can be left undone, but two or three buttons undone is inappropriate). Torn jeans, with patches and loose fitting are not acceptable. No T-shirts or shorts.

To Cross or Not To Cross

Anyone who has looked around on a Sunday morning will notice that different people cross themselves at different times (and sometimes in different ways). To a certain extent, when to cross oneself is according to personal piety and not an issue of dogma. But there are times when it is specifically proper to cross yourself, and times when you should not. Here is a brief list of when to cross and when not to cross:

Cross:

When you hear one of the variations of the phrase, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; at the beginning and end of the liturgical service or your private prayers; entering or exiting the church, or when passing in front of the Holy Altar; before venerating in icon, the cross, or Gospel book.

Do not Cross:

At the chalice before or after taking Communion (you might hit the chalice with your hand); when the priest or bishop blesses saying, "Peace be to all," bow slightly and receive the blessing; when receiving a blessing from a bishop or a priest (kissing the right hand of the bishop or priest is appropriate, but not making the sign of the cross).

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 and to drink some wine (zapivka). 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. Monitor your children as they take the antidoron and teach them to eat it respectfully.

Crying Children

If your child is crying in church please take them outside until they stop. If you do not have children of your own and notice the parents of a crying child are not leaving church, please approach them lovingly and tell them nicely that they should take the child out of church until they have quieted down so that they don't disrupt the service.