

Why Worship?

People often talk about how the state of the world has deteriorated over recent decades. This is nothing new. St. Paul, in the first century, talks about people who are *“filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”* (Rm. 1: 29-32)

Reading these words, we might say “he certainly knew what life was going to be like in 21st century Canada!

What causes people created in the image and likeness of God to degenerate into little more than animals, if not outright monsters? St. Paul explains earlier in the chapter:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because although they knew God they did not glorify Him as God nor were thankful . . .” (Rm. 1: 18: 21).

“. . . they did not glorify Him as God nor were thankful . . .”. The original Greek says **“edoxasan kai eucharistian”**. If St. Paul is to be believed people who do not offer God *doxa* (glory) and *eucharistia* (thanksgiving) risk becoming less than human. If what St. Paul writes is true, given the decline in Church attendance throughout North America over the past five decades, should we be surprised at the current state of morality and interpersonal dysfunction in our society?”

If we trust Biblical teaching, the source of all troubles is the refusal to offer God glory and thanksgiving, which is what we go to Church to do in a

very particular and specific way. Our choice as human beings is either to give God glory & thanksgiving, or to be *“unloving, unforgiving, lovers of self. . . ”*etc.

Many people feel that they don't need to go to Church to be a good person. *“Can't I give God glory and thanksgiving anywhere - on the beach, on a forest trail, in a rowboat?”* It's not accidental that the Greek word for thanksgiving is *“eucharistia” - “eucharist”*. As we know, the eucharist isn't served at home, or at the beach, or in the forest, but in Church.

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn. 17: 3). One of the most important ways in which the people of God come to know Him is through worship and participation in the Holy Mysteries. On the other hand if we refuse to worship God we'll begin to worship anything: sports teams, for example, whose temple is the stadium or arena; celebrities, whose scriptures are the magazines you see in the check-out aisle at the grocery store; money, whose sacrament is the stock exchange or the casino; sex, (no comment); or the body, whose liturgy is served at the health club. All these can be and often are objects of non-religious, but nonetheless real, worship.

In most congregations of our Church it's a sad fact that most members do not attend Church services faithfully - i.e. regularly and often. I am personally aware of people who hold leadership positions in the Church, who sit on seminary boards, members of parish councils, etc., but only attend Sunday Liturgy sporadically, who partake of the Holy Supper on Christmas Eve but don't necessarily go to the Nativity Liturgy, who don't attend a single service during Holy Week but go to Church to bless their baskets on Easter, etc.

Many excuses are given by people who don't attend Church regularly: *“I don't understand what's going on”, “it's boring”, “I'm too busy”, “I've got to work”*, etc.

Some of these excuses are valid, some aren't. There are people who don't attend Church during the school year because their children are too busy, but during the summer they don't attend because they need to *“take a*

break". It seems like attending Church services is not an important enough matter to be taken seriously during the school year, but too serious to focus on during summer vacation.

So youth don't attend Church services regularly and often. And we are astonished at the amount of crime, amorality, social disintegration, and family dysfunction that we hear about on the news, read in the paper, or experience first-hand. Amoral, criminal, and socially dysfunctional young people grow up to be amoral, criminal, and socially dysfunctional adults. Why? Among other things, because "they neither know God, nor worship Him as God".

On September 14th we celebrate the beginning of the Church new year. Perhaps we should do so by making a resolution to attend Liturgy with the same diligence and joy we attend sporting events, musical lessons, concerts, the theatre, the casino, cultural events, work, and school. Remember - Churches are like prescriptions. They don't do you any good unless you fill them.

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