

UNIT 1B LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

17a: Liturgical Space

The Historical development of Eastern Christian Church Architectural Forms

There is no single standard form of Church Architecture although the requirements of worship, practically speaking, continue to play a key role in the design of the Temple, internally and in the basic structure and form of the building shell. Before the Edict of Milan (313 AD) ended the persecutions of the Church, Christians had met in house churches with no permanent consecrated buildings. However, the endurance of archetypal liturgical spaces to the present day show that basic template consisted of a fusion of the bimah / bema (a central reading platform) in the synagogue with the 'Holy of Holies' of the Jerusalem Temple. After freedom was granted to the Church in 313 AD ecclesiastical architecture evolved from the dual usage of existing public secular buildings, particularly the Roman basilica or city hall ... for example, as in the churches St. John Lateran and St. Mary Major in Rome.

The basilica was essentially a simple but well-lit and vaulted rectangular hall for the conducting of the civic business of the city. It had a raised platform at one end under a concave apse where the magistrate or some other public official sat. The bishop took the seat of the magistrate at the Liturgy, flanked by his presbyteral assistants. Such Christian basilica churches were built not only in western Europe but also in Greece, Syria, Egypt, and Palestine. Good early examples can be found in the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (6th century AD) and the church of St Elias in Thessalonica (5th century AD). From the outset atria or courtyards derived from the larger house churches of the periods of persecution were often included to soften and make more humane the classical severity of the basilica design, St. Clement at Rome being a good example.

The north and south crossing transept was another very popular addition which rendered the thus modified basilica into the form of a cross. This was in evidence as early as 380 AD at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, according to the account of St. Gregory the Theologian. The Christian east experimented with the basic basilica format somewhat more freely than the west at the time often creating quite different structures and styles. The Great Octagonal Church¹ at Antioch for example (sadly destroyed by a series of earthquakes and after 588 AD never rebuilt) suggests a Liturgy in the round - if not strictly speaking a central altar table. Some commentators suppose that the Church of St. Vitale in Ravenna may have deliberately shared this evolution in architectural style in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean Christian world.

This trend towards a centred nave inspired the evolution of an overarching dome, a development which was never really taken up in the west where church architecture continued to elaborate on the rectangular model of the Roman basilica on either a modest or a grand scale. In the Middle Ages this often included a spire as an addition to a fortified tower; suggesting quite a different model of transcendence in which the earth was seen as reaching up toward heaven rather than heaven coming down to embrace the earth. This reflected scholastic Latin notions of heaven as an utterly remote realm, whereas in the east Christ was depicted in frescoes in the apex of the dome as very near the worshippers. The increasing size of the eastern basilicas with multiple supporting mini-domes is shown *par excellence* in the engineering and spiritual miracle which is the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.² Arguably this church has never been surpassed in beauty and longevity.

¹ <http://libaniusredux.blogspot.com/2008/03/golden-octagon.html> for more technical information on the "Golden Octagon."

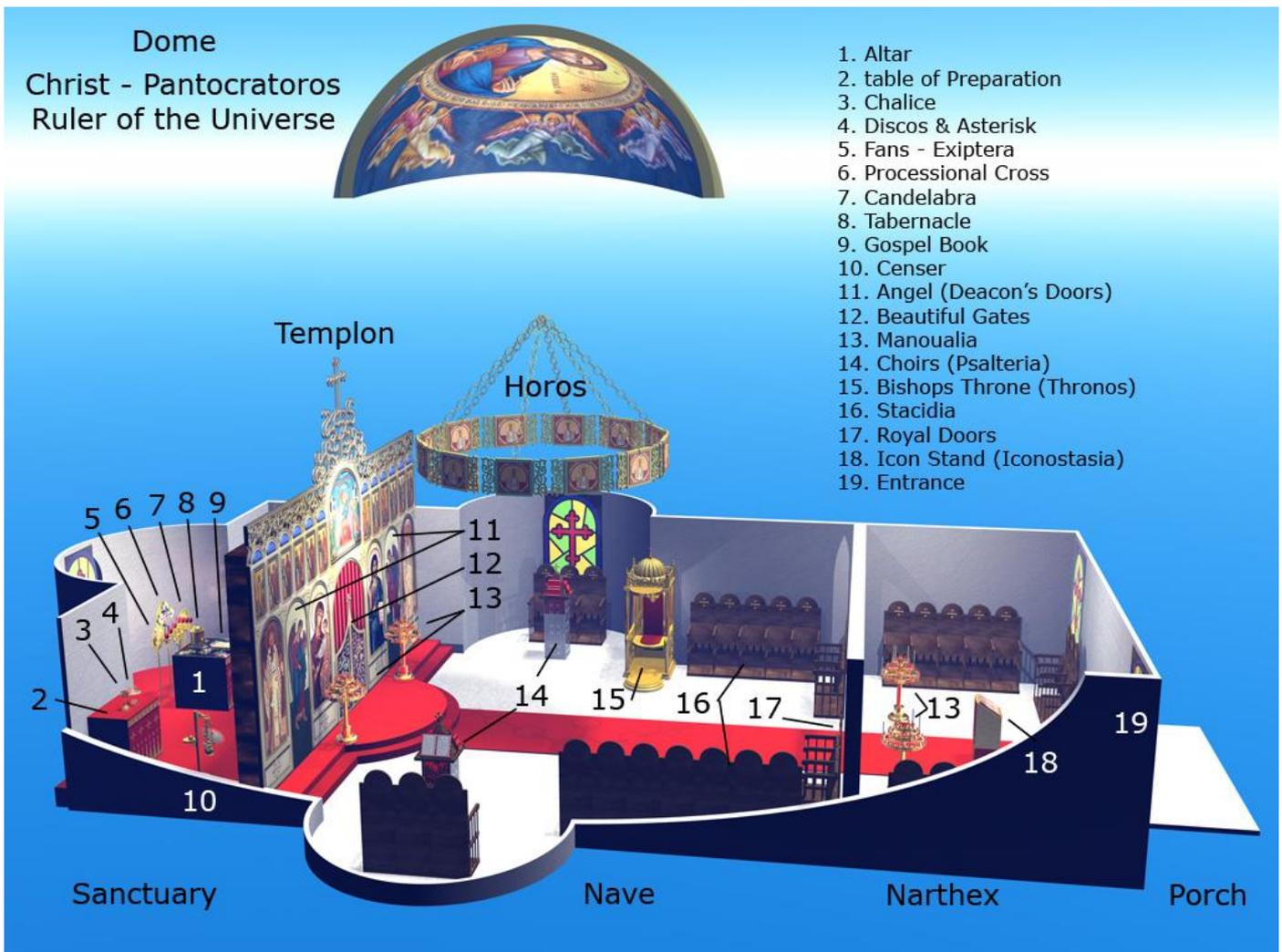
² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_architecture#Structural_evolution for a detailed examination of the evolution of the domed basilica in the Orthodox Christian east.

When the eastern Church evangelised the Slavic peoples from Constantinople, the basic template of the domed basilica was taken with the missionaries into the Ukraine and Eastern Europe. However, in the conditions of more northerly regions and with the local materials then available the dome contracted in size and multiplied, giving rise to the traditional cupolae that still adorn Russian and other Slav tradition churches. Churches in remote and northern areas particularly were often made of wood rather than stone. In other regions the dome was more or less abandoned (as in the famous painted monasteries of Romania).

In the contemporary Orthodox Church, many new designs are in evidence, particularly in countries newly settled by Orthodox communities where local limitations, opportunities and circumstances are once again driving architectural evolution. Although it is certainly true, therefore, that there has been no standard form of Church architecture with respect to the building shell, this is less true of the interior where fixtures, fittings and furnishings more closely adhere to the requirements, symbolisms and rituals of worship.

[AFR PODCAST: There now follows on the lecture transcript but not on this audio recording a detailed explanation of the interior of an Orthodox church together with its liturgical furnishings and use of sacred space.]

A Traditional Orthodox Church Interior and an Explanation of its Contents



source³

References: For additional resources on vestments⁴, liturgical colours⁵, eucharistic vessels and other objects⁶. (Detailed descriptions on pages 3-9 not on the AFR podcast).

³ by Phiddipus at en.wikipedia <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AOrthodox-Church-interior.jpg>

⁴ <http://orthodoxwiki.org/Vestments>

⁵ http://orthodoxwiki.org/Liturgical_colors

⁶ http://orthodoxwiki.org/Liturgical_objects

for Church vestments.

for the colour schemes of vestments and liturgical furnishings in the Greek and Slav traditions.

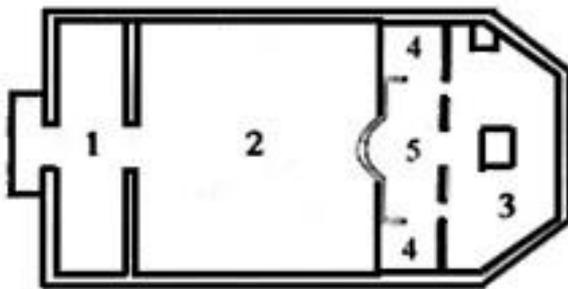
for descriptions and explanations of vessels and other objects used in liturgical services.

INSIDE AN ORTHODOX CHURCH

A SIMPLE CHURCH DESIGN

...KEY

Church Plan

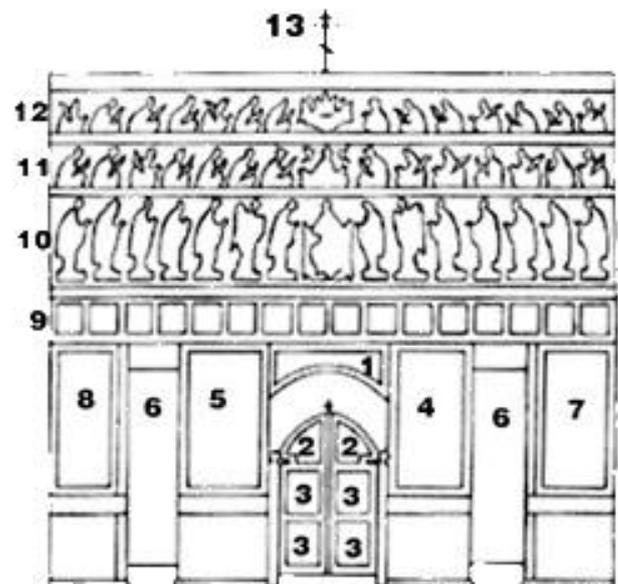


1. **NARTHEX:** Scenes from the Last Judgement and the Old Testament. We repent as we enter the House of God, (called a "temple" in the Orthodox Church). The baptismal font is sometimes here or separately in a courtyard.
2. **NAVE:** Where the people stand, just a few seats for the infirm. Scenes from Christ's earthly life and the saints. Above, Christ the Pantocrator, (He who holds all things in His hands).
3. **ALTAR:** Refers to the whole sanctuary area. Contains the Holy Table for the celebration of the services including the Divine Liturgy or Eucharist. Also contains the Table of Oblation, (upper, area 3), where the Holy Gifts of bread and wine are prepared before the Liturgy.
4. **SOLEA:** a walkway/step in front of the icon screen, (iconostasis ... dashed line).
5. **AMVON:** (ambo/ambon) ... a small platform for the use of the priest or deacon in front of the Holy Doors. Only these ministers may enter through the Holy/Royal Doors. Servers use the Angel/Deacons' Doors either side.

KEY TO ICONOSTASIS ICONS

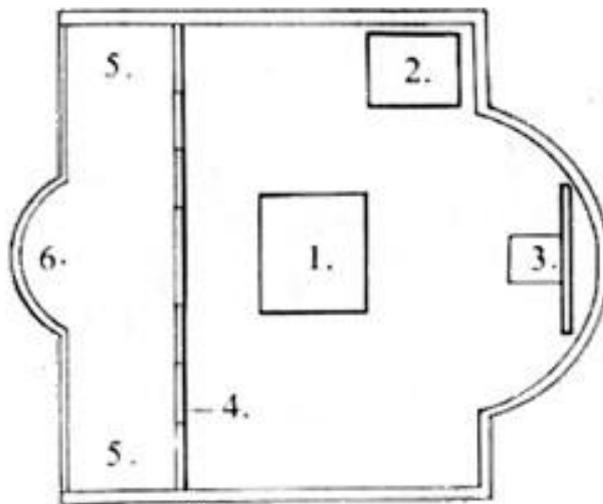
1. Last Supper
2. Annunciation of the Archangel Gabriel to the Mother of God, (Theotokos), and Ever-Virgin Mary
3. The Four Evangelists on the Holy Doors
4. The Saviour
5. The Mother of God, (Theotokos), and Ever-Virgin Mary
6. The Angel/Deacons' Doors
7. The Forerunner, St. John the Baptist
8. The Patron Saint of the Church
9. The Major Feasts (Festivals) of the Church
10. The Apostles
11. The Prophets
12. The Fathers and the Mothers of the Church in Heaven with the Theotokos
13. The Holy Cross ... above which in the apse (curved inset ceiling), the Mother of God Icon of the Sign, or "she who fills the heavens), welcoming believers to her Son whom she presents to the world.

ICON SCREEN (ICONOSTASIS)



INSIDE THE ALTAR (SANCTUARY)

KEY



1. Holy Table - where the Liturgy is served and the Holy Gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ
2. Table of Oblation (Prothesis or Proskomedie)
3. The High Place with the Bishop's throne. The throne will also be in the Nave.
4. The Iconostasis (Icon Screen)
5. Solea (see above)
6. Amvon (see above)

Orthodox Altars





Holy Table (page 8)



Prosphora (page 9)

A closer attention to the Holy Table itself reveals the following items:-

The Holy Table cover

The Book of the Gospels

Antimins/Antimension, (a small cloth signed by the bishop and containing relics of a saint without which the priest is not able to serve the Liturgy).

The Blessing Cross and a small standing Cross

The Bishop's Candles (Trikir, Dikiri)

Tabernacle for reservation of Holy Communion for the Sick

Container for the Holy Chrism, (holy oil for Holy Baptism and Chrismation)

Menorah seven-branch candlestick (sometimes installed at the back of the Holy Table with other candles)

Kalima cloth for use in administering Holy Communion

The priest's service books, sometimes placed on a side stand to keep the altar clear of "clutter."

The vessels of the Eucharist

No Holy Table should be cluttered with anything other than these items which strictly refer to the holy oblation of the Eucharist and the preaching of the Word of God. Orthodox take great care that all items used in worship are fitting and used appropriately. Any "sloppiness" in approaching these holy things is frowned upon and matched by the care and reverence for the prayers of the Liturgy in their recitation and chanting. This is the place where the earth itself, indeed the Cosmos, is to be transformed by the resurrection of Christ. We may offer God only our best.

The vessels of the Eucharist are first to be found on the nearby Table of Oblation (prothesis / proskomedie table) where the Holy Gifts are prepared at the beginning of the Liturgy. These and other items are as follows:-

Icon of the Nativity
The Prosphora (Holy Bread) and the Wine
Spear to cut the Prosphora
Spoon for administering Holy Communion
Zeon jug for the hot water
The Holy Chalice
Star to cover the Lamb (portion of the bread to be used for Holy Communion)
Diskos for the breads and particles for the prayers

The priest and deacon follow an order of service in the preparation of the Holy Gifts that clearly reflects the prayer of the Church for the whole world and in the communion of saints. Every time bread and wine is brought by the People of God to the temple, this offering is transfigured in the Kingdom for the redemption of all who worthily partake and those for whom they pray according to their intention and God's good will. The language used for the preparation of the Holy Gifts clearly reflects the redemptive significance of the liturgical ascent through the power of Easter into the heavenly realm ... star, spear, Lamb; there are so many references to the Passion and Pascha of Christ here. It is Easter then that enables our offering to be made to God.

The Prosphora (bread) is cut up into different pieces representing the following different commemorations in prayer:-

The Lamb - Our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ
The Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary
The Angels and Saints
The Living
The Reposed

The Lamb, the Body of Christ when consecrated, is divided up into four pieces during the Liturgy. On each piece is a sealed piece of writing in abbreviated form. It reads: "Jesus Christ conquers all." The consecrated Lamb is placed in the Chalice of consecrated wine that also contains hot water as a symbol of the life-giving character of the Holy Gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ. The faithful receive Holy Communion from a spoon. This is partly for the ease of administration of the Holy Mysteries to babies and partly for the practical convenience of ensuring that the people can receive reverently.

Finally in the altar we may find a table for the servers. From here their sacred duty in the assistance of divine worship is performed. The incense, the censer, the charcoal, the candles are cared for with as much as love as any other aspect of Orthodox worship.

The keynote of worship in and before the altar in an Orthodox Church is love. It is offered with great love both for the Lord and for His People. All have their part to play. This work of the whole People of God is a participation in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The altar is the place where Christ is and where He is, so also is the Father. It is in the altar that we all receive divine power through repentance and faith to become more fully human; that is, in the likeness of God in whose image we have been so wonderfully made.

17b: Preaching from the Bible, the Fathers and the Saints

Introduction: Practice Exegesis, not Eisegesis

Every preacher is also a shepherd who seeks to implement the closing verses of Psalm 78 (79): “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skilful hands.” Just as shepherds gain skill through experience in the use of their *hands*, so preachers must gain skill through experience in the use of their *words*.

A key skill that any preacher must learn is the distinction between exegesis and eisegesis, between narrating and explaining a sacred text, as opposed to introducing personal presuppositions and biases into a sacred text. The Greek origins of the two words are significantly different, because exegesis is derived from the Greek words *ex hegesthai* meaning “to bring out,” whereas eisegesis derives from the Greek word meaning “into.”⁷ Preachers bear a responsibility to bring their congregations *out* into the meaning of a text, not *into* their personal biases.

Hermeneutics, derived from the Greek word meaning “to interpret” has a broader meaning than exegesis, because hermeneutics seeks to delineate the procedures that should guide sound exegesis.⁸ Although hermeneutical perspectives have differed greatly over the centuries in different cultures and among different groups of Christians, since the first century the purpose of preaching has remained constant:

to teach, strengthen, and enthuse congregations that they may become more effective witnesses to Christian truth and the Christian way of life. Where preaching has been

⁷ See John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), “Exegesis,” pp. 134-137. Father McGuckin traces the historical changes in attitudes to Biblical exegesis among different groups of Christians over the centuries.

⁸ See the articles on “exegesis” and “hermeneutics” in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007) for which the Rt. Rev. Dr. K. T. Ware [now Metropolitan Kallistos] served as an adviser “to fill gaps in the coverage of Eastern Orthodoxy.” pp. 585, 760-761. [This is the paperback third (and most recent) edition of the hardback, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997].

directed to non-Christians its purpose has been so to move those who listen that they become a congregation of believers. All preaching is thus related to Christian community. . . .⁹

In our role as preachers, as we seek to build a particular Orthodox Christian community, we must reflect on when best to preach from: (1) the Bible; (2) the Church Fathers; and (3) the Saints and Feasts of the Church. How in our preaching can we draw our listeners into a closer oneness with God as they (and we) live out our lives on earth?

Preaching from the Bible: Expository, Interpretative and Transformative

A good start in effective preaching is to study and learn from the prophets of the Old Testament, because:

The origins of preaching lie in the words of the prophets of the Old Testament. They saw themselves as God’s spokesmen, directly commissioned by Him to declare His will to His people Israel, both in their corporate and their individual lives; to influence the direction of life by encouragement, warning, and condemnation. Through this work of the prophets the idea of God relating to His people through His words became an important part of the Old Testament tradition. In the New Testament St. John’s Gospel used that tradition when the birth of Jesus Christ was described as ‘the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). . . .¹⁰

⁹ “Preaching,” in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1317. In contemporary cultures, situations may well arise in which the purpose of speaking publicly or privately to non-Christians may not necessarily be to encourage them to become part of an Orthodox Christian community, but simply to respect and understand more deeply the Orthodox pattern of prayer, worship and life. Also, other traditions, both Christian and non-Christian, may bring insights of value to Orthodox Christianity. However, the centrality of evangelism by Orthodox Christians has been set out clearly by Father Michael Keiser in *Spread the Word: Reclaiming the Apostolic Tradition of Evangelism* (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press [now Ancient Faith Press], 2011).

¹⁰ “Preaching,” in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 1317.

In later Judaism, this earlier prophetic tradition of preaching became a much more legalistic search for meaning—a Talmudic search for truth among alternative meanings.

As a preacher explores the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, and how the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father to each of us, a very personal question emerges that requires as objective an answer as possible: Is the Holy Spirit resting on this particular Scripture or this particular interpretation for me as a preacher at this time before this congregation? There are three quite different approaches to preaching from the Bible—expository, interpretive and transformative. Yet for all three approaches the question about the presence of the Holy Spirit needs to be posed and answered in the prayer for, preparation of and delivery of every homily.

Each sermon is unique; and preachers rightly have quite different objectives for specific sermons. Contemporary Orthodox expository preaching gives an in-depth exegesis of a Biblical text, with an appreciation of its historical and linguistic background, moulded into a coherent narrative. Interpretative (or evaluative) preaching offers a synthesis of a text, focusing on its theological significance. Transformative (or transformational) preaching is not so much a narrative or an exposition but a personal meditation, grounded in prayerful reflection on the truth that is being communicated in the text and its practical application to members of the congregation.¹¹

¹¹ For an extensive discussion of these three levels of preaching from a Biblical text, see Father Theodore G. Stylianopoulos, *The New Testament: An Orthodox Perspective*, Volume One: Scripture, Tradition, Hermeneutics (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1997), pp. 187-238. Father Stylianopoulos uses the term “exegetical” rather than “expository” for the first type of preaching, but his focus is firmly on the exposition of a specific text, as set out in the previous E-Quip lecture. See also Father Stylianopoulos, “Orthodox Biblical Interpretation,” in his *Encouraged by the Scriptures: Essays on Scripture, Interpretation, and Life* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2011), pp. 19-36 where Father Stylianopoulos refers to these three kinds of preaching as historical, theological and mystical.

Preaching from the Fathers of the Church

For the Fathers of the Church, exegesis of a Biblical text was often a primary “avenue of theological speculation.”¹² For example, St. Gregory the Great in his *Pastoral Rule* and *Great Moralia on Job* set out “a grand theory of how the preacher ought to approach the text ‘attentively’ from a historical, moral, and then mystical viewpoint,” with the goal of drawing a listener “through all the levels of spiritual perfection.”¹³ This search for spiritual perfection deeply evident in the theology of the Church Fathers is still present today in Orthodox spirituality.¹⁴

As set out by Augustine Cassidy in *Orthodox Thinking on the Patristic Heritage*¹⁵ and in E-Quip Lecture 15, “there is much to learn from [the] sophisticated processes of discernment [of the Church Fathers]—and their deep sense of charity.”¹⁶ The same three-fold study of a Biblical text—expository, interpretive and transformative—is clearly relevant to the writings of the Church Fathers, especially in the final transformative (or mystical) stage. The danger to which D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee have referred in *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* remains today that “the voice of [mystical] witness [can] be lost in the turmoil of surrounding things.”¹⁷ Therefore, every preacher needs to exercise considerable care in identifying which insights of the Church Fathers apply to specific passages and how to link those insights to contemporary life.¹⁸

¹² Father John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*, “Exegesis,” p. 137.

¹³ McGuckin, p. 137.

¹⁴ See Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Theological Seminary Press, 2002), “The Major Steps of the Spiritual Life,” pp. 69-73; and “A Guide to the Spiritual Life” (St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Greenville, SC: 2014)

¹⁵ Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2014).

¹⁶ Cassidy, p. 64.

¹⁷ D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee, *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), p. v.

¹⁸ Father Anthony McGuckin points out that “the word and notion of patristics is incomplete, however, for many reasons—not least because it technically neglects every theologian of the early church (and there were many of them) who was not a bishop.” The broader term “patrology,” literally “the study of the fathers” also raises difficulties. See the entries for “Patristics” and “Patrology” in McGuckin’s *The Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology*, pp. 252-255.

This process of discernment belongs to a purified soul truly open to the Holy Spirit. It is the means by which the preaching of the gospel is accomplished using the Fathers' own methods. This protects the preacher from a sort of naïve patristic fundamentalism. As with the interpretation of Scripture the context of any given text is the key to its application. This is what St. Ignatius Brianchaninov writes concerning due care in reading from the Fathers:

Let each one choose reading of the Holy Fathers for himself in accordance with his way of life. Let the recluse read the Fathers who wrote on hesychasm; the monk living in a community - Fathers writing the directions for monastic communities; the Christian living amid the world - the Holy Fathers who pronounce their teachings in general for all Christendom. Let each one, whatever his calling, draw abundant admonition (advice) from the writings of the Fathers.¹⁹

Preaching from the Saints and Feasts of the Church

The Church celebrates a significant number of major fixed feasts as well as fixed and general feast days. As St. John Kronstadt has written: "We should not allow ourselves to celebrate any Christian feast without seriously considering: What is its meaning and what is its purpose; what is our responsibility toward it?"²⁰ The feast days linked to Our Lord and the Theotokos offer especially valuable opportunities to reflect on how each of us, men and women, can live our lives in such a way that we are "a living and productive part of the Body of Christ."²¹

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.pravmir.com/approach-reading-holy-fathers/#ixzz3SHMSBLRj> (an excellent selection of the saint's writings on how to read and apply the Fathers teachings on the gospel).

²⁰ Quoted by Joanna Manley in *The Bible and the Holy Fathers for Orthodox*, p. 949. Manley provides a helpful introduction to both the major fixed feasts of the Church and Special and General Feast Days, pp. 949-1061.

²¹ Manley, p. 950.

For example, the English poet Gerald Manley Hopkins has set out in his poem, “Mary Mother of Divine Grace, compared to the Air we breathe,” how the Mother of God provides a model for how to change our lives, to grow closer to Christ:

Through her we may see Him/Made sweeter, not made dim,/ And her hand leaves His
light sifted to suit our sight./ Be thou, then, O thou dear/Mother, my atmosphere. .
./Stir in my ears, speak there/ Of God’s love, O live air/ Of patience, penance, prayer; .
. .²²

In preaching from the saints and the Feasts of the Church this is precisely the task of every preacher—to sift the Light of Christ “to suit our sight” and to stir our ears to hear God’s love and to experience “patience, penance [and] prayer.” Friendship with the saints and converse with them in aspiring to their holiness of life is a pre-requisite for the Orthodox preacher. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov is once again both practical and inspiring about this requirement:

Conversation and association with neighbours has a great influence on man. Conversation and contacts with a learned person impart much knowledge; with a poet - many lofty thoughts and feelings; with a traveller - much information about the countries, morals, and manners of people. It is obvious: conversation and acquaintance with the Saints imparts saintliness. ‘With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure.’

(Psalm 17:26-27).²³

²² Hopkins’ long poem is given in full in D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee, *The Oxford Book of Mystical Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), pp. 355-359.

²³ Source: <http://www.pravmir.com/approach-reading-holy-fathers/#ixzz3SHNW6goW>

Conclusion: Prepare to Preach and Teach

Those who have been following closely this first year of the E-Quip Course to deepen your understanding of Christian life and theology have perhaps reached a point where you should seek advice from your spiritual director about the possibility of preaching to either your local congregation or to your fellow searchers. Are there preaching and teaching opportunities which will both empower you to grow as a Christian and empower the congregation to grow with you? Reflect upon the contemporary possibilities to participate in the Great Commission as set out in St. Matthew (28:16-20) and St. Mark (16:15, 20) and implemented throughout the Book of Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul. Who might help and mentor you as you preach and teach?²⁴ Whatever task you tackle, it is well to remember: “Care enough about what you do to learn to do it well, and then do it well.”²⁵

²⁴ For a helpful resource, see Father Michael Keiser, *Spread the Word: Reclaiming the Apostolic Tradition of Evangelism* (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press [now Ancient Faith Publishing], 2011), especially Chapter 10, “Preaching the Word,” pp. 175-198.

²⁵ Keiser, p. 198.