

13. THE CHURCH PRAYS

The Church has been gathered. Everyone is ready to meet God, to hear His words, and to offer Him gifts. The priest begins the service with the words:

"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

Every service in which the whole Church takes part begins with these words. They are like an announcement which tells people why they have come together.

Have you ever taken a plane trip and heard over the loudspeaker:

"Flight 203 to Pittsburgh is now in the boarding process. Passengers should proceed to Gate 3 on the blue concourse."

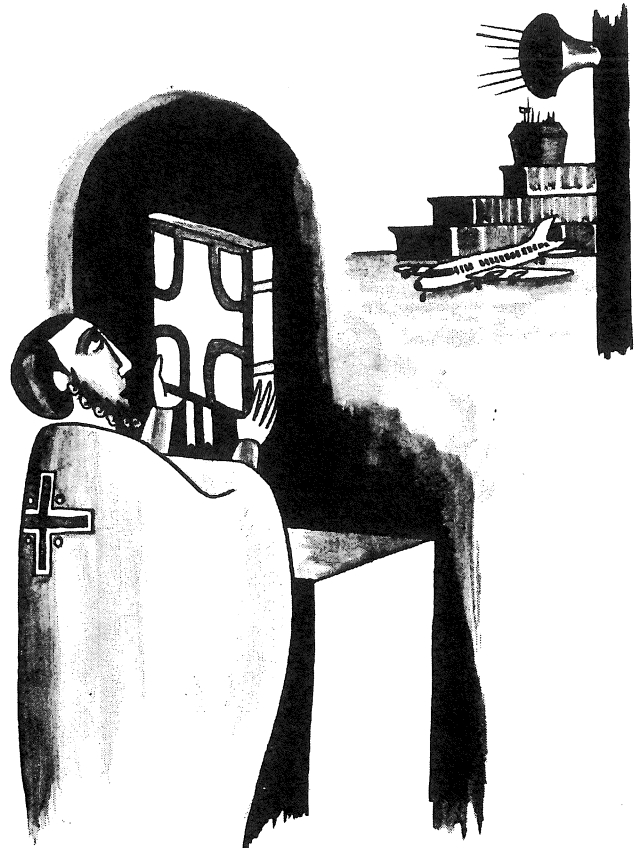
Or, have you ever been called to a special meeting, or perhaps to the principal's office where the first words you heard were something like this:

"The reason I called you here was . . ."

Even on your way to Church today, you may have heard an announcement, like your mother calling:

"Hurry up, Johnny! We don't want to be late for Church!"

No matter what we're doing or where we're going we usually have to know why we're doing it or just where we're headed. This is true also when we come together to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. We come together to meet God and we meet God in His Kingdom. This is the first announcement that the priest makes, and we agree to it by singing "Amen," or "Okay!"



Blessed is the Kingdom . . .

The first prayer we always make to God is the **Great Litany**, the Great Prayer of the Church. In this one prayer, we remember the whole world, the leaders of our Church and our country, the members of the Church, those who live in all places and those who serve in our armed forces to protect us from our enemies. We remember the people in prisons. We pray for good seasons so that we may have plenty of food to eat. We remember all the saints who join us in our prayers and especially the holy Theotokos, the ever-Virgin Mary, and we put our whole life and trust in God through His Son Jesus Christ. We ask God to bless us, and especially to give us His Peace, the "peace that is from above." We want all men to be able to live as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and to share in His love and peace.

If we truly love Jesus Christ, then we love the world which He came to save. We pray in the Great Litany that God will bless us — His Church and His world. We remember the words of St. Paul who tells us to pray that all men may be saved and come to know the truth about Jesus Christ. Read his instructions to Timothy:

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(I Timothy 2:1-4)

Activity

Choose one of the petitions of the Great Litany and make a poster showing all the things for which we pray. Use pictures and words from magazines and newspapers to make your poster.