

OUR TEMPLE

The design of Orthodox temples and our pattern of worship strives to create an atmosphere of worship, elevating the mind and soul of the worshipper towards the kingdom of the God through all of his senses. The pattern of Orthodox worship is apostolic in origin and has clearly grown from the Temple and synagogue worship revealed by God Himself in the Scriptures as an "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5), that is, the prayerful worship which continues in Heaven "without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17)

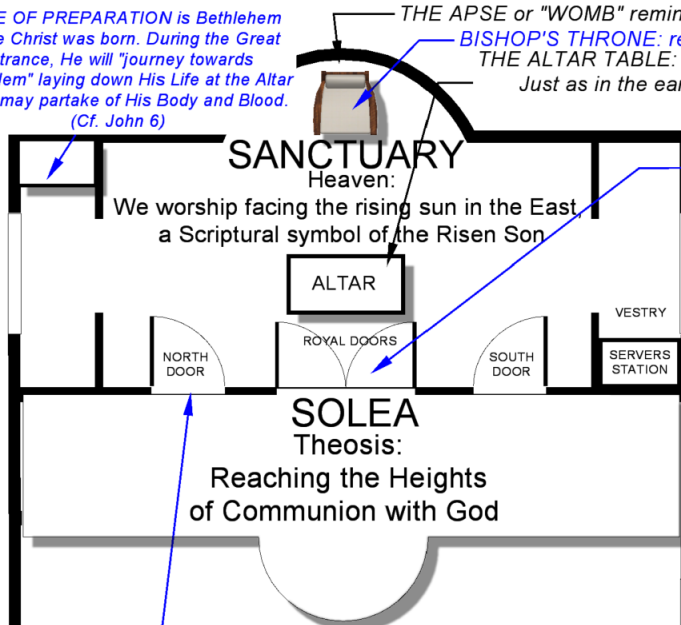


TABLE OF PREPARATION is Bethlehem where Christ was born. During the Great Entrance, He will "journey towards Jerusalem" laying down His Life at the Altar so we may partake of His Body and Blood. (Cf. John 6)

THE APSE or "WOMB" reminds us of the God-Man's Incarnation through Mary whom we see inviting us to her Son. **BISHOP'S THRONE:** reminds us of the authority of the Apostles and their successors, the Orthodox Bishops.

THE ALTAR TABLE: Represents the Tomb of Christ and is where the Eucharist is both offered and received. Just as in the early Christian catacombs, relics of martyrs are placed within the Altar Table because the Church has been built on the faith and blood of the martyrs.

THE ROYAL DOORS: Representing the Gates of the earthly Jerusalem during the Great Entrance and the Gates of the heavenly Jerusalem most other times; Christ passes through these doors each Liturgy as Gospel, Eucharist, and Priest reminding us that we may enter Heaven only through the doors which He Himself has opened.



SANCTUARY
Heaven:
We worship facing the rising sun in the East
a Scriptural symbol of the Risen Son

ALTAR

ROYAL DOORS

VESTRY

SERVERS STATION

SOLEA

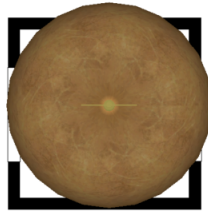
Theosis:
Reaching the Heights
of Communion with God

NORTH DOOR

SOUTH DOOR

THE DEACON DOORS:

The North Door is guarded by the Archangel Michael who defends the Gates of Heaven from entry while the South Door shows us Gabriel whose Annunciation to Mary was the beginning of our entrance into Heaven.



NAVE

Illumination:
Our Daily Life in
Christ and His Church

NARTHEX

Repentance:
The First Stage of
Our Life in Christ

PORCH

The World:
Our Life Before Christ

† The Sanctuary corresponds historically to the Holy of Holies in Jewish Temple worship and spiritually it symbolizes the Kingdom of Heaven to which we as Christians are seeking to spend eternity.

† The Iconostasis is symbolic of the Temple Veil in the Old Testament which separated the Holy of Holies from the remainder of the Temple. It also reminds us of Christ's Incarnation in which Heaven and earth meet.

† The Solea is the raised platform of the altar area and reminds us of the final elevated stage of the Christian life where we are united with God in theosis. It is here that the Mysteries or Sacraments are administered to the faithful.

† The Nave is from a Latin word which means "ship" or "ark" and corresponds historically to the Inner Court in Jewish Temple worship. Spiritually it symbolizes our Christian life here on earth and reminds us that together we are sailing towards our true heavenly homeland in "the East" surrounded and supported by "a great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1-2)- our brothers and sisters the saints.

† In temples with a dome, Christ the Ruler of All looks down and blesses His people from Heaven. He is at the Helm of our Ark of Salvation.

† We stand in worship because we are in the presence of our King.

† The chandelier stands for the stars to remind us that "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 18/19:1) and that we also are to be lights in this life "among whom ye shine like stars in the world" (Php. 2:15)

† The floor stands for the earth while the ceilings and the altar/ solea area represents Heaven, therefore, we try to build our temples as high as we can.

† The Narthex corresponds to the Outer Court in Jewish Temple worship and spiritually it stands for the first stage in the Christian life: repentance. It was here in the early church that both those who wished to become Orthodox Christians and believers who were penitents would stand throughout the service.

† Traditionally, it is darker than the rest of the temple because of this. The Nave is bright to reveal our illumination in Christ.

† Coming into the temple and leaving it, we cross ourselves praying to the Lord.

† Here worshippers will get candles to light at the icon stands where they will say a few prayers as they wish. The candles symbolize Christ the Light of the World who was sacrificed for our sins. The wax of the candle reminds us of the human soul. The wax of the candle is cold and hard, but after being lit and spending time in the church, the wax becomes warm and pliable. Our soul is often cold and hard when we first enter the church from the outside world, but yet it warms and becomes pliable as we stand in church worshipping God.