



A Case for Church in the Summer  
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SUMMER MONTHS BRING OPPORTUNITIES to cook in a campground or on the Grill Outside, but no one can argue that the best place to cook is in a well-equipped kitchen. With the right tools, ingredients, and time a delicious meal can be created. Our spiritual nurturing is created in a well-equipped church. All that is needed is the priest, the people, and the Holy Gifts. The time we take to worship in church nourishes our souls. Often during the summertime or busy times in our lives, we neglect attending church.

Certainly sleeping in, time with family, a Sunday morning golf game, or a stroll on the beach are different means to feed our spirits and bodies but just as we acknowledge the importance of the kitchen as the central place for preparing a meal, we must realize that nothing tops the environment of church for our spiritual growth. In once read somewhere that going to church makes you no more a Christian than standing in your garage makes you a car. Whoever wrote this has a poor understanding of what makes a Christian. However, I will agree that just standing in church is but a small part of the experience. After all, I can stand in the middle of my kitchen all afternoon and dinner will not just magically appear on the table.

The word liturgy means work of the people and in our church experience we are called to prepare for communion and participate in the service. During the summer months many of the choirs in our Orthodox churches do not sing as an organized group and it is evident during the time that not

everyone present understands the importance of making the appropriate responses to the priest. My heart is always pained when the priest faces us, the congregation, and with his hands lifted says, "Let us lift our hearts to the Lord" and this is followed by a long pause and then unenthused response. The word liturgy does not mean work of the priest or work of the choir and canters. Our church experience calls us to be present and participate.

Our participation need not take a hiatus during the summer. Wherever we may find ourselves, it is worth looking for an Orthodox church. Just as that beach retreat or golf course provides a change of scene for our spirit, the same result can happen when visiting another church. The acoustics of another building, the sermon from another priest, or a different icon can speak to our souls. But, the experience should not stop at just standing there. Our souls may also be fed by the people around us and the opportunity to say, "Good morning" and smile. After worship is an opportunity to welcome one another and by welcoming it does not mean saying, "Xeni eise?" (Stranger, are you?)

Even if the economy dictates a stay at home for vacation, make time for church as part of your summer, get to know your community and warmly welcome the visitors. The kitchen is a vital place in the home for nourishment. Without physical food people die. Likewise, our church provides a central sanctuary for our spirits. Without spiritual nourishment, we would die spiritually.

