

Order of meeting Most Reverend Hierarchs during the visit of their churches

Many priests, especially the young, do not know how to properly meet the Archpastor, who visits the church, entrusted to him. This ignorance of the order, observed in the remembered case, enters the priest into a frenzied concern which is unpleasantly evident to both the Most Reverend Hierarch Bishop and parishioners, is frequent in the large number gathering for receiving the blessing from the Archpastor. Frequent cases, the confusion allowed by inexperienced clergy at a meeting of Bishops induced the Moscow Theological Consistory in 1841 to publish the "Order" of meeting of Most Reverend Hierarchs during the visit of their churches.

This "Order" with the indication of the features necessary is in practice at the present time.

1) "At approach of the Hierarch to the church, the ringing of the bell begins which stops after the Bishops reaches the church".

2) "The priest in full vestments opens the Royal Gates and with a cross on the dish covered with aer goes to the western doors in front of the deacon (of course in vestments) with a censer and subdeacons in sticharions (if they are ordained) with candlesticks". [In practice the priest ordinarily meets the Bishop not in full vestments, but only in a stole and a phelonion; the deacon (if there is one) has to have a censer in the right hand, and a lit candle in the left; one of the subdeacons or attendants has to stand with holy water].

3) "When the cross is presented to the Bishop, the priest goes before him and, having brought the cross into the sanctuary, he places it on the throne without the dish, waiting on the side of the throne of the entry of the Bishop into the sanctuary, then the priest or the deacon shuts the royal doors". [In practice the matter happens differently. After the Bishop places the holy cross back on the dish, the priest with this dish does not enter the sanctuary, but stops near the ambo. While the Bishop goes from the western doors to the sanctuary altar, venerates the local icons and goes into the sanctuary, the subdeacons sing the troparion for the temple saint or for the feast; then - the deacon but if he is not present, then the priest, exclaims the shortened fervent ektenia - that which is placed in the daily matins before the Six Psalms, the priest does the exclamation and the dismissal; finally, if the Hierarch demands, the deacon or the priest exclaim the many years for the Most August Family, to the Holy Synod, the Hierarch and the flock; and after the many years, having received the cross from the Hierarch, the priest together with him enters the sanctuary

4) "The priest, having opened the holy antimimension on the throne [altar], places the Holy Gifts and Myrrh in vessels in which they are stored. After this as the Bishop examines the Holy Gifts and Myrrh, the priest puts them in its place and folds the antimimension".

5) "If the Bishop visits church during matins or vespers, the services do not stop".

6) "After the Bishop's exit from the church the bell rings again". [Besides this, for the time of the visit of the church by the diocesan Bishop, each parish priest has to prepare all church documents, to gather all of them and place them in the vestry or sanctuary in a visible place, so that it will be possible to present them for the Hierarch's consideration, according to his first requirement; and finally, in some dioceses, together with church documents, parish priests are obligated to present to the Hierarch a report on his pastoral activity for the last year, and all the sermons and lectures of the priest, delivered by him in the parish church throughout the financial year]. (Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News] 1890, 25)

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1270-1271.
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