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The services of the Church, its liturgy and liturgies (whether that be the Divine Liturgy, Vespers, Matins, etc.), exist on at least two different levels. The first, lower level involves a certain amount of complexity. There is a structure to the services and within that structure there are numerous hymns, readings, movements, actions, etc. Most of this complexity occupies the clergy, the servers, the readers, and the choir. Of course, the better they know and are prepared for the services the less they have to think about it and, thus, the less they perceive that complexity. We might think of this as the material level of the liturgy, or perhaps the body. And like the body it has many parts that, when functioning properly, work together smoothly and fluidly, even given all of its complexity.

There is another level to the liturgy as well, though: a higher level. We might call this the heart, or the spiritual level of the liturgy. Here we rise up through the complexity of the services to the simplicity of true spiritual worship. Here we do not perceive the liturgy as many and multiple parts but as one single experience of the Kingdom of God. Or, to be still more direct, we simply experience God, the blessed Trinity, at one with all the angels and saints.

And yet, as ideal as that sounds, many or most of us find entering that higher level of the Liturgy difficult. Our minds wander constantly, flitting about the Temple, straying off to the week behind or the week ahead of us like a restless child bored with his toys. At best we are stuck in the first level and approach the liturgy as a complex set of words and symbols, while at worst we are not present in any way other than physically.

In chapter 10 of his gospel, St Luke records a visit by our Lord to the home of His friends, Martha and Mary (Luke doesn't mention Lazarus). Christ took this occasion, as He often did, to teach the disciples who had gathered around Him. Martha served her guests, but Mary, her sister, sat at Jesus' feet along with the other disciples. When Martha complained to Jesus about this injustice He replied to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42, NKJV)

For the sake of our discussion about complexity and simplicity in worship, I want to draw our attention to just two words in our Lord's gentle rebuke of Martha: "many" and "one". Martha is troubled about many things; in other words, she is lost in the complexity of her service to the Lord and His disciples. As a result of that she is troubled, worried, and frustrated. Mary, on the other hand, has chosen as her service to the Lord what Christ calls "the good part", the "one thing." At its root the term "simple" means "one", or "single". So, whereas Martha is lost in complexity, Mary has found rest in simplicity, the "one thing" needed.

For all of the complexity of the services of the Orthodox Church, it is essential for us to strive to rise with Mary to the next level, to the simplicity of the "one thing" needed. We cannot do this if our minds are constantly wandering around through space and time while our bodies are standing in church. We cannot even do it if our minds are occupied with the complexity of the lower level of the liturgy, for here we will still be experiencing the liturgy outside of our

heart. We can only do it if we focus on the one thing needed and enter into our heart, sitting at the feet of Jesus.

One way of looking at these two levels of the liturgy might be to see the clergy, servers, readers, and singers as Martha, allowing the rest of us to be Mary. They willingly take on the liturgical complexity so that most of us can be free to experience the simplicity. (But, as I said earlier, the better the clergy and others know their work the more they, too, will be free to enter into Mary's simplicity.)

When all is said and done, however, the best preparation for rising up to the higher level, to the liturgy of the heart, is simply learning how to pray. The prayer we learn at home, before our icons, in our prayer corner or closet, translates directly to the Temple and the liturgy of the Church. And without it little else will help us. We will end up, at best, lost in the complexity of the services, trying our best to keep our minds engaged in what is going on in church, and hoping that we at least get a grade for effort. But God wants more than our effort. "My son," He says, "give me your heart." (Prov. 23.26 LXX)