

Worship in the Age of Christendom

The Development of Christian Liturgy in the Wake of the Western Empire



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St. John's Church, Charlotte, Michigan

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12:00-2:30

Worship and Lunch Included

I: Convergence of Faith and Liturgy: The Unity of Diversity

In this section, we continue explore the impact that Constantine's Royal Imprimatur had on the norms and practices of Christian Worship, and on the larger structures and functions of the Church. Of special interest here is processes of gathering and incorporation of myriad religious customs and theological emphases from centers of worship throughout the Empire into increasingly common and complex forms. The development of the elaborate "Cathedral Liturgies" of the principal churches of the Empire's metropolitan centers is also considered. Special attention is given to the Easter liturgy and to the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist more generally, as well as the continuing evolution of the Church Calendar.

II: White Martyrdom and the Roots of the Monastic Vocation

As the great metropolitan centers of worship were constructed and filled with ever greater numbers of new Congregants, small but growing numbers of the Faithful struggled to redefine the life of Sacrifice in Christ's Blood in an age where bloody or "red" martyrdom was largely a thing of the past. And so, following in the footsteps of the Desert Fathers and the Essenes before them, Christian Contemplatives headed to quieter confines to practice their faith away from the the distractions of the noisy cities, their larger churches, and the questionable converts who filled them.

III: Sacrament and Spirit in the Medieval Church

Contrary to the gloomy stagnation of so many popular images of Medieval Christendom, aside from relatively brief periods following the fall of the Western Empire, the Church in the Middle Ages was a lively and dynamic place, where liturgical practices developed, progressed, and flourished throughout the Continent, as the Barbarian societies north of the Alps were brought ever more into the Life of Christ. In this section, we encounter what would be the evolution of the Sacramental Life of the Church as we now know it in the West, as we conclude with the dawn of the Gothic Age.