

# Why?/Why:

by Fr Denny Molitvy

**In going through sheltering-in-place and regulations restricting our attendance at church is it necessary to mention we've missed Liturgy in confession?**

**Y**our question may seem to some as almost unusual. Others may see it as a sincere attempt to come to grips with the current situation.

The question may have arisen in others, too, and you may have caused someone to seriously look upon the issue in their own life.

Realizing the need for an examination of conscience before approaching the Mystery of Repentance, we must take advantage of a habit many have formed over the years: a daily review of the thoughts and actions that comprised each day's course

Our catechism, *Christ—Our Pascha*, emphasizes the need to contemplate all our actions through God's eyes—seeing things in truth, as they really are.

This may help you realize that the inability to attend public worship is not your fault, espe-

cially in light of the *de facto* imposition on a quarantine by authorities.

Quarantine is done for public safety. It keeps you sequestered and separated from places where a known danger to health exists, and isolates contagion to keep the un-infected away.

For these reasons, it seems unnecessary to mention that you have not attended the Church services—even for a protracted time. But, if you need to ease your conscience, ask the confessor for clarification or advice..

Additionally, the hierarchy of our Church has issued a "dispensation" from attending public services as long as mandated restrictions on public gatherings (often in terms of "maximum attendees allowed" limits are in place.

It is an oversimplification to think "keeping the day holy" is mere attendance at a Church service. Did you seek a liturgy on the Internet?

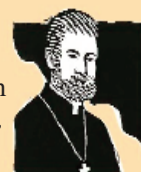
It is quite possible for a person to have been in the church building, even singing along with the others, and fail to sanctify the day!

How?

Look at the other Commandments, and weigh how they were kept. Perhaps your mind wandered and was not directed to God. Did some physical or financial "thing" take the place of God—to become a god itself? Did you use God's name unwisely? Gossip? Speak untruths? Envy someone? Hurt another (physically, verbally, emotionally, morally?) etc.

Consider this under "keeping the day holy".

Send your questions to  
Fr DennyMolitvy:  
[newstarwhywhy@aol.com](mailto:newstarwhywhy@aol.com)  
include your name and parish,  
which will not be published.



## GOD VS. GODS

**E**ach time we say the Creed, we profess our faith in one God. We wouldn't have to do this if we always believed in one God. Christians, for most of their history, even until today, are in a world where people believe in the one God; or their god; or their gods. This is not new. In Ukraine, at the time of Volodymyr, the country was pagan. The Grand Duke knew that paganism was not suitable for his people. So, he sent out representatives to find the best religion for the people of Kyivan-Rus. He decided that the God of Christianity as found in Constantinople was the best for his people. With that, he tried to root out pagan worship. This was never successfully done in Ukraine. In the United States, we have religions that believe in other or many gods. Paganism is still in existence. Here in the United States, Wicca is prevalent.

When we say in the Creed, there is only one God, we mean there is *only one God*. Our God is the only God. There are no other gods. This belief is called monotheism. It took many centuries for at least one section of humanity to believe in the existence of only one God. That section is the Judeo-Christian Tradition. This Tradition was not always monotheistic. Abraham's family worshipped the God of Abraham and other gods at the same time. The one

person who was identified with the establishment of monotheism is Moses. (Of Ten Commandment fame.)

When Moses first encountered God in the Burning Bush, he needed to know the name of his God. God had identified Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This meant that this God was the God of Moses' ancestors, the Jews. Being familiar with the myriad of Egyptian gods, he wanted to know a name.

God told him the divine name was Yahweh, meaning "I am." This name has many different interpretations. It can be "I am who I am," which means "all that I am, I am". Just a statement of fact: "I exist". It can also be seen as a creative word, "I create." It also can be a future word, as said in the book of Genesis; "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious" or even in terms of being future "I will be." In Exodus, God says to Moses "I will be with you, and again I will be with your mouth, still I will be your God". It can also be understood in terms of being eternal, not only in the future but in the past as well. As commonly explained today, as "always being" or "without beginning or end".

This concept would have been difficult for Moses to understand, growing up amid Egyptian religions. where the gods were cyclical, being born and dying, and being born again.



Moses had to present this God to the Israelites who were in slavery in Egypt. The slaves were not interested in a philosophical understanding of divinity; instead, they wanted a God who would free them from slavery. They needed to know that their God was the true God, and the Egyptian gods were false. Moses stood at the center of a battle between the one true God and all of these false rivals. Our God took on all the Egyptian gods.

Our God is the creator, and is all-powerful. He has shown His power of creation to Noah with the Flood; to Abraham with Sodom and Gemorrah. So, when Moses met Pharaoh, he presented a case of "my God is more powerful than yours". This can be seen in Pharaoh's statement, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" It was not a God with whom he was familiar and, therefore, had no power over him.

As God said then, "that He was "executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt—"I am the Lord." One by one, God would show His power to Pharaoh and all the world. It would be displayed for all to see that the God of Moses was greater than all of their gods, who had no power over nature's goodness or its disasters. Plagues came.

The first plague was not just turning the River Nile into blood, (not red-colored water) and not just in the river but in water in streams, fields, and even cups. Water was the source of all life in Egypt. Not only did it provide drinking water, but as it flowed from south to north, the annual inundation of the fields provided fertile soil for food to be grown. Hapi was the god of the Nile. He was pictured as a man with a big belly and two large breasts. Fertility and life came to Egypt; his believers thought it was from him. The God of the Jews decimated the source of his power and devotion.

Frogs were the second plague. Frogs were a good thing in Egypt because they kept the insects that destroy crops under control. One of the Egyptian fertility goddesses was Heqet, who was portrayed as a woman with the head of a frog. But there can be too much of a good thing. The frogs were everywhere and got into everything. This means that Heqet could not control their multiplication, which mocked the goddess. Compounding this, since frogs were so important, it was a crime punishable by death to kill a frog. Now with so many around, it was almost impossible not to kill one, even accidentally. The goddess was seen as powerless.

The third plague was directed against a god and his priests. The god Geb was the god of the earth, and the gnats were coming out of the ground. The priests of Geb had purification rituals to perform to sacrifice to Geb. They couldn't get into the temple to ask Geb for help because they were covered in gnats.

A scarab beetle was a sign of family happiness. The fourth plague was flies, and the Egyptian god Kheper was the god of the flies. His head was that of a beetle. The scarab was so popular with the people that many had golden scarabs made for worship. This object of happiness became an object of unhappiness. It was this divine contest that brought the Pharaoh around to want to negotiate with Moses because the Pharaoh saw that the flies were not in Goshen's land, where

the Hebrews lived.

During the fifth plague, all the livestock died. Apis was the sacred bull of the god Ptah. Apis was represented by a special bull that was well-treated. As the bull flourished, all the livestock of Egypt flourished. Probably, this special bull died as well, along with the rest of the livestock, meaning that the god Ptah was defeated.

The sixth plague was an attack against three gods, Imhotep, Isis, and Sekmet. The first was the god of medicine, and since festering boils were not cured, Imhotep failed. Isis was the goddess of love, magic, maternity, and peace. Imhotep and Isis were the two most popular gods in worship because they brought health and happiness. The festering boils brought sickness and unhappiness. Sekhmet was the god of plagues and pestilence. While this god could have been responsible, his priests were doctors and veterinarians, so what the god brought the priests ended. The boils were not cured, so the worship of Sekhmet was futile.

Now it was the time for God to pull out all the stops, as He is quoted in Exodus 9:14: "for this time I will unleash all My blows upon you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like Me anywhere on earth." The seventh plague of hail was an attack against all the gods of nature. This included: Nut, the goddess of the sky; Horus, the sky god; Shu, the god of wind; Tefnut, the goddess for rain, dew, and moisture; Osiris, the god of agriculture and nature; and Seth, the harvest god. The powers of them all failed before the work of Yahweh, the God of the Burning Bush. These gods had failed. The Egyptian food supply was destroyed, and the people were impoverished. Yet their slaves in the land of Goshen lost nothing.

The top of the hierarchy of the Egyptian gods were the Sun gods.

So, the ninth plague was darkness. Aton, Ra, Tem, and Amon-Re could not restore the light to Egypt. Indeed a people left in darkness, palpable darkness.

The climax, the tenth plague, was the death of the firstborn sons. The Pharaoh was descended from the god Re. The death of the Pharaoh's firstborn was the end of the line of the Egyptian gods.

Many say that except for the tenth plague, all of them are natural events. That is true. This is not a problem because God, as the author of all creation, is just using the tools that He already

made.

The defeat of the Egyptian gods was not enough to end the dangers of polytheism (the belief in many gods) among the Jews. They, at other times, allowed statutes of the false gods in the Temple. The prophets warned against the worship of the god Baal. But as the Jews moved to monotheism through more successive signs of the power of our one true God, they did arrive at that point. As people at the time of Jesus, they were monotheists living in a polytheistic world. What was true then is true now.

*Fr Jonathan Morse*

