Your First Divine Liturgy

Before you go.

Dress modestly, as if meeting someone important who also loves you. No shorts.
Men: no hats inside. Women: skirts or trousers. Head coverings vary by parish.

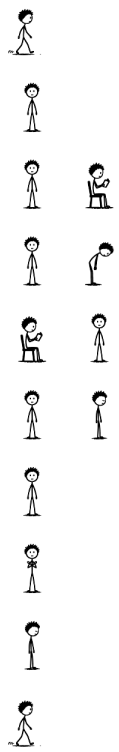
In the narthex.

Light a candle and kiss or bow to the icon by the door if you'd like.
It's optional for visitors. Then go in, find a spot toward the back, and stand.

During the service.

Crossing yourself is always optional for visitors. Standing when others stand is enough.

1. BEFORE LITURGY: Matins (Orthros) or the Hours may be underway; check the parish schedule and come in quietly.
2. "Blessed is the Kingdom": the Liturgy begins.
3. Hymns and litanies: "Lord, have mercy" is the people's part.
4. SMALL ENTRANCE: the Gospel book processes.
5. Epistle, Gospel, homily: stand for the Gospel if you can. For the Epistle and sermon, follow local practice; sit when needed. The homily may come later.
6. GREAT ENTRANCE: bread and wine carried in, not yet consecrated.
7. The Creed: "I believe..." said or sung by everyone.
8. COMMUNION: prepared Orthodox come forward, arms crossed; visitors stay in place and pray.
9. Blessing and dismissal: "We have beheld the true Light."
10. Kiss the cross, take the blessed bread, coffee hour.



Communion.

For Orthodox Christians who have prepared. Visitors are welcome at everything else.
Visitors stay where they are. Standing quietly and praying along is exactly right.

After.

Line up to kiss the cross and take the blessed bread (antidoron). It isn't Communion.
Usually offered to visitors too. Then coffee hour—go! "Are you visiting?" is meant kindly.

Nobody expects you to know any of this.

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