Preface
Some elders once visited Abba Anthony, and Abba Joseph was with them. The elder mentioned a verse from Scripture, wishing to put them to the test. He began to ask, starting with the least of them, what this verse was about and each one began to speak according to his own ability. But the elder said to each one: “You have not discovered it yet.” Last of all he said to Abba Joseph: “You then, what do you say this phrase is about?” “I do not know,” he replied-so Abba Anthony said: ”Because he said, ‘I do not know,’ Abba Joseph has indeed discovered the way.”

During the last years of his life, the late Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko was fond of carrying with him a copy of The Arena, by Saint Ignatius - Brianchaninov, and a print-out of the thirty-eight sayings of Saint Anthony the Great from the Alphabetical Sayings of the Desert Fathers, from which the above quotation is taken. Being himself deeply rooted in the rich scriptural, patristic, and historical soil of the Orthodox faith, Father Tom saw both texts as fundamental to the Christian life. He knew through his own experience what Saint Anthony was trying to convey to the elders that came to see him: that knowledge of God is best attained, not through study and discourse-though these have their place-but through the experience of living in Christ, which requires great humility and great love.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the series The Orthodox Faith, one of the earliest publications written by Father Tom, the first volume of which came out in 1971. This deceptively labeled “elementary handbook” on the Orthodox Church has been used by thousands, from casual enquirers to catechumens to lifelong Church members, as both a catechesis and basic reference tool on Orthodox Christianity.

Yet the series has always been more than a simple set of reference manuals, precisely because it is the fruit of the living faith and understanding of tradition of its author, which give the work its sense of immediacy and zeal. Over forty-five years after their first appearance, these volumes continue to fulfill a dual purpose. First, they provide a rich base of introductory information on many aspects of Orthodoxy: Church doctrine and its development, Holy Scripture, liturgical practices, the spiritual life, etc. But, beyond this, through the rousing voice of Father Tom, they remind us that our
life in the Church-in Christ-means more than a vain repetition of ritual by a
group of individuals.

Writing about the Liturgy, Father Tom writes:

The Divine Liturgy is not an act of personal piety. It is not a prayer
service. It is not merely one of the sacraments. The Divine Liturgy is the one
common sacrament of the very being of the Church itself. It is the one
sacramental manifestation of the essence of the Church as the Community of
God in heaven and on earth. It is the one unique sacramental revelation of the
Church as the mystical Body and Bride of Christ.

And so, it is more than fitting that these books be given an update in
design and content after so many years of faithful service. Father Tom had
plans to revise and update all four volumes of this series. But alas, with his
final illness and death in марта, 2015, this was not to be.

Significantly, however, Father Tom, working together with Dr. David Ford
of Saint Tikhon’s Seminary, was able to complete one important piece of that
plan, namely, a fully re-worked Church history volume. The revised and
expanded Volume 3: Church History of this series contains the fruit of that
labor, containing greatly enhanced coverage of major events in the history of
the Church, from the Church’s birth at Pentecost through the arrival of
Orthodoxy to the Americas in the eighteenth century and into the early twenty-
first. This new edition of Church History also includes theological and
historical developments occurring in the West during the same periods.

Of course, in today’s digital era, there are more considerations to take
account of when updating content. These volumes will also be available for
download in digital formats. Additionally, in an effort to provide more
interactivity and the possibility for continual updates, the Department of
Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America has created a section
on the OCA’s website offering discussion questions and points for reflection.
To view and download these resources as they become available, please visit:
oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith.

My hope is that these volumes will continue to inspire those who have
made use of them over the years and will serve as an introduction to the
Orthodox Faith for a new generation of seekers and learners who are willing to
enter into the experience of God by following the example provided by
Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko and his words.

†Tikhon Archbishop of Washington Metropolitan of All America and
Canada
Volume I – Doctrine and Scripture
Sources of Christian Doctrine
Revelation

Every morning at its Matins Service the Orthodox Church proclaims: “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself unto us; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Ps 118:26–27). The first foundation of Christian doctrine is found in this biblical line: God has revealed Himself to us.

God has shown Himself to His creatures. He has not disclosed His very innermost being, for this innermost essence of God cannot be grasped by creatures. But God has truly shown what men can see and understand of His divine nature and will.

The fullness and perfection of God’s self-revelation is found in His Son Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the gradual and partial revelation of God in the Old Testament. Jesus is the one truly “blessed .?.?. Who comes in the name of the Lord.”

The first title given to Jesus by the people is that of Rabbi, which literally means teacher. In the English New Testament the word Master also issued in relation to Jesus in the sense of one who teaches, such as a schoolmaster or holder of a master’s degree. Jesus’ followers are also called disciples, which literally means students or pupils.

Jesus came to men first of all as the Teacher sent from God. He teaches the will of God and makes God known to men. He reveals fully-as fully as men can grasp-the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

The coming of Jesus as teacher is one aspect of his being Christ the Messiah. The word Christ in Greek is the word for the Hebrew Messiah which means the Anointed of God. For when the messiah would come, it was foretold, men would be “taught by God” (Is 54:13, Jn 6:45).

Jesus comes to men as the divine teacher. He claimed on many occasions that his words were those of God. He spoke as ‘one having authority’ not like the normal Jewish teachers (Mt 7:29). And he accused those who rejected his teachings as rejecting God Himself.

He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees Him who sent me. I have come as light into the world .?.?. for I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to speak. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me (Jn?12.44–50).

Jesus taught men not only by his words, but also by his actions; and indeed by his very own person. He referred to himself as the Truth (Jn 14.6) and as the Light (Jn 8.12). He showed himself not merely to be speaking God’s words, but
to be himself the Living Word of God in human flesh, the Logos who is eternal and uncreated, but who has become man as Jesus of Nazareth in order to make God known to the world.

In the beginning was the Word [Logos] and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten Son from the Father.

And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law came through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

(See Jn 1.1–18; the Easter Liturgy Gospel Reading in the Orthodox Church.)

Jesus, the divine Word of God in human flesh, comes to teach men by his presence, his words and his deeds. His disciples are sent into the world to proclaim Him and His Gospel, which means literally the “glad tidings” or the “good news” of the Kingdom of God. Those whom Jesus sends are called the apostles, which means literally “those who are sent.” The apostles are directly inspired by God’s Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (Jn 15.26), to “make disciples of all nations” teaching them what Christ has commanded (Mt 28.19).

The early Church, we are told, “devoted themselves to the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2.42). Doctrine as a word simply means teaching or instruction. The apostles’ doctrine is the doctrine of Jesus and becomes the doctrine of the Christian Church. It is received by the disciples of every age and generation as the very doctrine of God. It is proclaimed everywhere and always as the doctrine of eternal life through which all men and the whole world are enlightened and saved.

At this point it must be mentioned that although God’s self-revelation in history through the chosen people of Israel—the revelation which culminates in the coming of Christ the Messiah—is of primary importance, it is also the doctrine of the Christian Church that all genuine strivings of men after the truth are fulfilled in Christ. Every genuine insight into the meaning of life finds its perfection in the Christian Gospel. Thus, the holy fathers of the Church taught
that the yearnings of pagan religions and the wisdom of many philosophers are also capable of serving to prepare men for the doctrines of Jesus and are indeed valid and genuine ways to the one Truth of God.

In this way Christians considered certain Greek philosophers to have been enlightened by God to serve the cause of Truth and to lead men to fullness of life in God since the Word and Wisdom of God is revealed to all men and is found in all men who in the purity of their minds and hearts have been inspired by the Divine Light, which enlightens every man who comes into this world. This Divine Light is the word of God, Jesus of Nazareth in human flesh, the perfection and fullness of God’s self-revelation to the world.

It cannot be overstressed that divine revelation in the Old Testament, in the Church of the New Testament, in the lives of the saints, in the wisdom of the fathers, in the beauty of creation and most fully and perfectly in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the revelation of God Himself. God has spoken. God has acted. God has manifested Himself and continues to manifest Himself in the lives of His people.

If we want to hear God’s voice and see God’s actions of self-revelation in the world, we must purify our minds and hearts from everything that is wicked and false. We must strive to love the truth, to love one another, and to love everything in God’s good creation. According to the Orthodox faith, purification from falsehood and sin is the way to the knowledge of God. If we open ourselves to divine grace and purify ourselves from all evils, then it is certain that we will be able to interpret the scriptures properly and come into living communion with the true and living God who has revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself to those who love Him.
Tradition

The ongoing life of God’s People is called Holy Tradition. The Holy Tradition of the Old Testament is expressed in the Old Testamental part of the Bible and in the ongoing life of the People of Israel until the birth of Christ. This tradition is fulfilled, completed and transcended in the time of the Messiah and in the Christian Church.

The New Testamental or Christian Tradition is also called the apostolic tradition and the tradition of the Church. The central written part of this tradition is the New Testamental writings in the Bible. The gospels and the other writings of the apostolic church form the heart of the Christian tradition and are the main written source and inspiration of all that developed in later ages.

This Christian tradition is given over from people to people, through space and time. Tradition as a word means exactly this: it is that which is “passed on” and “given over” from one to another. Holy Tradition is, therefore, that which is passed on and given over within the Church from the time of Christ’s apostles right down to the present day.

Although containing many written documents, Holy Tradition is not at all limited to what is written; it is not merely a body of literature. It is, on the contrary, the total life and experience of the entire Church transferred from place to place and from generation to generation. Tradition is the very life of the Church itself as it is inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Not everything in the Church belongs to its Holy Tradition for not everything in the Church is done by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and not everything in the Church pertains essentially and necessarily to the Kingdom Of God. Some things in the Church are just temporal and temporary things, merely human customs and traditions of no eternal and everlasting value. Such things in themselves are not sinful or wrong. On the contrary, they may be very positive and very helpful to the life of the Church as long as they are not taken to be what they are not. Thus, it is very important in the Church to make the distinction between traditions which are merely earthly and human and passing away and the genuine Holy Tradition which pertains to the heavenly and eternal Kingdom of God.

It is also important to recognize that there are also things in the Church which not only do not belong to Holy Tradition, but which are not even to be counted among its positive human traditions. These things which are just sinful and wrong are brought into the life of the Church from the evil world. The
Church in its human form, as an earthly institution, is not immune to the sins of its unholy members. These deviations and errors which creep into the life of the Church stand under the judgment and condemnation of the authentic and genuine Holy Tradition which comes from God.

Among the elements which make up the Holy Tradition of the Church, the Bible holds the first place. Next comes the Church’s liturgical life and its prayer, then its dogmatic decisions and the acts of its approved churchly councils, the writings of the church fathers, the lives of the saints, the canon laws, and finally the iconographic tradition together with the other inspired forms of creative artistic expression such as music and architecture. All of the elements of Holy Tradition are organically linked together in real life. None of them stands alone. None may be separated or isolated from the other or from the wholeness of the life of the Church. All come alive in the actual living of the life of the Church in every age and generation, in every time and place. As the Church continues to live by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Tradition of the Church will continue to grow and develop. This process will go on until the establishment of the Kingdom of God at the end of the ages.
The written record of God’s revelation is the Bible, which means the book, or the books. The Bible is also called the Holy Scriptures. Scripture as a word simply means writings.

The Bible was written over thousands of years by many different people. It is divided into two testaments or covenants. These words signify agreements, pacts, or we might say, ‘deals.’ The two basic covenants are the old and the new; each has its own scriptures. As a book, the Bible contains many different kinds of writings: law, prophecy, history, poetry, stories, aphorisms, prayers, letters and symbolical visions.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament scripture begins with the five books of the Law called the Pentateuch, which means the five books; also called the Torah, which means the Law. Sometimes these books are also called the Books of Moses since they are centered on the exodus and the Mosaic laws.

In the Old Testament there are also books of the history of Israel; books called the Wisdom books such as the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Book of Job; and books of the prophecies which carry the names of the Old Testament prophets. A prophet is one who speaks the Word of God by direct divine inspiration. Only secondarily does the word prophet mean one who foretells the future.

The Orthodox Church also numbers among the genuine books of the Old Testament the so-called apocryphal books, meaning literally the secret or hidden writings. Other Christians put these books in a secondary place or reject completely their being of divine inspiration.

The New Testament

The center of the New Testament part of the Bible is the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who are called the four evangelists, which means those who wrote the gospels. Gospel in Greek is evangelion which means the “glad tidings” or the “good news.”

In the New Testament scripture there is also the book of the Acts of the Apostles, written by Saint Luke. There are fourteen letters called the epistles (which simply means letters) of the Apostle Paul, though perhaps some, such as the Letter to the Hebrews, were not written directly by him. Three letters are also ascribed to the apostle John; two to the apostle Peter; and one each to the apostles James and Jude. Finally there is the Book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse, which is ascribed to Saint John as well.
For the Orthodox, the Bible is the main written source of divine doctrine since God Himself inspired its writing by His Holy Spirit (see 2Tim 3.16 and 2Pet 1.20). This is the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible, namely that men inspired by God wrote the words which are truly their own human words—all words are human!—but which nevertheless may be called all together the Word of God. Thus, the Bible is the Word of God in written form because it contains not merely the thoughts and experiences of men, but the very self-revelation of God.

The center of the Bible as the written Word of God in human form is the person of the Living Word of God in human form, Jesus Christ. All parts of the Bible are interpreted in the Orthodox Church in the light of Christ since everything in the Bible leads up to Christ and speaks about Him (Lk 24.44). This fact is symbolized in the Orthodox Church by the fact that only the book of the four gospels is enthroned on the altars of our churches and not the entire Bible. This is so because everything in the Bible is fulfilled in Christ.
The Liturgy

When the Church, which means literally the gathering or assembly of people who are called together to perform a specific task, assembles as God’s People to worship, this gathering is called the liturgy of the Church. As a word, liturgy means the common work or action of a particular group of people for the sake of all. Thus the divine liturgy of the Christian Church means the common work of God done by the people of God.

The liturgy of the Old Testament people was the official worship in the temple of Jerusalem according to the Mosaic Law, as well as the annual feasts and fasts and the private prayers and services held by the Israelites at home or in the synagogues. Synagogues by definition are houses of gathering; they are not temples since, according to the Law, there was just the one temple in Jerusalem where the priestly worship was conducted. In the synagogues the Israelites gathered for prayer and scriptural study, preaching, and contemplation of the Word of God.

In the New Testament Church the liturgy is centered in the person of Christ and is primarily a “christening” of the Old Testament liturgical life. The Christian Church retains the liturgical life of the Old Testament in a new and eternal perspective. Thus, the prayers of the Old Testament, the scriptures and the psalms, are read and sung in the light of Christ. The sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ replaces the Old Testament sacrifices in the temple. And the Lord’s Day, Sunday, replaces the old Jewish sabbath which is Saturday.

The Jewish feasts also take on new meaning in the Christian Church, with the central feast of Passover, for example, becoming the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection; and the feast of Pentecost becoming the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which fulfills the Old Testamental Law. The Christian liturgical year is also patterned after the Old Testamental prototype.

From the basic foundation of the Old Testament liturgy, the Church developed its own sacramental life with baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, chrismation, holy communion, marriage, repentance, healing, and the Churchly ministry and priesthood taking on specifically Christian forms and meaning. In addition, a great wealth of specifically Christian prayers, hymns, and blessings were developed, together with specifically Christian feasts and celebrations in remembrance of New Testamental events and saints.

The living experience of the Christian sacramental and liturgical life is a primary source of Christian doctrine. In the liturgy of the Church, the Bible and the Holy Tradition come alive and are given to the living experience of the
Christian people. Thus, through prayer and sacramental worship, men are “taught by God” as it was predicted for the messianic age (Jn 6.45).

In addition to the living experience of the liturgy, the texts of the services and sacraments provide a written source of doctrine in that they may be studied and contemplated by one who desires an understanding of Christian teachings. According to the common opinion of the Orthodox Church, the sacramental and liturgical texts—the hymns, blessings, prayers, symbols, and rituals—contain no formal errors or deformations of the Christian faith and can be trusted absolutely to reveal the genuine doctrine of the Orthodox Church. It may well be that some of the historical information contained in church feasts is inaccurate or merely symbolical, but there is no question in the Church that the doctrinal and spiritual meaning of all of the feasts is genuine and authentic and provides true experience and knowledge of God.
The Councils

As the Church progressed through history it was faced with many difficult decisions. The Church always settled difficulties and made decisions by reaching a consensus of opinion among all the believers inspired by God who were led by their appointed leaders, first the apostles and then the bishops.

The first church council in history was held in the apostolic church to decide the conditions under which the gentiles, that is, the non-Jews, could enter the Christian Church (see Acts 15). From that time on, all through history councils were held on every level of church life to make important decisions. Bishops met regularly with their priests, also called presbyters or elders, and people. It became the practice, and even the law, very early in church history that bishops in given regions should meet in councils held on a regular basis.

At times in church history, councils of all of the bishops in the church were called. All the bishops were not able to attend these councils, of course, and not all such councils were automatically approved and accepted by the Church in its Holy Tradition. In the Orthodox Church only seven such councils, some of which were actually quite small in terms of the number of bishops attending, have received the universal approval of the entire Church in all times and places. These councils have been termed the Seven Ecumenical Councils (see table below).

The dogmatic definitions (dogma means official teaching) and the canon laws of the ecumenical councils are understood to be inspired by God and to be expressive of His will for men. Thus, they are essential sources of Orthodox Christian doctrine.

Besides the seven ecumenical councils, there are other local church councils whose decisions have also received the approval of all Orthodox Churches in the world, and so are considered to be genuine expressions of the Orthodox faith and life. The decisions of these councils are mostly of a moral or structural character. Nevertheless, they too reveal the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils

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<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nicea 1</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>Formulated the First Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Son of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantinople I</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>Formulated the Second Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit</td>
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Ephesus 431 Defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary as Theotokos

Chalcedon 451 Defined Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man in One Person

Constantinople II 553 Reconfirmed the Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ

Constantinople III 680 Affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus by insisting upon the reality of His human will and action

Nicea II 787 Affirmed the propriety of icons as genuine expressions of the Christian Faith
The Fathers

There are in the Church a number of saints who were theologians and spiritual teachers who defended and explained the doctrines of the Christian Faith. These saints are called the holy fathers of the Church and their teachings are called the patristic teachings (patristic is from the Greek word for father).

Some of the holy fathers are called apologists because they defended the Christian teachings against those outside the Church who ridiculed the faith. Their writings are called apologies which means “answers” or “defenses.”

Others of the holy fathers defended the Christian faith against certain members of the Church who deformed the truth and life of Christianity by choosing certain parts of the Christian revelation and doctrine while denying other aspects. Those who deformed the Christian faith in this way and thereby destroyed the integrity of the Christian Church are called the heretics, and their doctrines are called heresies. By definition heresy means “choice,” and a heretic is one who chooses what he wants according to his own ideas and opinions, selecting certain parts of the Christian Tradition while rejecting others. By his actions, a heretic not only destroys the fullness of the Christian truth but also divides the life of the Church and causes division in the community.

Generally speaking, the Orthodox tradition regards the teachers of heresies as not merely being mistaken or ignorant or misguided; it accuses them of being actively aware of their actions and therefore sinful. A person merely misguided or mistaken or teaching what he believes to be the truth without being challenged or opposed as to his possible errors is not considered to be a heretic in the true sense of the word. Many of the saints and even the holy fathers have elements in their teachings which Christians of later times have considered as being false or inaccurate. This, of course, does not make them heretics.

Not all of the holy fathers were defenders against falsehood or heresy. Some of them were simply the very positive teachers of the Christian faith, developing and explaining its meaning in a deeper and fuller way. Others were teachers of the spiritual life, giving instruction to the faithful about the meaning and method of communion with God through prayer and Christian living. Those teachers who concentrated on the struggle of spiritual life are called the ascetical fathers, asceticism being the exercise and training of the “spiritual athletes”; and those who concentrated on the way of spiritual communion with God are called the mystical fathers, mysticism being defined
as the genuine, experiential union with the Divine.

All of the holy fathers, whether they are classified as theological, pastoral, ascetical or mystical gave their teachings from the sources of their own living Christian experience. They defended and described and explained the theological doctrines and ways of spiritual life from their own living knowledge of these realities. They blended together the brilliance of the intellect with the purity of the soul and the righteousness of life. This is what makes them the holy fathers of the Church.

The writings of the Church Fathers are not infallible, and it has even been said that in any given one of them some things could be found which could be questioned in the light of the fullness of the Tradition of the Church. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the writings of the Fathers which are built upon the biblical and liturgical foundations of Christian faith and life have great authority within the Orthodox Church and are primary sources for the discovery of the Church’s doctrine.

The writings of some of those fathers who have received the universal approval and praise of the Church through the ages are of particular importance, such as those of Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Photius of Constantinople, and Gregory Palamas; and those of the ascetical and spiritual fathers such as Anthony of Egypt, Macarius of Egypt, John of the Ladder, Isaac of Syria, Ephraim of Syria, Simeon the New Theologian, and others.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to read the writings of the fathers of the Church since their problems were often complicated and their manner of writing very different in style from our own. Also most of the spiritual and ascetical writings are put in the monastic setting and have to be transposed in order to be understandable and usable to those of us who are not monks or nuns. Nevertheless, it is important to read the writings of the fathers directly. One should do so slowly, a little at a time, with careful thought and consideration and without making quick and capricious conclusions. the same way that one would read the Bible. Among the church fathers, Saint John Chrysostom’s writings are very clear and direct and can be read by many with great profit if the proper care is given. Also the Philokalia-an anthology of spiritual writings-exists in English, at least in part, and with proper care, it can be helpful to a mature Christian in search of deeper insights into the spiritual life.
The Saints

The doctrine of the Church comes alive in the lives of the true believers, the saints. The saints are those who literally share the holiness of God. “Be holy, for I your God am holy” (Lev 11:44; 1Pet 1:16). The lives of the saints bear witness to the authenticity and truth of the Christian gospel, the sure gift of God’s holiness to men.

In the Church there are different classifications of saints. In addition to the holy fathers who are quite specifically glorified for their teaching, there are a number of classifications of the various types of holy people according to the particular aspects of their holiness.

Thus, there are the apostles who are sent to proclaim the Christian faith, the evangelists who specifically announce and even write down the gospels, the prophets who are directly inspired to speak God’s word to men. There are the confessors who suffer for the faith and the martyrs who die for it. There are the so-called “holy ones,” the saints from among the monks and nuns; and the “righteous,” those from among the lay people.

In addition, the church service books have a special title for saints from among the ordained clergy and another special title for the holy rulers and statesmen. Also there is the strange classification of the fools for Christ’s sake. These are they who through their total disregard for the things that people consider so necessary—clothes, food, money, houses, security, public reputation, etc.—have been able to witness without compromise to the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. They take their name from the sentence of the Apostle Paul: “We are fools for Christ’s sake” (1Cor 4:10; 3:18).

There are volumes on lives of the saints in the Orthodox tradition. They may be used very fruitfully for the discovery of the meaning of the Christian faith and life. In these “lives” the Christian vision of God, man, and the world stands out very clearly. Because these volumes were written down in times quite different from our own, it is necessary to read them carefully to distinguish the essential points from the artificial and sometimes even fanciful embellishments which are often contained in them. In the Middle Ages, for instance, it was customary to pattern the lives of saints after literary works of previous times and even to dress up the lives of the lesser known saints after the manner of earlier saints of the same type. It also was the custom to add many elements, particularly supernatural and miraculous events of the most extraordinary sort, to confirm the true holiness of the saint, to gain strength for his spiritual goodness and truth, and to foster imitation of his virtues in the
lives of the hearers and readers. In many cases the miraculous is added to stress the ethical righteousness and innocence of the saint in the face of his detractors.

Generally speaking, it does not take much effort to distinguish the sound kernel of truth in the lives of the saints from the additions made in the spirit of piety and enthusiasm of the later periods; and the effort should be made to see the essential truth which the lives contain. Also, the fact that elements of a miraculous nature were added to the lives of saints during medieval times for the purposes of edification, entertainment, and even amusement should not lead to the conclusion that all things miraculous in the lives of the saints are invented for literary or moralizing purposes. Again, a careful reading of the lives of the saints will almost always reveal what is authentic and true in the realm of the miraculous. Also, the point has been rightly made that men can learn almost as much about the real meaning of Christianity from the legends of the saints produced within the tradition of the Church as from the authentic lives themselves.
There are canon laws of ecumenical councils, of provincial and local councils, and of individual church fathers which have been received by the entire Orthodox Church as normative for Christian doctrine and practice. As a word canon means literally rule or norm or measure of judging. In this sense the canon laws are not positive laws in the juridical sense and cannot be easily identified with laws as understood and operative in human jurisprudence.

The canons of the Church are distinguished first between those of a dogmatic or doctrinal nature and those of a practical, ethical, or structural character. They are then further distinguished between those which may be changed and altered and those which are unchangeable and may not be altered under any conditions.

The dogmatic canons are those council definitions which speak about an article of the Christian faith; for example, the nature and person of Jesus Christ. Although such canons may be explained and developed in new and different words, particularly as the Church Tradition grows and moves through time, their essential meaning remains eternal and unchanging.

Some canons of a moral and ethical character also belong to those which cannot be changed. These are the moral canons whose meaning is absolute and eternal and whose violation can in no way be justified. The canons which forbid the sale of Church sacraments are of this kind.

There are, in addition, canons of a quite practical nature which may be changed and which, in fact, have been changed in the course of the life of the Church. There are also those which may be changed but which remain in force since the Church has shown the desire to retain them. An example of the former type is the canon which requires the priests of the church to be ordained to office only after reaching thirty years of age. It might be said that although this type of canon remains normative and does set a certain ideal which theoretically may still be of value, the needs of the Church have led to its violation in actual life. The canon which requires that the bishops of the Church be unmarried is of the latter type.

It is not always clear which canons express essential marks of Christian life and which do not. There are often periods of controversy over certain canons as to their applicability in given times and conditions. These factors, however, should not lead the members of the Church to dismay or to the temptation either to enforce all canons blindly with identical force and value or to dismiss all the canons as meaningless and insignificant.
In the first place, the canons are “of the Church” and therefore cannot possibly be understood as “positive laws” in a juridical sense; secondly, the canons are certainly not exhaustive, and do not cover every possible aspect of Church faith and life; thirdly, the canons were produced for the most part in response to some particular dogmatic or moral question or deviation in the Church life and so usually bear the marks of some particular controversy in history which has conditioned not merely their particular formulation, but indeed their very existence.

Taken by themselves, the canon laws of the Church can be misleading and frustrating, and therefore superficial people will say “either enforce them all or discard them completely.” But taken as a whole within the wholeness of Orthodox life-theological, historical, canonical, and spiritual-these canons do assume their proper place and purpose and show themselves to be a rich source for discovering the living Truth of God in the Church. In viewing the canons of the Church, the key factors are Christian knowledge and wisdom, which are borne from technical study and spiritual depth. There is no other “key” to their usage; and any other way would be according to the Orthodox faith both unorthodox and unchristian.
The Orthodox Church has a rich tradition of iconography as well as other church arts: music, architecture, sculpture, needlework, poetry, etc. This artistic tradition is based on the Orthodox Christian doctrine of human creativity rooted in God’s love for man and the world in creation.

Because man is created in the image and likeness of God, and because God so loved man and the world as to create, save, and glorify them by His own coming in Christ and the Holy Spirit, the artistic expressions of man and the blessings and inspirations of God merge into a holy artistic creativity which truly expresses the deepest truths of the Christian vision of God, man, and nature.

The icon is Orthodoxy’s highest artistic achievement. It is a gospel proclamation, a doctrinal teaching, and a spiritual inspiration in colors and lines.

The traditional Orthodox icon is not a holy picture. It is not a pictorial portrayal of some Christian saint or event in a “photocopy” way. It is, on the contrary, the expression of the eternal and divine reality, significance, and purpose of the given person or event depicted. In the gracious freedom of the divine inspiration, the icon depicts its subject as at the same time both human and yet “full of God,” earthly and yet heavenly, physical and yet spiritual, “bearing the cross” and yet full of grace, light, peace, and joy.

In this way the icon expresses a deeper “realism” than that which would be shown in the simple reproduction of the physical externals of the historic person or happening. Thus, in their own unique way the various types of Orthodox icons, through their form and style and manner of depiction as well as through their actual contents and use in the Church, are an inexhaustible source of revelation of the Orthodox doctrine and faith.

Musical expression may be added to the icon as a source of discovering the Orthodox Christian worldview. Here, however, there is greater difficulty because of the loss in recent years of the liturgical and spiritual meaning of music in the Church. Just as the theological meaning of the traditional Orthodox icon is being rediscovered, so is the traditional doctrinal significance of Orthodox music. The process in the latter case, however, is much slower, much more difficult, and much less evident to the average person.

The traditional Orthodox architecture also expresses the doctrine of the Church, particularly in its emphasis on “God with us” and the complete communion of men and the world with God in Christ. The use of domed
ceilings, the shape and layout of the buildings, the placing of the icons, the use of vestments, etc., all express the teachings of the Church. The traditional Orthodox church architecture and artwork are expressions of the Orthodox Christian doctrines of creation, salvation, and eternal life.

It is a very important spiritual exercise for Christians to study the holy icons and the hymns of the Church’s liturgy. One can learn much about God and His gracious actions among men by a careful and prayerful contemplation of the artistic expressions of Church doctrine and life (see Worship).
The Symbol of Faith
The Nicene Creed should be called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed since it was formally drawn up at the first ecumenical council in Nicea (325) and at the second ecumenical council in Constantinople (381).

The word creed comes from the Latin credo which means “I believe.” In the Orthodox Church the creed is usually called The Symbol of Faith which means literally the “bringing together” and the “expression” or “confession” of the faith.

In the early Church there were many different forms of the Christian confession of faith; many different “creeds.” These creeds were always used originally in relation to baptism. Before being baptized a person had to state what he believed. The earliest Christian creed was probably the simple confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, i.e., the Messiah; and that the Christ is Lord. By publicly confessing this belief, the person could be baptized into Christ, dying and rising with Him into the New Life of the Kingdom of God in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As time passed different places had different credal statements, all professing the identical faith, yet using different forms and expressions, with different degrees of detail and emphasis. These credal forms usually became more detailed and elaborate in those areas where questions about the faith had arisen and heresies had developed.

In the fourth century a great controversy developed in Christendom about the nature of the Son of God (also called in the Scripture the Word or Logos). Some said that the Son of God is a creature like everything else made by God. Others contended that the Son of God is eternal, divine, and uncreated. Many councils met and made many statements of faith about the nature of the Son of God. The controversy raged throughout the entire Christian world.

It was the definition of the council which the Emperor Constantine called in the city of Nicea in the year 325 which was ultimately accepted by the Orthodox Church as the proper Symbol of Faith. This council is now called the first ecumenical council, and this is what it said:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and
became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

Following the controversy about the Son of God, the Divine Word, and essentially connected with it, was the dispute about the Holy Spirit. The following definition of the Council in Constantinople in 381, which has come to be known as the second ecumenical council was added to the Nicene statement:

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

This whole Symbol of Faith was ultimately adopted throughout the entire Church. It was put into the first person form “I believe” and used for the formal and official confession of faith made by a person (or his sponsor-godparent) at his baptism. It is also used as the formal statement of faith by a non-Orthodox Christian entering the communion of the Orthodox Church. In the same way the creed became part of the life of Orthodox Christians and an essential element of the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church at which each person formally and officially accepts and renews his baptism and membership in the Church. Thus, the Symbol of Faith is the only part of the liturgy (repeated in another form just before Holy Communion) which is in the first person. All other songs and prayers of the Liturgy are plural, beginning with “we”. Only the credal statement begins with “I.” This, as we shall see, is because faith is first personal, and only then corporate and communal.

To be an Orthodox Christian is to affirm the Orthodox Christian faith—not merely the words, but the essential meaning of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol of faith. It means as well to affirm all that this statement implies, and all that has been expressly developed from it and built upon it in the history of the Orthodox Church over the centuries down to the present day.
I believe…

Faith is the foundation of Christian life. It is the fundamental virtue of Abraham, the forefather of Israel and the Christian Church. “Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15.6).

Jesus begins his ministry with the same command for faith.

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15).

All through his life Jesus was calling for faith; faith in himself, faith in God his Father, faith in the Gospel, faith in the Kingdom of God. The fundamental condition of the Christian life is faith, for with faith come hope and love and every good work and every good gift and power of the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine of Christ, the apostles, and the Church.

In the Scriptures faith is classically defined as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11.1).

There are basically two aspects to faith; one might even say two meanings of faith. The first is faith “in” someone or something, faith as the recognition of these persons or things as real, true, genuine, and valuable; for example, faith in God, in Christ, in the Holy Trinity, in the Church. The second is faith in the sense of trust or reliance. In this sense, for example, one would not merely believe in God, in his existence, goodness, and truth; but one would believe God, trust his word, rely upon his presence, depend securely and with conviction upon his promises. For Christians both types of faith are necessary. One must believe in certain things with mind, heart, and soul; and then live by them in the course of everyday life.

Faith is sometimes opposed to reason, and belief to knowledge. According to Orthodoxy, faith and reason, belief and knowledge, are indeed two different things. They are two different things, however, which always belong together and which may never be opposed to each other or separated from each other.

In the first place one cannot believe anything which he does not already somehow know. A person cannot possibly believe in something he knows nothing about. Secondly, what one believes in and trusts must be reasonable. If asked to believe in the divinity of a cow, or to place one’s trust in a wooden idol, one would refuse on the basis that it is not reasonable to do so. Thus, faith must have its reasons, it must be built upon knowledge, it must never be blind. Thirdly, knowledge itself is often built upon faith. One cannot come to
knowledge through absolute skepticism. If anything is known at all, it is because there exists a certain faith in man’s knowing possibilities and a real trust that the objects of knowledge are really “showing themselves” and that the mind and the senses are not acting deceitfully. Also, in relation to almost all written words, particularly those which relate to history, the reader is called to an act of faith. He must believe that the author is telling the truth; and, therefore, he must have certain knowledge and certain reasons for giving his trust.

Very often it is only when one does give his trust and does believe something that one is able to “go further,” so to speak, and to come finally to knowledge of his own and to the understanding of things he would never have understood before. It is true to say that certain things always remain obscure and meaningless unless they are viewed in the light of faith which then provides a way of explaining and understanding their existence and meaning. Thus, for example, the phenomena of suffering and death would be understood differently by one who believes in Christ than by one who believes in some other religion or philosophy or in none at all.

Faith is always personal. Each person must believe for himself. No one can believe for another. Many people may believe and trust the same things because of a unity of their knowledge, reason, experience and convictions. There can be a community of faith and a unity of faith. But this community and unity necessarily begins and rests upon the confession of personal faith.

For this reason the Symbol of Faith in the Orthodox Church—not only at baptisms and official rituals of joining the Church, but also in common prayers and in the Divine Liturgy—always remains in the first person. If we can pray, offer, sing, praise, ask, bless, rejoice, and commend ourselves and each other to God in the Church and as the Church, it is only because each one of us can say honestly, sincerely, and with prayerful conviction: “Lord, I believe .?.?.”- adding, as one must, the words of the man in the gospel—“.?.?. help thou my unbelief” (Mk 9.24).

In order for our faith to be genuine, we must express it in everyday life. We must act according to our faith and prove it by the goodness and power of God acting in our lives. This does not mean that we “tempt God” or “put God to the test” by doing foolish and unnecessary things just for the sake of seeing if God will participate in our foolishness. But it does mean that if we live by faith in our pursuit of righteousness, we can demonstrate the fact that God will be with us, helping and guiding us in every way.

For faith to grow and become stronger, it must be used. Each person should live according to the measure of faith which he has, however small,
weak and imperfect it might be. By acting according to one’s faith, trust in God and the certitude of God’s presence is given, and with the help of God many things which were never before imagined become possible.
... One God, the Father Almighty…

The fundamental faith of the Christian Church is in the one true and living God.

“Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one God; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be placed upon your heart, and you shall teach them to your children, and you shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise .?.?.” (Deut 6.4–8).

These words from the Law of Moses are quoted by Christ as the first and greatest commandment (Mk 12.29). They follow upon the listing of the Ten Commandments which begin, “I am the Lord your God .?.?. you shall have no other gods besides me” (Deut 5.6–7).

The one Lord and God of Israel revealed to man the mystery of his name.

And Moses said “.?.?. if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

God also said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you: this is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations’” (Ex 3.13–15).

God’s name is Yahweh which means I AM WHO I AM; or I AM WHAT I AM; or I AM WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE; or simply I AM. He is the true and living God, the only God. He is faithful and true to his people. He reveals to them His divine and holy Word. He gives to them his divine and holy Spirit. He is called Adonai: the Lord; and his holy name of Yahweh is never mentioned by the people because of its awesome sacredness. Only the high priest, and only once a year, and only in the holy of holies of the Jerusalem Temple dared to utter the divine name of Yahweh. On all other occasions Yahweh is addressed as the Almighty Lord, as the Most High God, as the Lord God of Hosts.

According to the Scriptures and the experience of the saints of both the old and new testaments, Yahweh is absolutely holy. This means literally that He is absolutely different and unlike anything or anyone else that exists (Holy literally means totally separated, different, other).

According to the Biblical-Orthodox tradition, even to say that “God
exists” must be qualified by the affirmation that He is so unique and so perfect that His existence cannot be compared to any other. In this sense God is “above existence” or “above being.” Thus, there would be great reluctance according to Orthodox doctrine to say that God “is” as everything else “is” or that God is simply the “supreme being” in the same chain of “being” as everything else that is.

In this same sense the Orthodox doctrine holds that God’s unity or oneness is also not merely equivalent to the mathematical or philosophical concept of “one”; nor is his life, goodness, wisdom, and all powers and virtues ascribed to Him merely equivalent to any idea, even the greatest idea, which man can have about such reality.

However, having warned about an overly-clear or overly-positivistic concept or idea of God, the Orthodox Church-on the basis of the living experience of God in the saints-still makes the following affirmations: God may certainly be said to exist perfectly and absolutely as the one who is perfect and absolute life, goodness, truth, love, wisdom, knowledge, unity, purity, joy, simplicity; the perfection and superperfection of everything that man knows as holy, true, and good. It is this very God who is confessed formally in the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom as “.?.?. God, ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same.”

It is this God-the Yahweh of Israel-whom Jesus Christ has claimed to be His Father. God Almighty is known as “Father” through His son Jesus Christ. Jesus taught man to call the Almighty Lord God of Hosts by the title of Father. Before Jesus no one dared to pray to God with the intimate name of Father. It was Jesus who said, “Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven .?.?.”

Jesus could call God Father because He is God’s only-begotten Son. Christians can call God Father because through Christ they receive the Holy Spirit and become themselves sons of God.

For when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons [or, so that we all might be made sons]. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir [of the Kingdom of God]

(Gal 4.4–7, The Christmas Epistle Reading in the Orthodox Church)

Thus no man is naturally a son of God and no man can easily call God Father. We can only do so because of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so we say in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy:

And make us worthy, O Master, that with boldness and without
condemnation, we may dare to call upon Thee, the Heavenly God as Father and to say: Our Father, who art in heaven .?.?.

In contemplating the revelation of God our Father in the life of His people in the Old Testament and in the life of the Church in the New Testament, certain attributes and properties of God can be grasped by men. First of all, it can be clearly seen that God is Love, and that in all of His actions in and toward the world, God the Father expresses His nature as Love through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins.

So we know and believe that love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him

(1Jn 4.7–16).

?.?. God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom 5.5).

Being the God who is Love, our Father in heaven does all that He can for the life and salvation of man and the world. He does this because He is merciful and kind, longsuffering and compassionate, willing to forgive and to pardon man’s sins so that man might share in the life and love of God. These gracious attributes of God are recalled in the scriptural psalmody normally chanted at the beginning of the divine liturgy in the Church.

Bless the Lord, O my soul! And forget not all His benefits! Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases! The Lord is compassionate and merciful, long suffering and of great goodness! (Ps 103).
Creation

Maker of Heaven and Earth…

The Orthodox Church believes that God the Father is the “Creator of Heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.”

To create means to make out of nothing; to bring into existence that which before did not exist; or, to quote the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom once more: “to bring from non-existence into being.”

The Orthodox doctrine of creation is that God has brought everything and everyone which exists from non-existence into being. The Scriptural description of creation is given primarily in the first chapter of Genesis. The main doctrinal point about creation is that God alone is uncreated and ever-existing. Everything which exists besides God was created by Him. God, however, did not create everything individually and all at once, so to speak. He created the first foundations of existence, and then over periods of time (perhaps millions of years, see 2Pet 3.8) this first foundation of existence-by the power which God had given to it-brought forth the other creatures of God:

Let the earth put forth vegetation.?.?. let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures.?.?. let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds.?.?. (Gen 1.19, 20, 24)

Thus, although God is certainly the creator of everything. He acts gradually in time and by means of things previously made by Him to which He has given life-producing potencies and powers.

According to the Orthodox Faith, everything that God makes is “very good”: the heavens, the earth, the plants, the animals, and finally man himself (Gen 1.31). God is pleased with creation and has made it for no other purpose than to participate in His own divine, uncreated existence and to live by His own divine “breath of life” (Gen 1.30; 2.7).

By the Word of the Lord
the heavens were made,
and all their host by the
breath (or Spirit) of His mouth.
He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle;
He put the deeps in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the Lord,
let all the inhabitants of the world
stand in awe of Him!
For He spoke, and it came to be
He commanded, and it was made!

(\text{Ps 33.6–9})

In the above-quoted verses as well as in the account of Genesis we must notice the presence and action of God’s Word and God’s Spirit. God the Father makes all that exists by means of His Divine Word—“for He spoke and it came to be”—and by His Divine Spirit who “moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1.2). We see already a glimpse of the Holy Trinity to be fully revealed in the New Testament when the Word becomes flesh and when the Holy Spirit comes personally to the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost.

We must make special notice as well of the goodness of the created physical world. There is no dualism in Orthodox Christianity. There is no teaching that “spirit” is good and “matter” is bad, that “heaven” is good and the “earth” is evil. God loves His entire material creation with His eternal love and, as we shall see, when the physical creation is mined by sin He does everything in His power to save it.

Loving the whole of His good creation, God the Father dwells within the world that He has made because of His goodness and love for man. The omnipresence of God is one of the divine attributes of the Creator particularly stressed in Orthodox Christian teaching. This fact is directly affirmed in the prayer to the Spirit of God which is used as the opening prayer of Orthodox worship:

\begin{quote}
O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life! Come and abide in us. And cleanse us from every impurity. And save our souls, O Good One!
\end{quote}

The fact that Christians pray: Our Father who art in heaven .?.?. (or, literally, “in the heavens”) is also an affirmation of the fact that God is present everywhere, for wherever men move on the face of the earth, over the seas or in the air, the heavens surround them with the presence of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, in order to have men realize that the true God, His Father, is not bound to one or another particular place, as were the pagan gods, teaches men to pray to the Father “in the heavens.” For the one true and living God is present to all, over all, embracing and encompassing all with His heavenly care and protection. The God who is “over all” is also “through all and in all” (Eph 4.5). By His Word and His Holy Spirit, God “fills all in all” (Eph 1.10, 23).

Thus, the Apostle Paul also proclaimed to the Athenians, that whether men realize it or not, “in Him we live and move and have our being,” for “He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17.27–28). It is this fact of God’s omnipresence in His creation, and our own presence in and to Him, that is witnessed to so beautifully in Psalm 139:
Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?
If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou art there
If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, “Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night,”
even the darkness is not dark to Thee, the night is bright as the day;
for darkness is as light with Thee!
(Ps 139.7–12)
Angels and Evil Spirits

All things visible and invisible...

In addition to the visible, physical creation there is an invisible world created by God. The Bible sometimes calls it “the heavens” and other times refers to it as “above the heavens.” Whatever its symbolical description in the Holy Scriptures, the invisible world is definitely not part of the physical, material universe. It does not exist in space; it has no physical dimensions. And so it cannot be located, and it has no “place” which can be “reached” by travel within the galaxies of the spatial, locatable “places” of the physically created universe.

However, the fact that the invisible, created world is purely spiritual and is not discoverable on a map of the created material spaces makes it no less real or truly existing. The invisible creation exists as different from the created material universe and, of course, as totally different from the uncreated, absolutely super-divine existence of the uncreated God.

Invisible created reality consists of the hosts of bodiless powers, generally-and somewhat incorrectly-called the angels.

Angels

Angels (which means literally “messengers”) are, strictly speaking, but one rank of the incorporeal or bodiless powers of the invisible world.

According to Orthodox Scripture and Tradition there are nine ranks of bodiless powers or the Hosts (Sabaoth means literally “armies” or “choirs” or “ranks”). There are angels, archangels, principalities, powers, virtues, dominions, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim. The latter are described as offering continual adoration and glory to God with the incessant and ever-resounding cry of Holy! Holy! Holy! (Is 6.3; Rev 4.8). Those in the middle of the above listing are little-known to men while the angels and archangels are seen as the active workers, warriors, and messengers of Yahweh relative to this world. Thus, angels and archangels are seen to struggle against spiritual evil and to mediate between God and the world. They appear in various forms to men in both the Old and New Testaments as well as in the life of the Church. The angels are those who bring the power and presence of God and who aremessengers of His word for the salvation of the world. The best-known of the angels are Gabriel (which means literally “man of God”), the bearer of the good news of Christ’s birth (Dan 8.16; 9.21; Lk 1.19, 26), and Michael (which means literally “who is like God”), the chief warrior of the spiritual armies of God (Dan 11.13; 12.1; Jude 9; Rev 12.7).
Generally speaking the appearances of the bodiless powers to men are described in a physical way ("six-winged, many-eyed"); or in the "form of a man"). However, it must be clearly understood that these are merely symbolical descriptions. By nature and definition the angels have no bodies and no material properties of any sort. They are strictly spiritual beings.

**Evil Spirits**

In addition to the created spiritual powers who do the will of God, there are, according to the Orthodox faith, those who rebel against Him and do evil. These are the demons or devils (which means literally those who “pull apart” and destroy) who are also known both in the Old and New Testaments as well as in the lives of the saints of the Church.

Satan (which means literally the enemy or the adversary) is one proper name for the devil, the leader of the evil spirits. He is identified in the serpent symbol of Gen 3 and as the tempter of both Job and Jesus (Job 1.6; Mk 1.33). He is labelled by Christ as a deceiver and liar, the “father of lies” (Jn 8.44) and the “prince of this world” (Jn 12.31; 14.30; 16.11). He has “fallen from heaven” together with his evil angels to do battle with God and his servants (Lk 10.18; Is 14.12). It is this same Satan who “entered Judas” to effect the betrayal and destruction of Christ (Lk 22.3).

The apostles of Christ and the saints of the Church knew from direct experience Satan’s powers against man for Man’s own destruction. They knew as well Satan’s lack of power and his own ultimate destruction when man is with God, filled with the Holy Spirit of Christ. According to Orthodox doctrine there is no middle road between God and Satan. Ultimately, and at any given moment, man is either with God or the devil, serving one or the other.

The ultimate victory belongs to God and to those with Him. Satan and his hosts are finally destroyed. Without this recognition-and still more-the experience of this reality of the cosmic spiritual struggle (God and Satan, the good angels and the evil angels), one cannot truly be called an Orthodox Christian who sees and lives according to the deepest realities of life. Once again, however, it must be clearly noted that the devil is not a “red-suited gentleman” nor any other type of grossly-physical tempter. He is a subtle, intelligent spirit who acts mostly by deceit and hidden actions, having as his greatest victory man’s disbelief in his existence and power. Thus, the devil attacks “head-on” only those whom he can deceive in no other way: Jesus and the greatest of the saints. For the greatest part of his warfare he is only too satisfied to remain concealed and to act by indirect methods and means.

*Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1Pet 5.8).*
Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6.11–12).
Man

Man is God’s special creature. He is the only one “created in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26). He is created by God from the dust at the end of the process of creation (the “sixth day”) and by the special will of God. He is made to breathe “the breath of life” (Gen 2:7), to know God, to have dominion over all that God has made.

God created humans as male and female (Gen. 1:27; 2:21) in order “to be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine sexuality belongs to the creation which God calls “very good” (Gen 1:31), and in itself it is in no way sinful or perverse. It belongs to the very nature of humanity directly willed by God.

As the image of God, ruler over creation and co-creator with the Uncreated Maker, man has the task to “reflect” God in creation; to make His presence, His will and His powers spread throughout the universe; to transform all that exists into the paradise of God. In this sense man is definitely created for a destiny higher than the bodiless powers of heaven, the angels. This conviction is affirmed by Orthodox Christianity not only because of the Scriptural emphasis on man as made in God’s image to rule creation, which is not said about angels; but it is also directly affirmed because it is written of Jesus Christ, Who is truly the perfect man and the Last Adam (1Cor 15:45) that “God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10–11).

It follows from belief in Jesus that man is created for a life far superior to that of any creature, even the angels who glorify God and serve the cause of man’s salvation. It is precisely this conviction which is affirmed when the Church hails Mary the Mother of Christ as “more honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim.” For what is glorified as already accomplished in the human Mary is precisely what is expected and hoped for by all men “who hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11:28).

Thus we see the great dignity of man according to the Christian faith. We see man as the “most important” of God’s creatures, the one for whom “all things visible and invisible” have been created by God.

It is the Orthodox doctrine that one can understand and appreciate what it means to be human only in the light of the full revelation of Jesus Christ. Being the Divine Word and Son of God in human flesh, Jesus reveals the real meaning
of manhood. As the Perfect Man and the Last Adam, the “man from heaven,” Jesus gives us the proper interpretation of the story of creation given in the book of Genesis. For as the Apostle Paul has written, Adam finds his significance as “the type (or figure) of the one who was to come,” namely Jesus Christ (Rom 5.14).

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man (Christ) is from heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1Cor 15.45–49).

According to Orthodox theology, to bear the image of God is to be like Christ, the uncreated Image of God, and to share in all of the spiritual attributes of divinity. It is, in the words of the holy fathers, to become by divine grace all that God Himself is by nature. If God is a free, spiritual, personal Being, so human beings, male and female, are to be the same. If God is so powerful and creative, having dominion over all creation, so human creatures, made in His image and according to His likeness, are also to exercise dominion in the world. If God exercises dominion and authority not by tyranny and oppression, but by loving kindness and service, so are His creatures to do likewise. If God Himself is love, mercy, compassion and care in all things, so must His creatures, made to be like Him, also be the same. And finally, if God lives forever in eternal life, never dying, but always existing in perfectly joyful and harmonious beauty and happiness with all of creation, so too are human beings made for everlasting life in joyful and harmonious communion with God and the whole of creation.

According to Orthodox doctrine, human being and life is never completed and finished in its development and growth because it is made in the image and according to the likeness of God. God’s being and life are inexhaustible and boundless. As the Divine Archetype has no limits to His divinity, so the human image has no limits to its humanity, to what it can become by the grace of its Creator. Human nature, therefore, is created by God to grow and develop through participation in the nature of God for all eternity. Man is made to become ever more Godlike forever, even in the Kingdom of God at the end of this age, when Christ will come again in glory to raise the dead and give life to those who love Him.

Thus the holy fathers of the Orthodox faith taught that whatever stage of maturity and development man attains and achieves, whatever his power, wisdom, mercy, knowledge, love, there continually remains before him an
infinity of ever-greater fullness of life in the most blessed Trinity to be participated in and lived. The fact that human nature progresses eternally in perfection within the nature of God constitutes the meaning of life for man, and remains forever the source of his joy and gladness for all eternity.

It must be mentioned at this point as well that according to Orthodox Christian doctrine, the fact that humans are created male and female is the direct will of God and is essential for proper human life and activity as reflective of God. In a word, human sexuality is a necessary element in human being and life as made in the image of God. This does not mean that there is any sort of sexuality in God, but it does mean that human life must be sexual-male and female-if it will be what God Himself has made it to be.

Man and woman, male and female, are created by God to live together in a union of being, life and love. The man is to be the leader in human activities, the one reflecting Christ as the new and perfect Adam. The woman is to be man’s “helpmeet,” the “mother of all living” (Gen 2.18; 3.20). Symbolized in the relationship of Mary and the Church, the New Eve, to Christ, the New Adam, as the one who inspires man’s life and completes his being and fulfills his life, the woman is not man’s instrument or tool. She is a person in her own right, a sharer of the nature of God, a necessary complement to man. There can be no man without woman-no Adam without Eve; just as there can be no woman without man. The two exist together in perfect communion and harmony for the fulfillment of human nature and life.

The differences between men and women are real and irreducible. They are not limited to biological or physical differences. They are rather different “modes of existence” within one and the same humanity; just as, we might say, the Son and the Holy Spirit are different “modes of existence” within one and the same divinity, together with God the Father. The male and female are to be in spiritual as well as bodily union. They are to express together, in one and the same humanity, all of the virtues and powers that belong to human nature as made in the image and according to the likeness of God. There are no virtues or powers that belong to man, and not to woman; nor to woman and not to man. All are called to spiritual perfection in truth and in love, indeed in all of the divine virtues of God given to His creatures.

The hostilities and competitions between man and woman that exist in the present world are not due to their respective “modes of existence” as created by God. They are due rather to sin. There should be no tyranny of men over women; no oppression, no servitude. Just as there should be no striving of women to be men, and to hold the male position in the order of creation. There should be rather a harmony and unity within the community of being with its
natural created order and distinctions. The oneness of nature with the
distinction of various modes of being within Divinity, the Most Holy Trinity.
For in the Divinity of the Trinity itself there is a perfect unity of nature and
being, with real distinctions between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
as to how each of the Divine Persons lives and expresses the common nature of
God. There is an order in the Trinity. There is even a hierarchy if we do not
take this term to mean some difference in nature between the Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit, but merely the way in which the Divine Persons relate to one
another and to man and the world. For in the Trinity itself the Father alone is
the “source of divinity.” The Son is the expression of the Father and is
“subject” to Him. And the Holy Spirit, of one essence and fully equal with the
Father and the Son, is the “third” Person who fulfills the will of the Father and
the Son. The Three Divine Persons are perfectly equal. This is a dogma of the
Church. But they are not the same, and there is an ordered relation between
them in which there are “priorities” in being and acting which not only do not
destroy the perfection and perfect unity of the Godhead, but even allow it and
make it to be perfect and divine (see “The Holy Trinity,” below). It is the
Trinitarian Life of God which is the Divine Archetype and Pattern for the being
and acting of male and female within the order of creation.

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The word sin means literally “missing the mark.” It means the failure to be what one should be and to do what one should do.

Originally man was made to be the created image of God, to live in union with God’s divine life, and to rule over all creation. Man’s failure in this task is his sin which has also been called his fall.

The “fall” of man means that man failed in his God-given vocation. This is the meaning of Gen 3. Man was seduced by evil (the serpent) into believing that he could be “like God” by his own will and effort.

In the Orthodox tradition the eating of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” is generally interpreted as man’s actual taste of evil, his literal experience of evil as such. Sometimes, this eating is also interpreted (as by Saint Gregory the Theologian) as man’s attempt to go beyond what was possible for him; his attempt to do that which was not yet within his power to realize.

Whatever the details of the various interpretations of the Genesis story, it is the clear doctrine of Orthodoxy that man has failed in his original vocation. He disobeyed God’s command through pride, jealousy and the lack of humble gratitude to God by yielding to the temptation of Satan. Thus man sinned. He “missed the mark” of his calling. He transgressed the Law of God (see 1Jn 3.4). And so he ruined both himself and the creation which he was given to care for and to cultivate. By his sin—and his sins—man brings himself and all creation under the rule of evil and death.

In the Bible and in Orthodox theology these elements always go together: sin, evil, the devil, suffering and death. There is never one without the other, and all are the common result of man’s rebellion against God and his loss of communion with Him. This is the primary meaning of Genesis 3 and the chapters which follow until the calling of Abraham. Sin begets still more sin and even greater evil. It brings cosmic disharmony, the ultimate corruption and death of everyone and everything. Man still remains the created image of God—this cannot be changed—but he fails to keep his image pure and to retain the divine likeness. He defiles his humanity with evil, perverts it and deforms it so that it cannot be the pure reflection of God that it was meant to be. The world also remains good, indeed “very good,” but it shares the sorry consequences of its created master’s sin and suffers with him in mortal agony and corruption. Thus, through man’s sin the whole world falls under the rule of Satan and “lies in wickedness” (1Jn 5.19; see also Rom 5.12).
The Genesis story is the divinely-inspired description in symbolic terms of man’s primordial and original possibilities and failures. It reveals that man’s potency for eternal growth and development in God was turned instead into man’s multiplication and cultivation of wickedness and his transformation of creation into the devil’s princedom, a cosmic cemetery “groaning in travail” until saved once more by God (Rom 8.19–23). All the children of Adam, i.e. all who belong to the human race, share in this tragic fate. Even those born this very minute as images of God into a world essentially good are thrown immediately into a deathbound universe, ruled by the devil and filled with the wicked fruit of generations of his evil servants.

This is the fundamental message: man and the world need to be saved. God gives the promise of salvation from the very beginning, the promise which begins to be fulfilled in history in the person of Abraham, the father of Israel, the forefather of Christ.

And the Lord said .?.?. to Abram [later named Abraham] “I will make you a great nation .?.?. and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12.3; also 22.15).

Abraham believed God; and from him came the people of Israel from whom, according to the flesh, came Jesus Christ the Saviour and Lord of Creation (see Lk 1.55, 73; Rom 4; Gal 3).

The entire history of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus. All that happened to the chosen children of Abraham happened in view of the eventual and final destruction of sin and death by Christ. The covenants of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel which means “the one who struggles with God”); the twelve tribes of Israel; the story of Joseph; the passover, exodus and reception of God’s Law by Moses; the entrance into the promised land by Joshua; the founding of Jerusalem and the building of the temple by David and Solomon; the judges, kings, prophets and priests; everything in the Old Testament history of God’s chosen people finds its final purpose and meaning in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of God’s only Son Jesus the Messiah. He is the one who comes from the Father to save the people from their sins, to open their tombs and to grant eternal life to all creation.
Jesus Christ

And In One Lord Jesus Christ.?.?.
The fundamental confession of Christians about their Master is this: Jesus Christ is Lord. It begins in the gospel when Jesus himself asks his disciples who they think that He is:

But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Mt 16.16).

Jesus is the Christ. This is the first act of faith which men must make about Him. At His birth, the child of Mary is given the name Jesus, which means literally Saviour (in Hebrew Joshua, the name also of Moses’ successor who crossed the Jordan River and led the chosen people into the promised land). “You will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1.21; Lk 1.31). It is this Jesus who is the Christ, which means the Anointed, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus is the Messiah, the one promised to the world through Abraham and his children.

But who is the Messiah? This is the second question, one also asked by Christ in the gospels—this time not to his disciples, but to those who were taunting him and trying to catch him in his words. “Who is the Messiah?” he asked them, not because they could answer or really wished to know, but in order to silence them and to begin the inauguration of “the hour” for which he had come: the hour of the world’s salvation.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question saying, “What do you think of the Christ [i.e., the Messiah]? Whose Son is he?”

They said to him, “The Son of David.”

He said to them, “How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand till I put thy enemies under thy feet” (Ps 110). If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?”

And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

(Mt 22.41–46)

After Jesus’ resurrection, inspired by the same Holy Spirit who inspired David, the apostles and all members of the Church understood the meaning of his words. Jesus is the Christ. And the Christ is the Lord. This is the mystery of Jesus Christ the Messiah, namely that He is the One and Only Lord, identified with the God Yahweh of the Old Testament.
We saw already how Yahweh was always called Adonai, the Lord, by the people of Israel. In the Greek Bible the very word Yahweh was not even written. Instead, where the word Yahweh was written in Hebrew, and where the Jews said Adonai, the Lord, the Greek Bible simply wrote Kyrios—the Lord. Thus, the Son of David, which was another way of saying the Messiah, is called Kyrios, the Lord.

For the Jews, and indeed for the first Christians, the term Lord was proper to God alone: “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself unto us” (Ps 11.8). This Lord and God is Yahweh; and it is Jesus the Messiah as well. For although Jesus claims that “the Father is greater than I” (Jn 14.28), he claims as well: “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10.30).

Believing in “One Lord Jesus Christ” is the prime confession of faith for which the first Christians were willing to die. For it is the confession which claims the identity of Jesus with the Most High God.
The only-begotten Son of God.

Jesus is one with God as His only-begotten Son. This is the gospel proclamation formulated by the holy fathers of the Nicene Council in the following way:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages: Light of Light. True God of True God. Begotten not made. Of one essence with the Father. Through whom all things were made.

These lines speak about the Son of God, also called the Word or Logos of God, before his birth in human flesh from the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem.

There is but one eternal Son of God. He is called the Only-begotten, which means the only one born of God the Father. Begotten as a word simply means born or generated.

The Son of God is born from the Father “before all ages”; that is, before creation, before the commencement of time. Time has its beginning in creation. God exists before time, in an eternally timeless existence without beginning or end.

Eternity as a word does not mean endless time. It means the condition of no time at all-no past or future, just a constant present. For God there is no past or future. For God, all is now.

In the eternal “now” of God, before the creation of the world, God the Father gave birth to his only-begotten Son in what can only be termed an eternal, timeless, always presently-existing generation. This means that although the Son is “begotten of the Father” and comes forth from the Father, his coming forth is eternal. Thus, there never was a “time” when there was no Son of God. This is specifically what the heretic Arius taught. It is the doctrine formally condemned by the first ecumenical council.

Although born of the Father and having his origin in Him, the only-begotten Son always existed, or rather more accurately always “exists” as uncreated, eternal and divine. Thus, the Gospel of Saint John says:

In the beginning was the Word [the Logos-Son], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1.1).

As the eternally-born of God and always existing with the Father in the “timeless generation,” the Son is truly “Light of Light, True God of True God.” For God is Light and what is born of Him must be Light. And God is True God, and what is born of Him must be True God.
We know from the created order of things that what is born must be essentially the same as what gives birth. If one comes from the very being of another, one must be the very same thing. He cannot be essentially different. Thus, men give birth to men, and birds to birds, fish to fish, flowers to flowers.

If God, then, in the super-abundant fullness and perfection of His divine being gives birth to a Son, the Son must be the same as the Father in all things—except, of course, in the fact of his being the Son.

Thus, if the Father is divinely and eternally perfect, true, wise, good, loving, and all of the things that we know God is: “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, ever-existing and eternally the same” (to quote this text of the Liturgy once more), then the Son must be all of these things as well. To think that what is born of God must be less than God, says one saint of the Church, is to dishonor to God.

The Son is “begotten not made, of one essence with the Father.” “Begotten not made” may also be put “born and not created.” Everything which exists besides God is created by Him: all things visible and invisible. But the Son of God is not a creature. He was not created by God or made by Him. He was born, begotten, generated from the very being and nature of the Father. It belongs to the very nature of God-to God as God—according to divine revelation as understood by the Orthodox, that God is an eternal Father by nature, and that He should always have with Him his eternal, uncreated Son.

It belongs to the very nature of God that He should be such a being if He is truly and perfectly divine. It belongs to God’s very divine nature that He should not be eternally alone in his divinity, but that His very being as Love and Goodness should naturally “overflow itself” and “reproduce itself” in the generation of a divine Son: the “Son of His Love” as the Apostle Paul has called him (Col 1.13, inaccurately translated in English).

Thus, there is an abyss drawn between the created and the uncreated, between God and everything else which God has made out of nothing. The Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, is not created. He was not made out of nothing. He was eternally begotten from the divine being of the Father. He belongs “on the side of God.”

Having been born and not made, the Son of God is what God is. The expression of one essence simply means this: what God the Father is, so also is the Son of God. Essence is from the Latin word esse which means to be. The essence of a thing answers the question, What is it? What the Father is, the Son is. The Father is divine, the Son is divine. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated. The Father is God and the Son is God. This is what men confess when they say “the only-begotten Son
of God. of one essence with the Father.”

Being always with the Father, the Son is also one life, one will, one power and one action with Him. Whatever the Father is, the Son is; and so whatever the Father does, the Son does as well. The original act of God outside of His divine existence is the act of creation. The Father is creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in the act of creation, as-we confess in the Symbol of Faith, the Son is the one by whom all things were made.

The Son acts in creation as the one who accomplishes the Father’s will. The divine act of creation-and, indeed, every action toward the world in revelation, salvation, and glorification—is willed by the Father and accomplished by the Son (we will speak of the Holy Spirit below) in one identical divine action. Thus, we have the Genesis account of God creating through His divine word (“God said . . . .”), and in the Gospel of St John the following specific revelation:

“He [the Word-Son] was in the beginning with God [the Father]; all things were made through [or by] him and without him was not anything made that was made” (Jn 1.2–3).

This is the exact doctrine of the Apostle Paul as well:

“. . . . in him [the Son] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers—all things were created through him and for him. He is before an things and in him all things hold together” (Col 1.16–17).

Thus, the eternal Son of God is confessed as the one “by whom all things were made” (Heb 1.2; 2.10; Rom 11.36).

The Symbol of Faith continues: . . . . Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man . . . .

The divine Son of God was born in human flesh for the salvation of the world. This is the central doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Faith; the entire life of Christians is built upon this fact.

The Symbol of Faith stresses that it is “for us men and for our salvation” that the Son of God has come. This is the most critical biblical doctrine, that “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn 3.16, quoted at each Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom at the center of the eucharistic prayer).

Because of His perfect love, God sent forth His Son into the world. God knew in the very act of creation that to have a world at all would require the
incarnation of His Son in human flesh. Incarnation as a word means “enfleshment” in the sense of taking on the wholeness of human nature, body and soul.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as the only-begotten Son of the Father. And from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace” (Jn 1.14–16).

... came down from heaven...

The affirmation that the Son came “down from heaven” also should not be interpreted in the sense that before the incarnation the Son of God was totally absent from the world. The Son was always “in the world” for the “world was made through Him” (Jn 1.10). He was always present in the world for He is personally the life and the light of man (1Jn 4).

As “created in the image and likeness of God,” every man-just by being a man-is already a reflection of the divine Son, who is Himself the uncreated image of God (Col 1.15; Heb 1.3). Thus, the Son, or Word, or Image, or Radiance of God, as He is called in Scriptures, was always “in the world” by being always present in every of his “created images,” not only as their creator, but also as the one whose very being all creatures are made to share and to reflect. Thus, in his incarnation, the Son comes personally to the world and becomes Himself a man. But even before the incarnation He was always in the world by the presence and power of his creative actions in his creatures, particularly in man.

In addition to this, it is also Orthodox doctrine that the manifestation of God to the saints of the Old Testament, the so-called theophanies (which means divine manifestations), were manifestations of the Father, by, through and in his Son or Logos. Thus, for example, the manifestations to Moses, Elias or Isaiah are mediated by God’s divine and uncreated Son.

It is the Orthodox teaching as well that the Word of God which came to the Old Testament prophets and saints, and the very words of the Old Testament Law of Moses, which are called in Hebrew the “words” and not as we say in English, the “commandments”, are also revelations of God by his Son, the Divine Word. Thus, for example, we have Old Testamental witness to the revelation of God’s Word, such as that of the Prophet Isaiah, in almost the same personalistic form as is found in the Christian gospel:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I propose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it (Is 55.10–11).
Thus, before His personal birth of the Virgin Mary as the man Jesus, the
divine Son and Word of God was in the world by His presence and action in
creation, particularly in man. He was present and active; also in the theophanies
to the Old Testament saints; and in the words of the law and the prophets, both
oral and scriptural.
Incarnation

And He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. . . .

The divine Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1; Lk 1). The Church teaches that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Is 7.14), and that it is as well the fulfillment of the longings of all men for salvation which are found in all religions and philosophies in human history. Only God can save the world. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who must be saved. Therefore, according to Orthodox doctrine, the virgin birth is necessary not at all because of a false idolization of virginity as such or because of a sinful repulsion to normal human sexuality. Nor is it necessary as some would contend to give “added weight” to the moral teachings of Jesus. The virgin birth is understood as a necessity because the one who is born must not be merely a man like all others needing salvation. The Saviour of the world cannot merely be one of the race of Adam born of the flesh like all of the others. He must be “not of this world” in order to save the world.

Jesus is born from the Virgin Mary because he is the divine Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It is the formal teaching of the Orthodox Church that Jesus is not a “mere man” like all other men. He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, soul and body. But he is the man which the Son and Word of God has become. Thus, the Church formally confesses that Mary should properly be called Theotokos, which means literally “the one who gives birth to God.” For the one born of Mary is, as the Orthodox Church sings at Christmas: “. . . he who from all eternity is God.”

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child! (Kontakion of the Nativity)

Jesus of Nazareth is God, or, more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. He is a true man in every way. He was born. He grew up in obedience to his parents. He increased in wisdom and stature (Lk 2.51–52). He had a family life with “brethren” (Mk 3.31–34), who according to Orthodox doctrine were not children born of Mary who is confessed as “ever-virgin,” but were either cousins or children of Joseph.

As a man Jesus experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst,
fatigue, sorrow, pain, and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering, and death. He took these things upon himself “for us men and for our salvation.”

*Since, therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it was not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect. To make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (Heb 2.9–18).*

Christ has entered the world becoming like all men in all things except sin.

*He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him [God the Father] who judges justly (1?Pet 2.22; Heb 4.15).*

Jesus was tempted, but he did not sin. He was perfect in every way, absolutely obedient to God the Father; speaking His words, doing His works, and accomplishing His will. As a man, Jesus fulfilled his role perfectly as the Perfect Man, the new and final Adam. He did all things that man fails to do, being in everything the most perfect human response to the divine initiative of God toward creation. In this sense, the Son of God as man “recapitulated” the life of Adam, i.e., the entire human race, bringing man and his world back to God the Father and allowing for a new beginning of life free from the power of sin, the devil, and death.

As the Saviour-Messiah, Christ fulfilled as well all of the prophecies and expectations of the Old Testament, fulfilling and crowning in final and absolute perfection all that was begun in Israel for human and cosmic salvation. Thus, Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, the completion of the Law of Moses, the fulfillment of the prophets and Himself the Final Prophet, the King and the Teacher, the one Great High Priest of Salvation and the Perfect Sacrificial Victim, the New Passover and the Bestower of the Holy Spirit upon all creation.

It is in this role as Messiah-King of Israel and Saviour of the world that Christ insisted upon His identity with God the Father and called Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Resurrection and the Life, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Door to the Sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, the Heavenly Son of Man, the Son of God, and God Himself, the I AM (Gospel of Saint John).

**Defense of the Doctrine of Incarnation**
In the Orthodox Church the central fact of the Christian faith, that the Son of God has appeared on earth as a real man, born of the Virgin Mary in order to die and rise again to give life to the world, has been expressed and defended in many different ways. The first preaching and the first defense of the faith consisted in maintaining that Jesus of Nazareth is in truth the Messiah of Israel, and that the Messiah Himself—the Christ—is indeed truly Lord and God in human form. The first Christians, beginning with the apostles, had to insist on the fact that not only is Jesus truly the Christ and the Son of God, but that He has truly lived and died and risen from the dead in the flesh, as a true human being.

*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God (1Jn 4.2).*

For many deceivers have gone into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.?.?. (2Jn 7).

In the early years of the Christian faith, the defenders of the faith—the apologists and martyrs—had as their central witness and task the defense of the doctrine that Jesus, being the Son of God in human flesh, has lived on earth, has died, has been raised by the Father, and has been glorified as the only King and Lord and God of the world.

**The Ecumenical Councils**

In the third and fourth centuries attempts were made to teach that although Jesus is truly the incarnate Son and Word of God, that the Son and Word Himself is not fully and totally divine, but a creature—even the most exalted creature—but a creature made by God like everything else that was made. This was the teaching of the Arians. Against this teaching, the fathers, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil the Great, his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Theologian of Nazianzus defended the definition of faith of the first and second ecumenical councils which held that the Son and Word of God—incarnate in human form as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah-Christ of Israel—is not a creature, but is truly divine with the same divinity as God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This was the defense of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity which preserved for the Church of all ages the faith that Jesus is indeed the divine Son of God, of one essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one of the Holy Trinity.

At the same time, in the fourth century, it was also necessary for the Church to reject the teaching of a certain Appolinarius, who claimed that although Jesus was indeed the incarnate Son and Word of God, the incarnation consisted in the Word merely taking a human body and not the fullness of human nature. This was the doctrine that Jesus had no real human soul, no
human mind, no human spirit, but that the divine Son of God, who exists eternally with the Father and the Spirit, merely dwelt in a human body, in human flesh, as in a temple. It is for this reason that every official doctrinal statement in the Orthodox Church, including all of the statements of the ecumenical councils, always insists that the Son of God became man of the Virgin Mary with a rational soul and body; in other words, that the Son of God really became human in the full meaning of the word and that Jesus Christ was and is a real human being, having and being everything that every human being has and is. This is nothing other than the teaching of the Gospels and the New Testament scriptures generally.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature .?.?. [being] made like His brethren in every respect .?.?. (Heb 2.14–17)

**The Nestorian Controversy**

In the fifth century a long and difficult controversy developed over the true understanding of the person and nature of Jesus Christ. The third ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431, following the teaching of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, was most concerned to defend the fact that the One who was born of the Virgin Mary was no one other than the divine Son of God in human flesh. It was necessary to defend this fact most explicitly because some in the Church, following Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, were teaching that the Virgin Mary should not be called Theotokos—a term already used in the Church’s theology—because it was claimed that the Virgin gave birth to the man Jesus whom the Son of God had become in the incarnation, and not to the Son Himself. In this view it was held that there is a division between the Son of God born in eternity from God the Father and the Son of Man born from the Virgin in Bethlehem; and that although there is certainly a real “connection” between them, Mary merely gave birth to the man. As such, it was held, Mary could be called Theotokos only by some sort of symbolic and overly-pious stretching of the word, but that it is rather dogmatically accurate to call her Christotokos (the one who gave birth to the Messiah) or Anthropotokos (the one who gave birth to the Man that the Son of God has become in the incarnation).

Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the fathers of the council in Ephesus rejected the Nestorian doctrine and claimed that the term Theotokos for the Virgin Mary is completely and totally accurate and must be retained if the Christian faith is to be properly confessed and the Christian life properly lived. The term must be defended because there can be no division of any sort between the eternal Son and Word of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, and Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary. Mary’s child is the eternal and divine
Son of God. He-and no one else-was born of her as a child. He-and no one else-was incarnate in human flesh from her. He-and no one else-became man in the manger in Bethlehem. There can be no “connection” or “conjunction” between God’s Son and Mary’s Son because they are in fact one and the same person. God’s Son was born of Mary. God’s Son is divine; He is God. Therefore, Mary gave birth to God in the flesh, to God as a man. Therefore, Mary is truly Theotokos. The battle cry of St Cyril and the Council in Ephesus was just this: The Son of God and the Son of Man-one Son!

The Council of Chalcedon

This teaching about Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, was further elaborated and explained by the definition of the fourth ecumenical council in Chalcedon in 451. This was necessary because there was a tendency to stress the divine nature of Christ to such an extent that His true human nature was underplayed to the point almost of being rejected. At the fourth council the well-known formulation was made which says that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son and Word of God is one person (or hypostasis) having two full and complete natures: human and divine. Inspired particularly by the letter of Saint Leo, the Pope of Rome, the fourth council insisted that Jesus is exactly what God the Father is in relation to His divinity. This was a direct reference to the Nicene Creed which claims that the Son of God is “of one essence with the Father,” which simply means that what God the Father is, the Son is also: Light from Light, True God from True God. And the council insisted as well that in the incarnation the Son of God became exactly what all human beings are, confessing that Jesus Christ is also “of one essence” with all human beings in respect to His humanity. This doctrine was and is defended as teaching nothing other than the apostolic faith as recorded in the Gospels and the New Testament writings, for example, those of the Apostle Paul:

\[\text{Phil 2.6–8; See also Heb 1–2, Jn 1}\]

The critical words in the definition of faith of the Council of Chalcedon are the following:

Following the holy fathers we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same [Person], and He is perfect in Divinity and perfect in Humanity, true God and true Man, of a rational soul and [human] body consisting, of one essence with the Father as touching His Divinity and of one essence with us as touching His Humanity;
made in all things like unto us, with the exception of sin only; begotten of His Father before all ages according to His Divinity: but in these last days, for us men and for our salvation, born [into the world] of the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, according to His Humanity. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, without mixture and without change, without separation and without division [i.e., without fusing together Divinity and Humanity so that the proper characteristics of each are changed or lost; and also without separating them in such a way that there might be considered to be two Sons and not One Son only] and that without the distinction of natures being removed by such union, but rather that the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and Hypostasis, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Prophets of old have spoken concerning Him [e.g., the Immanuel of Is 7.14], and as Jesus Christ has taught us, and as the Creed of the fathers has delivered to us.

A number of Christians did not accept the Council of Chalcedon and broke communion with those who did accept it. They did so because they thought that the council had in fact resurrected the wrong doctrine of Nestorius by insisting on the “two natures” after the incarnation, however strongly and firmly the “union” of the two natures was insisted upon. These Christians were called the monophysites (from the term meaning “one nature” after the incarnation), and they continue until today in separation from the Chalcedonian Orthodox in the Coptic, Ethiopian and Armenian churches. Hopefully, one day, by God’s grace, this dispute will be resolved and those who adhere to Chalcedon the Eastern Orthodox Christians, as well as the traditional Roman Catholics and Protestants—will come to a unity of faith with those who reject Chalcedon in regard to its explication of the union of the divine and the human in the one person of Christ our Lord. Whatever the future may hold by God’s grace, however, it is still the firm teaching of the Orthodox Church that the Council of Chalcedon is in strict adherence with the anti-Nestorian doctrines of Saint Cyril and the third ecumenical council in Ephesus. The virtue of the fourth council, in the Orthodox view, is that it defines very clearly the fact that when the Son of God was born as a man from the Virgin Mary, Theotokos, He did not cease to be God or change in His Divinity, while becoming a complete and perfect man in His incarnate Humanity. For salvation itself requires the perfect union of Divinity and Humanity in the one Person of Jesus Christ; 21 union where God is God and Man is Man, and yet where the two become one in perfect unity: without fusion or change, and without division or separation.

**Emperor Justinian and the 5th Ecumenical Council**
In the sixth century, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian wanted to reaffirm the fact that the followers of the council of Chalcedon really believed that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son and Word of God, one of the Holy Trinity. He wanted to do this primarily to convince those who did not accept the fourth council that its definition did not reintroduce the error of Nestorius. To do this, the Emperor called the council now known as the fifth ecumenical council in Constantinople in 553 which further served to clarify the Orthodox position in regard to the person and action of Christ. The following are some of the key texts of this council:

*If anyone understands the expression “one Person only of our Lord Jesus Christ” in this sense, that it is the union of many hypostases [or persons], and if he thus attempts to introduce into the mystery of Christ two hypostases or two persons, and after having introduced two persons speaks of one Person only in the sense of dignity, honor or worship .?.?. [and] shall calumniate the holy council of Chalcedon, pretending that it used this expression [one hypostasis and person] in this impious sense .?.?. let him be anathema.*

If anyone shall not call in a true acceptation .?.?. the holy, glorious and ever-virgin Mary, the Theotokos .?.?. believing that she bare only a simple man and that God the Word was not incarnate of her .?.?. [and] shall calumniate the holy synod of Chalcedon as though it has asserted the Virgin to be Theotokos according to the impious sense .?.?. let him be anathema.

If anyone using the expression “in two natures” does not confess that our one Lord Jesus Christ has been revealed in the divinity and in the humanity, so as to designate by that expression a difference of the natures of which an ineffable union is made without confusion, in which neither the nature of the Word was changed into that of the flesh, nor that of the flesh into that of the Word, for each remained what it was by nature, the union being hypostatic [i.e., in the one Person]; but shall take the expression to divide the parties .?.?. let him be anathema.

If anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in the flesh is true Gad and the Lord of Glory and one of the Holy Trinity, let him be anathema.

To further emphasize the point that the Chalcedonian Council was truly orthodox, the Emperor Justinian wrote a doctrinal hymn which is still sung in the Orthodox Church at every divine liturgy. It confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as perfect God and perfect man.

*Only-begotten Son and Word of God,*

Who for our salvation willed to be incarnate of
the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary,
Who without change became man and was crucified,
Who is one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with
the Father and the Holy Spirit,
O Christ our God, trampling down death by death,
Save us!

**The Monothelite Controversy**

In the seventh century the question of how to understand, define and confess the person and action of Jesus Christ continued to cause divisions among the believers. Some now said that after the Son of God became man, He had just one activity and will—the theandric activity and will of the Word-made-flesh. These people, called monothelites, insisted that the One Person of Christ, in uniting the natures of God and Man in His One Person, fused together the human and divine will and activity in such a way that they no longer could be distinguished.

The sixth ecumenical council met in Constantinople in 680–681. Following the teachings of St. Maximus the Confessor who was imprisoned and tortured for his doctrines, it decreed that just as Christ is really fully divine and fully human, the perfect union of Divinity and Humanity in one Person, so also He must have both a real human activity and will and a real divine activity and will according to each of His natures and that these two wills and activities, like the natures themselves, should not be understood to be fused or mingled together into one so as to lose their proper natural characteristics and properties. This decision was based on the fact that since the Son of God remained fully divine in the incarnation, He must continue to have His proper divine activity and will; and that since He became fully human in the incarnation He must also have a complete and perfect human activity and will; and that the salvation of mankind requires that the distinction but not the division or separation of each of these respective activities and wills remain in the incarnate Saviour. The following is part of the definition of faith of the sixth council:

> in Him are two natural wills and two natural operations without division, without fusion, without change and without separation according to the teaching of the holy fathers. And these two natural wills are not contrary to one another (God forbid!) but His human will follows, and not as resisting and reluctant, but rather as subject to His divine and omnipotent will. For as His most holy and immaculate animated flesh was not destroyed because it was deified but continued in its own state and nature, so also His human will, although deified, was not suppressed, but was rather preserved. We glorify two natural operations. We glorify two natural operations. in the same Lord Jesus Christ our true God, that is
to say a divine operation [or action] and a human operation.

... For we will not admit one natural operation in God and in the creature. ... believing our Lord Jesus Christ to be one of the Trinity, and after the incarnation our true God we say that His two natures shone forth in His one hypostasis [or person] in which He both performed the miracles and endured the sufferings. ... Wherefore we confess two wills and two operations concurring most fitly in Him for the salvation of the human race.

**Iconoclastic Controversy**

In the eighth and ninth centuries the question of the person and nature of Christ continued in the controversy over the veneration of the holy icons in the Church. At this time many were found, including emperors and secular rulers, who claimed that the veneration of icons is wrong because it is the sin of idolatry. They claimed that as God is invisible and has commanded in the Old Testament law that men are not to make “graven images,” so it is wrong to depict and to honor images of Christ and the saints.

The defenders of the veneration of the holy icons, led by Saints John Damascene and Theodore Studion, claimed that the central point of the Christian faith is that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” and that “we have beheld His glory” (Jn 1.14). Referring to the holy scriptures they insisted that belief in the incarnation of the Son of God calls for the veneration of icons since Jesus Christ is a real man with a real human soul and body, and as such can be depicted. They said that those who were against the holy icons reduced the incarnation to a “fantasy” and denied the true humanity of the Son of God in His coming to man. Thus they made reference to the words of Jesus Himself in His dialogue with Philip:

*Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied.”*  
Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”  
(Jn 14.8–9).

The defenders of the propriety of icon veneration also referred to the apostolic writings of Saint John and Saint Paul:

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the Word of Life the Life was made manifest, and we saw it.*  
(1Jn 1.1–2).

... the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness [in Greek: eikon] of God (2Cor 4.4).
He is the image [eikon] of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth. All things were created through Him and for Him. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. (Colossians 1.15–20).

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the reflection of the glory of God and the express image of His person, upholding the universe by the word of His power. (Hebrews 1.1–3).

The seventh ecumenical council in Nicea in 787 officially declared that the Christian faith is to be proclaimed “in words and images.” And while making clear the teaching that holy icons may be made; that they are not to be worshipped—for only God Himself is worthy of worship—but are to be venerated and honored; the seventh council also made the following statement about Christ in reference to the veneration of icons:

We keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, agreeable to the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that so the incarnation of the Word of God is shone forth in real and not merely in phantasy, for these have mutual indications and without doubt have also mutual significations.

In later times the doctrines of the real divinity and real humanity of Jesus Christ was witnessed and defended by such saints as Simeon the New Theologian (d. 1022) and Gregory Palamas, the Archbishop of Thessalonika (d. 1359) in their teachings about the real sanctification and deification of man through living communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit in the Church. In and through Christ, the Word incarnate, human persons can be filled with the Spirit of God and can be in genuine communion with God the Father, participating in the uncreated being, life and light of the Most Blessed Trinity. If Jesus Christ were not true God and true Man, this would be impossible. But it is not impossible. It is man’s experience of salvation and redemption in the life of the Church of Christ.
Redemption

And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

Although Jesus did not sin and did not have to suffer and die, he voluntarily took upon himself the sins of the world and voluntarily gave himself up to suffering and death for the sake of salvation. This was his task as the Messiah-Saviour:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good tidings to the afflicted .?.?. to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound .?.?. to comfort all who mourn .?.?. to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning” (Is 61.1–3).

And at the same time, Jesus had to do this as the suffering servant of Yahweh-God.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised. and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our grieves and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and by his stripes [i.e., wounds] we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgement he was taken away .?.?. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord [Yahweh] to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the
spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many [or the multitude] and made intercession for the transgressors.

(Is 53)

These words of the prophet Isaiah written centuries before the birth of Jesus tell the story of his Messianic mission. It began officially before the eyes of all in his baptism by John in the Jordan. By allowing himself to be baptized with the sinners though he had no sin, Jesus shows that he accepts his calling to be identified with the sinners: “the Beloved” of the Father and “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1.29; Mat 3.17).

Jesus begins to teach, and on the very day and at that very moment when his disciples first confess him to be the Messiah, “the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus tells immediately of his mission to “go to Jerusalem and suffer many things .?.?. and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Mt 16.16–23; Mk 8.29–33). The apostles are greatly upset by this. Jesus then immediately shows them his divinity by being transfigured before them in divine glory on the mountain in the presence of Moses and Elijah. He then tells them once more: “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day” (Mt 17.1–23; Mk 9.1–9).

The powers of evil multiplied against Christ at the end: “The kings of the earth counsel together against the Lord and His Christ” (Ps 2.2). They were looking for causes to kill him. The formal reason was blasphemy, “because you, being a man, make yourself God” (Jn 10.31–38). Yet the deep reasons were more personal: Jesus told men the truth and revealed their stubbornness, foolishness, hypocrisy, and sin. For this reason every sinner, hardened in his sins and refusing to repent, wishes and causes the crucifixion of Christ.

The death of Jesus came at the hands of the religious and political leaders of his time, with the approval of the masses: when Caiaphas was high priest, “under Pontius Pilate.” He was “crucified for us .?.?. and suffered and was buried” in order to be with us in our sufferings and death which we brought upon ourselves because of our sins: “for the wages of sin are death” (Rom 6.23). In this sense the Apostle Paul writes of Jesus that “having become a curse for us” (Gal 3.13), “for our sake he (God the Father) made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2Cor 5.21).

The sufferings and death of Christ in obedience to the Father reveals the super-abundant divine love of God for his creation. For when all was sinful, cursed, and dead, Christ became sin, a curse, and dead for us-though he himself
never ceased to be the righteousness and blessedness and life of God Himself. It is to this depth, of which lower and more base cannot be discovered or imagined, that Christ has humiliated himself “for us men and for our salvation.” For being God, he became man; and being man, he became a slave; and being a slave, he became dead and not only dead, but dead on a cross. From this deepest degradation of God flows the eternal exaltation of man. This is the pivotal doctrine of the Orthodox Christian faith, expressed over and again in many ways throughout the history of the Orthodox Church. It is the doctrine of the atonement—for we are made to be “at one” with God. It is the doctrine of redemption—for we are redeemed, i.e., “bought with a price,” the great price of the blood of God (Acts 20.28; 1Cor 6.20).

Have this mind among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant [slave], being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2.5–11).

In contemplating the saving and redeeming action of Christ, it has become traditional to emphasize three aspects which in reality are not divided, and cannot be; but which in theory (i.e., in the vision of Christ’s being and activity as the Saviour of the world) may be distinguished. The first of these three aspects of the redeeming work of Christ is the fact that Jesus saves mankind by providing the perfect image and example of human life as filled with the grace and power of God.

**Jesus, the Perfect Image of Human Life**

Christ is the incarnate Word of God. He is the Teacher and Master sent by God to the world. He is the embodiment of God Himself in human form. He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15). In Him “the fullness of divinity dwells bodily” (Col 2.9). The person who sees Jesus sees God the Father (Jn 14.9). He is the “reflection of the glory of God and the express image of His person” (Heb 1.3). He is the “light of the world” who “enlightens every man coming into the world” (Jn 8.12, 1.9). To be saved by Jesus Christ is first of all to be enlightened by Him; to see Him as the Light, and to see all things in the light of Him. It is to know Him as “the Truth” (Jn 14.6); and to know the truth in Him.

*And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free* (Jn 8.31).
When one is saved by God in Christ one comes to the knowledge of the truth, fulfilling God’s desire for His creatures, for “God our Saviour... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Tim 2.4). In saving God’s world, Jesus Christ enlightens God’s creatures by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father and is sent into the world through Christ.

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you (Jn 14.15–17).

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you... (Jn 15.26).

When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth... (Jn 16.13).

The first aspect of salvation in Christ, therefore, is to be enlightened by Him and to know the truth about God and man by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, which God gives through Him to those who believe. This is witnessed to in the apostolic writings of Saints John and Paul:

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit... For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ (1Cor 2.13–16).

For [God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth. To me... this grace was given... to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God... that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known... (Eph 1.8–10; 3.9).

For I want... that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2.1–3).

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you know all things I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth... but the anointing which you received
from Him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him. .?.?. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given to us (1Jn 2.20–27; 3.24).

The first aspect of man’s salvation by God in Christ is, therefore, the ability and power to see, to know, to believe and to love the truth of God in Christ, who is the Truth, by the Spirit of Truth. It is the gift of knowledge and wisdom, of illumination and enlightenment, it is the condition of being “taught by God” as foretold by the prophets and fulfilled by Christ (Is 54.13; Jer 31.33–34; Jn 6.45). Thus, in the Orthodox Church, the entrance into the saving life of the Church through baptism and chrismation is called “holy illumination.”

For it is God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2Cor 4.6).

**Jesus, the Reconciler of Man with God**

The second aspect of Christ’s one, indivisible act of salvation of man and his world is the accomplishment of man’s reconciliation with God the Father through the forgiveness of sins. This is the redemption and atonement strictly speaking, the release from sins, and the punishment due to sins; the being made “at one” with God.

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since therefore we are now made righteous by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation (Rom 5.6–11).

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation (2Cor 5.17–19).

The forgiveness of sins is one of the signs of the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, as foretold in the Old Testament:

.?.?. they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer.
Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the Lamb that is slain that through Him all sins might be forgiven. He is also the great high priest, who offers the perfect sacrifice by which man is purged from his sins and cleansed from his iniquities. Jesus offers, as high priest, the perfect sacrifice of His own very life, His own body, as the Lamb of God, upon the tree of the cross.

*For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were estraying like sheep, but have now returned to the Pastor and Bishop of your souls (1Pet 2.22–25).*

The high-priestly offering and sacrifice of the Son of God to His eternal Father is described in great detail in the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament scriptures.

*In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard for His godly fear. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated a high priest by God, according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5.7–10).*

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come .?.?. He entered once for all into the Holy Place [not made by hands, i.e., the Presence of God] taking .?.?. His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant (Heb 9.11–15).

According to the scriptures, man’s sins and the sins of the whole world are forgiven and pardoned by the sacrifice of Christ, by the offering of His life-His body and His blood, which is the “blood of God” (Acts 20.28)-upon the cross. This is the “redemption,” the “ransom,” the “expiation,” the “propitiation”
spoken about in the scriptures which had to be made so that man could be “at one” with God. Christ “paid the price” which was necessary to be paid for the world to be pardoned and cleansed of all iniquities and sins (1Cor 6.20; 7.23).

In the history of Christian doctrine there has been great debate over the question of to whom Christ “pays the price” for the ransom of the world and the salvation of mankind. Some have said that the “payment” was made to the devil. This is the view that the devil received certain “rights” over man and his world because of man’s sin. In his rebellion against God, man “sold himself to the devil” thus allowing the Evil One to become the “prince of this world” (Jn 12.31). Christ comes to pay the debt to the devil and to release man from his control by sacrificing Himself upon the cross.

Others say that Christ’s “payment” on behalf of man had to be made to God the Father. This is the view which interprets Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross as the proper punishment that had to be paid to satisfy God’s wrath over the human race. God was insulted by man’s sin. His law was broken and His righteousness was offended. Man had to pay the penalty for his sin by offering the proper punishment. But no amount of human punishment could satisfy God’s justice because God’s justice is divine. Thus the Son of God had to be born into the world and receive the punishment that was rightly to be placed on men. He had to die in order for God to receive proper satisfaction for man’s offenses against Him. Christ substituted Himself on our behalf and died for our sins, offering His blood as the satisfying sacrifice for the sins of the world. By dying on the cross in place of sinful man, Christ pays the full and total payment for man’s sins. God’s wrath is removed. Man’s insult is punished. The world is reconciled with its Creator.

Commenting on this question about to whom Christ “pays the price” for man’s salvation, St Gregory the Theologian in the fourth century wrote the following in his second Easter Oration:

Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was It shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and High Priest and Sacrifice.

We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause?

If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, then it would have been right for him to
have left us alone altogether!

But if to God the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed. And next, on what principle did the Blood of His only-begotten Son delight the Father, who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being sacrificed by his father, [Abraham], but changed the sacrifice by putting a ram in the place of the human victim? (see Gen 22).

Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant [i.e., the devil] and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son who also arranged this to the honor of the Father, whom it is manifest He obeys in all things.

In Orthodox theology generally it can be said that the language of “payment” and “ransom” is rather understood as a metaphorical and symbolical way of saying that Christ has done all things necessary to save and redeem mankind enslaved to the devil, sin and death, and under the wrath of God. He “paid the price,” not in some legalistic or juridical or economic meaning. He “paid the price” not to the devil whose rights over man were won by deceit and tyranny. He “paid the price” not to God the Father in the sense that God delights in His sufferings and received “satisfaction” from His creatures in Him. He “paid the price” rather, we might say, to Reality Itself. He “paid the price” to create the conditions in and through which man might receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life by dying and rising again in Him to newness of life (see Rom 5–8; Gal 2–4).

By dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus Christ cleansed the world from evil and sin. He defeated the devil “in his own territory” and on “his own terms.” The “wages of sin is death” (Rom 6.23). So the Son of God became man and took upon Himself the sins of the world and died a voluntary death. By His sinless and innocent death accomplished entirely by His free will – and not by physical, moral, or juridical necessity – He made death to die and to become itself the source and the way into life eternal. This is what the Church sings on the feast of the Resurrection, the New Passover in Christ, the new Paschal Lamb, who is risen from the dead:

Christ is risen from the dead!
Trampling down death by death!
And upon those in the tombs bestowing life!
(Easter Troparion)

And this is how the Church prays at the divine liturgy of Saint Basil the Great:
He was God before the ages, yet He appeared on earth and lived among men, becoming incarnate of a holy Virgin;

He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being likened to the body of our lowliness, that He might liken us to the image of His Glory.

For as by man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so it pleased Thine Only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of Thee, the God and Father, who was born of a woman, the holy Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, who was born under the law to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who were dead in Adam might be made alive in Thy Christ Himself.

He lived in this world and gave commandments of salvation; releasing us from the delusions of idolatry, He brought us to knowledge of Thee, the true God and Father. He obtained us for His own chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Having cleansed us in water, and sanctified us with the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself as a ransom to death, in which we were held captive, sold under sin.

Descending through the cross into Sheol – that He might fill all things with Himself – He loosed the pangs of death. He arose on the third day, having made for all flesh a path to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the Author of Life to be a victim of corruption. So He became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first-born of the dead, that He might be Himself truly the first in all things .?.?.

(Eucharistic Prayer of the Liturgy of St Basil)

Jesus, the Destroyer of Death

The third and final aspect of the saving and redeeming action of Christ, therefore, is the deepest and most comprehensive. It is the destruction of death by Christ’s own death. It is the transformation of death itself into an act of life. It is the recreation of Sheol—the spiritual condition of being dead-into the paradise of God. Thus, in and through the death of Jesus Christ, death is made to. die. In Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, man cannot die, but lives forever with God.

Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (Jn 5.24)

I am the Resurrection and the Life! He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die (Jn 11.25–26).

It is Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us! Who shall separate us
from the love of Christ? For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8.34–39).

For in Him the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him. And you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead. And you were dead in trespasses. God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the [demonic] principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them. for you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 2.9 ff.)

This is the doctrine of the New Testament scriptures, repeated over and again in many ways in the tradition of the Church: in its sacraments, hymnology, theology, iconography. Christ’s victory over death is man’s release from sins and man’s victory over enslavement to the devil because in and through Christ’s death man dies and is born again to eternal life. In his death sins are no longer counted. In his death the devil no longer holds him. In his death he is born again to newness of life and is liberated from all that is evil, false, demonic and sinful. In a word, he is freed from all that is dead by dying and rising again in and with Jesus.

But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one. Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (Heb 2.9–15).

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor 15.20 ff; 56–57).
Resurrection

And He rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

Christ is risen from the dead! This is the main proclamation of the Christian faith. It forms the heart of the Church’s preaching, worship and spiritual life. “.?.?. if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1Cor 15.14).

In the first sermon ever preached in the history of the Christian Church, the Apostle Peter began his proclamation:

Men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man attended to you by God with mighty works and signs and wonders which God did to him in your midst, as you yourself know-this Jesus delivered up according to a definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it (Acts 2.22–24).

Jesus had the power to lay down his life and the power to take it up again:

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again; this charge I have received from My Father (Jn 10.17–18).

According to Orthodox doctrine there is no competition of “lives” between God and Jesus, and no competition of “powers.” The power of God and the power of Jesus, the life of God and the life of Jesus, are one and the same power and life. To say that God has raised Christ, and that Christ has been raised by his own power is to say essentially the same thing. “For as the Father has life in himself,” says Christ, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself” (Jn 5.26). “I and the Father are one” (Jn 10.30).

The Scriptural stress that God has raised up Jesus only emphasizes once more that Christ has given His life, that He has laid it down fully, that He has offered it whole and without reservation to God-Who then gave it back in His resurrection from the dead.

The Orthodox Church believes in Christ’s real death and His actual resurrection. Resurrection, however, does not simply mean bodily resuscitation. Neither the Gospel nor the Church teaches that Jesus was lying dead and then was biologically revived and walked around in the same way that He did before He was killed. In a word, the Gospel does not say that the angel moved the stone from the tomb in order to let Jesus out. The angel moved the stone to
reveal that Jesus was not there (Mk 16; Mt 28).

In His resurrection Jesus is in a new and glorious form. He appears in different places immediately. He is difficult to recognize (Lk 24.16; Jn 20.14). He eats and drinks to show that He is not a ghost (Lk 24.30, 39). He allows himself to be touched (Jn 20.27, 21.9). And yet He appears in the midst of disciples, “the doors being shut” (Jn 20.19, 26). And he “vanishes out of their sight” (Lk 24.31). Christ indeed is risen, but His resurrected humanity is full of life and divinity. It is humanity in the new form of the eternal life of the Kingdom of God.

So it is with the resurrection of the dead: What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raked in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Thus, it is written, the first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam [i.e. Christ] became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, then the spiritual.

The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man from heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have home the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1Cor 15.42–50).

The resurrection of Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection of all humanity. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, “according to the Scriptures” where it is written, “For Thou dost not give me up unto Sheol [that is, the realm of death], or let Thy Godly one see corruption” (Ps 16.10; Acts 2.25–36). In Christ all expectations and hopes are filled: O Death, where is your sting? O Sheol, where is your victory? (Hos 13.14).

He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces .?.?. It will be said on that day, “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Is 25.8–9).

Come, let us return to the Lord: For He has torn, that He may heal us; He has stricken, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live before Him (Hos 6.1–2).

Thus says the Lord God: Behold I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people .?.?. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live .?.?. (Ezek 37.12–14).

On Death and Resurrection in Christ

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.
Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him.
Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him.
Yesterday I died with Him; today I am made alive with Him.
Yesterday I was buried with Him; today I am raised up with Him.
Let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us .??. ourselves, the possession most precious to God and most proper.
   Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us.
   Let us become Divine for His sake, since for us He became Man.
   He assumed the worse that He might give us the better.
   He became poor that by His poverty we might become rich.
   He accepted the form of a servant that we might win back our freedom.
   He came down that we might be lifted up.
   He was tempted that through Him we might conquer.
   He was dishonored that He might glorify us.
   He died that He might save us.
   He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were thrown down through the fall of sin.
Let us give all, offer all, to Him who gave Himself a Ransom and Reconciliation for us.
   We needed an incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live.
   We were put to death together with Him that we might be cleansed.
   We rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him.
   We were glorified with Him because we rose again with Him.
A few drops of Blood recreate the whole of creation!
-St Gregory the Theologian, Easter Orations
and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.

After His resurrection from the dead Jesus appeared to men for a period of forty days after which He “was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mk 16.19; see also Lk 24.50 and Acts 1.9–11).

The ascension of Jesus Christ is the final act of His earthly mission of salvation. The Son of God comes “down from heaven” to do the work which the Father gives Him to do; and having accomplished all things, He returns to the Father bearing for all eternity the wounded and glorified humanity which He has assumed (see e.g. Jn 17).

The doctrinal meaning of the ascension is the glorification of human nature, the reunion of man with God. It is indeed, the very penetration of man into the inexhaustible depths of divinity.

We have seen already that “the heavens” is the symbolical expression in the Bible for the uncreated, immaterial, divine “realm of God” as one saint of the Church has called it. To say that Jesus is “exalted at the right hand of God” as Saint Peter preached in the first Christian sermon (Acts 2.33) means exactly this: that man has been restored to communion with God, to a union which is, according to Orthodox doctrine, far greater and more perfect than that given to man in his original creation (see Eph 1–2).

Man was created with the potential to be a “partaker of the divine nature,” to refer to the Apostle Peter once more (2Pet 1.4). It is this participation in divinity, called theosis (which literally means deification or divinization) in Orthodox theology, that the ascension of Christ has fulfilled for humanity. The symbolical expression of the “sitting at the right hand” of God means nothing other than this. It does not mean that somewhere in the created universe the physical Jesus is sitting in a material throne.

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Christ’s ascension in terms of the Jerusalem Temple. Just as the high priests of Israel entered the “holy of holies” to offer sacrifice to God on behalf of themselves and the people, so Christ the one, eternal and perfect High Priest offers Himself on the cross to God as the one eternal, and perfect, Sacrifice, not for Himself but for all sinful men. As a man, Christ enters (once and for all) into the one eternal and perfect Holy of Holies: the very “Presence of God in the heavens.”

we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. (Heb 4.14)

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless,
unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. .?.?. He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifice daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once and for all when he offered up himself.

Now, the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which is set up not by man but by the Lord (Heb 7.26; 8.2).

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb 9.24).

.?.?. when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet (Heb 10.12–13; Ps 110.1).

Thus, the ascension of Christ is seen as man’s first entry into that divine glorification for which He was originally created. The entry is made possible by the exaltation of the divine Son who emptied Himself in human flesh in perfect self-offering to God.
and He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come the same way as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1.11).

These words of the angels are addressed to the apostles at the ascension of the Lord. Christ will come again in glory, “not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9.28).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangels’ call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up in the cloud to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4.16–17, the Epistle reading of the Orthodox funeral service).

The coming of the Lord at the end of the ages will be the Day of Judgment, the Day of the Lord foretold in the Old Testament and predicted by Jesus himself (e.g. Dan 7; Mt 24). The exact time of the end is not foretold, not even by Jesus, so that men would always be prepared by constant vigil and good works.

The very presence of Christ as the Truth and the Light is itself the judgment of the world. In this sense all men and the whole world are already judged or, more accurately, already live in the full presence of that reality—Christ and His works—by which they will be ultimately judged. With Christ now revealed, there is no longer any excuse for ignorance and sin (Jn 9.39).

At this point it is necessary to note that at the final judgment there will be those “on the left hand” who will go into “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25.41; Rev 20). That this is the case is no fault of God’s. It is the fault only of men, for “as I hear, I judge and My judgment is just,” says the Lord (Jn 5.30).

God takes no “pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek 18.22). He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth” (1Tim 2.4). He does everything in His power so that salvation and eternal life would be available and possible for all. There is nothing more that God can do. Everything now depends on man. If some men refuse the gift of life in communion with God, the Lord can only honor this refusal and respect the freedom of His creatures which He Himself has given and will not take back. God allows men to live “with the devil and his angels” if they so desire. Even in this He is loving and just. For if God’s presence as the “consuming fire”
(Heb 12.29) and the “unapproachable light” (1Tim 6.16) which delights those who love Him only produces hatred and anguish in those who do not “love His appearing” (2Tim 4.8), there is nothing that God can do except either to destroy His sinful creatures completely, or to destroy Himself. But God will exist and will allow His creatures to exist. He also will not hide His Face forever.

The doctrine of eternal hell, therefore, does not mean that God actively tortures people by some unloving and perverse means. It does not mean that God takes delight in the punishment and pain of His people whom He loves. Neither does it mean that God “separates Himself” from His people, thus causing them anguish in this separation (for indeed if people hate God, separation would be welcome, and not abhorred!). It means rather that God continues to allow all people, saints and sinners alike, to exist forever. All are raised from the dead into everlasting life: “those who have done good, to the resurrection of judgment” (Jn 5.29). In the end, God will be “all and in all” (1Cor 15.28). For those who love God, resurrection from the dead and the presence of God will be paradise. For those who hate God, resurrection from the dead and the presence of God will be hell. This is the teaching of the fathers of the Church.

There is sprung up a light for the righteous, and its partner is joyful gladness. And the light of the righteous is everlasting .?.?.

One light alone let us shun—that which is the offspring of the sorrowful fire .?.?.

For I know a cleansing fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, and He Himself is called a Fire. This Fire takes away whatsoever is material and of evil quality; and this He desires to kindle with all speed .?.?.

I know also a fire which is not cleansing, but avenging .?.?. which He pours down on all sinners .?.?. that which is prepared for the devil and his angels .?.?. that which proceeds from the Face of the Lord and shall burn up His enemies round about .?.?. the unquenchable fire which .?.?. is eternal for the wicked. For all these belong to the destroying power, though some may prefer even in this place to take a more merciful view of this fire, worthily of Him who chastises.

(Saint Gregory the Theologian)

.?.?. those who find themselves in Gehenna will be chastised with the scourge of love. How cruel and bitter this torment of love will be! For those who understand that they have sinned against love undergo greater sufferings than those produced of the most fearful tortures. The sorrow which takes hold of the heart which has sinned against love is more piercing than any other pain. It is not right to say that sinners in hell are deprived of the love of God .?.?. But
love acts in two different ways, as suffering in the reproved, and as joy in the blessed.

(Saint Isaac of Syria)

Thus, man’s final judgment and eternal destiny depends solely on whether or not man loves God and his brethren. It depends on whether or not man loves the light more than the darkness-or the darkness more than the light. It depends, we might say, on whether or not man loves Love and Light Itself; whether or not man loves Life—which is God Himself; the God revealed in creation, in all things, in the “least of the brethren.”

The conditions of the final judgment are already known. Christ has given them Himself with absolute clarity.

*When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at His right hand, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”*

Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee, or thirsty and give Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger and welcome Thee, or naked and clothe Thee? And when did we see Thee sick or in prison and visit Thee?”

And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

Then He will say to those at His left hand, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.”

Then they also will answer, “Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?”

Then He will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.” And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Mt 25.31–46, Gospel reading for Meatfare Sunday)

It is Christ who will judge, not God the Father. Christ has received the power of judgment “because He is the Son of Man” (*Jn* 5.27). Thus, man and
the world are not judged by God “sitting on a cloud,” as it were, but by One who is truly a man, the One who has suffered every temptation of this world and has emerged victorious. The world is judged by Him who was Himself hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, in prison, wounded, and yet the salvation of all. As the Crucified One, Christ has justly achieved the authority to make judgment for He alone has been the perfectly obedient servant of the Father who knows the depths of human tragedy by His own experience.

For He will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give eternal life; but for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil .?.?. but glory and honor and peace for every one who does good .?.?. for God shows no partiality. All who have sinned without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified (Rom 2.6ff).
Kingdom of God

And of His kingdom there will be no end .?.?.

Jesus is the royal Son of David, of whom it was prophesied by the angel at His birth:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end (Lk 1.32–33).

Through His sufferings as the Christ, Jesus achieved everlasting kingship and lordship over all creation. He has become “King of kings and Lord of lords,” sharing this title with God the Father Himself (Deut 10.17; Dan 2.47; Rev 19.16). As a man, Jesus Christ is King of the Kingdom of God.

Christ came for no other reason than to bring God’s kingdom to men. His very first public words are exactly those of His forerunner, John the Baptist: “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mt 3.2, 4.17).

All through His life Jesus spoke of the kingdom. In the sermons such as the Sermon on the Mount and the many parables, He told of the everlasting kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven .?.?.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

He who does these commandments and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

But seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all things will be yours as well.

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

(Mt 5–7)

The mustard seed, the leaven, the pearl of great price, the lost coin, the treasure in the field, the fishing net, the wedding feast, the banquet, the house of the Father, the vineyard .?.?. all are signs of the kingdom which Jesus has come to bring. And on the night of His last supper with the disciples He tells the apostles openly:

You are those who have continued with me in my trials; as My Father appointed a kingdom for Me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at My table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22: 28–30; Reading of the Vigil of Holy Thursday).

Christ’s kingdom is “not of this world” (Jn 18.31). He says this to Pontius
Pilate when being mocked as king, revealing in this humiliation His genuine divine kingship. The Kingdom of God, which Christ will rule, will come with power at the end of time when the Lord will fill all creation and will be truly “all, and in all” (Col 3.11). The Church, which in popular Orthodox doctrine is called the Kingdom of God on earth, has already mysteriously been given this experience. In the Church, Christ is already acknowledged, glorified, and served, as the only king and lord; and His Holy Spirit, whom the saints of the Church have identified with the Kingdom of God, is already given to the world in the Church with full graciousness and power.

The Kingdom of God, therefore, is a Divine Reality. It is the reality of God’s presence among men through Christ and the Holy Spirit. “For the Kingdom of God .?.?. means .?.?. peace and joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14.17). The Kingdom of God as a spiritual, divine reality is given to men by Christ in the Church. It is celebrated and participated in the sacramental mysteries of the faith. It is witnessed to in the scriptures, the councils, the canons, and the saints. It will become the universal, final cosmic reality for the whole of creation at the end of the ages when Christ comes in glory to fill all things with Himself by the Holy Spirit, that God might be “all and in all” (1Cor 15.28).
And in the Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.

The Holy Spirit bears the title of Lord with God the Father and Christ the Son. He is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ. He is eternal, uncreated, and divine; always existing with the Father and the Son; perpetually worshipped and glorified with them in the oneness of the Holy Trinity.

Just like the Son, there was no time when there was no Holy Spirit. The Spirit is before creation. He comes forth from God, as does the Son, in a timeless, eternal procession. “He proceeds from the Father,” in eternity in a divinely instantaneous and perpetual movement (Jn 15.26).

Orthodox doctrine confesses that God the Father is the eternal origin and source of the Spirit, just as He is the source of the Son. Yet, the Church affirms as well that the manner of the Father’s possession and production of the Spirit and the Son differ according to the difference between the Son being “born,” and the Spirit “proceeding.” There have been many attempts-by holy men inspired by God and with a genuine experience of His Trinitarian life to explain the distinction between the procession of the Spirit and the begetting or generation of the Son. For us it is enough to see that the difference between the two lies in the distinction between the divine persons and actions of the Son and the Spirit in relation to the Father, and so as well to each other and to the world. It is necessary to note further that all words and concepts about God and divinity, including those of “procession” and “generation” must give way before the mystical vision of the actual Divine Reality which they express. God may somehow be grasped by men as He has chosen to reveal Himself. However, the essence of His Triune existence remains-and will always remain-essentially inconceivable and inexpressible to created minds and lips. This does not mean that words about God are meaningless. It only means that they are inadequate to the Reality which they seek to express.

At this point also it is necessary to note that the Roman and Protestant churches differ in their credal statement about God by adding that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “and the Son” (filioque)-a doctrinal addition unacceptable to Orthodoxy since it is both unscriptural and inconsistent with the Orthodox vision of God.

With the affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of worshipping and glorifying him with the Father and the Son, the Orthodox
Church affirms that the Divine Reality, called also the Deity or the Godhead in the Orthodox Tradition, is the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is essentially one in his eternal existence with the Father and the Son; and so, in every action of God toward the world, the Holy Spirit is necessarily acting. Thus, in the Genesis account of creation it is written: “The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen 1.2). It is this same Spirit who is the “breath of life” for all living things and particularly for man, made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1.30; 2.7). Generally speaking the Spirit in Hebrew is called the “breath” or the “wind” of Yahweh. It is He who makes everything alive, the “Giver of life” Who upholds and sustains the universe in its existence and life (e.g. Ps 104.29; Job 33.4).

The Holy Spirit is also the who inspires the saints to speak God’s word and to do God’s will. He anoints the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament; and “in the fullness of time” it is this same Spirit who “descends and remains” on Jesus of Nazareth, making him the Messiah (anointed) of God and manifesting him as such to the world. Thus, in the New Testament at the first epiphany (which means literally showing forth or manifestation) of Christ as the Messiah-his baptism by John in the Jordan-the Holy Spirit is revealed as descending and resting upon him “as a dove from heaven” (Jn 1.32; Lk 3.22, see also Mt 3.16 and Mk 1.9). It is important to note, both here and in the account of the Spirit’s coming on the Day of Pentecost, as well as in other places in the Scriptures, that the words “as” and “like” are used in order to avoid an incorrect “physical” interpretation of the events recorded where the Bible itself is literally speaking in quite a symbolical and metaphorical way.

Jesus begins His public work after His baptism, and immediately refers Isaiah’s prophecy about the Messiah directly to Himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me .?.” (Is 61.1; Lk 4.18).

All the days of his life Jesus is “full of the Holy Spirit”-preaching, teaching, healing, casting out devils and accomplishing every sign and wonder of his messiahship by the Spirit’s power (Lk 4.11). It is written that even his self-offering to God on the cross is made “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb 9.14). And it is through the same divine Spirit that he and all men with him are risen from the dead (Ezek 37.1–4).

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples of Christ in the form of “tongues as of fire,” with the sound “like that of a mighty rushing wind” (Acts 2.1–4). We note once more the use of “as” and “like.” The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost is the final fulfillment of Christ’s earthly messianic mission, the beginning of the Christian Church. It is the fulfillment of the Old Testamental prophecy that in the time of the messiah-king, the Spirit
of God will be “poured out on all flesh” (Joel 2.28; Acts 1.14). It is the condition of the age of the final and everlasting covenant of perfect mercy and peace (Ezek 34.37; Jer 31–33; Is 11.42, 44, 61).

The Christian Church lives by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone is the guarantee of God’s Kingdom on earth. He is the sole guarantee that God’s life and truth and love are with men. Only by the Holy Spirit can man and the world fulfill that for which they were created by God. All of God’s actions toward man and the world-in creation, salvation and final glorification-are from the Father through the Son (Word) in the Holy Spirit; and all of man’s capabilities of response to God are in the same Spirit, through the same Son to the same Father.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you (Rom 8.11).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

When the Spirit of Truth comes he will guide you into all the Truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (Jn 16:13; see also Jn 14:25; Jn 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of divine sonship.

For all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. For you did not receive the Spirit of slavery. .??. but you received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8.14; also Gal 4.6).

The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of the new and everlasting covenant between God and man, the seal and guarantee of the Kingdom of God, the power of the divine indwelling of God in man.

.?.?. you are a letter from Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. .?.?. our sufficiency is from God who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in written code but in the Spirit, for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life (2Cor 3.2–6).

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you .?.?. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are (1Cor 3.16; also Rom 6.19).

.?.?. through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation
of apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows in a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2.18–22; also 1Pet 2.4–9).

In the Holy Spirit men have the possibility of receiving every gift from God, of sharing His divine nature and life, of doing what Christ has done by fulfilling His “new commandment” to love one another even as He has loved us, “because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which He has given us” (Rom 5.5).

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control .?.?. . And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit .?.?. he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life (Gal 5.22–25; 6.8).
Church

In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

Church as a word means those called as a particular people to perform a particular task. The Christian Church is the assembly of God’s chosen people called to keep his word and to do his will and his work in the world and in the heavenly kingdom.

In the Scriptures the Church is called the Body of Christ (Rom 12; 1Cor 10, 12; Col 1) and the Bride of Christ (Eph 5; Rev 21). It is likened as well to God’s living Temple (Eph 2; 1Pet 2) and is called “the pillar and bulwark of Truth” (1Tim 3.15).

One Church

The Church is one because God is one, and because Christ and the Holy Spirit are one. There can only be one Church and not many. And this one Church, because its unity depends on God, Christ, and the Spirit, may never be broken. Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine, the Church is indivisible; men may be in it or out of it, but they may not divide it.

According to Orthodox teaching, the unity of the Church is man’s free unity in the truth and love of God. Such unity is not brought about or established by any human authority or juridical power, but by God alone. To the extent that men are in the truth and love of God, they are members of His Church.

Orthodox Christians believe that in the historical Orthodox Church there exists the full possibility of participating totally in the Church of God, and that only sins and false human choices (heresies) put men outside of this unity. In non-Orthodox Christian groups the Orthodox claim that there are certain formal obstacles, varying in different groups, which, if accepted and followed by men, will prevent their perfect unity with God and will thus destroy the genuine unity of the Church (e.g., the papacy in the Roman Church).

Within the unity of the Church man is what he is created to be and can grow for eternity in divine life in communion with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Church is not broken by time or space and is not limited merely to those alive upon the earth. The unity of the Church is the unity of the Blessed Trinity and of all of those who live with God: the holy angels, the righteous dead, and those who live upon the earth according to the commandments of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Church

The Church is holy because God is holy, and because Christ and the Holy
Spirit are holy. The holiness of the Church comes from God. The members of the Church are holy to the extent that they live in communion with God.

Within the earthly Church, people participate in God’s holiness. Sin and error separate them from this divine holiness as it does from the divine unity. Thus, the earthly members and institutions of the Church cannot be identified as such with the Church as holy.

The faith and life of the Church on earth is expressed in its doctrines, sacraments, scriptures, services, and saints which maintain the Church’s essential unity, and which can certainly be affirmed as “holy” because of God’s presence and action in them.

Catholic Church

The Church is also catholic because of its relation to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The word catholic means full, complete, whole, with nothing lacking. God alone is full and total reality; in God alone is there nothing lacking.

Sometimes the catholicity of the Church is understood in terms of the Church’s universality throughout time and space. While it is true that the Church is universal—for all men at all times and in all places—this universality is not the real meaning of the term “catholic” when it is used to define the Church. The term “catholic” as originally used to define the Church (as early as the first decades of the second century) was a definition of quality rather than quantity. Calling the Church catholic means to define how it is, namely, full and complete, all-embracing, and with nothing lacking.

Even before the Church was spread over the world, it was defined as catholic. The original Jerusalem Church of the apostles, or the early city-churches of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, or Rome, were catholic. These churches were catholic—as is each and every Orthodox church today—because nothing essential was lacking for them to be the genuine Church of Christ. God Himself is fully revealed and present in each church through Christ and the Holy Spirit, acting in the local community of believers with its apostolic doctrine, ministry (hierarchy), and sacraments, thus requiring nothing to be added to it in order for it to participate fully in the Kingdom of God.

To believe in the Church as catholic, therefore, is to express the conviction that the fullness of God is present in the Church and that nothing of the “abundant life” that Christ gives to the world in the Spirit is lacking to it (Jn 10.10). It is to confess exactly that the Church is indeed “the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1.23; also Col 2.10).

Apostolic Church

The word apostolic describes that which has a mission, that which has
“been sent” to accomplish a task.

Christ and the Holy Spirit are both “apostolic” because both have been sent by the Father to the World. It is not only repeated in the Scripture on numerous occasions how Christ has been sent by the Father, and the Spirit sent through Christ from the Father, but it also has been recorded explicitly that Christ is “the apostle .?.. of our confession” (Heb 3.1).

As Christ was sent from God, so Christ Himself chose and sent His apostles. “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you .?.. receive ye the Holy Spirit,” the risen Christ says to His disciples. Thus, the apostles go out to the world, becoming the first foundation of the Christian Church.

In this sense, then, the Church is called apostolic: first, as it is built upon Christ and the Holy Spirit sent from God and upon those apostles who were sent by Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit; and secondly, as the Church in its earthly members is itself sent by God to bear witness to His Kingdom, to keep His word and to do His will and His works in this world.

Orthodox Christians believe in the Church as they believe in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Faith in the Church is part of the creedral statement of Christian believers. The Church is herself an object of faith as the divine reality of the Kingdom of God given to men by Christ and the Holy Spirit; the divine community founded by Christ against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16.18).

The Church, and faith in the Church, is an essential element of Christian doctrine and life. Without the Church as a divine, mystical, sacramental, and spiritual reality, in the midst of the fallen and sinful world there can be no full and perfect communion with God. The Church is God’s gift to the world. It is the gift of salvation, of knowledge and enlightenment, of the forgiveness of sins, of the victory over darkness and death. It is the gift of communion with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit. This gift is given totally, once and for all, with no reservations on God’s part. It remains forever, until the close of the ages: invincible and indestructible. Men may sin and fight against the Church, believers may fall away and be separated from the Church, but the Church itself, the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1Tim 3.15) remains forever.

.?.?. [God] has put all things under His [Christ’s] feet and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

.?.?. for through Him we .?.. have access in one Spirit, to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in
whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, that he might sanctify her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. This is a Great Mystery.

(Eph 1.21–23; 2.19–22; 5.25–32)
I confess one baptism for the remission of sins

The way of entry into the Christian Church is by baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28.19; the Baptismal Gospel reading in the Orthodox Church).

Baptism as a word means immersion or submersion in water. It was practiced in the Old Testament and even in some pagan religions as the sign of death and re-birth. Thus, John the Baptist was baptizing as the sign of new life and repentance which means literally a change of mind, and so of desires and actions in preparation of the coming of the Kingdom of God in Christ.

In the Church, the meaning of baptism is death and rebirth in Christ. It is the personal experience of Easter given to each man, the real possibility to die and to be “born anew” (Jn 3.3).

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom 6.3—5; Baptismal Epistle reading in the Orthodox Church; See also Col 2.12; 3.1).

The baptismal experience is the fundamental Christian experience, the primary condition for the whole of Christian life. Everything in the Church has its origin and context in baptism for everything in the Church originates and lives by the resurrection of Christ. Thus, following baptism comes “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit,” the mystery (sacrament) of chrismation which is man’s personal experience of Pentecost. And the completion and fulfillment of these fundamental Christian mysteries comes in the mystery of Holy Communion with God in the divine liturgy of the Church.

Only persons who are committed to Christ in the Orthodox Church through baptism and chrismation may offer and receive the holy eucharist in the Orthodox Church. The holy eucharist is Holy Communion. As such it is not just a “means of sanctification” for individual believers, a means through which private persons gain “communion” with God according to their own private consciences, beliefs and practices. It is rather the all-embracing act of Holy Communion of many persons having the same faith, the same hope, the same baptism. It is the corporate act of many persons having one mind, one heart, one mouth in the service of the one God and Lord, in the one Christ and the one
To participate in Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church is to identify oneself fully with all of the members of the Orthodox faith, living and dead; and to identify oneself fully with every aspect of the Orthodox Church: its history, councils, canons, dogmas, disciplines. It is to “take on oneself” the direct and concrete responsibility for everyone and everything connected in and with the Orthodox tradition and to profess responsibility for the everyday life of the Orthodox Church. It is to say before God and men that one is willing to be judged, in time and eternity, for what the Orthodox Church is and for what the Orthodox Church stands for in the midst of the earth.

Entering into the “Holy Communion” of the Orthodox Church through baptism and chrismation, one lives according to the life of the Church in every possible way. One is first of all faithful to the doctrine and discipline of the Church by faithful communion with the hierarchy of the Church who are those members of the Body sacramentally responsible for the teachings and practices of the Church; the sacramental images of the Church’s identity and continuity in all places and all times. When one enters into the community of marriage, a union of one man and one woman forever according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, this union is sanctified and made eternal and divine in the sacramental mystery of matrimony in the Church. When one is sick and suffering, he “calls for the priests of the Church” to “pray over him, anointing him with oil” in the sacramental mystery of holy unction (cf. Jas 5.4). When one sins and falls away from the life of the Church, one returns to the “Holy Communion” of the divine community by the sacramental mystery of confession and repentance. And when one dies, he is returned to his Creator in the midst of the Church, with the prayers and intercessions of the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ and the Spirit. Thus the entire life of the person is lived in and with the Church as the life of fullness and newness in God Himself, the Church which is the mystical presence of God’s Kingdom which is not of this world.

The confession of “one baptism for the remission of sins,” therefore, is the confession of the total newness of life given to men in the Church because Christ is risen.

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory* (Col 3.1–4).

Thus, in the Church, the whole of life is the one which begins in the new birth of baptism, the “life hid with Christ in God.” All of the mysteries of the
Christian faith are contained in this new life. Everything in the Church flows out of the waters of baptism: the remission of sins and life eternal.
Eternal Life

I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world [ages] to come.

The Orthodox Church does not believe merely in the immortality of the soul, and in the goodness and ultimate salvation of only spiritual reality. Following the Scriptures, Orthodox Christians believe in the goodness of the human body and of all material and physical creation. Thus, in its faith in resurrection and eternal life, the Orthodox Church looks not to some “other world” for salvation, but to this very world so loved by God, resurrected and glorified by Him, tilled with His own divine presence.

At the end of the ages God will reveal His presence and will fill all creation with Himself. For those who love Him it will be paradise. For those who hate Him it will be hell. And all physical creation, together with the righteous, will rejoice and be glad in His coming.

The wilderness and the solitary places will be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom in abundance (Is 35.1).

For behold I create new heavens and a new earth says the Lord, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create, for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy (Is 65.17–18).

The visions of the prophets and those of the Christian apostles about things to come are one and the same:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21.1–5).

When the Kingdom of God fills all creation, all things will be made new. This world will again be that paradise for which it was originally created. This is the Orthodox doctrine of the final fate of man and his universe.

It is sometimes argued, however, that this world will be totally destroyed and that God will create everything new “out of nothing” by the act of a second creation. Those who hold this opinion appeal to such texts as that found in the
second letter of Saint Peter:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away .?.?. and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up (2Pet 3.10).

Because the Bible never speaks about a “second creation” and because it continually and consistently witnesses that God loves the world which He has made and does everything that He can to save it, the Orthodox Tradition never interprets such scriptural texts as teaching the actual annihilation of creation by God. It understands such texts as speaking metaphorically of the great catastrophe which creation must endure, including even the righteous, in order for it to be cleansed, purified, made perfect, and saved. It teaches as well that there is an “eternal fire” for the ungodly, an eternal condition of their being destroyed. But in any case the “trial by fire” which “destroys the ungodly” is in no way understood by the Orthodox in the sense that creation is doomed to total destruction, despised by the loving Lord who created it and called it “very good” (Gen 1.31; also 1Cor 3.13–15; Heb 12.25–29; Is 66; Rev 20–22).
The Holy Trinity
The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely an “article of faith” which men are called to “believe.” It is not simply a dogma which the Church requires its good members to “accept on faith.” Neither is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity the invention of scholars and academicians, the result of intellectual speculation and philosophical thinking.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity arises from man’s deepest experiences with God. It comes from the genuine living knowledge of those who have come to know God in faith.

The paragraphs which follow are intended to show something of what God has revealed of Himself to the saints of the Church. To grasp the words and concepts of the doctrine of the Trinity is one thing; to know the Living Reality of God behind these words and concepts is something else. We must work and pray so that we might pass beyond every word and concept about God and to come to know Him for ourselves in our own living union with Him: “The Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit” (Eph 2: 18–22).
In the Old Testament we find Yahweh, the one Lord and God, acting toward the world through His Word and His Spirit. In the New Testament the “Word becomes flesh” (Jn 1.14). As Jesus of Nazareth, the only-begotten Son of God becomes man. And the Holy Spirit, who is in Jesus making him the Christ, is poured forth from God upon all flesh (Acts 2.17).

One cannot read the Bible nor the history of the Church without being struck by the numerous references to God the Father, the Son (Word) of God and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament record, and the life of the Orthodox Church is absolutely incomprehensible and meaningless without constant affirmation of the existence, interrelation and interaction of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit towards each other and towards man and the world.
Wrong Doctrines of the Trinity

The main question for the Church to answer about God is that of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to Orthodox Tradition, there are a number of wrong doctrines which must be rejected.

One wrong doctrine is that the Father alone is God and that the Son and the Holy Spirit are creatures, made “from nothing” like angels, men and the world. The Church answers that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not creatures, but are uncreated and divine with the Father, and they act with the Father in the divine act of creation of all that exists.

Another wrong doctrine is that God in Himself is One God who merely appears in different forms to the world: Now as the Father, then as the Son, and still again as the Holy Spirit. The Church answers once more that the Son and Word is “in the beginning with God” (Jn 1.12) as is the Holy Spirit, and that the Three are eternally distinct. The Son is “of God” and the Spirit is “of God.” The Son and the Spirit are not merely aspects of God, without, so to speak, a life and existence of their own. How strange it would be to imagine, for example, that when the Son becomes man and prays to his Father and acts in obedience to Him, it is all an illusion with no reality in fact, a sort of divine presentation played before the world with no reason or truth for it at all!

A third wrong doctrine is that God is one, and that the Son and the Spirit are merely names for relations which God has with Himself. Thus, the Thought and Speech of God is called the Son, while the Life and Action of God is called the Spirit; but in fact-in genuine actuality-there are no such “realities in themselves” as the Son of God and the Spirit of God. Both are just metaphors for mere aspects of God. Again, however, in such a doctrine the Son and the Spirit have no existence and no life of their own. They are not real, but are mere illusions.

Still another wrong doctrine is that the Father is one God, the Son is another God, and the Holy Spirit still another God. There cannot be “three gods,” says the Church, and certainly not “gods” who are created or made. Still less can there be “three gods” of whom the Father is “higher” and the others “lower.” For there to be more than one God, or “degrees of divinity” are both contradictions which cannot be defended, either by divine revelation or by logical thinking.

Thus, the Church teaches that while there is only One God, yet there are Three who are God-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit-perfectly united and
never divided yet not merged into one with no proper distinction. How then does the Church defend its doctrine that God is both One and yet Three?
First of all, it is the Church’s teaching and its deepest experience that there is only one God because there is only one Father.

In the Bible the term “God” with very few exceptions is used primarily as a name for the Father. Thus, the Son is the “Son of God,” and the Spirit is the “Spirit of God.” The Son is born from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father-both in the same timeless and eternal action of the Father’s own being.

In this view, the Son and the Spirit are both one with God and in no way separated from Him. Thus, the Divine Unity consists of the Father, with His Son and His Spirit distinct from Himself and yet perfectly united together in Him.
One God: One Divine Nature and Being

What the Father is, the Son and the Spirit are also. This is the Church’s teaching. The Son, born of the Father, and the Spirit, proceeding from Him, share the divine nature with God, being “of one essence” with Him.

Thus, as the Father is “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same” (Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom), so the Son and the Spirit are exactly the same. Every attribute of divinity which belongs to God the Father—life, love, wisdom, truth, blessedness, holiness, power, purity, joy—belongs equally as well to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The being, nature, essence, existence and life of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are absolutely and identically one and the same.
One God: One Divine Action and Will

Since the being of the Holy Trinity is one, whatever the Father wills, the Son and the Holy Spirit will also. What the Father does, the Son and the Holy Spirit do also. There is no will and no action of God the Father which is not at the same time the will and action of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In Himself, in eternity, as well as towards the world in creation, revelation, incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification—the will and action of the Trinity are one: from the divine Father, through the divine Son, in the divine Holy Spirit. Every action of God is the action of the Three. No one person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. And the divine action is essentially one.
One God: One Divine Knowledge and Love

Since each person of the Trinity is one with the others, each knows the same Truth and exercises the same Love. The knowledge of each is the knowledge of all, and the Love of each is the Love of all.

If taken in distinction, each person of the Trinity knows and loves the others with such absolute perfection, knowledge, and love that there is nothing unknown and nothing unloved of each in the others, and all in all. Thus, if the creaturely knowledge of men can unite minds in full unanimity, and if the creaturely love of men can bring the divided together into one heart and one soul and even one flesh, how incomparably more perfect and absolutely uniting must be the oneness when the Knowers and Lovers are eternal and divine.
The Three Divine Persons

In Orthodox terminology the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are called three divine persons. Person is defined here simply as the subject of existence and life-hypostasis in the traditional church language.

As the being, essence or nature of a reality answers the question “what?”, the person of a reality answers the question “which one?” or “who?” Thus, when we ask “What is God?” we answer that God is the divine, perfect, eternal, absolute .?.?. and when we ask “Who is God?” we answer that God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The saints of the Church have explained this tri-unity of God by using such an example from worldly existence. We see three men. “What are they?” we ask. “They are human beings,” we answer. Each is man, possessing the same humanity and the same human nature defined in a certain way: created, temporal, physical, rational, etc. In what they are, the three men are one. But in who they are, they are three, each absolutely unique and distinct from the others. Each man in his own unique way is distinctly a man. One man is not the other, though each man is still human with one and the same human nature and form.

Turning to God, we may ask in the same way: “What is it?” In reply we say that it is God defined as absolute perfection: “ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing, and eternally the same.” We then ask, “Who is it?”, and we answer that it is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In who God is, there are three persons who are each absolutely unique and distinct. Each is not the other, though each is still divine with the same divine nature and form. Therefore, while being one in what they are; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are Three in who they are. And because of what and who they are-namely, uncreated, divine persons-they are undivided and perfectly united in their timeless, spaceless, sizeless, shapeless super-essential existence, as well as in their one divine life, knowledge, love, goodness, power, will, action, etc.

Thus, according to the Orthodox Tradition, it is the mystery of God that there are Three who are divine; Three who live and act by one and the same divine perfection, yet each according to his own personal distinctness and uniqueness. Thus it is said that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each divine with the same divinity, yet each in his own divine way. And as the uncreated divinity has three divine subjects, so each divine action has three divine actors; there are three divine aspects to every action of God, yet the
action remains one and the same.

We discover, therefore, one God the Father Almighty with His one unique Son (Image and Word) and His one Holy Spirit. There is one living God with His one perfect divine Life, who is personally the Son, with His one Spirit of Life. There is one True God with His one divine Truth, who is personally the Son, with His one Spirit of Truth. There is one wise and loving God with His one Wisdom and Love, who is personally the Son, with His one Spirit of Wisdom and Love. The examples could go on indefinitely: the one divine Father personifying every aspect of His divinity in His one divine Son, who is personally activated by His one divine Spirit. We will see the living implications of the Trinity as we survey the activity of God in his actions toward man and the world.
The Holy Trinity in Creation

God the Father created the world through the Son (Word) in the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is present in all that exists, making it to exist by the power of the Spirit. Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine, the universe itself is a revelation of God in the Word and the Spirit. The Word is in all that exists, causing it to be, and the Spirit is in all that exists as the power of its being and life.

This is most evident in God’s special creature, man. Man is made in the image of God, and so he bears within him the unique likeness of God which is eternally and perfectly expressed in the divine Son of God, the Uncreated and Absolute Image of the Father. Thus, man is “logical”; that is, he participates in God’s Logos (the Son and Word) and so is free, knowing, loving, reflecting on the creaturely level the very nature of God as the uncreated Son does on the level of divinity.

Man also is ”spiritual”; he is the special temple of God’s Spirit. The Breath of God’s Life is breathed into him in the most special way. Thus, among creatures man alone is empowered to imitate God and to participate in His life. Man has the competence and ability to become a Son of God, mirroring the eternal Son, reflecting the divine nature because he is inspired by the Holy Spirit as is no other creature. Thus, one saint of the Church has said that for man to be a man, he must have the Spirit of God in him. Only then can he fulfill his humanity; only then can he be made a true Son of God, likened to him who is only-begotten.

On the most basic level of creation, therefore, we see the Trinitarian dimensions of the being and action of God: the Word and the Spirit of God enter man and the world to allow them to be and to become that for which the Father has willed their existence.
The Holy Trinity in Salvation

With man’s failure to fulfill himself in his created uniqueness, God undertakes the special action of salvation. The Father sends forth His Son (Word) and His Spirit in yet another mission. The Word and the Spirit come to the Old Testament saints to make known the Father. The Word, as it were, incarnates himself in the Law (in Hebrew called the “words”) which is inspired by the Spirit. The Spirit inspires the prophets to proclaim the Word of God. Thus, the Law and the Prophets are revelations of God in His Word and His Spirit. They are partial revelations, “shadows” (as the New Testament calls them), prefiguring the total revelation of the “fullness of time” and preparing its coming.

When the time is fulfilled and the world is made ready, the Word and the Spirit come once more-no longer by their mere action and power, but now in their own persons, dwelling personally in the world.

The Word becomes flesh. The only-begotten Son is born as a man, Jesus of Nazareth. And the Spirit who is in him is given to all men to make them also sons of the Father in an eternal development of attaining His perfection by growing forever “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Thus, in the New Testament we have the full epiphany of God, the full manifestation of the Holy Trinity: the Father through the Son in the Spirit to us; and we in the Spirit through the Son to the Father.
The life of the Church is the life of men in the Holy Trinity. In the Church all become one in Christ, all put on the deified humanity of the Son of God. “For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal 3.27). The unity of the Church is the unity of many into one, the one Body of Christ, the one living temple of God, the one people and family of God.

Within the one body there are many individual members. Many “living stones” constitute the living temple. Many brothers and sisters make up the one family of which God is the Father. The unique diversity of each member of the one Body of Christ is guaranteed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Each unique person is inspired by the Spirit to be a true man, a true son of God in his own distinct way. Thus, as the Body of the Church is one in Christ, the one Holy Spirit gives to each member the possibility of fulfilling himself in God and so of being one with all others in calling God “Father” (See 1Cor 12).

The Church, then, as the perfect unity of many persons into one fully united organism, is a reflection of the Trinity itself. For the Church, being many unique and distinct persons, is called to be one mind, one heart, one soul and one body in the one Truth and Love of God Himself. The calling of the Church to be one in all things is the prototype of the vocation of all mankind which was originally created by God as many persons in one nature, ultimately destined by God for ever-more-perfect growth in free unity of Truth and Love, in the life of God’s Kingdom.
The Holy Trinity in the Sacraments

The sacraments of the Church portray the Trinitarian character of the life of God and man. Each person is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the one humanity of Christ. Being baptized, each person is given the “seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” of God in chrismation to be a “christ”, i.e. an anointed son of God to live the life of Christ.

In marriage the unity of two into one makes the new unity a reflection of the unity of the Trinity, and the unity of Christ and the Church. For the family of many persons united in one truth and love is indeed the created manifestation of the one family of God’s Kingdom, and of God Himself, the Blessed Trinity.

In penance once more we renew our new life as sons of the Father through the grace of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, forgiven and reunited into the unity of God in His Church.

In holy unction the Spirit anoints the sufferer to suffer and die in Christ and so to be healed and made alive with the Father for eternity.

The priesthood itself, the ministry of the Church, is nothing other than the concrete manifestation in the Church of the presence of Christ by the same Holy Spirit who makes accessible to all men the action of the Father and the way to everlasting communion in and with Him.

Finally, the “mystery of mysteries,” the Holy Eucharist, is the actual experience of all Christian people led to communion with God the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit through Christ the Son who is present in the Word of the Gospel and in the Passover Meal of His Body and Blood eaten in remembrance of Him. The very movement of the Divine Liturgy-towards the Father through Christ the Word and the Lamb, in the power of the Holy Spirit-is the living sacramental symbol of our eternal movement in and toward God, the Blessed Trinity.

Even Christian prayer is the revelation of the Trinity, accomplished within the third person of the Godhead. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, men can call God “our Father” only because of the Son who has taught them and enabled them to do so. Thus, the true prayer of Christians is not the calling out of our souls in earthly isolation to a far-away God. It is the prayer in us of the divine Son of God made to His Father, accomplished in us by the Holy Spirit who himself is also divine.

For we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba! Father! The Spirit itself bears witness that we are children of God .?.?. for we know not
what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself intercedes for us. (Rom 8.15–16, 26).
The new commandment of Christian life is “to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5.48). It is to love as Christ Himself has loved. “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15.12). Men cannot live the Christian life of divine love in imitation of God’s perfection without the grace of the Holy Spirit. With the power of God, however, what is impossible to men becomes possible. “For with God all things are possible” (Mk 10.27).

The Christian life is the life of God accomplished in men by the Spirit of Christ. Men can live as Christ has lived, doing the things that He did and becoming sons of God in Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, once more, the Christian life is a Trinitarian life.

By the Holy Spirit given by God through Christ, men can share the life, the love, the truth, the freedom, the goodness, the holiness, the wisdom, the knowledge of God Himself. It is this conviction and experience which has caused the development in the Orthodox Church of the affirmation of the fact that the essence of Christianity is “the acquisition of the Holy Spirit” and the “deification” of man by the grace of God, the so-called theosis.

The saints of the Church are unanimous in their claim that Christian life is the participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity in the most genuine and realistic way. It is the life of men becoming divine. In the smallest aspects of everyday life Christians are called to live the life of God the Father, which is communicated to them by Christ, the Son of God, and made possible for them by the Holy Spirit who lives and acts within them.
The Holy Trinity in Eternal Life

At the end of the ages Christ will come in the glory of God the Father, He will make the Father known throughout all creation. The Holy Spirit will fill all things and enable all to be in union with God through Christ for eternity. Again we have the presence and action of the Holy Trinity.

What we know and experience now in the world as members of the Church will be manifested in power in the life of the kingdom to come. The essence of life everlasting is the life of the Holy Trinity, the same eternal life given to us already in the mystery of faith.

And I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb [Christ] are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun .?.?. for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb [Christ] is the light thereof .?.?.

And the throne of God and the Lamb [Christ] shall be in it, and his servants shall see him .?.?. and they shall see his face .?.?.

And the Spirit and the Bride [the Church] say Come! (Rev 21.22; 22.3, 17)

In the eternal life of the Kingdom of God, the Holy Trinity will fill all creation: the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Every man enlightened by Christ in the Spirit will know the invisible Father. “And this is eternal life, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jn 17.3). Such knowledge is possible only by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, “the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1.23; 2.22).

Come O Ye People! Let us adore the Three-Personal Godhead, the Son in the Father with the Holy Spirit.

For before all time the Father gave birth to the Son, co-eternal and co-enthroned with Himself.

And the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified with the Son.
Adoring One Power, One Essence, One Divinity, let us cry:

O Holy God who made all things by the Son through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit!
O Holy Mighty through whom we know the Father and through whom the Holy Spirit comes into the world!
O Holy Immortal, the Spirit, the Comforter, who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son!
O Most Holy Trinity! Glory to Thee!
(The Vespers of Pentecost)
The Bible
The Bible is the book of sacred writings of God’s People of the Old and New Testaments.

The People of God of the Old Testament were the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose name was changed by God to Israel (Gen 32.28). These people are also called the Hebrews. They remain forever as God’s chosen people for from them “according to the flesh” Christ, the Son of God, was born (Rom 9.5). This Son of God is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah-King of Israel and the Savior of the world (See Mt 1–2, Lk 1–2, Rom 8.3, Gal 4.4, Heb 1–5). The Old Testamental writings of the People of Israel remain forever as the Word of God for all who believe in God and wish to know His divine Truth and to do His divine Will.

The People of God of the New Testament are the Christians-those who believe in Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the Living God” and who belong to the Church which He has founded upon faith in Himself (See Mt 16.13–20). The People of God of the New Testament also have their holy writings which bear witness to Christ and which are affirmed to be the Word of God.

Thus, the Bible as a book, or a collection of many books, has two main parts. It has the Old Testament writings which prepare the world for the coming of Christ, and, it has the New Testament writings which testify to the fact that Christ has come and has saved the world.
The Bible is called the written Word of God. This does not mean that the Bible fell from heaven ready made. Neither does this mean that God dictated the Bible word for word to men who were merely His passive instruments. It means that God has revealed Himself as the true and living God to His People, and that as one aspect of His divine self-revelation God inspired His People to produce scriptures, i.e., writings which constitute the true and genuine expressions of His Truth and His Will for His People and for the whole world.

The words of the Bible are human words, for indeed, all words are human. They are human words, however, which God Himself inspired to be written in order to remain as the scriptural witness to Himself. As human words, the words of the Bible contain all of the marks of the men who wrote them, and of the time and the culture in which they were written. Nevertheless, in the full integrity of their human condition and form, the words of the Bible are truly the very Word of God.

The Bible is truly the Word of God in human form because its origin is not in man but in God, Who willed and inspired its creation. In this sense, the Bible is not like any other book. In the Bible, in and through the words of men, one finds the self-revelation of God and can come to a true and genuine knowledge of Him and His will and purpose for man and the world. In and through the Bible, human persons can enter into communion with God.

*All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* *(2Tim 3.16–17).*

It is the faith of the Orthodox Church that the Bible, as the divinely-inspired Word of God in the words of men, contains no formal errors or inner contradictions concerning the relationship between God and the world. There may be incidental inaccuracies of a non-essential character in the Bible. But the eternal spiritual and doctrinal message of God, presented in the Bible in many different ways, remains perfectly consistent, authentic, and true.
The Bible has many different human authors. Some books of the Bible do not indicate in any way who wrote them. Other books bear the names of persons to whom authorship is ascribed. In some cases it is perfectly clear that the indicated author is in fact the person who actually wrote the book with his own hands. In other cases it is as clear that the author of the book had another person do the actual writing of his work in the manner of a secretary. In still other cases it is the Tradition of the Church, and not seldom the opinion of biblical scholars, that the indicated author of a given book of the Bible is not the person (or persons) who wrote it, but the person who originally inspired its writing, whose name is then attached to it as its author.

In a number of instances the Tradition of the Church is not clear about the authorship of certain books of the Bible, and in many cases biblical scholars present innumerable theories about authorship which they then debate among themselves. It is impossible to establish the authorship of any book of the Bible by scholarship, however, since historical and literary studies are relative by nature.

Because the Orthodox Church teaches that the entire Bible is inspired by God Who in this sense is its one original author, the Church Tradition considers the identity of the human authors as incidental to the correct interpretation and proper significance of the books of the Bible for the believing community. In no case would the Church admit that the identity of the author determines the authenticity or validity of a book which is viewed as part of the Bible, and under no circumstances would it be admitted that the value or the proper understanding and use of any book of the Bible in the Church depends on the human writer alone.
Interpretation

The Bible is the book of sacred writings for God’s People, the Church. It was produced in the Church, by and for the Church, under divine inspiration as an essential part of the total reality of God’s covenant relationship with His People. It is the authentic Word of God for those who belong to God’s chosen assembly of believers, to the Israel of old and to the Church of Christ today and forever.

The Bible lives in the Church. It comes alive in the Church and has the most profound divine meaning for those who are members of the community which God has established, in which He dwells, and to which, through His Word and His Spirit, He has given Himself for participation, communion and life everlasting. Outside of the total life and experience of the community of faith, which is the Church of Christ, “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1Tim 3.15) no one can truly understand and correctly interpret the Bible.

First of all you must understand that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2Pet 1.20).

Scholars of the Bible can help men to understand its divine contents and meaning. Through their archeological, historical, and literary studies they can offer much light to the words of the scriptures. But by themselves and by their academic work alone, no men can produce the proper interpretation of the Bible. Only Christ, the living and personal Word of God, Who comes from the Father and lives in His Church through the Holy Spirit, can make God known and can give the right understanding of the scriptural Word of God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known (Jn 1.1–18).

Jesus Christ, the Word of God in human flesh, alone makes God known. And Jesus, besides being Himself the living incarnation of God, the living fulfillment of the law and the prophets (Mt 5.17), is also the One by whom the Bible is rightly interpreted.

And [being risen from the dead] He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?”

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in
all the scriptures the things concerning Himself (Lk?24.25–27).

And He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures.?.?.?.

Jesus Christ remains forever in His Church by the Holy Spirit to open men’s minds to understand the Bible (Jn 14.26, 16.13). Only within Christ’s Church, in the community of faith, of grace, and of truth, can men filled with the Holy Spirit understand the meaning and purpose of the Bible’s holy words. Thus, speaking about those who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, the apostle Paul contends that when they read the Bible a “veil” hides its true meaning from them “because only through Christ is it taken away” (2Cor 3.14).

Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all [i.e. believers in Christ] with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Therefore, ?.?. we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God (2Cor 3.15–4.4).

In the New Testament, Christ not only provides the correct interpretation of the Bible, He also allows the believers themselves to be directly enlightened by the Holy Spirit and to be themselves “the letter from Christ. … written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts” (2Cor 3.3). Thus is fulfilled the prediction of the old covenant that in the time of the Messiah “they all shall be taught of God” by direct divine inspiration and instruction (Jn 6.45, Is 54.13, Ezek 36.26, Jer 31.31, Joel 2.28, Mic 4.2, et al.). It is only within the living Tradition of the Church under the direct inspiration of Christ’s Spirit that the proper interpretation of the Bible can be made.
Old Testament
The first part of the Bible is called the Torah, which means the Law. It is also called the Pentateuch which means the five books. These books are also called the Books of Moses. They include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The events described in these books, from the calling of Abraham to the death of Moses, probably took place sometime in the second millennium before Christ (2000–1200 BC).

The Book of Genesis contains the pre-history of the people of Israel. It begins with the story of the creation of the world, the fall of Adam and Eve and the subsequent, quite sinful, history of the children of Adam. It then tells of God’s call and promise of salvation to Abraham, and the story of Isaac and Jacob, whom God named Israel, ending with the settlement of the twelve tribes of Israel—the families of the twelve sons of Jacob—in Egypt, during the time of Joseph’s favor with the Egyptian Pharaoh. In traditional Church language, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are called the patriarchs.

The Book of Exodus relates the deliverance of the people of Israel by Moses from the slavery in Egypt to which they were subjected after the death of Joseph. It tells of the revelation of God to Moses of His divine name of Yahweh—I AM WHO I AM (3.14). It gives the account of the passover and the exodus, and the journey of the Israelites, led by God, through the desert. Also, in this book is the narrative of God’s gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, and the other laws which God gave to Moses concerning the moral and ritual conduct of His People.

The Book of Leviticus is a further book of laws, primarily concerned with the priestly and ritual offices of the people which were conducted by men taken from the tribe of Levi.

The Book of Numbers concerns itself primarily with a census of the people. It also contains laws given by God to Moses, and further narratives about the movement of God’s People through the wilderness to the land which God promised them.

The Book of Deuteronomy, which means the “second law,” is again primarily a law code in which is told again the story of the Ten Commandments and the institution of the Mosaic laws of moral and ritual conduct. It ends with Moses’ blessing of the people, and his vision of the promised land into which Joshua would lead God’s People after his death, the account of which ends the Books of Moses.

Scholars tell us that the Law was not written by the personal hand of
Moses and that the books show evidence of being the result of a number of oral and written traditions transmitted among the People of Israel, containing material of later periods. Nevertheless, in the Tradition of Israel and of the Christian Church, the Law remains essentially connected with Moses, the great man of God to whom “the Lord used to speak .?.?. face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33.11).

**The Ten Commandments**

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

You shall not kill.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his man servant, or his maidservant, or his ox. or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

*(Ex 20.1–17)***
Following the Law in the Bible are those books which are called historical. They cover the history of Israel from the settlement in the promised land of Canaan to the first centuries before Christ. They include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, as well as 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2Maccabees, which in the English Bible includes 3Maccabees.

In the biblical listing of the Orthodox Church, which is generally that of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel are called 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Kings are called 3 and 4 Kings. Also, the so-called apocryphal books, listed above after Esther, are considered by the Orthodox as genuine parts of the Bible. The Old Testament apocrypha is a body of writings considered by the non-Orthodox to be of close association with the Bible, but not actually part of its official canonical contents.

The Book of Joshua begins with the People of Israel crossing over the Jordan River and into the promised land led by Joshua, the successor of Moses. It tells of the victories of the Israelites over the local inhabitants, and the settlement of the twelve tribes in the territories appointed to each by Moses.

The Book of Judges tells of the period when the Israelites were ruled by the “judges” whom God appointed, the most famous being Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. During this period, the Israelites were often unfaithful to God and given to evil. They were constantly at war with themselves and their neighbors. The book ends with the line: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his eyes” (Judg. 23.25).

The Book of Ruth is a very short story of the Moabite woman whom God blessed to be the wife of Boaz, the great-grandmother of David the King.

The books of Samuel and Kings begin with the birth of Samuel, the prophet whom God chose to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. Until Saul there was no king, for God Himself was to be King for His People. Yet Israel wished to be “like all the nations” and God yielded, with reluctance, to their desires (Sam 8). Saul soon became evil and God sent Samuel to anoint David, the shepherd boy, as king in his place. Saul was enraged and made war against David, but David was merciful to him though he could easily have killed him. During this whole time, the Israelites were constantly at war. Saul finally killed himself rather than be taken in battle, and David became the only king. Having subdued all of his enemies, both within Israel and without, David established a
glorious kingdom centered in Jerusalem, the city which he built. David’s son, Solomon, favored by God with great wisdom, enlarged his father’s kingdom and built the great temple for God on Mount Zion. The kingship of David and Solomon lasted from 1000–422 BC.

No sooner had Solomon died, than the kingdom collapsed. Two rival states emerged, Israel and Judah, which were constantly at war with each other and with those around them. This was a time of great decadence and evil that lasted for about three hundred years and ended with the Babylonian Captivity (587–539 BC). It was the time of Elijah and many of the great prophets of God.

Babylon was captured by the Persians led by Cyrus and Darius who restored the Israelites to their homeland. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the resettlement of the Jews, and of the rebuilding and the reopening of the temple in Jerusalem.

The two books of Chronicles date from this same period and may well have been compiled by Ezra, although scholars consider them as the work of third century authors, perhaps the same who wrote Ezra and Nehemiah. The Chronicles cover the history of Israel from Adam to the time of Cyrus. They contain numerous genealogies, and show particular interest in David and the Kings as well as in the temple and the priesthood. In the Septuagint Bible the Chronicles are called Paralipomena which means “that which has been left out,” thus indicating their purpose as being to fill in what has been excluded from the earlier historical books of the Bible.

The Book of Esther, and those of 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, and 1 and 2Maccabees which, as we have said, are included in the Bible in the Orthodox Church, bring the history of Israel down to New Testament times. They tell of the reorganization of the Jewish community around the temple, the cult and the law as a mere remnant of the great nation, or nations of Israel and Judah, which existed before the time of exile; a struggling remnant constantly in subjugation to external powers. It is mostly the case that the historical books of the Bible were written well after the events described in them actually took place.
Wisdom

The books of the Bible which are commonly called the Wisdom books include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, as well as the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, also called Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon from the so-called apocrypha.

The Book of Job, usually dated sometime at the period of exile, is the story of righteous suffering in which the sufferer pleads his cause before God only to “repent in dust and ashes” (42.6) upon seeing the Lord for himself and being confronted by Him with His own defense of His unspeakable and unfathomable majesty. Selections from this book are read on the first days of Holy Week in the Orthodox Church because they deal with the most profound problem facing believers, the problem of suffering, which is brought to its ultimate completion in Christ who is not merely the most perfect of “suffering innocents,” but indeed the Suffering God in human flesh.

The Book of Proverbs, called the “proverbs of Solomon,” undoubtedly comes from Solomon’s time, although scholars place some of the proverbs at a much later date and tell us that the book was put in its present form only after the Babylonian exile. The proverbs are short sayings concerning the proper conduct of wise and righteous persons. They are read in their entirety at the weekday Vesper services of the Church during Great Lent. Selections from the Proverbs are also read at the vigils of a number of feasts of the Church since for Christians the Wisdom of God is personified and embodied in Christ.

Ecclesiastes is a book of common-sense meditations on the vanity of life in this world and the wisdom of fearing God and keeping His commandments which is “the whole duty of man” (11.3). It is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, the Preacher. Scholars place the book in the third century before Christ, however, and find in its message a hellenistic spirit taken over by the Jews in diaspora among the gentile nations.

The same hellenistic spirit and influences of Greek philosophy, but to a much greater degree, are found in both the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon which come from the same period, the very eve of New Testament times. Of the three books just mentioned, only the Wisdom of Solomon, which is considered to be the last of them written, is read liturgically in the Orthodox Church.

The Song of Solomon-also called the Song of Songs or Canticle of Canticles-is considered by scholars as a Canaanite wedding hymn of uncertain date. In Orthodox Church Tradition it is interpreted as a mystical love story.
between man’s soul and God. Christian saints of East and West, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux, have given such a meaning to the book which is in line with the biblical tradition of viewing the interrelationship of God and His People as that of conjugal love (See Hos, Jer 2–3, Eph 5, Rev 21–22). This book is never read in the liturgical services of the Orthodox Church, although certain lines from it are traditionally sung in the Russian Orthodox Church when the bride approaches her bridegroom in the church before the celebration of their marriage.

Although not technically a “wisdom” book, mention may be made at this point of The Prayer of Manasseh from the so-called apocrypha. This penitential prayer of the King of Judah, which for the Orthodox is part of the Bible, is included in the Great Compline service of the Orthodox Church.
The Psalms are the divinely-inspired songs of the People of Israel. They are traditionally called the “psalms of David,” although many of them most certainly come from other authors of much later times. The enumeration and the wording of the psalms differ in various scriptural traditions. The Orthodox Church follows the Septuagint version of the psalter and for this reason the numbers and not seldom the texts of certain psalms are different in Orthodox service books from what they are in the Bibles which are translated from the Hebrew.

In the Orthodox Church, the entire psalter is divided into twenty sections and is chanted each week in those monasteries and churches which perform the entire liturgical office. Various psalms and verses of psalms are used in all liturgical services of the Orthodox Church (see Worship).

Virtually all states of man’s soul before God are found expressed in the psalms: praising, thanking, blessing, rejoicing, petitioning, repenting, lamenting, questioning and even complaining. Many of the psalms are centered in the cultic rituals of the Jerusalem temple and the Davidic kingship. Others recount God’s saving actions in Israelite history. Still others carry prophetic utterances about events yet to come, particularly those of the messianic age. Thus, for example, we find Christ quoting Psalm 8 in reference to His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; Psalm 110 in reference to his own mysterious divinity; and Psalm 22, when, hanging upon the cross, He cries out with the words of the psalm in which is described His crucifixion and his ultimate salvation of the world (See Mt 21.16, 22.44, 27.46).

In the Orthodox Church all of the psalms are understood as having their deepest and most genuine spiritual meaning in terms of Christ and His mission of eternal salvation. Thus, for example, the psalms which refer to the king are sung in the Church in reference to Christ’s exaltation and glorification at the right hand of God. The psalms which refer to Israel’s deliverance are sung in reference to Christ’s redemption of the whole world. The psalms calling for victory over the enemies in battle refer to the only real Enemy, the devil, and all of his wicked works which Christ has come to destroy. Babylon thus signifies the realm of Satan, and Jerusalem, the eternal Kingdom of God. The psalms which lament the innocent suffering of the righteous are sung as the plea of the Lord Himself and all those with Him who are the “poor and needy” who will rise up to rule the earth on the day of God’s terrible judgment. Thus, the psalter remains forever as the divinely-inspired song book of prayer and
worship for all of God’s People, and most especially for those who belong to the Messiah whose words the psalms are in their deepest and most divine significance.

*Liturgical Division of the Psalter (Kathisma)*

Psalms 1–8
Psalms 9–17
Psalms 18–24
Psalms 25–32
Psalms 33–37
Psalms 38–46
Psalms 47–55
Psalms 56–64
Psalms 65–70
Psalms 71–77
Psalms 78–85
Psalms 86–91
Psalms 92–101
Psalms 102–105
Psalms 106–109
Psalms 110–118
Psalm 119
Psalms 120–134
Psalms 135–143
Psalms 144–150
There are sixteen books in the Bible called by the names of the prophets although not necessarily written by their hands. A prophet is one who speaks by the direct inspiration of God; only secondarily does the word mean one who foretells the future. Four of the prophetic books are those of the so-called major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Most scholars believe that the book of Isaiah is the work of more than one author. It covers the period from the middle of the eighth century before Christ to the time of the Babylonian exile. It tells of the impending doom upon the people of God for their wickedness and infidelity to the Lord. And it foretells the mercy of God upon His People, as well as the gentiles, in the time of His redemption in the messianic age. The famous vision of the prophet in chapter six is included in the eucharistic prayers of the Orthodox Church. Of central importance in Isaiah are the prophecies in the first part of the book, especially chapters six to twelve, concerning the coming of the Messiah-King; and the prophecies at the end of the book, about the salvation of all creation in the suffering servant of the Lord. The entire book of Isaiah is read in the Church during Great Lent, and many selections are read at the vigils of the great feasts of the Church. In the New Testament scriptures there are innumerable quotations of the prophecy of Isaiah made in reference to John the Baptist, and most especially to Christ Himself.

The book of Jeremiah covers the period of the seventh century before Christ and, like Isaiah, prophecies the Lord’s wrath upon His sinful people. Jeremiah, a most reluctant prophet, suffered greatly at the hands of the people and was constantly persecuted for his proclamation of the Word of the Lord. The book is referred to many times in the New Testament. The messianic prophecies of salvation in Jeremiah are often read in the festal services of the Church. The books of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah from the apocrypha go together with this prophetic book in the Orthodox version of the Bible.

The book of Ezekiel, who was a priest as well as a prophet, is dated at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Once again, the prophet is directly concerned with God’s righteous anger over the sins of His People, making specific reference to the presence-and the departure-of the Lord’s glory in the Jerusalem Temple. Ezekiel, however, like all of the prophets, is not without hope in the mercy of God. The moving passage about God’s resurrection of the “dry bones” of dead Israel through the breathing in of His Holy Spirit is read over the tomb of Christ at the Great Saturday service of the Orthodox Church.
The prophecy of Daniel, read in the Church at the vigil of Easter, is concerned with the faithfulness of the Jews to their God in the time of forced apostasy. Scholars consider this book among the latest written in the Old Testament, much after the time of the Babylonian captivity in which the story is placed. Central among the book’s messages is the redemption of Israel in the victorious coming of the heavenly Son of Man, who, in the New Testament, is identified with Christ. It is the apocalyptic character of the book-apocalyptic meaning that which refers to the final revelation of God and His ultimate judgment over all creation-which accounts for the placement of Daniel at a date close to New Testament times. The Song of the Three Youths which goes together with Daniel and which is placed by the non-Orthodox among the apocryphal writings, forms a genuine part of the Bible in the Orthodox Church, as do the books of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon, also part of Daniel. The Song of the Youths is part of the matinal office in the Orthodox Church.

Among the books of the so-called minor prophets, Amos and Hosea are the earliest, coming, like the first part of Isaiah, from the middle of the eighth century before Christ. Amos is the great proclaimer of the justice of God against the injustices of His People. Hosea tells of the unwavering love of God which will ultimately triumph over the adulterous harlotry of His People who unfaithfully lust after false gods. The book of Micah dates from approximately the same period and is very similar in content to Isaiah. In Micah is found the prophecy of the Savior’s birth in Bethlehem (5.2–4).

Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah are dated in the later part of the seventh century before Christ. They imitate Jeremiah, prophesying the wrath of a good and just God upon a wicked and unjust people. Like Jeremiah, they also foretell the restoration of Israel by the merciful Lord.

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and perhaps Obadiah, belong to the period of the return of God’s People from exile. Zechariah is famous for the oracle of the appearance of the Savior-King, “triumphant and victorious as he is, humble and riding on an ass...” (9.9) which referred to Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Malachi, who is ferocious against the sins of the priests, is the last of the prophets before John the Baptist whose coming he foretells, as did the others, to usher in the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (3.1, 4.5) when “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings” (4.2), a reference made, according to Christians, explicitly to their Lord.

The prophecy of Joel, quoted by Saint Peter in reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), belongs to the apocalyptic style of Daniel as it speaks of the final acts of God in the days of the Lord’s “great and terrible” appearance when He will execute justice and restore the
fortunes of His People, delivering “all who call upon the name of the Lord” (2.31–32).

The book of Jonah is most likely a prophetic allegory intended to foretell the Lord’s salvation of the gentiles in the time of His final messianic presence in the world. It was probably written in post-exilic times. It is read in its entirety in the Church at the Easter vigil of Great Saturday as it was directly referred to by Christ Himself as the sign of His messianic mission in the world (Mt 12.38, Lk 11.29).

It must be mentioned at this point, that the variation in names found in English for the prophets, as well as for other persons and places in the scriptures, comes from the different Hebrew and Greek language traditions of the Bible. The Orthodox sources most often tend to follow the Greek. Thus, for example, Elijah becomes Elias, Hosea becomes Osee, Habakkuk becomes Avvakum, Jonah becomes Jonas, etc. Once again we must mention as well that according to Christians, the entire Old Testament finds it deepest meaning and its most perfect fulfillment in the coming of Christ and in the life of His Church.
New Testament
The first books of the New Testament scriptures are the four gospels of Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The word gospel literally means good news or glad tidings. The gospels tell of the life and teaching of Jesus, but none of them is a biography in the classical sense of the word. The gospels were not written merely to tell the story of Jesus. They were written by the disciples of Christ, who were filled with the Holy Spirit after the Lord’s resurrection, to bear witness to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah—Christ of Israel and the Savior of the world.

In the Orthodox Church, it is not the entire Bible, but only the book of the four gospels which is perpetually enthroned upon the altar table in the church building. This is a testimony to the fact that the life of the Church is centered in Christ, the living fulfillment of the law and the prophets, who abides perpetually in the midst of His People, the Church, through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The gospels of Saints Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels, which means that they “look the same”. These three gospels are very similar in content and form and are most probably interrelated textually in some way, exactly how being an ongoing debate among scriptural scholars. They each were written sometime in the beginning of the second half of the first century, and the texts of each of them, as that of St John, have come down to us in Greek, the language in which they were written, with the possible exception of Matthew which may have been written originally in Aramaic, the language of Jesus.

Each of the synoptic gospels follows basically the same narrative. Each begins with Jesus’ baptism by John and His preaching in Galilee. Each centers on the apostles’ confession of Jesus as the promised Messiah of God, with the corresponding event of the transfiguration, and the announcement by Christ of His need to suffer and die and be raised again on the third day. And each concludes with the account of the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord.
The gospel of Saint Mark is the shortest, and perhaps the first written, of the gospels, although this is a matter of debate. Its author was not one of the twelve apostles and it is the common view that this gospel presents the “tradition” of Saint Peter. The gospel begins immediately with Jesus’ baptism, the call of the apostles, and the preaching of Jesus accompanied by his works of forgiveness and healing. In this gospel, as in all of them, Jesus is revealed from the very beginning by His authoritative words and His miraculous works as the Holy One of God, the divine Son of Man, Who was crucified and is risen from the dead, thus bringing to the world the Kingdom of God.
The gospel of Saint Matthew, who was one of the twelve apostles, is considered by some to be the earliest written gospel. There is also the opinion that it was originally written in Aramaic and not in the Greek text which has remained in the Church. It is a commonly-held view that the gospel of Saint Matthew was written for the Jewish Christians to show from the scriptures of the Old Testament, that Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham, is truly the Christ, the bearer of God’s Kingdom to men.

The gospel of Saint Matthew abounds with references to the Old Testament. It begins with the genealogy of Jesus from Abraham and the story of Christ’s birth from the Virgin in Bethlehem. Then recounting the baptism of Jesus and the temptations in the wilderness, it proceeds to the call of the disciples and the preaching and works of Christ.

The gospel of Saint Matthew contains the longest and most detailed record of Christ’s teachings in the so-called Sermon on the Mount (5–7). Generally, in the Orthodox Church, it is the text of the gospel of Saint Matthew which is used most consistently in liturgical worship, e.g., the version of the beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer. Only this gospel contains the commission of the Lord to His apostles after the resurrection, “to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28.19).
The gospel of Saint Luke, who was not one of the twelve apostles but one of the original disciples, a physician known for his association with the apostle Paul, claims to be an “orderly account...delivered by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesess and ministers of the Word” (1:1–4). Together with the book of Acts, also written by Saint Luke for a certain Theophilus, this gospel forms the most complete “history” of Christ and the early Christian Church that we have.

The gospel of Saint Luke, alone among the four canonical gospels, has a complete account of the birth of both Jesus and John the Baptist. Traditionally, the source for these events recorded by Saint Luke is considered to be Mary, the mother of Christ. We must mention at this point that in addition to the four gospels called “canonical” in that they alone have been accepted by the Church as genuine witnesses to the true life and teachings of Christ, there exist many other writings from the early Christian era which tell about Jesus, and especially His childhood, which have not been accepted by the Church as authentic and true. These writings are often called apocryphal (not to be confused with the so-called apocrypha of the Old Testament), or the pseudoepigrapha which literally means “false writings.”

Saint Luke’s gospel is noted for the detail of its narrative, and especially for its record of Christ’s great concern for the poor and for the sinful. Certain parables warning against the dangers of riches and self-righteousness, and revealing the great mercy of God to sinners, are found only in the gospel of Saint Luke, for example, those of the publican and the pharisee, the prodigal son, and Lazarus and the rich man, There is also a very great emphasis in this gospel on the Kingdom of God which Christ has brought to the world and which He gives to those who continue with Him in His sufferings.

The post-resurrection account of the Lord’s presence to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in which only one of the disciples is named, an account found only in Saint Luke’s gospel, gives rise to the tradition that the unnamed disciple was Luke himself.
The gospel of Saint John is very different from the synoptic gospels. It is undoubtedly the latest written, being the work of the beloved disciple and apostle of the Lord at the end of his life near the close of the first century. In most Orthodox versions of the Bible, this gospel is printed before the others as it is the one which is first read in the Church’s lectionary beginning at the divine Liturgy on Easter night.

The gospel of Saint John begins with its famous prologue which identifies Jesus of Nazareth with the divine Word of God of the Old Testament, the Word of God Who was ‘in the beginning with God,’ Who ‘is God,’ the One through Whom ‘all things were made’ (1.1–3). This Word of God ‘became flesh,’ and as Jesus, the Son of God, He makes God known to men and grants to all who believe in Him the power of partaking of His own fulness of grace and truth and of becoming themselves ‘children of God’ (1.14ff).

From the first pages of this gospel, following the prologue, in the account of Jesus’ baptism and His calling of the apostles, Jesus is presented as God’s only begotten Son, the Messiah and the Lord. Throughout the gospel, He is identified as well, in various ways, with the God of the Old Testament, receiving the divine name of I AM together with the Yahweh of Moses and the prophets and psalms.

The gospel of Saint John, following the prologue, may be divided into two main parts. The first part is the so-called book of ‘signs,’ the record of a number of Jesus’ miracles with detailed ‘commentary’ about their significance in signifying Him as Messiah and Lord (2–11). Because the “signs” all have a deeply spiritual and sacramental significance for believers in Christ, with almost all of them dealing with water, wine, bread, light, the salvation of the nations, the separation from the synagogue, the forgiveness of sins, the healing of infirmities and the resurrection of the dead, it is sometimes thought that the gospel of Saint John was expressly written as a ‘theological gospel’ for those who were newly initiated into the life of the Church through the sacramental mysteries of baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the eucharist. In any case, because of the contents of the book of ‘signs,’ as well as the long discourses of Christ about His relationship to God the Father, the Holy Spirit and the members of His faithful flock, in the latter part of the gospel, the apostle and evangelist John has traditionally been honored in the Church with the title of The Theologian.

The latter half of Saint John’s gospel concerns the passion of Christ and its
meaning for the world (11–21). Here most explicitly, in long discourses coming from the mouth of the Lord Himself, the doctrines of Christ’s person and work are most deeply explained. As we have just mentioned, here Christ relates Himself to God the Father, to the Holy Spirit and to His community of believers in clear and certain terms. He is one with God, Who as Father is greater than He, Whose words He speaks, Whose works He accomplishes and Whose will He performs. And through the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father to bear witness to Him in the world, He remains abiding forever in those who are His through their faith and co-service of God.

The account of the passion in Saint John’s gospel differs slightly from that of the synoptic gospels and is considered by many, in this instance, to be a certain clarification or correction. There are also accounts of the resurrection given which are recorded only in this gospel. The final chapter of the book is traditionally considered to be an addition following the first ending of the gospel, to affirm the reinstatement of the apostle Peter to the leadership of the apostolic community after his three denials of the Lord at the time of His passion. It may have been a necessary inclusion to offset a certain lack of confidence in Saint Peter by some members of the Church.

In the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, a tradition often expressed in the Church’s iconography, the four gospels are considered to be symbolized in the images of the ‘four living creatures’ of the biblical apocalypse, the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle, with the most classical interpretation connecting Matthew with the man, Luke with the ox, Mark with the lion and John with the eagle (Ezek 1.10, Rev 4.7). The four gospels, taken together, but each with its own unique style and form, remain forever as the scriptural center of the Orthodox Church.
The book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by Saint Luke toward the end of the first century, as the second part of his history for Theophilus about Christ and His Church. The book begins with an account of the Lord’s ascension and the election of Matthias to take the place of Judas as a member of the twelve apostles. Then follows the record of the events of the day of Pentecost when the promised Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Christ empowering them to preach the gospel of new life in the resurrected Savior to the people of Jerusalem.

The first chapters of the book tell the story of the first days of the Church in Jerusalem and provide us with a vivid picture of the primitive Christian community being built up through the work of the apostles. It tells of the people being baptized and endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit through repentance and faith in Christ, and continuing steadfast in their devotion “to the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship (communion), to the breaking of the bread and the prayers” (2.42).

Following the description of the martyrdom of the deacon Stephen, the first to give his life for Christ, Acts tells of the conversion of the persecutor Saul into the zealous apostle Paul, and records the events by which the first gentiles were brought into the Church by the direct action of God. There then follows an account of the first missionary activities of Saints Paul and Barnabas, and the famous fifteenth chapter in which the first council of the Church in Jerusalem is described, the council which established the conditions under which the gentiles could enter the Church relative to the Mosaic law which all of the Jewish Christians were then keeping.

The final half of the book describes the missionary activities of the apostle Paul through Syria and Cilicia, into Macedonia and Greece and back again through Ephesus to Jerusalem. It then gives the account of Saint Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem, and his defense before the authorities there. The book ends with the description of Saint Paul’s journey to Rome for trial, closing with the information that “he lived there two whole years .?.?. preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord quite openly and unhindered” to those who came to him in his house of arrest (28.30).

The book of the Acts of the Apostles forms the apostolic lectionary of the Church’s Liturgy during the time from Easter to Pentecost. Selections from it are also read at other feasts of the Church, e.g., Saint Stephen’s Day. It is also the custom of the Church to read the book of Acts over the tomb of Christ on
Good Friday, and over the body of a deceased priest at the wake prior to his burial.
Letters of Saint Paul

Fourteen letters, also called epistles, which are ascribed to the apostle Paul are included in the holy scriptures of the New Testament Church. We will comment on the letters in the order in which they are normally printed in the English Bible and read in the Church’s liturgical year.
The letter to the Romans was written by Saint Paul from Corinth sometime at the end of the fifties of the first century. It is one of the most formal and detailed expositions of the doctrinal teaching of Saint Paul that we have. It is not one of the easier parts of the scripture to understand without careful study.

In this letter, the apostle Paul writes about the relationship of the Christian faith to the unbelievers, particularly the unbelieving Jews. The apostle upholds the validity and holiness of the Mosaic law while passionately defending the doctrine that salvation comes only in Christ, by faith and by grace. He discourses powerfully about the meaning of union with Christ through baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He urges great humility on the part of the gentle Christians toward Israel, and calls with great pathos and love for the regrafting of the unbelieving Jews to the genuine community of God which is in Christ Who is Himself from Israel “according to the flesh” (9.5) for the sake of its salvation and that of all the world.

The end of the letter is a long exhortation concerning the proper behavior of Christians, finally closing with a long list of personal greetings from the apostle and his co-workers, including one Tertius, the actual writer of the letter, to many members of the Roman Church, urging, once more, steadfastness of faith.

The letter to the Romans is read in the Church’s liturgical lectionary during the first weeks following the feast of Pentecost. Selections from it are also read on various other liturgical occasions, one of which, for example, is the sacramental liturgy of baptism and chrismation (6.3–11).
First Corinthians

The first Christian community in Corinth, was noted neither for its inner peace and harmony, nor for the exemplary moral behavior of its members. The two letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians which we have in the New Testament, written in the mid-fifties of the first century, are filled not only with doctrinal and ethical teachings, the answers to concrete questions and problems, but also with no little scolding and chastisement by the author, as well as numerous defenses of his own apostolic authority. These letters clearly demonstrate the fact that the first Christians were not all saints, and that the early Church experienced no fewer difficulties than the Church does today or at any time in its history in the world.

After a short greeting and word of gratitude to God for the grace given to the Corinthians, the first letter begins with Saint Paul’s appeal for unity in the Church. There are deep disagreements and dissensions among the members of the community, and the apostle urges all to be fully united in the crucified Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit in Whom there can be no divisions at all (1–3) He then defends his apostleship generally and his fatherhood of the Corinthian Church in particular, both of which were being attacked by some members of the Church. (4) Next, he deals with the problem on sexual immorality among members of the community and the matter of their going to court before pagan judges (5–6). After this comes Saint Paul’s counsel about Christian marriage and his advice concerning the eating of food offered to idols (7–8). Then once again he defends his apostleship, stressing the fact that he has always supported himself materially and has burdened no one.

The divisions and troubles in the Corinthian community were most concretely expressed at the eucharistic gatherings of the Church. There was general disrespect and abuse of the Body and Blood of Christ, and the practice had developed where each clique was having its own separate meal. These divisions were caused in no small part by the fact that some of the community had certain spiritual gifts, for example, that of praising God in unknown tongues, which they considered as signs of their superiority over others. There also was trouble caused by women in the Church, who were using their new freedom in Christ for disruption and disorder.

In his letter Saint Paul urges respect and discernment for the holy eucharist as the central realization of the unity of the Church, coming from Christ, Himself. He warns against divisions in the Church because of the various spiritual gifts, urging the absolute unity of the Church as the one body
of Christ which has many members and many gifts for the edification of all. He insists on the absolute primacy and superiority of love over every virtue and gift, without which all else is made void and is destroyed. He tempers those who had the gift of praising God in strange tongues, a gift which was obviously presenting a most acute problem, and calls for the exercise of all gifts and most particularly the simple and direct teaching of the Word of God in the Church. He appeals to the women to maintain themselves in dress and behavior proper to Christians. And finally he insists that “all things should be done decently and in order” (10–14).

The first letter to the Corinthians ends with a long discourse about the meaning of the resurrection of the dead in Christ which is the center of the Christian faith and preaching. The apostle closes with an appeal for money for the poor, and promising a visit, he once again insists on the absolute necessity of strength of faith, humble service and most especially, love.
Second Corinthians

The entire second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians is a detailed enumeration and description of his sufferings and trials in the apostolate of Christ. In this letter, the apostle once again defends himself before the Corinthians, some of whom were reacting very badly to him and to his guidance and instruction in the faith. He defends the “pain” that, he is causing these people because of his exhortations and admonitions to them concerning their beliefs and. Behavior, and he calls them to listen to him and to follow him in his life in Christ.

Of special interest in the second letter, in addition to the detailed record of Saint Paul’s activities and all that he had to bear for the gospel of Christ, is the doctrine of the apostle concerning the relationship of Christians with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church. Worthy of special note also, is the apostolic teaching about the significance of the scriptures for the Christians (3–4) and the teaching about contributions, of money for the work of the Church. (9) The closing line of the second letter to the Corinthians, which, like all epistles, forms part of the Church’s lectionary, is used in the divine liturgies of the Orthodox Church during the eucharistic canon.

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God (the Father), and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.* (2Corinthians 13.14)

**Saint Paul’s Hymn to Love**

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So
faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

*(1Corinthians 13)*
Galatians

The letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians, most likely the southern Galatians (Lystra, Derbe, Iconium), was sent from Antioch in the early fifties. In this most vehement epistle, the apostle Paul expresses his profound anger and distress at the fact that the Galatians, who had received the genuine gospel of Christ from him, had been seduced into practicing “another gospel” which held that man’s salvation requires the ritual observance of the Old Testament law, including the practice of circumcision.

The heart of this letter to the “foolish Galatians” (3.1) is Saint Paul’s uncompromising defense of the fact -that his gospel is not his but Christ’s, the gospel of salvation not by the law, but by grace and faith in the crucified Savior Who gives the Holy Spirit to all who believe. The apostle stresses the fact that in Christ and the Spirit there is freedom from slavery to the flesh, slavery to the elemental spirits of the universe, and slavery to the ritual requirements of the law through which no one can be saved. For the true “Israel of God” (6.16) in Christ and the Spirit, there is perfect freedom, divine sonship and a new creation. Those “who are led by the Spirit .?.?. are not under the law” (5.18).

The letter to the Galatians is included in the Church’s liturgical lectionary, with the famous lines from the fourth chapter being the epistle reading of the Orthodox Church at the divine liturgy of Christmas (4.4–7). This letter also provides the Church with the verse which is sung at the solemn procession of the liturgy of baptism and chrismation, and which also replaces the Thrice-Holy Hymn at the divine liturgies of the great feasts of the Church which were once celebrations of the entrance of the catechumens into the sacramental life of the Church (see Worship, “Baptism”).

For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3.27).
The letters of Saint Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians are called the captivity epistles since they are held to have been written by the apostle from his house arrest in Rome around 60 A.D. In some early sources, the letter to the Ephesians does not contain the words “who are at Ephesus,” thus leading some to think of the epistle as a general letter meant for all of the churches.

Saint Paul’s purpose in the letter to the Ephesians is to share his “insight into the mystery of Christ” (3.4) and “to make all men see what is the plan of the for ages in God Who created all things .?..” (3.9) In the first part of the letter, the apostle attempts to describe the mystery. He uses many words in long sentences, overflowing with adjectives, in his effort to accomplish his task. Defying a neat outline, the main points of the message are clear.

The plan of God for Christ, before the foundation of the world, is “to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1.10) The plan is accomplished through the crucifixion, resurrection and glorification of Christ at the right hand of God. The fruits of God’s plan are given freely to all men by God’s free gift of grace, to Jews and gentiles alike, who believe-in the Lord. They are given in the One Holy Spirit, in the One Church of Christ, “which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (1.23). In the Church of Christ, with each part of the body knit together and functioning properly in harmony and unity, man grows up in truth and in love “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4.12–16). He gains access to God the Father through Christ in the Spirit thus becoming “a holy temple of the Lord .?.?. a dwelling place of God” (2.18–22), “filled with all the fullness, of God” (3.19).

In the second part of the letter, Saint Paul spells out the implications of the “great mystery .?.?. Christ and the Church” (5.32). He urges sound doctrine and love, a true conversion of life, a complete end to all impurity and immorality and a total commitment to spiritual battle. He addresses the Church as a whole; husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves. He calls all to “put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (4.24).

The letter to the Ephesians finds its place in the liturgical lectionary of the Church, with the well-known lines from the sixth chapter being the epistle reading at the sacramental celebration of marriage (5.21–33).
As we have mentioned, the letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians was written at the time of his confinement in Rome. It is a most intimate letter of the apostle to those whom he sincerely loved in the Lord, those who were his faithful partners in the gospel “from the first day until now” (1.5). In this letter, Saint Paul exposes the most personal feelings of his mind and heart as he sees the approaching end of his life. He also praises the Philippian Church as a model Christian community in every way, encouraging and inspiring its beloved members whom he calls his “joy and crown” (4.1) with prayers that their “love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment,” so that they “may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with all the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ for the praise and glory of God” (1.10–11).

Of special significance in the letter to the Philippians, besides the mention of “bishops and deacons” (1.1), which hints at the developing structure of the Church, is Saint Paul’s famous passage about the self-emptying (kenosis) of Christ which is the epistle reading for the feasts of the Nativity and Dormition of the Theotokos in the Orthodox Church, and which has been so influential for Christian spiritual life, particularly in Russia.

**Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant (slave), and being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.**

Like all Pauline epistles, the letter to Phillipians has its place in the Church’s normal lectionary.
Colossians

It is believed that the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians, written, as we have said, from Rome, was expressly intended to instruct the faithful in Colossae in the true Christian gospel in the face of certain heretical teachings which were threatening the community there. It appears that some form of gnosticism and angel worship had crept into the Colossian Church.

Gnosticism was an early Christian heresy which, in all of its various forms, denied the goodness of material, bodily reality, and therefore, the genuine incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ in human flesh. It made of the Christian faith a type of dualistic, spiritualistic philosophy which pretended to provide a secret knowledge of the divine by way of intellectual mysticism. Gnosis, as a word, means knowledge.

In this letter, Saint Paul stresses that he indeed wishes the Colossians to be “filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (1.9), and that indeed it is true that in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2.3). The real point of the Christian gospel, however, is that in Christ, through whom and for whom all things were created (1.16), “the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily” (2.9). It is only through the incarnation of Christ and His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, in the most real way, that salvation is given to men. It is given in the Church, through baptism; the Church which is itself Christ’s “body” (1.24, 2.19).

Thus, the apostle insists to the Colossians that Christ is superior to all angels, having “disarmed the principalities and powers (i.e., the angels)... triumphing over them on the cross” (2.15). He warns them, therefore “to see to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions, according to the elemental spirits of the uni-verse and not according to Christ” (2.8). He warns as well that they should “let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind .??.” (2.18)

The content and style of the letter to the Colossians is very similar to Ephesians. Following the doctrinal instructions of the letter, their spiritual implications for the believer are spelled out with moral exhortations for a life lived in conformity to Christ and in total service to Him. Like the other letters of Saint Paul, the letter to Colossians is read in its turn in the liturgical services of the Church.
It is generally agreed that Saint Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians are the first of the apostle’s epistles, and are also the earliest written documents of the New Testament scriptures. They were most likely sent from Corinth, at the end of the forties, in response to the report brought from Timothy that certain difficulties had arisen in the Thessalonian Church about the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

In both of his letters to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul repeats the same doctrine. He urges patient steadfastness of faith and continual love and service to the Lord and the brethren in the face of the many persecutions and trials which were confronting the faithful. He affirms that the Lord will come “like a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5.2) when all satanic attacks against the faith have been completed. But in the meantime, the Christians must continue “to do their work in quietness” (2 Thess 3.12) without panic or fear, and without laziness or idleness into which some had fallen because of their belief in the Lord’s immediate return.

Concerning the resurrection from the dead, the apostle teaches that as Jesus truly rose, so will all “those who have fallen asleep” (Thess 4.14).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven .?.?. and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord (1 Thess. 4.16–17).

This entire passage (1 Thess 4.16–17) is the epistle reading at the funeral liturgy in the Orthodox Church. Both letters to the Thessalonians are included in the liturgical lectionary during the Church year.
The letters of Saint Paul to Timothy and Titus are called the pastoral epistles. Although some modern scholars consider these letters as documents of the early second century, primarily because of the developed picture of Church structure which they present, Orthodox Church Tradition defends the letters as authentic epistles of Saint Paul from his house arrest in Rome in the early sixties of the first century.

The two letters to Timothy are of similar contents, having the same purpose to teach “how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1Tim 3.15).

In his first letter to Timothy, Saint Paul urges his “true child in the faith” (1.2), who was in Ephesus, to “wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience” (1.18–19). He urges that prayers “be made for all men” by the Church (2.1) and that “good doctrine” be preserved and propagated, most particularly in times of difficulties and defections from the true faith (4.6, 6.3). In the letter, the apostle counsels all in proper Christian belief and behavior, giving special advice, both professional and personal, to his co-worker Timothy whom he counsels not to neglect the gift which he received “when the elders laid their hands” upon him (4.14).

The main body of the first letter to Timothy describes in detail the requirements for the pastoral offices of bishop, deacon and presbyter (priest or elder), and offers special instructions concerning the widows and slaves. The rules concerning the pastoral ministries have remained in the Orthodox Church, being formally incorporated into its canonical regulations.

Of special note in the first letter to Timothy is Saint Paul’s confession of sinfulness which has become part of the pre-communion prayers of the Orthodox Church.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first (1Tim 1.15).

In his second letter to Timothy, Saint Paul again urges his “beloved child” to “rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (1.2, 6). He stresses the absolute necessity for “sound doctrine” in the Church, calling for a firm struggle against “godless chatter” and the “disputing over words” (2.14,16) particularly in “times of stress” when the gospel is attacked by men of “corrupt mind and counterfeit faith” who are merely “holding the form of religion but denying the power of it” (3.1–8). As in his first letter, the apostle specifically mentions the need for the firm adherence to
the scriptures (3.15).

The expression of Saint Paul in this letter, that the leaders of the Church must be found “rightly handling the word of truth” (2.15), has become the formal liturgical prayer of the Orthodox Church for its bishops.
Saint Paul’s letter to Titus in Crete is a shorter version of his two letters to Timothy. The author outlines the moral requirements of the bishop in the Church and urges the pastor always to “teach what befits sound doctrine” (1.9, 2.1). It tells how both the leaders and the faithful members of the Church should behave.

Sections of the letter to Titus about the appearance of “the grace of God .?.?. for the salvation of all men .?.?. by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (2.11–3.7) comprise the Church’s epistle reading for the feast of the Epiphany.

Generally speaking, each of the pastoral epistles is included in the Church’s continual epistle lectionary, coming in the Church year just before the beginning of Great Lent.
In his letter to Philemon written from his Roman imprisonment, Saint Paul appeals to his “beloved fellow worker” (1.1) to receive back his runaway slave Onesimus who had become a Christian, “no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother .?.?. both in the flesh and in the Lord.” (16) He asks Philemon to “receive him as you would receive me” (17) and offers to pay whatever debts Onesimus may have towards his master.
Virtually none of the modern scriptural scholars think that Saint Paul is the author of the letter to the Hebrews. The question of the exact authorship of this epistle was questioned early in Church Tradition with the general consensus being that the inspiration and doctrine of the letter is certainly Saint Paul’s, but that perhaps the actual writer of the letter was one of Saint Paul’s disciples. The letter is dated in the second half of the first century and is usually read in the Church as being “of the holy apostle Paul.”

The letter to the Hebrews begins with the clear teaching about the divinity of Christ, affirming that God, Who “in many and various ways .?.?. spoke of old to our fathers” has “in these last days .?.?. spoken to us by a Son, Whom He appointed the heir of all things, through Whom He also created the world” (1.1–2).

He (the Son of God) reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature (or person), upholding the universe by the word of His power (1.3).

Christ, the divine Son of God, was made man as the “apostle and high priest of our confession” (3.1), “the great shepherd of the sheep” (13: 20), “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (12.2), whom God sent to “taste of death for everyone” (2.9).

He Himself .?.?. partook of the same nature (of human flesh and blood), that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that.is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage .?.?. (being) made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful highpriest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted (2.14–18).

The main theme of the letter to the Hebrews is to compare the sacrifice of Christ to the sacrifices of the priests of the Old Testament. The Old Testament priests made continual sacrifices of animals for themselves and the sins of the people, entering into the sanctuary of the Jerusalem temple. Christ makes the perfect and eternal sacrifice of Himself upon the cross, once and for all, for the sins of the people and not for Himself, entering into the heavenly sanctuary, not made by hands, “to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” (9.24). This is the perfect and all fulfilling sacrifice of the one perfect high priest of God Who was prefigured in the mysterious person of Melchizedek, in the Old Testament, as well as in the ritual priesthood of the Levites under the old law which was “but a shadow of the good things to come” and not yet the “true form of these
realities” (10.1, See Gen 14, Ex 29, Lev 16, Ps 110).

Through the perfect sacrifice of Christ, the believers receive forgiveness of sins and are “made perfect” (11.40), being led and disciplined by God Himself Who gives His Holy Spirit that through their sufferings in imitation of Christ, His people “may share in His holiness” (12.10). This is effected, once again, not by the ritual works of the law which “made nothing perfect” (7.19), but by faith in God, without which “it is impossible to please Him” (11.6).

The letter to the Hebrews, which is read in the Orthodox Church at the divine liturgies during Great Lent, ends with the author’s appeal to all to “be grateful for receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken” and to “offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire” (12.28). It calls as well for love, faith, purity, generosity, strength, obedience and joy among all who believe in “Jesus Christ (Who) is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (13.8).
According to Church Tradition, the letter of James was written not by either of the apostles, but by the “brother of the Lord” who was the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15, Gal 1.19). The letter is addressed to the “twelve tribes in the dispersion” which most probably means the Christians not of the Jerusalem Church.

The main purpose of the letter of James is to urge Christians to be steadfast in faith and to do those works which are called for by the “perfect law” of Christ which is the “law of liberty” (1.25, 2.12). It aims to correct the false opinion that because Christians are freed from the ritual works of the Mosaic law through faith in Christ, they need not do any good works whatsoever and are not subject to any law at all. Thus, the author writes very clearly against the doctrine of salvation by “faith alone” without the good works that the believer must necessarily perform if his faith is genuine.

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works. Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe-and shudder. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness;” and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone (2.14–24).

First among the good works which the letter insists upon most vehemently is the work of honoring and serving the poor and lowly without partiality and selfish greed which is the cause of all wars and injustices among men (2.1–7). The author is passionately opposed to any “friendship with the world” which makes man an “enemy of God” because of covetousness (4.1–4). He calls the rich to “weep and howl for the miseries which are coming” to them because of the “luxuries and pleasures” which they have attained at the expense of others whom they have exploited (5.1–6).

Together with this despising of wealth, James teaches the absolute necessity of “bridling the tongue,” the “little member” which is a “fire” that
man uses to boast, slander, condemn, swear, lie and speak evil against his brethren, “staining the whole body” and “setting aflame the whole cycle of nature” (3.1–12).

If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man’s religion is in vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world (1.26–27).

The teaching of the letter of James that “every good gift and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of lights” (1.17) has become part of the dismissal prayer of the divine liturgies of the Orthodox Church. The letter of James also provides the Church with the first epistle reading for its sacrament of the unction of the sick.

Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters (elders) of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (5.13–16).
Most modern scholars do not think that Saint Peter actually wrote the two letters called by his name. They consider the first letter as coming from the end of the first century and the second letter from the first half of the second century. The Tradition of the Church, however, maintains the testimony of the letters themselves, ascribing them to the foremost leader of Christ’s apostles writing from “Babylon,” which was the early Church’s name for Rome, on the eve of his martyrdom there in the latter half of the first century (see 1Pet 5.13, 2Pet 1.14).

The first letter of Saint Peter is a passionate plea to all of “God’s People” to be strong in their sufferings in imitation of Christ and together with Him, maintaining “good conduct among the Gentiles,” subjecting themselves without malice or vindictiveness to “every human institution for the Lord’s sake” (2.11–13).

Special instructions and exhortations to godliness are addressed first to the whole Church which is a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (2.9), and then in turn to the slaves (2.18), to the husbands and wives (3.1–7) and to the presbyters [elders] whom the author, as a “fellow presbyter and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,” calls to “tend the flock of God .?.?. not by constraint, but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not as domineering over those in [their] charge, but being examples to the flock” (5.1–4).

Throughout the letter, the analogy is constantly drawn between the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of Christians which is for their salvation.

But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God’s approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him Who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian [literally Bishop] of your souls (2.20–25).

The second letter of Saint Peter is sometimes considered to be a sermon addressed to those who were newly baptized into the Christian faith. The author wishes before his death to “arouse .?.?. by way of reminder” (1.13, 3.1) what God has done for those who are called, that they might “escape from the
corruption that is in the world through passion, and become partakers of the
divine nature” (1.3–4). He warns against the appearance of “false prophets” and
“scoffers” who would lead the elect astray by their “destructive heresies” and
denials of “the Master who bought them” thus causing them to fall back to a
life of sin and ignorance as “the dog turns back to his own vomit and the sow is
washed only to wallow once more in the mire” (2.1–22, 3.1–7). The author
makes special warning against the perversion of the holy scriptures, both those
of the Old Testament and those of Saint Paul, “which the ignorant and unstable
twist to their own destruction” (3.16, 1.20).

The third chapter of the second letter of Saint Peter is sometimes wrongly
interpreted as teaching the total destruction of creation by God at the end of the
world. The Orthodox interpretation is that it is only sin and evil that will be
“dissolved with fire” on the “day of God,” and that the “new heavens and a new
earth in which righteousness dwells” will be the same “very good” world of
God’s original creation, but purified, renewed and purged of all that is contrary
to His divine goodness and holiness (3.8–13).

The reminiscence in the second letter of Saint Peter about the
transfiguration of Christ is the epistle reading at the Church’s feast of this
sacred event (1.16–18). Readings from both letters are found in the Church’s
lectionary, with selections from the first letter being read at the vigil of the
feast of Saints Peter and Paul.
The three letters of Saint John were written by the Lord’s beloved apostle who also wrote the fourth gospel. They were written at the close of the first century and have as their general theme a fervent polemic against the heretical “antichrists” who were changing the doctrines of Christ and denying His genuine appearance “in the flesh” for the salvation of the world, denying thereby both “the Father and the Son” (1 Jn 2.22, 4.3, 2Jn 7).

The first letter of Saint John is the simplest and deepest exposition of the Christian faith that exists. Its clarity concerning the Holy Trinity and the Christian life of truth and of love in communion with God makes it understandable without difficulty to anyone who reads it. It is the best place to begin a study of the Christian faith generally, and the Bible in particular. The first letter begins in the same way as Saint John’s gospel to which it is most similar in its entire content and style.

*That which was from the beginning,* which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life. ?. ?. we proclaim also to you, so that you may have communion with us; and our communion is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete (1.1–14).

The first letter of Saint John proclaims that Jesus is truly “the Christ,” the Messiah and Son of God who has come “in the flesh” to the world as “the expiation of our sins, and not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (2.2). Those who believe in Christ and are in communion with Him and His Father have the forgiveness of sins and the possibility not to sin any more (1.5–2.12). They “walk in the same way in which He walked” (2.6) being the “children of God” (3.1, 5.1). They know the truth by the direct inspiration of God through the anointment [chrisma] of the Holy Spirit (2.20–26; 6.7). They keep the commandments of God, the first and greatest of which is love, and so they are already recipients of eternal life, already possessing the indwelling of God the Father and Christ the Son “by the Spirit which He has given us” (2.24–3.24).

**Beloved,** let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God has sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation of our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to
love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (14.7–16).

The hatred of others is the sure sign that one does not love God (4.20) and is “in the darkness still” (2.9–11). The one who hates his brother is “a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (3.15). Those who love God are hated by the world which is in the power of the evil one” (5.19, 2.15–17).

The first letter of Saint John is part of the Church’s lectionary, with special selections from it being read at the feast of the apostle John.

The second letter of Saint John is addressed to the “elect lady and her children” which is obviously the Church of God and its members. Again the truth of Christ is stressed and the commandment of love is emphasized.

And this is love, that we follow His commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward. Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son (6–9).

The third letter of Saint John is addressed to a certain Gaius praising him for the “truth of his life” (3) and “urging him not to Imitate evil but imitate good” (11). “No greater joy can I have than this”, writes the beloved apostle, “to hear that my children follow the truth” (4).
It has been questioned whether “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James” who wrote the letter of Saint Jude is the “Judas, the brother of James” (Lk 6.16, Acts 1.13), one of the twelve apostles, “not Iscariot” (Jn 14.22). In the Tradition of the Church, the two have usually been identified as the same person.

The letter of Saint Jude is a general epistle which the author “found it necessary to write to those who are called,” appealing to them “to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (1–3).

For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ (4).

These “scoffers,” some of whom the faithful may be able to save “by snatching them out of the fire” (23), are those who “defile the flesh, reject authority and revile the glorious ones” (8). They are those who follow their “ungodly passions … [and] set up divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit” (18–19) who have entered the Church,

Jude commands those who are faithful to resist the ungodly.

But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. (21).

Of special interest in the letter, which is sometimes read in Church, is the mention of the archangel Michael (9), as well as the evil angels “that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling (with God) and have been kept by Him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day” (6). Generally speaking, there is a definite apocalyptic tone to the letter of Saint Jude.
The Book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse which means that which has been disclosed, and also called the Revelation to Saint John, is traditionally considered to be the work of the Lord’s apostle who later wrote the fourth gospel and the letters. It is dated in the middle of the last half of the first century.

Saint John received his vision “on the island called Patmos.” He was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” when he received God’s command to write the letters “to the seven churches of Asia” (1.4–10). Each of the seven messages contains the words of Christ for the specific church (2–4).

Following the seven letters in the book of Revelation, the apostle records his vision of God on His throne in heaven being hymned unceasingly by angels, the “living creatures”, and the “twenty four elders”: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come” (4).

There then follows the prophecies of the seven seals and the seven angels (5–11), and the visions of the “women clothed with the sun” and Michael and his angels engaged in battle with the “dragon” (12). Next come the images of the “beast rising from the sea” and the “other beast rising from the earth” (13). Then comes the vision of the Lamb and those who are saved by God, with the angels coming to earth from heaven bearing their “bowls of wrath” (14–16). The image of the “great harlot” follows (17), with the final prophecy about the “downfall of great Babylon” (18). The end of the book of Revelation describes the wonderful vision of salvation, with the multitude of those “blessed .?.?. who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” in the midst of the great celestial assembly of angels who sing glory to God and to Jesus, His word and His Lamb, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. It is the image of the Kingdom of God and of Christ, the Heavenly Jerusalem foretold by the prophets of old in which the righteous shall reign forever with God (19–22).

Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and the Bride (the Church) has made herself ready.?.?.?. (19.6–7).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.?.?.?. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be His People, and God
Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (21.1–4).

And He Who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new” (21.5).

It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of life. He who conquers shall have this inheritance, and I will be his God and he shall be My son (21.6–7).

There was a certain hesitation on the part of the early Church to include the book of Revelation in the canonical scriptures of the New Testament. The reason for this was obviously the great difficulty of interpreting the apocalyptic symbols of the book. Nevertheless, since the document carried the name of the apostle John, and since it was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the instruction and edification of the Church, it came to be the last book listed in the Bible, although it is never read liturgically in the Orthodox Church.

It is indeed difficult to interpret the book of Revelation, especially if one is unfamiliar with the images and symbols of the apocalyptic writings of the Bible, that is the Old Testament, and of the Judeo-Christian Tradition. There exists, however, a traditional approach to the interpretation of the book within the Church which offers insight into its meaning for the faithful.

The wrong method of interpreting the book of Revelation is to give some sort of exclusive meaning to its many visions, equating them with specific, concrete historical events and persons, and to fail to understand the symbolical significance of the many images which are used by the author following biblical and traditional sources.

First of all, the letters to the seven churches have both a historical and a universal meaning. The messages are clear and remain relevant to situations which have always existed in the Church and which exist today. For example, many older churches in all ages of history can be identified with the Church of Ephesus. Those under persecution can be compared with the Church in Smyrna. And not a few—perhaps some in America right now—can be judged with the Church in Laodicea. The seven letters remain forever as “prototypical” of churches that will exist until Christ’s kingdom comes.

The visions and prophecies of the main body of the book of Revelation present great difficulties, but mostly to those interpreters who would attempt to apply them to one or another historical event or person. If the general vision and prophecy of the book is seen as revealing the correlation between events “in heaven” and events “on earth,” between God and man, between the powers
of goodness and the powers of evil, then, though many difficulties obviously remain, some will also immediately disappear.

In the book of Revelation, one comes to understand that the Kingdom of God is always over all and before all. One sees as well that the battle between the righteous and the evil is perpetually being waged. There are always the faithful who belong to the Lamb, being crowned and robed by Him for their victories. There are always the “beasts” and the “dragons” which need to be defeated. The “great harlot” and the “great Babylon” are forever to be destroyed. The “heavenly Jerusalem” is perpetually coming, and one day it will come and the final victory will be complete.

One notices as well that there is a universality and finality about the symbols and images of the book of Revelation, a meaning to be applied to them which has already been revealed in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Thus, for example, the image of Babylon stands for every society which fights against God, every body of persons united in wickedness and fleshliness. The image of harlotry universally applies as well to all who are corrupted by their passions and lusts, unfaithful to God Who has made them and loves them. The symbolic numerology also remains constant, with the number 666 (13.18), for example, symbolizing total depravity, unlike 7 which is the symbol of fulness; and the number 144,000 (14.3) being the symbol of total completion and the full number of the saved, the result of the multiplication of 12 times 12—the number of the tribes of Israel and the apostles of Christ. Thus, through the images of the book of Revelation, a depth of penetration into universal spiritual realities is disclosed which is greater than any particular earthly reality. The insight into the meaning of the book depends on the inspiration of God and the purity of heart of those who have eyes to see and ears to hear and minds willing and able to understand.

In the Orthodox Church, the book of Revelation has great liturgical significance. The worship of the Church has traditionally, quite consciously, been patterned after the divine and eternal realities revealed in this book. The prayer of the Church and its mystical celebration are one with the prayer and celebration of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, in Church, with the angels and saints, through Christ the Word and the Lamb, inspired by the Holy Spirit, the faithful believers of the assembly of the saved offer perpetual adoration to God the Father Almighty.

The book of Revelation, although never read in the Orthodox Church, bears witness to the divine reality which is the Church’s own very life.

_The Spirit and the Bride [the Church] say, “Come.” And let him who hears say, “Come.” And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the_
water of life without price.

“Surely I am coming soon” [says Jesus, the Lord].

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (22.17, 20)
Salvation History
Word and Spirit

It is the constant testimony of the Bible and the Church that God acts toward the world through His Word and His Spirit.

God created all things by His Word and His Spirit. He created man in His divine image and likeness to partake of His Word and to live by His Spirit. All of the holy people of God received the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles all proclaimed the Word which came to them from God by the Spirit of God. The law of Moses and the prophets, the psalms and all the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written and interpreted by men through the Spirit of God. Always and everywhere in the Bible and in the Church, God reveals Himself and acts in man and the world by His Word and His Spirit.

The central affirmation of the Christian Faith and the very essence of its gospel and life is that the Word of God became man as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah of Israel and the Lord and Savior of the world. Jesus of Nazareth is the divine Word of God in human form. He is the personal Word of God Who was “in the beginning with God,” the Word “by whom all things were made” (Jn 1.2). He is the uncreated Word of God according to Whose image all men are created. He is the Word of God Who came to the patriarchs and prophets and Who is incarnate in the Bible in scriptural form. He is the Word of God Who died on the cross and is risen from the dead. He is the Head of the Church which is His Body, and the King of the Kingdom of God. He is the Word of God with Whom and through Whom the Holy Spirit comes to the world.

The Holy Spirit of God comes personally to men from the Father through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. He comes to those who believe in Christ and belong to Him through faith and repentance and baptism in His Church. He is the Spirit Who descended upon the disciples on Pentecost, who also is the One by whose power the world was created and continued to exist. He is the Spirit breathed into men by God to make them live according to His divine likeness. He is the Spirit Who inspired the Law, and the prophets and the entire holy scripture, providing for its production and preservation, as well as for its interpretation in the life of the faithful. He is the same Holy Spirit Who abides in the Church, making possible the fulness of its sacramental and spiritual life. He is the Spirit of God Who, by His presence with men in the world, is the pledge and the promise of God’s Kingdom to come. He is the Holy Spirit of God Who will one day, on the Day of the Lord, fill all creation with the presence of God.
Thus, the entire creation, the salvation and glorification of the world, the whole of what we call “salvation history,” depends on God and His Word and His Spirit, the Most Holy Trinity, Who in the Church and in the Kingdom, “fills all in all” (Eph 1.23).
The Bible begins with the story of creation and the making of man. Although the Bible often lists the generations of men from the creation of Adam (Chron 1.1, Lk 4.38), the history of salvation, in the most proper sense, begins with Abraham, the forefather of Israel and the first ancestor of Christ, “according to the flesh.”

The story of creation, and specifically of Adam and Eve, gives the divine revelation about the absolute sovereignty of God over all of creation. It tells of the goodness of all things that exist, and the superiority of man over other beings. It shows how the origin of evil does not lie in God but in His most perfect creature whose free act of sin brought wickedness and death to the world.

The chapters of Genesis 1–11 are called the “prehistory” of salvation because with little exception, such as that of the righteous Noah, these chapters are almost exclusively the record of sin. They begin with man’s original rebellion against God, and tell of the first act of man’s children as being brotherly murder. They record God’s sadness in creating the world when He “saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually,” and that the earth was “corrupt .?.?. filled with violence .?.?. for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth” (Gen 6.5–12). They end with the symbolic account of the ultimate impudence of men who sought “to make a name for themselves” by building “a tower with its top in the heavens” (Gen 11.4). Through the story of the tower of Babel is shown the prideful arrogance of man which results in the division of the nations and the scattering of men “over the face of all the earth” (Gen 11.9).

The pre-history of salvation, the story of sin, is the original counter-symbol of salvation in Christ. The events of these first chapters of the Bible, before the calling of Abraham, find their proper interpretation in the saving events of the coming of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the new and final covenant of God with His People.

Christ is the True Adam. The original Adam was merely “a type of him who was to come” (Rom 5.14).

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living soul;” the last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a
man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (\textit{1Cor 15.21–22, 45–49}).

The word Adam in Hebrew comes from “adamah” which means earth. The word Christ, in Hebrew, Messiah, means the “anointed” of God. As Christ is the new Adam, so His mother Mary is the new Eve, for she is the true “mother of all living,” which is the meaning of the name given to the original “helper” of man (\textit{Gen 3.20}). The biblical symbolism continues with the Church of Christ being the true “ark of salvation” in which “every living thing” is saved (\textit{Gen 6.14, 1Pet 3.20–22}). And the events of Pentecost reverse the tragedy of Babel, when through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church of Christ, all national divisions are overcome and all men “from over the face of all the earth” are brought into unity by God in Christ.

Thus the pre-history of man’s sin is the counter-symbol of his righteousness in God which is realized in Christ, the “child of Abraham” in whose children all of the families of the earth are blessed by God (\textit{Gen 12.3}).
Abraham

Salvation history, properly so-called, begins with Abram, whom God named Abraham which means “father of a multitude.” Abraham was the first patriarch of the people of Israel. The word patriarch means “the father of the people.” In the person and life of Abraham, the central events of the salvation of the world by Christ in the New Testament have been prefigured.

God made the first promise of His salvation of all the people of the earth to Abraham, with whom He also made His covenant to be faithful forever.

Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing .?.?. and in you all families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12.1–3. See also 17.1–8, 22.1–18).

The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham comes in Jesus Christ. He is the descendent of Israel’s first father in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. Thus, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, sings at her time of waiting for the Savior’s birth, that all generations will call her blessed because the fulfillment has come from God “as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever” (Lk 1.55, see also Zachariah’s Song in Lk 1.67–79). All through the New Testament the claim is made that God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Jesus.

Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to off springs,” referring to many; but, referring to one, “And to your offspring,” which is Christ (Gal 3.16).

The faith of Abraham is prototypical of all those who in Christ are saved by faith. The New Testament stresses faith as necessary for salvation. The model for this faith is Abraham.

Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Gen 15.6, Rom 4.3).

Abraham’s faith was united to his works, and was expressed in his works.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness;” and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone (Jas 2.21–24).

God tested Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his beloved son
Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham believed and trusted in God. He obeyed his will, and went to the mountain to slay his child. God stopped him and placed a ram in Isaac’s place saying “for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Gen 22.12). Then once more God made the promise that “by your descendants shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed??.?.?” (Gen 22.18).

The sacrifice of Isaac is not only a testimony to Abraham’s faith. It is also the original sign that God Himself does what He does not allow the first and foremost of His People to do. No ram is put in the place of God’s Son, His only Son Jesus, when He is sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the world.

The perfect priesthood of Christ is also prefigured in Abraham’s life. It is the priesthood of Melchizedek, the King of Peace. It is the priesthood in which the offering is bread and wine. It is the priesthood which is before that of the Levites, and the one which is that of the Messiah, Who is “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110.4, Heb 5–10).

So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him Who said to Him, “Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee”; as He says also in another place, “Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.”

In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard for His godly fear. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered; and being made perfect He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5.5–10).

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever (Heb 7.1–3).

The most sublime of the New Testament revelations, that of the Holy Trinity, was also prefigured in Abraham’s life. This is the famous visit of the three angels of God to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre.

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, “My lord, if I have found...
favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on. Since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said” (Gen 18.1–5).

Abraham addresses the three angels as one, calling them Lord. They eat in his presence and foretell the birth of Isaac from Sarah in her old age. In this visitation of God to Abraham, the Orthodox Church sees the prefiguration of the full revelation of the Holy Trinity in the New Testament.

Because there can be no depiction of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in human form, Orthodox iconography has traditionally painted the Holy Trinity in the form of the three angels who came to Abraham. The most famous icon of the Holy Trinity, the one often used in the Church on the feast of Pentecost, is that of Saint Andrew Rublev, a disciple of Saint Sergius of Radonezh in Russia in the fourteenth century.

Thus the salvation of the world which has come in Christ was prefigured in the life of Abraham, as well as the Christian doctrine about faith and works and the Christian revelations about the sacrifice, the priesthood, and even the most Holy Trinity. Truly in Abraham every aspect of the final covenant in Christ the Messiah was foreshadowed and foretold.
The central event of the entire Old Testament history is the passover and exodus.

Abraham’s son Isaac was the father of Jacob whom God named Israel which means "he who strives with God" (Gen 32.28). God renewed His promise to Isaac and Jacob, and continued the covenant with them that He had made with Abraham.

Jacob had twelve sons who became the leaders of the twelve tribes or houses of Israel. The sons of Jacob sold their youngest brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt. With the help of God, Joseph gained the favor of the Egyptian pharaoh and became a great man in Egypt. In a time of famine, Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt for food. Joseph recognized them and brought all of the people of Israel into Egypt with him. When Joseph died, the people of Israel were put into slavery by the Egyptians for four hundred years (See Gen 24–50).

God raised up Moses to lead His people out of bondage in Egypt. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and revealed His Name to him.

Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The Lord (Yahweh), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations” (Ex 3.14–15).

Moses returned to Egypt and after many trials with the Egyptian pharaoh and after many plagues, which God sent upon the Egyptians, he led the people of Israel out of slavery. The exodus, which means the escape or the departure, from Egypt took place on the night called the passover.

God, through Moses, ordered the Israelites to select lambs, to kill them and place some blood on the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses. Standing up, clothed and ready to escape, they were to eat the lambs in the night.

In this manner you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat in haste. It is the Lord’s passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of
Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. This day shall be a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance forever (Ex 12.11–13).

Thus, the passover and exodus took place. At midnight the Lord slew the Egyptian firstborn. The houses marked with blood were spared when the Lord passed over. During the tumult, the Israelites began to escape. They made their exodus through the Red Sea. By this time, the Egyptian horsemen were in pursuit. At the sea, Moses prayed to God. He lifted his rod over the waters and “The Lord drove the sea back by a strong East wind all night, and made the sea dry land .?.?. ” (Ex 14.21) The Israelites passed through the sea on foot. The pursuing chariots of the Egyptians were caught in the waters and were drowned.

And Israel saw the great work, which the Lord did against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses (Ex 14.31).

In the wilderness on the other side of the sea, the people of Israel began to complain. There was no food and drink in the desert. Moses prayed to the Lord, Who provided water for the people to drink and manna, the “bread from heaven,” for the people to eat (Ex 15–16). God led the people through the desert by a cloud and a pillar of fire.

On Mount Sinai, Moses received the Ten Commandments and the laws of morality and worship from the Lord Who “used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex 33.11). Moses was allowed to behold the glory of the Lord in the smoke and clouds on the mountaintop and he himself shone with the majesty of God (Ex 34.29).

Moses was not granted to cross the Jordan and to enter the promised land. He died and was buried near Mount Nebo in the land of Moab. This is where he had looked across the Jordan River into the land where his successor Joshua would lead the people.

The passover and exodus was the central event in Israelite history. It was remembered in all generations as the great sign of God’s fidelity and favor to His People. It was sung about in the psalms and recalled by the prophets. It was celebrated annually together with Pentecost, as the chief celebration of the People of God. And, consequently, it was also the main event of the Old Testament to be fulfilled perfectly and eternally in the time of Christ, the Messiah of God.

In Jesus Christ the ultimate meaning and universal purpose of the passover
and exodus are revealed and accomplished. Jesus Christ is Himself the New Passover. He is the Passover Lamb, which is slain for the deliverance and liberation of all men and the whole world from the powers of evil. The real “pharaoh” is the devil. He holds all men in slavery. The real deliverer is Jesus. He leads the people from the captivity of sin and death into the “promised land” of the Kingdom of God.

As the people pass through the wilderness of life in this world, they are fed by Jesus, the true Bread of Life, the true “bread from heaven.”

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which came down from heaven, and gives life to the world.”

“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”

“I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread, which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this meal, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

“Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6.25–59).

Jesus is not only the true “bread from heaven,” He is also the true “living water.” He is the One Whom, if men drink of Him, they will never thirst again.

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” (Jn 7.37)

“...whoever drinks of the Water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4.14).

Saint Paul, speaking of the exodus and the rock, which Moses struck, from which the spring of water flowed, says plainly that this refers to Christ.

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same
spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1Cor 10.1–4)

Thus it is that Jesus Christ fulfilled the passover and exodus in the events of His life. This fulfillment came to its climax at the time of His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus was killed at the feast of the passover to show that the old passover has been completed and the new passover has begun. When the paschal lamb was being killed in the temple, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was being crucified on the cross outside the city.

When the great day of the passover, which that year was the Sabbath, was being observed as the rest from work, Jesus lay dead, resting from all His work, in the tomb. When the “day after Sabbath” dawned, the first day of the week, the day of God’s original creation, Jesus arose from the dead.

All of this took place that the New Passover and New Exodus could be effected, not from Egypt into Canaan, but from death to life, from wickedness to righteousness, from darkness to light, from earth to heaven, from the tyranny of the devil to the glorious freedom of the Kingdom of God. The death and resurrection of Christ is the true passover-exodus of the People of God. Those who are marked with Christ’s blood are spared from the visitation of death.

Jesus inaugurated the celebration of the new passover at the last supper with His disciples, which was the paschal meal. He told them that no longer would they keep the passover feast in remembrance of the old exodus. They now would keep the paschal celebration in remembrance of Him.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “This is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes (1Cor 2.23–26; see also Mat 26.26–29, Mk 14.22–25, Lk 22.14–19).

In the same letter, Saint Paul also says:

.?.?. Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1Cor 5.7–8).

Of great importance also in the new passover of Christ is the new gift of God’s law, the law not written on tablets of stone, but on human hearts by the very Holy Spirit of God (See 2Cor 3, Jer 31.31–34, Ezek 36.26–27, Joel 2.28–29).

The giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai is fulfilled in the time of
the Messiah in the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples of Christ in the upper room on the feast of Pentecost. In the Old Testament, this was the festival of the reception of the law, fifty days after the passover (Acts 2). Thus, once again, in the time of the Messiah, the old event is completed in the new and final one: the exterior law of Moses is completed by the interior law of Christ, the “perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas 1.25, 2.12), the “law of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 8.2).

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God had done (in Christ) what the law (of Moses), weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin .?.?. in order that the just requirements of the law (of Moses) might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Rom 8.2–4, See also 2Cor 3, Gal 3–5).

Thus the apostle John writes: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1.17).

Within the total fulfillment and perfection of the passover-exodus of the Old Testament in the time of the Messiah, it must be noted as well that the crossing of the Jordan into the promised land corresponds to baptism in Christ into the Kingdom of God. Also worthy of note is the symbolic fact that the one who actually crossed the Jordan and brought the people into the “land flowing with milk and honey,” was not Moses but Joshua, whose name in Greek is Jesus, thus prefiguring the One Who was to come of the same name, which means Savior, the One Who began His messianic mission of bringing the Kingdom of God by His baptism in the Jordan River.

Thus, every aspect of the old passover-exodus is completed in Christ, perfectly, totally and forever. All of this is renewed and relived in the Church of Christ each year on Easter and Pentecost, and on each Sunday, the Day of the Lord. Whenever the Church gathers, it celebrates the perfect passover of Christ the Lamb of God, Who is also the divine I AM Who exists eternally with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who was slain for the life of the world.
Kingship

In the Old Testament, God was to be the King of His People. But wishing to be like the other nations, the Israelites asked the Lord for a human king.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to govern us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, “Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds which they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, hearken to their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who shah reign over them” (1Sam 8.4–9).

So Samuel recounted to the people all that would happen to them if they lived like the other nations having a man as their king. The king would send their sons to war. He would put all the people to work for him. He would take their best animals and crops. He would make the people his slaves.

“And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.” But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel; and they said, “No! but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles.” And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, “Hearken to their voice, and make them a king” (1Sam 8.18–22).

Israel received its king. The first was Saul who became demented. The second was David the Shepherd who ruled well. The third was Solomon who was known for his wisdom and who built the temple to God in Jerusalem. But then there was a division of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and strife among them because of their sins, which resulted in a succession of captivities to various foreign powers from which the people never finally escaped.

The psalms and prophets of the Old Testament constantly recalled God’s people to the reality that only the Lord is king. He alone is the True Shepherd of His People. He alone is the One Who rules and Who is to be served and obeyed.

I will extol Thee, my God and King,
and bless Thy name for ever and ever.  
Every day I will bless Thee,  
and praise Thy name for ever and ever.  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,  
and His greatness is unsearchable,  
All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O Lord, and all Thy saints shall bless Thee!  
They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom and tell of Thy power,  
to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor of Thy kingdom.  
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations.  
(Ps 145.1–3, 10–13)

The prophets called all of the earthly kings, the “shepherds of Israel,” to repentance before the divine King of heaven, but their words were mostly to no avail.

_The word of the Lord came to me:_ “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them” (Ezek 34.1–6).

The psalms and the prophets of the Old Testament also foretold the time when God would rule His People directly. He would be the shepherd of all nations, ruling through the Messiah-King Who would come from the house of David, the King of Whose kingdom there would be no end.

_For to us a child is born,_  
to us a son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder,  
and His name will be called  
“Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”  
Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end,
upon the throne of David, and over His kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (Is 4.6–7).

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which He will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness’” (Jer 23.5–6).

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth (Mic 5.2–4)

For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness.

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice (Ezek 34.11–12, 15–16).

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt the foal of an ass.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and He shall command peace to the nations;
His dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zech 9.9–10).
The king of the final kingdom of God is Jesus Christ. He is the One Shepherd and Lord. He is the One “of whose kingdom there will be no end.” Thus, the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary at the announcement of His birth:

*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there will be no end”* (Lk 1.32–33).

All of His life, Jesus was preparing the everlasting Kingdom of God. He came to bring this Kingdom to men. He is the Son of David, Who will reign forever. He is the One Who announces the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mt 4.23, 9.35).

*Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you”* (Lk 17.20–21).

The Kingdom of God is in the midst of men when Christ is present. He Himself is the King Who gives the Kingdom of God to those who are this.

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12.32).

*You are those who have continued with Me in My trials; as My Father appointed a kingdom for Me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom.* (Mt 22.28–30).

All of the preaching and parables of Christ concerning the Kingdom of God speak of Himself as the King. Those who believe in Jesus and obey Him will reign with Him in His Kingdom which has been prepared “ from the foundation of the world” for those who love Him (Mt 25.34). His Kingdom is the everlasting kingdom which is “not of this world,” but of God the Father (Jn 18.36).

The gospel narratives of the crucifixion of Christ place Him in His role as King. All of the mockery and torment of Jesus is given to Him as the “King of the Jews.” This was the accusation against Him and the title nailed to the cross.
Thus, the irony is complete as the scriptures are fulfilled in the words of Pilate when, after Jesus had sat down on the judgment seat, Pilate proclaimed to the people, “Behold, your king!” (Jn 19.14).

Jesus is the King. He is one with God, the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1Tim 6.5). He is the One “highly exalted” over all principalities and powers, the One before Whom every knee shall bow “In heaven, and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2.9–11, also Eph 1.20–23). He is the One Who, at the end of the ages when He “comes in His kingdom” with all the heavenly powers, will destroy every evil, and rule over all creation forever as the prophets predicted.

“.?.?. and the Lamb (Christ) will conquer them [the wicked], for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful (Rev 17.14).

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name inscribed which no one knows but Himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed Him on white horses. From His mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19.11–16).

Then He showed me the river of the water of Life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever (Rev 22.1–5).
Priesthood

When speaking of Abraham, we mentioned how Jesus Christ is the “priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” As the “priest for ever,” Jesus is also the completion and fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood of the Levites.

In the Old Testament, God ordered Moses to build the tabernacle with a sanctuary for worship and sacrifice.

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst, According to all that I show you concerning the tabernacle, and all of its furniture, so you shall make it (Ex 25.8–9).

In the tabernacle there was a sanctuary surrounded by a court yard. Within the sanctuary was the “most holy place.” A special ark was built to hold the tables of the covenant law surrounded by two cherubim. The ark was kept in the most holy place. Above the ark of the covenant was the mercy seat from which Moses would speak to the people (Ex 25.14–22).

In the sanctuary, special tables were placed which held “plates and dishes for incense” and “flagons and bowls with which to pour libations.”

...of pure gold you shall make them. And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always (Ex 25.28–30).

There also was the golden altar upon which the animal sacrifices were offered.

A lampstand of gold, with “seven lamps for it” which were lighted with pure olive oil, was placed in the sanctuary. And between the various part of the tabernacle, curtains were hung.

And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen; in skilled work shall it be made, with cherubim; and you shall hang it upon four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, upon four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in thither within the veil; and the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table; and you shall put the table on the north side. And you shall make a screen for the door of the tent, of blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them. You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five
cubits long and five cubits broad; the altar shall be a square, and its height shall be three cubits. And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze (Ex 26.31–27.2).

The priests of the tabernacle were to be the Levites, the men from the tribe of Levi.

Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests. (Ex 28.1)

God commanded that special vestments be made for the priests to wear when serving in the sanctuary (Ex 28). He also ordered that special oil be blended for the anointing of all of the utensils of the tabernacle, as well as for the anointing of the priests. He also ordered special incense to be made for burning in the holy place.

%.%. you shall consecrate them [the furniture and utensils], that they may be holy; whatever touches them will become holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. And you shall say to the people of Israel, “This is my holy anointing oil throughout your generations.” (Ex 30.29–31)

And the incense which you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves; it shall be for you holy to the Lord (Ex 30.37).

God also provided a very detailed code concerning worship and the offering of the various sacrifices. He explained which animals should be selected and how they should be killed. He told which offerings should be made on which occasions and for what purposes. He gave instructions about offerings for peace and for praise, for thanksgiving and mercy, for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God in times of transgression. He also told which feasts should be observed, when they should be kept and how they should be celebrated. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are filled with such specific and detailed instructions.

While passing through the desert and into the promised land, the People of God carried the tabernacle with them. They set it up in each place where they camped. Finally, after the crossing of the Jordan River and the settlement in Canaan, the city of Jerusalem was established by David the king. David’s son Solomon was then commanded by God to build the temple in which the worship of God would take place and the ritual sacrifices would be offered.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel %.%. he began to build the house of the Lord (1 Kg 6.1).

The house of the Lord was of the same pattern as Moses’ tabernacle. It had
the outer court, the inner sanctuary and the most holy place in which the ark of the covenant was kept. It had the altars for incense, libations and burnt offerings. It had the lampstands and the table for the bread of the Presence. It had all of the utensils and vestments necessary for the service of the Lord (see 1 Kg 6–8).

When Solomon finished building the temple (c. 960 BC), he conducted a great celebration of dedication.

*Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.*

There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. Then Solomon said, “The Lord has set the sun in the heavens, but has said that He would dwell in thick darkness. I have built thee an exalted house, a place for thee to dwell in for ever” (1 Kg 8.6, 9–13).

Solomon then blessed the people and addressed them concerning the building of the temple which the Lord promised David that his son would build. He then offered a long prayer of dedication, asking God to be with the people and to receive their prayers offered in the temple.

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, hearkening to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee this day; that Thine eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which Thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that Thou mayest hearken to the prayer which Thy servant offers toward this place. And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; yea, hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place; and when Thou hearest, forgive” (1 Kg 8.27–30).

Thus, the temple which Solomon built to the Lord became the sole place for the formal worship and the priestly sacrifices of the People of God. The temple was destroyed during the time of Babylonian captivity, and was restored in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah only to be defiled again by foreign invaders, and finally destroyed completely by the Romans in the year 70 AD.

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that the time would come when the glory of the Lord would fill all creation. It was foretold that in the time of the
Messianic King, God would dwell in men as in His holy temple. The ritual sacrifices of the temple would cease, as the perfect and everlasting covenant of mercy and peace would be accomplished between God and man (see Isa 55.3, 61.1–11, 66.18–23, Jer 31.31–34, Ezek 34.22–31, 37.24–28).

When Jesus came, the new and everlasting covenant between God and man was established forever. The temple of God became the body of Christ, which was the assembly of His people filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Indeed, one of the accusations against Jesus at the time of His crucifixion was that He said that He would destroy the temple in Jerusalem.

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple He found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, He drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and He poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And He told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for thy house will consume me.” The Jews then said to Him, “What sign have you to show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But He spoke of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken (Jn 2.13–22).

Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’” And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Mt 26.59–64).

In Christ, the Messiah, human persons become the temple of the Living God. The deacon Stephen, the first Christian martyr, bore witness to this and died for his testimony (see Acts 7.44–59). The apostle Paul also taught this explicitly, as did the apostle Peter.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has
broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2.13–22).

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are (1Cor 3.16–17).

Come to Him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in Him will not be put to shame” (1Pet 2.4–6).

Jesus Christ is not only the living temple of God-God Himself in human flesh-through whom all men become God’s temple in the Holy Spirit; Jesus is also the one great high priest and the one perfect sacrificial offering, Who assumes and fulfills the entire Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament which was merely a “shadow” of the “reality” to come. Upon the cross, Jesus sacrificed Himself. He rose from the dead and entered the sanctuary in heaven. After this, there is no other priesthood and no other sacrifice well-pleasing to God (see Heb 6–10).

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the Holy place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9.11–14).

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of
the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him (Heb 9.24–28).

Consequently, when Christ came into die world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,’ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.” When He said above, “Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then He added, “Lo, I have come to do thy will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at His service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until His enemies should be made a stool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10.5–14).

In the Church of Christ, there is only one priesthood and one sacrifice. It is the priesthood of Jesus and the sacrifice of the Cross. The entire Church of Christ is a “royal priesthood” (1Pet 2.4). The ordained clergy of the Church exists to manifest and realize the unique priesthood of Jesus in the community which is the “body of Christ” (1Cor 12.27).

In the Kingdom of God, Christ, the great High Priest and Lamb will rule. He Who “was dead and is alive again” (Rev 2.8) will govern all creation which will be the dwelling place of God.

And I saw no temple in the heavenly city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day-and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 21.22–27).
Thus, the Old Testament temple, the priesthood and the sacrifices are all fulfilled in Christ Who is Himself the Temple and the Priest and the Sacrificed Lamb of the Kingdom of God which exists for His People whom He has made “a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (Rev 1.16, 6.10).
The Old Testament is filled with prophecy. Prophecy means the direct inspiration of God to speak His words to the world. There were many prophets in the Old Testament, not only those whose names are given to the prophetic books of the Bible, but many others, including Moses, Elijah, Samuel and Nathan.

In the Old Testament, many prophecies were made concerning the history and destiny of the people of Israel and of the whole human race. Usually the prophecies told what God would do in response to the wickedness and unfaithfulness of His People. The prophecies foretold the tragedies coming to Israel because of the sins of the People. They also foretold the ultimate mercy and forgiveness of God Who is faithful to His promises, Who will not be angry forever, but Who will restore the fortunes of His People and bring all nations to His everlasting Kingdom.

The ultimate act of God’s mercy and compassion is His sending of His Son as the Messiah of Israel. Jesus, as we have seen, is the final King of God’s Kingdom which reigns forever. He is the great high priest Who brings completion and perfection to man’s priestly sacrifices to God. He is also the last and final Prophet Who ushers in the time when God creates a whole people of prophets, a whole assembly of those who are taught directly by God to know His Will and to speak His Words in the world.

Thus, in the Gospel of Saint John, it is recorded that the people recognized Jesus not merely as a prophet or one of the prophets, but as the final Prophet Whom God would send at the end of the ages.

When the people saw the sign which He had done [the feeding of the five thousand], they said, “This is indeed the Prophet Who is come into the world!” (Jn 6.14)

When they heard these words (about the living water), some of the people said, “This is really the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ” (Jn 7.40).

Saint Peter refers to the same appearance of Christ as the Prophet, in his preaching to the people outside the temple in Jerusalem.

Moses said, “The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as He raised me up. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people” (Acts 3.22–23).

Jesus is “that prophet” whom Moses spoke about in the Old Law (Dt 18.15). But even Moses and all the prophets of old did not realize that “that
prophet” would be the divine Son and the uncreated Word of God in human flesh.

Jesus, as the final Prophet, is more than a prophet. He is radically different from the prophets of old. He is the “teacher come from God” (Jn 3.2), Who “speaks as one having authority” (Mt 7.24, Mk 1.22), Who speaks not His own words, but the words of the Father Who sent Him (Jn 14:24). But He is even more than this because He is Himself the divine Word of God in human flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (Jn 1.1–4).

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (Jn 1.14).

And from His fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known (Jn 1.16–18).

As the Word of God in human flesh, Jesus fulfills the prophecy of the great prophets of old who wrote that in the Messiah’s time, all men would be taught directly by God.

For a brief moment I forsook you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.
In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the Lord, your Redeemer.
For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.
All your sons shall be taught by the Lord,
And great shall be the prosperity of your sons.
In righteousness you shall be established;
you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;
and from terror, for it shall not come near you
(Is 54.7–8, 10, 13–14).

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying “Know
the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer 31.33–34).

As the Prophet and the incarnate Word of God, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Light of the world.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; henceforth you know Him and have seen Him” (Jn 14.6–7).

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8.12).

Jesus shares His gift of prophecy with all who belong to Him. He gives the Holy Spirit to all of His disciples that they too might know the Father and speak His words and be themselves “the light of the world.”

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Mt 5.14–16).

... and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Mt 10.18–20).

The full possibility for men to prophesy is given in the gift of the Holy Spirit Who came to Christ’s disciples on Pentecost and continues to come upon all who in the Church are baptized into Christ. This full outpouring of the Spirit of God on all flesh was itself prophesied by Joel in the Old Testament. Thus once again, the apostle Peter bears witness:

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day: but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.’”

(Acts 2.14–18)
The apostle Paul concurs with Peter as he insists that prophecy is the first of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church of the Messiah. *Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy* (1Cor 14.1).

In the Kingdom of God, all prophecy will cease, for the final and perfect presence of God will be given. Then Christ, the Word of God, will be present in all of His divine glory, manifesting God the Father to the whole of creation.
Holiness

The God of the Old Testament was the Holy God. The word holy means separate, different, unlike anything else that exists.

The Holy God of the Old Testament revealed Himself to His chosen people who were able to behold His glory. The glory of the Lord was a special divine manifestation of the Person and Presence of God. It consisted in the vision of light, majesty and beauty and was accompanied by the voice of the Lord and His holy angels. It created in the persons who observed it overwhelming feelings of fear and fascination, as well as profound convictions of peace, well-being, and joy.

In this way did Moses experience the Holy God in His divine glory on Horeb, the mountain of God., before the passover, and in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and to, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, “I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And He said, “Here am I.” Then He said, “Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And He said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Ex 3.2–6).

Moses said, “I pray thee, show me thy glory.” And He said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” He said, “you cannot see My face; for man shall not see Me and live.” And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by Me where you shall stand upon the rock; and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen” (Ex 33.18–23).

Other select persons of the Old Testament also experienced the presence of divine holiness and the glory of God. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, and Ezekiel had such experiences, as did Isaiah whose classic vision has become a standard part of the Church’s liturgical prayer.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the
seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; and the whole earth is full of his glory.”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke, And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.” And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.” (Is 6.1–8)

The psalms also sing of the holiness of God and proclaim that all creation speaks of God’s glory (see Ps 8, 19, 93, 104, 148, et al.).

The main teaching of the Old Testament and the foundation of all of its life was that God’s people should share in His holiness. This was the purpose of the entire Law of Moses in its commandments of morality and worship.

For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls upon the earth. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy (Lev 11.44–45).

The people were to be holy and to gain the wisdom and righteousness of God through their service and worship of Him. All of the so-called Wisdom writings of the Old Testament, and all of the teachings of the prophets and psalms are centered around this same fundamental fact: God’s people should acquire and express the holiness, wisdom, glory, and righteousness of God Himself. This, and nothing else is the meaning and purpose of man’s life as created and guided by God.

The ultimate perfection of God’s purpose for man is fulfilled in Christ. He alone is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. He alone is the “Holy One of God” (Mk 1.24, Lk 1.35, 4.34). He alone is perfectly righteous and wholly without sin. Thus, Saint Peter speaks of Jesus to the people after the event of Pentecost.

The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the
Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses (Acts 3.13–15).

The apostle Paul concurs with the teaching of Peter by referring to Christ not merely as holy, righteous and wise, but as Himself the very holiness, righteousness and wisdom of God Himself in human flesh.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord” (1Cor 1.22–24, 30–31).

The glory of God is revealed in the person of Christ. This is the consistent witness of the apostles who beheld the “Kingdom of God come with power” on the mountain of the Transfiguration (see Mt 17.1–6, Mk 9.2–7, Lk 9.28–36).

And the Word became flesh and dwell among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (Jn 1.14).

Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2Cor 3.7, 18, 4.6).

In and through Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, all men can share in the glory of God and become participants in God’s own holiness.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature (2Pet 1.3–4).
The participation of men in the “nature of God” already begins in the Church of Christ, the final fruit of the salvation history of the Old Testament. In the Church, the Kingdom of God is present which is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14.17). In the Church of Christ already begins that perpetual praise of the Holy God which exists now in the heavens and will fill all creation when Christ comes in the glory of His Kingdom at the end of the ages.

**Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,**
who was and is to come! (Rev 4.8b).

**And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place. And behold, I am coming soon.”** Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22.6–7).

**Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star (Rev 22.11–16).**

**He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.”** Amen. **Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord be with all the saints. Amen** (Rev 22.20–21).
Resources
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SELECTED ARTICLES FROM SAINT VLADIMIR’S THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY


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Introduction

When Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko of blessed memory was in the process of revising his series *The Orthodox Faith*, he requested the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America, which had originally published the series, to create questions to accompany the texts of each volume. The following questions are the fulfillment of his request for the Doctrine and Scripture volume of the series.

There are questions for each chapter of this volume, based on the text. They can be used to review or further consider the material in the chapter. A page number follows each question to show the part of the text it’s based on.

A separate document gives numbered answers. We would suggest that a discussion leader, after the group has read a chapter, give each participant a copy of the questions for that chapter. They can then answer them together. The leader can have a copy of the answer pages for that chapter to check answers if need be (though most of the answers should easily be found in the chapter text.) A reader going through the book on his or her own can use the questions and answers in whatever way is most helpful.

Some of the answers also offer points for reflection. Father Thomas always liked to reflect further on things as he taught, and we hope readers will want to do the same. Most of all we hope that many people will use and benefit from the revised edition of Father Thomas’ wonderful gift to the Church, his series *The Orthodox Faith*.

Department of Christian Education Orthodox Church in America

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What title is given to the apostle and evangelist John? (p. 177)

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What event in the time of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, fulfills the giving of the law to Moses (p. 221)

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The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, never to be rebuilt. What has now become God’s temple, according to I Corinthians 3: 16–17? (p. 235)

Hebrews 9: 11–14 calls Jesus Christ the “high priest” who sacrifices “not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood.” What does His sacrifice achieve for us? (p. 236)

What public action of Jesus Christ makes the people call Him “the Prophet
Who is come into the world”? (p. 239)
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Chapter 1: Sources of Christian Doctrine

Isaiah said that men (meaning all human beings) would be “taught by God.”

They said that the yearnings of pagan religions and the wisdom of many philosophers could be valid and genuine paths to the Truth of God. Saint Basil the Great said that in pagan writings truth could be perceived “as it were in shadows and in mirrors” He advised young men, whose minds were not yet mature, to “receive those words from pagan authors which contain suggestions of the virtues.” This would prepare their minds to understand, later, the truly precious words of the Holy Scriptures, which lead to salvation.

No; some things are temporal and temporary, and don’t pertain to God’s Kingdom.

The Bible comes first.

Primarily, the word *prophet* describes a person who speaks the Word of God by direct divine inspiration. Secondarily it describes one who foretells the future.

Everything in the Bible (law, history, wisdom and prophecy) prepares us for Jesus Christ. Therefore the Gospels, which tell us how He fulfilled that preparation, are enthroned on the altar.

The Church’s liturgy, which means the common work of prayer and worship, retains the liturgical life of the Old Testament, but in a new and eternal perspective.

An *apologist* is one who offers answers about, or defends, something. Some Church Fathers wrote what are called *apologies*, meaning explanations or defenses of the Christian faith.

The Church Fathers lived as Christians are called to live. With righteousness of life they combined purity of soul and intellectual brilliance. This gives them great authority, though the Church does not claim that they are infallible.

The *fools for Christ’s sake* had no regard for things considered by most of us to be basic necessities-food, clothing, shelter-or for social reputation and status. Some of them “spoke truth to power” in risky ways; many were often treated with hostility.

No. Canons of a moral and ethical character don’t change. Those of a practical nature sometimes do.

An icon, unlike a holy picture, is not a pictorial representation. It has a
deeper realism, and depicts a person or event as earthly and yet heavenly, physical and yet spiritual.

Chapter 2: The Symbol of Faith (the Creed)

The earliest creed was probably the simple confession that Jesus Christ is Messiah and Lord.

The Symbol of Faith, the Creed, is said in the first person because each person must believe for himself or herself. The community of faith begins with and rests upon each member’s personal confession of faith.

God is above existence, above being. Therefore the Orthodox Church would be reluctant to use the term “supreme being” because it implies that God is merely the greatest in the chain of “being” to which everything and everyone belongs.

No. God created the first foundations of existence. Then, over periods of time—perhaps millions of years—through His power these foundations brought forth other elements of His creation.

The prayer addresses the Spirit of God, “who art everywhere and fillest all things.” Similarly, Psalm 139 expresses God’s omnipresence, as well as His constant care for us.

There are nine ranks of bodiless powers; angels are just one of these ranks.

The Scriptures tell us that our destiny, being made in God’s image, is to rule creation. Nothing like this is said about angels. We are created for a life superior to that of any creature, including the angels who glorify God and serve the cause of our salvation. We do not become angels when we die; we are forever different from angels.

There are no limits to the divinity of our Creator, and by His grace there are no limits to what we, in our humanity, can become. We have been created to grow and develop, through participation in the nature of God, for all eternity.

The three Persons of the Holy Trinity, while perfectly equal, are not the same. They are in complete unity of nature and being. Yet there are distinctions as to how each Person lives and expresses the common nature of God. Similarly, men and women are completely equal and are called to spiritual perfection, of which they both are capable. Yet they are two different “modes of existence” within one and the same humanity just as the Three Persons of the Trinity are three different “modes of existence” within one and the same divinity.

Though we may think of the word eternity as meaning endless time, it actually means the condition of no time at all. Therefore, for God, there is no past or future; all time is now. This means, for example, that there has never been a time when the Son of God was not-His coming forth from the Father is
eternal. This is why the Church had to condemn the teachings of Arius, who said that there had been a time when there was no Son of God.

No, because “the world was made through Him” (Jn 1:10) and He was always present, and active, as the “life and light of man” (1Jn 4). When the Old Testament saints experienced divine manifestations (Moses, for example) or when God’s word was revealed to them (as in Isaiah 55:10–11), these were revelations of God by His Son, the Divine Word.

To save the world, the Messiah could not be someone in need of salvation like everyone else. The Savior had to be “not of this world” and must be able to overcome death. This doesn’t alter the fact that He became a real and perfect man.

The hymn expresses the truth that Jesus Christ is both perfect God and perfect man.

The defenders of icons said that because God became a true man of flesh and blood (which we call the Incarnation), it was appropriate to depict Him. In fact, to deny the possibility of depicting Him was to deny the truth of His having come to us as a man.

The event is Christ’s baptism in the Jordan by John.

In baptism and chrismation we enter into the saving life of the Church. We are enlightened and enabled to see, believe and love the Truth of God. The Church calls this enlightenment holy illumination.

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. By taking our sins on Himself and then dying a sinless death of His own free will, not through any necessity, Jesus Christ defeated the power of death. In that way He made death the source and the way into life eternal.

Ezekiel says that God will open the graves and raise up those buried in them. The raised people will receive God’s Spirit and live. This is exactly what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for us.

We are His most precious possession.

It is recreated with “a few drops of Blood”—the Blood of the crucified Christ, shed for our salvation.

It means that Christ has completed His work on earth and is reunited with His Father in heaven, bearing the wounded and glorified humanity which He assumed. Through this, we human beings are restored to communion with God.

Not being told the time of “the end” is a gift to us—it allows us to be vigilant and to be constant in our good works. That way we will be prepared for the end no matter when it comes.

Saint Isaac says that God’s love acts as suffering in “the reproved”—those who have sinned against love—and as joy in the blessed, who have loved God.
We will be judged by Christ, by One who has fully shared our life and knows its sorrows, temptations and difficulties. Some people who don’t know much about Christianity fail to understand this, and ask how God can fairly judge us when He is reigning “up there” and we are struggling “down here.” Father Hopko makes the important point that we are not judged by God “sitting on a cloud” but by Christ who suffered every human hardship yet emerged victorious.

John 15: 26 says that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father” and this is our Orthodox understanding.

Pentecost was the fulfillment of Christ’s earthly mission and the beginning of the Christian Church.

Catholic means full and complete, lacking nothing.
The Church is called “the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”

This passage is not describing total annihilation of God’s creation, which He loves and wants to save. Rather it is telling of a catastrophe that all of creation will have to endure in order to be purified, cleansed and saved. It also tells of eternal fire in which the ungodly will suffer.

Chapter 3: The Holy Trinity

We can do this through work and prayer, passing beyond words and concepts about God and coming to know Him for ourselves.

No, because the Son and the Spirit are not creatures. Like God the Father, they are uncreated.

If we ask who God is, the answer is that He is the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Human beings are logical in that they participate in God’s Logos–His Son and Word. They reflect God’s nature on the creaturely level as the Logos does on the divine level.

We have this special empowerment because we are given the gift of being inspired by the Holy Spirit, unlike every other creature.

Chapter 4: The Bible

We do not mean that it fell from heaven ready made, and we do not mean that it was dictated by God to men who were just His passive instruments. Rather, God inspired His People to produce the Scriptures.

This is because the Church considers the Bible to be entirely inspired by God; in that sense He is its original author. The identity of the human author doesn’t determine the authenticity or validity of a book which is considered to be part of the Bible.

Chapter 5: Old Testament

Moses.
No. In most cases they were written well after the events they describe. 

Apocalyptic means that which refers to the final revelation of God and His judgment over all creation. 

Christ referred to the book of Jonah as the sign of His messianic mission in the world. On Holy Saturday we are preparing to celebrate His rising from the dead, and the salvation offered to all people—the fulfillment of His mission. 

Chapter 6: New Testament

The gospels were written not just to tell the story of Jesus’ life. His Spirit-filled disciples wrote to bear witness that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

The Gospel of Matthew is intended to show that Jesus Christ (son of David, son of Abraham) is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures and is truly the Christ.

Because the second disciple on the road is not named, it is assumed that he is Luke, the writer of the gospel.

He is called the Theologian.

While upholding the validity and holiness of the Mosaic Law, Saint Paul defends the doctrine that salvation comes only in Jesus Christ, by faith and by grace.

The words “bishops and deacons” indicate the growing structure of the Church.

The main theme is a comparison of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to the sacrifices of the Old Testament priests.

The teaching is that the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” will be purged of all that is contrary to God’s divine goodness and holiness, and will be “very good” as was the first creation. The only things “dissolved with fire” will be evil and sin.

The image of Babylon has a universal application—it stands for every society which fights against God and for every body of persons united in wickedness and fleshliness.

Father Hopko says that the number 144,000 is the symbol of total completion and of the full number of the saved.

Chapter 7: Salvation History

The first Adam was a type (a figure which anticipates a greater figure to come) of the True Adam, Jesus Christ—the One who was to come. The first was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.

The event was the visit of three angels of God to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre. Here again, the event “prefigures” something great to come—the revelation of the Holy Trinity.
Jesus says that the Jews who ate manna in the wilderness still died. But He is the Living Bread from heaven, and those who eat it will not die but will live forever.

Saint Paul says that the rock was Christ; Jesus Christ is the Living Water as well as the Living Bread.

The giving of the law to Moses is fulfilled in the giving of the Holy Spirit to Christ’s Disciples on Pentecost.

He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

We, God’s people, are now God’s temple.

Christ’s sacrifice secured an eternal redemption.

The public action was “the sign which He had done”—the feeding of the 5000.

In the Kingdom, the final and perfect presence of God, which had been prophesied, will actually be given.

The promise is that we can become partakers of the divine nature, participants in God’s own holiness.
The Church Building
Church Building

In the long history of the Orthodox Church a definite style of church architecture has developed. This style is characterized by the attempt to reveal the fundamental experience of Orthodox Christianity: God is with us.

The fact that Christ the Immanuel (which translated means “God with us”) has come, determines the form of the Orthodox church building. God is with man in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The dwelling place of God is with man. “The Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands,” says Saint Stephen quoting the Old Testament prophets. Saint Paul says that men are the temples of God:

“Christ Jesus himself [is] the cornerstone, in Whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in Whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2.21–22).

The words of Saint Peter are very much the same.

“Come to him [Christ] to that living stone .?.?. and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house .?.?. to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1Pet 2.4–5).

“We are the temple of the living God .?.?” (2Cor 6.16). And it is exactly this conviction and experience that Orthodox Church architecture wishes to convey.

Orthodox Church architecture reveals that God is with men, dwelling in them and living in them through Christ and the Spirit. It does so by using the dome or the vaulted ceiling to crown the Christian church building, the house of the Church which is the People of God. Unlike the pointed arches which point to God far up in the heavens, the dome or the spacious all-embracing ceiling gives the impression that in the Kingdom of God, and in the Church, Christ “unites all things in himself, things in heaven and things on earth,” (Eph 1.10) and that in Him we are all “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19).

The interior of the Orthodox Church building is particularly styled to give the experience of the unity of all things in God. It is not constructed to reproduce the upper room of the Last Supper, nor to be simply a meeting hall for men whose life exists solely within the bounds of this earth. The church building is patterned after the image of God’s Kingdom in the Book of Revelation. Before us is the altar table on which Christ is enthroned, both as the Word of God in the Gospels and as the Lamb of God in the eucharistic sacrifice. Around the table are the angels and saints, the servants of the Word and the Lamb who glorify him-and through him, God the Father-in the
perpetual adoration inspired by the Holy Spirit. The faithful Christians on earth who already belong to that holy assembly “.?.?. fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God .?.?.” (Eph 2.19) enter into the eternal worship of God’s Kingdom in the Church. Thus, in Orthodox practice the vestibule symbolizes this world. The nave is the place of the Church understood as the assembly and people of God. The altar area, called the sanctuary or the holy place, stands for the Kingdom of God.
We have mentioned how the entire church building is centered around the altar table. The altar table does not merely symbolize the table of the last supper. It is the symbolic and mystical presence of the heavenly throne and table of the Kingdom of God; the table of Christ the Word, the Lamb and the King of the ever-lasting life of God’s glorified dominion over all of creation.

The Book of the Gospels is perpetually enthroned on the altar table. It is on the altar table that we offer the “bloodless sacrifice” of Christ to the Father. And from the altar table we receive the Bread of Life, the Body and Blood of the Lord’s Passover Supper. This table is the “table of God’s Kingdom” (Lk 13.29).

In Orthodox Tradition the altar table is often carved wood or stone. It is usually vested with colorful material to show its divine and heavenly character. It should always be a simple table of proportional dimensions, often a perfect cube, and is always free-standing so that it may be encircled.

On the altar table one always finds the antimension. This is the cloth depicting Christ in the tomb which contains the signature of the bishop and is the permission for the local community to gather as the Church. “Antimension” means literally “instead of the table.” Since the bishop is the proper pastor of the Church, the antimension is used instead of the bishop’s own table which is, obviously, in his own church building, the cathedral-the place where the bishop has his chair (cathedra).

The antimension usually contains a relic (normally a part of the body) of a saint which shows that the Church is built on the blood of the martyrs and the lives of God’s holy people. This custom comes from the early Church practice of gathering and celebrating the eucharist on the graves of those who have lived and died for the Christian faith. Usually, a relic of a saint is embedded in the altar table itself as well.

Also on the altar table there is a tabernacle, often in the shape of a church building, which is a repository for the gifts of holy communion that are reserved for the sick and the dying. Behind the altar table there is usually a seven-branched candle stand which comes from the Old Testamental tradition of the Jewish temple. Generally speaking, the Jerusalem temple is highly valued in the Orthodox Christian tradition of worship and church construction as a “prototype” of the true worship “in spirit and truth” of the Kingdom of God (Jn 4.23).
Oblation Table

As we face the altar area the table of oblation on which the bread and wine are prepared for the liturgy stands on the left side of the altar table. The chalice—the cup for the wine—and the diskos—the round plate, elevated on a stand, for the bread—are kept on this table. These vessels are normally decorated with iconographic engravings, Christian symbols, and the sign of the cross.

On this table there is also a special liturgical knife—symbolically called the spear—which is used for cutting the eucharistic bread, and a liturgical spoon for administering holy communion to the people. There are also special covers for the chalice and diskos and a cruciform piece of metal called the star which holds the cover over the eucharistic bread on the diskos. A sponge and cloths for drying the chalice after the liturgy are also usually kept here. The oblation table is decorated in a manner similar to that of the altar table.

Above the table of oblation (the table on which the gifts for holy communion are prepared), which stands in the altar area to the left of the altar table, one might find various icons. A favorite one is that of Christ praying in Gethsemane: ‘Let this cup pass.?.?.?’ Another is that of the Nativity, although this is due to a symbolical interpretation of the Divine Liturgy which is not indicative of the fundamental liturgical tradition of the Church.
In the Orthodox Church the icons bear witness to the reality of God’s presence with us in the mystery of faith. The icons are not just human pictures or visual aids to contemplation and prayer. They are the witnesses of the presence of the Kingdom of God to us, and so of our own presence to the Kingdom of God in the Church. It is the Orthodox faith that icons are not only permissible, but are spiritually necessary because “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1.14). Christ is truly man and, as man, truly the “icon of the invisible God” (Col 1.15; 1Cor 11.7; 2Cor 4.4).

The iconostasis or icon screen in the Orthodox Church exists to show our unity with Christ, his mother and all the angels and saints. It exists to show our unity with God. The altar table, which stands for the Banquet Table of the Kingdom of God, is placed behind the so-called royal gates, between the icons of the Theotokos and Child and the glorified Christ, showing that everything which happens to us in the Church happens in history between those “two comings” of Christ: between his coming as the Saviour born of Mary and His coming at the end of the age as the King and the Judge.

The icons on the royal gates witness to the presence of Christ’s good news, the gospel of salvation. The four evangelists who recorded the gospels appear, and often also an icon of the Annunciation, the first proclamation of the gospel in the world. In Greek the gospel is the evangelion, the authors of the gospels the evangelistoi, the annunciation the evangelismos.

Over the doors we have the icon of Christ’s Mystical Supper with his disciples, the icon of the central mystery of the Christian faith and the unity of the Church in the world. It is the visual witness that we too are partakers in the “marriage supper of the lamb” (Rev 19.9), that we too are blessed by Christ “to eat and drink at my table in my kingdom” (Lk 22.30), blessed to “eat bread in the Kingdom of God” (Lk 14.15).

Over and around the central gates are icons of the saints. The deacon’s doors in the first row (for the servants of the altar) usually have icons depicting deacons or angels, God’s servants. The first row also has an icon of the person or event in whose honor the given building is dedicated, along with other prominent saints or events. Depending on the size of the iconostasis, there may be rows of icons of the apostles, the major feasts of the Church, the prophets and other holy people blessed by God, all crowned on the top by the cross of Christ.

In recent centuries the iconostasis in most Orthodox churches became very
ornate and developed into a virtual wall, dividing the faithful from the holy altar rather than uniting them with it. In recent years this development has happily been altered in many places. The iconostasis in many church buildings now gives first place to the icons themselves and has become once more an icon “stand” or “screen” (stasis) rather than a solid partition.

Besides the iconostasis, Orthodox Church buildings often have icons or frescoes on the walls and ceilings. The “canon” of Church design is to have the icon of Christ the Almighty in the center of the building, and the icon of the Theotokos with Christ appearing within her found over the altar area. This latter icon is called the “image of the Church” since Mary is herself the prototype of the entire assembly of believers in whom Christ must dwell. In the altar area it is also traditional to put icons of the saints who composed Church liturgies and hymns. Directly behind the altar table there is usually an image of Christ in glory-enthroned or transfigured or resurrecting, and sometimes offering the eucharistic gifts.
Also found on the altar table is a small hand cross used for blessing and for veneration by the faithful. The sign of the cross is used throughout the church building: on the holy vessels, stands, tables, and vestments.

The cross is the central symbol for Christians, not only as the instrument of the world’s salvation by the crucified Christ, but also as the constant witness to the fact that men cannot be Christians unless they live with the cross as the very content of their lives in this world. “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mk 8.34).

For these reasons Christians place upon themselves the sign of the cross. The Orthodox place their first two fingers and thumb together to form a sign of the Triune God and cross themselves from the head to the breast and from shoulder to shoulder, right to left. This unique and all-embracing symbol shows that the cross is the inspiration, power and indeed the very content of our lives as Christians; and that man’s mind, heart and strength must be given to the love of God and man.
Vestments

In the Orthodox Church the clergy vest in special clothing for the liturgical services. There are two fundamental Christian vestments, the first of which is the baptismal robe. This robe, which is worn by bishops and priests at the service of holy communion and which should always be white, is the “robe of salvation”: the white garment in which every Christian is clothed on his day of baptism, symbolizing the new humanity of Jesus and life in the Kingdom of God (Rev 7.9ff).

The second fundamental vestment for Christian clergy is the stole or epitrachelion which goes around the neck and shoulders. It is the sign of the pastoral office and was originally made of wool to symbolize the sheep—that is, the members of the flock of Christ—for whom the pastors are responsible. Both bishops and priests wear this vestment when they are exercising their pastoral office, witnessing to the fact that the ministers of the Church live and act solely for the members of Christ’s flock.

As the Church developed through history the vestments of the clergy grew more numerous. Special cuffs for deacons, priests, and bishops were added to keep the sleeves of the vestments out of the way of the celebrants during the divine services. When putting on their cuffs, the clergy read lines from the psalms reminding them that their hands belong to God.

A special belt was added as well to hold the vestments in place. When putting on the belt the clergy say psalms which remind them that it is God who “girds them with strength” to fulfill their service. Only the bishops and priests wear the liturgical belt.

All orders of the clergy wear a special outer garment. Deacons, sub-deacons, and readers wear a robe called a sticharion. It is probably the baptismal garment, decorated and made more elaborate. Deacon and sub-deacons also wear a stole called the orarion, probably originally a piece of material upon which were inscribed the liturgical litanies and prayers (orare means to pray). The deacon still holds up the orarion in a position of prayer when he intones his parts of the divine services. The sub-deacon’s orarion is placed around his back in the sign of the cross.

Priests wear their white baptismal robe over which they have their pastoral stole, cuffs and belt. They also wear a large garment called a phelonion which covers their entire body in the back and goes below their waist in front. This vestment was probably developed from the formal garments of the early Christian era and, under the inspiration of the Bible, came to be identified with
the calling of the priestly life. When putting on his phelonion, the priest says the lines of Psalm 132:

Thy priests, O Lord, shall clothe themselves in righteousness, and the saints shall rejoice with joy always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The bishops traditionally probably also wore the phelonion over which they placed the omophorion, the sign of their episcopal office as leading pastor of the local church. When the Christian empire was captured by the Turks in the fifteenth century, however, the Christian bishops of the East were given civil rule over all Christians under Turkish domination. At that time, since there was no longer a Christian empire, the bishops adopted the imperial insignia and began to dress as the Christian civil rulers used to dress. Thus, they began to wear the sakkos, the imperial robe, and the mitre, the imperial crown. They also began to stand upon the orlets (the eagle) during the divine services and to carry the staff which symbolized more their secular power than their pastoral office. At that time as well, the word despota (vladyko or master)-a title for temporal rather than spiritual power-was used in addressing the bishops, and the clergy began to grow long hair which was also a sign of earthly rule in former times. In the seventeenth century, during the reform of Patriarch Nikon, the Russian Church adopted these same forms for its bishops.

In the Church some of these new insignia were “spiritualized” and given a Biblical meaning. Thus, the mitres became signs of Christian victory, for the saints receive their crowns and reign with Christ (Rev 4.4). The eagle became the sign of the flight to the heavenly Jerusalem since it is the classical Biblical symbol of Saint John and the fourth gospel (Rev 4.7; Ezek 1.10). The staff became the symbol of Aaron’s rod (Ex 4.2), and so on. It should be understood, however, that these particular insignia of the bishop’s office are of later and more accidental development in the Church.

In relation to the bishop’s service in the Orthodox Church, the use of two special candelabra with which the bishop blesses the faithful also developed. One of these candelabra holds three candles (trikiri – on right) while the other holds two candles (dikiri – on left). These candelabra stand for the two fundamental mysteries of the Orthodox faith: that the Godhead is three Divine Persons; and that Jesus Christ, the Saviour, has two natures, being both perfect God and perfect man.

Bishops and priests in the Orthodox Church also wear other special garments. There are, first of all, two pieces of cloth: one square (nabedrennik) and one diamond-shaped (epigonation or palitsa). The former is worn only by priests as a sign of distinction, while the latter is always worn by bishops and is given to some priests as a special distinction of service. Probably these cloths
were originally “liturgical towels.” Their symbolical meaning is that of spiritual strength: the sword of faith and the Word of God. They hang at the sides of their wearers during divine services.

There are also clerical hats which carry special meaning in some Orthodox Churches—the pointed hat (skufya) and the cylindrical one (kamilavka). The kamilavka is normally worn by all Greek priests, but only by some clergy in other national Orthodox churches as a special distinction. The kamilavka may be black or purple; monks, and by extension all bishops, wear it with a black veil. The skufya is worn by monks and, in the Russian tradition, by some of the married clergy as a special distinction, in which case the hat is usually purple. Also in the Russian tradition certain married clergy are given the honor of wearing a mitre during liturgical services. In other Orthodox churches the mitre is reserved only for bishops and abbots of monasteries (archimandrites). Generally speaking, especially in the West, the use of clerical headwear is declining in the Orthodox Church.

Finally, it must be mentioned that bishops and priests wear the cross. The bishops also wear the image of Mary and the Child (panagia—the “all holy”). In the Russian tradition all priests wear the cross. In other churches it is worn liturgically only by those priests given the special right to do so as a sign of distinction.

As the various details of clerical vestments evolved through history, they became very complex and even somewhat exaggerated. The general trend in the Church today is toward simplification. We can almost certainly look forward to a continual evolution in Church vestments which will lead the Church to practices more in line with the original Christian biblical and sacramental inspiration.

The Orthodox Church is quite firm in its insistence that liturgical vesting is essential to normal liturgical worship, experienced as the realization of communion with the glorious Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which is yet to come but which is also already with us in the mystery of Christ’s Church.
Christian Symbols

The Orthodox Church abounds with the use of symbols. These symbols are those realities which have the power and competence of manifesting God to men, signs which carry us beyond ourselves and themselves into the genuine union and knowledge of things eternal and divine.

Among the Christian symbols we have already mentioned are the icons, the sign of the cross, and the vestments of liturgical celebration. In addition, we can mention the use of various colors which have their particular significance, as well as the use of light, normally the natural light of candles, which leads us to Christ, the Light of the world and of the Kingdom of God. Generally speaking, light is a universal symbol for the mystical presence of God as the True, the Beautiful and the Good. This is witnessed in almost all religions, philosophies, and artistic expressions.

The Orthodox Church follows the Bible in its use of incense (Ex?30.8, Ps 141.2; Lk 1.9; Rev 8.3). Incense is the symbol of the rising of prayers, of spiritual sacrifice and of the sweet-smelling fragrance of the Kingdom of God.

The Church also uses bread, wine, wheat, oil, water, flowers and fruits as signs of God’s love, mercy, goodness, life and the very presence given to man in creation and salvation. Indeed, all elements of creation find the “truth” of their very being and existence as expressions and manifestations of God, as “symbols” of his presence and action in the world for man. This is the reason for their use in this way in the Church.

Among the more graphic Christian symbols in the Church are the initials and letters of Christ’s name; the triangle of the Trinity; the circle of eternity; the fish which stands for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour; the eye of God’s omnipresence; the anchor of hope; the rock of faith; the flame of God’s consuming presence; the vine which Jesus named himself—“I am the vine, you are the branches” (Jn 15.5); the alpha and the omega (Rev 1.8); the crown and staff of Christ’s kingship; and many others—all of which indicate some aspect of the saving presence and action of God in the world.

The use of symbols is a mode of revelation and communion which passes beyond that of mere verbal or intellectual communication. The death of symbols comes when they are artificially invented, rationally explained, or reduced to mere “illustrations” whose meaning is not immediately grasped by man on the level of his living spiritual vision and experience.
The Sacraments
The Sacraments

The sacraments in the Orthodox Church are officially called the “holy mysteries.” Usually seven sacraments are counted: baptism, chrismation (or confirmation), holy eucharist, penance, matrimony, holy orders and the unction of the sick.

The practice of counting the sacraments was adopted in the Orthodox Church from the Roman Catholics. It is not an ancient practice of the Church and, in many ways, it tends to be misleading since it appears that there are just seven specific rites which are “sacraments” and that all other aspects of the life of the Church are essentially different from these particular actions. The more ancient and traditional practice of the Orthodox Church is to consider everything which is in and of the Church as sacramental or mystical.

The Church may be defined as the new life in Christ. It is man’s life lived by the Holy Spirit in union with God. All aspects of the new life of the Church participate in the mystery of salvation. In Christ and the Holy Spirit everything which is sinful and dead becomes holy and alive by the power of God the Father. And so in Christ and the Holy Spirit everything in the Church becomes a sacrament, an element of the mystery of the Kingdom of God as it is already being experienced in the life of this world.

Viewing the Church as the new and eternal life of the Kingdom of God given to man by God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, we understand first of all that for life to exist there must be birth. The birth into the eternal life of God is the mystery of baptism. But birth is not enough for living; there must be the ongoing possibility of life: its power, energy and force. Thus, the mystery of chrismation is the gift of the power to live the life of Christ which is born in man by baptism. It is the gift of the “all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit” to man.

Life also must be sustained. This is normally done by eating and drinking. Food is the nourishment which keeps us alive. It is man’s communion with creation which keeps him existing. But, naturally speaking, our normal eating and drinking does not keep us alive forever. Our natural communion with the world is a communion to death. We need eating and drinking of a special food which nourishes us for eternal life. This food is the “mystical supper of the Son of God,” the body and blood of Christ, the mystery of the holy eucharist-the communion to Life Itself.

For life to be truly perfect, holy and good, there must also be a particular mystery about marriage and the bearing of children. In this world all who are
born are born to die, and even the most perfect of human love stands under the condemnation: “?.?. until death do you part.” The mystery of Christian marriage transforms human love, childbearing, and family communities into realities of eternal proportion and significance. In marriage we are blessed by God for unending friendship and love. We are blessed so that the fruit of our love, the begetting of our children and the life of our families will be not “unto death” but unto life everlasting.

Until the final establishment of the Kingdom of God, our life remains under the attack of its demonic enemies: sin, sickness, suffering, sorrow and death. The mystery of penance is the remedy for spiritual sickness. It allows us to turn again to God, to be taken back, to be forgiven and to be received once more into the life of God from which our sins have separated us. And the mystery of holy unction is the remedy for our physical sickness which is the power of sin over our bodies, our inevitable union with suffering and death. Holy unction allows us to be healed; to suffer, not “unto death” but, once more, unto life everlasting. It is the incorporation of our wounds into the life-creating cross of Christ.

The mystery, finally, which allows the perfection of divine life to be ours in all of its fullness and power in this world is the mystery of the Church itself. And most specifically within the Church, we have the mystery of holy orders: the sacrament of priesthood, ministry, teaching and pastoral care. The clergy of the church-bishops, priests, and deacons-exist for no other purpose than to make manifest, present and powerful in the Church the divine life of the Kingdom of God to all men while still living in this world.

Thus, from birth to death, in good times and bad, in every aspect of worldly existence, real life-life as God has created and saved and sanctified it to be-is given to us in the Church. This is Christ’s express purpose and wish, the very object of his coming to the world: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10.10).

The Church as the gift of life eternal is by its very nature, in its fullness and entirety, a mystical and sacramental reality. It is the life of the Kingdom of God given already to those who believe. And thus, within the Church, everything we do-our prayers, blessings, good works, thoughts, actions-everything participates in the life which has no end. In this sense everything which is in the Church and of the Church is a sacrament of the Kingdom of God.
The practice of baptism as a religious symbol did not begin with Jesus. Baptism, which means literally the immersion in water, was practiced among the people of the Old Testament as well as the people who belonged to pagan religions. The universal meaning of baptism is that of “starting anew,” of dying to an old, way of life and being born again into a new way of life. Thus, baptism was always connected with repentance which means a moral conversion, a “change of mind,” a change in living from something old and bad to something new and good.

Thus, in the Gospel we find John the Baptist baptizing the people as a sign of repentance in preparation for the Kingdom of God which was coming to men with Christ the Messiah. Christ himself was baptized by John not because he was sinful and needed to repent, but because in allowing himself to be baptized he showed that indeed he was God’s “Beloved Son,” the Saviour and Messiah, the “Lamb of God who takes upon himself the sins of the world” (See Mt 3, Mk 1, Lk 3, Jn 1–3).

In the Christian Church the practice of baptism takes on a new and particular significance. It no longer remains merely a sign of moral change and spiritual rebirth. It becomes very specifically the act of a person’s death and resurrection in and with Jesus. Christian baptism is man’s participation in the event of Easter. It is a “new birth by water and the Holy Spirit” into the Kingdom of God (Jn 3.5).

Baptism in the Church begins with the rejection of Satan and the acceptance of Christ. Before being baptized, a person—or his sponsors or godparents for him—officially proclaims the symbol of Christian faith, the Creed. Because the godparent speaks on behalf of the child, sponsors his entrance into the Church and “receives” the child out of the baptismal waters into the Church and cares for his spiritual life, the godparent himself must be a member of the Church.

After the proclamation of faith, the baptismal water is prayed over and blessed as the sign of the goodness of God’s creation. The person to be baptized is also prayed over and blessed with sanctified oil as the sign that his creation by God is holy and good. And then, after the solemn proclamation of “Alleluia” (from Hebrew, meaning “God be praised”), the person is immersed three times in the water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Through the act of immersion, the baptized person dies to this world and is born again in the resurrection of Christ into eternal life. He is clothed with the
“garments of salvation” symbolized by the white baptismal robe which is the “new humanity” of Jesus himself who is the new and heavenly Adam (See Jn 3, Rom 5, 1Cor 15). Thus, the words of the Apostle Paul are chanted as the newly-baptized is led in procession around the baptismal font three times as the symbol of his procession to the Kingdom of God and his entrance into eternal life: “For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia” (Gal 3.27).

In ancient times this procession was made from the baptistery to the church where the newly-baptized received Holy Communion at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Baptisms were normally done in connection with the Easter Liturgy; our present procession around the church building on Easter night is nothing more than our remembrance that we are baptized, that we have left the life of this world to enter the eternal life of the Risen Christ in the Kingdom of God. This new life is given to us in the life of the Church, most specifically in the Divine Liturgy.

Before the baptismal procession and the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel is fulfilled in the reception of Holy Communion, however, the newly-baptized is given the gift of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Chrismation.
In the sacrament of Chrismation we receive “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” (See Rom 8, 1Cor 6, 2Cor 1.21–22). If baptism is our personal participation in Easter—the death and resurrection of Christ, then chrismation is our personal participation in Pentecost—the coming of the Holy Spirit upon us.

The sacrament of chrismation, also called confirmation, is always done in the Orthodox Church together with baptism. Just as Easter has no meaning for the world without Pentecost, so baptism has no meaning for the Christian without chrismation. In this understanding and practice, the Orthodox Church differs from the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches where the two sacraments are often separated and given other interpretations than those found in traditional Orthodoxy.

Chrismation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is performed in the Orthodox Church by anointing all parts of the person’s body with the special oil called holy chrism. This oil, also called myrrh is prepared by the bishops of the Church on Holy Thursday. It is used in chrismation to show that the gift of the Spirit was originally given to men through the apostles of Christ, whose formal successors in the world are the bishops of the Church (see Acts 8.14; 19.1–7).

In chrismation a person is given the “power from on high” (Acts 1–2), the gift of the Spirit of God, in order to live the new life received in baptism. He is anointed, just as Christ the Messiah is the Anointed One of God. He becomes—as the fathers of the Church dared to put it—a “christ” together with Jesus. Thus, through chrismation we become a “christ,” a son of God, a person upon whom the Holy Spirit dwells, a person in whom the Holy Spirit lives and acts—as long as we want him and cooperate with his powerful and holy inspiration.

Thus, it is only after our chrismation that the baptismal procession is made and that we hear the epistle and the gospel of our salvation and illumination in Christ.

After the baptism and chrismation the person newly-received into God’s family is tonsured. The tonsure, which is the cutting of hair from the head in the sign of the cross, is the sign that the person completely offers himself to God—hair being the symbol of strength (Jud 16.17). Thus, until the fifteenth century the clergy of the Orthodox Church—the “professional Christians,” so to speak—wore the tonsure all their lives to show that their strength was in God.

**The Rite of Churching**

Together with being baptized and chrismated, the new-born child is also “churched.” The rite of churching imitates the offering of male children to the
temple according to the law of the Old Testament, particularly the offering of Christ on the fortieth day after his birth (Lk 2.22). Because of this fact, baptism in the Orthodox tradition came to be prescribed for the fortieth day or thereabouts. In the New Testament Church both male and female children are formally presented to God in the Church with special prayers at this time.

Also at this time, once more in imitation of Old Testament practice, the mother of the new-born child is also “churched.” Here we have the specific example of the purification ritual of Jesus’ mother Mary (Lk 2.22). In the Orthodox tradition the churching of the mother is her re-entry into the assembly of God’s people after her participation with God in the holy act of birth and after her separation from the Liturgy during her confinement. Thus, the mother is blessed to enter once more into communion with the mystery of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Divine Liturgy of the Church from which she has been necessarily absent.

The new mother should be churched before the baptism of her infant so that she can be present at the sacramental entrance of her child into the Kingdom of Christ. The official service book indicates that this should be done.

It is also the Orthodox tradition that the mysteries of baptism and chrismation, called officially “holy illumination,” are fulfilled in the immediate reception by the “newly-enlightened” of Holy Communion in the eucharistic liturgy of the Church. This is the case with infants as well as adults.

**The Epistle of Baptism-Chrismation**

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For He who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. The death He died he died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6.3–11)

**The Gospel of Baptism-Chrismation**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Mt 28.16–20)
The Holy Eucharist is called the “sacrament of sacraments” in the Orthodox tradition. It is also called the “sacrament of the Church.” The eucharist is the center of the Church’s life. Everything in the Church leads to the eucharist, and all things flow from it. It is the completion of all of the Church’s sacraments—the source and the goal of all of the Church’s doctrines and institutions.

As with baptism, it must be noted that the eucharistic meal was not invented by Christ. Such holy ritual meals existed in the Old Testament and in pagan religions. Generally speaking the “dinner” remains even today as one of the main ritual and symbolic events in the life of man.

The Christian eucharist is a meal specifically connected with the Passover meal of the Old Testament. At the end of his life Christ, the Jewish Messiah, ate the Passover meal with his disciples. Originally a ritual supper in commemoration of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Passover meal was transformed by Christ into an act done in remembrance of him: of His life, death and resurrection as the new and eternal Passover Lamb who frees men from the slavery of evil, ignorance and death and transfers them into the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.

At the supper Christ took the bread and the wine and ordered his disciples to eat and drink it as his own Body and Blood. This action thus became the center of the Christian life, the experience of the presence of the Risen Christ in the midst of his People (see Mt 26; Mk 14; Lk 22; Jn 6 and 13; Acts 2.41–47; 1Cor 10–11).

As a word, the term eucharist means thanksgiving. This name is given to the sacred meal—not only to the elements of bread and wine, but to the whole act of gathering, praying, reading the Holy Scriptures and proclaiming God’s Word, remembering Christ and eating and drinking his Body and Blood in communion with him and with God the Father, by the Holy Spirit. The word eucharist is used because the all-embracing meaning of the Lord’s Banquet is that of thanksgiving to God in Christ and the Holy Spirit for all that he has done in making, saving and glorifying the world.

The sacrament of the eucharist is also called holy communion since it is the mystical communion of men with God, with each other, and with all men and all things in him through Christ and the Spirit. The eucharistic liturgy is celebrated in the Church every Sunday, the Day of the Lord, as well as on feast days. Except in monasteries, it is rarely celebrated daily. Holy Communion is
forbidden to all Orthodox Christians on the week days of Great Lent except in the special communion of the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts (see below) because of its joyful and resurrectional character. The eucharist is always given to all members of the Church, including infants who are baptized and confirmed. It is always given in both forms—bread and wine. It is strictly understood as being the real presence of Christ, His true Body and Blood mystically present in the bread and wine which are offered to the Father in his name and consecrated by the divine Spirit of God.

In the history of Christian thought, various ways were developed to try to explain how the bread and the wine become the Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharistic liturgy. Quite unfortunately, these explanations often became too rationalistic and too closely connected with certain human philosophies.

One of the most unfortunate developments took place when men began to debate the reality of Christ’s Body and Blood in the eucharist. While some said that the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine were the real Body and Blood of Christ, others said that the gifts were not real, but merely the symbolic or mystical presence of the Body and Blood. The tragedy in both of these approaches is that what is real came to be opposed to what is symbolic or mystical.

The Orthodox Church denies the doctrine that the Body and the Blood of the eucharist are merely intellectual or psychological symbols of Christ’s Body and Blood. If this doctrine were true, when the liturgy is celebrated and holy communion is given, the people would be called merely to think about Jesus and to commune with him “in their hearts.” In this way, the eucharist would be reduced to a simple memorial meal of the Lord’s last supper, and the union with God through its reception would come only on the level of thought or psychological recollection.

On the other hand, however, the Orthodox tradition does use the term “symbols” for the eucharistic gifts. It calls, the service a “mystery” and the sacrifice of the liturgy a “spiritual and bloodless sacrifice.” These terms are used by the holy fathers and the liturgy itself.

The Orthodox Church uses such expressions because in Orthodoxy what is real is not opposed to what is symbolic or mystical or spiritual. On the contrary! In the Orthodox view, all of reality—the world and man himself—is real to the extent that it is symbolical and mystical, to the extent that reality itself must reveal and manifest God to us. Thus, the eucharist in the Orthodox Church is understood to be the genuine Body and Blood of Christ precisely because bread and wine are the mysteries and symbols of God’s true and genuine presence and manifestation to us in Christ. Thus, by eating and drinking the
bread and wine which are mystically consecrated by the Holy Spirit, we have
genuine communion with God through Christ who is himself “the bread of life”
(Jn 6.34, 41).

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this
bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the
world is my flesh (Jn 6.51).

Thus, the bread of the eucharist is Christ’s flesh, and Christ’s flesh is the
eucharistic bread. The two are brought together into one. The word
“symbolical” in Orthodox terminology means exactly this: “to bring together
into one.”

Thus we read the words of the Apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord
Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given
thanks, He broke it, and said, “This is My body which is broken for you. Do this
in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as you drink it, in
remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you
proclaim the Lord’s death, until He comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread
and drinks the cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body
and blood of the Lord (1Cor 11.23–26).

The mystery of the holy eucharist defies analysis and explanation in
purely rational and logical terms. For the eucharist-and Christ Himself-is
indeed a mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven which, as Jesus has told us, is “not
of this world.” The eucharist—because it belongs to God’s Kingdom—is truly free
from the earth-born “logic” of fallen humanity.
Penance

The sacrament of penance is our formal act of reconciliation with God in the Church when sin has severed us from the Church’s life. Because penance is the way to communion with God when that communion has been broken by sin, it is often referred to in Church Tradition as the renewal of baptism, or as the reestablishment of that condition of life with God which was given to men in the basic sacraments of inauguration into the Christian life.

Not every sin requires the necessity of formal penance through sacramental ritual. This is obvious because Christians are never completely without sin. Certain grave sins or the prolonged separation from Holy Communion, however, do call for the act of sacramental penance. Also, Christians living in communion with Christ are expected to make use of this sacrament periodically in order to humble themselves consciously before God and to receive guidance in the Christian life from their pastor in the Church. It is the teaching of the Orthodox Church that sacramental penance is necessary for those receiving Holy Communion when they have committed grave sins or when they have been separated from the eucharistic meal for a long time.

The sacrament of penance exists in the Church to allow for the repentance and reconversion of Christians who have fallen away from the life of faith. There are three main elements to the act of formal penance. The first is a sincere sorrow for sins and for the breaking of communion with God. The second is an open and heartfelt confession of sins. At one time this confession was done publicly before all men in the midst of the Church, but in recent times it is usually done only in the presence of the pastor of the Church who stands in behalf of all. The third element of penance is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of God through Christ is sacramentally bestowed upon the repentant sinner.

The fulfillment of penance consists in the reception of Holy Communion and the genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with God and all men according to the commandments of Christ. From this there obviously follows the necessity of a sincere attempt by the penitent to refrain from sin and to remain in faithful obedience to God and in uprightness of life before Him and all people.

The sacrament of penance, like all sacraments, is an element of the life of the Church which presupposes a firm belief and conviction that Christ himself is present in the Church through his Holy Spirit. A person without the experience of Christ in the Church will not understand the meaning of
sacramental penance and the need for the open and public confession of sins. When the Church is experienced as the new life in Christ and as the genuine communion with God in his kingdom already present with men in sacrament and mystery, then not only will sacramental penance and the confession of sins be understood, but it will be cherished as the great mystery of God which it is: the unique possibility for reunion with God through the forgiveness of Christ who has come to save sinners who confess their sins and who sincerely desire to change their lives according to the ways which he himself has given.

In a word, the Orthodox Church strictly adheres to the teaching of the Bible that only God can forgive sins, that he does so through Christ in the Church, that his conditions are genuine repentance and the promise of change which are witnessed by confession; and that confession, by definition, is the open and public acknowledgment of sin before God and all mankind.
Holy Unction

Christ came to the world to “bear the infirmities” of men. One of the signs of his divine messiahship was to heal the sick. The power of healing remains in the Church since Christ himself remains in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

The sacrament of the unction of the sick is the Church’s specific prayer for healing. If the faith of the believers is strong enough, and if it is the will of God, there is every reason to believe that the Lord can heal those who are diseased.

*Is any among you sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed (Jas 5.14–16; see also Mk 6.13).*

The sacrament of anointing is a “sobornal” sacrament in the traditional Orthodox practice. This means that as many of the faithful as possible are gathered to participate in the prayers. The rite itself calls for seven priests, seven readings from the epistles and gospels, seven prayers and seven anointings with oil specifically blessed for the service. Although it is not always possible to perform the sacrament in this way, the normal procedure is still to gather together as many priests and people as possible.

The express purpose of the sacrament of holy unction is healing and forgiveness. Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God’s will be done always remains as the proper context of the sacrament. In addition, it is the clear intention of the sacrament that through the anointing of the sick body the sufferings of the person should be sanctified and united to the sufferings of Christ. In this way, the wounds of the flesh are consecrated, and strength is given that the suffering of the diseased person may not be unto the death of his soul, but for eternal salvation in the resurrection and life of the Kingdom of God.

It is indeed the case that death inevitably comes to man. All must die, even those who in this life are given a reprieve through healing in order to have more time on the earth. Thus, the healing of the sick is not itself a final goal, but is merely “instrumental” in that it is given by God as a sign of his mercy and as a grace for the further opportunity of man to live for him and for others in the life of this world.

In the case where a person is obviously in the final moments of his earthly...
life, the Church has special prayers for the “separation of soul and body.” Thus, it is clear that the sacrament of holy unction is for the sick—both the physically and mentally sick—and is not reserved for the moment of death. The sacrament of unction is not the “last rites” as is sometimes thought; the ritual of the anointing itself in no way indicates that it should be administered merely in “extreme” cases. Holy unction is the sacrament of the spiritual, physical, and mental healing of a sick person whatever the nature or the gravity of the illness may be.
Marriage

Marriage was not invented or instituted by Christ. The Lord, however, gave a very specific meaning and significance to human marriage. Following the Old Testament Law, but going beyond its formal precepts in His messianic perfection, Jesus taught the uniqueness of human marriage as the most perfect natural expression of God’s love for men, and of His own love for the Church.

According to Christ, in order for the love of a man and woman to be that which God has: perfectly created it to be, it must be unique, indestructible, unending and divine. The Lord himself has not only given this teaching, but he also gives the power to fulfill it in the sacrament of Christian marriage in the Church.

In the sacrament of marriage, a man and a woman are given the possibility to become one spirit and one flesh in a way which no human love can provide by itself. In Christian marriage the Holy Spirit is given so that what is begun on earth does not “part in death” but is fulfilled and continues most perfectly in the Kingdom of God.

For centuries there was no particular ritual for marriage in the Church. The two Christians expressed their mutual love in the Church and received the blessing of God upon their union which was sealed in the holy eucharist of Christ. Through the Church’s formal recognition of the couple’s unity, and its incorporation into the Body of Christ, the marriage became Christian; that is, it became the created image of the divine love of God which is eternal, unique, indivisible and unending.

When a special ritual was developed in the Church for the sacrament of marriage, it was patterned after the sacrament of baptism-chrismation. The couple is addressed in a way similar to that of the individual in baptism. They confess their faith and their love of God. They are led into the Church in procession.

They are prayed over and blessed. They listen to God’s Word. They are crowned with the crowns of God’s glory to be his children and witnesses (martyrs) in this world, and heirs of the everlasting life of his Kingdom. They fulfill their marriage, as all sacraments are fulfilled, by their reception together of holy communion in the Church.

There is no “legalism” in the Orthodox sacrament of marriage. It is not a juridical contract. It contains no vows or oaths. It is, in essence, the “baptizing and confirming” of human love in God by Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is the deification of human love in the divine perfection and unity of the eternal
Kingdom of God as revealed and given to man in the Church.

The Christian sacrament of marriage is obviously available only to those who belong to the Church; that is, only for baptized communicants. This remains the strict teaching and practice of the Orthodox Church today. Because of the tragedy of Christian disunity, however, an Orthodox may be married in the Church with a baptized non-Orthodox Christian on the condition that both members of the marriage sincerely work and pray for their full unity in Christ, without any coercion or forceful domination by either one over the other. An Orthodox Christian who enters the married state with a non-Orthodox Christian must have the sacramental prayers and blessings of the Church in order to remain a member of the Orthodox Church and a participant in the sacrament of holy communion.

According to the Orthodox teaching, only one marriage can contain the perfect meaning and significance which Christ has given to this reality. Thus, the Orthodox Christian tradition encourages widows and widowers to remain faithful to their spouses who are dead to this world but alive in Christ. The Orthodox tradition also, by the same principle, considers temporary “living together,” casual sexual relations, sexual relations with many different people, sexual relations between members of the same sex, and the breakdown of marriages in separation and divorce, all as contrary to the human perfection revealed by God in Christ. Through penance, however, and with the sincere confession of sins and the genuine promise of a good life together, the Orthodox Church does have a service of second marriage for those who have not been able to fulfill the ideal conditions of marriage as taught by Christ. It is the practice of the Church as well not to exclude members of second marriages from the sacrament of holy communion if they desire sincerely to be in eucharistic fellowship with God, and if they fulfill all other conditions for participation in the life of the Church.

Because of the realization of the need for Christ in every aspect of human life, and because, as well, it is the firm Christian conviction that nothing should, or even can, be done perfectly without Christ or without his presence and power in the Church by the Holy Spirit, two Christians cannot begin to live together and to share each other’s life in total unity-spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, economically-without first placing that unity into the eternity of the Kingdom of God through the sacrament of marriage in the Church.

According to the Orthodox teaching as expressed in the sacramental rite of marriage, the creation of children, and the care and love for them within the context of the family, is the normal fulfillment of the love of a man and woman
in Christ. In this way, marriage is the human expression of the creative and caring love of God, the perfect Love of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity which overflows in the creation and care for the world.

This conviction that human love, imitative of divine love, should overflow itself in the creation and care for others does not mean that the procreation of children is in itself the sole purpose of marriage and the unique and exclusive justification and legitimization of its existence. Neither does it mean that a childless couple cannot live a truly Christian life together. It does mean, however, that the conscious choice by a married couple not to have a family for reasons of personal comfort and accommodation, the desire for luxury and freedom, the fear of responsibility, the refusal of sharing material possessions, the hatred of children, etc., is not Christian, and can in no way be considered as consonant with the biblical, moral and sacramental teachings and experience of the Orthodox Church about the meaning of life, love and marriage.

In light of the perspective offered above, the control of the conception of children in marriage is a very delicate matter, discouraged in principle and considered as perhaps possible only with the most careful examination of conscience, prayer and pastoral guidance.

The abortion of a child already conceived is strictly forbidden in the Orthodox Church, and cannot be justified in any way, except perhaps with the greatest moral risk and with the most serious penitence in the most extreme cases such as that of irreparable damage to the mother or her probable death in the act of childbirth. In such extreme situations, the mother alone must take upon herself the decision, and all must be prepared to stand before God for the action, asking His divine mercy.
Holy Orders

It is the conviction of the Orthodox that Christ is the only priest, pastor and teacher of the Christian Church. He alone guides and rules his people. He alone forgives sins and offers communion with God, his Father.

It is also the Orthodox conviction that Christ has not abandoned his people, but that he remains with his Church as its living and unique head. Christ remains present and active in the Church through his Holy Spirit.

The sacrament of holy orders in the Christian Church is the objective guarantee of the perpetual presence of Christ with his people. The bishops, priests, and deacons of the Church have no other function or service than to manifest the presence and action of Christ to his people. In this sense, the clergy do not act in behalf of Christ or instead of Christ as though he himself were absent. They are neither vicars of Christ, nor substitutes for Christ nor representatives of Christ.

Christ is present now, always, and forever in his Church. The sacramental ministry of the Church—the bishops, priests, and deacons—receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to manifest Christ in the Spirit to men. Thus, through His chosen ministers, Christ exercises and realizes His unique and exclusive function as priest, perpetually offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice to the Father on behalf of His human brothers and sisters. Through His ministers in the Church, Christ also acts as teacher, Himself proclaiming the divine words of the Father to men. He acts as the good shepherd, the one pastor who guides His flock. He acts as the forgiver and healer, remitting sins and curing the ills of men—physical, mental and spiritual. He acts as bishop, overseeing the community which He has gathered for Himself (1Pet 2.25). He acts as deacon (which means servant or minister) for He alone is the suffering servant of the Father Who has come “not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20.28).

The sacrament of holy orders takes its name from the fact that the bishops, priests and deacons give order to the Church. They guarantee the continuity and unity of the Church from age to age and from place to place from the time of Christ and the apostles until the establishment of God’s Kingdom in eternity.

As the apostles received the special gift of God to go forth and to make Christ present to men in all of the manifold aspects of his person and work, so the clergy of the Church receive the gift of God’s Spirit to maintain and to manifest Christ’s presence and action in the churches.

It is the doctrine of the Church that the clergy must strive to fulfill the
grace given to them with the gift of the “laying on of hands” in the most perfect way possible. But it is also the doctrine of the Church that the reality and effectiveness of the sacraments of the Church ministered by the clergy do not depend upon the personal virtue of the ministers, but upon the presence of Christ who acts in his Church by the Holy Spirit.

**Bishops**

The bishops are the leading members of the clergy in the sense that they have the responsibility and the service of maintaining the unity of the Church throughout the world by insuring the truth and unity of the faith, and practice of their respective churches with all of the others. Thus, the bishops represent their particular churches or dioceses to the other churches or dioceses, just as they represent the Universal Church to their own particular priests, deacons, and people.

In the Orthodox Church, the office of bishop is the leading Church ministry. The word bishop (episkopos, in Greek) means overseer. Each of the bishops has exactly the same service to perform. No bishop is “over any other bishop in the Church” and, indeed, the bishop himself is not “over” his church, but is himself within and of the Church as one of its members. He is the one who is responsible and answerable before God and man for the life of his particular church community.

All bishops of the Orthodox Church are bishops of a particular geographical territory called a diocese. They usually receive their title from the main city in the territory. A bishop of the chief city of a region which has within it other bishops with their own particular dioceses is usually called the metropolitan or archbishop. “Metropolitan” merely means “bishop of the metropolis,” the main city. The title of archbishop means “leading bishop” of an area, but sometimes the title is given to certain bishops for personal or honorary reasons. The title of patriarch belongs to the bishop of the capitol city of a region containing other metropolitanates and dioceses. Today this usually means a national church.

When the bishops of an area meet in council, as they must do periodically according to Church Law, the metropolitan presides; or in the case of a large territory or national church, the patriarch. Once again, however, it must be clearly understood that sacramentally all bishops are identical and equal. None is “higher” than the others as far as their sacramental position is concerned; none is “over” the others as far as their life in the Church is concerned.

In purely human and practical matters, the metropolitans and patriarchs guide and preside over areas greater than their own particular dioceses, but they are not superior or more powerful as far as their bishop’s office is concerned.
No bishop in Orthodoxy is considered infallible. None has any “powers” over or apart from his priests, deacons and people or the other bishops. All are servants of Christ and the Church.

Since the sixth century it has been the rule in the Orthodox Church that the bishops be single men or widowers. They are also usually in at least the first degree of monastic orders.

Priests

The priests of the Church, also called presbyters, are those who assist the bishop in his work. In the present day, the priests normally exercise the function of pastors of the local churches or parishes, a function which was normally done by the bishops in early times. The priests head the local congregations of Christians. They preside at the celebration of the liturgy. They teach, preach, counsel and exercise the ministries of forgiveness and healing.

The priests in the Church are assigned by the bishop and belong to the specific congregations which they serve. No one receives the gift of the priesthood personally or individually. Apart from his bishop and his own particular parish community, the priest has no “powers” and, indeed, no services to perform. Thus, on the altar table of each Christian community headed by the priest as pastor, there is the cloth called the antimension signed by the bishop which is the permission to the community to gather and to act as the Church of God. Without the antimension, the priest and his people cannot function legitimately, and the actions of the assembly cannot be considered as being authentically “of the Church.”

In the Orthodox Church a married man may be ordained to the priesthood. His marriage, however, must be the first for both him and his wife, and he may not remarry and continue in his ministry if his wife should die. If a single man is ordained, he may not marry and retain his service.

Deacons

The deacons of the Church originally assisted the bishops in good deeds and works of charity. In recent centuries the diaconate has become almost exclusively a liturgical function in which the deacons assist at the celebration of the divine liturgy and other Church services. In more recent times, the diaconate has been extended to many as a permanent position for full or part-time service to the work of the Church. In the office of deacon, the men may now not only assist the priest and bishop in liturgical services, but will often head educational programs and youth groups, do hospital visitation and missionary work and conduct projects of social welfare. In these cases the deacons are not necessarily taken from the professional schools of theology, but are chosen directly from the local parish community. The Church’s rules
about marriage are the same for the deacons as they are for the priests.

In addition to the bishops, priests and deacons who comprise the central ordained ministries in the Church, the Orthodox tradition also has special blessings for the particular ministries of sub-deacons and readers. In the early church there were also special prayers and blessings for other Church ministries such as exorcists, doorkeepers, deaconesses, and lay-preachers; the latter still function in some churches today. Also in most churches today there are special ceremonies of blessing and installation of lay workers in the Church such as members of the parish council, catechists, choir singers and leaders of various organizations and projects.
Funeral

The funeral service in the Orthodox Church, although not considered as specifically sacramental, belongs among the special liturgical rites of the People of God.

We have already seen that the Church has a particular sacramental service for the consecration of human suffering, and special prayers for the departure of the soul from the body in death. When a person dies, the Church serves a special vigil over the lifeless body, called traditionally the parastasis or panikhida, both of which mean a “watch” or an “all-night vigil.”

The funeral vigil has the basic form of Matins. It begins with the normal Trisagion Prayers and the chanting of Psalm 91, followed by the special Great Litany for the dead. Alleluia replaces God is the Lord, as in Great Lent, and leads into the singing of the funeral troparion.

The troparion and the kontakion of the dead, as all hymns of the funeral vigil, meditate on the tragedy of death and the mercy of God, and petition eternal life for the person who is “fallen asleep.”

Thou only Creator Who with wisdom profound mercifully orderest all things, and givest unto all that which is useful, give rest, O Lord, to the soul of Thy servant who has fallen asleep, for he has placed his trust in Thee, our Maker and Fashioner and our God (Troparion).

With the saints give rest, O Christ, to the soul of Thy servant where sickness and sorrow are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting (Kontakion).

Psalm 119, the verbal icon of the righteous man who has total trust in God and total devotion and love for his Divine Law—the verbal icon of Jesus Christ—is chanted over the departed, with its praises and supplications for life in God. It is this same psalm which is chanted over the tomb of Christ on Great Friday.

It is the psalm which sings of the victory of righteousness and life over wickedness and death.

My soul cleaves to the dust, give me life according to Thy word (119.25).

Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; and give me life in Thy ways (119.37).

Behold, I long for Thy precepts; in Thy righteousness give me life (119.40).

Thy testimonies are righteousness forever; give me understanding that I may live (119.144).

Plead my cause, and redeem me; give me life according to Thy promise.
This entire psalm together with the verses and prayers that go with it, the canon hymns of the service, and the special funeral songs of Saint John of Damascus all are a meditation on life and death. They are, in the context of the new life of the Risen Christ who reigns in the Church, a lesson of serious instruction for those who are immune to the full tragedy of sin and its “wages” which are death.

Sometimes men criticize the funeral vigil for its supposed morbidity and gloom; they say that there should be more words of resurrection and life. Yet the vigil itself is not the Church’s “final word” about death. It is simply the solemn contemplation upon death’s tragic character, its horrid reality and its power as that of sin and alienation from God. The realization of these facts, which particularly in the modern age is so strikingly absent, is the absolute condition for the full appreciation and celebration of the victorious resurrection of Christ and his gracious gift of eternal life to mankind. Without such a preparatory meditation on death, it is doubtful whether the Christian Gospel of Life can be understandable at all.

Thus it is not at all ironic that the same Saint John of Damascus who wrote the joyful canon sung by the Church on Easter Night is also the author of the Church’s songs of death, which are indeed unyielding in their gravity and uncompromising in their bluntness and realism about the inevitable fact of the final fate of fallen human existence.

What earthly sweetness remains unmixed with grief? What glory stands immutable on the earth? All things are but feeble shadows, all things are most deluding dreams, yet one moment only, and death shall supplant them all. But in the light of Thy countenance, O Christ, and in the sweetness of Thy beauty, give rest to him whom Thou hast chosen, for as much as Thou lovest mankind.

I weep and lament when I think upon death, and behold our beauty created in the likeness of God lying in the tomb disfigured, bereft of glory and form. O the marvel of it! What is this mystery concerning us? Why have we been delivered to corruption? Why have we been wedded unto death? Truly, as it is written, by the command of God Who giveth the departed rest (Funeral Hymns).

As the funeral service is now normally served, the Beatitudes are chanted after the canon and the hymns of Saint John, with prayer verses inserted between them on behalf of the dead. The epistle reading is from First Thessalonians (4.13–17). The gospel reading is from Saint John (5.24–30). A sermon is preached and the people are dismissed after giving their “final kiss” with the singing of the final funeral song: Eternal Memory.
It has to be noted here that this song, contrary to the common understanding of it, is the supplication that God would remember the dead, for in the Bible it is God’s “eternal memory” which keeps man alive. Sheol or Hades or the Pit, the biblical realm of the dead also called Abaddon, is the condition of forsakenness and forgottenness by God. It is the situation of non-life since in such a condition no one can praise the Lord; and the praise of the Lord is the only content and purpose of man’s life; it is the very reason for his existence. Thus, this most famous and final of the Orthodox funeral hymns is the prayer that the departed be eternally alive in the “eternal rest” of the “eternal memory” of God—all of which is made possible and actual by the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the destruction of the Pit of Death by the splendor of Divine Righteousness and Life (see Ps 88; Hos 13.14; 1Cor 15; Eph 4.9; Phil 2.5–11; 1Pet 3).

The vigil of the dead should normally be fulfilled in the eucharistic liturgy in which the faithful meet the Risen Lord, and all those who are alive in him, in the glory of his Kingdom of Life. The fact that the funeral vigil, in recent years, has lost its preparatory character and has simply been transformed into the funeral service itself, separated from the eucharistic liturgy, is a sad fact which allows neither for the proper appreciation of the vigil itself nor for the full Christian vision of the meaning of life, death and resurrection in Christ, the Church and the Kingdom of God.

The fact that the Divine Liturgy, when it is preserved with the funeral vigil, is served before it and is made into something mournful, converted into a “requiem mass” offered “on behalf of the dead,” is also an innovation of recent centuries under old Roman Catholic influence which further distorts the Christian understanding and experience of death in Christ.
Monasticism

Although not considered as one of the sacraments of the Church since it is not essential to the Christian life as such and is not a necessary element for the very existence of God’s People, monasticism has played an important role in Christian history and is highly valued by the Orthodox Church.

In the Orthodox Tradition the monastic calling is considered to be a personal gift of God to the individual soul for his salvation and service to the Body of Christ. The monastic vocation is the calling to personal repentance in a life dedicated solely to God. The ultimate Christian virtue of love is sought by the monk or nun primarily through prayer and fasting, and through the exercise of the Christian virtues of poverty, chastity, humility and obedience.

The monastic Christian does not normally exercise any particular ministry in the Church such as that of priest, pastor, teacher, nurse or social worker. The monk is normally a layman and not a cleric, with each monastery having only enough clergy to care for the liturgical and sacramental needs of the community itself.

In Orthodox Christian history many missionaries, teachers and bishops have come from men with monastic vocations. For centuries the bishops have been traditionally selected from among the monks. These additional callings, however, are considered to be acts of God’s will expressed in his people, and are not the purpose or intention of the monastic vocation as such. Indeed, one must enter a monastery only in order to repent of his sins, to serve God and to save his soul according to the ideals of monastic ascetism. The ceremony of monastic profession indicates this very clearly. Thus, for example, Saint Herman of Alaska was first dedicated to the monastic life, and only then, in obedience to his spiritual father, left his solitude to become a great missionary.

**The Monastic Ranks**

The Orthodox monastic tradition has four classical ranks that apply equally to men and to women. The first step is that of novice, which in church terminology is called the rank of obedience. At this first stage the candidate for monastic profession simply lives in the monastery under the direction of a spiritual father or mother.

The second step is that of riasa-bearer, which means that the person is more formally accepted into the community, and is given the right to wear the monastic robe, called the riasa. At this stage the candidate is not yet fully committed to the monastic life.

The third rank is that of the small schema which means that the person is a
professed monastic. He or she now receives a new name and wears the monastic schema (a cloth with the sign of the cross), the veil and the mantle (mantia). At this stage the person pledges to remain in the monastic community in perpetual obedience to the spiritual leader and to the head of the monastery, called the abbot or abbess (igoumenos or igoumenia). The service of profession, in addition to the hymns and prayers, includes a long series of formal questioning about the authenticity of the calling, the tonsuring (i.e., the cutting of the hair), and the vesting in the full monastic clothing.

The final rank of the monastic order is that of the great schema. This last step is reserved for very few, since it is the expression of the most strict observance of the monastic ideals, demanding normally a state of life in total seclusion in perpetual prayer and contemplation. With this final profession a new name is again received, and a new monastic insignia—the great schema—is worn.

In the Orthodox tradition there is no prescribed length of time that a person must remain in one or another of the monastic ranks. This is so because of the radically personal character of the vocation. Thus, some persons may progress rapidly to profession, while others may take years, and still others may never be formally professed while still remaining within the monastic community. The decision in these matters is made individually in each case by the spiritual director and the head of the community.

**Types of Monasticism**

Although the Orthodox Church does not have religious orders as the Latin Church does, there are in Orthodoxy different styles of monastic life, both individually and in community. Generally speaking some monasteries may be more liturgically oriented, while others may be more ascetic, while still others may have a certain mystical tradition, and others be more inclined to spiritual guidance and openness to the world for the purpose of care and counseling. These various styles of monasticism, which take both a personal as well as a corporate form, are not formally predetermined or officially legislated. They are the result of organic development under the living grace of God.

In addition to the various spiritual styles of monastic life, three formal types of organization may be mentioned. The first is that of coenobitic monasticism. In this type all members of the community do all things in common. The second form is called idiorhythmic in which the monks or nuns pray together liturgically, but work and eat individually or in small groups. In this type of monasticism the persons may even psalmody and do the offices separately, coming together only for the eucharistic liturgy, and even then, perhaps, only on certain occasions. Finally, there is the eremitic type of
monasticism where the individual monks or nuns are actually hermits, also called anchorites or recluses. They live in total individual seclusion and never join in the liturgical prayer of the community, except again perhaps on the most solemn occasions. In the rarest of cases it may even happen that the Holy Eucharist is brought to the monk or nun who remains perpetually alone.

In the Orthodox Church today in the Western world there are only a few communities with a genuinely monastic life. In the traditional Orthodox countries monasticism still thrives, although with greatly reduced numbers due to the political and spiritual conditions. In recent years, in some places, there has been a renewed interest in monasticism, particularly among the more educated members of the Church.
The Daily Cycles of Prayer
Prayer is essential to Christian life. Jesus Christ himself prayed and taught men to pray. One who does not pray to God cannot be a follower of Christ.

In the Orthodox Church all prayer is Trinitarian. We pray in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus the Son of God, and in his name, to God the Father. We call God “our Father” because Jesus has taught us and enabled us to do so. We have the capability of addressing God as Father because we are made sons of God by the Holy Spirit (see Rom 8).

In the Church we also address prayers to Christ and the Holy Spirit, the Divine Persons who are one with God the Father and exist eternally in perfect unity with him, sharing his divine being and will.

In the Church we also pray to the saints—not in the same way as we pray to the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but as our helpers, intercessors, and fellow-members of the Church who are already glorified with God in his divine presence. Foremost among the saints and first among the mere humans who are glorified in God’s Kingdom is Mary, the Theotokos and Queen of Heaven, the leader among our saintly intercessors before God. We can also pray to the holy angels to plead our cause before God.

In the traditional catechism of the Church three types of prayer are listed: asking, thanking, and praising. We can add a fourth type which can be called lamenting before God, questioning him about the conditions of life and the meaning of our existence, particularly in times of tragedy and confusion. We very often find all four kinds of prayer in the Bible.

Sometimes prayer is defined as a dialogue with God. This definition is sufficient if we remember that it is a dialogue of silence, carried on in the quiet of our hearts. In the Orthodox Church a more ancient and traditional definition of prayer calls it the lifting of the mind and heart to God, the standing in his presence, the constant awareness and remembrance of his name, his existence, his power and his love. This is the kind of prayer which is also called “walking in the presence of God.”

The purpose of prayer is to have communion with God and to be made capable of accomplishing his will. Christians pray to enable themselves to know God and to do his commandments. Unless a person is willing to change himself and to conform himself to Christ in the fulfillment of his commandments, he has no reason or purpose to pray. According to the saints, it is even spiritually dangerous to pray to God without the intention of responding and moving along the path that prayer will take us.
Praying is not merely repeating the words of prayers. Saying prayers is not the same as praying. Prayer should be done secretly, briefly, regularly, without many words, with trust in God that he hears, and with the willingness to do what God shows us to do (see Mt 6.5–15; Lk 11 and 18; Jn 14–17).

The Orthodox Church follows the Old Testament practice of having formal prayers according to the hours of the day. Christians are urged to pray regularly in the morning, evening and at meal times, as well as to have a brief prayer which can be repeated throughout the day under any and all circumstances. Many people use the Jesus Prayer for this purpose: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” Of course, the form of the prayer is secondary and may vary from person to person. It is the power of the prayer to bring us to God, and to strengthen us in doing his divine will that is essential.

The prayers of a person at home differ from those in church, since personal prayer is not the same as the communal prayer of the Church. The two types of prayer are different and should not be confused.

When we go to church to pray, we do not go there to say our private prayers. Our private prayers should be said at home, in our room, in secret, and not in church (Mt 6.5–6). This does not mean that we do not bring our personal cares, desires, troubles, questions and joys to the prayer of the Church. We certainly can, and we do. But we bring ourselves and our concerns to church to unite them to the prayer of the Church, to the eternal prayer of Christ, the Mother of God, the saints and the brothers and sisters of our own particular church community.

In church we pray with others, and we should therefore discipline ourselves to pray all together as one body in the unity of one mind, one heart and one soul. Once again this does not mean that our prayers in church should cease to be personal and unique; we must definitely put ourselves into our churchly prayer. In the Church, however, each one must put his own person with his own personal uniqueness into the common prayer of Christ with his Body. This is what enriches the prayer of the Church and makes it meaningful and beautiful and, we might even say, “easy” to perform. The difficulty of many church services is that they are prayers of isolated individuals who are only physically, and not spiritually, united together.

The formal Church services are normally rather long in the Orthodox Church. This is so because we go to church not merely to pray. We go to church to be together, to sing together, to meditate on the meaning of the faith together, to learn together and to have union and communion together with God. This is particularly true of the Divine Liturgy of the Church (see “The Divine Liturgy,” below). If a person wants merely to pray in the silence of his
heart, he need not-and, indeed, he should not go to the church services for this purpose. The church services are not designed for silent prayer. They exist for the prayerful fellowship of all God’s people with each other, with Christ and with God.
In the Orthodox Church the liturgical day begins in the evening with the setting of the sun. This practice follows the Biblical account of creation: “And there was evening and there was morning, one day” (Gen 1:5).

The Vespers service in the Church always begins with the chanting of the evening psalm: “The sun knows it’s time for setting, Thou makest darkness and it is night.” (Ps 104:19–20). This psalm, which glorifies God’s creation of the world, is man’s very first act of worship, for man first of all meets God as Creator.

*Bless the Lord, oh my soul, O Lord my God, Thou art very great.*

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy creatures (Ps 104:24).

Following the psalm, the Great Litany, the opening petition of all liturgical services of the Church is intoned. In it we pray to the Lord for everyone and everything.

Following this litany a number of psalms are chanted, a different group each evening. These psalms normally are omitted in parish churches though they are done in monasteries. On the eve of Sunday, however, sections of the first psalm and the other psalms which are chanted to begin the week are usually sung even in parish churches.

Psalm 141 is always sung at Vespers. During this psalm the evening incense is offered:

*Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me. Hear me, O Lord.*

Let my prayer arise in Thy sight as incense.

And let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord (Ps 141:1–2).

At this point special hymns are sung for the particular day. If it be a Church feast: songs in honor of the celebration are sung. On Saturday evenings, the eve of the Lord’s Day, these hymns always praise Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

The special hymns normally end with a song called a Theotokion which honors Mary, the Mother of Christ. Following this, the vesperal hymn is sung. If it be a special feast or the eve of Sunday, the celebrant will come to the center or the church building with lighted candles and incense. This hymn belongs to every Vespers service.

*O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the
light of evening. We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For it is right at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of Life, therefore all the world glorifies Thee.

Christ is praised as the Light which illumines man’s darkness, the Light of the world and of the Kingdom of God which shall have no evening (Is 60.20, Rev 21.25).

A verse from the Psalms, the prokeimenon, follows-a different one for each day, announcing the day’s spiritual theme. If it be a special day, three readings from the Old Testament are included. Then more evening prayers and petitions follow with additional hymns for the particular day, all of which end with the chanting of the Song of Saint Simeon:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation: which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people. A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel (Lk 1.29–32).

After proclaiming our own vision of Christ, the Light and Salvation of the world, we say the prayers of the Thrice-Holy (trisagion) through to the Our Father. We sing the main theme song of the day, called the Troparion, and we are dismissed with the usual benediction.

The service of Vespers takes us through creation, sin, and salvation in Christ. It leads us to the meditation of God’s word and the glorification of his love for men. It instructs us and allows us to praise God for the particular events or persons whose memory is celebrated and made present to us in the Church. It prepares us for the sleep of the night and the dawn of the new day to come. On the evening before the Divine Liturgy, it begins our movement into the most perfect communion with God in the sacramental mysteries.
Matins

The morning service of the Church is called Matins. It opens with the reading of six morning psalms and the intoning of the Great Litany. After this, verses of Psalm 118 are sung:

*God is the Lord and has revealed himself unto us.*
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The Troparion is then sung and, if it be a monastery, various groups of psalms which differ each day are read. Once again there are hymns on the theme of the particular day. On major feast days, special praises and psalms are sung, which on the Lord’s Day sing of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. On major feasts and on Sundays, the Gospel is also read.

After the Gospel there is a long intercessory prayer followed by a set of hymns and readings called the Canon. These songs are based on the Old Testamental canticles and conclude with the song of Mary, the so-called Magnificat (Lk 1.46–55). The Great Doxology is chanted followed by the morning litanies. The troparion is also repeated once again before the congregation is dismissed to begin the activities of the day.

The Matins service of the Church unites the elements of morning psalmody and prayer with meditation on the Biblical canticles, the Gospel reading, and the particular theme of the day in the given verses and hymns. The themes of God’s revelation and light are also always central to the morning service of the Church. Sometimes, particularly in churches of the Russian tradition, the Matins and the Vespers services are combined to form a long vigil service. On special feast days, the blessing of bread, wheat, wine, and oil is added to the Vespers, even when it is served separately from Matins. The faithful partake of the blessed food and are anointed with the oil as a sign of God’s mercy and grace.
Hours, Compline and Nocturne

In addition to the liturgical services of Vespers and Matins, there are also the services of the Hours, Compline, and Nocturne. These services are chanted in monasteries but are seldom used in parish churches except perhaps during Lent and Holy Week, and on special feast days.

The services of Hours are called the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth. These “hours” conform generally to the hours of six and nine in the morning, noon, and three in the afternoon. The services consist mostly of psalms which are generally related to the events in the passion of Christ which took place at that particular hour of the day. The Third Hour also refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples on Pentecost.

The troparia of the given day or of the feast being celebrated are added to the Hours. During the first days of Holy Week as well as on certain major feasts, the Gospel is also read during the Hours. On days when there is no Divine Liturgy, the so-called Typical Psalms which include elements of the Divine Liturgy such as the liturgical psalms, the Beatitudes, and the Creed are read after the Ninth Hour.

Compline is called the “after-dinner” service of the Church. Its name, both in Greek and Slavonic, indicates this. It is a service of psalms and prayers to be read following the evening meal; after Vespers has been served. On days when Vespers is connected to the Divine Liturgy, such as the eves of Christmas and Epiphany, Great Compline is added to Matins to form a Vigil service. During the first week of Great Lent, the Penitential Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete is read at the Compline Service.

Nocturne is the midnight service of the Church. In monasteries it usually begins the all-night vigil of the monks. It contains a number of psalms together with the normal prayers found in other services, such as the call to worship, the Thrice-Holy, the Our Father, the Troparion, etc. Its theme is obviously the night and the need for vigilance. In the parishes, it is known almost exclusively as the service preceding Easter Matins at which the winding-sheet depicting the dead Saviour is taken from the tomb and is placed on the altar table.
Although the first of сентября is considered the start of the Church year, according to the Orthodox Church calendar, the real liturgical center of the annual cycle of Orthodox worship is the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. All elements of Orthodox liturgical piety point to and flow from Easter, the celebration of the New Christian Passover. Even the “fixed feasts” of the Church such as Christmas and Epiphany which are celebrated according to a fixed date on the calendar take their liturgical form and inspiration from the Paschal feast.

The Easter cycle of worship begins with the season of Great Lent, preceded by the special pre-lenten Sundays. The lenten order of worship fulfills itself in Holy Week and the Great Day of Christ’s Resurrection. Following Easter there are the fifty days of paschal celebration until the feast of Pentecost. Every week of the year is then considered in the Church’s worship as a “Sunday after Pentecost.” The weeks are counted in this way (First Sunday, Second Sunday, etc.) until the pre-lenten season begins again when the weeks are given their name and central content of worship in view of the annual return of Easter.

There are two special liturgical books for the Easter cycle of worship, the Lenten Triodion and the Easter Triodion (literally the Flower Triodion), which is also called the Pentecostarion. These books are called Triodions because of the “three odes” which are often sung during the church services of these seasons.

The Sundays and weeks following Pentecost also have their special book called the Octoechos which literally means the “eight tones.” The Octoechos contains the services for each day of the week. Sunday is always dedicated to the Resurrection of Christ. Wednesdays and Fridays commemorate Christ’s suffering and crucifixion. Monday’s theme is the “bodiless powers” the angels. Tuesday is dedicated to the memory of John the Baptist, Thursday to the apostles and Saint Nicholas, and Saturday to the Theotokos with the memory of the departed.

On each day of the week, beginning with the eve of the Lord’s Day, the services are sung in the same “tone” or musical melody. There are eight sets of services in eight different “tones” (hence, the name Octoechos), sung in a revolving pattern throughout the year. Thus, for example, on the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost there would be Tone 1; the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 2; the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 3, and so on until the 10th Sunday which
is again Tone 1. This cycle of “tones” exists for every week of the year, although when the lenten season approaches the emphasis falls once more upon the preparation for the celebration of Easter.

In addition to the Easter cycle of worship with the “weeks after Pentecost,” and existing together with it, is the Church’s worship for each particular day of the year, each of which is dedicated to certain saints or sacred events. Each month has a special liturgical book called the Menaion which contains the specific service for each day of that month. The solemnity of the day is proportionate to the importance and popularity of the given saints or events to be commemorated.

There are twelve major feast days of the Church which are universally celebrated: the Nativity, Epiphany, Presentation to the Temple (called the “Meeting of the Lord”) and Transfiguration of Christ; the Nativity, Annunciation, Presentation to the Temple and Dormition of Mary; the Exaltation of the Cross; and, from the Paschal cycle, the feast of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem, the feast of the Lord’s Ascension and the feast of Pentecost. Easter is not counted among the twelve major feasts of the Church since it is considered by itself as “the feast of feasts.”

Different Orthodox churches emphasize the other days of the year according to their particular relevancy and significance. Thus, the day of Saint Sergius would be greatly celebrated in Russia, Saint Spiridon in Greece, and Saint Herman in America. Some days, such as Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Nicholas, and Saint Michael, also enjoy a universal popularity in the church.

**Major Feasts of the Church**

- **September 8**  The Nativity of Mary the Theotokos
- **September 14**  The Exaltation of the Cross
- **November 21**  The Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple
- **December 25**  The Nativity of Christ
- **January 6**  The Epiphany: The Baptism of Christ
- **February 2**  The Meeting of Christ in the Temple
- **March 25**  The Annunciation
- **August 6**  The Transfiguration of Christ
- **August 15**  The Dormition of the Theotokos

**Calculated according to the Spring Equinox and the Jewish Passover**

- **Palm Sunday**  The Entry into Jerusalem
- **PASCHA**  Christ’s Resurrection
- **Ascension**  The Ascension of Christ
- **Pentecost**  The Descent of the Holy Spirit

The feast of Christmas has its own cycle of prayer patterned after Easter.
There is a forty-day lent preceding it and a post-feast celebration following it. The feasts of Mary’s Dormition and Saints Peter and Paul also have traditional lenten preparations of shorter duration. Most of the major feasts have a prefestal preparation of liturgical prayer, and a post-festal glorification. This means that the feast is called to mind and is glorified in the Church’s liturgical services in anticipation of its coming and is also celebrated in songs and prayers for some days in the Church after its passing.
Pre-Lent

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is itself preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man and how his life was greatly changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Lk 19.3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Easter. It is the first movement of salvation.

The following Sunday is that of the Publican and the Pharisee. The focus here is on the two men who went to the Temple to pray—one a Pharisee who was a very decent and righteous man of religion, the other a publican who was a truly sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. The first, although genuinely righteous, boasted before God and was condemned, according to Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God (Lk 18.9). The meditation here is that we have neither the religious piety of the Pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ’s teaching, and to beg for mercy.

The next Sunday in the preparation for Great Lent is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Hearing the parable of Christ about God’s loving forgiveness, we are called to “come to ourselves” as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being “in a far country” far from the Father’s house, and to make the movement of return to God. We are given every assurance by the Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only “arise and go,” confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that “home” where we truly belong (Lk 15.11–24).

The next Sunday is called Meatfare Sunday since it is officially the last day before Easter for eating meat. It commemorates Christ’s parable of the Last Judgment (Mt 25.31–46). We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, his only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience.

.?.?. for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave
Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and in prison and you visited Me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me (Mt 25).

We are saved not merely by prayer and fasting, not by “religious exercises” alone. We are saved by serving Christ through his people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed.

Finally, on the eve of Great Lent, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing of Adam’s exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord’s teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us.

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses (Mt 6.14–18).
The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. It is the living symbol of man’s entire life which is to be fulfilled in his own resurrection from the dead with Christ. It is a time of renewed devotion: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time of repentance, a real renewal of our minds, hearts and deeds in conformity with Christ and his teachings. It is the time, most of all, of our return to the great commandments of loving God and our neighbors.

In the Orthodox Church, Great Lent is not a season of morbidity and gloominess. On the contrary, it is a time of joyfulness and purification. We are called to “anoint our faces” and to “cleanse our bodies as we cleanse our souls.”

The very first hymns of the very first service of Great Lent set the proper tone of the season:

*Let us begin the lenten time with delight.?.?. let us fast from passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and his holy Pascha, spiritually rejoicing.*

Thy grace has arisen upon us, O Lord, the illumination of our souls has shown forth; behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the time of repentance (Vespers Hymns).

It is our repentance that God desires, not our remorse. We sorrow for our sins, but we do so in the joy of God’s mercy. We mortify our flesh, but we do so in the joy of our resurrection into life everlasting. We make ready for the resurrection during Great Lent, both Christ’s Resurrection and our own.
**Lenten Fasting**

A special word must be said about fasting during lent. Generally speaking, fasting is an essential element of the Christian life. Christ fasted and taught men to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, without ostentation or accusation of others (Mt 6:16; Rom 14). It has as its goal the purification of our lives, the liberation of our souls and bodies from sin, the strengthening of our human powers of love for God and man, the enlightening of our entire being for communion with the Blessed Trinity.

The Orthodox rules for lenten fasting are the monastic rules. No meat is allowed after Meatfare Sunday, and no eggs or dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday. These rules exist not as a Pharisaic “burden too hard to bear” (Lk 11:46), but as an ideal to be striven for; not as an end in themselves, but as a means to spiritual perfection crowned in love. The lenten services themselves continually remind us of this.

*Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This is the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lusts, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable* (Monday Vespers of the First Week).

The lenten services also make the undeniable point that we should not pride ourselves with external fasting since the devil also never eats!

The ascetic fast of Great Lent continues from Meatfare Sunday to Easter Sunday, and is broken only after the Paschal Divine Liturgy. Knowing the great effort to which they are called, Christians should make every effort to fast as well as they can, in secret, so that God would see and bless them openly with a holy life. Each person must do his best in the light of the given ideal.

In addition to the ascetic fasting of the lenten season, the Orthodox alone among Christians also practice what is known as eucharistic or liturgical fasting. This fasting does not refer to the normal abstinence in preparation for receiving the holy eucharist; it means fasting from the holy eucharist itself.

During the week days of Great Lent the regular eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in Orthodox churches since the Divine Liturgy is always a paschal celebration of communion with the Risen Lord. Because the lenten season is one of preparation for the Lord’s Resurrection through the remembrance of sin and separation from God, the liturgical order of the Church eliminates the eucharistic service on the weekdays of lent. Instead the non-eucharistic services are extended with additional scripture readings and hymnology of a lenten character. In order that the faithful would not be entirely
deprived of Holy Communion on the lenten days, however, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

Even during Great Lent, Saturday (the Sabbath Day) and Sunday (the Lord’s Day) remain eucharistic days, and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. On Saturdays it is the normal Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, usually with prayers for the dead. On Sundays it is the longer Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

The well-known teaching that Saturdays and Sundays are never days of fasting in the Orthodox Church, an issue emphasized centuries ago when controversy arose with the Latin Church, refers only to this eucharistic-liturgical fast. During Great Lent, even though the eucharistic fast is broken on Saturdays and Sundays, the ascetical fast continues through the weekends since this fasting is an extended effort made from Meatfare Sunday right to Easter itself.
The weekday services of Great Lent are characterized by special lenten melodies of a penitential character. The royal gates to the altar area remain closed to signify man’s separation through sin from the Kingdom of God. The church vesting is of a somber color, usually purple. The daily troparia are also of an intercessory character, entreating God through his saints to have mercy on us sinners.

At the Matins the long Alleluia replaces the psalm: God is the Lord. the Psalmody is increased. The hymnology refers to the lenten effort. Scripture readings from Genesis and Proverbs are added to Vespers, and the Prophecy of Isaiah to the Sixth Hour. Each of these books is read nearly in its entirety during the lenten period. Epistle and gospel readings are absent because there are no Divine Liturgies.

At all of the lenten services the Prayer of Saint Ephraim of Syria is read. It supplicates God for those virtues especially necessary to the Christian life.

*O Lord and Master of my life: take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power and idle talk.*

But grant rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to Thy servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own errors and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Vespers service which begins the lenten season is called the Vespers of Forgiveness. It is customary at this service for the faithful to ask forgiveness and to forgive each other. At the Compline services of the first week of lent the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete is read. This is a long series of penitential verses based on Biblical themes, to each of which the people respond: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me. This canon is repeated at Matins on Thursday of the fifth week.

On Friday evening of this same fifth week, the Akathistos Hymn to the Mother of God is sung; and the Saturday Divine Liturgy also honors the Theotokos.

The first Saturday of Great Lent is dedicated to the memory of Saint Theodore of Tyre. The second, third, and fourth Saturdays are called Memorial Saturdays since they are dedicated to the remembrance of the dead.

On Memorial Saturdays the liturgical hymns pray universally for all of the departed, and the Matins for the dead, popularly called the parastasis or panikhida, is served with specific mention of the deceased by name. Litanies
and prayers are also added to the Divine Liturgy at which the scripture readings refer to the dead and their salvation by Christ.

Saturday, even during the non-lenten season, is the Church’s day for remembering the dead. This is so because Saturday, the Sabbath Day, stands as the day which God blessed for life in this world. Because of sin, however, this day now symbolizes all of earthly life as naturally fulfilled in death. Even Christ the Lord lay dead on the Sabbath Day, “resting from all of his works” and “trampling down death by death.” Thus, in the New Testament Church of Christ, Saturday becomes the proper day for remembering the dead and for offering prayers for their eternal salvation.
As we already have seen, the eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in the Orthodox Church on lenten weekdays. In order for the faithful to sustain their lenten effort by participation in Holy Communion, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served. The service is an ancient one in the Orthodox Church. We officially hear about it in the canons of the seventh century, which obviously indicates its development at a much earlier date.

On all days of the holy fast of Lent, except on the Sabbath, the Lord’s Day, and the holy day of the Annunciation, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is to be served (Canon 52, Quinisext, 692).

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service. It is the solemn lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. There is no consecration of the eucharistic gifts at the presanctified liturgy. Holy Communion is given from the eucharistic gifts sanctified on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, unless, of course, the feast of the Annunciation should intervene; hence its name of “presanctified.”

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings, although some churches may celebrate it only on one of these days. It comes in the evening after a day of spiritual preparation and total abstinence. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting because of weakness or work, however, normally eat a light lenten meal in the early morning.

During the psalms of Vespers, the presanctified gifts are prepared for communion. They are transferred from the altar table where they have been reserved since the Divine Liturgy, and are placed on the table of oblation. After the evening hymn, the Old Testamental scriptures of Genesis and Proverbs are read, between which the celebrant blesses the kneeling congregation with a lighted candle and the words: “The Light of Christ illumines all,” indicating that all wisdom is given by Christ in the Church through the scriptures and sacraments. This blessing was originally directed primarily to the catechumens-those preparing to be baptized on Easter-who attended the service only to the time of the communion of the faithful.

After the readings, the evening Psalm 141 is solemnly sung once again with the offering of incense. Then, after the litanies of intercession and those at which the catechumens were dismissed in former days, the presanctified eucharistic gifts are brought to the altar in a solemn, silent procession. The song of the entrance calls the faithful to communion.
Now the heavenly powers [i.e., the angels] do minister invisibly with us. For behold the King of Glory enters. Behold the mystical sacrifice, all fulfilled, is ushered in.

Let us with faith and love draw near that we may be partakers of everlasting life. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

After the litany and prayers, the Our Father is sung and the faithful receive Holy Communion to the chanting of the verse from Psalm 34: “O taste and see how good is the Lord. Alleluia.” The post-communion hymns are sung and the faithful depart with a prayer to God who “has brought us to these all-holy days for the cleansing of carnal passions,” that he will bless us “to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the fast, and to attain unto and to adore the holy resurrection” of Christ.

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is traditionally considered to be the work of the sixth-century pope, Saint Gregory of Rome. The present service, however, is obviously the inspired liturgical creation of Christian Byzantium.
Sundays of Lent

Each of the Sundays of Great Lent has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (1Jn 5.4). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, “created in the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1.26), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God’s living image.

The Second Sunday of Lent is the commemoration of Saint Gregory Palamas. It was Saint Gregory (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God’s divine glory.

The Third Sunday of Lent is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ’s redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. “He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10.38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both “the power of God and the wisdom of God” for those being saved (1Cor 1.24).

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to Saint John of the Ladder (Climacus), the author of the work, The Ladder of Divine Ascent. The abbot of Saint Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai (6th century) stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God’s Kingdom (Mt 10:12). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is a real one, “not against flesh and blood, but against .?.?. the rulers of the present darkness .?.?. the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places??.” (Eph 6.12). St John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 24.13).

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of Saint Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come “to call sinners to repentance” and to save them from their sins (Lk 5.32). In addition, Saint Mary tells us that it is never too late in life—or in Lent—to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.
The week following the Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt is called Palm or Branch Week. At the Tuesday services of this week the Church recalls that Jesus’ friend Lazarus has died and that the Lord is going to raise him from the dead (Jn 11). As the days continue toward Saturday, the Church, in its hymns and verses, continues to follow Christ towards Bethany to the tomb of Lazarus. On Friday evening, the eve of the celebration of the Resurrection of Lazarus, the “great and saving forty days” of Great Lent are formally brought to an end:

*Having accomplished the forty days for the benefit of our souls, we pray to Thee, O Lover of Man, that we may see the holy week of Thy passion, that in it we may glorify Thy greatness and Thine unspeakable plan of salvation for our sake. ... (Vespers Hymn)*.

Lazarus Saturday is a paschal celebration. It is the only time in the entire Church Year that the resurrectional service of Sunday is celebrated on another day. At the liturgy of Lazarus Saturday, the Church glorifies Christ as “the Resurrection and the Life” who, by raising Lazarus, has confirmed the universal resurrection of mankind even before His own suffering and death.

*By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy passion, Thou didst confirm the universal resurrection, O Christ God! Like the children with the branches of victory, we cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! (Troparion).*

*Christ -the Joy, the Truth and the Light of All, the Life of the world and its Resurrection-has appeared in his goodness to those on earth. He has become the Image of our Resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all (Kontakion).*

At the Divine Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday the baptismal verse from Galatians: As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal 3.27) replaces the Thrice-holy Hymn thus indicating the resurrectional character of the celebration, and the fact that Lazarus Saturday was once among the few great baptismal days in the Orthodox Church Year.

Because of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, Christ was hailed by the masses as the long-expected Messiah-King of Israel. Thus, in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, He entered Jerusalem, the City of the King, riding on the colt of an ass (Zech 9.9; Jn 12.12). The crowds greeted Him with branches in their hands and called out to Him with shouts of praise: Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The Son of David! The King of Israel! Because of this glorification by the people, the priests and scribes were finally driven “to destroy Him, to put Him to death” (Lk 19.47;
The feast of Christ’s triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, is one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. The services of this Sunday follow directly from those of Lazarus Saturday. The church building continues to be vested in resurrectional splendor, filled with hymns which continually repeat the Hosanna offered to Christ as the Messiah-King who comes in the name of God the Father for the salvation of the world.

The main troparion of Palm Sunday is the same one sung on Lazarus Saturday. It is sung at all of the services, and is used at the Divine Liturgy as the third antiphon which follows the other special psalm verses which are sung as the liturgical antiphons in the place of those normally used. The second troparion of the feast, as well as the kontakion and the other verses and hymns, all continue to glorify Christ’s triumphal manifestation “six days before the Passover” when he will give himself at the Supper and on the Cross for the life of the world.

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together. Let us all take up Thy cross and say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! (First Verse of Vespers).

When we were buried with Thee in baptism, O Christ God, we were made worthy of eternal life by Thy resurrection. Now we praise Thee and sing: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! (Second Troparion).

Sitting on Thy throne in heaven, and carried on a foal on earth, O Christ God, accept the praise of angels and the songs of children who sing: Blessed is he who comes to recall Adam! (Kontakion).

At the vigil of the feast of Palm Sunday the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah-King are read together with the Gospel accounts of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem. At Matins branches are blessed which the people carry throughout the celebration as the sign of their own glorification of Jesus as Saviour and King. These branches are usually palms, or, in the Slavic churches, pussy willows which came to be customary because of their availability and their early blossoming in the springtime.

As the people carry their branches and sing their songs to the Lord on Palm Sunday, they are judged together with the Jerusalem crowd. For it was the very same voices which cried Hosanna to Christ, which, a few days later, cried Crucify Him! Thus in the liturgy of the Church the lives of men continue to be judged as they hail Christ with the “branches of victory” and enter together with Him into the days of His “voluntary passion.”
Holy Week

In the Orthodox Church the last week of Christ’s life is officially called Passion Week. In popular terminology it is called Holy Week. Each day is designated in the service books as “great and holy.” There are special services every day of the week which are fulfilled in all churches. Earthly life ceases for the faithful as they “go up with the Lord to Jerusalem” (Matins of Great and Holy Monday).

Each day of Holy Week has its own particular theme. The theme of Monday is that of the sterile fig tree which yields no fruit and is condemned. Tuesday the accent is on the vigilance of the wise virgins who, unlike their foolish sisters, were ready when the Lord came to them. Wednesday the focus is on the fallen woman who repents. Great emphasis is made in the liturgical services to compare the woman, a sinful harlot who is saved, to Judas, a chosen apostle who is lost. The one gives her wealth to Christ and kisses his feet; the other betrays Christ for money with a kiss.

On each of these three days the Gospel is read at the Hours, as well as at the Vespers when the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served. The Old Testamental readings are from Exodus, Job, and the Prophets. The Gospel is also read at the Matins services which are traditionally called the “Bridegroom” services because the general theme of each of these days is the end of the world and the judgment of Christ. It is the common practice to serve the Bridegroom services at night.

Behold, the bridegroom comes in the middle of the night and blessed is the servant whom he shall find watching, and unworthy the servant whom he shall find heedless. Take care then, O my soul, and be not weighed down by sleep that you will not be given over unto death and be excluded from the Kingdom. But rise up and call out: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou O God, by the Theotokos have mercy on us (Troparion of the First Three Days).

During the first three days of Holy Week, the Church prescribes that the entire Four Gospels be read at the Hours up to the point in each where the passion of Christ begins. Although this is not usually possible in parish churches, an attempt is sometimes made to read at least one complete Gospel, privately or in common, before Holy Thursday.
Holy Thursday

The vigil on the eve of Holy Thursday is dedicated exclusively to the Passover Supper which Christ celebrated with his twelve apostles. The main theme of the day is the meal itself at which Christ commanded that the Passover of the New Covenant be eaten in remembrance of Himself, of His body broken and His blood shed for the remission of sins. In addition, Judas’ betrayal and Christ’s washing of His disciples feet is also central to the liturgical commemoration of the day.

In cathedral churches it is the custom for the bishop to re-enact the foot washing in a special ceremony following the Divine Liturgy. At the vigil of Holy Thursday, the Gospel of Saint Luke about the Lord’s Supper is read. At the Divine Liturgy the Gospel is a composite of all the evangelists’ accounts of the same event. The hymns and the readings of the day also all refer to the same central mystery.

When Thy glorious disciples were enlightened at the washing of their feet before the supper, then the impious Judas was darkened by the disease of avarice, and to the lawless judges he betrayed Thee, the Righteous Judge. Behold, O lover of money, this man because of avarice hanged himself. Flee from the insatiable desire which dared such things against the Master! O Lord who deals righteously with all, glory to Thee (Troparion of Holy Thursday).

In the regions of the Master, at the Table of Immortality, in the high place, with minds lifted up, come, O ye faithful, let us eat with delight (Ninth Ode of the Canon of Matins).

The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is served on Holy Thursday in connection with Vespers. The long gospel of the Last Supper is read following the readings from Exodus, Job, Isaiah and the first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians (1Cor 11). The following hymn replaces the Cherubic Hymn of the offertory of the liturgy, and serves as well as the Communion and Post-Communion Hymns.

Of Thy mystical supper, O Son of God, accept me today a communicant, for I will not speak of Thy mystery to thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss, but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom.

The liturgical celebration of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday is not merely the annual remembrance of the institution of the sacrament of Holy Communion. Indeed the very event of the Passover Meal itself was not merely the last-minute action by the Lord to “institute” the central sacrament of the
Christian Faith before His passion and death. On the contrary, the entire mission of Christ, and indeed the very purpose for the creation of the world in the first place, is so that God’s beloved creature, made in His own divine image and likeness, could be in the most intimate communion with Him for eternity, sitting at table with Him, eating and drinking in His unending kingdom. Thus, Christ the Son of God speaks to His apostles at the supper, and to all men who hear His words and believe in Him and the Father who sent Him:

_Fear not, little flock, it is Your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Lk 12.32)._

_You are those who have continued with Me in My trials; as My Father appointed a Kingdom for Me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom._ (Lk 22.28–31).

In a real sense, therefore, it is true to say that the body broken and the blood spilled spoken of by Christ at His last supper with the disciples was not merely an anticipation and preview of what was yet to come; but that what was yet to come—the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven—came to pass precisely so that men could be blessed by God to be in holy communion with Him forever, eating and drinking at the mystical table of His Kingdom of which there will be no end.

Thus the “Mystical Supper of the Son of God” which is continually celebrated in the Divine Liturgy of the Christian Church, is the very essence of what life in God’s Kingdom will be for eternity.

_Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God (Lk 14.15). _

_Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19.9)._
Matins of Holy Friday are generally celebrated on Thursday night. The main feature of this service is the reading of twelve selections from the Gospels, all of which are accounts of the passion of Christ. The first of these twelve readings is \textit{Jn 13.31–18.1}. It is Christ’s long discourse with his apostles that ends with the so-called high priestly prayer. The final gospel tells of the sealing of the tomb and the setting of the watch (\textit{Mt 27.62–66}).

The twelve Gospel readings of Christ’s passion are placed between the various parts of the service. The hymnology is all related to the sufferings of the Saviour and borrows heavily from the Gospels and the prophetic scriptures and psalms. The Lord’s beatitudes are added to the service after the sixth gospel reading, and there is special emphasis given to the salvation of the thief who acknowledged Christ’s Kingdom.

The Hours of Holy Friday repeat the Gospels of Christ’s passion with the addition at each Hour of readings from Old Testamental prophecies concerning man’s redemption, and from letters of Saint Paul relative to man’s salvation through the sufferings of Christ. The psalms used are also of a special prophetic character, e.g., \textit{Ps 2, 5, 22, 109, 139}, et al.

There is no Divine Liturgy on Good Friday for the same obvious reason that forbids the celebration of the eucharist on the fasting days of lent (see “Lenten Fasting,” below).
Holy Saturday

The first service belonging to Holy Saturday—called in the Church the Blessed Sabbath—is the Vespers of Good Friday. It is usually celebrated in the mid-afternoon to commemorate the burial of Jesus.

Before the service begins, a “tomb” is erected in the middle of the church building and is decorated with flowers. Also a special icon which is painted on cloth (in Greek, epitaphios; in Slavonic, plaschanitsa) depicting the dead Saviour is placed on the altar table. In English this icon is often called the winding-sheet.

Vespers begins as usual with hymns about the suffering and death of Christ. After the entrance with the Gospel Book and the singing of Gladsome Light, selections from Exodus, Job, and Isaiah 52 are read. An epistle reading from First Corinthians (1.18–31) is added, and the Gospel is read once more with selections from each of the four accounts of Christ’s crucifixion and burial. The prokeimena and alleluia verses are psalm lines, heard often already in the Good Friday services, prophetic in their meaning:

_They divided my garments among them and for my raiment they cast lots_ (Psalm 22.18).

_My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me_ (Ps 22.1).

_Thou hast put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep_ (Ps 88.6).

After more hymns glorifying the death of Christ, while the choir sings the dismissal song of Saint Simeon, the priest vests fully in his dark-colored robes and incenses the winding-sheet which still lies upon the altar table. Then, after the Our Father, while the people sing the troparion of the day, the priest circles the altar table with the winding-sheet carried above his head and places it into the tomb for veneration by the faithful.

_The noble Joseph, when he had taken down Thy most pure body from the Tree, wrapped It in fine linen and anointed It with spices, and placed It in a new tomb_ (Troparion of Holy Saturday).

The Matins of Holy Saturday are usually celebrated on Friday night. They begin in the normal way with the singing of God is the Lord, the troparion The Noble Joseph, and the following troparia:

_When Thou didst descend to death O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead! And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out: O Giver of Life! Christ our God! Glory to Thee!_
The angel standing by the grave cried out to the women: Myrrh is proper for the dead, but Christ has shown himself a stranger to corruption.

In place of the regular psalm reading the entire Psalm 119 is read with a verse praising the dead Saviour chanted between each of its lines. This particular psalm is the verbal icon of Jesus, the righteous man whose life is in the hands of God and who, therefore, cannot remain dead. The Praises, as the verses are called, glorify God as “the Resurrection and the Life,” and marvel at his humble condescension into death.

There is in the person of Jesus Christ the perfect unification of the perfect love of man toward God and the perfect love of God toward man. It is this divine human love which is contemplated and praised over the tomb of the Savior. As the reading progresses the Praises become shorter, and gradually more concentrated on the final victory of the Lord, thus coming to their proper conclusion:

- *I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, Thy law is my delight (Ps 119.174).*
- *The mind is affrighted at Thy dread and strange burial.*
- *Let me live, that I may praise Thee, and let Thy ordinances help me* (119.175).
- *The women with spices came early at dawn to anoint Thee.*
- *I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments* (119.176).
- By Thy resurrection grant peace to the Church and salvation to Thy people!

After the final glorification of the Trinity, the church building is lighted and the first announcement of the women coming to the tomb resounds through the congregation as the celebrant censes the entire church. Here for the first time comes the clear proclamation of the good news of salvation in Christ’s resurrection.

The canon song of Matins continues to praise Christ’s victory over death by His own death, and uses each of the Old Testamental canticles as a prefigurative image of man’s final salvation through Jesus. Here for the first time there emerges the indication that this Sabbath this particular Saturday on which Christ lay dead-is truly the most blessed seventh day that ever existed. This is the day when Christ rests from His work of recreating the world. This is the day when the Word of God “through Whom all things were made” (Jn 1.3) rests as a dead man in the grave, saving the world of His own creation and opening the graves:

*This is the most blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, but to rise again on the third day* (Kontakion and Oikos).
Again, the canon ends on the final note of the victory of Christ.

_Lament not for Me, Mother, beholding Me in the grave, the son whom you have born in seedless conception, for I will arise and be glorified, and will exalt with glory, unceasingly as God, all those who with faith and love glorify you_ (Ninth Ode of the Canon).

As more verses of praise are sung, the celebrant again vests fully in his somber vestments and, as the great doxology is chanted, he once more censes the tomb of the Savior. Then, while the congregation with lighted candles continually repeats the song of the Thrice Holy, the faithful-led by their pastor carrying the Gospel Book with the winding-sheet of Christ held over his head-go in procession around the outside of the church building. This procession bears witness to the total victory of Christ over the powers of darkness and death. The whole universe is cleansed, redeemed and restored by the entrance of the Life of the World into death.

As the procession returns to the church building, the troparia are sung once again, and the prophecy of Ezekiel about the “dry bones” of Israel is chanted with great solemnity:

“And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you and you shall live?.?.?.”  (Ezek 37.1–14).

With the victorious lines of the psalms calling God to arise, to lift up his hands, to scatter his enemies and to let the righteous rejoice; and with the repeated singing of Alleluia, the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians is read: “Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed” (1Cor 5.6–8). The Gospel about the sealing of the tomb is read once more, and the service is ended with intercession and benediction.

The Vespers and Matins of the Blessed Sabbath, together with the Divine Liturgy which follows, form a masterpiece of the Orthodox liturgical tradition. These services are not at all a dramatic re-enactment of the historical death and burial of Christ. Neither are they a kind of ritual reproduction of scenes of the Gospel. They are, rather, the deepest spiritual and liturgical penetration into the eternal meaning of the saving events of Christ, viewed and praised already with the full knowledge of their divine significance and power.

The Church does not pretend, as it were, that it does not know what will happen with the crucified Jesus. It does not sorrow and mourn over the Lord as if the Church itself were not the very creation which has been produced from his wounded sides and from the depths of his tomb. All through the services the victory of Christ is contemplated and the resurrection is proclaimed. For it is indeed only in the light of the victorious resurrection that the deepest divine
and eternal meaning of the events of Christ’s passion and death can be genuinely grasped, adequately appreciated and properly glorified and praised.

On Holy Saturday itself, Vespers are served with the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. This service already belongs to the Passover Sunday. It begins in the normal way with the evening psalm, the litany, the hymns following the evening Psalm 141 and the entrance with the singing of the vesperal hymn, Gladsome Light. The celebrant stands at the tomb in which lies the winding-sheet with the image of the Savior in the sleep of death.

Following the evening entrance which is made with the Book of the Gospels, fifteen readings from the Old Testament scriptures are read, all of which relate to God’s work of creation and salvation which has been summed up and fulfilled in the coming of the predicted Messiah. Besides the readings in Genesis about creation, and the passover-exodus of the Israelites in the days of Moses in Exodus, there are selections from the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zephaniah, and Jonah as well as from Joshua and the Books of Kings, the Canticles of Moses, and of the Three Youths found in Daniel are chanted as well.

After the Old Testament readings the celebrant intones the normal liturgical exclamation for the singing of the Thrice-Holy Hymn, but in its place the baptismal verse from Galatians is sung: As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia (Gal 3.27).

As usual in the Divine Liturgy the epistle reading follows at this point. It is the normal baptismal selection of the Orthodox Church (Rom 6.3–11). “If we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Rom 6.5).

At this time the royal gates are closed, and the celebrants and altar servers change their robes from the dark vestments of the passion into the bright vestments of Christ’s victory over death. At this time all vestings of the church appointments are also changed into the color signifying Christ’s triumph over sin, the devil and death. This revesting takes place while the people sing the verses of Psalm 82: “Arise O Lord and judge the earth, for to Thee belong all the nations.”

After the solemn chanting of the psalm verses, to which are often added the hymn glorifying Christ as the New Passover, the Living Sacrifice who is slain, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world; the celebrants emerge from the altar to announce over the tomb of Christ the glad tidings of his victorious triumph over death and his command to the apostles: “Make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have
commanded?.?.?.” (Mt28.1.20). This Gospel text is also the reading of the baptismal ceremony of the Orthodox Church.

The Divine Liturgy then continues in the brilliance of Christ’s destruction of death. The following song replaces the Cherubic Hymn of the offertory:

*Let all mortal flesh keep silent and in fear and trembling stand, pondering nothing earthly-minded. For the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords comes to be slain, to give himself as food to the faithful.*

Before him go the ranks of angels: all the principalities and powers, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim, covering their faces, singing the hymn: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

In place of the Hymn to the Theotokos, the ninth ode of the matinal canon is sung once again: “Lament not for Me, Mother .?.?. for I will arise” (see above). The communion hymn is the line of the psalm: “The Lord awoke as one asleep, and arose saving us” (Ps 78.65).

The Divine Liturgy is fulfilled in the communion with him who lies dead in his human body, and yet is enthroned eternally with God the Father; the one who, as the Creator and Life of the World, destroys death by his life-creating death. His tomb—which still stands in the center of the church—is shown to be, as the Liturgy calls it: the fountain of our resurrection.

Originally this Liturgy was the Easter baptismal liturgy of Christians. It remains today as the annual experience for every Christian of his own dying and rising with the Lord.

*But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him* (Rom 6.8–9).

Christ lies dead, yet he is alive. He is in the tomb, but already he is “trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.” There is nothing more to do now but to live through the evening of the Blessed Sabbath on which Christ sleeps, awaiting the midnight hour when the Day of our Lord will begin to dawn upon us, and the night full of light will come when we will proclaim with the angel: “He is risen, he is not here; see the tomb where they laid him” (Mk 16.6).
Easter Sunday: The Holy Pascha

A little before midnight on the Blessed Sabbath the Nocturne service is chanted. The celebrant goes to the tomb and removes the winding-sheet. He carries it through the royal doors and places it on the altar table where it remains for forty days until the day of Ascension.

At midnight the Easter procession begins. The people leave the church building singing:

*The angels in heaven, O Christ our Savior, sing of Thy resurrection. Make us on earth also worthy to hymn Thee with a pure heart.*

The procession circles the church building and returns to the closed doors of the front of the church. This procession of the Christians on Easter night recalls the original baptismal procession from the darkness and death of this world to the light and the life of the Kingdom of God. It is the procession of the holy passover, from death unto life, from earth unto heaven, from this age to the age to come which will never end.

Before the closed doors of the church building, the resurrection of Christ is announced. Sometimes the Gospel is read which tells of the empty tomb. The celebrant intones the blessing to the “holy, consubstantial, life-creating and undivided Trinity.” The Easter troparion is sung for the first time, together with the verses of Psalm 68 which will begin all of the Church services during the Easter season.

*Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee from before his face!*

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life (Troparion).

*This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

The people re-enter the church building and continue the service of Easter Matins which is entirely sung.

The canon hymns of Christ’s resurrection, ascribed to Saint John of Damascus, are chanted with the troparion of the feast as the constantly recurring refrain. The building is decorated with flowers and lights. The vestments are the bright robes of the resurrection. The Easter icon stands in the center of the church showing Christ destroying the gates of hell and freeing Adam and Eve from the captivity of death. It is the image of the Victor “trampling down death by his own death.” There is the continual singing and censing of the icons and the people, with the constant proclamation of the celebrant: Christ is risen! The faithful continually respond: Indeed He is risen!
It is the day of resurrection! Let us be illumined for the feast! Pascha! The Pascha of the Lord! From death unto life, and from earth unto heaven has Christ our God led us! Singing the song of victory: Christ is risen from the dead! (First Ode of the Easter Canon).

Following the canon, the paschal verses are sung, and at the conclusion of the Easter Matins, the Easter Hours are also sung. In general, nothing is simply read in the Church services of Easter: everything is fully sung with the joyful melodies of the feast.

At the end of the Hours, before the Divine Liturgy, the celebrant solemnly proclaims the famous Paschal Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom. This sermon is an invitation to all of the faithful to forget their sins and to join fully in the feast of the resurrection of Christ. Taken literally, the sermon is the formal invitation offered to all members of the Church to come and to receive Holy Communion, partaking of Christ, the Passover Lamb, whose table is now being set in the midst of the Church. In some parishes the sermon is literally obeyed, and all of the faithful receive the eucharistic gifts of the Passover Supper of Easter night.

The Easter Divine Liturgy begins immediately with the singing once more of the festal troparion with the verses of Psalm 68. Special psalm verses also comprise the antiphons of the liturgy, through which the faithful praise and glorify the salvation of God:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Sing of his name, give glory to His praise.

Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee! Let it praise Thy name, O most High!

That we may know Thy way upon the earth and Thy salvation among all nations.

Let the people thank Thee, O God! Let all the people give thanks to Thee.

The troparion is repeated over and over again. The baptismal line from Galatians replaces the Thrice-Holy Hymn. The epistle reading is the first nine verses of the Book of Acts. The gospel reading is the first seventeen verses of the Gospel of Saint John. The proclamation of the Word of God takes the faithful back again to the beginning, and announces God’s creation and recreation of the world through the living Word of God, his Son Jesus Christ.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him. In Him was life and the life was the light of men.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. We have beheld His glory, glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, and
from His fullness have we all received grace upon grace (Jn 1.1–17).

The Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom continues, crowned in holy communion with the Passover Lamb at his banquet table in God’s Kingdom. Again and again the troparion of the Resurrection is sung while the faithful partake of Him “Who was dead and is alive again” (Rev 2.8).

In the Orthodox Church the feast of Easter is officially called Pascha, the word which means the Passover. It is the new Passover of the new and everlasting covenant foretold by the prophets of old. It is the eternal Passover from death to life and from earth to heaven. It is the Day of the Lord proclaimed by God’s holy prophets, “the day which the Lord has made” for His judgment over all creation, the day of His final and everlasting victory. It is the Day of the Kingdom of God, the day “which has no night” for “its light is the Lamb” (Rev 21.22–25).

The celebration of Easter in the Orthodox Church, therefore, is once again not merely an historical reenactment of the event of Christ’s Resurrection as narrated in the gospels. It is not a dramatic representation of the first Easter morning. There is no “sunrise service” since the Easter Matins and the Divine Liturgy are celebrated together in the first dark hours of the first day of the week in order to give men the experience of the “new creation” of the world, and to allow them to enter mystically into the New Jerusalem which shines eternally with the glorious light of Christ, overcoming the perpetual night of evil and destroying the darkness of this mortal and sinful world:

*Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone upon you! Exult and be glad O Zion! Be radiant O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your Son!*

This is one of the main Easter hymns in the Orthodox Church. It is inspired by Isaiah’s prophecy and the final chapters of the Book of Revelation, for it is exactly the New Creation, the New Jerusalem, the Heavenly City, the Kingdom of God, the Day of the Lord, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb with His Bride which is celebrated and realized and experienced in the Holy Spirit on the Holy Night of Easter in the Orthodox Church.
Saint Thomas Sunday: Antipascha

Every day during the week of Easter, called Bright Week by the Church, the paschal services are celebrated in all their splendor. The Easter baptismal procession is repeated daily. The royal gates of the sanctuary remain open. The joy of the Resurrection and the gift of the Kingdom of eternal life continue to abound. Then, at the end of the week, on Saturday evening, the second Sunday after Easter is celebrated in remembrance of the appearance of Christ to the Apostle Thomas “after eight days” (Jn 20.26).

It is important to note that the number eight has symbolical significance in both Jewish and Christian spiritual tradition. It signifies more than completion and fullness; it signifies the Kingdom of God and the life of the world to come since seven is the number of earthly time. The sabbath, the seventh day, is the blessed day of rest in this world, the final day of the week. The “first day of the week,” the day “after Sabbath”; stressed in all of the gospels as the day of Christ’s Resurrection (Mk 16.1, Mt 28.1, Lk 24.1, Jn 20.1, 19), is therefore also “the eighth day,” the day beyond the confines of this world, the day which stands for the life of the world to come, the day of the eternal rest of the Kingdom of God (see Heb 4).

The Sunday after Easter, called the Second Sunday, is thus the eighth day of the paschal celebration, the last day of Bright Week. It is therefore called the Antipascha, and it was only on this day in the early church that the newly-baptized Christians removed their robes and entered once again into the life of this world.

In the Church services the stress is on the Apostle Thomas’ vision of Christ and the significance of the day comes to us in the words of the gospel:

Then He said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe” (Jn 20.27–29).

We have not seen Christ with our physical eyes nor touched His risen body with our physical hands, yet in the Holy Spirit we have seen and touched and tasted the Word of Life (1Jn 1.1–4), and so we believe.

At each of the daily services until Ascension Day we sing the Easter Troparion. At each of the Sunday services beginning with Antipascha, we sing the Easter canon and hymns, and repeat the celebration of the “first day of the
week” on which Christ rose from the dead. At all of the liturgies the epistle readings are taken from the Book of Acts telling us of the first Christians who lived in communion with the Risen Lord. All of the gospel readings are taken from the Gospel of Saint John, considered by many to be a gospel written particularly for those who are newly-baptized into the new life of the Kingdom of God through death and new birth in Christ, in the name of the Holy Trinity. The reason for this opinion is that all of the “signs”—as the miracles in Saint John’s Gospel are called—deal with sacramental themes involving water: wine and bread. Thus, each of the Sundays after Thomas Sunday with the exception of the third, is dedicated to the memory of one of these “signs.”

**The Myrrhbearing Women**

The third Sunday after Pascha is dedicated to the myrrhbearing women who cared for the body of the Saviour at his death and who were the first witnesses of His Resurrection. The three troparia of Holy Friday are sung once again and from the theme of the day:

*The noble Joseph, when he had taken down Thy most pure body from the Tree, wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices, and placed it in a new tomb.*

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life Immortal, Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.

The angel came to the myrrhbearing women at the tomb and said: Myrrh is fitting for the dead, but Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption! So proclaim: The Lord is risen, granting the world great mercy.

**The Paralytic**

The fourth Sunday is dedicated to Christ’s healing of the paralytic (Jn 5). The man is healed by Christ while waiting to be put down into the pool of water. Through baptism in the church we, too, are healed and saved by Christ for eternal life. Thus, in the church, we are told, together with the paralytic, “to sin no more that nothing worse befall you” (Jn 5.14).

**The Feast of Mid-Pentecost**

In the middle of this fourth week, the middle day between Easter and Pentecost is solemnly celebrated. It is called the feast of Mid-Pentecost, at which Christ, “in the middle of the feast” teaches men of his saving mission and offers to all “the waters of immortality” (Jn 7.14). Again we are reminded of the Master’s presence and his saving promise: “If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me and drink” (Jn 7.37). We think also once again of our death and resurrection with Christ in our baptism, and our reception of the Holy Spirit from him in our chrismation. We “look back to one, and anticipate the other” as one of the hymns of the feast puts it. We know that we belong to that kingdom
of the Risen Christ where “the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev 22.17; Is 55.1).

*In the middle of the feast, O Saviour, fill my thirsting soul with the waters of godliness, as Thou didst cry unto all: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink! O Christ God, Fountain of life, glory to Thee!* (Troparion).

*Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: Come and drink the water of immortality! We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: Grant us Thy bounties, for Thou art the Fountain of our life!* (Kontakion).

### The Samaritan Woman

The fifth Sunday after Easter deals with the woman of Samaria with whom Christ spoke at Jacob’s Well (Jn 4). Again the theme is the “living water” and the recognition of Jesus as God’s Messiah (Jn 4.10–11; 25–26). We are reminded of our new life in Him, of our own drinking of the “living water,” of our own true worship of God in the Christian messianic age “in Spirit and in Truth” (Jn 4.23–24). We see as well that salvation is offered to all: Jews and Gentiles, men and women, saints and sinners.

### The Blind Man

The sixth Sunday commemorates the healing of the man blind from birth (Jn 9). We are identified with that man who came to see and to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The Lord has anointed our eyes with his own divine hands and washed them with the waters of our baptism (Jn 9.6–11).

Jesus used clay of spittle and told the man to wash in the waters of Siloam. He did so because it was the Sabbath day on which spitting, clay-making and washing were strictly forbidden. By breaking these ritual laws of the Jews, Jesus showed that He is indeed the Lord of the Sabbath, and, as such, that He is equal to God the Father Who alone, according to Jewish tradition, works on the Sabbath day in running His world.

There is scandal over the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath day. He is separated from the synagogue because of his faith in Christ. The entire Church follows this man in his fate, knowing that it is those who do not see Jesus as the Lord who are really blind and still in their sins (Jn 9.41). The others have the light of life and can see and know the Son of God, for “you have seen Him, and it is He who speaks to you” (Jn 9.37).

*I come to Thee, O Christ, blind from birth in my spiritual eyes, and call to Thee in repentance: Thou art the most radiant Light of those in darkness!* (Kontakion).
Ascension

Jesus did not live with His disciples after His resurrection as He had before His death. Filled with the glory of His divinity, He appeared at different times and places to His people, assuring them that it was He, truly alive in His risen and glorified body.

To them He presented Himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1.3).

It should be noted that the time span of forty days is used many times in the Bible and signifies a temporal period of completeness and sufficiency (Gen. 7.17; Ex 16.35, 24.18; Judg 3.11; 1Sam 17.16; 1 Kg 19.8; Jon 3.4; Mt 4.2).

On the fortieth day after His passover, Jesus ascended into heaven to be glorified on the right hand of God (Acts 1.9–11; Mk 16.19; Lk?24.51). The ascension of Christ is His final physical departure from this world after the resurrection. It is the formal completion of His mission in this world as the Messianic Saviour. It is His glorious return to the Father Who had sent Him into the world to accomplish the work that He had given him to do (Jn 17.4–5).

And lifting His hands He blessed them. While blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy (Lk 24.51–52).

The Church’s celebration of the ascension, as all such festal celebrations, is not merely the remembrance of an event in Christ’s life. Indeed, the ascension itself is not to be understood as though it were simply the supernatural event of a man floating up and away into the skies. The holy scripture stresses Christ’s physical departure and His glorification with God the Father, together with the great joy which His disciples had as they received the promise of the Holy Spirit Who was to come to assure the Lord’s presence with them, enabling them to be His witnesses to the ends of earth (Lk 24.48–53; Acts 1.8–11; Mt 28.20; Mk 16.16–14).

In the Church the believers in Christ celebrate these very same realities with the conviction that it is for them and for all men that Christ’s departure from this world has taken place. The Lord leaves in order to be glorified with God the Father and to glorify us with himself. He goes in order to “prepare a place” for and to take us also into the blessedness of God’s presence. He goes to open the way for all flesh into the “heavenly sanctuary. the Holy Place not made by hands” (see Hebrews 8–10). He goes in order send the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father to bear witness to Him and His gospel in the
world, making Him powerfully present in the lives of disciples.

The liturgical hymns of the feast of the Ascension sing of all of these things. The antiphonal verses of the Divine Liturgy are taken from Psalms 47, 48, and 49. The troparion of the feast which is sung at the small entrance is also used as the post-communion hymn.

Thou hast ascended in glory O Christ our God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world! (Troparion).

When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, and didst unite earth to heaven, Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love Thee, but remaining with them and crying: I am with you and no one will be against you! (Kontakion).
Pentecost: The Descent of the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament Pentecost was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God’s gift of the ten commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the new covenant of the Messiah, the passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ’s death and resurrection, the “exodus” of men from this sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the “new law,” the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ.

When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit .?.?. (Acts 2.1–4).

The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came on the day of Pentecost (Jn 14.26, 15.26; Lk 24.49; Acts 1.5). The apostles received “the power from on high,” and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the birthday of the Church.

In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Godhead is manifested with the Spirit’s coming to man, and the Church hymns celebrate this manifestation as the final act of God’s self-disclosure and self-donation to the world of His creation. For this reason Pentecost Sunday is also called Trinity Day in the Orthodox tradition. Often on this day the icon of the Holy Trinity—particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith—is placed in the center of the church. This icon is used with the traditional pentecostal icon which shows the tongues of fire hovering over Mary and the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of “cosmos,” the world.

On Pentecost we have the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God mystically present in this world in the Church of the Messiah. For this reason the fiftieth day stands as the beginning of the era which is beyond the limitations of this
world, fifty being that number which stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment in Jewish and Christian mystical piety: seven times seven, plus one.

Thus, Pentecost is called an apocalyptic day, which means the day of final revelation. It is also called an eschatological day, which means the day of the final and perfect end (in Greek eschaton means the end). For when the Messiah comes and the Lord’s Day is at hand, the “last days” are inaugurated in which “God declares: .?.?. I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”; This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (Acts 2: 17; Joel 2: 28–32).

Once again it must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the “temples of the Holy Spirit.” God’s Spirit dwells in us (Rom. 8; 1Cor 2–3, 12; 2Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2–3). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” in the sacrament of chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us.

The Divine Liturgy of Pentecost recalls our baptism into Christ with the verse from Galatians again replacing the Thrice-Holy Hymn. Special verses from the psalms also replace the usual antiphonal psalms of the liturgy. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit’s coming to men. The kontakion sings of the reversal of Babel as God unites the nations into the unity of his Spirit. The troparion proclaims the gathering of the whole universe into God’s net through the work of the inspired apostles. The hymns “O Heavenly King” and “We have seen the True Light” are sung for the first time since Easter, calling the Holy Spirit to “come and abide in us,” and proclaiming that “we have received the heavenly Spirit.” The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God’s divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the “life-creating Spirit.” In Hebrew the word for Spirit, breath and wind is the same word, ruah.

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit: through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee (Troparion).

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, he divided the nations. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit! (Kontakion).

The Great Vespers of Pentecost evening features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since Easter. The Monday after
Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Spirit in the Orthodox Church, and the Sunday after Pentecost is the feast of All Saints. This is the logical liturgical sequence since the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this is the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. “Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy” (Lev 11.44–45, 1Pet 1.15–16).
The celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord’s Resurrection. A fast of forty days precedes the feast, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour. Thus, on Saint Andrew’s Day (November 30) and Saint Nicholas Day (December 6) songs are sung to announce the coming birthday of the Lord:

*Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb* (Vesperal Hymn of Saint Nicholas Day).

On the eve of Christmas, the Royal Hours are read and the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil is served with Vespers. At these services the Old Testament prophesies of Christ’s birth are chanted, emphasizing the prophecy of Micah which foretells Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Saviour, and the prophecies of Isaiah about the appearance and character of the Messiah:

*The Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which translated is, God with us* (Is 7.14–15).

*God is with us, understand all ye nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us* (Is 8.9).

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end* (Is 9.6–7).

The Vigil of Christmas begins with Great Compline, highlighted once again by the solemn chanting of God is with us and the words of the prophecy of Isaiah. At Compline there is also the singing of the Troparion and Kontakion of the feast along with the special hymns glorifying the Saviour’s birth. There are also the special long litanies of intercession and the solemn blessing of the five loaves of bread together with the wheat and the wine of which the faithful partake and the oil with which they are anointed. This part of the festal vigil, which is done on all great feasts, is called the litya (in Greek, the *artoklasia* or the breaking of the bread).

At the beginning of the Christmas Matins, which together with Compline form the Christmas Vigil, the six matinal psalms begin as usual with the words: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will among men” (*Lk* 2.14).
At the Christmas services these words of the angelic song are normally sung with great solemnity rather than being chanted as at the daily service. The Christmas Matins proceed as usual. The gospel reading from Matthew (1.18–25) tells of the birth of Christ, and all of the hymns and verses glorify His appearance on earth:

*Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ is from heaven, go to meet Him. Christ is on earth, be ye lifted up. Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing out with gladness, all ye people. For He is glorified* (First Ode of the Christmas Canon).

The Christmas Liturgy begins with psalms of glorification and praise. The troparion and kontakion mark the entrance with the Book of the Gospels. The baptismal line from Galatians 3.27 once again replaces the Thrice-Holy. The Epistle reading is from Galatians:

*But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir* (Gal 4.4–7).

The Gospel reading is the familiar Christmas story from Matthew (2.1–12), and the liturgy continues in the normal fashion. A specific two-day celebration follows, dedicated to Mary the Theotokos and Saint Stephen, the First Martyr. The period of Christmas rejoicing extends to Epiphany during which time the Christmas songs are sung and fasting and kneeling in prayer are not called for by the Church.

The feast of Christmas is formally entitled the Nativity in the Flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ. At Christmas we celebrate the birth as a man of the Son of God, the one who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is truly God from all eternity. Thus, we sing in the Church.

*Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One, and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One! Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him! The wise men journey with the star! Since for our sake the Eternal God is born as a little child* (Kontakion).

The feast of Christmas was not a separate Church feast for the first four centuries of Christian history. It was celebrated with Epiphany in the one great feast of God’s appearance on earth in the form of the human Messiah of Israel. The Nativity began to be celebrated as such on the twenty-fifth of декабря in order to offset the pagan festival of the Invincible Sun which occurred on that day. It was established by the Church quite consciously as an attempt to defeat the false religion of the heathens. Thus, we discover the troparion of the feast making a polemic against the worship of the sun and the stars and calling for
the adoration of Christ, the True Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4.2), who is Himself worshiped by all of the elements of nature.

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshiped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness and to know Thee, the Orient from on high [Lk 1.78, translated as Dawn or Day spring]. O Lord, glory to Thee! (Troparion).

Thus, the feast of Christmas is the celebration of the world’s salvation through the Son of God who became man for our sake that, through him, we might ourselves become divine, sons of God the Father by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit in us.
The sixth of января is the feast of the Epiphany. Originally it was the one Christian feast of the “shining forth” of God to the world in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. It included the celebration of Christ’s birth, the adoration of the Wisemen, and all of the childhood events of Christ such as His circumcision and presentation to the temple as well as His baptism by John in the Jordan. There seems to be little doubt that this feast, like Easter and Pentecost, was understood as the fulfillment of a previous Jewish festival, in this case the Feast of Lights.

Epiphany means shining forth or manifestation. The feast is often called, as it is in the Orthodox service books, Theophany, which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, in the baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus identifies Himself with sinners as the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1.29), the “Beloved” of the Father whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (Lk 3.21, Mk 1.35). And he is revealed as well as One of the Divine Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and by the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the main hymns of the feast:

When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee (Troparion).

Today Thou hast appeared to the universe, and Thy Light, O Lord, has shone on us, who with understanding praise Thee: Thou hast come and revealed Thyself, O Light Unapproachable! (Kontakion).

The services of Epiphany are set up exactly as those of Christmas, although historically it was most certainly Christmas which was made to imitate Epiphany since it was established later. Once again the Royal Hours and the Liturgy of Saint Basil are celebrated together with Vespers on the eve of the feast; and the Vigil is made up of Great Compline and Matins.

The prophecies of Epiphany repeat the God is with us from Isaiah and stress the foretelling of the Messiah as well as the coming of His forerunner, John the Baptist:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord,
make His path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (Is 40.3–5; Lk 3.4–6).

Once more special psalms are sung to begin the Divine Liturgy of the feast, and the baptismal line of Galatians 3.27 replaces the song of the Thrice-Holy. The gospel readings of all the Epiphany services tell of the Lord’s baptism by John in the Jordan River. The epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy tells of the consequences of the Lord’s appearing which is the divine epiphany.

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds (Titus 2.11–14).

The main feature of the feast of the Epiphany is the Great Blessing of Water. It is prescribed to follow both the Divine Liturgy of the eve of the feast and the Divine Liturgy of the day itself. Usually it is done just once in parish churches at the time when most people can be present. It begins with the singing of special hymns and the censing of the water which has been placed in the center of the church building. Surrounded by candles and flowers, this water stands for the beautiful world of God’s original creation and ultimate glorification by Christ in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes this service of blessing is done out of doors at a place where the water is flowing naturally.

*The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying: Come all ye, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, even Christ who is made manifest.*

Today the nature of water is sanctified. Jordan is divided in two, and turns back the stream of its waters, beholding the Master being baptized.

As a man Thou didst come to that river, O Christ our King, and dost hasten O Good One, to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner [John], because of our sins, O Lover of Man (Hymns of the Great Blessing of Waters).

Following are three readings from the Prophecy of Isaiah concerning the messianic age:

*Let the thirsty wilderness be glad, let the desert rejoice, let it blossom as a rose, let it blossom abundantly, let everything rejoice.* .?.?. (Is?35.1–10).

*Go to that water, O you who thirst, and as many as have no money, let them eat and drink without price, both wine and fat.* .?.?. (Is?55.1–13).
With joy draw the water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall you say: Confess ye unto the Lord and call upon his Name; declare his glorious deeds .?.?. his Name is exalted .?.?. Hymn the Name of the Lord .?.?. Rejoice and exult .?.?. (Is 12.3.6).

After the epistle (1Cor 1.10–14) and the gospel reading (Mk 1.9–11) the special great litany is chanted invoking the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the water and upon those who will partake of it. It ends with the great prayer of the cosmic glorification of God in which Christ is called upon to sanctify the water, and all men and all creation, by the manifestation of his saving and sanctifying divine presence by the indwelling of the Holy and Good and Life-creating Spirit.

As the troparion of the feast is sung, the celebrant immerses the Cross into the water three times and then proceeds to sprinkle the water in the four directions of the world. He then blesses the people and their homes with the sanctified water which stands for the salvation of all men and all creation which Christ has effected by his “epiphany” in the flesh for the life of the world.

Sometimes people think that the blessing of water and the practice of drinking it and sprinkling it over everyone and everything is a “paganism” which has falsely entered the Christian Church. We know, however, that this ritual was practiced by the People of God in the Old Testament, and that in the Christian Church it has a very special and important significance.

It is the faith of Christians that since the Son of God has taken human flesh and has been immersed in the streams of the Jordan, all matter is sanctified and made pure in Him, purged of its death-dealing qualities inherited from the devil and the wickedness of men. In the Lord’s epiphany all creation becomes good again, indeed “very good,” the way that God Himself made it and proclaimed it to be in the beginning when “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen 1.2) and when the “Breath of Life” was breathing in man and in everything that God made (Gen 1.30; 2.7).

The world and everything in it is indeed “very good” (Gen 1.31) and when it becomes polluted, corrupted and dead, God saves it once more by effecting the “new creation” in Christ, his divine Son and our Lord by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Gal 6.15). This is what is celebrated on Epiphany, particularly in the Great Blessing of Water. The consecration of the waters on this feast places the entire world-through its “prime element” of watering the perspective of the cosmic creation, sanctification, and glorification of the Kingdom of God in Christ arid the Spirit. It tells us that man and the world were indeed created and saved in order to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19), the
“fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1.22). It tells us that Christ, in Who in “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,” is and shall be truly “all, and in all” (Col 2.9, 3.11). It tells us as well that the “new heavens and the new earth” which God has promised through His prophets and apostles (Is 66.2; 2 Peter 3.13; Rev 21.1) are truly “with us” already now in the mystery of Christ and His Church.

Thus, the sanctification and sprinkling of the Epiphany water is no pagan ritual. It is the expression of the most central fact of the Christian vision of man, his life and his world. It is the liturgical testimony that the vocation and destiny of creation is to be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3.19).
Meeting of the Lord

Forty days after Christ was born He was presented to God in the Jerusalem Temple according to the Mosaic Law. At this time as well His mother Mary underwent the ritual purification and offered the sacrifices as prescribed in the Law. Thus, forty days after Christmas, on the second of февраля, the Church celebrates the feast of the presentation called the Meeting (or Presentation or Reception) of the Lord.

The meeting of Christ by the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna (Lk 2.22–36) is the main event of the feast of Christ’s presentation in the Temple. It was “revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Lk 2.26) and, inspired by the same Spirit, he came to the Temple where he met the new-born Messiah, took Him in his arms and said the words which are now chanted each evening at the end of the Orthodox Vespers service:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel (Lk 2.29–32).

At this time as well Simeon predicted that Jesus would be the “sign which is spoken against” and that He would cause “the fall and the rising of many in Israel.” He also foretold Mary’s sufferings because of her son (Luke 22.34–35). Anna also was present and, giving thanks to God “she spoke of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Lk 2.38).

In the service of the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, the fact emphasized is that Christ, the Son and Word of God through Whom the world was created, now is held as an infant in Simeon’s hands; this same Son of God, the Giver of the Law, now Himself fulfills the Law, carried in arms as a human child.

Receive him, O Simeon, whom Moses on Mount Sinai beheld in the darkness as the Giver of the Law. Receive him as a babe now obeying the Law. For he it is of whom the Law and the Prophets have spoken, incarnate for our sake and saving mankind. Come let us adore him!

Let the door of heaven open today, for the Eternal Word of the Father, without giving up his divinity, has been incarnate of the Virgin in time. And as a babe of forty days he is voluntarily brought by his mother to the Temple, according to the Law. And the elder Simeon takes him in his arms and cries out: Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, O Lord, who has come to save the human race-glory to
Thee! (Vespers Verses of the Feast).

The Vespers and Matins of the feast of the Meeting of the Lord are filled with hymns on this theme. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated with the lines from the canticle of Mary forming the prokeimenon and the words of Simeon being the verses for the Alleluia. The gospel readings tell of the meeting, while the Old Testament readings at Vespers refer to the Law of the purification in Leviticus, the vision of Isaiah in the Temple of the Thrice-Holy Lord, and the gift of faith to the Egyptians prophesied by Isaiah when the light of the Lord shall be a “revelation to the Gentiles” (Lk 2.32).

The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord in the church is not merely a historical commemoration. Inspired by the same Holy Spirit as Simeon, and led by the same Spirit into the Church of the Messiah, the members of the Church also can claim their own “meeting” with the Lord, and so also can witness that they too can “depart in peace” since their eyes have seen the salvation of God in the person of his Christ.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those who sat in darkness! Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder; you accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls who grants us the resurrection (Troparion).

By Thy nativity, Thou didst sanctify the Virgin’s womb. And didst bless Simeon’s hands, O Christ our God. Now Thou hast come and saved us through love. Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, O only Lover of man (Kontakion).

It is customary in many churches to bless candles on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord.
Transfiguration

The transfiguration of Christ is one of the central events recorded in the gospels. Immediately after the Lord was recognized by His apostles as “the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Living God,” He told them that “He must go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things .?.?. and be killed and on the third day be raised” (Mt 16). The announcement of Christ’s approaching passion and death was met with indignation by the disciples. And then, after rebuking them, the Lord took Peter, James, and John “up to a high mountain”—by tradition Mount Tabor—and was “transfigured before them.”

?.?. and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as snow and behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish I will make three booths here, one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is My Beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead” (Mt?17.1–92, see also Mk 9.1–9; Lk 9.28–36; 2Pet 1.16–18).

The Jewish Festival of Booths was a feast of the dwelling of God with men, and the transfiguration of Christ reveals how this dwelling takes place in and through the Messiah, the Son of God in human flesh. There is little doubt that Christ’s transfiguration took place at the time of the Festival of Booths, and that the celebration of the event in the Christian Church became the New Testamental fulfillment of the Old Testamental feast in a way similar to the feasts of Passover and Pentecost.

In the Transfiguration, the apostles see the glory of the Kingdom of God present in majesty in the person of Christ they see that “in Him, indeed, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,” that “in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 1.19, 2.9). They see this before the crucifixion so that in the resurrection they might know Who it is Who has suffered for them, and what it is that this one, Who is God, has prepared for those who love Him. This is what the Church celebrates in the feast of the Transfiguration.

Thou wast transfigured on the mount. O Christ God, revealing Thy glory to Thy disciples as they could bear it. Let Thine everlasting light shine upon us
sinners. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Giver of Light, glory to Thee (Troparion).

On the mountain wast Thou transfigured, O Christ God, and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; so that when they would behold Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary, and would proclaim to the world that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father (Kontakion).

Besides the fundamental meaning which the event of the Transfiguration has in the context of the life and mission of Christ, and in addition to the theme of the glory of God which is revealed in all of its divine splendor in the face of the Saviour, the presence of Moses and Elijah is also of great significance for the understanding and celebration of the feast. Many of the hymns refer to these two leading figures of the Old Covenant as do the three scripture readings of Vespers which tell of the manifestation of the glory of God to these holy men of old (Ex 24.12–18; 33.11–34.8; 1 Kg 19.3–16).

Moses and Elijah, according to the liturgical verses, are not only the greatest figures of the Old Testament who now come to worship the Son of God in glory, they also are not merely two of the holy men to whom God has revealed himself in the prefigurative theophanies of the Old Covenant of Israel. These two figures actually stand for the Old Testament itself: Moses for the Law and Elijah for the Prophets. And Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5.17).

They also stand for the living and dead, for Moses died and his burial place is known, while Elijah was taken alive into heaven in order to appear again to announce the time of God’s salvation in Christ the Messiah.

Thus, in appearing with Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah show that the Messiah Saviour is here, and that He is the Son of God to Whom the Father Himself bears witness, the Lord of all creation, of the Old and New Testaments, of the living and the dead. The Transfiguration of Christ in itself is the fulfillment of all of the theophanies and manifestations of God, a fulfillment made perfect and complete in the person of Christ. The Transfiguration of Christ reveals to us our ultimate destiny as Christians, the ultimate destiny of all men and all creation to be transformed and glorified by the majestic splendor of God Himself.

There is little doubt that the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ belonged first to the pre-Easter season of the Church. It was perhaps celebrated on one of the Sundays of Lent, for besides certain historical evidence and the fact that today St Gregory Palamas, the great teacher of the Transfiguration of Christ, is commemorated during Lent, the event itself is one which is definitely
connected with the approaching death and resurrection of the Saviour.

.?.?. for when they would behold Thee crucified, they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary (Kontakion).

The feast of the Transfiguration is presently celebrated on the sixth of August, probably for some historical reason. The summer celebration of the feast, however, has lent itself very well to the theme of transfiguration. The blessing of grapes, as well as other fruits and vegetables on this day is the most beautiful and adequate sign of the final transfiguration of all things in Christ. It signifies the ultimate flowering and fruitfulness of all creation in the paradise of God’s unending Kingdom of Life where all will be transformed by the glory of the Lord.
The feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary comes nine months before Christmas on the twenty-fifth of March. It is the celebration of the announcing of the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary as recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her (Lk 1.26–38).

The services of the feast of the Annunciation, the Matins and the Divine Liturgy, stress again and again the joyous news of the salvation of men in the birth of the Saviour.

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery. The Son of God becomes the Son of the virgin, as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you (Troparion).

A special feature of this feast is the Matinal Canon which has the character of a dialogue between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. Also among the more popular elements of the feast is the Magnification which has the form of our own salutation to the virgin mother with the words of the archangel:

With the voice of the archangel we cry to Thee, O Pure One: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee! (Magnification).

The celebration of the Annunciation, therefore, is the feast of our own
reception of the glad tidings of salvation, and our own glorification of the maiden Mary who becomes the Mother of God in the flesh.

Because the feast of the Annunciation normally comes during the season of Great Lent, the manner of celebration varies from year to year depending upon the particular day on which it falls. If the feast comes on a weekday of Lent, which is the most common case, the Divine Liturgy of the feast is served in the evening with Vespers and thus is celebrated after a full day of total abstinence. When this happens, the fasting rules for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts are followed. The Divine Liturgy of the Annunciation is the only celebration of the eucharistic liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom allowed on a weekday of Great Lent.
In addition to the celebration of the Annunciation, there are three major feasts in the Church honoring Mary, the Theotokos. The first of these is the feast of her nativity which is kept on the eighth of сентября.

The record of the birth of Mary is not found in the Bible. The traditional account of the event is taken from the apocryphal writings which are not part of the New Testament scriptures. The traditional teaching which is celebrated in the hymns and verses of the festal liturgy is that Joachim and Anna were a pious Jewish couple who were among the small and faithful remnant—“the poor and the needy”—who were awaiting the promised messiah. The couple was old and childless. They prayed earnestly to the Lord for a child, since among the Jews barrenness was a sign of God’s disfavor. In answer to their prayers, and as the reward of their unwavering fidelity to God, the elderly couple was blessed with the child who was destined, because of her own personal goodness and holiness, to become the Mother of the Messiah-Christ.

Your nativity, O Virgin, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe. The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, has shone from you, O Theotokos. By annulling the curse he bestowed a blessing. By destroying death he has granted us eternal life (Troparion).

By your nativity, O most pure virgin, Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness; Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. And we, your people, freed from the guilt of sin, celebrate and sing to you: The barren woman gives birth to the Theotokos, the Nourisher of our Life (Kontakion).

The fact that there is no Biblical verification of the facts of Mary’s birth is incidental to the meaning of the feast. Even if the actual background of the event as celebrated in the Church is questionable from an historical point of view, the divine meaning of it “for us men and for our salvation” is obvious. There had to be one born of human flesh and blood who would be spiritually capable of being the Mother of Christ, and she herself had to be born into the world of persons who were spiritually capable of being her parents.

The feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, therefore, is a glorification of Mary’s birth, of Mary herself and of her righteous parents. It is a celebration as well of the very first preparation of the salvation of the world. For the “Vessel of Light,” the “Book of the Word of Life,” the “Door to the Orient,” the “Throne of Wisdom” is being prepared on earth by God Himself in the birth of the holy girl-child Mary.

The verses of the feast are filled with titles for Mary such as those in the
quotations above. They are inspired by the message of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. The specific Biblical readings of the feast give indications of this.

At Vespers the three Old Testamental readings are “mariological” in their New Testamental interpretation. Thus, Jacob’s Ladder which unites heaven and earth and the place which is named “the house of God” and the “gate of heaven” (Gen 28.10–17) are taken, to indicate the union of God with men which is realized most fully and perfectly—both spiritually and physically—in Mary the Theotokos, Bearer of God. So also the vision of the temple with the “door ‘to the East’” perpetually closed and filled with the “glory of the Lord” symbolizes Mary, called in the hymns of the feast “the living temple of God filled with the divine Glory” (Ezek 43.27–44.4). Mary is also identified with the “house” which the Divine Wisdom has built for himself according to the reading from Proverbs 9.1–11.

The Gospel reading of Matins is the one read at all feasts of the Theotokos, the famous Magnificat from Saint Luke in which Mary says: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden, for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1.47).

The epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy is the famous passage about the coming of the Son of God in “the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man” (Phil 2.5–11) and the gospel reading is that which is always read for feasts of the Theotokos—the woman in the crowd glorifies the Mother of Jesus, and the Lord himself responds that the same blessedness which his mother receives is for all “who hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11.27–28).

Thus, on the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, as on all liturgical celebrations of Christ’s Mother, we proclaim and celebrate that through God’s graciousness to mankind every Christian receives what the Theotokos receives, the “great mercy” which is given to human persons because of Christ’s birth from the Virgin.
Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple

The second great feast of the Theotokos is the celebration of her entrance as a child into the Jerusalem Temple which is commemorated on the twenty-first of November. Like the feast of her nativity, this feast of Mary is without direct biblical and historical reference. But like the nativity, it is a feast filled with important spiritual significance for the Christian believer.

The texts of the service tell how Mary was brought as a small child to the temple by her parents in order to be raised there among the virgins consecrated to the service of the Lord until the time of their betrothal in marriage. According to Church tradition, Mary was solemnly received by the temple community which was headed by the priest Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. She was led to the holy place to be “nourished” there by the angels in order to become herself the “holy of holies” of God, the living sanctuary and temple of the Divine child who was to be born in her.

There is no doubt that the verses of the Old Testamental Psalm 45, used extensively in the services of the feast, provided a great inspiration for the celebration of Mary’s consecration to the service of God in the Jerusalem Temple.

Hear, O Daughter, and consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your Lord, bow to him .?.?.

The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes, in many-colored robes she is led to her king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train.

With joy and gladness they are led along, as they enter the palace of the king.

Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations, therefore, the peoples will praise you forever and ever (Ps?45.10–17).

The Orthodox Church understands these words of the psalm to be a prophecy directly related to Mary the Theotokos. According to the Gospel of Saint Luke which is read at the Vigil of each of her feasts, Mary herself speaks the following words:

My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, hence-forth all generations shall call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from
The main theme of the feast of Mary’s entrance to the Temple, repeated many times in the liturgical services, is the fact that she enters the Temple to become herself the living temple of God, thus inaugurating the New Testament in which are fulfilled the prophecies of old that “the dwelling of God is with man” and that the human person is the sole proper dwelling place of the Divine Presence (Ezek 37.27; Jn 14.15–23; Acts 7.47; 2Cor 6.11; Eph 2.18–22; 1Pet 2.4; Rev 22.1–4).

Today is the preview of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment of the Creator’s dispensation (Troparion).

The most pure Temple of the Saviour, the precious Chamber and Virgin, the Sacred Treasure of the Glory of God, is presented today to the house of the Lord. She brings with her the grace of the Spirit, which the angels of God do praise. Truly this woman is the Abode of Heaven! (Kontakion).

The fortieth chapter of Exodus about the building of the tabernacle is read at Vespers, together with passages from the First Book of Kings and the Prophecy of Ezekiel. Each one of these readings all end with exactly the same line, “for the glory of the Lord filled the house [tabernacle] of the Lord God Almighty” (Ex 40.35; 1 Kg 8.11; Ezek 44.4).

Once again on this feast, the Old Testament readings are interpreted as symbols of the Mother of God. This “glory of the Lord” is referred to the Mother of Christ and it “fills” her and all people after her who “hear the word of God and keep it” as the Gospel of the festal liturgy proclaims (Lk 11.37–28). The epistle reading at the Divine Liturgy also proclaims this very same theme (Heb 9.1–7).

Thus, the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple is the feast which celebrates the end of the physical temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God. When the child Mary enters the temple, the time of the temple comes to an end and the “preview of the good will of God” is shown forth. On this feast we celebrate-in the person of Christ’s mother-that we too are the house and tabernacle of the Lord.

.??. We are the temple of the living God, as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2Cor 6.16; Is 52.11).
The feast of the Dormition or Falling-asleep of the Theotokos is celebrated on the fifteenth of August, preceded by a two-week fast. This feast, which is also sometimes called the Assumption, commemorates the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ’s mother. It proclaims that Mary has been “assumed” by God into the heavenly kingdom of Christ in the fullness of her spiritual and bodily existence.

As with the nativity of the Virgin and the feast of her entrance to the temple, there are no biblical or historical sources for this feast. The Tradition of the Church is that Mary died as all people die, not “voluntarily” as her Son, but by the necessity of her mortal human nature which is indivisibly bound up with the corruption of this world.

The Orthodox Church teaches that Mary is without personal sins. In the Gospel of the feast, however, in the liturgical services and in the Dormition icon, the Church proclaims as well that Mary truly needed to be saved by Christ as all human persons are saved from the trials, sufferings and death of this world; and that having truly died, she was raised up by her Son as the Mother of Life and participates already in the eternal life of paradise which is prepared and promised to all who “hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk11.27–28).

*In giving birth, you preserved your virginity. In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos. You were translated to life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers, you deliver our souls from death* (Troparion).

*Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life, by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb* (Kontakion).

The services of the feast repeat the main theme, that the Mother of Life has “passed over into the heavenly joy, into the divine gladness and unending delight” of the Kingdom of her Son (Vesperal hymn). The Old Testament readings, as well as the gospel readings for the Vigil and the Divine Liturgy, are exactly the same as those for the feast of the Virgin’s nativity and her entrance into the Temple. Thus, at the Vigil we again hear Mary say: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour” (Lk 1.47). At the Divine Liturgy we hear the letter to the Philippians where Saint Paul speaks of the self-emptying of Christ who condescends to human servitude and ignoble death in order to be “highly exalted by God his Father” (Phil 2.5–11). And once again we hear in the Gospel that Mary’s blessedness belongs to all who “hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11.27–28).
Thus, the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos is the celebration of the fact that all men are “highly exalted” in the blessedness of the victorious Christ, and that this high exaltation has already been accomplished in Mary the Theotokos. The feast of the Dormition is the sign, the guarantee, and the celebration that Mary’s fate is, the destiny of all those of “low estate” whose souls magnify the Lord, whose spirits rejoice in God the Saviour, whose lives are totally dedicated to hearing and keeping the Word of God which is given to men in Mary’s child, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world.

Finally it must be stressed that, in all of the feasts of the Virgin Mother of God in the Church, the Orthodox Christians celebrate facts of their own lives in Christ and the Holy Spirit. What happens to Mary happens to all who imitate her holy life of humility, obedience, and love. With her all people will be “blessed” to be “more honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim” if they follow her example. All will have Christ born in them by the Holy Spirit. All will become temples of the living God. All will share in the eternal life of His Kingdom who live the life that Mary lived.

In this sense everything that is praised and glorified in Mary is a sign of what is offered to all persons in the life of the Church. It is for this reason that Mary, with the divine child Jesus within her, is called in the Orthodox Tradition the Image of the Church. For the assembly of the saved is those in whom Christ dwells.

It is the custom in some churches to bless flowers on the feast of the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos.
The Elevation of the Cross, celebrated on the fourteenth of сентября, commemorates the finding of Christ’s Cross by Saint Helen, the mother of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century; and, after it was taken by the Persians, of its recovery by the Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century at which time it was “elevated” in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. From this latter event the “universal elevation” of the Cross was celebrated annually in all of the churches of the Christian Empire.

The day of the Elevation of the Cross became, as it were, the national holiday of the Eastern Christian Empire similar to the Fourth of июля in the United States. The Cross, the official emblem of the Empire which was placed on all public buildings and uniforms, was officially elevated on this day by the bishops and priests. They blessed the four directions of the universe with the Cross, while the faithful repeated the chanting of “Lord have mercy.” This ritual is still done in the churches today after the solemn presentation and elevation of the Cross at the end of the Vigil service of the holy day following the Great Doxology of Matins.

The troparion of the feast which was, one might say, the “national anthem” sung on all public occasions in the Christian Empires of Byzantium and Russia, originally petitioned God to save the people, to grant victory in war and to preserve the empire “by the virtue of the Cross.” Today the troparion, and all the hymns of the day, are “spiritualized” as the “adversaries” become the spiritually wicked and sinful including the devil and his armies, and “Orthodox Christians” replace the names of ruling officials of the Empire.

_O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by the virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation_ (Troparion).

_As Thou was mercifully crucified for our sake, grant mercy to those who are called by Thy name; make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power, granting them victories over their adversaries, by bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace_ (Kontakion).

The holy day of the Elevation of the Cross, although it has an obviously “political” origin, has a place of great significance in the Church today. It remains with us as a day of fasting and prayer, a day when we recall that the Cross is the only sign worthy of our total allegiance, and that our salvation comes not by “victories” of any earthly sort but by the only true and lasting victory of the crucifixion of Christ and our co-crucifixion with him.
When we elevate the Cross and bow down before it in veneration and worship to God, we proclaim that we belong to the Kingdom “not of this world,” and that our only true and enduring citizenship is with the saints in the “city of God” (Eph 2.19; Heb 11.10; Rev 21–22).

The first Old Testament reading of the Vespers of the day tells of the “tree” which changes the bitter waters into sweetness—the symbol of the Tree of the Cross (Ex 15.22–16.1). The second reading reminds us that the Lord chastens and corrects those whom He loves and that Divine Wisdom is “a Tree of life to those who lay hold upon her and trust in her, as in the Lord” (Prov 3.11–18). Again the reference is to the Cross which is, as the epistle reading of the day proclaims, “to those who are called .?.?. the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1Cor 1.24).

The third Old Testament reading is from the Prophecy of Isaiah which tells of the “city of the Lord” where both Jews and Gentiles will live together and “shall bow themselves down” at the place of God’s feet and “shall know that I the Lord am Thy Saviour and Thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Israel” (Is 60.11–16). Here we have the direct reference to God’s city where men shall worship at His feet; and together with the psalm line repeated constantly during the services which calls us to “bow before His footstool,” we have once again the reference to the Holy Cross (Ps 99.5, 110.1, et al.).

*Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master, and Thy holy resurrection, we glorify* (Hymn of Veneration before the Cross).

This central hymn of the Elevation of the Cross which lasts for eight days in the Church is sung many times. It replaces the Thrice-Holy of the Divine Liturgy. The normal antiphons are also replaced by special verses from the psalms which have direct reference to Christ’s crucifixion on the Cross (Ps 22, 74, 99). At the Matins, in the gospel reading from Saint John, Christ says that when He is elevated on the Cross He will draw all men to Himself (Jn 12.28–36). The long gospel reading at the Divine Liturgy is the passion account from this same gospel.

Thus, at the Elevation of the Cross the Christians make their official rededication to the crucified Lord and pledge their undivided allegiance to Him by the adoration of His holy feet nailed to the life-creating Cross. This is the meaning of this holy day of fasting and repentance in the Church today.
On each day of the year the Orthodox Church commemorates certain saints or sacred events in its history. In addition to the twelve major feast days mentioned above, the entire Orthodox Church celebrates a number of other days with special liturgical and spiritual solemnity.

First among the feasts universally celebrated by all the Orthodox are those of Saint John the Baptist (on left) of whom Christ has said that “among those born of women there has arisen none greater” (Mt 11.11; Lk 7.28).

The feasts of the apostles are also celebrated in all the churches, particularly the feast of Saints Peter and Paul (on right) which is preceded by a prescribed fasting period.

Certain other saints are especially venerated throughout the world as well, such as Saints Nicholas (on left) and George, the Prophet Elias and the Archangel Michael, together with the hierarchs, Saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Gregory the Theologian.

Each local church also has its own particularly holy days. In the Greek Church Saints Spiridon, Demetrios, Nektarios, and others are highly venerated, just as Saints Sergius, Seraphim, Tikhon, and Vladimir are in the Russian Church; Saint Sava (on right) in the Serbian Church; and Saint Herman in the American Church.

In addition to those special festal days of the particular national churches, there exists also the practice for certain cities, towns and monasteries to have liturgical celebrations of holy persons or events proper to their own particular interests and desires. Thus there exist certain saints, for example, which are celebrated with great solemnity in just a very few places in the Church, perhaps even in just one particular place where they have a special importance for the faithful.

It is necessary to note that in the Orthodox Church the liturgical feasts are not “institutions” which are legislated by some ecclesiastical authority apart from the interest and consent of the people. The feasts of the Church, and even the canonization of saints, always follows from the living devotion of the Christian people. If there were no popular interest and veneration of a certain holy person, there would be no official canonization and no liturgical festival established in his or her honor. Once a person is recognized as a saint, however, and it is agreed that God himself is presenting this person as a living witness to himself and his Kingdom, then the Church hierarchy will set the day of the feast and will compose the proper liturgical service and hymns to be used in the
celebration. The frequency and fervor of the celebration will then depend solely upon the will of the people, and once established the feast could only disappear organically, in a way similar to its appearance. It would not, and indeed it really could not be “disestablished” by the decree of any church authority.
The Divine Liturgy
The word liturgy means common work or common action. The Divine Liturgy is the common work of the Orthodox Church. It is the official action of the Church formally gathered together as the chosen People of God. The word church, as we remember, means a gathering or assembly of people specifically chosen and called apart to perform a particular task.

The Divine Liturgy is the common action of Orthodox Christians officially gathered to constitute the Orthodox Church. It is the action of the Church assembled by God in order to be together in one community to worship, to pray, to sing, to hear God’s Word, to be instructed in God’s commandments, to offer itself with thanksgiving in Christ to God the Father, and to have the living experience of God’s eternal kingdom through communion with the same Christ Who is present in his people by the Holy Spirit.

The Divine Liturgy is always done by Orthodox Christians on the Lord’s Day which is Sunday, the “day after Sabbath” which is symbolic of the first day of creation and the last day—or as it is called in Holy Tradition, the eighth day—of the Kingdom of God. This is the day of Christ’s resurrection from the dead, the day of God’s judgment and victory predicted by the prophets, the Day of the Lord which inaugurates the presence and the power of the “kingdom to come” already now within the life of this present world.

The Divine Liturgy is also celebrated by the Church on special feast days. It is usually celebrated daily in monasteries, and in some large cathedrals and parish churches, with the exception of the week days of Great Lent when it is not served because of its paschal character.

As the common action of the People of God, the Divine Liturgy may be celebrated only once on any given day in an Orthodox Christian community. All of the members of the Church must be gathered together with their pastor in one place at one time. This includes even small children and infants who participate fully in the communion of the liturgy from the day of their entrance into the Church through baptism and chrismation. Always everyone, always together. This is the traditional expression of the Orthodox Church about the Divine Liturgy.

Because of its common character, the Divine Liturgy may never be celebrated privately by the clergy alone. It may never be served just for some and not for others, but for all. It may never be served merely for some private purposes or some specific or exclusive intentions. Thus there may be, and usually are, special petitions at the Divine Liturgy for the sick or the departed,
or for some very particular purposes or projects, but there is never a Divine Liturgy which is done exclusively for private individuals or specific isolated purposes or intentions. The Divine Liturgy is always “on behalf of all and for all.”

Because the Divine Liturgy exists for no other reason than to be the official all-inclusive act of prayer, worship, teaching, and communion of the entire Church in heaven and on earth, it may not be considered merely as one devotion among many, not even the highest or the greatest. The Divine Liturgy is not an act of personal piety. It is not a prayer service. It is not merely one of the sacraments. The Divine Liturgy is the one common sacrament of the very being of the Church itself. It is the one sacramental manifestation of the essence of the Church as the Community of God in heaven and on earth. It is the one unique sacramental revelation of the Church as the mystical Body and Bride of Christ.

As the central mystical action of the whole church, the Divine Liturgy is always resurrectional in spirit. It is always the manifestation to his people of the Risen Christ. It is always an outpouring of the life-creating Spirit. It is always communion with God the Father. The Divine Liturgy, therefore, is never mournful or penitential. It is never the expression of the darkness and death of this world. It is always the expression and the experience of the eternal life of the Kingdom of the Blessed Trinity.

The Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Orthodox Church is called the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. It is a shorter liturgy than the so-called Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great that is used only ten times during the Church Year. These two liturgies probably received their present form after the ninth century. It is not the case that they were written exactly as they now stand by the saints whose names they carry. It is quite certain, however, that the eucharistic prayers of each of these liturgies were formulated as early as the fourth and fifth centuries when these saints lived and worked in the Church.

The Divine Liturgy has two main parts. The first part is the gathering, called the synaxis. It has its origin in the synagogue gatherings of the Old Testament, and is centered in the proclamation and meditation of the Word of God. The second part of the Divine Liturgy is the eucharistic sacrifice. It has its origin in the Old Testament temple worship, the priestly sacrifices of the People of God; and in the central saving event of the Old Testament, the Passover (Pascha).

In the New Testament Church Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God, and it is the Christian gospels and apostolic writings which are proclaimed and meditated at the first part of the Divine Liturgy. And in the New Testament
Church, the central saving event is the one perfect, eternal and all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the one great High Priest who is also the Lamb of God slain for the salvation of the world, the New Passover. At the Divine Liturgy the faithful Christians participate in the voluntary self-offering of Christ to the Father, accomplished once and for all upon the Cross by the power of the Holy Spirit. In and through this unique sacrifice of Christ, the faithful Christians receive Holy Communion with God.

For centuries it was the practice of the Church to admit all persons to the first part of the Divine Liturgy, while reserving the second part strictly for those who were formally committed to Christ through baptism and chrismation in the Church. Non-baptized persons were not permitted even to witness the offering and receiving of Holy Communion by the faithful Christians. Thus the first part of the Divine Liturgy came to be called the Liturgy of the Catechumens, that is, the liturgy of those who were receiving instructions in the Christian Faith in order to become members of the Church through baptism and chrismation. It also came to be called, for obvious reasons, the Liturgy of the Word. The second part of the Divine Liturgy came to be called the Liturgy of the Faithful.

Although it is generally the practice in the Orthodox Church today to allow non-Orthodox Christians, and even non-Christians, to witness the Liturgy of the Faithful, it is still the practice to reserve actual participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion only to members of the Orthodox Church who are fully committed to the life and teachings of the Orthodox Faith as preserved, proclaimed and practiced by the Church throughout its history.

In the commentary on the Divine Liturgy which follows, we will concentrate our attention on what happens to the Church at its “common action.” By doing this we will attempt to penetrate the fundamental and essential meaning of the liturgy for man, his life and his world. This will be a definite departure from the interpretation of the Divine Liturgy which treats the service as if it were a drama enacted by the clergy and “attended” by the people, in which each part stands for some aspect of Christ’s life and work (e.g., the prothesis stands for Christ’s birth, the small entrance for the beginning of his public ministry, the gospel for his preaching, the great entrance for Palm Sunday, etc.). This latter type of interpretation of the Divine Liturgy is an invention, which, although perhaps interesting and inspiring for some, is nevertheless completely alien to the genuine meaning and purpose of the Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church.
To bless the Kingdom of God means to love it as one’s most precious possession. The response of the people to the proclamation of blessing by the priest is with the word Amen, which means so be it. This is the solemn affirmation that indeed the blessing of God’s Kingdom is fitting and proper. It is the official confirmation that this Kingdom is indeed the “pearl of great price” for the faithful, which once having found it, they will love it and serve it and desire to have it forever (Lk 13.14).

Only the Divine Liturgy and the other sacraments and services of the Church which were originally integrated into the eucharistic celebration, such as baptism, chrismation, and marriage begin with the solemn blessing of the Kingdom of God.
Great Litany

After the opening proclamation, the Great Litany is chanted. This litany begins every liturgical service of the Orthodox Church, as well as virtually all sacraments and special services. It is the all-embracing prayer of the Church for everyone and everything. It consists of petitions to which the people respond: Lord have mercy.

The Great Litany begins with prayers “in peace” and “for peace.” The people then proceed in the litany to pray for their eternal salvation; for the welfare of God’s churches and for the union of all; for the faithful and God-fearing of the particular community; for the bishops, priests, deacons and all the people of the Church; for the nation and its institutions for which all are responsible: the president, civil authorities and armed forces; for the given city and country and for all cities and countries; for good weather and abundant crops; for travelers, for the sick, the suffering and those in captivity.

Finally, after asking God for the deliverance from everything harmful and negative and for his divine help, salvation, mercy and protection, the people remember the Theotokos and all the saints and commend themselves and each other and all their life to Christ their God.

The Great Litany then ends with a doxology proper to the Holy Trinity to whom are due all glory, honor and worship forever. Once more the prayer is completed by the Amen of the people.
After the Great Litany, psalm verses are chanted proper to the particular occasion. These psalm verses are called the antiphons because they were, and sometimes still are sung by the people in two choirs, each responding antiphonally to the other. There are three sets of antiphons at each Divine Liturgy.

Historically the antiphons were chanted by the people in solemn procession to the church where the Divine Liturgy of the day was to be celebrated. Today, although they are now part of the service itself, they still form the joyful preparation for entrance into the worship of Christ through the Word of the Gospel and the offering and receiving of Holy Communion.

The psalms normally sung as the antiphons at the Divine Liturgy of the Lord’s Day are Psalms 103 and 146. On feast days other psalms are used with particular relevance to the special celebration. To these psalm verses, refrains are added proper to the occasion.

Following the second antiphon, a hymn by the Emperor Justinian, Only-begotten Son, is always sung. It is a hymn of faith in the divinity of Christ and his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection as “one of the Holy Trinity” for the salvation of men.

In addition to the two sets of antiphons and the singing of Only-begotten Son, which belong to every Divine Liturgy, a third antiphon is chanted which on normal Sundays in most Orthodox Churches is the Beatitudes of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount according to the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Mt 5.3–12). The Beatitudes are sung with the refrain taken from the words of the Good Thief on the Cross: Remember us, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom (Lk 23.42). On festal occasions special psalm verses with the singing of the Troparion of the day constitute the third antiphon at the Divine Liturgy.
During the singing of the third antiphon, whether it be the Beatitudes or the Troparion of the day, the so-called Small Entrance is made. The Small Entrance is the solemn procession of the clergy to the altar led by the Book of the Gospels. If the bishop is celebrating, the Gospel Book is brought out to him in the center of the church in the midst of the people where he has been standing from the beginning of the liturgy.

After the exclamation: “Wisdom! Let Us Attend!” the clergy enter the royal gates of the iconostasis while all sing the Hymn of Entrance:

\textit{O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ. O Son of God .?.?. Save us who sing unto Thee: Alleluia.}

A special line is added before the final phrase of the entrance hymn at each liturgy, proper to the celebration. Thus, for example, on the Lord’s Day this line would always be, “Who rose from the dead.”

If the priest is serving the Divine Liturgy alone, or with a deacon, the Small Entrance is made by the clergy circling the altar table and coming to the middle of the church with the Gospel Book in order to enter through the royal gates of the iconostasis accompanied by the Hymn of Entrance.

The Small Entrance is the first significant movement of the Divine Liturgy. It follows the primary liturgical action which is the gathering of the faithful into the one community of the Church of God. The Small Entrance is the movement of the entire Church through its Head Jesus Christ, in the person of the celebrant, to the altar which symbolizes the Kingdom of God. It is the movement made possible by the Gospel of Christ, the Way to the Kingdom. It can only be accomplished by following Jesus, the Living Word of God in human flesh (Jn 1.1–18).

There can be no approach to God the Father but through Christ, the Son of God (Jn 14.6). There can be no communion with God the Father except by the fulfillment of his commandments which are given by Jesus and proclaimed in the words of his Gospel. Thus it is the Gospel of Christ, the Son and Word of God, which takes us into the realm of the Father and into the eternal life of the Blessed Trinity whose Kingdom we enter and experience in the Divine Liturgy of the Church.

Technically speaking, the Small Entrance is not completed when the clergy enter the sanctuary and stand before the altar table. It is completed only with the singing of the Thrice-Holy Hymn during which the clergy proceed to the place behind the altar table (called the High Place), at which time the chief
celebrant turns and blesses the people with the solemn biblical greeting: “Peace be, unto all!”

While the clergy are still before the altar table, the people sing the troparia and kontakia of the day. These are hymns which praise the saving events or holy persons celebrated liturgically at the particular gathering. On Sundays these songs always praise Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

While these hymns are being sung, the celebrant of the liturgy prays before the altar for the general absolution and forgiveness of sins of the entire assembly so that all of the people might be made worthy by God “to stand before the glory of Thy holy altar and to offer worship and praise which are due unto Thee.” There then follows the singing of the Thrice-Holy Hymn of the angels which perpetually resounds in the presence of the Kingdom of God. “Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us!” (Is 6.1–5).

This version of the Thrice-Holy Hymn is of very ancient origin. It is a hymn to the Holy Trinity in whose presence the Christians now find themselves at the liturgy. It is within the presence of the Kingdom of God that men are made competent by Christ and the Holy Spirit to hear, to understand and to do the Word of God which will be announced to them from the throne of the Father.
During the solemn singing of the Thrice-Holy Hymn to the Most Holy Trinity, the clergy proceed to the High Place behind the altar table, blessing Christ who “sits upon the throne of glory, upon the cherubim. .?.?.” From this place, as we have already mentioned, the celebrant turns and blesses the people with the Peace of Christ. After the Peace is returned, the Epistle of the Divine Liturgy is chanted, usually by a layman of the Church or one in the minor order of Reader.

The epistle reading in traditional Church language is called the apostle or the apostolic reading. This is so since the reading may be taken from the Acts of the Apostles as well as from one of the apostolic letters of the New Testament scriptures. The word epistle means letter. We should note here that the only book of the New Testament writings which is not read liturgically in the Orthodox Church is the Book of Revelation because of its apocalyptic character.

There is a series of epistle readings prescribed in regular order for each day of the Church Year, with the exception of the week days of Great Lent when the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated. There are also special epistle readings prescribed for particular Church celebrations. Thus at any given Divine Liturgy more than one epistle lesson may be chanted.

Before the actual reading of the epistle, an appointed verse from the Psalter is sung called the prokeimenon, which literally means, “that which goes before.” As usual, the prokeimenon, with its verse, is suited to the particular liturgy and prepares the people to listen to the Word of God.
A reading from one or more of the four Christian Gospels follows the reading of the epistle at the Divine Liturgy. In between these two proclamations of the Word of God, Alleluia is solemnly chanted, once more interspersed by verses from the Psalms. At this time incense is also offered, with the incensing of the Gospel Book, the icons, the reader and all of the people.

The Alleluia and the incensing at this moment in the Divine Liturgy signify the very presence of God with his People, teaching them himself through Christ the Word and the Holy Spirit (Jn 6.45). God is with men in the Church, revealing himself and his Holy Will to the world. The Gospel is God’s glad tidings of salvation, his official good news to mankind. It contains and proclaims his presence and his power among men.

The proclamation of the Gospel in the Church is a sacramental act. It is a form of man’s communion with God. It is an element of the liturgical mystery in and through which God is united with his People, and his People with him.

Just as for the epistle readings, there are prescribed readings from the Gospels for each liturgical day of the year, as well as special readings for particular Church celebrations. Thus, once more, there may be several different readings from the Gospels at any given Divine Liturgy.

Following the proclamation of the Word of God through the words of the Holy Gospel, a liturgical sermon or homily is preached. The sermon normally proclaims, and not seldom explains, the significance of the Divine Word received at the particular liturgy for the life of the People of God and the destiny of the world. In Orthodox Tradition, the sermon is an essential part of the eucharistic liturgy and participates in its general sacramental character.
Following the readings from the holy scriptures and the liturgical sermon, the Liturgy of the Word, also called the Liturgy of the Catechumens, comes to an end with the so-called Litany of Fervent Supplication. This litany is the one through which the people pray for their own particular needs, as well as those of the entire Church, their neighbors, their country and the entire world.

At this time the intercessions are not made generally, as in the Great Litany, but very specifically on behalf of all persons in need of God’s blessings, strength and guidance. Thus prayers are made for the sick, the suffering, the needy, the afflicted and the departed by name; as well as for such specific things as national guidance, deliverance from some particular threat, etc. Also at this time special prayers of thanksgiving and praise may be offered in response to some particular blessing of God. Because the offertory will follow, prayers are also made at the end of the litany “for those who bring offerings and do good work” in the particular community.

After the completion of the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the catechumens are prayed for and dismissed from the Divine Liturgy since, as not yet baptized, they are not competent to offer and to receive the eucharistic gifts. In the early Church all those under penance for their sins, and all who for one reason or another were not receiving Holy Communion, also left the liturgical gathering at this time.

At present the dismissal of the catechumens has become only theoretically significant since it is not the case that non-communicants, or even the non-baptized, leave the gathering for the eucharistic part of the service which, we have noted, is still officially called the Liturgy of the Faithful.

After the prayer that God would illumine the catechumens with the Gospel of Truth and unite them to his Holy Church, granting them “in due time the laver of regeneration, the remission of sins and the robe of incorruption” in baptism; and after their theoretical dismissal from the liturgy, two prayers are read for the faithful who are already members of the Church, that God would hear their prayers and would make them worthy to offer and to receive the gifts of Holy Communion:

And enable us also whom Thou hast placed in this Thy service by the power of the Holy Spirit, blamelessly and without offence, in the pure witness of our conscience to call upon Thee?.?.?.

.?.?. to worship Thee blamelessly with fear and with love, and to partake without condemnation of Thy Holy Mysteries, and to be accounted worthy of
Thy Heavenly Kingdom.
Offertory: Great Entrance

It is now time for the sacrificial offering to God. There is only one true and acceptable offering with which God is pleased. It is the offering of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God Who offers Himself eternally to the Father for the sins of the world.

In Christ men can offer themselves and each other and all men and the entire world to God. Christ has united all things in Himself, and has taken all things upon Himself. Thus, in and through Him, men can offer all that they are, and all that they have, to God the Father. They can do this because they are in Christ, and have received the Holy Spirit from Him.

At this moment in the Divine Liturgy the celebrant prays for himself, confessing his personal unworthiness and affirming that the only Priest of the Church is Jesus:

For Thou art the One who offers and the One who is offered, the One who receives and the One who is given, O Christ our God.

The altar table, the icons and all of the people are incensed once again as the Cherubic Hymn is sung:

Let us who mystically represent the cherubim and sing the Thrice-holy Hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside all earthly cares.

The Gifts of bread and wine which stand for Christ, and in him, for all men and the entire world of God’s creation-for Life itself-are now offered to God. They are carried in solemn procession from the table of oblation, into the middle of the church, and through the royal doors of the iconostasis to the altar table. This procession is called the Great Entrance as distinct from the Small Entrance that was made earlier with the Book of the Gospels. In some Orthodox Churches the offertory procession of the Great Entrance is made around the entire nave of the church building, and so it is actually of greater length and solemnity than the small procession with the Gospel Book.

During the offertory procession of the Great Entrance, the celebrant once again prays to God on behalf of all with the prayer of the Crucified Thief: “Remember, O Lord in Thy Kingdom.” The bread and wine are placed on the altar table and the people conclude the Cherubic Hymn:

That we мая receive the King of all who comes invisibly upborne by the angelic hosts. Alleluia.

At this time the celebrant quietly recites verses which call to remembrance the absolute perfection and total sufficiency of Christ and His self-offering. For the Lord Who “fills all things” with Himself makes even His tomb “the
fountain of our resurrection."

The Cherubic Hymn and the meditative verses of the celebrant just mentioned are a late addition to the Divine Liturgy. They were added in the imperial era of Byzantium in order to enhance the essential liturgical act of the offertory which is the movement of the Church offering itself to God the Father through its Head, High Priest and King Jesus Christ who is also the Suffering Servant, the Lamb of God and the New Passover; the sole sufficient sacrifice which is perfect, total and fully acceptable to the Father.

In the liturgical offertory, the faithful give themselves in sacrifice to God together with Christ. They do so through the Holy Spirit as those who have died and risen with Christ in baptism. In order for the liturgical act of offering to be genuine and true, it must be the living expression of the Church’s constant and total self-offering to God. If each member of the Church is not in perpetual sacrifice with Christ to the Father and is not “bearing his cross” by the power of the Spirit, the offertory entrance of the Divine Liturgy becomes a sterile symbol devoid of reality. As such it is done not as a movement towards God, but unto condemnation and judgment.

Thus, once again a litany is chanted and a prayer is made that God would be merciful, because of the sacrifice of Christ, and would accept His people and their offering in spite of their sins; and would allow them worthily to offer the Gifts and to receive Holy Communion with God.

O Lord God Almighty, who alone art holy, who acceptest the sacrifice of praise from those who call upon Thee with their whole heart. Accept also the prayer of us sinners, and bear it to Thy holy altar, enabling us to offer unto Thee gifts and spiritual sacrifices for our sins and for the errors of the people. Make us worthy to find grace in Thy sight that our sacrifice may be acceptable unto Thee, and that the Good Spirit of Grace may dwell upon us, and upon these Gifts here offered, and upon all Thy People.

At this time in the Divine Liturgy the gifts of money for the work of the Church, the propagation of the Gospel and the assistance of the poor and the needy are collected and offered to God.
Love and Faith

Before the Divine Liturgy can proceed further, there are two conditions which must be fulfilled by the faithful. These are the solemn expressions of love and of faith which are essential to the Christian life, and without which there can be no self-offering and no communion with God. Therefore at this time the proclamation is made from the altar: “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess” . . . the faithful people continue . . . “Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity, one in essence and undivided.”

Love is the foundation of life. This is the fundamental Christian truth. Without love there can be no life, no truth and no communion with God, for God is Love (1 Jn 4.8, 16). Thus Jesus Christ has taught that the whole Old Testament Law and the Prophets depend on the two great commandments of love for God and men, and He has given his own “new commandment” that His disciples should love “even as I have loved you” (Jn 13.34).

Thus at the Divine Liturgy the Christians are continually called to love. The outward expression of this love in the liturgy today is the kiss of peace exchanged by the celebrating clergy, which in times past was certainly exchanged among the faithful people as well. Without this love, the liturgy cannot go on.

Following the call to love, the Symbol of Faith, also called the Creed, is chanted. The traditional introduction to the recitation of the creed in the liturgy is the exclamation: “The Doors! The Doors! In wisdom, let us attend!” The doors referred to here are the doors of the church building, and not the doors of the iconostasis as some have been known to think, since this is a call to assure that all catechumens and non-communicants have left, and that now no one may enter or leave the liturgical assembly. The historical reason for such an exclamation in the Divine Liturgy was not only that order might be kept in the church, but that the Creed might be pronounced only by those who had already officially pronounced it at baptism, and continued to confess it within the life of the Church.

The recitation of the Symbol of Faith at the Divine Liturgy stands as the official acknowledgment and formal acceptance by each individual member of the Church of his or her own baptism, chrismation and membership in the Body of Christ. The recitation of the Creed is the only place in the Divine Liturgy, with the exception of the very similar pre-communion confession of faith, where the first person pronoun is used. All through the liturgy the community prays in the plural we. Only here does each person confess for himself his own
personal faith: I believe.

No person can believe for another. Each must believe for himself. A person who believes in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in the Church, in baptism and in life eternal, in short, a person who affirms and accepts his baptismal membership in the Church, is competent to participate in the Divine Liturgy. A person who cannot do this, cannot participate. He simply is not able to, since this specific faith is the specific requirement for membership in the Orthodox Church and for participation in its Divine Liturgy. Without this faith, the movement of the liturgy cannot proceed further. With it, and its official acknowledgment in the chanting of the Creed, the liturgical action goes on.

It is the custom in the Church for the clergy to fan the eucharistic gifts during the singing of the Creed. This fanning was an act of veneration used toward the earthly emperor in the Byzantine period, during which time it was incorporated into the Church’s liturgy, and used as an act of veneration toward the “presences” of the Heavenly King in the midst of His People, namely towards the book of the Gospels and the eucharistic gifts. (In some churches special liturgical fans are carried by the altar servers at all processions and expositions of the Gospel book and the eucharistic gifts.)
Eucharistic Canon: Anaphora

Now begins the part of the Divine Liturgy called the eucharistic canon. It is also called the anaphora, which means the lifting-up or the elevation. At this time the gifts of bread and wine which have been offered on the altar are lifted up from the altar to God the Father, and receive divine sanctification by the Holy Spirit who comes to change them into the very Body and Blood of Christ.

The general form of the eucharistic canon is that of the Old Testamental Passover ritual, now fulfilled and perfected in the new and everlasting covenant of God with men in the person and work of Jesus Christ the Messiah, “our Paschal Lamb Who has been sacrificed” (1?Cor 4.7; See also Heb 5–10). Thus the eucharistic anaphora begins:

Let us stand aright! Let us stand with fear! Let us attend! That we may offer the Holy Oblation in peace.

The people respond: A mercy of peace! A sacrifice of praise!

The Holy Oblation is Christ, the Son of God who has become the Son of Man in order to offer Himself to His Father for the life of the world. In His own person Jesus is the perfect peace offering which alone brings God’s reconciling mercy. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the expression a mercy of peace, which has been a source of confusion for people over the years in all liturgical languages.

In addition to being the perfect peace offering, Jesus is also the only adequate sacrifice of praise which men can offer to God. There is nothing comparable in men to the graciousness of God. There is nothing with which men can worthily thank and praise the Creator. This is so even if men would not be sinners. Thus God himself provides men with their own most perfect sacrifice of praise. The Son of God becomes genuinely human so that human persons could have one of their own nature sufficiently adequate to the holiness and graciousness of God. Again this is Christ, the sacrifice of praise.

Thus, in Christ, all is fulfilled and accomplished. In Him the entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament, which is itself the image of the universal striving of men to be worthy of God, is fulfilled. All possible offerings are embodied and perfected in the offering of Christ on the Cross. He is the offering for peace and reconciliation and forgiveness. He is the sacrifice for supplication, thanksgiving and praise. In Him all of men’s sins and impurities are forgiven. In Him all of men’s positive aspirations are fulfilled. In Him, and in him alone, are all of men’s ways to God, and God’s ways to men, brought into one Holy Communion. Through Him alone do men have
access to the Father in one Holy Spirit (Eph 2.18; Also Jn 14, 2Cor 5, Col 1).

The celebrant now addresses the congregation with the Trinitarian blessing of the Apostle Paul (2Cor 13.14). This is the more elaborate Christian salutation than the simple Peace (Shalom) of the Old Testament:

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.*

And the people respond: And with your spirit.

The grace of Christ comes first. In this grace is contained the fullness of the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. The celebrant offers this entire abundant outpouring of the inner life of the Holy Trinity to the People of God. And they in turn respond with the prayer that this “fullness of God” would be with his spirit as well.

The eucharistic dialogue continues:

*Let us lift up our hearts!*

We lift them up unto the Lord!

Let us give thanks unto the Lord!

It is meet and right to worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Trinity one in essence and undivided.

As men in Christ lift up the eucharistic gifts, they lift up their hearts as well. In the Bible the heart of man stands for his whole being and life. Thus in the anaphora, as the Apostle Paul has stated, the whole man is taken up into that realm where Christ is now seated at the right hand of God.

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col 3.1–3).*

The manner of lifting up oneself to God is through thanksgiving. The word eucharist in Greek means thanksgiving. The eucharistic Divine Liturgy is preeminently the action of lifting up one’s heart and giving thanks to God for all that He has done for man and the world in Christ and the Holy Spirit: creation, salvation and eternal glorification.

The original sin of man, the origin of all of his trouble, corruption and ultimate death, is his failure to give thanks to God. The restoration of communion with God, and with all creation in him, is through thanksgiving in Christ. Jesus is the only man truly grateful, humble and obedient to God. In him, as the only Beloved Son of God and the only perfect Adam, all men can lift up their hearts and give thanks to the Lord: “For there is .?.?. one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all?.?.?” (1Tim 2.5).
It should be noted here that the affirmation “it is meet and right” is expanded into a longer form only in the Slavic tradition of the Church. In other churches it remains in this simple and more ancient form.

With hearts lifted up to the Lord, and thanksgiving rendered to God, the prayer of the eucharistic canon continues:

It is meet and right to sing of Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion. For Thou art God ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou it was who brought us from non-existence into being, and when we had fallen away, didst raise us up again, and didst not cease to do all things until Thou hadst brought us up to heaven and hadst endowed us with Thy Kingdom which is to come. For all these things we give thanks to Thee, and to Thine only-begotten Son and to Thy Holy Spirit; for all things of which we know and of which we know not, whether manifest or unseen; and we thank Thee for this liturgy which Thou hast found worthy to accept at our hands, though there stand by Thee thousands of archangels and hosts of angels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six-winged, many eyed, who soar aloft, borne on their pinions, singing the triumphant hymn, shouting, proclaiming and saying:

Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

At this point in the Divine Liturgy man’s thanksgiving to God the Father for all that he has done in Christ and the Spirit is brought to its climax. The man in God remembers all things and is grateful to God. His remembrance and his thanksgiving take him into the very Presence of the Kingdom to the Throne of the Father to sing the Thrice-Holy Hymn with the angelic choirs (Is 6.1–5).

Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, the man of faith is transported in spirit to be with his Lord. The limitations of this age are left behind through grateful remembrance of Christ and his accomplishment of salvation. Thus the eucharistic prayer continues with the whole focus of attention brought to that One Man and that one night in which the Divine Son gave himself as food for the faithful, offering himself in sacrifice for the life of the world.

With these blessed powers, O Master, Who lovest mankind, we also cry aloud and say: Holy art Thou and all-holy, Thou and Thine only-begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit! Holy art Thou and all-holy, and magnificent is Thy glory! Who hast so loved Thy world as to give Thine only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Who when He had come and had fulfilled all the dispensation for us. in the night in which He was
given up—or rather gave Himself up for the life of the world—He took bread in His holy, pure and blameless hands; and when He had given thanks and blessed it, and hallowed it and broken it, He gave it to His holy disciples and apostles saying:

Take! Eat! This is My Body which is broken for you for the remission of sins. Amen.

And likewise after supper, He took the cup saying: Drink of it all of you! This is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins! Amen.

Remembering this saving commandment and all those things which have come to pass for us: the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand of God the Father, the second and glorious coming.

Thine own of Thine own we Offer unto Thee, in behalf of all and for all!

As the celebrant intones these last words which proclaim that all that is offered to the Father is already his—for every creature and all of creation are his, together with the Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit who are uncreated and divine—the eucharistic gifts are lifted up and elevated towards the heavens. It is the sign that the faithful Christians have been exalted together with their Lord into the Kingdom of God.

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands . . . but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf . . . we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . for when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God . . . for by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 9.24, 10.10–14).

Heaven and earth are now blended into one, filled with the glory of God. The ages past and the ages still to come are brought into unity. The night, the supper, the cross, the tomb, the resurrection, the ascension, the kingdom to come—all merge together in the eucharistic moment of the Divine Liturgy. Man is with God in a holy communion which is “not of this world.” All boundaries of time and of space are utterly broken. All walls of division are totally destroyed. Man’s sins are forgiven in Christ, his impurities are cleansed, his corruption is healed. His mortal nature is restored to immortality with God. His created humanity is filled with the Uncreated Divinity of the All-Holy Trinity. It only remains now to seal this action by the invocation of the Spirit of God.
Epiklesis

After the elevation of the eucharistic gifts to the Father, the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy prays for the Holy Spirit to come upon them, and upon all of the people, and to change (or as the Liturgy of Saint Basil says, to show) the bread and wine offered in remembrance of Christ to be the very Body and Blood of the Lord.

The prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit is considered by the Orthodox to be an essential part of the Divine Liturgy. It is called the epiklesis, which means literally the calling upon or the invocation.

The Orthodox Church believes, as it prays, that the Holy Spirit is always “everywhere and fills all things.” The invocation of the Holy Spirit at the Divine Liturgy is the solemn affirmation that everything in life which is positive and good is accomplished by the Spirit of God. Creation, salvation, eternal glorification; the entire work of God in making and saving the world is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who dwelt in Jesus making him the Christ. He is the one by whom Christ was incarnate of the Virgin Mary. He is the one who led Christ to the cross as the innocent Victim, the one who raised Him from the dead as the triumphant Victor.

He is the one who guarantees the indwelling of God with men in the Holy Communion of the Church and in the life of the Kingdom to come.

Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable and bloodless worship, and we ask Thee, and pray Thee, and supplicate Thee: Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here offered. And make this bread the precious Body of Thy Christ.

And that which is in this cup, the precious Blood of Thy Christ.

Making the change by the Holy Spirit.

That these gifts may be to those who partake for the purification of soul, for remission of sins, for the communion of the Holy Spirit, for the fulfillment of the Kingdom of Heaven; for boldness towards Thee, and not for judgment or condemnation.

In the Orthodox Churches of the Slavic tradition, the Prayer of the Third Hour is added to the epiklesis. It is a prayer asking the Lord to send the Holy Spirit to the Church right now as He did “at the third hour” to His holy apostles and disciples on Pentecost. This prayer was added to emphasize the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental action of the Divine Liturgy, and to affirm that nothing at all may be done in Christ without the specific intervention of the Spirit of God.
Rememberances

The holy eucharist is offered in remembrance of Christ. “Do this in remembrance of Me.” Remembering Christ, and offering all things to God in and through Him, the Church is filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. At the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Spirit comes “upon us and upon the gifts here offered.” Everything is filled with the Kingdom of God. In God’s Kingdom nothing is forgotten. All is remembered, and is thereby made alive. Thus, at this moment in the Divine Liturgy the faithful, remembering Christ, remember all men and all things in him, especially Christ’s mother, the Holy Theotokos, and all of the saints.

It is important to note here that as the Divine Liturgy is the real presence and power of the unique saving event of Christ for His people in all of its manifold elements and aspects, it is always offered for all who need to be saved. Thus the liturgical sacrifice is offered for Mary and all of the saints, as well as for the whole Church and the entire universe of God’s creation.

*Again we offer unto Thee this reasonable worship for those who have fallen asleep in the faith: ancestors, fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith.*

And especially for our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary.

While the choir sings a hymn to the Theotokos, which often changes during the Church Year according to the various seasons and celebrations, the celebrant incenses the consecrated gifts and continues to ask God to remember John the Baptist, the saints of the day, the departed faithful, the whole Church and the entire world. Following the specific remembrance of the bishop of the given church, the people sum up all of the remembrances with the words: “And all mankind!”

There then follow even more prayers asking God to remember the city, the country, the travelers, the sick, the suffering, the captives, the benefactors of the Church, those who themselves “remember the poor” and all of the people. There is also the provision made at this point in the liturgy for remembering by name persons in need of special mercy from God.

In the Liturgy of Saint Basil, which is generally much longer and much more detailed than that of Saint John Chrysostom the remembrances are very specific and numerous, going on for more than three pages in the liturgical service book.
It is necessary to remember once again that remembrance in the Orthodox Church, and particularly the remembrance of God and by God, has a very special meaning. According to the Orthodox Faith, expressed and revealed in the Bible and the Liturgy, divine remembrance means glory and life, while divine forgetfulness means corruption and death. In Christ, God remembers man and his world. Remembering Christ, man remembers God and his Kingdom. Thus the remembrances of the Divine Liturgy are themselves a form of living communion between heaven and earth (see “Funerals,” above).
Our Father

Following the remembrances of the Divine Liturgy, the people pray to God to allow them to worship “with one mouth and one heart.” They then wish each other “the mercies of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”; and, “having remembered all of the saints,” they sing the litany in which they beg God to receive the eucharistic gifts “upon His holy, heavenly and ideal altar,” and to “send down in return his divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Ending the litany with the prayer for “the unity of the Faith and the Communion of the Holy Spirit,” the faithful commend their lives to Christ asking to be made worthy “with boldness and without condemnation to dare to call upon the Heavenly God as Father and to say: ‘Our Father, Who art in heaven. .?.?’. ”

In the Old Testament the People of God did not dare to address God in prayer with the intimate name of Father. Only in Christ and because of Christ can men have such boldness. Only Christians can properly use the Lord’s Prayer that was taught to them by the Son of God. Only those who have died and risen with Christ in baptism, and have received the power to become sons of God by the Holy Spirit in chrismation are enabled to approach the All-mighty God Most High as their Father (Jn 1.12; Mt 6.9; Rom 8.14; Gal 4.4).

In the early Church the Lord’s Prayer was taught to people only after they had become members of Christ through baptism and chrismation. Just before receiving the gifts of Holy Communion “for remission of sins, for forgiveness of transgressions, for the communion of the Holy Spirit and for the inheritance of the Kingdom of Heaven,” the faithful who have become children of God in Christ and the Spirit exercise their gift of divine sonship in the Saviour. They dare pray to God as to their very own Father.
Communion

After the Our Father, the children of God receive Holy Communion. The celebrant again offers the Peace of Christ to the people, and with bowed heads they pray together for their worthy participation in Holy Communion. The celebrant prays that Christ Himself would come to distribute His Body and Blood.

Attend O Lord Jesus Christ our God, out of Thy holy dwelling place, from the throne of the glory of Thy kingdom and come to sanctify us, O Thou who sittest on high with the Father and art here invisibly present with us, and by Thy mighty hand impart unto us Thy most pure Body and precious Blood, and through us to all of the people.

The consecrated Lamb is then elevated with the proclamation: “Holy Things are for the holy!” The people respond: “One is Holy! One is the Lord Jesus Christ! To the glory of God the Father, Amen.” The celebrant then breaks the Lamb into four pieces according to the way it was cut at the prothesis.

One piece of the sanctified bread (IC) is put into the chalice together with a cup of hot water which symbolizes the living character of the Risen Christ whose body and soul are reunited and filled with the Holy Spirit in the glorified life of the Kingdom of God.

The clergy then receive Holy Communion from the bread (XC), and drink from the consecrated cup. While the clergy participate in the Holy Mysteries, the people sing a special communion verse that changes according to the celebration. They may sing other hymns proper to the season as well, especially if the communion of the clergy takes a long time.

The faithful people receive Holy Communion on a spoon. They are given both the consecrated bread (NIKA), and the sanctified wine. The communion of the faithful is always from the gifts offered and sanctified at the given Divine Liturgy. Holy Communion is never taken from any “reserve.” As we have mentioned, all who are members of the Church through the sacraments of baptism and chrismation, including small children and infants, may partake of Holy Communion.

During the communion of the faithful the people sing: Receive the Body of Christ, Taste the Fountain of Immortality, Alleluia. Before the reception of Holy Communion generally, the following prayer is recited by all. It is each person’s act of personal commitment to Christ, with faith in Him and the Sacred Mysteries of His Church.

I believe O Lord and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the
Living God, who camest into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first (see 1Tim 1.15).

I believe also that this is truly Thine own most pure Body, and that this is truly Thine own most precious Blood. Therefore I pray Thee: Have mercy upon me and forgive me my transgressions.

And make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Thy most pure Mysteries, for the remission of sins and unto life everlasting.

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant. For I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss; but like the thief will I confess Thee: “Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.”

May the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries be neither to my judgment, nor to my condemnation, O Lord, but to the healing of soul and body.

Following Holy Communion in some churches it is the custom of the people to take some bread and wine. This helps them to receive the holy gifts, and to have something more to eat since they have been fasting.
After the communion of the people, the celebrant blesses them with the words: “O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance.” The people sing in response:

_We have seen the True Light! We have received the Heavenly Spirit! We have found the True Faith! Worshiping the Undivided Trinity, Who has saved us._

The celebrant then blesses the faithful with the eucharistic chalice in which the gifts not received are still present, as he takes them to the table of oblation where the youngest member of the clergy consumes them. During the removal of the consecrated gifts the people sing:

_Let our mouths be filled with Thy praise O Lord, that we may sing of Thy glory; for Thou hast made us worthy to partake of Thy Holy, Divine, Immortal and Life-creating Mysteries. Keep us in Thy holiness, that all the day we may meditate upon Thy righteousness. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!_  

A litany of thanksgiving is then sung to the Lord with prayers of gratitude that he has blessed his people with participation in the “heavenly and immortal mysteries.” The prayers also ask God to keep the whole day “perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless;” that through the reception of Holy Communion, God would “make straight our path, strengthen us all in Thy fear; guard our lives, make firm our steps.??.?.”

The songs and prayers following Holy Communion in the Divine Liturgy, as all parts of the holy service, presuppose that the members of the Church are partaking in the eucharistic mysteries and are receiving the gifts of Christ’s Body and Blood. The offertory, the anaphora, the epiklesis, the remembrances, the Our Father, and the communion itself all affirm the active participation of the faithful.

Thus it is obvious from the text of the Divine Liturgy as it is always served in the Orthodox Church that the reception of Holy Communion on the part of the people is a regular and normal part of the liturgy and the life of Christians. It is not to be reserved for special days or seasons, but is to be done prayerfully and carefully at all times when the Divine Liturgy is celebrated.

It may happen that all members of the Church are not prepared to receive Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy. It is even reasonable to expect that this will often be the case, given the present conditions of life and the great number of people who are just nominally Christians. However, be that as it may, it must be very forcefully affirmed, without any reservations or doubts, that the
prayers, hymns and actions of the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church presuppose the regular and normal participation of all of the people in Holy Communion; and that the failure on the part of the faithful to receive the Holy Mysteries of Christ is to deprive the Divine Liturgy of its essential meaning and purpose.
Benediction and Dismissal

After giving thanks to God for His gift of Holy Communion, the people are commanded by the celebrant of the liturgy to depart in peace. They respond to this command with the words: “In the Name of the Lord.”

A final prayer is read in the center of the Church, or at the icon of Christ, called the ambo prayer, in which the priest asks God’s blessing and peace upon all of his people, the Church and the world. In this prayer the believers also affirm with the Apostle James that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights” (Jas 1.17). Following this prayer which gives God “glory, thanksgiving, and worship,” the people sing three times: “Blessed be the Name of the Lord henceforth and forevermore.”

At this point the pastor of the community normally makes his announcements, greets his people and gives them his own personal blessing. The final benediction of the Divine Liturgy is then pronounced following the exclamation of glory to Christ as “our God and our Hope.”

The final liturgical blessing is the blessing of Christ. It always begins on the Lord’s Day with reference to His resurrection from the dead. On other days other references may be made to some saving aspect of the Lord’s person and work. In this final benediction the mercy and salvation of Christ, the Lover of Men, is called down upon his people through the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, and by the prayers of the saints of the day, the saint whose liturgy is served, the saints of the particular church, as well as all other saints especially venerated by the local community, such, for example, as Saint Herman of Alaska in the American Church.

After the final benediction, the people venerate the Cross held by the celebrant, and receive pieces of the bread from which the eucharistic offering was taken at the beginning of the liturgy. This bread is called the antidoron which means literally “in place of the gifts”, since it used to be given only to those who did not actually receive Holy Communion at the liturgy. Today usually all of the people take pieces of this bread for themselves, as well as for others absent from church.

The act of dismissal in the Divine Liturgy is as much a liturgical and sacramental action as was the original act of gathering. It is the final critical step of the entire movement of the liturgy. In their dismissal from the liturgical gathering, the People of God are commanded to go forth in peace into the world to bear witness to the Kingdom of God of which they were partakers in the Liturgy of the Church. They are commanded to take everything that they have
seen and heard and experienced within the Church and to make it alive in their own persons within the life of this world. Only in this way can the presence and power of the Kingdom of God which is “not of this world” extend out of the Church and into the lives of men.

Those who have seen the True Light, who have received the Heavenly Spirit, who have found the True Faith at the liturgy of the Church; those who have partaken of the holy, divine, immortal and life-creating mysteries of Christ, become competent to make the very same proclamation and testimony that was made by the apostles and by all true Christians in every age and generation. It is for this reason that the Church of God and its Divine Liturgy exist.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-the Life was manifest and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have communion with us; and our communion is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And we are writing that your joy may be full (1Jn 1.14).
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| First Century |
The first century of the Christian era begins with the birth of Jesus Christ from the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Christ lived, preached, did mighty acts, was crucified, rose again, and ascended into Heaven in the first several decades of the first century. After His Ascension into Heaven, God sent the Holy Spirit upon Christ’s disciples on the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2), empowering them to take Christ’s Gospel to the ends of the known world.

During His life on earth, Jesus selected disciples-first the Twelve (Mt 10.2–4) and then the Seventy (Lk 10.1). He trained them to be the leaders of His Church. After Pentecost, the Apostles preached the Gospel of Christ far and wide. We do not know exactly where all the Apostles traveled, but we know a good deal about the missionary journeys of Saint Paul, which are recorded in the Book of Acts (chs. 13–28). In his extensive travels Saint Paul founded many churches in Asia Minor and Greece. All the Twelve Apostles (including Saint Matthias, who took Judas’s place-Acts 1.15–26) except Saint John, as well as many of the Seventy, died as martyrs for their faith in Christ.

The Gospels and Epistles, and all of the 27 writings which the Church eventually selected to be the New Testament Scriptures, were written in the first century. Also in this time, Christian communities were established in the main cities of Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt, and even as far as Armenia and India.

Because the Church in Antioch was growing so much, Saints Paul and Barnabas went there to preach and teach. It was there that the followers of Christ were first called Christians (Acts 11.19–30). Also, this Church sent forth Saints Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13.1). Antioch probably surpassed Jerusalem as the leading Christian center by the time the Christians fled from Jerusalem shortly before the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 66 A.D.

The Church was also established in Rome. The natural prestige of the Church in Rome as the capital of the Empire was enhanced when the two greatest Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul, were both martyred there under Emperor Nero around 67 A.D. Their graves became important places of pilgrimage, and their common feastday (June 29) was established in the Church by the middle of the second century.

Though the first Christians were Jews, the early Christians wrote in Greek, the prevalent language in the Roman Empire. Even the Church in Rome used Greek until the beginning of the third century.
The Christian Church was at first an urban phenomenon which only later spread to the rural areas. It was composed mainly of people from what we would call today the “middle classes” of society. It is not true that Christianity gained its foothold in the world primarily among uneducated and backward people who were looking for heavenly consolation in the face of oppressive and unbearable living conditions on earth.

The most important decision the Church had to make during the first century was whether non-Jewish people (Gentiles) could be received into the Church by faith in Christ without being required to follow the ritual requirements of the Mosaic Law, including circumcision. Based on Saint Paul’s understanding of the Old Testament, and on Saint Peter’s testimony about how the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit even while Peter was still speaking to them (Acts 10 and 11), the first council of the Church, held in Jerusalem in about 49 A.D., decided that Gentile converts would not be subject to the Mosaic Law (Acts 15). Held under the leadership of Saint James, the Brother of the Lord and the first Bishop of Jerusalem, this council is considered the prototype of all subsequent Church councils.

While the Christian Church entered Roman imperial society “under the veil” of Judaism, quite soon it became separated from the Jewish faith. The Church embraced all those, of whatever ethnic background, who through belief in Jesus as Lord and Christ, and through repentance from sin, were incorporated into Christ’s Body, the Church, through Baptism. After Baptism, with the laying on of hands of an Apostle or one ordained by an Apostle, the new Christians received the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2.37–39 and 8.14–17), and then participated in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Eucharist.

The separation of the Church from Judaism was made sharper when the Roman army in 70 A.D. crushed the revolt of the Jews against the rule of Rome. The Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple, putting an end to the worship and animal sacrifice (at first done in the Tabernacle, and then in the Temple) that was central to Judaism since the time of Moses. For the Christians, the destruction of the Temple was the fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy (Mt 24.1–2), and the final proof that the Lord Jesus had indeed given the Kingdom to all those who believed in Him, both Jews and Gentiles.

The Church was founded in each place as a local community. It often met in private houses, such as that of Saints Priscilla and Aquila-first in Ephesus.
(1Cor 16.19) and then in Rome (Rom 16.3–5). These early congregations were led by those called bishops (overseers) or presbyters (elders) who received the laying-on-of-hands (ordination) from the Apostles (see Acts 14.23). As the Apostles themselves were called to spread the Gospel throughout the whole world, they did not serve as bishops, i.e., local leaders, of any particular Christian community in any place.

Each of the early Christian communities had its own unique character and challenges, as the New Testament writings reveal. Each church had great concern for the others, and they were all called to teach the same doctrines and to practice the same virtues, living together the same life of fellowship and sacramental worship in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Saint Luke writes that the first Church in Jerusalem “continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and communion, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2.42). The bonds of love and faith were so strong among the first Christians that they “had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2.44–45).

Thus, the preaching and interpretation of God’s gospel in Jesus, the basic structure of the Church, and the essential character of Christian worship were all firmly in place by the end of the first century.
Second Century
The Persecutions

The second century saw the further development and expansion of the Christian Faith, and more widespread persecution of the Church by the Roman imperial authorities, for whom Christianity was an “illegal religion.” The Christians were criminals in the eyes of the Romans, not only religiously, but also politically. They transgressed the laws of the state in that they refused to honor the earthly emperor as lord and god, which was required of them as inhabitants of the Empire. The Christians prayed for the civil authorities and gave “honor to whom honor is due” (Rom 13.1–7; 1Tim 2.1–3; Mk 12.13–17), but they refused to give the earthly king the glory and worship which was due to God, and to his Christ, alone. Thus Roman law declared: *It is not lawful to be a Christian.*

One of the earliest reports about Christianity to appear in non-Christian writings is found in the correspondence between Pliny the Younger, the Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, and Emperor Trajan (r. 98–117). This correspondence reveals that Christianity was indeed proscribed, and though Christians should not be sought out and were innocent of the gross charges against them—such as the sacrifice of children and the eating of human flesh (a misunderstanding of the Eucharist, which was conducted in “secret meetings”)—the Christians nevertheless were to be executed when seized, if they refused to renounce their Faith.

The persecution of Christians in the second century was largely localized, occurring sporadically and at varying locations according to what was allowed or authorized by the local imperial authorities. The account of The Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons in Gaul gives a vivid description of one such outbreak of persecution, in about the year 177.

Nevertheless, the persecutions were widespread, and the Christians were generally hated even by the most tolerant and open-minded of the Roman rulers. They were despised mostly, it seems, for what was considered their stubbornness and intolerance due to their exclusive devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord. They were persecuted also for what was considered to be the political danger they posed to the unity of the imperial society, especially as their numbers steadily grew.
The Apostolic Fathers

Among the most famous of the Christian leaders and martyrs of the second century were the bishops Saint Clement of Rome (d. c. 102), Saint Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 110), and Saint Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 157). Their writings, along with the Didache (the Teachings of the Twelve Apostles), the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, and the stirring Account of the Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, which strongly attests to the veneration of martyrs and their relics, comprise the literature known as the Apostolic Fathers. Written in the years immediately after the era of the original Apostles, these invaluable writings provide a fascinating glimpse into what the Church believed, how it was structured, and how the Christians lived and worshiped in these early years. As such, these writings can be considered the sequel to the Book of Acts, and to the New Testament writings in general.
The Apologists

While the literature of the Apostolic Fathers was addressed to Christians for their instruction and edification, other Church leaders of the second century were writing to the outside world, explaining and defending Christianity—especially to those who were persecuting Christians out of misunderstanding and ignorance. These writings are called Apologies, or Defenses of the Faith, and their authors are called Apologists. The leading Apologists were the philosopher Saint Justin Martyr (d.c. 165); Saint Quadratus of Athens; Athenagoras of Athens; Saint Melito, Bishop of Sardis (d.c. 190); Saint Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (d.c. 190); and Minucius Felix of western North Africa (d.c. 235). Often writing directly to the Roman emperor, the Apologists did much to help Christianity gain intellectual and social “respectability” in the greater Roman society.

Many of the Apologists also wrote essays and other things for the Church. Saint Melito of Sardis, for example, wrote a magnificent and long liturgical poem called “On Pascha.” In it we find wording almost identical to some of the language in the hymns for Great and Holy Friday. He writes about the Lord’s crucifixion:

*He who hung the earth is hanging.*
*He who fixed the heavens in place has been fixed in place.*
*He who laid the foundations of the universe has been laid on a tree.*
*The Master has been profaned.*
*God has been murdered* (ch. 96).
Protecting the Church from Falsehood and Heresy

Near the end of the first century and on into the second century, many false writings about Christ were produced. Some of these were the so-called apocryphal writings (not to be confused with the Old Testament Apocrypha), or pseudepigrapha (see volume one on Scripture). These writings, each one usually bearing the name of an Apostle or another prominent New Testament figure in an attempt to give it more authority, introduced into Christian circles many fanciful, legendary stories about the childhood of Christ, the life of the Virgin Mary, and the activities of the Apostles.

Together with the pseudepigrapha, there also appeared the false teachings of Gnosticism, a group of related heresies which sought to transform Christianity into a kind of spiritualistic, dualistic, and intellectualistic philosophy (see Scripture). The first of the great Church Fathers, Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 130-c. 200), wrote a monumental work called Against Heresies, which powerfully refuted the various forms of Gnosticism.

In this work, Saint Irenaeus emphasized three crucial ways by which to distinguish heretical groups from true Christian Churches. First, all the true Churches, no matter where they are located, hold the same basic doctrines, known together as the rule of faith. In contrast, the various Gnostic groups disagree among themselves in their beliefs.

Second, all the authentic Churches can trace their origins back to one of the original Apostles, with their bishops coming down in direct descent from that Apostle; this is known as apostolic succession. The Gnostic groups, however, could not claim a similar lineage back to the Apostles.

Third, whereas the various Gnostic groups each had their own writings which they followed, the true Churches only considered the Gospels according to the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to be divinely inspired. Saint Irenaeus’s strong affirmation of these four Gospels helped to solidify the first crucial step in the very long and tremendously important process by which the organized Church selected the 27 books which would eventually comprise the New Testament Scriptures. In this canonization process the Church had to determine which of the many writings circulating among the various Christian communities were to be accepted as Scripture, and which ones were to be rejected.

The canonization process was not completed until the end of the 4th century. In fact, the earliest list of exactly the 27 New Testament books that we have today was not compiled until in 367 A.D. This list, drawn up by Saint
Athanasius the Great, was based on the usage of his Church in Alexandria, Egypt.

Another dangerous threat to the stability and integrity of the Church in the 2nd century arose in about the year 160 in central Asia Minor—the sect known as Montanism. This strict, rigorist, fundamentalistic group arose partly in protest to what was perceived as a growing laxity of spiritual fervor and moral purity among the majority of Christians. Like many such groups throughout Christian history, they were overly apocalyptic, being convinced that Christ would return in their own day. And they also had an over-emphasis on supernatural manifestations such as prophecy, and probably also speaking in tongues.

Montanism was founded by a man named Montanus, who claimed that he and his two prophetesses, Priscilla and Maximilla, were the chosen instruments for the dawning of the End Times and a new, purer, more spiritually advanced Age of the Spirit. However, they prophesied in a strange, frenzied way, contrary to Saint Paul’s injunctions in 1Cor 14.32–33 and 40. Also, some of their “prophetic” messages contradicted the Gospels and Saint Paul’s epistles—for instance, they forbade fleeing from persecution (violating Christ’s words in Mt. 24.16); and they strictly prohibited second marriages (superseding Saint Paul’s words in 1Cor 7.9 and 1Tim 5.14). For these reasons, and also because of the movement’s judgmentalism and divisiveness, the Church condemned Montanism in several local councils in Asia Minor by the year 200.
The Quartodeciman Controversy

We also find near the end of the second century the first time occasion when the bishop of Rome tried to exert his authority over a group of Christians living outside of his area of jurisdiction—Rome and the surrounding region. This occurred in about 190, when Pope Victor I (ruled 189–199), the first Latin-speaking bishop of Rome, attempted to excommunicate the Christians in Asia Minor who were celebrating Pascha on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan, no matter what day of the week it fell on. Hence these Christians came to be known as Quartodecimans (i.e., the “Fourteeners”).

Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (d. c. 340), the first great Church historian, in his *History of the Church*, reports that a number of bishops, including Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, “very sternly rebuked Victor” for this action, even though they agreed with him that Pascha should always be celebrated on a Sunday. Victor’s announcement of excommunication was ignored by the Quartodecimans, who continued their custom. When the First Ecumenical Council, in 325, mandated that all the Churches celebrate Pascha at the same time, most of the remaining “Quartodecimans” aligned their practice with that of the rest of the universal Church.
Church Order and Liturgy

In the writings of The Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, and other early Fathers like Saint Irenaeus, it is seen that, at least by the middle of the second century, each local Christian Church was headed by one bishop who presided over a “college” of presbyters or elders, and who guided the more socially-oriented work of the deacons. Thus Saint Ignatius of Antioch writes in his letters:

*I exhort you to strive to do all things in harmony with God: the bishop is to preside in the place of God, while the presbyters are to function as the council of the apostles, and the deacons, who are most dear to me, are entrusted with the ministry [diakonia; i.e., good works] of Jesus Christ* (Letter to Magnesians 6.1).

Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants (Letter to Philadelphians 4).

Where the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church (Letter to Smyrneans 8.2).

Saint Ignatius was the first to use the term catholic to describe the Church. It is an adjective of quality that tells how every authentic Church is-namely, full, perfect, complete, and whole, with nothing lacking of the fullness of the grace, truth, and holiness of God.

To comment on one more of these early writings, the *Didache* is a kind of brief manual on Christian living and various Church practices compiled probably by the middle of the second century, but including material most likely coming from as early as the late first century. It contains several passages relating to Baptism and the Eucharist:

*Baptize as follows: after explaining all of these points, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water. But if you do not have running water, use whatever is available. And prior to baptism, both he who is baptizing and he who is being baptized should fast, along with any others who can* (Didache 7.1–4).

Let no one eat and drink of your Eucharist except those who are baptized in the name of the Lord (Didache 9.5).

On the Lord’s own Day [i.e., Sunday], assemble in common to break bread and give thanks [i.e., the Eucharist; the word itself means ‘thanksgiving’]; but first confess your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. However, no one
quarreling with his brother may join your assembly until they are reconciled; for your sacrifice must not be defiled (Didache 14.1–2).

**An early description of Christian worship,**
by Saint Justin Martyr, c. 155 AD

And on the day which is called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits.

Then, when the reader has concluded, the president verbally instructs and exhorts us to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray. And as I said before, when we have ended our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought. And the president in like manner offers up prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people give their assent by saying ‘Amen.’ And there is a distribution to each and a partaking by everyone of the Eucharist, and to those who are absent a portion is brought by the deacons.

And those who are well-to-do and willing give as they choose, each as he himself purposes. The collection is then deposited with the president, who supports orphans and widows, and those who are in want owing to sickness or any other cause, and those who are in prison, and strangers who are sojourning with us. In a word, he takes care of all those who are in need.

Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.

*(First Apology 67)*
Persecution

The third century opened with relatively widespread persecution of Christians under Emperor Septimius Severus (r. 193–211). The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas vividly recounts the victorious suffering of some of those who were martyred in Carthage (western North Africa) at this time. Also in this wave of persecution, in Alexandria in Egypt, Origen’s father, Saint Leonides, was martyred. And when Clement, the head of the important catechetical school there, fled the city, the brilliant and fervently pious Origen was appointed by Bishop Demetrius to be the head of the school, even though he was only about 18 years old.

The Christian Church lived in relative peace from the death of Septimius Severus to the time of Emperor Decius (r. 249–251). But very soon after Decius came to power, he inaugurated an intense persecution of Christians throughout the whole empire. This wave of persecution ended with his death in 251, but another wave began in 257 under Emperor Valerian (r. 253–260). In these times, not only were the Christians forced to sacrifice to the imperial gods, but also the higher clergy were specifically sought out to be executed, in the erroneous expectation that by eliminating the Church’s leaders, Christianity would wither and die.

Then, after Valerian’s death, his son, Emperor Gallienus (r. 260–268), stopped the policy of general persecution, and the Christians once more lived in relative peace, until the beginning of the next century. During this period, there was ongoing, steady growth in Church membership, which perhaps reached up to ten percent of the population in the Empire by the year 300-or about 6,000,000.
The Lapsed

The persecutions by Decius and Valerian, as well as the peaceful times which preceded and followed, brought a great interior crisis to the Christian Church in the third century. The question arose about how to care for the “lapsed”-Christians who had denied Christ under the threat of torture and execution, but who afterwards wanted to return to the Church. This sin of apostasy, as well as the sins of murder and adultery, were considered the three most heinous sins, and many in the Church thought that it was entirely inappropriate, if not downright impossible, for the Church, as the pure Bride of Christ, to offer the possibility of repentance and forgiveness for such sins. Hence, they felt that such sinners must endure lifelong excommunication.

Gradually, however, through the first half of the third century, most of the bishops were realizing that as the Body of Christ, the All-Merciful One Who came “not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Mt 9.13), the Church must allow for the possibility of heartfelt repentance for even the worst of sins. They were careful to stipulate, though, that such repentance must be worked out through a lengthy period of penitence, after which absolution and restoration to Eucharistic communion would be given through the proper channels under the authority of the bishops.

Many rigorists in the Church, however, refused to accept this pastoral decision. They preferred a concept of the Church as “the society of the pure” rather than as “the hospital for sinners.” One such figure was the illustrious Carthaginian theologian and Apologist, Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220), known as “the Father of Latin theology” for his prolific, insightful writings on many topics. But he always had rigorist tendencies. This made him susceptible to the claims of the Montanists, whom he joined in about 205, despite their having been officially condemned by several Church councils. Very sadly, he died outside the Church.

Another rigorist who objected to the Church offering the possibility of repentance for the worst sins was Hippolytus (c. 170-c. 235), a leading priest and theologian in Rome. He felt strongly that Bishop Zephyrinus (r. 198–217) of Rome and his successor Bishop Callistus (r. 217–222) were too “soft on sin” since they held a more lenient view.

Hippolytus also accused these two of being too “soft on heresy,” as they were slow to condemn the teaching of Sabellius, another priest in Rome. Sabellius taught that “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” were just three different names for God, rather than being the Three Persons of the Holy
Trinity. As a result, in 217 Hippolytus refused to recognize the newly elected Callistus as the legitimate bishop of Rome and started his own church. Thus he became the first of over twenty different anti-popes in the history of the Roman Church.

But as it happened, some time after 230, both Hippolytus and Bishop Pontianus (r. 230–235) of Rome, during a brief period of persecution, were sent to the mines in Sardinia, where they were reconciled before their deaths. This is what made it possible for Hippolytus to be recognized as Saint Hippolytus.

After the Decian Persecution, a new rigorist sect arose in opposition to the Church’s policy of offering repentance to those who had lapsed and denied Christ during that period of persecution. This was Novatianism, founded by Novatian, a leading priest of Rome who led his followers into schism upon refusing to accept the authority of the newly elected Bishop Cornelius (r. 251–253), who favored mercy towards the lapsed if they were sincerely repentant. The virulent sect of Novatianism spread quickly through the Empire; it was still in existence in the 5th century.

The greatest defender of the Catholic Church at this time was Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (c. 200–258), who strenuously opposed the so-called “pure Church” of the Novatianists-and especially the divisiveness of that movement. Although a great reader of Tertullian (most of whose works were written before he became a Montanist), Saint Cyprian defended the Catholic Church, with Her unbroken apostolic succession of bishops, against the newly formed spiritualistic “churches” of the rigorists, or maximalists. He stated in one of his most famous works, entitled On the Unity of the Church, which he wrote to prevent schism occurring in his own church:

Does he who does not hold this unity of the Church think that he holds the Faith? Does he who strives against and resists the Church trust that he is in the Church, when moreover the blessed Apostle Paul teaches the same thing, and sets forth the sacrament of unity, saying, ‘There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God’ [Eph 4.4]?

And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us who are bishops, who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopacy itself to be one and undivided.?.?. The episcopacy is one, each part of which is held wholly by each one. The Church also is one.?.?.

Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his mother (On the Unity of the Church 4–6).
Saint Cyprian also strongly resisted the second attempt by a bishop of Rome to dictate to a Church beyond her territory. This occurred when Bishop Stephen I (r. 254–257) tried to force the Church of Carthage to receive converts from schismatic or heretical Christian groups by anointing with oil, or even just by a statement of faith, rather than by baptism, as long as the heretical baptism had been done with the proper form. Cyprian, taking a more rigorist stance on this issue, insisted that any sacraments done by those outside the canonical Church have no validity whatsoever; as he said, “How can he who does not have the Spirit impart the Spirit?”

While the Church through the centuries has generally taken Stephen’s approach on this difficult issue, Cyprian was certainly right in resisting Rome’s pretension to have authority over the Church of Carthage. As he said concerning such jurisdictional matters, “None of us claims to be a bishop of bishops or resorts to tyranny to obtain the consent of his brethren. Each bishop in the fullness of his freedom and his authority retains the right to think for himself; he is not subject to any other and he does not judge others.” And as in the time of Bishop Victor’s attempt to force the Quartodecimans to accept Roman practice, strong protests were raised by bishops from across the Empire against Bishop Stephen’s imperious attitude.
The third century also witnessed the emergence of the first formal school of Christian theology. It was located in Africa-in Alexandria, Egypt. Founded in about 180 A.D. by Pantaenus, a converted Stoic philosopher, the school was developed and strengthened by Clement (d. c. 215), and crowned by the outstanding theologian and scholar Origen (c. 185–254). Whereas Tertullian strongly rejected any alliance between “Athens and Jerusalem”—that is, between pagan philosophy and Christian revelation—the Alexandrians insisted that Greek philosophy was preparation for the Christian Gospel. They affirmed that the glimmers of truth discerned by the great pagan philosophers, poets, and dramatists all point to, and are fulfilled and completed by, the truth of the Christian Faith. Hence, Christianity can be seen to be the Highest Philosophy, the culmination of all human philosophical endeavor. Thus, Origen wrote to his illustrious disciple Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (c. 213–c. 270),

*I desire you to take from the philosophy of the Greeks what may serve as a course of study or a preparation for Christianity, and from geometry and astronomy what may serve to explain the sacred Scriptures, in order that all that the philosophers say about geometry and music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy, we may say about philosophy itself, in relation to Christianity.*

The work of Origen was phenomenal. He wrote numberless treatises on many themes. He is known as the “Father of Biblical Criticism” for the Hexapla, his monumental, six-fold, critical (meaning trying to determine the most accurate text) edition of the Old Testament, and for his commentaries on most of the books of the Bible. He is also known as the “Father of Systematic Theology,” mostly for his work called *On First Principles*, the first of its kind, in which he systematically treated all the major doctrines of the Christian Faith. In general, his work laid the foundation for virtually all subsequent theological scholarship in the Greek Church.

However, in some of his works Origen made use of various problematic Platonistic teachings as he tried to explain certain mysteries of the Faith which the Church had not yet officially clarified. In time, these Platonistic speculations led to various heresies, mostly among certain monks who considered some of these questionable teachings to be dogma. As this problem increased, by the middle of the 6th century, out of a pastoral concern to put an end to these divisive heresies, the Church took the drastic step of condemning Origen himself, as well as his erroneous teachings, at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in the year 553.
Among the major theologians of the third century who also must be mentioned are Saint Dionysius the Great, Bishop of Alexandria (d. 264); Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, Bishop of Neocaesarea in Cappadocia (d.c. 270); and Saint Methodius, Bishop of Olympus in western Asia Minor (d. 311). Saint Dionysius, the dynamic bishop of Alexandria from 247 until his death in 264, was noted for his efforts in helping to end disputes of various kinds among and within the Churches around the Mediterranean Basin. He led the opposition to the heretical teachings of Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, and may have died at the first council in Antioch that condemned Paul’s erroneous speculations about the Holy Trinity and about Christ.

It is interesting to note that when Paul did not cease his erroneous teachings, a subsequent council in Antioch, held in 268, reaffirmed the condemnation of his speculations and deposed him as bishop. However, he refused to give up the episcopal throne and residence. Finally, in 272 the Church appealed to Emperor Aurelian (r. 270–275), who had recently won back Antioch from the Kingdom of Palmyra, to remove Paul by force. This he did, after conferring with “the bishops of the religion in Italy and Rome” (as presumably impartial judges, as reported by Bishop Eusebius in his History of the Church VII.30.19), who assured him that the Church in the East had indeed acted properly in deposing Paul.

This was apparently the first time the Church ever appealed to the civil authorities for assistance. It is perhaps a sign of the Church’s growing “self-confidence” regarding its place and stature in Roman society that it would make such a request from the emperor, who just as easily could have been persecuting Christians. It also can be seen as prophetic of the alliance of the Church with the State that will gradually develop during the fourth century.

Concerning Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, it is said that upon his return to his hometown of Neocaesarea after his five years in Palestine, there were only 17 Christians; but at his death, after being bishop for about 30 years, there were only 17 pagans. Though Gregory was converted to Christianity by Origen, and though Origen was his teacher for five years, there is no evidence of Origen’s problematic, misleading speculations in Gregory’s writings.

And Saint Methodius, a prolific writer and important theologian, was one of the first Christian leaders to point out and refute various erroneous speculations in Origen’s works. Methodius’s only work which comes down to us in its entirety is called The Symposium, or the Banquet of the Ten Virgins. Interestingly, this treatise contains an especially positive understanding of marriage and marital relations, even though its overarching theme is praise for a life of consecrated virginity. He died as a martyr near the end of the
Diocletian Persecution.
Liturgical Development

Writings also exist from the third century which give many insights into the canonical and liturgical life of the Church in this era. These are the so-called *Teachings of the Apostles* from Syria, and the *Apostolic Tradition* of Saint Hippolytus of Rome, the last Church leader in the West who wrote in Greek. The former gives regulations concerning the hierarchical offices and the sacramental practices in the Church of Syria, and it describes the liturgical assembly. The latter gives similar information, in a more lengthy and detailed way, about the Church in Rome—though it probably also reflects influence from Alexandria. It contains the text of the oldest fixed Eucharistic prayer in Church history that we possess, as well as the form for the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, and Ordination.

**Baptism and Chrismation in the Apostle Tradition of Hippolytus**

And when he who is to be baptized goes down to the water, let him who baptizes lay a hand on him, saying thus: "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty?"

And he who is being baptized shall say: "I believe."

Let him forthwith baptize him once, having laid his hand upon his head. And after this, let him say: "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, Who was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate; and died and was buried; and He rose the third day living from the dead; and ascended into heaven; and sat down at the right hand of the Father; and will come to judge the living and the dead?"

And when he says: "I believe," let him baptize him the second time.

And again let him say:

"Dost thou believe in the Holy Spirit in the Holy Church, and the resurrection of the flesh?"

And he who is being baptized shall say: "I believe."

And so let him baptize him the third time.

And afterwards when he comes up from the water, he shall be anointed by the presbyter with the Oil of Thanksgiving, saying:

"I anoint thee with holy oil in the Name of Jesus Christ."

And so each one drying himself with a towel, they shall now put on their clothes, and after this let them be together in the assembly (Church).

And the Bishop shall lay his hand upon them, invoking and saying:

"O Lord God, who didst count these Thy servants worthy of deserving the forgiveness of sins by the laver of regeneration, make them worthy to be filled
with Thy Holy Spirit and send upon them Thy grace, that they may serve Thee according to Thy will, for to Thee is the glory, to the Father and to the Son with the Holy Spirit in the Holy Church, both now and ever and world without end. Amen.”

After this, pouring the consecrated oil from his hand and laying his hand on his head, he shall say:
“I anoint thee with holy oil in God the Father Almighty and Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit.”
And sealing him on the forehead, he shall give him the kiss of peace and say: “The Lord be with you.”
And he who has been sealed shall say: “And with thy spirit.”
And so he shall do to each one severally.
Thenceforward they shall pray together with all the people. But they shall not previously pray with the faithful before they have undergone all these things.

And after the prayers, let them give the kiss of peace.

Eucharist in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus
Celebrant: “The Lord be with you.”
People: “And with thy spirit.”
Celebrant: “Lift up your hearts.”
People: “We have them in the Lord.”
Celebrant: “Let us give thanks to the Lord.”
People: “That is proper and right.”
Celebrant: “We thank Thee God through Thy beloved servant Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent in the latter times to be our Savior and Redeemer and the messenger of Thy counsel, the Logos Who went out from Thee, through Whom Thou hast created all things, Whom Thou wast pleased to send out from heaven into the womb of the Virgin, and in her body He became incarnate and was shown to be Thy Son born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin. In order to fulfill Thy will and to make ready for Thee a holy people, He spread out His hands when He suffered in order that He might free from sufferings those who have reached faith in Thee.

“And when He gave Himself over to voluntary suffering, in order to destroy death, and to break the bonds of the devil, and to tread down hell, and to illuminate the righteous, and to set up the boundary stone, and to reveal the Resurrection, He took bread, gave thanks, and said: ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you.’ In the same manner also He took the cup, and said: ‘This is My blood which is poured out for you. As often as you do this you keep My memory.’
“When we remember His death and His resurrection in this way, we bring to Thee the bread and the cup, and give thanks to Thee, because Thou hast thought us worthy to stand before Thee and to serve Thee as priests.

“And we beseech Thee that Thou wouldst send down Thy Holy Spirit on the sacrifice of the Church. Unite them, and grant to all the saints who partake in the sacrifice, that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened in faith in the truth, in order that we may praise and laud Thee through Thy servant, Jesus Christ, through Whom praise and honor be to Thee in Thy Holy Church now and forevermore. Amen.”
Fourth Century
Early in the fourth century began the longest and most extensive persecution ever waged against the Church. It was started in 303 by Emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305), at the urging of his deputy emperor in the East, Galerius, who began to suspect the loyalty and valor of the Christian soldiers in the military. During this nine-year persecution, soldier-martyrs like Saint George of Nicomedia proved their courage in enduring fearsome tortures and death on behalf of the true emperor, the King of Glory. Among the other more well-known martyrs of this period are Saint Katherine the Greatmartyr of Alexandria; Saint Panteleimon of Nicomedia; Saint Demetrius the Greatmartyr of Thessalonica and his friend Saint Nestor; Saints Agapia, Chionia, and Irene of Aquileia; and the 20,000 Martyrs of Nicomedia.

After Diocletian abdicated the throne in 305, Galerius became the Emperor in the East. He continued the attack against Christianity until he was on his deathbed, when he asked the Christians to pray for him. After his death in 311, his former deputy emperor, Maximin, renewed the persecution for another year, until he was overthrown by Licinius.

Meanwhile, Constantine was proclaimed emperor in the West in York, England, in 306, upon the death of his father, the deputy emperor Constantius. In 312, as Constantine was moving with his troops towards Rome to fight against Maxentius, the tyrannical ruler there, he had a vision or a dream that dramatically changed the course of history. He saw in the sky the Cross or Labarum (Chi Rho: XP) of Christ with the words, “In this sign, conquer.” He placed this Christian symbol on his troops’ tunics and shields, and they won the battle-known as the Battle of the Milvian Bridge.

With this Christ-inspired victory, Constantine not only became the sole emperor in the West; he also became a stronger believer in the God of the Christians. So he acted very quickly to bring the era of persecution of Christians to an official end. In февраля of 313, Constantine met Licinius, the ruler of the Eastern half of the empire, in Milan. Together they issued the Edict of Milan giving freedom to Christians to practice their Faith in the empire-as well as affirming general religious freedom for everyone. Now recognized as a legal entity, the Church expanded and flourished greatly during the 4th century-so much so that in the last decade of the century, Emperor Saint Theodosius the Great (r. 379–395), with advice from Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c. 339–397), made Christianity the official state religion of the Empire.

In about 320, the eastern emperor Licinius began persecuting Christians in
the military. The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste and the Greatmartyr Theodore Stratelates died for Christ in this time. Partly because of this betrayal by Licinius of the Edict of Milan, Constantine led his troops against him. By 324 Constantine had defeated Licinius, thus becoming sole emperor of the whole empire, both East and West.

**Excerpts from the Edict of Milan**

When with happy auspices I, Constantinus Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, had arrived at Milan, and were enquiring into all matters that concerned the advantage and benefits of the public, among the other measures directed to the general good, or rather as questions of highest priority, we decided to establish rules by which respect and reverence for the Deity would be secured, i.e., to give the Christians, and all others, liberty to follow whatever form of worship they chose, so that whatsoever divine and heavenly powers that exist might be enabled to show favor to us and to all who live under our authority. We have given the said Christians free and absolute permission to practice their own form of worship.

With regard to the Christians, we also give this further ruling. In the letter sent earlier to Your Dedicatedness, precise instructions were laid down at an earlier date with reference to their places where earlier on it was their habit to meet. We now decree that if it should appear that any persons have bought these places either from our treasury or from some other source, they must restore them to these same Christians without payment and without any demand for compensation, and there must be no negligence or hesitation.

All this property is to be handed over to the Christian body immediately, by energetic action on your part, without any delay.

And since the aforesaid Christians not only possessed those places where it was their habit to meet, but are known to have possessed other places also, belonging not to individuals but to the legal estate of the whole body, i.e., of the Christians, all this property, in accordance with the law set forth above, you will order to be restored without any argument whatever to the aforesaid Christians.

In the next year Emperor Constantine had a dream which he believed was given to him by God, directing him to build a magnificent Christian city at the site of the ancient town of Byzantium. Very strategically located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, this city was officially dedicated in 330 as Constantinople (meaning “City of Constantine”), the new imperial capital. The emperor helped to build churches there, in particular the Church of the Holy Apostles, where he was buried upon his death in 337.

Another highlight of his reign was the visit of his mother, Saint Helen, to
Palestine. There she made pilgrimage to the holy sites of Christ’s life. With divine guidance she made a discovery that inflamed the heart of the Christian world. Near the hill of Golgotha outside Jerusalem, she found the True Cross on which Christ was crucified. Constantine helped to build churches at some of these sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and Jerusalem quickly became a great center of pilgrimage for the entire Christian world.

The era of Constantine is sometimes seen in the West as the beginning of the corruption of the pure Christianity of the Early Church. During the fourth century, millions more people become Christians, many of whom may not have had the spiritual fervor of the early Christians. But for Orthodox Christians, the great importance of Constantine is that with his conversion to the true faith, what was only a seemingly impossible dream now became possible: namely, the conversion of the entire society-the whole empire-to Christ.

Constantine not only allowed the Church to operate freely; he also specifically helped it in many ways. He restored or made restitution for properties that Christians had lost during the Diocletian Persecution. He sponsored copies of the Scriptures to be produced. He helped many churches to be built. He entrusted the Church with substantial amounts of tax revenue to use for charitable work. He gave the Lateran Palace to the bishop of Rome to be his residence. And he made it easier for the populace to attend church on Sunday by making it a weekly holiday—thus forming, along with Saturday (the Sabbath), the weekend which we still have. This was not an arbitrary decision on his part; rather, he was honoring Sunday as “the Lord’s Day,” the day of Christian worship from the very beginning (Rev 1.10; Acts 20.7; 1Cor 16.2; also Saint Justin Martyr, First Apology 67).

In addition, Constantine began to bring Christian influence into the law code. In 316 a law was passed prohibiting branding criminals on the face “because man is made in God’s image.” He ended the special taxation of single people (which Augustus Caesar had instituted to try to reverse a downward trend in the population of Italy in his day), thus honoring the Christian practice of consecrated virginity. Constantine also made grants of money to poor families to help them support their children, thus discouraging the practice of exposure of infants by parents who felt they could not provide for them. And he exempted Christian clergy from every form of civic duty—so that, in his words, “they will be completely free to serve their own law at all times. In thus rendering wholehearted service to the Deity, it is evident that they will be making an immense contribution to the welfare of the community” (Eusebius, History of the Church 10.5).

Another typical Western view is that Constantine initiated the process
whereby the Eastern Church became subject to and dominated by the Emperor—a state of affairs called caesaropapism. In reality, while there were some notable exceptions, most of the time the Eastern Church functioned in harmony with the State in a relationship known as symphonia. In this arrangement, the Church was responsible for the spiritual welfare of the people, while the Emperor was responsible for their physical and material well-being. The Emperor had the responsibility to defend and protect the realm; thus he was also seen as defending and protecting the Faith of the realm. But this did not mean that he was dominating the Church. Rather, he was helping to assure that it could continue to function in peace.

The emperor sometimes recognized the need to help the Church to resolve internal disputes. At such times he would use his authority to summon Church councils. Thus, it was an emperor or empress who called each of the Seven Great Ecumenical Councils (called “Ecumenical” because they were received by the entire Church). But this does not mean that the State was interfering in its life. Rather, the emperor or empress acted in collaboration with Church leaders in calling these councils, and allowed the Church to reach its own decisions during the councils.

Sadly, however, some emperors did use their authority to support heretical teachings. The most prominent and grievous example is the era of the six Iconoclastic emperors in the 8th and 9th centuries.

For all of Constantine’s great efforts on behalf of the Christian Church and in promoting its influence in his vast domain, and for his own repentance and life of faith, he is revered in the Eastern Church as Saint Constantine the Great, Equal-to-the-Apostles. He and his illustrious mother, Saint Helen, are honored together on мая 21. Interestingly, he is not considered a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, no doubt partly because of his permanent removal of the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople.
Though the Church was free from external persecution in the era of Constantine, inner troubles soon arose to disturb its peace. First, there was the Donatist Schism that erupted in western North Africa. This was a schism between those who supported a certain Majorinus-soon afterwards succeeded by Donatus-to be the bishop of Carthage, and those who supported the regularly elected bishop, Caecilian. The Donatists opposed Bishop Caecilian because he was willing to grant the possibility of repentance to those who had lapsed during the Diocletian Persecution, and because one of the bishops who consecrated him allegedly had surrendered holy books to the authorities.

In an attempt to help the Church resolve this conflict, Constantine summoned the parties to Rome to appear before a commission led by Pope Miltiades. When this commission decided in favor of Bishop Caecilian, the Donatists refused to accept the judgment. They complained to Constantine that the matter had been judged too hastily and by too few other bishops. Yielding to their request to reopen the case, the emperor summoned a much larger council to address the problem. This Council of Arles (in Gaul-modern day France) in 314 also decided against the Donatists.

But still the Donatists refused to be reconciled with Bishop Caecilian, and in 316 Constantine resorted to the use of force to try to bring the schism to an end. Unfortunately, this gave the movement an aura of martyrdom. Fueled by the anti-Roman feelings of the native Berber population of the region, the schism became more deeply entrenched than ever.

Constantine stopped using force against the Donatists in 321, but the schism continued into the next century. The Church in western North Africa never fully recovered from this grievous schism, so that when the Muslims swept across this region in the 7th century, there was little resistance from the Christians, and Christianity was virtually obliterated there.
Arianism

Shortly after the beginning of the Donatist schism, the Arian controversy arose. Arius, an Alexandrian presbyter, began teaching some time before 318 that the Logos, the Word of God who became man-Jesus Christ-is not the divine Son of God. For Arius, the Son of God is not the pre-existent, eternally existing, uncreated Second Person of the Holy Trinity, but a created being-created out of nothing, like everything else, by God the Father.

According to Arius, God is not the uncreated Holy Trinity. Rather, God is the Father, the Creator, alone. For Arius, God the Father created His Logos, or Word, or Son, as the first and greatest of His creatures. This Logos then earned the right to be worshiped as God because of His constant devotion to the Father. Thus the Son became God’s instrument for the salvation of the world, being born as the man Jesus. Hence, for Arius, Jesus Christ is not the uncreated, divine Son of God having exactly the same uncreated divine nature that God the Father has. Rather, He is a created being, as is the Holy Spirit.

Saint Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria (r. 312–328), tried to convince Arius to stop this teaching that directly subverted the Bible and the traditional teaching and worship of the Church. But Arius refused to desist. Instead, he appealed far and wide for support. He found his most powerful ally in Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, his former classmate in the Christian school at Antioch led by Saint Lucian (d. 312). Ironically, it was this Arian-sympathizing Bishop Eusebius who eventually became the court theologian to Emperor Constantine in his later years, and who baptized him on his deathbed in 337.
Soon after Emperor Constantine took up residence in Nicomedia, the eastern capital, after his victory over Licinius, he was chagrined to learn of this new controversy that was troubling the whole Eastern Church. So, with the advice of St Hosius, Bishop of Spain (c. 257–357), his theological advisor, he summoned the largest council of bishops ever held up to that point. It opened on May 20, 325, in the city of Nicea, near Nicomedia. Constantine himself gave the opening address. According to tradition, 318 bishops were in attendance, including the famous and greatly beloved Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, and Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithus in Cyprus.

This council, known now as the First Ecumenical Council, decreed that the Logos, the Word and Son of God, is uncreated, ever-existent, and fully divine. He is begotten—that is, “born” or generated-from the Father, and not made or created by Him. He is of one essence (in Greek, homoousios) with the Father. He is true God of true God, the Word of God by Whom all things were made (Jn 1:3; Heb 1.2). It is this uncreated, only-begotten, divine Son of God Who became man from the Virgin Mary as Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world.

The Council of Nicea also decreed a number of canons (i.e., Church regulations) concerning various issues of order and discipline in the Church. Canon 6 confirmed the jurisdictional authority of Alexandria over Egypt and the neighboring regions of Libya and Pentapolis, “since the like is customary for the Bishop of Rome also [meaning that the Roman Church, in a corresponding way, had jurisdictional authority only over Rome and its neighboring territory—at that time, most likely central Italy]. Likewise in Antioch and the other provinces let the Churches retain their privileges.” This canon clearly ratifies the ancient practice of the Churches in the major cities each having full jurisdictional authority only over the surrounding region.

Concerning the lapsed, Canon 11 offered the possibility of restoration to Eucharistic communion, but only after a period of 12 years of heartfelt contrition, in three stages:

Concerning those who have fallen without compulsion, without the spoiling of their property, without danger or the like, as happened during the tyranny of Licinius, this Synod declares that, though they have deserved no mercy, they shall be dealt with mercifully. Those who were previously communicants, if they heartily repent, shall spend three years among the hearers; for seven years they shall be prostrators; and for two years they shall
join the people in prayers, but still as yet without receiving the Eucharistic gifts.

Canon 20 prohibited the practice of penitential kneeling during the Church’s Sunday Liturgy, as well as during the entire Pentecostarion season.

The Nicene Council also established guidelines for determining the date of the annual celebration of Pascha—thus helping to bring the Quartodecimans’ practice to an end.

Finally, this council affirmed once and for all, at least for the Eastern Churches, the propriety of allowing married men to be ordained as deacons, presbyters, and at that time even bishops, and to still have a normal married life. While the Roman Church during the 4th century began trying to force its clergy to be celibate, it was not until the 12th century that it was finally able to enforce this rule.
Saint Athanasius and his defence of Nicea

The doctrinal definition of the Nicene Council was not universally accepted throughout the Church for a long time. The Arian controversy raged for over five more decades, and because several Christian emperors in this period gave their support to the Arianizers, the defenders of the Nicene Faith were greatly persecuted. With imperial support, Church councils were held in Milan, Sirmium, Rimini, Seleucia, and elsewhere, to try to articulate the mystery of Christ’s divinity and humanity, but all with varying degrees of Arian influence.

Saint Athanasius (c. 298–373) attended the Nicene Council as a deacon of the Church in Alexandria. Though only 27 years old, he was a leader at that council in promoting the crucial word homoousios as most fitting to affirm the truth that the Son of God has the same uncreated divine nature as God the Father.

Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria in 328, upon the death of Saint Alexander. As the anti-Nicene party, led by Bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, gained strength, Bishop Athanasius was one of the first to be attacked through slander and intrigue. This group managed to get him exiled from his see in 335. Altogether, this fearless champion of Nicene Orthodoxy suffered exile five times for his valiant and eloquent defense of the Christian Faith. Near the end of his life, his pastoral, forgiving outreach to his former enemies greatly helped to bring Arianism to an end. For all this and more, he is revered in Church Tradition as Saint Athanasius the Great.
Compounding the problems for the Church in these middle decades of the 4th century, new heresies arose. One was Macedonianism-named after Macedonius, an archbishop of Constantinople. The Macedonians accepted the Nicene declaration about Christ being “of one essence with the Father,” but they denied that the Holy Spirit was fully divine, saying that He was a created being. Because of this belittling of the Spirit, this group was also called the Pneumatomachians (meaning “fighters against the Spirit”).

The Church Father who led the battle against this heresy was Saint Basil the Great (c. 330–379). In his work called On the Holy Spirit, he refuted Macedonianism by pointing out from the Holy Scriptures and the sacramental life of the Church all the things that the Holy Spirit does as the “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ.” Following Saint Athanasius in his Letters to Serapion, Saint Basil never called the Holy Spirit “God.” The first holy father to do this was Saint Gregory the Theologian.

Saint Basil is also remembered for his wise and firm guidance of the rapidly growing monastic movement, thus keeping it safely within the confines of the Church. His Longer and Shorter Rule, written for the monastic movement, emphasized the communal form of monasticism—as he writes, “since man is by nature a social creature”—with each monastery headed by its abbot, under the authority of the local bishop.

Another new heresy was Apollinarianism, which originated with the speculations of Apollinaris of Laodicea about how Christ can be both divine and human at the same time. He deduced that when the pre-eternal Word of God, the Logos, entered the body of Jesus, the Logos took the place of Jesus’ soul. In such a scheme, Jesus is denied having full and complete humanity.

Saint Gregory the Theologian (c. 330–389), Bishop of Sasima and then of Constantinople refuted Apollinarianism. As he declared, whatever belongs to human nature that Christ did not take to Himself has not been saved and healed. If Jesus had no human soul, He simply was not a human being, and humanity is not saved.

Saint Gregory, Saint Basil the Great’s best friend, is also remembered for finally refuting the Arians by his brilliant and beautiful preaching that won him the title “The Theologian.” This title has been given to only two others in the history of the Church: Saint John the Theologian, the Apostle and Evangelist, and Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022).
Emperor Theodosius the Great came to the imperial throne of the eastern part of the Roman Empire in 379. A strong supporter of the Nicene Faith, he wanted to help the Church finally put an end to the various forms of Arianism which had cropped up since the Council of Nicea. He also understood that Macedonianism and Apollinarianism had to be addressed. In 381 he called a Church council in Constantinople which would come to be known as the Second Ecumenical Council.

This council condemned all forms of Arianizing doctrines by reaffirming the doctrinal statement, or creed, which had been proclaimed at the Nicene Council. It also condemned Macedonianism, and proclaimed the divinity of the Holy Spirit in a paragraph added to the Creed of Nicea. It is this Creed, the combined work of the first two Ecumenical Councils, which Orthodox Christians we recite at baptismal services and the Divine Liturgy. Also known as the Symbol of Faith, it is the most important Christian creed ever written. This council also condemned the teachings of Apollinaris.

The canons adopted at this council reaffirmed the fundamental principle of Church organization—that each region is self-governing:

_The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches. But let the Bishop of Alexandria, according to the canons, alone administer the affairs of Egypt. And let the bishops of the East manage the East alone, with the privileges of the Church in Antioch, which are mentioned in the canons of Nicea, being preserved. And let the bishops of the Asian Diocese [i.e., western Asia Minor] administer the Asian affairs only; and the Pontic bishops [in northcentral Asia Minor] only Pontic matters; and the Thracian bishops [in Thrace; directly west of Constantinople] only Thracian affairs. It is evident that the synod of every province will administer the affairs of that particular province, as was decreed at Nicea (Canon 2)._

Canon 3 from this council is also significant:

_The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honor after the Bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is New Rome._

This canon affirmed that the Church in Constantinople, the new imperial capital called “New Rome,” would naturally assume leading importance, though the Church in Old Rome would retain its traditional position as “first among equals.”

At this time the bishop of Old Rome was Pope Damasus (r. 366–384), who
was intent on extending the power of his see as much as possible. He rejected this canon, despite its assurance that Old Rome still had “the prerogative of honor.” This is a clear sign of a growing difference in basic understanding of the Church between East and West, which will be a major cause of the Great Schism of 1054.

Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Gregory of Nyssa—the other of the three great Cappadocian Fathers, along with his older brother, Saint Basil the Great—and Saint Meletios, Bishop of Antioch, were leaders at the Second Ecumenical Council.
In the 4th century, the Eucharistic prayers of the two most prominent liturgies of the Eastern Church—the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, and the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople (d. 407)—were substantially formulated. The catechetical sermons of Saint John Chrysostom, together with those of Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (d. 386), show that the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation were being celebrated in the fourth century almost exactly as they are done in the Orthodox Church today.

By this time, the 40-Day Great Lent and the Feast of Pascha (Easter) were well established. And the Feast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas) was separated from the Feast of Theophany (Epiphany), thus becoming a separate feast of the Church (see Worship).
Monasticism

With the end of the era of persecution and the rapid growth of Christianity in the cities, many Christians, both men and women, were drawn to wilderness areas to serve God alone, and to fight the devil. Some lived completely in isolation as hermits. Others lived near famous elders to be led by their spiritual guidance. And still others gathered together to live in communities—the first monasteries.

The ascetical life led by the monastics came to be seen as a white, bloodless martyrdom, marked by constant dying to one’s passions and desires. Not rejecting the world as something evil, the monastics served the world in the most effective way possible—by their constant prayer for the whole world, and by giving spiritual counsel to those who came to visit them.

Monasticism began in Egypt in the 3rd century. Saint Paul of Thebes (c. 230–340) was apparently the first hermit in the Egyptian desert. He was seen by Saint Anthony the Great (c. 250–356), the one traditionally considered to be the founder of monasticism, who lived in isolation for many years before allowing disciples to begin living around him. The very vivid and dramatic *Life of Anthony*, written by Saint Athanasius the Great, did much to popularize monasticism, especially in Western Europe. The 38 “sayings” of Anthony in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* remain to this day a superb teaching of the Christian spiritual life.

The *Life of Saint Martin of Tours* (d. 397), written by Sulpicius Severus, was intentionally modeled on the *Life of Anthony*. Saint Martin was a Roman soldier who became a Christian after beholding a vision of Christ in which the Lord commended him for giving half his cloak to a cold beggar. Together with Saint Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–367), who is known as the “Saint Athanasius of the West” for his ardent defense of the Nicene Faith, Saint Martin established the first monastery in Gaul (modern-day France).

Communal, or cenobitic, monasticism was founded in Egypt by Saint Pachomius (c. 290–346). His monastic *Rule* greatly influenced Saint Basil the Great, as well as Saint John Cassian (c. 360–435), who founded two monasteries in southern Gaul with the ethos of Egyptian monasticism, as well as Saint Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–c. 550), whose *Rule* guided nearly all of Western monasticism for some 500 years.

One of the first monks to write about the spiritual and ascetical life was Saint Macarius the Great (c. 300–390) of Egypt. The *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, traditionally ascribed to him or his disciples, are some of the most powerful
spiritual treatises ever written. Evagrius of Ponticus (346–399), a disciple of Saint Macarius, also wrote important spiritual works, but some of his writing is considered to be tinged with Origenistic teachings.
Saint John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) lived for several years as a monk in the caves near his hometown of Antioch. However, he so injured his health through his severe asceticism that he came back into the city to live. Eventually he was ordained as a presbyter and given the major preaching duties in the cathedral in Antioch. Having been trained in rhetoric by Libanius of Antioch, one of the last great pagan rhetoricians of the ancient world, John flourished as a preacher, coming to be known as the Golden-Mouth (this is what “Chrysostom” means).

Many of Saint John’s sermons were preached in series as he went through various books of the Bible verse by verse. He eloquently interpreted and explained the texts with great practical wisdom and deeply penetrating spiritual fervor. Hence he is honored in the Church as not only the greatest preacher who ever lived, but also as the greatest Biblical commentator in the Eastern Church.

In 398 Saint John was made Archbishop of Constantinople. Partly because he alienated Empress Eudoxia, and many others, through his forthright preaching against luxury and ostentation, he was unjustly deposed and exiled to eastern Asia Minor in 404. In his many years of preaching he had said much about accepting and bearing innocent suffering patiently and nobly. Especially in these years of exile, he practiced what he preached. He wrote many letters from exile, including many to his closest friend and co-worker, the Deaconess Saint Olympias, encouraging her to stand firm in hope.

He died in 407 on a forced march to a place of further exile, near modern Abkhazia. In spite of all his unjust trials and suffering, his last words were “Glory to God for all things!”

In 438 his relics were brought to Constantinople in triumph. When his coffin was brought into the Great Church there, his voice was said to have rung out, “Peace be with you all!”
Inner Struggles

In the first decades of the fifth century, when Alexandria and Constantinople were continuing their feud over their respective positions in the Church and in the Empire, Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople (r. 428–431), made known his refusal to honor Mary, Christ’s mother, with the traditional title of Theotokos. He claimed that the one born from Mary is not the Logos Himself, but merely the “man” in whom the eternal Logos of God came to dwell. Thus, Mary could not properly be called “Theotokos,” which means “the one who gave birth to God,” but only either “Christotokos,” meaning “the one who gave birth to Christ,” or “anthropotokos,” meaning ‘the one who gave birth to a man’-i.e., the man Jesus, to whom the Logos was joined.

Saint Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria (r. 412–444), with the active support of Pope Celestine of Rome, forcefully rejected the teaching of Nestorius, claiming that it is indeed proper to call Mary Theotokos since the one born from her “according to the flesh” is none other than the divine Logos of God. The only-begotten Son of God was “begotten of the Father before all ages”; and He it was “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man” (The Nicene Creed). Thus, the Son of God and the Son of Mary is one and the same Son.
Third Ecumenical Council

Nestorius and his followers refused to yield to Saint Cyril’s appeals for repentance. Thus, in 431, in the city of Ephesus, a Church council was summoned by Emperor Theodosius II (r. 408–450) to resolve the issue. On the first day, Nestorius, supported by only ten bishops, still refused to change his mind, so he was condemned by Saint Cyril and his group of 57 bishops, and by Bishop Memnon of Ephesus and his group of 52 bishops. This decision, however, was not accepted by Bishop John of Antioch and his group of 30 bishops, who arrived at the council four days after it started-having been delayed in their travels. They maintained their support for Nestorius, who had previously been an outstanding preacher in Antioch.

The controversy was not resolved until two years later, when Bishop John and Saint Cyril signed the Formulary of Peace of 433, in which the condemnation of Nestorius was reaffirmed, but with language that more clearly honored the typically Antiochian emphasis on the full reality of Christ’s humanity. The Council of 431 (along with the Formulary of Peace of 433) subsequently became known as the Third Ecumenical Council.
Unfortunately, not everyone was satisfied with the results of the Third Ecumenical Council and the Formulary of Peace. In particular, Saint Cyril’s more extreme followers resented the fact that he had not insisted on one particular phrase concerning Christ: the “one nature of the Word of God Incarnate.” Saint Cyril occasionally had used this phrase, but he had never insisted upon it, perhaps realizing that the term “one nature” could imply that Christ does not have a full human nature. The more extreme Alexandrians, however, feared that by not using it, the Nestorian tendency to overemphasize Christ’s two natures, and especially His humanity-to the point of giving it an independent existence (a personal center of being, or hypostasis)-which would make Jesus two different persons (the Son of God and the Son of Mary), would not be fully rejected.

An uneasy peace was maintained until Saint Cyril’s death in 444. But he was succeeded as bishop of Alexandria by Dioscorus, another fiery Alexandrian, who wished to attain full recognition of the phrase “one nature of the Word of God Incarnate.” His associate, Eutyches, even went so far as to say “Christ’s humanity is different from ours.”

With the support of Emperor Theodosius II, Dioscorus arranged a major council to be held in Ephesus in 449, which affirmed the extreme Alexandrian position that the divinity of Christ virtually eclipsed or even destroyed His humanity. Pope Saint Leo of Rome (r. 440–461) had sent to the council a doctrinal statement, called Leo’s Tome, which strongly affirmed the ongoing reality of the two natures of Christ-one fully divine, and one fully human. But Dioscorus was so much in control of the council that Leo’s Tome was not even allowed to be read there, and bishops suspected of Nestorian tendencies were deposed. When Leo heard later what had happened, he exclaimed that it was a “latrocinium,” a Council of Robbers.

There was widespread resistance to this council, and yet it was the law for the Church and the Empire as long as Emperor Theodosius lived and did not change his mind. Providentially for the Orthodox, in July of the very next year (450), he fell from his horse and died. This brought his distinguished and extremely pious elder sister, Saint Pulcheria, to the throne, along with her distinguished consort, a retired military general who would become Saint Marcian. This Pulcheria had been a champion of the Theotokos during the controversy with Nestorius; it was partly due to her efforts that popular devotion to the Theotokos increased in the first half of the fifth century.
The Fourth Ecumenical Council

Together, in 451, Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria called another general council, this time on a far broader scale, to give the Church the opportunity to resolve the differences while still being completely faithful to the Nicene Creed. This illustrious council became known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council. With 630 bishops in attendance, it was the largest of all seven of the Ecumenical Councils. It was held in Chalcedon, not far from Constantinople, in Asia Minor.

This council defended the teaching of Saint Cyril on the “hypostatic union” of Christ’s divine and human natures as expressed at the Council of Ephesus of 431. It also expressed the Antiochian emphasis on the genuine humanity of Jesus as expressed in the Formulary of Peace, as well as the Roman emphasis on the ongoing distinctiveness of the fully divine and fully human natures of Christ, as expressed in the language of Leo’s Tome. Indeed, when Leo’s Tome was read, all the bishops were reported to have cried out, “Peter has spoken through Leo!” But the Pope’s statement was not the last word. It also was subjected to scrutiny by the fathers at the Council, who decided to select parts of it to be woven into the Council’s final doctrinal definition.

The Chalcedonian Definition states that Jesus Christ is indeed the Logos incarnate, the very Son of God “begotten of the Father before all ages” (Nicene Creed). It reaffirms that the Virgin Mary is truly Theotokos, since the one born from her “according to the flesh” in Bethlehem is the uncreated, divine Son of God, one of the Holy Trinity. In His human birth, the Council declared, the Word of God took to Himself the whole of humanity, becoming a real man in every way, but without sin. Thus, according to the Chalcedonian Definition, Jesus of Nazareth is one person or hypostasis in two natures-human and divine-united “without change, without confusion, without division, without separation.” He is fully human. He is fully divine. He is perfect God and perfect man. As God, He is “of one essence” (homoousios) with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And as man, He is “of one essence” (homoousios) with all human beings, as the Formulary of Peace had declared.

The union of divinity and humanity in Christ is called the hypostatic union. This expression means that in the one, unique person, or divine hypostasis, of Christ, divine nature and human nature are united in such a way that they are neither changed, nor confused, nor separated, nor divided. Christ is one Person Who is both human and divine. One and the same divine person...
(or hypostasis) is the Son of God and the Son of Mary.
The Monophysites

The Definition of the Council of Chalcedon was not accepted by the extreme disciples of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, nor by those who later came to be associated with them. These Christians were called by the Chalcedonians Monophysites, because of their insistence on Saint Cyril’s phrase “one nature of the Word of God Incarnate” (“one nature” in Greek is “mia physis”). Hence they rejected the Chalcedonian Definition, which speaks of Christ being “in two natures.”

The supporters of Chalcedon claimed and still claim that the Chalcedonian Definition is fully in accord with the thought of Saint Cyril, who did not insist on the Monophysites’ hallmark phrase “one nature of the Word of God Incarnate” in his letters to Nestorius, or at the Council of Ephesus, or in the Formulary of Peace. And from other things he wrote, it is clear that when he used this problematic phrase, his actual meaning was “one hypostasis of the Word of God Incarnate,” which is just what Chalcedon proclaimed and defended.
The Henotikon

In 482 Emperor Zeno, with the support of Patriarch Acacius of Constantinople, issued an imperial edict called the Henotikon (coming from the Greek word meaning “unity” or “union”), which was designed to bring reconciliation between those who accepted the Council of Chalcedon and those who rejected it. The Henotikon strongly affirmed the first three Ecumenical Councils, avoided any mention of one or two natures in Christ, and anathematized “anyone who has held or holds any other opinion, either now or at any other time, whether at Chalcedon or at any synod whatsoever.”

The Henotikon mollified the moderate Monophysites, who continued to stay in communion with the Chalcedonian Byzantines—for as yet there had been no actual schism in the Church. But it infuriated the Roman Church, since it certainly did place a question mark over the Council of Chalcedon, at which the Tome of their beloved Saint Leo was so influential. In 484 Pope Felix of Rome (r. 483–492) excommunicated all the Churches of the East on account of their acceptance of the Henotikon. This began the so-called Acacian Schism between Rome and the East, which lasted until 518.
Canons of the Councils

The Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils adopted a number of canons of a disciplinary and practical nature. The Council of Ephesus forbade the composition of a “different faith” from that of the first two councils (Canon 7). This canon has been used by the Orthodox in opposition to the addition of the word *filioque* to the Creed as it came to be used in the Western Churches. This Council also reaffirmed the ancient independent jurisdictional status of the Church of Cyprus against attempts by the Church of Antioch to hold ordinations there (Canon 8). The Council of Chalcedon, in basically repeating Canon 3 from the Second Ecumenical Council, gave to Constantinople, the New Rome, “equal privileges with the old imperial Rome” because the new capital city was “honored with the emperor and the senate” (Canon 28). The Roman Church, however, fearing that this canon would interfere with her growing aspirations to have universal authority over the whole Church, did not accept this canon of the Council of Chalcedon.
The Western Church was dominated intellectually and spiritually by the towering figure of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (r. 386–430), near Carthage in western North Africa. Living in a kind of communal monasticism with friends on his estate, Augustine wrote massively in Latin. His *City of God* was the most extensive Christian reflection on human history and its ultimate destiny ever written up to that point. His Scriptural commentaries and his many letters have provided practical guidance for many generations of Western Christians. And his remarkably intimate *Confessions* became a model for many more such introspective spiritual analyses.

Many of his writings were taken up with fighting three virulent heresies—Donatism, the rigorist sect of western North Africa similar to Novatianism; Manicheanism, a strictly dualist movement from Asia Minor; and Pelagianism, promoted by a British monk named Pelagius, who asserted that man could be saved by his own virtue, without the assistance of divine grace. In the heat of the polemics with these heterodox movements, Augustine did not always avoid the temptation of taking his position to the opposite extreme.

This happened most conspicuously in his anti-Pelagian writings, in which he said that man, due to the grievous calamity of Adam’s Fall, so far from being able to save himself, cannot even do anything good. Because his free will has become *totally depraved* due to this “original sin” of Adam, man cannot participate in his own salvation, so God must do everything.

These presuppositions led with inexorable logic to what would become known as the doctrine of double predestination. As stated many years later in the Westminster Confession (1646) of the Presbyterian Church, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.” Such a view is in stark contrast to the Orthodox understanding of *synergism*, in which God and man-whose free will, though damaged, was not totally corrupted at the Fall—*cooperate together* in the work of salvation, which God longingly desires for every human being (cf. 1Tim 2.4).

Another problematic side to Augustine, from the Orthodox point of view, is his philosophical speculation about the Holy Trinity, in which he suggests that the Holy Spirit is the love that binds the Father and the Son. Such speculation creates some of the philosophical underpinning for the *filioque*, which appeared in Spain in the next century.

In addition, his claim that marital relations can never occur without the sin
of concupiscence darkened in the West the traditional understanding of the full goodness of human sexuality and marriage (as seen at the Council of Nicea). This skepticism/pessimism regarding sexuality is reflected in the mandatory clerical celibacy practiced in the Roman Catholic Church to this day.
In southern France, Saint John Cassian (c. 360-c. 435) established two monasteries based on the pattern of the Egyptian monasticism of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, with whom he had spent much time earlier in his life. In his most highly acclaimed works, *The Conferences* and *The Institutes*, he conveys the wisdom he learned from the monastics of Egypt, including their understanding of the mystery of synergism.

**Saint John Cassian writing on synergism**

And therefore it is laid down by all the catholic fathers who have taught perfection of heart not by empty disputes of words, but in deed and act, that the first stage in the Divine gift is for each man to be inflamed with the desire for everything that is good, but in such a way that the choice of free will is open to either side. The second stage in Divine grace is for the aforesaid practices of virtue to be able to be performed, but in such a way that the possibilities of the will are not destroyed. The third stage also belongs to the gifts of God, so that it may be held by the persistence of the goodness already acquired, and in such a way that the liberty may not be surrendered and experience bondage. For the God of all must be held to work in all, so as to incite, protect, and strengthen, but not to take away the freedom of the will which He Himself has once given.

If, however, any more subtle further human argumentation and reasoning seems opposed to this interpretation, it should be avoided, rather than brought forward to the destruction of the faith (for we do not gain faith from understanding, but understanding from faith, as it is written, “Except ye believe, ye will not understand” [Is. 7.9]). For how God works all things in us and yet everything can be ascribed to free will, cannot be fully grasped by the mind and reason of man.

*The Conferences, XIII.18*

Many monasteries, sketes, and hermitages based on the Egyptian model sprang up and flourished in the mountains and valleys of eastern and southern France in the 5th and 6th centuries. The lives of nearly thirty saints in this setting were compiled near the end of the 6th century by Saint Gregory of Tours.
Pope Saint Leo the Great

In 452 Pope Saint Leo proved to be a skillful diplomat as he convinced Attila the Hun not to sack the city of Rome. Thereafter, the imperial government in Rome continued to weaken, until it was taken over by Germanic invaders from the north in 476. This made the end of close political connections between East and West. Though political unity was restored temporarily under Emperor Justinian I in the next century, the political, cultural, and linguistic disunity that prevailed after his death was a major factor in the eventual schism in the 11th century between the Roman, Latin-speaking Church in the West and the Greek-speaking Patriarchates of the East.

Pope Leo also played a major role in the ongoing story of the gradual extension of Papal power in Western Europe. In 444 he deprived the archbishop of the city of Arles in France, who was then Metropolitan Saint Hilary of Arles, of his status as a metropolitan, thus consolidating Roman authority over this part of France. He also obtained from the Western Emperor Valentinian III a decree granting the Roman Church supreme authority over the Churches in all of Western Europe. However, it would take many more centuries of overcoming strong opposition in virtually every part of Western Europe before Rome could fully put this edict into effect.
Sixth Century
Emperor Justinian I and the Non-Chalcedonians

The 6th century was dominated by the person and policies of the Emperor Saint Justinian I (r. 527–565). Perhaps the greatest of all the Byzantine emperors, he was also an outstanding theologian. He correctly understood the relationship between the Church and the State to be one of unity and cooperation, or *symphonia*, between the priesthood (which “concerns things divine”) and the empire (which “presides over morals”).

Justinian’s goals were to completely reunite the Empire both politically and religiously, by regaining the western part of the empire from the Germanic Ostrogoths, led by Theodoric, and by winning back the Monophysites, or Non-Chalcedonians, to the Orthodox Faith proclaimed at the Council of Chalcedon. Reconciliation with the Roman Church had already been accomplished in 518 by his predecessor, his uncle Emperor Justin I (r. 518–527), who brought the era of the Henotikon and the Acacian Schism to an end by strongly endorsing the Council of Chalcedon. An annual commemoration, on July 16, of the Fathers of the Chalcedonian council was added to the Church calendar at that time.

Justinian accomplished his first goal through the efforts of his armies, led by the great general Belisarius—although within three years after Justinian’s death, the Lombards had taken back much of Italy. But he failed in his second goal, even though his attempts were bold and persistent.

Justinian’s main attempt to win back the Non-Chalcedonians to the Orthodox Church was through the official condemnation of three theologians who had been quite popular in the East, but who had been connected with Nestorius. The first of these, Bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia, had been Nestorius’s teacher; he died in 428, three years before Nestorius was condemned at the Third Ecumenical Council. The other two, Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrus and Bishop Ibas of Edessa, originally had been supporters of Nestorius at the Third Council and therefore had been condemned and deposed at the Robber Council of 449. But at the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon, after agreeing to the condemnation of Nestorius they were restored to their bishoprics. By an imperial decree in 544, and by the decision of the major council held in 553—the Fifth Ecumenical Council, also known as the Second Council of Constantinople—Justinian formally condemned the so-called Three Chapters. These chapters were the objectionable, pro-Nestorian writings of Theodoret of Cyrrus and Ibas of Edessa, along with the writings and the person of Theodore of Mopsuestia.
The Fifth Ecumenical Council

In addition to rejecting the unorthodox, ambiguous writings listed in the Three Chapters, the Fathers of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, with great pastoral concern, strove to find a way to remain faithful to the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon while Non-Chalcedonians. In a long series of statements, the Council affirmed, without ambiguity, the traditional Orthodox understanding that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is “one of the Holy Trinity,” one and the same divine person (hypostasis) Who has united personally (hypostatically) in Himself the two natures of divinity and humanity, without fusing them together and without allowing their separation in any way. In these statements, the Council several times permitted the use of characteristic Monophysite/Non-Chalcedonian language, including the hallmark phrase “one nature of the Word of God Incarnate,” as long as this language is interpreted in an Orthodox way, as explained by the Council.

The Fifth Council also officially condemned the problematic teachings of Origen (d. 254) and his 6th-century disciples who taught and practiced a “spiritualistic” version of Christianity which contained many unorthodox doctrines. For instance, they taught that Christ was the only created spirit who did not become material through sin; that men’s souls were pre-existent spirits; and that all of Creation, including the demons, will ultimately be saved through its spiritualization by God in Christ the Savior.
The Oriental Orthodox Churches

Very sadly, despite the Henotikon, the condemnation of the Three Chapters, and the other efforts of the Fifth Council to win back the Non-Chalcedonians, they were not reunited to the Byzantine Church. By 553, their alternate ecclesiastical hierarchical structure was already quite firmly established—a process which actually had not begun until the decade of the 530s. The Non-Chalcedonians generally felt that the efforts of the Fifth Council were too little, too late. Apparently they never became convinced that Chalcedon was faithful to the thought of Saint Cyril. Even though Chalcedon reaffirmed the Third Council’s condemnation of Nestorius, the Non-Chalcedonians always suspected that the Chalcedonian Definition tended towards Nestorianism.

One major reason for their suspicion was that Chalcedon also had restored several bishops to their thrones who had been deposed at the Robber Council—bishops who at one time did have pro-Nestorian leanings, especially Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrus and Bishop Ibas of Edessa. Even though the pro-Nestorian writings of these two bishops were condemned at the Fifth Council, this was not enough to satisfy the Monophysites.

The disagreement was never settled, despite further efforts on the part of the Byzantines to win back the non-Chalcedonians in the next century. And while there have been encouraging discussions between the two sides in recent times (beginning in the 1960s), in which basic doctrinal agreement seems to have been established, the dissenters from the Chalcedonian decision remain separated from the Orthodox Church.

Today, the Non-Chalcedonian Churches are generally known as the Oriental Orthodox Churches. They are the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Ethiopian Church, the Syrian Jacobite Church, the Syrian (Malankara) Church of India, and the Armenian Church.
Emperor Justinian I and Reform

By Justinian’s time most of the citizens of the Empire had accepted Christianity, but there were still some strong pockets of resistance to the Gospel. Justinian’s reign saw a concerted attack against the remnants of Hellenistic paganism in the empire. The University of Athens was closed in 529, and exclusively Christian learning and culture were promoted. Justinian also undertook a massive codification of the laws of the Empire, which became known as the Code of Justinian. In its introduction, the emperor made his own personal declaration of his faith in Christ.

Justinian built many church buildings in the imperial city and throughout the empire, particularly in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and at Saint Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai. His greatest creation was the temple in Constantinople dedicated to Christ the Wisdom of God—the magnificent Church of the Hagia Sophia, with the largest dome ever built, even to this day. Iconography, engraving, and mosaic work flourished during this time. The basilicas of Ravenna, with their famous mosaic iconographic frescoes, were built in this era (Ravenna, in northeastern Italy, would long be the main seat of Byzantine imperial authority in the West during this period of barbarian conquests).
Liturgical Development

Many liturgical hymns were written, including the Christmas kontakion and many other kontakia by Saint Romanos the Hymnographer (early 6th century), a deacon in Constantinople, who was one of the most gifted hymnographers of all time. It is said that Emperor Justinian himself wrote the hymn “Only-begotten Son,” which is still sung at the synaxis of the divine liturgies in the Orthodox Church.

The 6th century witnessed a certain establishment and stabilization of liturgical worship throughout the Eastern Christian world, particularly because the liturgical practices of the imperial city of Constantinople were being accepted voluntarily by other cities throughout the empire. The Church of Constantinople began to use certain liturgical feasts already in use in the Palestinian centers of Church life. These feasts were the Nativity and the Dormition of the Theotokos, and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. It is also likely that the feast of the Transfiguration was celebrated in Constantinople by this time.

In addition to the festal celebrations of the capital city that spread throughout the Eastern empire, such elements as the formal liturgical entrances, and the chanting of the Trisagion in the Divine Liturgy, were added.

The convergence of several factors caused numerous changes in the Church’s liturgical ritual and piety. These factors were the rise of the Constantinopolitan Church as the model for other churches; the development of the imperial churchly ritual; the appearance of the mystical theology expressed in the writings published under the name of Saint Dionysius the Aeropagite; and the attempts of the Church and State to reconcile the Non-Chalcedonians.

At this time the practices of the Church of Constantinople were combined with the original Jewish-Christian worship of the early Church, the rule of prayer which had developed in the Christian monasteries, and the liturgical practices of the Church in Jerusalem, to form the first great synthesis of liturgical worship in Orthodox history.
Five Patriarchates

In the sixth century, Constantinople, in the minds of Eastern Christians, was firmly established as the primary see in the Christian pentarchy, even though the see of Rome was still technically considered the “first among equals.” Emperor Justinian called the pentarchy—the great original patriarchates of Constantinople, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—the “five senses of the universe.”

The title “ecumenical” was given to all the chief offices in the imperial city. When Saint John the Faster (r. 582–595), the Patriarch of Constantinople, assumed the title of “Ecumenical Patriarch,” the designation was adamantly opposed by Pope Saint Gregory the Great of Rome (r. 590–604) as being extremely arrogant and unbecoming of any Christian bishop, including the bishop of Rome. This is the same Saint Gregory whose name is traditionally connected with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts which the Orthodox celebrate on the weekdays of Great Lent (see Worship).
The West

Saint Gregory the Great

In the West, the power and prestige of the Roman Papacy increased dramatically under Saint Gregory the Great. In the midst of a general breakdown of civil authority in the face of the invasion of the Lombards, he led the Church in organizing the economic, social, political, and even military affairs of Italy. He successfully negotiated a separate peace with the Lombards, thus effectively setting aside the authority of the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna. Personally very humble, he was also a skilled practical theologian. His Book of Pastoral Rule would have great influence in the Western Church.

Saint Gregory is also particularly remembered for writing the Dialogues, which relate the lives and miracles of a number of Italian saints (hence he is known in the Orthodox Church as Saint Gregory Dialogus). He is also remembered for sending Saint Augustine of Canterbury and about forty companions to England, where they firmly established Latin-speaking Christianity centered in Canterbury, which is the seat of the head of the Anglican Church to this day.

Saint Benedict of Nursia and his Monastic Rule

Saint Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-c. 550) founded an important monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy. His Monastic Rule, in which he drew freely from the Rule of Saint Basil the Great among other sources, would become the single guiding regulation for Western monasticism for the next five hundred years. This moderate, balanced Rule for cenobitic (communal) monasticism continues to guide the Benedictine Order within the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

From the Prologue of the Monastic Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia

Therefore we must establish a school of the Lord’s service, in the founding of which we hope to stipulate nothing that is harsh or burdensome. But if, for good reason, for the amendment of evil habits or for the preservation of charity, there be some strictness of discipline, do not be at once dismayed and run away from the way of salvation, of which the entrance must be narrow.

Rather, as we progress in our monastic life and in faith, our hearts will be enlarged, and we will run with unspeakable sweetness of love in the way of God’s commandments. Hence, by never abandoning His rule, and by persevering in His teaching in the monastery until death, we will share by patience in the sufferings of Christ, that we may deserve to be partakers also of His Kingdom. Amen.

Other Leading Saints
Among the leading saints of this century, mention also must be made of Saint Columba (c. 521–597), a great missionary in Scotland and Ireland; and Saint Sabas (439–532), who built on the preliminary work of the wonderworking Saint Euthymius the Great (377–473) in establishing what would become the leading monastery of Palestine. A stronghold of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy, the Monastery of Saint Sabas is still in existence today.

The Filioque

In Spain, most likely at the Council of Toledo in 589, the word filioque (meaning “and the Son”) was added by the Spanish Church to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: “And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son.” This action was taken to further emphasize the divinity of Christ to the Visigoths, Arian Christians who first invaded Spain in the previous century. Their ancestors had been converted to Arian Christianity (which denied Christ’s full divinity) by Bishop Ulfilas (c. 311–383), known as the Apostle to the Goths.

However, it was a serious offense for a local council to unilaterally alter the universally accepted Creed which had been written by the first two Ecumenical Councils. And asserting that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son seriously distorts the traditional understanding of the Holy Trinity. So, as we will see, the addition of “and the Son” (filioque) to the Creed in reference to the procession of the Holy Spirit will have grave consequences in later Church history.
Seventh Century
In the year 610, a new emperor took the imperial throne, and a new patriarch took the ecclesiastical throne of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–641) and Patriarch Sergius (r. 610–638) became close friends and collaborators. Together they led the State and the Church for almost thirty years. And they were very eager to reunite the western and eastern parts of the Empire both religiously and politically.

In another major effort to heal the schism with the Monophysites/Non-Chalcedonians, Patriarch Sergius proposed the idea that in the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ, there must be one divine-human (theandric) energy—hence, this view came to be known as “Monoenergism.” This formula appealed to the moderate Non-Chalcedonians, with their continued emphasis on “the one nature of the Word of God Incarnate”—since having one nature would imply having one energy. And for the Chalcedonians, it did seem to make sense that since the Word of God has only one (divine) hypostasis, He must act with only one energy, operation, or action.

Support for Sergius’s new formula was strengthened by the fact that the concept of “one theandric energy” appeared in the writings attributed to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite. Most probably Sergius got the idea from this source. By now these writings, which first appeared among moderate Monophysites early in the previous century, had become very popular with both Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians. These writings would come to have great influence on the liturgical piety of the Church through their symbolic explanations of the rituals of worship.

For a time, it appeared that the “monoenergistic” formula would be successful in winning back the Non-Chalcedonians. In 632, in Erzerum, a council of 193 Greek and Armenian (Monophysite) bishops was held which formally recognized the Council of Chalcedon on the basis of the “monoenergistic” interpretation. And in 633, the new Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria, named Cyrus, succeeded in getting a number of leading Egyptian Non-Chalcedonians to agree to accept the Council of Chalcedon on the basis of the “monoenergistic” formula.

Unexpectedly, even the Nestorians of Persia were drawn to the formula, since the teachers of Nestorius had said that the two natures (though really implying two hypostases) of Christ were united by the one activity, or energy, of their union in Christ. In 628, Emperor Heraclius, in the midst of his military campaign against the Persians, participated, along with his court, in the
The celebration of the Divine Liturgy and received the Holy Eucharist with the Nestorian Catholicos of Persia,Isoyabh II.

The Syrian and Palestinian Non-Chalcedonians were less excited by the “monoenergistic” plan of reunion, though the Monastery of Saint John Maron, near Emesa, accepted it. These monks and their followers eventually fled to the mountains of Lebanon to escape persecution, and in 1182 they joined Roman Catholicism. To this day their descendants are known as Maronites; they are the largest Christian group in the modern state of Lebanon.

Apparently there was no opposition raised against the “monoenergistic” formula from any of the Chalcedonians until 633. In that year the elderly and highly esteemed monk Saint Sophronius (c. 560–638) implored Cyrus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, not to promote it. Sophronius was convinced that something vital and intrinsic to human nature was being denied to Jesus Christ in the assertion that He has only one divine-human energy.

Cyrus was not convinced by Sophronius. But when the determined monk appealed personally to Patriarch Sergius, the patriarch became willing to reconsider the issue. In a letter to Pope Honorius of Rome (r. 625–638), Patriarch Sergius suggested that instead of asserting that there is only one energy in Christ, perhaps it might be more accurate to say that He has only one will.

Honorius eagerly took up Sergius’s hint about one will in Christ. He wrote back saying that there would be no need to talk about one or two energies in Christ if everyone would agree that there is only one will in Christ. So he is the first one to explicitly declare that there is only one will in Christ. This view, however well-intentioned and seemingly reasonable as it may have been, will be condemned at the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in Constantinople in 680–681, as the heresy of Monothelitism.

Sergius, convinced that Monothelitism is closer to the truth than Monoenergism, was delighted with Honorius’s reply. In 638, in collaboration with Abbot Pyrrhus, who followed him as Patriarch of Constantinople, Sergius convinced Emperor Heraclius to proclaim the Monothelite doctrine in an imperial decree. The doctrine was endorsed by two Church councils in Constantinople, in 638 and 639. This doctrine became the law of the Church and State until it was condemned at the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

Meanwhile, the elderly monk Sophronius, who had become Patriarch of Jerusalem (r. 634–638), was convinced that Monothelitism is just as erroneous as Monoenergism, but he was not able to deter either Patriarch Sergius or Pope Honorius from promoting the Monothelite position. However, he inspired his brilliant follower, Saint Maximus the Confessor (580–662), to take up the
struggle.
Saint Maximus, from an old aristocratic family of Constantinople, had been an imperial secretary to Emperor Heraclius before becoming a monk in 614. In western North Africa in 645, Maximus convinced the deposed and exiled Patriarch Pyrrhus of Constantinople of the error of Monothelitism. By the next year he was in Rome, where he so strongly convinced Pope Theodore (r. 642–649) of the error that the Pope broke communion with the Monothelite Patriarch Paul of Constantinople. And in 649, Maximus inspired the new Pope Saint Martin (r. 649–655) to hold a council in Rome which solemnly condemned both Monoenergism and Monothelitism.

What was wrong with Monothelitism? Saint Maximus and Saint Martin, together with their staunch supporters, insisted that both Christ’s divine nature and his human nature each have its own proper energy (or activity) and capability/power to will. Christ, in His divine nature, has the same fullness of the divine will, energy, action, operation, and power which the Father and the Holy Spirit also have. And in His human nature, Christ has the same fullness of the human will, energy, action, operation, and power which every other human being has. He must have this key element in human nature, or else, as Saint Gregory the Theologian said in refuting Apollinarianism, “What He has not assumed has not been healed (or saved).”

Christ has indeed healed and saved every aspect of human nature, including the natural human will, because He assumed every element/aspect of human nature when he became Incarnate. And it is through His genuinely human action, voluntarily submitting his natural human will to His divine will (the will of God), that Jesus Christ, as the new and final Adam, freely accepted crucifixion to liberate all of humanity from sin and death (see Doctrine).

Saint Maximus and Saint Martin suffered greatly for opposing the Monothelite position. They were both arrested by the imperial authorities and brought to Constantinople, where they were tried on false charges, condemned, imprisoned, and exiled. Saint Maximus even had his right hand and his tongue cut off by the imperial powers, who were determined to force the Chalcedonians and the Non-Chalcedonians into theological agreement. Ironically, by then real reconciliation between the two sides had been made virtually impossible by the Arab conquests, which in effect sealed off Egypt, Palestine, and Syria from the Byzantine world, preventing the possibility of further theological discussion.
The Sixth Ecumenical Council

The doctrine of Saint Sophronius, Saint Maximus, and Saint Martin prevailed at the Third Council of Constantinople, known as the Sixth Ecumenical Council, held in 680–681. This council verified their teaching and condemned Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople and his successors Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter, as well as Pope Honorius of Rome, together with all who defended the false doctrine about Jesus that deprived Him of His genuine humanity. Pope Saint Agatho of Rome (r. 678–681) did much to prepare the way for this council and its decision, whereby communion between Rome and the Eastern Churches was restored.
The Council of Trullo or the Quinisext Council

In 692, just eleven years after the Sixth Ecumenical Council was held, another major council of Eastern bishops was held in the imperial palace called Trullo in Constantinople—hence the name, the Council of Trullo. This Council made no doctrinal proclamations; rather, it issued 102 canonical regulations on a wide variety of topics.

This council is probably more often called the Quinisext Council (meaning “fifth-sixth”), because its canonical legislation is understood as having completed the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils, neither of which had passed any canons. So its rulings are held by the Orthodox Church to be at the same level of authority as the canons passed by the first four Ecumenical Councils.

Some of these 102 canons were previously included in Justinian’s civil legislation. Others concerned early practices of the Church which had not previously been put into formal Church law.

Some of these canons reveal differences in practices between the Roman and the Eastern Churches. For example, Canon 13 states:

*Since we know it to be handed down as a rule of the Roman Church that those who are deemed worthy to be advanced to the diaconate or presbyterate should promise no longer to cohabit with their wives, we, preserving the ancient rule and apostolic perfection and order, will that the lawful marriages of men who are in holy orders be from this time forward firm, by no means dissolving their union with their wives nor depriving them of their mutual intercourse at a convenient time. *Mt 19.6*; and as the Gospel says, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (*Mt 19.6*); and as the Apostle says, “Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled” (*Heb 13.4*); and again, “Are you bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed” (*1Cor 7.27*).

**Canon 102 of the Quinisext Council, on pastoral care as the cure of souls**

It behooves those who have received from God the power to loose and bind, to consider the type and the degree of the sin, and the readiness of the sinner for repentance, and to apply medicine suitable for the disease, lest if he is undiscerning in each of these respects he should fail in healing the sick man. For the disease of sin is not simple, but complex, and can take many different forms, and it germinates many mischievous offshoots, from which much evil is diffused, and it proceeds further until it is stopped by the power of the
physician. Wherefore the one who professes the science of spiritual medicine ought first of all to consider the disposition of the one who has sinned, and to see whether he tends towards health or, on the contrary, provokes himself to disease by his own behavior. ?.?.

For the whole account is between God and the one to whom the pastoral rule has been delivered, to lead back the wandering sheep and to cure that which is wounded by the serpent. The pastor must neither cast the sheep down into the depths of despair, nor loosen the bridle thus leading them to a dissolute way of life. Rather, by some way or other, either by means of sternness and astringency, or by greater softness and milder medicines, the pastor must resist the sickness and exert himself for the healing of the ulcer, examining the fruits of the man’s repentance and wisely managing him—for all men are called to higher illumination.

The Roman Church, however, continued to try to enforce celibacy upon all her priests, though she was not able to do so fully until about the 12th century.

Canon 6 of the Quinisext Council reaffirmed the rule that unmarried priests, deacons, and subdeacons may not marry after their ordination. The council also reinforced the law dating from Justinian’s time that only celibates, normally taken from among the monks, may serve in the office of the bishop (Canons 12 and 48). And this council set the ages for ordination to the offices of deacon, priest, and bishop (Canons 14 and 15).

In general, the council reaffirmed the traditional churchly discipline regarding the clergy, such as their strict exclusion from direct participation in the political, military, and economic affairs of this world. This can be seen in varying ways in Canons 9, 10, 24, 27, 34, and 50.

This council also called for the “penalty of murder” for those who “give drugs for procuring abortion and those who take them to kill the fetus” (Canon 91).
Besides his deep and profound theological writings, Saint Maximus the Confessor also wrote much on spiritual and ascetical themes. His most famous spiritual work is probably the Four Centuries on Love, which is included in the *Philokalia*, the greatest collection of spiritual writings of Eastern Orthodoxy. There is more written by Saint Maximus in the *Philokalia* than by any other writer.

At about the same time, Saint John Climacus (d. 649), abbot of the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, wrote one of the greatest, classic works on the spiritual life, called *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. This book was held in such high esteem that it gave John his last name, for “Climacus” means “of the Ladder.”
Liturgical Development

During his long campaign against the Persians, Emperor Heraclius recovered the True Cross of Christ, which the Persians had taken from Jerusalem in 614. On March 21, 631, he solemnly brought it to Golgotha in Jerusalem. This action dramatically helped to spread the celebration of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) throughout the Christian Empire; until then this feast was celebrated mostly only in Jerusalem (see Worship).

The Quinisext Council decreed that on the weekdays of Great Lent the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts should be served instead of the Eucharistic Divine Liturgy (Canon 52). It called for Christians to honor Christ’s resurrection by refraining from penitential kneeling on Sundays (Canon 90). This council forbade all laymen except the Emperor from entering the sanctuary of the church building (Canon 69), and it forbade the sacramental marriage of Orthodox Christians with non-Orthodox (Canon 72). It enjoined those who sing in church to refrain from “undisciplined vociferations” and from using “any melodies which are incongruous and unsuitable for the Church” (Canon 75). And it called for the excommunication of people who for no good reason miss the Divine Liturgy for “three consecutive Sundays” (Canon 80).

Canon 55 of the Quinisext Council reveals a significant difference in practice between East and West concerning fasting during Great Lent, and it mandates that the Roman Church must correct her non-traditional custom:

Since we understand that in the city of the Romans, in the holy fast of Lent they fast on the Saturdays [meaning abstinence from all food, and no celebration of the Divine Liturgy], contrary to the ecclesiastical observance which is traditional, it seemed good to the holy synod that also in the Church of the Romans the canon [Canon 66 of the ancient Apostolic Canons] shall immovably stand fast which says: “If any cleric shall be found to fast on a Sunday or Saturday (except on one occasion only [i.e., Great and Holy Saturday]) he is to be deposed; and if he is a layman he shall be cut off.”

Another difference in practice between East and West is discussed in Canon 82, which addresses how Christ is to be depicted in the holy icons:

In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor [i.e., Saint John the Baptist] points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true Lamb, Christ our God. Considering therefore the ancient types and shadows to be symbols of
the truth and patterns given to the Church, we prefer ‘grace and truth’ [Jn 1.17], receiving it as the fulfillment of the Law. In order therefore that ‘that which is perfect’ may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in colored expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory His life in the flesh, His passion and salutary death, and His redemption which was wrought for the whole world

This canon will become even more relevant in the next century, in the era of Iconoclasm, for here is clear proof of the Church’s official acceptance of iconography-in a declaration from the second half, so to speak, of the Sixth Ecumenical Council.
Relations with Rome

No doubt due, to a great extent, to the canons of the Quinisext Council mentioned above that show some of the differences in ecclesiastical practices between the Roman and the Eastern Churches, the Roman Church did not accept this council, and never has to this day. To the Roman Church, these canons represented an independent spirit on the part of the Eastern Churches that conflicted with her desire to bring all the Churches of the world under her authority.

Perhaps sensing this desire on the part of the Roman Church, the Fathers of the Quinisext Council felt obliged to reaffirm the independent position of the Patriarchate of Constantinople vis-à-vis the Church of Rome. This they did in Canon 36, which basically repeats Canon 3 from the Second Ecumenical Council and Canon 28 from the Fourth Ecumenical Council:

*Renewing the enactment by the 150 Fathers assembled at the God-protected and imperial city, and those of the 630 who met at Chalcedon, we decree that the see of Constantinople shall have equal privileges with the see of Old Rome, and shall be as highly regarded in ecclesiastical matters as that is, and shall be second after it.*

The Sixth Ecumenical Council had restored communion between Rome and the Eastern Churches, but Rome’s rejection of its sequel, the Quinisext Council, reveals that there were still major tensions between the two great halves of Christianity. These tensions will be very much exacerbated in the next century with the rise of Iconoclasm in the East, and with the rise of the Carolingian dynasty, and the Roman Church’s alliance with it, in the West.
The Rise of Islam

The seventh century also witnessed the rise of Islam, founded by an Arabian mystic named Mohammed (c. 570–632), who initiated the Moslem era by his flight, along with his closest followers, from Mecca to Medina in 622. For centuries the various tribes in Arabia had fought against one another, but Mohammed was able to unite them under the dual banner of Arab brotherhood and the religion called Islam, which means “subjugation.”

After Mohammed’s death in 632, the movement was consolidated further by Abu Bakr (r. 632–634). Then the second caliph (meaning “successor”), Omar (r. 634–644), led the Arabs in conquering all of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia by the time of his death in 644. These conquests reduced the Byzantine Empire to basically only Asia Minor and Greece. Nearly all of the non-Chalcedonian Christians were now living under Islamic rule, and all possibility for further dialogue between them and the Byzantine Chalcedonians was cut off, as mentioned above.

The Muslims continued their conquest across northern Africa through the rest of the 7th century, and in 714 they invaded Spain. They would not be driven entirely out of Spain until 1492.
Eighth Century
Iconoclasm
Emperor Leo III the Isaurian

During the winter of 717–718, an Arab fleet of 1800 vessels put Constantinople under siege. The new emperor, Leo III the Isaurian (r. 717–741), a brilliant military commander from eastern Asia Minor, used the secret weapon called “Greek fire” to drive away the Arabs, thus saving Europe from the advancing Mohammedans.

The new emperor, now a popular hero, initiated a number of military, economic, and administrative reforms. Then he turned his attention to the Church, which he blamed for the various problems of the Empire. He had particular animosity towards the monks, who now numbered at least 100,000—a very large number of men who were lost from military and civil service, and the growing monastic estates were free from taxation.

When a dispute about the icons, raised by certain bishops from the eastern provinces of Asia Minor, came to his attention, he took the opportunity to exert his own authority over the Church. Beginning in 726, he issued a number of edicts against the icons and their veneration, for in his opinion they were being worshiped as idols.

It was true that various superstitious abuses had arisen involving icons, and there had always been a certain hesitation about them among a minority in the Church who feared the possibility of idolatry. Since the main thrust of Iconoclasm originated in the eastern provinces of Asia Minor, the part of the Empire closest to the Islamic lands, it is probable that Islam, with its condemnation of pictorial religious art, played a role in influencing the views of the Iconoclasts. And for Scriptural support, the Iconoclasts invoked the second of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (Ex 20.4).

The majority in the Church, including many of the great Church Fathers, defended the icons as important aids in personal and corporate spiritual life and worship. As noted above, the Council of Trullo in 692 affirmed the propriety of making and venerating icons of Christ. Nevertheless, Emperor Leo pressed on with his program, despite the willingness of many Christians, especially the monks, to shed their blood in defense of the holy images—and despite the indignant reaction of the Church of Rome, which held a council in 731 that condemned and excommunicated the Iconoclasts (literally, “icon-breakers”).

The defenders of the icons, called Iconodules, were led theologically by Saint Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (r. 715–730), who was deposed and exiled when he refused to reject the icons, and by Saint?John of Damascus.
(c. 652–749), a great Church Father who extensively quoted previous Fathers in his famous three treatises in defense of the icons, called On the Holy Images. Saint John was able to speak out relatively freely because he was a monk at the Saint Sabas Monastery in Palestine, a land which had been under the control of the Arabs since 636.

Saint John’s main point is that icons of Christ are entirely appropriate since He, the Son of God, really took human flesh and became man. Thus He can be depicted in that flesh. Saint John states,

*In former times God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of the God whom I see. I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who willed to take His abode in matter, who worked out my salvation through matter. Never will I cease honoring [proskynesis = veneration] the matter which wrought my salvation!* (On the Holy Images 1.16).

Saint John carefully distinguishes the relative worship, or—much better to say—the veneration (proskynesis) of the icons, the relics of the saints, the Cross, and the Gospel Book, from the highest degree of worship (latreia) due to God alone. And he reminds the Iconoclasts that the same Lord Who commanded “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven ” (Ex 20.4) so that such a thing would not be worshiped as an idol (Ex 20.5), also commanded that golden cherubim be crafted to hover over the mercy seat in the Tabernacle (Ex 25.18–22). He also points out that according to the Holy Scriptures, Christ is the “image (literally, icon-eikon) of God” (2Cor 4.4; also Col 1.15).

Emperor Leo perhaps was eventually influenced by the strong popular reaction against his Iconoclastic decrees, for he did not actively persecute the Iconodules in the later years of his reign. For political reasons, he allowed freedom to the Christians in southern Italy, then still under Byzantine control, to venerate the icons. Many Iconodules fled there in this era, where considerable Byzantine influence is evident to this day.
Emperor Constantine V Copronymos

Emperor Leo’s son and successor, Emperor Constantine V Copronymos (r. 741–775), took a much harsher stance against the icons and their defenders. Even daring to call himself “emperor and priest,” he was more determined than his father had been to subject the Church to his own will. He styled himself a theologian, and attempted to present a well-reasoned, theologically informed case against the icons. He systematically pursued the official policy of Iconoclasm, removing Iconodules from the episcopacy and replacing them with Iconoclasts.

By 753 he felt ready to move definitively at the highest theological and ecclesiastical level. He called a major Church council which he intended to be the Seventh Ecumenical Council. It met the next year in Constantinople, with 338 bishops in attendance—all of whom were under severe imperial pressure to support the Iconoclastic position.

This Iconoclastic Council of 754 condemned the making and venerating of icons. The bishops at the council declared that they were only following the first six Ecumenical Councils, and indeed, all of Holy Tradition—though quite obviously, they were ignoring Canon 82 promulgated by the Quinisext Council in 692.

In trying to make sophisticated theological arguments, the Iconoclastic Council asserted that icons of Christ either are Monophysitic (mixing the divine and human natures, if their defenders say that Christ Himself is depicted in the icons), or Nestorian (separating Christ’s divine nature from His humanity, if it is stated that only His human nature and not His divine nature is being depicted). In conclusion, the council decreed:

Supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, we declare unanimously, in the name of the Holy Trinity, that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed out of the Christian Church every likeness which is made out of any material and color whatever by the evil art of painters.

It seems that the chief Christological mistake of this council was that it did not properly distinguish between Christ’s divine nature and His (divine) hypostasis. The icons do depict Christ in His human nature, which He has forever joined inseparably to Himself through union with His divine Person or hypostasis. But of course the icons do not depict His divine nature, which forever remains invisible and uncircumscribable.

The theology expressed at this false council also reflects a dualistic streak haunting Christianity in various ways through the centuries, which denies the
full goodness of the material order. In addition to calling iconography “the evil art of painters,” this council also labeled it “a dead art, discovered by the heathen,” and “lifeless pictures with material colors which are of no value.” It said Christians are forbidden “to imitate the customs of the demon-worshippers, and to insult the saints .?.?. by common dead matter.” And it slanderously accused the iconographer of working “from sinful love of gain .?.?. with his polluted hands.”

Such a negative view of matter cannot help but undermine a proper understanding of the Incarnation of Christ-and hence, of the very nature and scope of salvation itself. As Bishop Kallistos Ware observes,

*The Iconoclasts, by repudiating all representations of God, failed to take full account of the Incarnation. They fell, as so many puritans have done, into a kind of dualism. Regarding matter as a defilement, they wanted a religion freed from all contact with what is material; for they thought that what is spiritual must be non-material. But this is to betray the Incarnation, by allowing no place to Christ’s humanity, to His body; it is to forget that our body as well as our soul must be saved and transfigured. The Iconoclast controversy is thus closely linked to the earlier disputes about Christ’s person. It was not merely a controversy about religious art, but about the Incarnation, about human salvation, about the salvation of the entire material cosmos.*

Many in the Church refused to accept the decisions of the Iconoclastic Council. As a result, they were viciously persecuted by the imperial authorities. The time between 762 and 775 is known as the “decade of blood” since hundreds of Christians, mostly monks, were imprisoned, tortured, and even killed for harboring and honoring icons.
The Seventh Ecumenical Council

In 787, during the reign of the Empress Irene (r. 780–802), who favored icon veneration, a major council was held in Nicea which defined the legitimate and proper use of icons in the Church. This council, the true Seventh Ecumenical Council, followed the theology of Saint John of Damascus in affirming the propriety of the icons. It proclaimed that icons “should be set forth” in the churches and in private homes and in public places.

In the 22 canons promulgated by this council, relics are stipulated to be in every church (Canon 7); all monasteries are to be restored (Canon 13); mixed monasteries (with a men’s part and a women’s part on the same property) are allowed to continue to exist, but no new ones may be established (Canon 20); and the buying of church office (simony) is condemned (Canon 5).

In celebrating the decisions of this council, Father Alexander Schmemann declares:

*Everything in the world and the world itself has taken on a new meaning in the Incarnation of God. Everything has become open to sanctification; matter itself has become a channel of the grace of the Holy Spirit.*

**From the proclamation of the Seventh Ecumenical Council**

To make our confession short, we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally, one of which is the making of pictorial representations, in conformity with the history of the preaching of the Gospel, a tradition useful in many respects, but especially in this, that the Incarnation of the Word of God is shown forth as real and not merely illusory.?.?.?.

We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit dwells in her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, in painting and mosaics, as well as in other appropriate materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels, and on the vestments and on hangings, and in pictures both in houses and in public places. These holy images should depict the figure of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, and of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, and of the honorable Angels and of all Saints, and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them. And to these should be given due salutation and honorable
reverence (aspasmon kai timetiken proskynesis), but not indeed that true worship of faith (latreia) which pertains alone to the divine nature. For the honor which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject [hypostasis] represented. Anathema to those who do not venerate the holy and venerable images. Anathema to those who call the sacred images idols.

This Christological definition of icons and their veneration forms the substance of the dogma promulgated by the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The whole Christological dispute, in fact, comes to a climax with this council, which gave it its final ‘cosmic’ meaning.

With rejoicing, the Church acclaimed Empress Irene and her son Constantine as “a new Constantine and a new Helen.” However, Irene did not prove to be a praiseworthy empress for the rest of her rule, for in the year 797 she had her son Constantine blinded so that she might continue to rule by herself. After ruling five more years, she was ousted in a coup d’état and exiled.

As we will see, the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787 did not bring Iconoclasm to a permanent end. Tragically, it will arise again in the next century.
Liturgical Development

Saint John of Damascus was also responsible for very significant liturgical developments in the eighth century. He wrote many liturgical hymns still sung in the Church, such as the Canon of Easter Matins, and some of the hymns sung at the Orthodox funeral service. He is considered to be the original composer of the Octoechos, the collection of hymns sung in the Church using eight different melodies, one per week on a rotating basis throughout the year (see Worship). Saint John is also the author of the first systematic treatise of Orthodox Christian doctrine, called the Complete Exposition of the Orthodox Faith. This treatise forms the third part of his trilogy, The Fount of Knowledge.

Saint Cosmas the Melodist, Bishop of Maiuma (c. 675-c. 751), Saint John of Damascus’s adopted brother and a very accomplished hymnwriter, also was active in this era. Fourteen of his canons for various feasts of the Church year were incorporated into the liturgical services of the Eastern Church.

Saint Andrew of Crete, Archbishop of of Gortyna (c. 660–740), wrote the lengthy penitential canon which is still sung in the Orthodox Church during the first week and then in the fifth week of Great Lent.

The feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple was introduced in Constantinople. According to Saint Andrew of Crete, the feast was already being celebrated in Jerusalem as early as the sixth century. By the eighth century, it had found its place in the universal calendar of the Orthodox Church.
The West

In the West in the eighth century, barbarian tribes in northern Europe continued to be converted to Christianity. The greatest missionary in this time was Saint Boniface, the Apostle to Germany (680–754). Working on behalf of the Roman Church, he eventually missionized much of northern Germany, and reformed the whole Frankish Church along Roman lines.

During this century the Roman Church turned away from the Byzantine Empire for support, allying itself instead with the newly emerging dynasty of the Franks. This northern tribe, which gave their name to the nation of France, was led by three remarkable leaders in the eighth century: Charles Martel (r. 723–741), who led the army that stopped the advance of the Arabs in western Europe at the famous Battle of Poitiers in 732; Pepin III the Short (r. 741–768), who gave the Roman Church vast tracts of land in central Italy in return for its favor and support; and especially Charlemagne (Charles the Great) (r. 768–814), who was anointed and crowned as Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III on Christmas Day in the year 800.

Ever since Emperor Constantine the Great had permanently moved the imperial capital from Rome to Constantinople, the Roman Church had felt somehow abandoned, if not betrayed. Then it felt threatened when Constantinople began claiming, at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, to be the “New Rome.” Such feelings only increased with the fall of Rome to the barbarians in 476. Ever since Pope Saint Gregory the Great (r. 590–604) had negotiated a separate peace with the Lombards, the Roman Church had been operating basically independently from Byzantium, fending for itself. When Iconoclasm broke out in the East, the Papacy was given another reason to distrust the Byzantines.

However, in turning to the Franks for protection and support, the Roman Church opened itself to foreign influences which would alienate the two halves of Christendom much further from each other. Three of the most important of these developments were the large tracts of land given to the Church by King Pepin III—the Papal States—that the Papacy would rule administratively as an independent temporal power up until the 19th century; the acquiring of a certain militaristic spirit that would lead to the Crusades, with some Popes even leading armies in battle; and the eventual acceptance of the addition of the filioque in the Nicene Creed, which to this day, along with the dogma of papal infallibility, is probably the single greatest theological difference between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy.
The Carolingian Renaissance

Through his conquests in France, Germany, Spain, and modern day Hungary, Charlemagne created what would be the largest empire in Europe from the fall of Rome in 476 until the time of Napoleon. From his capital in Aachen, he actively promoted higher learning through his patronage of the many scholars at his palace and the remarkable library there. He invited Alcuin (c. 740–804), a prodigious scholar and able representative of the Christian culture of Northumbria, England, to join his court in 781; this remarkable churchman of wide-ranging interests did much to enrich the flowering of learning and refined culture in this period in the West.

Charlemagne took a lively interest in ecclesiastical affairs. He called a series of sixteen Church councils all held in Frankfurt, Germany, and he promoted various reforms in the Frankish Church, including liturgical standardization based on Roman practices.

In 792 Charlemagne sent his Carolingian Books (Libri Carolini) to Pope Hadrian I (r. 772–795), which attacked not only the Iconoclastic Council of 754 for outlawing the icons, but also the Council of Nicea of 787 for allowing excessive reverence for the icons. This charge was apparently partly based on a faulty Latin translation of the decree of that council which did not properly distinguish between the veneration (proskynesis; veneratio in Latin) of the icons, and the worship, or adoration, given to God alone (latreia; adoratio in Latin).

A big reason for Charlemagne’s attack against the Eastern Church was to discredit the Eastern empire and its emperor so that he himself could be recognized as the sole ruler in Christendom. In his vision of the new Holy Roman Empire Charlemagne wanted to include all of the East together with all of the West in what he believed was the legitimate continuation of the ancient Roman Empire, overriding the fact that the Roman Empire still existed in the eastern half of the ancient Empire.

Charlemagne also played a major role in the sad story of the addition of the filioque into the Nicene Creed. He had grown up with the filioque, and urged the Roman Church to accept it. Pope Leo III (r. 795–816) resisted its imposition in Rome to such an extent that he had the original Creed engraved on silver tablets prominently displayed in Saint Peter’s Cathedral in Rome. However, he allowed the Frankish Church to use it. Eventually, the Roman Church yielded to the Germanic pressure and accepted the filioque-using it for the first time in public worship in 1014. The Byzantine Church actually had
dropped the pope’s name from the diptychs five years before, when Pope Sergius wrote a confession of faith that included the *filioque*. This was the first specific step towards the Great Schism of 1054.
Ninth Century
The End of Iconoclasm

In 811, the Byzantine army, led by Emperor Nikephoros I (r. 802–811), was ambushed in Bulgaria, and the Emperor was killed in the devastating defeat. Not since Emperor Valens died at the hands of the Goths at Adrianople in 378 had a Byzantine emperor been killed in battle.

Two years later, a new line of imperial rulers emerged who once again attacked both the veneration and the venerators of the holy images. Again the icons were blamed for the various troubles of the Empire, especially the setbacks in warfare with the Bulgarians.

In 815, Emperor Leo V the Armenian (r. 813–820) ordered the icons in the churches to be placed above the reach of the faithful so that they could not be honored and kissed. Everyone in the Church knew that a second wave of persecution against the icons and their venerators was starting. In defiance of the order, on Palm Sunday in 815, Saint Theodore the Studite (759–826), the abbot of the great Studion Monastery in Constantinople, led a public procession with the holy icons. For this he was sent into exile. He would be the main theological champion of the icons during the second wave of Iconoclasm, through his important work entitled On the Holy Icons.

Persecution of the Iconodules was as fierce at times during the next twenty-seven years as it had been in the previous century. Not until 842 was the persecution brought to an end. And just as it was a woman-Empress Irene-who ended the first wave of Iconoclasm after coming to the throne upon the death of her husband, Emperor Leo IV the Khazar (r. 775–780), as regent for their son who was too young to rule, so again it is a woman-Empress Saint Theodora-who brings the second wave of persecution against the icons to an end when she comes to the throne upon the death of her husband, Emperor Theophilus (r. 829–842), to rule as regent for their young son Michael III.

Empress Theodora worked quickly to restore the icons. In марта of 843, John the Grammarian, Iconoclastic Patriarch of Constantinople and advisor to Emperor Theophilus, was deposed and replaced with Methodius, who had spent seven years in prison for his defense of the icons. And immediately, at a local council in Constantinople, the icons were restored, and a huge, triumphant procession with the holy images took place on the first Sunday of Great Lent in that year-March 11, 843. This great event, known as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, has been celebrated ever since in the Orthodox Church on the first Sunday of Great Lent-known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

Hymns from Vespers for the Sunday of Orthodoxy
Thou who art uncircumscribed, O Master, in Thy divine nature, wast pleased in the last times to take flesh and be circumscribed; and in assuming flesh, Thou hast also taken on Thyself all its distinctive properties. Therefore we depict the likeness of Thine outward form, venerating it with an honor that is relative. So we are exalted to the love of Thee, and following the holy traditions handed down by the Apostles, from Thine icon we receive the grace of healing.

As a precious adornment the Church of Christ has received the venerable and holy icons of the Savior Christ, of God’s Mother and of all the saints. Celebrating now their triumphant restoration, she is made bright with grace and splendor.

The grace of truth has shone forth upon us; the mysteries darkly prefigured in the times of old have now been openly fulfilled. For behold, the Church is clothed in a beauty that surpasses all things earthly, through the icon of the incarnate Christ that was foreshadowed by the ark of testimony [Ex 25.22]. This is the safeguard of the Orthodox Faith; for if we hold fast to the icon of the Savior whom we worship, we shall not go astray.
In the middle of the ninth century, Saint Prince Rastislav (r. 846–870), the ruler of the Slav state of Moravia (now in the Czech Republic), sent a request to Byzantium asking for missionaries to bring the Christian Faith to his people in their own language. Frankish missionaries using Latin had already been at work in his land, but he realized that the Faith would be much more meaningful to his people if they could have the Scriptures and the liturgical services in their native tongue. He also wanted to strengthen the alliance his nation had recently formed with Byzantium, against possible encroachment by the Frankish Holy Roman Empire directly to the west of his realm.

In response to Prince Rastislav’s request, Emperor Michael III (r. 842–867) and Patriarch Saint Photius the Great of Constantinople sent two devout and well-educated brothers named Constantine and Methodius as missionaries to Moravia. From an aristocratic family, these brothers had grown up in Thessalonica, where many Slavs lived, from whom they learned the Slavic language. They even had already done some preliminary work in trying to develop an alphabet for that language. And they had previous diplomatic and missionary experience. So they were ideal candidates for the mission to the Slavs.

Before arriving in Moravia in 863, Constantine had finished developing the first alphabet for the Slavic language. Called Glagolitic, it had highly unusual characters, unlike those of any other language. In Moravia the brothers used this alphabet in translating Church books into the Slavic language, which came to be known as Old Church Slavonic. They taught the alphabet and literacy, introduced the use of Slavonic in the Church services, and began training men for the diaconate and priesthood as the first step in raising up a native clergy for the Moravian Church.

The mission of Constantine and Methodius created hostilities with the Frankish missionaries from the Latin Church who had come to Moravia earlier. These missionaries insisted that Church services should only be done in Latin, and that only Latin (Roman) customs and traditions should be used by the Slavic Christians.

In 867 the brothers traveled to Venice with some of their Moravian disciples, hoping to find a bishop to ordain these disciples as priests and deacons. In Venice they were sharply opposed by Latin clergy who insist that the services may only be celebrated in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. In response,
Constantine called this the “Three-Language Heresy”; he quoted 1 Corinthians 14 in defense of the use of the vernacular language in the Church services.

At this point the brothers were invited to Rome by Pope Nicholas, who was anxious to bring the Greek mission to the Moravians under his control. By the time they arrived, however, Nicholas had died, but they were received with great acclaim by his successor, Pope Hadrian II (r. 867–872). Pope Hadrian allowed the brothers to celebrate the Roman liturgy in the Slavonic language, and at least once he participated in such a service.

Constantine died early in 869, while still visiting Rome. Shortly before his death he became a monk, taking the name of Cyril. It is by this name that he is known as a saint of the Church. Before he died he begged his brother to continue the holy work among the Slavs. Methodius promised to do so.

Soon thereafter, Methodius was consecrated by Pope Hadrian as Archbishop of Pannonia and Moravia, with full authorization to continue using Slavonic in the Church services. However, when Archbishop Methodius returned to Moravia, he was arrested and imprisoned by the Frankish-Germanic clergy with the support of Rastislav’s successor, the pro-German usurper Sventopulk, and Louis the German, the Holy Roman Emperor. In 873, when Pope John VIII (r. 872–882) learned what had happened to Archbishop Methodius, he demanded and managed to obtain his release. But the Roman Church was unwilling to give much direct support to Methodius, for fear of offending the expanding Frankish and Germanic powers.

Despite repeated harassment by the German clergy, Methodius continued to promote Church life in the Slavonic language in Moravia for twelve more years, until his death in 885. Then Sventopulk moved fiercely against Methodius’s many disciples. Most of them were arrested, exiled, or even sold into slavery. Some of them, including a number of exceptionally talented missionaries, escaped into Bulgaria.

Led by their leader, Saint Khan Boris (r. 852–889), the Bulgarians had embraced the Christian Faith in 865 at the hands of Greek clergy from Byzantium. The Bulgarian Christians were delighted when Methodius’s disciples entered their land, bringing the services in Slavonic, which they much more readily understood than Greek. In 893, the Bulgarians officially adopted Slavonic as the official language of both their Church and State.

Saints Clement and Naum did outstanding missionary work among the Bulgarians. Most likely it was another of Saint Methodius’s disciples, Constantine of Preslav, who developed a second alphabet for the Slavonic language, based on letters mostly adapted from the Greek alphabet, making it more readily accessible than the Glagolitic alphabet. Constantine named his
alphabet Cyrillic in honor of St Cyril, and it is this alphabet which continues to this day to serve the nations of Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia, Ukraine, and Byelorussia, as well as the Czech, Slovak, and Polish Orthodox Christians.
In alliance with Charlemagne and his successors, the Roman popes managed to extend their authority in Western Europe. By the middle of the ninth century, Pope Nicholas I (r. 858–867) succeeded in gaining direct control over the entire Western Church by suppressing the local metropolitans and making all bishops in the West directly subject to the Roman see. In this effort, he made use of the False Decretals, documents that were later decisively proved to be forgeries, which claimed that Emperor Constantine the Great in the fourth century had given extensive powers and privileges to the Bishop of Rome. It was claimed that these powers included having governmental control over large territories in central Italy which later came to be called the Papal States. This particular forgery was the so-called Donation of Constantine.
Saint Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople

In Constantinople there were two parties struggling for power in both ecclesiastical and civil affairs—the so-called zealots or conservatives, and the moderates. In 858, in an effort to provide a leader capable of restoring peace to the Church, Photius was elected to be the new patriarch, succeeding Ignatius, who had been unjustly deposed. As the brilliant, popular, highly distinguished professor of philosophy at the University in Constantinople, Photius was an excellent choice, even though he was still a layman. He was ordained and quickly elevated to the patriarchal office.

The extremists of the so-called conservative party were not satisfied. They appealed to the Church of Rome, using the good name of the former patriarch Ignatius—who had accepted his forced retirement for the good of the Church—against Photius and the imperial government which confirmed his election. Pope Nicholas I proceeded to seize this opportunity to interfere in the affairs of the Church of Constantinople, in order to try to demonstrate that the Papacy had legitimate authority over the Eastern Churches as well as the Church in the West. To make this point, he decided to try to have Ignatius restored as patriarch of Constantinople.

In 861 a council was held in Constantinople to resolve the dispute. With the papal legates who presided over the council in full agreement, this council decided that Photius was indeed the rightful patriarch. However, when the legates returned to Rome, Pope Nicholas rejected their decision, since it was not the result that he desired. He held a council in Rome in 863, which presumed to have Photius deposed—along with all the clergy he had ordained in the preceding five years!—and Ignatius was proclaimed as the legitimate patriarch of Constantinople. As proof that the Papacy really had no legitimate authority over the Eastern Churches, the decrees of this council were ignored throughout the East. Patriarch Photius did not even deign to give Pope Nicholas a reply.

Four years later, in 867, Photius finally responded by calling a major council of five hundred bishops meeting in Constantinople. This council condemned Pope Nicholas and declared him to be deposed for interfering in the internal affairs of the Church of Constantinople—and also for interfering in the affairs of the new Bulgarian Church. This council also made the first official condemnation by the Eastern Church of the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed.

Later in 867, Basil I the Macedonian (r. 867–886) usurped the throne from
Emperor Michael III, who was assassinated. In order to win the support of Rome for this usurpation, Basil reinstated Ignatius as patriarch, which did indeed heal the breach between Rome and Constantinople that had existed since 863. And in 869–870 a council was held in Constantinople, known as the Ignatian Council, which affirmed Ignatius as patriarch and condemned Photius, who was sent into exile. However, Pope Hadrian (r. 867–872) was not entirely pleased with this council, because it refused to give the Bulgarian Church over to the authority of Rome.

By 873, Emperor Basil no longer felt such a need for the approval of Rome, and his favor was turning to the moderates in Constantinople. So Photius was brought out of exile, and was made the tutor for the emperor’s two sons. Photius and Ignatius became reconciled, to such an extent that before Ignatius died in 877, he stipulated that he wanted Photius to succeed him as patriarch. So in that year Photius returned to the patriarchal throne, and soon led the effort by which Patriarch Ignatius was glorified as a saint.

In 879 a huge council, known as the Photian Council, took place in Constantinople. Once again papal legates were in attendance, and again they agreed with the council’s decisions. The council affirmed Photius as the legitimate patriarch, nullifying the decisions of the previous councils of 863 in Rome and 869–870 in Constantinople. It also reaffirmed Rome’s position as the first among equals among the great patriarchates, but without having jurisdictional authority over the East. The Nicene Creed without the filioque was affirmed, and the Council of Nicea of 787 was officially recognized as the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

Pope John VIII (r. 872–882) was not pleased with this council’s decisions, but for the sake of peace in the Church he accepted them. For nearly two centuries this council was considered by Rome to be the Eighth Ecumenical Council.

Photius was officially canonized a saint by the Orthodox Church in the tenth century. She honors him with exceptional regard as Saint Photius the Great, one of the Three Pillars of Orthodoxy (along with Saint Gregory Palamas and Saint Mark of Ephesus). He was a man of many talents. An excellent diplomat in political affairs, he was also a great theologian who wrote extensively. His powerful critique of the filioque, the improper and theologically erroneous addition to the Nicene Creed, has remained the basic Orthodox refutation of this innovation ever since. He was a compiler and reviewer of both classical and patristic writings. As a brilliant scholar and professor as well as a leading churchman, he dominated the cultural flowering in Byzantium in the years after the restoration of the icons in 843. And we
recall that he also guided the mission to the Slavs by sending Saints Cyril and Methodius to Moravia in 863.

In relations with the West, Saint Photius defended the authentic Church Tradition in confrontation with the exaggerated claims and unwarranted interference of Pope Nicholas, while ultimately preserving unity with the Roman Church and Pope John VIII. However, he will long be remembered disparagingly in the West for his stubborn resistance to Papal claims. The break in relations between the Western and Eastern Churches from 863 to 867, initiated by the Council of Rome which condemned him, is still known in the West as the “Photian Schism”-i.e., blaming Photius for the schism. Only in the last half century or so has he been acknowledged at least by some in the West as a great bishop with personal humility and wisdom. He was one of the greatest bishops in Christian history.
Liturgical Developments

In the ninth century another great saint, Saint Theodore of Studion, was involved with a number of liturgical developments. The service books for Great Lent and Easter, the Lenten Triodion and the Flower Triodion (also called the Pentecostarion), are almost totally the work of the Studite monks, among the most famous of whom was Saint Joseph the Hymnographer. The liturgical typikon, the order of worship in the Studion Monastery, has been the normative order of worship for the entire Orthodox Church since the ninth century. As abbot of the Studion Monastery in Constantinople, the leading monastery in the Empire of his day, he had ultimate authority over about a hundred thousand monks throughout the Empire.

Also dating from the ninth century is a copy of the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom which has the Liturgy of the Faithful in virtually the exact form in which it is celebrated in the Orthodox Church today.
Near the end of the ninth century, a famous new law code was published by Emperor Basil I. In its introduction, called the Epanagoge, the system known as “symphonia”-the harmonious cooperation between the Church and State-is eloquently reaffirmed, with extremely high standards of moral probity, personal sanctity, and theological wisdom placed upon both the patriarch of Constantinople and the emperor. For example, the patriarch is to “lead unbelievers into adopting the Faith, astounding them with the splendor and glory and wondrousness of his own devotion”; and the emperor “must be of the highest perfection in Orthodoxy and piety.”
Generally speaking, the 9th century was one of the most significant centuries in Church history. It was a period of renaissance in the East after 843, while in the West it was one of increasing centralization around the Roman Papacy, especially through the efforts of Pope Nicholas I. The most important theologian in the West in this century was John Scot Erigena (d. 877), who brought the strong influence of the Eastern theology of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Maximus the Confessor into the Western Church. However, he interpreted the mystical writings attributed to Saint Dionysius along Neo-Platonic lines.
| Tenth Century |
Cultural Renaissance

In the East in the 10th century, there was a general continuation of the cultural renaissance of the ninth century. The writings of the Church Fathers were collected and key excerpts compiled in works known as florilegia. For the first time, Lives of the Saints were collected and paraphrased in an elegant style for liturgical usage; this was done by Saint Symeon Metaphrastes (i.e., the Translator).

In 960 Saint Athanasius of Mount Athos (d. 1003) founded the Great Lavra, the first large cenobitic (communal) monastery on Mount Athos. The way was thus opened for the development of the great monastic republic on the Holy Mountain that flourishes to this day. His work was strongly supported by two emperors: Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–969) and John I Tzimiskes (r. 969–976).

Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022), for many years the abbot of the Monastery of Saint Mamas in Constantinople, wrote many influential treatises, especially emphasizing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christians, the vision of the Uncreated Light, and ongoing repentance with tears. He is regarded as one of the most important mystical theologians of all time. His prominence is seen in the fact that he is one of only three figures in the Church who are called “the Theologian” – the other two being St John the Evangelist and St Gregory of Nazianzus. In the 14th century Saint Gregory Palamas will build upon the work of this wonderful saint who walked with God with profound intimacy and who described his experiences with the living God with powerful, poetic eloquence.

From the Hymns of Divine Love by Saint Symeon the New Theologian Master, how shall I express Your strange marvels, how shall I relate with words the depth of Your judgments which You accomplish each day in us, Your servants? How do You not cast Your eyes on the infinite number of my sins and not take into account the actions of my malice, O Master? But You have mercy, You protect me, You enlighten and nourish me as if I carried out all Your commands, O my Savior. Not only do You take pity on me, but, still more, You grant me leave to remain in the presence of Your glory, of Your power, of Your majesty. You talk with me and You address words of immortality to the one who is weak, lowly, unworthy to live.
How do You cover my sullied soul with light
and render it divine light, immaculate?
How do You invest with light my miserable hands
which, by sinning, I have sullied with the stains of sin?
How do you transform my lips by the ray of Your Divinity,
from unclean, making them holy?
And my filthy tongue, O Christ, how do You purify it
and give it a share in the eating of Your flesh?
How do You condescend to see me and to let me see You,
to let me hold You in my hands, You who hold all things,
You who the celestial armies cannot contemplate,
inaccessible even to Moses, the first of the prophets?
For he was not judged worthy to see Your face,
nor was any other man, to avoid that he die.
You therefore the only incomprehensible, the only inexpressible,
that no one can contain, inaccessible to all,
to hold You, to embrace You, to see You, to eat You,
to possess You in my heart, O Christ, how am I judged worthy of it?
How am I not consumed, but divided between joy and fear
and singing, O Christ, Your boundless love for man?
(Hymn 19)
The tenth century saw the increasing interpenetration of the ecclesiastical and civil aspects of Byzantine society. The Church received greater control over such matters as marriage and the family. For example, a church blessing-regulated by Orthodox canon law-came to be required for a marriage to be acknowledged as valid by the civil authorities. At the same time, the Church became more concerned with establishing “minimum requirements” for marriage.

This can be seen vividly in the so-called “fourth marriage dispute.” In 906 the patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas Mystikos (r. 901–907, 912–925), a disciple of Saint Photios the Great, refused to grant a fourth marriage to Emperor Leo VI (r. 886–912), whose first three wives all died young without bearing an heir to the throne. For Patriarch Nicholas’s refusal to recognize Emperor Leo’s fourth marriage, he was deposed. He was restored as patriarch upon the emperor’s death in 912.

In 920 a council in Constantinople declared that the Church would never grant a fourth marriage to anyone. The Church’s theology of marriage upholds perpetual monogamy as its standard—a union of one man and one woman which is not destroyed even by death. Remarriage, even of widows and widowers, does not conform to this standard, even though it may be accepted as a concession to human weakness. With the “fourth marriage dispute,” however, attention comes to focus on the minimum—hence the misleading notion that the Orthodox Church “allows” three marriages to its faithful.

At the same time, the beginning of the 10th century witnessed for the first time the “rite of crowning” as a separate marriage service apart from the context of the Divine Liturgy. Civil law now established the practice of “legal marriage” apart from the sacramental marriage of the Church. It also established a special secular form for the adoption of children which was also previously done only by the action of the Church.
Bulgaria

Khan Boris’s son and successor Symeon (r. 893–927) did much to strengthen Orthodoxy in his land, promoting Slavonic culture through sponsoring schools, libraries, and much translation work of the Church Fathers into Slavonic. He gained recognition from Byzantium as being the Emperor, or Tsar, of Bulgaria, and the archbishop of the Bulgarian Church was granted the title of Patriarch. This was highly significant, since this was the first new patriarchate to be established beyond the original five-Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

At Tsar Symeon’s death, his saintly and mild son Peter (r. 927–969) assumed the throne. During his long and peaceful reign, Orthodoxy penetrated deeper into the society of the nation, particularly through the establishment of monasteries in the countryside.

The leading monastic in this time was the famous Saint John of Rila (c. 880–946). He was one of several northern Macedonian hermits who found solitude in the mountains and became great ascetics and miracle-workers. Later in life they established cenobitic monasteries for their disciples. These monasteries had great impact on the spiritual life of the Bulgarians. Probably because Orthodox culture spread from Bulgaria into Russia in the decades after his death, Saint John of Rila became especially well-known in Russia. He is considered to be the patron saint of Bulgaria (Feastday, Oct. 19).

Unfortunately, the dualist heresy of Bogomilism also arose in Bulgaria during Peter’s reign. After Peter’s death, the power of the Bulgarian state began to decline.
Prince Vladimir of Kiev (r. 978–1015) ruled a domain that stretched from beyond Novgorod in the north to beyond Kiev in the south. He understood the importance of religion not only for the spiritual life of his people, but also for their political, social, and cultural advancement. At first he promoted devotion to the ancient gods and goddesses of the Slavs, such as Perun, Khors, Dazh’bog, Stribog, Simar’gl, and Mokosh.

But in 986 he began to take interest in the religions of other lands-Islam in Old Bulgaria, Judaism in Khazaria, Roman Catholicism in the Holy Roman Empire, and Greek Orthodox Christianity in Byzantium. In the following year, he sent emissaries to see for themselves these various religions in action. Their report upon their return to Kiev is given in the Russian Primary Chronicle (the earliest written historical account of the Slavs, traditionally attributed to Saint Nestor, a monk in the Kievan Caves Monastery who died in the early 12th century):

‘When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks (including the Emperor himself) led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty.’

Then the Chronicle relates, “Then the boyars [the noblemen] spoke to Vladimir and said, ‘If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Olga who was wiser than all other men.’ Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.”

Having made up his mind to adopt Orthodox Christianity for himself and his people, Vladimir took an armed force to the Byzantine city of Cherson on the Crimean Peninsula, and besieged and captured it. Then he sent a message to Emperor Basil II of Byzantium (r. 976–1025) and his brother Constantine VIII, asking for the hand of their sister Princess Anna in marriage. They replied, “It
is not proper for Christians to marry pagans. If you are baptized, you shall have her as your wife, inherit the kingdom of God, and be our companion in the Faith. Unless you do so, however, we cannot give you our sister in marriage.” Vladimir responded, saying that he had already given some study to the Greeks’ Faith and was ready to be baptized. The Greeks replied, telling Vladimir to come to Constantinople to be baptized. But when he then requested that he be baptized in Cherson by priests brought by Anna herself, they acceded to his wishes.

According to the Chronicle, before Anna and the priests arrived in Cherson, the prince contracted a very serious eye disease. But when he was baptized, taking the name Basil, not only did he receive spiritual healing, but his physical ailment was also miraculously healed—much as Saint Paul received back his sight when he was baptized by Ananias after being blinded by the vision of Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.17–19). A few days later, Prince Vladimir was united with Anna in marriage.

Upon his return to Kiev, his capital city, in the spring of the year 988, the people of the city and the surrounding countryside joyfully accepted to be baptized in the Dniepr River in the new Faith of their beloved prince. Thus began the history of the Orthodox Church in the lands of Rus’.

Beginning with his baptism, Vladimir experienced a genuine spiritual conversion. He put aside his many concubines and his otherwise wild and violent way of life, and lived in sober and respectful monogamy with Princess Anna. Together they did much to establish Christian principles in their realm, and to enlighten their subjects with the Orthodox Faith. For his personal and official acts of righteousness as a Christian prince, Vladimir has been glorified as a saint of the Church, as “Equal-to-the-Apostles, Enlightener of the Russian Lands.”

Saint Vladimir’s grandmother, the great Princess Olga (d. 969), was the wife of Igor, the ruler of the Kievan state. Upon Igor’s death in 945, Olga ruled as regent for their son, Svatoslav, until he assumed power in 961. In about 957, Olga accepted the Christian Faith and was baptized, probably in Constantinople. She also is recognized as a saint of the Church-like her illustrious grandson, as “Equal to the Apostles.”
Liturgical Development

The feast of the Protection of the Theotokos (October 1) comes from the 10th century. Saint Andrew the Fool for Christ (d. 956) saw a vision of the Theotokos interceding before God and protecting the praying people of Constantinople with her veil (omophorion) during the time of an attack on the city by the pagan Slavs. Ironically, this feast, which has been detached from its historical roots and is now celebrated primarily as the feast of the presence of Mary in the midst of the Church, is kept as a popular celebration almost solely by the churches of Slavic tradition.
In the later 9th century and all through the 10th century, the West experienced one of the darkest periods in its history. New waves of invasions, especially by Vikings and Muslim Arabs, destroyed the relative security of the empire created by Charlemagne. The Church suffered from the domination of lay lords. Communication with the East was virtually cut off, partly because of the Arabs’ power in the Mediterranean emanating from their strongholds in Crete and Sicily. In 996 the first German was elected as pope of Rome, with the name Gregory V.

In 910 the Monastery of Cluny was founded in Burgundy in eastern France, by William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine. Under its first abbot, Berno of Baume (d. 927), high standards of monastic observance were set and followed—including a return to the strict Benedictine Rule first established by Saint Benedict of Nursia in the 6th century, independence from lay control, and economic self-sufficiency. By the time of Berno’s death, several neighboring monasteries had adopted Cluny’s standards, and under Berno’s gifted successors, especially Saint Odo (r. 927–942) and Saint Odilo (r. 998–1048), hundreds of monasteries, especially in France and Italy, adopted these reforms. These “Cluniac houses” became a major force for general reform in the entire Western Church in the 11th century.
Eleventh Century
The Great Schism

In 1009 Pope Sergius of Rome wrote a confession of faith which included the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed. Because of this, the Church of Constantinople removed his name and that of the Roman Church from the diptychs (the official list of sister churches and bishops who are liturgically commemorated by a given church). Then in 1014, the Roman Church, after resisting for over 200 years Germanic pressure to adopt the *filioque*, finally used this addition to the Creed in public worship for the first time—at the coronation of Henry II as Holy Roman Emperor. Ironically, forty years later the Latin Christians would accuse the Greek Christians of being heretical for not using the *filioque*.

As we have seen, tensions between the two great halves of the Christian world had been simmering for many years, with roots going back to the early centuries of the Church. The two different languages-Greek in the East and Latin in the West-reflected differences in basic worldview, which contributed to different approaches in theology. The Latins tended to use philosophical, legal, and juridical concepts and categories in an attempt to make the mysteries of the Faith more comprehensible to the human mind, while the Greeks tended to more readily accept the paradoxical, ineffable mysteries of the Faith as being ultimately far beyond the limits of human logic and understanding. And the Greeks, more than the Romans, stressed the crucial importance of having a vibrant, dynamic experience and relationship with the living God, in order to better understand the Holy Scriptures and the mysteries of the Faith. Also, the loss of the political unity of the Empire was a huge factor in disrupting communication between East and West. And the rivalry between the Holy Roman Empire in the West and the Byzantine Empire in the East exacerbated the rift.

From the Eastern Orthodox perspective, however, the biggest single reason for the Great Schism was the reassertion of Papal claims to have jurisdictional authority over all the Churches of Christendom. Ever since Bishop Victor of Rome near the end of the second century tried to dictate to the Quartodeciman Christians of Asia Minor concerning the dating of Pascha, a succession of strong Roman bishops, as we have seen, steadily promoted Papal claims over Churches beyond the Roman Church’s geographic territory, even though this was in violation of the original pattern of each bishop having jurisdictional authority over his own geographic territory—a pattern clearly affirmed in the canons of the first four Ecumenical Councils. Gradually the Papacy did manage to gain at least nominal authority over all the churches of Western Europe, as
we have also seen, by the time of the powerful Pope Nicholas I in the middle of the 9th century.

In the middle of the 11th century, after a long period of weakness and decadence in the Papacy, there occurred an intense period of reform. This reform movement strove mightily to bring an end to widespread moral abuses among the clergy—especially the crime of simony (buying church office), and the practice of clergy who were supposed to be celibate living with concubines. Partly in an effort to deal with these problems, the reformers accomplished a dramatic centralization and expansion of the power of the Papacy.

The reforming movement began with the appointment by the Germanic Holy Roman Emperor Henry III (r. 1039–1056) of a fellow German named Bruno as Pope Leo IX (r. 1048–1054). Along with Leo’s efforts to increase the power of the Papacy in Western Europe, it’s not surprising that this particularly strong pope would also have been interested in extending Papal influence in the East. At the same time, the fiery Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius (r. 1043–1058), was determined to resist all attempts by the Roman Church to impose its will upon the Eastern Church.

The “showdown” came as a result of the Norman invasion of southern Italy beginning in 1016, and the subsequent suppression of Greek practices in the churches in this region where there was strong Byzantine influence. Patriarch Michael retaliated by trying to force the Latin churches in Constantinople to use Greek practices—especially leavened instead of unleavened bread (azymes) in the Eucharist. And Archbishop Leo of Ochrid wrote a comprehensive critique of the Latin beliefs and practices divergent from those of the Eastern Church—especially the filioque, mandatory clerical celibacy, and the use of azymes in the Eucharist.

In response, Pope Leo sent to Constantinople a delegation led by Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida (d. 1061), a fiery and fiercely anti-Byzantine personality who tried to press Roman claims to their fullest extent. After a cold initial reception, at which Humbert refused to greet the Patriarch with the customary protocol, Michael refused to deal with him any longer. After waiting about two months in the capital, on июля 16, 1054, Humbert strode into the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia during a service and placed on the altar a bull of excommunication against “Patriarch Michael and all his followers.” In a day or two, he and his fellow legate left for home. Michael, in his turn, excommunicated Humbert “and all those responsible” for the bull of excommunication against him.

Very interestingly, Pope Leo IX died soon after Humbert left Rome for Constantinople, but before Humbert issued the bull of excommunication. And
Leo’s successor was not elected until near the end of the year. So it would seem that the next pope, Victor II (r. late 1054–1057), could easily have revoked Humbert’s action, but he did not choose to do so. And while relations between some of the Eastern Churches with Rome continued to be relatively friendly for quite some time, the reality and extent of the schism gradually deepened and spread, until the sack of Constantinople and its conquest by the Latin knights of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 increased the mutual animosity to such a degree that future efforts at reconciliation had virtually no chance to succeed.

As we know, the Roman Catholic Church is still not in communion with the Orthodox Churches, even though in 1965 Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I lifted the mutual anathemas of 1054.
Pope Gregory VII

The reforming spirit of the Roman Papacy in the 11th century reached its height under Hildebrand who, as Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073–1085), firmly established the Papacy as a secular power. In a document called the *Dictatus papae*, he advocated the most extreme interpretation as yet of Papal authority in both church and state: “the Roman pontiff alone is to be called universal” (or “ecumenical”); “he alone can depose or reinstate bishops”; “he alone may use the imperial insignia”; “the pope is the only one whose feet are to be kissed by all princes”; “he may depose emperors”; “he himself may be judged by no one”; “to this see the most important cases of every Church should be submitted”; “the Roman Church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity”; “the Roman pontiff, if canonically ordained, is undoubtedly sanctified by the merits of St Peter.”

These radical claims were put severely to the test during Pope Gregory’s monumental struggle against *lay investiture* (the practice of secular lords, princes, and kings appointing their own priests, bishops, and abbots) in Western Europe. This struggle clearly demonstrated the fact that the Papacy’s authority over the churches of Western Europe was far from secure even in the latter part of the 11th century. For after Pope Gregory forbade lay investiture in 1075, his edict was met with violent opposition in England, France, and Germany—where nobles, according to the feudal system of strict allegiance of servants to one’s lord, were quite used to appointing their own priests for the chapels and churches on their lands, and kings felt it was their right to appoint their own bishops and abbots for the bishoprics and monasteries in their realms.

In Germany, Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV (r. 1056–1106) held two Church synods which attempted to depose Gregory from the Papacy for his interference in what he claimed were his own affairs. In 1077, Gregory responded by excommunicating Henry. The emperor then was stung with remorse. Traveling to the Pope’s castle retreat of Canossa in the mountains of central Italy to beg forgiveness, Henry stood for three days outside in the snow doing penitence. But in 1080, Henry set up an anti-pope, since Gregory had acknowledged Henry’s rival, Rudolf of Swabia, as Holy Roman Emperor. Henry then marched on Rome, which he captured after a two-year siege, with Pope Gregory fleeing to Salerno, where he died in 1085.
The First Crusade

In 1074 the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Doukas (r. 1071–1078) suggested to Pope Gregory VII that there might be a possibility of reunion between their two Churches in exchange for military aid against the Islamic Seljuk Turks. Three years before, at Mantzikert in eastern Asia Minor, the Byzantine army had suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of these Turks, who were then able to spread into nearly all of the heartland of Asia Minor.

In response to this idea, Pope Gregory offered to launch a crusade to liberate the Christians of the East, in return for acknowledgment of Papal supremacy. This crusade was not actually undertaken, probably largely because of Gregory’s desperate struggle over lay investiture. But the idea for the Crusades had been set in motion, and the typical pattern for East-West relations which lasted for nearly 400 years was begun.

The First Crusade was launched by Pope Urban II (r. 1088–1099) at the request of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Comnenos (r. 1081–1118) for knights to fight against the Seljuk Turks. After their victory at Mantzikert in 1071, the Turks captured Antioch in 1085 and Nicea in 1092, thus coming quite close to Constantinople itself. The Pope agreed to try to raise a military force to help the emperor.

However, it was not the quest to drive the Turks out of Asia Minor that fired the imagination of Western Europe. Rather, it was the call by Pope Urban to free the Holy Land from the infidel Muslim Arabs that rallied thousands of Western knights to set out on the First Crusade. On 27 November 1095, at Clermont in south central France, in a rousing and impassioned speech delivered in French, the pope convinced the great churchmen and nobles of Europe that the Holy Land must be liberated. The response was electrifying: cries of ‘Deus le volt’ (‘God wills it’) filled the air. The First Crusade was launched.

The Crusaders were able to capture Antioch from the Turks in 1098, and in the next year they won Jerusalem from the Arabs. But they slaughtered so many of the Muslim residents of the city that the Muslims have been embittered against the West to this day.

The Latin knights proceeded to carve out four kingdoms for themselves in the Middle East—Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem—all of which claimed independence from Byzantium. Latin patriarchs were set up in Jerusalem and Antioch, challenging the authority of the Orthodox patriarchs there (as well as the Non-Chalcedonian Jacobite patriarch in Antioch). During the next century
the Byzantines tried sporadically to win control of these areas from the Latins, but without success. By 1291, all these kingdoms had fallen back to the Muslims.
Kievan Russia

In Kievan Russia in the 11th century the new Christian Faith was flourishing. Saint Anthony (d. 1073) founded the famous Monastery of the Caves in Kiev, the Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra. Saint Theodosius (d. 1074), its greatest saint, came to be called the “Founder of Russian monasticism.” Saint Theodosius followed the example of the humble Christ of the gospels in an evangelical form of spiritual life. This form has come to be known as Russian kenoticism, which means a life of self-emptying humility and love for the brethren (cf. Phil 2.6). The Kievan Monastery of the Caves was a major center of Christian charity and social concern, as well as of spiritual and intellectual labor and enlightenment.
Saints Boris and Gleb

Among the saints of Kiev are numbered the brothers Boris and Gleb, sons of Saint Vladimir. They refused to fight their elder brother Sviatopolk in a power struggle after the death of their father in 1015. Although they could have fought against Sviatopolk, and were undoubtedly encouraged to do so by their warriors, the two young brothers refused to fight, so as not to take up arms against their brother, and in order to save the lives of many on both sides. As “Passion-Bearers,” turning the other cheek to endure completely innocent suffering, and laying down their lives so that others might live, Saints Boris and Gleb were canonized by the Russian Church in 1020-just five years after their deaths. These first Russian saints have been venerated and loved with special devotion by their fellow Russians to this day.
Yaroslav the Wise and Saint Anna of Novgorod

Yaroslav (978–1054) was another son of Saint Vladimir. He became the Grand Prince of Kiev in 1019 upon defeating the wicked Sviatopolk in battle. He ruled well for 35 years until his death in 1054. During his reign Kiev flourished as a major center of trade, and his building program made his capital the grandest city in Europe, after Constantinople. His crowning achievement was the construction of the Cathedral of Saint Sophia that still stands today. He also assembled many translators to continue the work of rendering the vast treasure of theological writings and hymnography of the Greeks into Slavonic. And in his time, Russian princes and princesses began marrying into many of the royal families of Western Europe.

Prince Yaroslav’s wife is a saint in the Church—she is venerated as Saint Anna of Novgorod. She was the daughter of the first Christian king of Sweden, King Olaf Sketkonung. She took an active part along with her husband in the rule of their domain, sometimes even entering into battle with him, and at other times helping to arrange peace treaties with enemies of the state. They had seven sons and three daughters, all of whom the great orator Hilarion, who later became the Metropolitan of Kiev, declared to be devoted to the Christian Faith. One of them, Vladimir, is also a saint in the Church. Shortly before she died, the princess took the monastic schema and entered the monastery that she and her husband had built in Kiev, manifesting thereby her deep piety and humility.
Near the end of this century, Blessed Theophylact, Bishop of Ochrid (r. 1090–1109), a Greek missionary bishop in southwestern Bulgaria, was writing voluminous commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, making much use of the commentaries by St John Chrysostom as he did so. And in Byzantium there arose renewed interest in pagan antiquity, led by such men as Michael Psellus (c. 1019-c. 1078), who favored the philosophy of Plato, and John Italos (c. 1025–1082), who favored the thought of Aristotle. This flowering of “Byzantine humanism” did not have a deleterious effect on the life of the Church, unlike what happened in the West in later centuries during the Renaissance, especially in the realm of Church art. Psellus also wrote a fascinating insider’s history of the reigns of the fourteen Byzantine rulers who ruled during his lifetime.

Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109), the most important theologian in the West in his time, was producing his extremely influential theological discourses. These writings contain the so-called “ontological proof” for the existence of God, a defense of the doctrine of the filioque, and the so-called “satisfaction theory” of the atonement. In this theory it was contended that the death of Christ on the Cross was the adequate payment of the punishment that fallen man deserved that was necessary to satisfy the justice and wrath of God the Father. This innovative speculation, reflecting to some extent popular notions of chivalry at that time in Western Europe, came to prevail in much of Western Christianity, especially conservative Protestantism, to this day.
Twelfth Century
The 12th century saw the continuing struggle of the illustrious Comneni imperial dynasty in Constantinople against the crusading Latins from the West and the encroaching Muslim Turks from the East. Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (r. 1081–1118) officially proclaimed Mount Athos as the center of Orthodox monasticism. His son and successor, John (r. 1118–1143), ruled so well that he became known as Kalokhohn (“John the Good”), and his wife, a Hungarian princess, was so devout in her Orthodox faith that she came to be venerated as Saint Irene of Hungary. Emperor Manuel Comnenus (r. 1143–1180) continued promoting the arts, but both of his marriages were with Western princesses, and his unwise favoritism of Venetian merchants eventually helped lead to a violent backlash with the sacking of the Latin quarter in Constantinople in 1182. In retaliation, the Latins sacked the city of Thessalonica in 1185.

Early in the 12th century, at the command of Emperor Alexius I, Euthymius Zigabenus produced his *Dogmatic Panoply*, a refutation of all the heresies both ancient and recent. Much of what we know about Bogomilism, the major dualist heresy that arose in Bulgaria in the 10th century, comes from this work. He also wrote extensive commentaries on the Psalms, the Four Gospels, and the Epistles of Saint Paul.

Art and architecture developed in the twelfth century with such classical Byzantine monuments as the Church of Saint Luke and the Church of Daphni, both near Athens, with their outstanding mosaics.
Christianity in Kievan Russia continued to expand and develop. A fire in Kiev in 1124 is reported to have destroyed six hundred church edifices—an indication of the great development of this cosmopolitan city which had become a leading center of European and Byzantine culture and trade. Early in this century, Prince Vladimir II Monomakh (1053–1125), a great grandson of Saint Vladimir and a grandson of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus of Byzantium, wrote his famous autobiography called his Testament, or Charge to My Children, a document intended to guide his sons in their lives as Christian leaders.

The Russian Primary Chronicle, the seminal document which records the basic history of the Kievan state, with special emphasis on the coming and spreading of Orthodox Christianity, began to be compiled by the monk Nestor of the Monastery of the Kievan Caves. Saint Alypius (d. 1114), the “Father of Russian iconography,” also lived in this period. Some of the greatest architectural and iconographic achievements of Novgorod, Vladimir, Suzdal, and Pskov come from this time.
The 12th century witnessed the emergence of the nation of Serbia through the efforts of the Grand Zupan Stephan Nemanya (1113–1200). Nemanya’s third son, Rastko (c. 1175–1235), at the age of 17, fled the life of the court to become a monk on Mount Athos. In monasticism he was given the name Sava, after Saint Sabbas of Jerusalem. He was destined to become the great national saint and leader of the Serbian people as the first archbishop of Serbia.

In 1196 Stephan Nemanya abdicated the throne and joined his son Sava on Mount Athos. There he was tonsured a monk with the name of Simeon. The Byzantine emperor Isaakios II Angelos gave the Serbian father and son the monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos, which remains today the Serbian monastery on the Holy Mountain. Some time after Saint Sava’s father died in 1200, his relics began exuding myrrh, and they began to flow with myrrh again after Saint Sava took them to Serbia in 1208. Hence, when he was glorified as a saint by the Church, he was given the name Saint Simeon the Myrrh-flowing.
In Western Europe the great Cistercian monastic reform movement of the Benedictine Order (now known as the Trappists) arose. This movement’s greatest representative, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), was an ascetical, mystical theologian and church activist of aristocratic background. He promoted the Second Crusade (of 1147), and theologically he fought against Peter Abelard (1079–1142), another important early Scholastic theologian and author of the famous *Sic et Non*. The Carthusian movement of intensely contemplative, semi-eremetic monasticism, founded in 1084 by Bruno, expanded rapidly in this era.

Together with the centralizing of Papal power and the victory of the Papacy over the secular rulers in the controversy over lay investiture, the 12th century also saw the rise of the Victorine school of Augustinian theology, led by Hugo (d. 1141) and Richard of Saint Victor (d. 1173). Another major Scholastic theologian, Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160), wrote his very influential *Sentences* in the 1150s.

On the more popular level, the Waldensian movement arose in the 1170s, led by a merchant of Lyons named Valdes. This very energetic layman emphasized itinerant, Scripture-based lay preaching, voluntary poverty, and works of charity. The various Waldensian groups suffered various forms of persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church during the succeeding centuries. Finally in the 16th century, most of them merged with various Protestant groups.

Also, the dualist heretical movement known as the Cathari arose in Germany around 1140, under the influence of Bogomilism from Eastern Europe. By around 1200 the Cathari had grown and spread to such an extent that they were the principal target of the Inquisition that was instituted in the early 13th century. In southern France these heretics were known as Albigensians.

In 1147, the Second Crusade was launched with the goal of winning back the Crusader Kingdom of Edessa which had fallen to the Muslims. Preached by Bernard of Clairvaux, this crusade was led by King Louis VII of France and Holy Roman Emperor Conrad III. These Crusaders further alienated the Byzantines by their uncouth behavior. At the same time, the Westerners had learned to hate the Greeks, considering them to be deceitful, and their Church heretical. The chronicler Odo of Deuil listed the various practices and beliefs of the Greek Christians now scorned by the Westerners, and he recorded their
willingness to kill the Greeks as heretics. More and more, the Latins dreamed of seizing Constantinople for themselves, and they were urged to do so by some of their own clergy.

Meanwhile, the Greek Church’s consternation at the extension of Papal claims was eloquently expressed in a letter by Archbishop Nicetas of Nicomedia written to Bishop Anselm of Havelberg, in Germany.

**Archbishop Nicetas of Nicomedia writing to Bishop Anselm of Havelberg**

My dearest brother, we do not deny to the Roman Church the primacy among the five sister Patriarchates, and we recognize her right to the most honorable seat at an Ecumenical Council. But she separated herself from us by her own deeds, when she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office. How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us, and even without our knowledge?

If the Roman pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We would be the slaves of such a church, and the Roman see would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves. In such a case what could have been the use of the Scriptures? The writings and the teachings of the Fathers would be useless. The authority of the Roman pontiff would nullify the value of all because he would be the only bishop, the sole teacher and master.
Thirteenth Century
The Fourth Crusade

The 13th century began with what is generally considered to be the final sealing of the schism between East and West, when the knights of the Fourth Crusade brutally sacked Constantinople during the first three days of Holy Week in 1204. They pillaged Hagia Sophia and other churches, desecrating the altars and stealing countless relics and other holy objects. The Crusaders took control of the city. A Latin, Thomas Morosini, was named Patriarch of Constantinople; and a Frank, Baldwin of Flanders, was named “Emperor of Byzantium.” Now, for the first time, the entire Latin West became a deeply hated enemy in the minds of the Greek people.

Most of the Byzantines regrouped in northwestern Asia Minor, in what they called the Empire of Nicea. They were led by the capable new Emperor Theodore I Laskaris (r. 1204–1222), who was succeeded by his saintly son-in-law, Emperor Saint John III Doukas Vatatzes (r. 1222–1254). By 1261, Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos (r. 1259–1282) was able to regain Constantinople from the Latins. Even though the Byzantine Empire lasted for almost another 200 years, she never fully recovered from the devastation of the Fourth Crusade and the 57 years of Latin rule in her capital city.
The Second Council of Lyons

In the early 1270s the Byzantines were threatened by the Serbs, the Bulgarians, and especially the Latin state of Achaia, in Greece, led by the Sicilian Norman, Charles of Anjou. And the Seljuk Turks, who had occupied most of Asia Minor in the previous two centuries, were an ongoing threat. In response to these pressures, Emperor Michael VIII appealed for support to Pope Gregory X (r. 1271–1276), who opposed Charles’ designs on Constantinople. Michael suggested that in return for military assistance, the Greek Church would accept the authority of the Papacy.

The reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches, therefore, was the major issue discussed at the Second Council of Lyons, which met in 1274 at Pope Gregory’s request. The Greek delegation brought letters accepting Papal authority and various Roman Catholic articles of faith, including the filioque clause in the Nicene Creed. It was at this council that for the first time the Western Church proclaimed that the filioque must be accepted as dogma. The Union agreement that restored communion between the two Churches stipulated that the Greeks could retain their liturgical rites and customs. The council also attempted to launch another Crusade to the Holy Land, and it established the practice of all the Roman cardinals meeting in a closed conclave during the entire process of electing a new pope.

When Emperor Michael VIII attempted to impose the so-called Union of Lyons upon the Byzantine Church, it was met with great resistance. When Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople refused to sign the agreement, he was deposed and replaced with John Beccus, who was the head of the minority party in Constantinople that favored the Union. But after Michael died in 1282, Beccus was quickly deposed, Joseph was restored to the patriarchal throne, and the Union of Lyons was officially renounced. Popular opposition to Emperor Michael was so strong that he was denied a church burial.

Remarkably, Michael retained his loyalty to the Union of Lyons even though in 1281 the new Pope Martin IV (r. 1281–1285) excommunicated him as part of the Pope’s plan to assist Charles of Anjou, one of his major supporters, in attacking and conquering the Byzantine Empire. But that plan, and the Council of Lyons’ plan to launch a new Crusade to the Holy Land, both came to naught.
Serbia and Bulgaria

In 1219 Saint Sava of Serbia went to Nicea to obtain the approval and blessing of the Church of Constantinople for an independent national church for the Serbs. Sava himself was consecrated as the first “Archbishop of the Serbian lands” by Manuel, Patriarch of Constantinople, in the presence of Emperor Theodore I Laskaris. On Ascension Day in 1220, at a national assembly of the Serbs held at the Zicha monastery, the newly-consecrated Archbishop Sava crowned his older brother, the grand zhupan Stephan, as the first “King of all the Serbian lands” (he is known as Saint Stephan the First-Crowned). And Archbishop Sava established the headquarters of the new Serbian Church at Zicha.

In 1233, after designating his trusted fellow monk, Father Arsenije (also later recognized as a saint), to be his successor as head of the Serbian Church, and leaving him in charge of the affairs of the Church, Archbishop Sava set off on a long pilgrimage and good will trip all across the Middle East. His mission was to visit holy places, and to meet with fellow Christians and share with them the story of the Serbian people becoming united in Holy Orthodoxy.

Saint Sava first went to Jerusalem, then to Alexandria, and through the Egyptian heartland of the Desert Fathers of long ago. Then he went to Cairo, where his warmth and generosity to the poor and the blind melted the hearts of the Muslim sultan and the Muslim population (while there he also gave large donations to several Coptic churches and institutions). Then he made a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai and the famous Monastery of Saint Katherine. Then this indefatigable ambassador for Serbian Orthodoxy returned to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, visiting for a second time the illustrious monastery founded by his patron saint, Saint Sabas the Great. Then he undertook an exceptionally dangerous journey to Baghdad, where he was received respectfully by the Sultan of Iraq, and where he visited the Patriarch of the Assyro-Chaldean (Nestorian) Church. From there he went to Antioch, to visit the patriarch there, and the monastery of Saint Symeon the Stylite. Then he went north to Armenia, to Kurdistan, and then westward across Seljuk-Turkey.

Finally he reached Nicea. While there he persuaded the patriarch and the emperor to recognize the reestablishment of the Patriarchate of the Bulgarian Church. Then he traveled to Trnovo, the Bulgarian capital, where he shared the good news of the official recognition of the restoration of the Bulgarian Patriarchate.
While still in Trnovo, before he could return to his beloved homeland, Saint Sava died on Января 14, 1235. He had given his Church and nation a life of outstanding devotion and leadership, having been sustained by the Lord through many grave trials and difficulties.

His body was taken back to Serbia, and placed at the royal monastery of Mileseva, where his relics were a source of great spiritual strength for the Serbian people. These relics were burned by the Ottoman Turks in 1595.

With the advance of Serbian King Miliutin (r. 1282–1321) and his army across the Sar Mountains into northern Macedonia, which opened the way for Serbian expansion southward down the entire Balkan Peninsula, the Serbian state once and for all shifted its main attention away from Rome and towards Byzantium. In fact, Miliutin is credited with strongly resisting the efforts of Byzantine Emperor Michael Paleologos to impose Roman Catholicism on the Balkans after the Union of Lyons in 1274.
In the 13th century Kieven Rus was overwhelmed by the Mongolian invasion. The Tatar Yoke fell over the land when Khan Batu, a grandson of the Mongolian conqueror Ghengis Khan, led the four hundred thousand horsemen of the Golden Horde into the Russian lands in 1237. The Kievan state collapsed in 1240.

In 1231 Alexander Nevsky (1219–1263) became the prince of Novgorod. This independent, large city-republic in the northwest had its own unique form of republican government, as well as its own particular spiritual, architectural, and iconographic traditions. In 1240, at the age of only 21, Alexander led the Russians in a victorious battle at the Neva River against the Roman Catholic Swedes, who were invading from the northwest at this moment of terrible crisis in Russia. In 1242 he led the successful resistance against another invading force from the West—this time, the Teutonic Knights from modern-day northern Germany, Lithuanian, and Latvia.

After these two brilliant victories, Alexander was pressured by many of his fellow Russian princes to raise up a counterattack against the Tatars. But he wisely understood that the Tatars were far too strong for the Russians to drive out. In addition, he knew that the Westerners were a much greater threat to the integrity of the Orthodox Church than were the Tatars, for the Swedes and the Germans would have imposed their Roman Catholicism upon the Russians, while the Tatars allowed the Church the freedom to carry on basically without restriction, and even with a certain amount of protection.

In 1247, Prince Alexander traveled to Khan Batu’s headquarters at Sarai, in the Volga Delta, humbly seeking mercy for the Russian people from the Tatars. Alexander agreed to pay annual tribute to the Khan in order to have peace for his people. He returned with the title of Grand Prince of Kiev, and the responsibility to assure that all the Russian princes paid the tribute money and remained subservient to the Tatars. Several times his fellow Russians tried to revolt, but each time the uprising was crushed by the Tatars, and each time Prince Alexander traveled to Sarai to beg the Khan that there be no further reprisals.

Alexander died in 1263 at the age of 44. In 1380 he was glorified as a saint by the Russian Church for his personal holiness, his military bravery, and his practical wisdom and diplomacy—all of which he dedicated selflessly to the service of his people as a true Christian statesman.

Saint Alexander Nevsky was ably supported by Metropolitan Cyril of Kiev.
(r. 1242–1281), a native Russian (nearly all the previous metropolitans of Kiev had been Greek). This cooperation between the grand prince and the metropolitan laid the foundation for the close Church-State relations that existed in Russia until the 20th century.
The 13th century has been called the “greatest of centuries” in the Western Church. The strong Pope Innocent III (r. 1198–1216) succeeded in upholding the prestige and power of the Papacy. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 defined the official doctrines of the Western Church. The remarkable Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226) founded his Franciscan Order (OFM) with its first great members Anthony of Padua (c. 1190–1231) and the major theologians Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274) and John Duns Scotus (c. 1265–1308). And in theological studies, it was the golden age of Scholastism.

By the beginning of the 13th century the University of Paris had taken shape; it was given its statutes by the illustrious Pope Innocent III in 1215. It was the first of many universities arising in western Europe, where theology was taught and studied in a scholastic manner as the “Queen of the Sciences.”

In about 1217 the Spaniard Dominic (c. 1174–1221) founded the Dominican Order of Preachers (OP). The great Scholastic theologian Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280) and his famous disciple Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), the greatest of all the Scholastic teachers, were two of its most illustrious early members. Aquinas’s vast, monumental *Summa Theologiae* dominated official Roman Catholic theology until the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. The controversial German mystical theologian Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1328) was also a member of the Dominican Order.

Around 1233 Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227–1241) established the Inquisition to seek out and punish heretics-often using the death penalty-with full-time Papal inquisitors appointed mainly from the recently founded Dominican and Franciscan Orders.

With the support of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Carmelite Order (OCC) took shape at the beginning of the 13th century among a group of Latin-speaking hermits living on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. A number of smaller religious groups also emerged during this century in the Latin Church.
Fourteenth Century
The 14th century was the time of the Palamite controversy in the Eastern Church. St Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), a monk of Mount Athos, was a practitioner of the method of prayer called hesychasm (*hesychia* means ‘silence’). This method of prayer is centered in the continuous repetition of the name of Jesus, usually in the form of the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” And a rigorous bodily discipline-emphasizing certain sitting postures and breathing techniques—is employed in order to help unite the mind and heart in God. Through the use of this method of prayer, the hesychast monks claimed to experience genuine communion with God, including sometimes a vision of the Uncreated Light of Divinity such as that seen by Moses on Mount Sinai, and by the Apostles Peter, James, and John at the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor.

In 1330 Barlaam the Calabrian, an Italo-Greek monk raised in an Orthodox family in southern Italy but educated in the Scholastic spirit prevailing in Western Europe at that time, came to Constantinople and accepted a chair in philosophy at the University of Constantinople. Barlaam, along with a number of other Byzantine humanists who were highly influenced by Western philosophical and theological ideas, ridiculed the practice of hesychastic prayer. They denied the possibility for human beings to be in direct, genuine communion with God.
Essence and Energies

In 1337 Gregory Palamas confronted Barlaam’s position and began his defense of hesychasm and the various contemplative practices of the Athonite monks. He confirmed the Orthodox doctrine that man can truly know God and can enter into living communion and relationship with Him through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church. He explained that the Essence (or Super-Essence) of God is utterly unknowable and incomprehensible, while at the same time, the actions, operations, or Energies of God, which are also uncreated and fully divine (such as the Divine Light), are communicated to people by divine grace and are open to human knowledge and experience. This is what is meant when Christians are said to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pet 1.4).

A local council held in 1341 in Constantinople upheld Gregory’s teaching. Amid ten more years of political turmoil and theological controversy, local councils held in 1347 and in 1351 reaffirmed Gregory’s position as that of the Bible and the whole Tradition of the Orthodox Church. From that time this crucial theological distinction between the divine Super-Essence and the divine Energies became an official part of the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas Writing on the Eucharist

Yet I have not mentioned the greatest thing of all. The Master is present with His servants not only to that extent, but He imparts of His own. He not only gives them a hand, but He has given us His whole Self. Wherefore we are the temple of the living God; our members are Christ’s members, whose Head the Cherubim adore. These very feet, these hands, depend on His Heart.

What then can you meditate upon with greater profit and pleasure than these things? For when we examine them, and these thoughts prevail in the soul, no evil thoughts will gain entry into us. Then it will come about that, as we learn of His benefits, we will increase in longing for our Benefactor. When we thus greatly love Him we become keepers of His commandments and participants in His purpose, for as He says, ‘he who loves Me will keep My commandments’ (Jn 14.15, 21).

Besides, when we recognize how great is our worth, we shall not readily betray it. We will not endure being slaves to a runaway slave when we have found out that a kingdom is ours. We shall not open our mouth in evil speech when we recollect the sacred banquet and that Blood which has reddened our tongue. How can we use our eyes to look on that which is not seemly when we have enjoyed such awesome Mysteries? We shall not move our feet nor stretch forth our hands to any wicked thing if the recollection of these things is active.
in our souls. Since they our members of Christ, they are sacred-as it were, a vial containing His Blood. Nay, rather, they are wholly clothed with the Savior Himself, not like a garment which we wear or the skin with which we are born, but much more, in that this clothing is far more closely united to those who wear it than their very bones.

*(The Life in Christ, Sixth Book, parts 3 and 4)*

Saint Gregory Palamas also served the Church as Archbishop of Thessalonica from 1350 until his death in 1359. Just nine years after his repose, he was glorified as a saint of the Church, with the second Sunday in Great Lent being dedicated to him in addition to ноября 14, the day of his death. This double annual commemoration underlines how important this great Church Father is in the mystical/theological tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Saint Nicholas Cabasilas (c. 1322-c. 1390), an important lay follower of Saint Gregory Palamas, wrote a very popular work called *The Life in Christ* which emphasizes the centrality of the Mysteries, or Sacraments, of the Church in the spiritual life of the people. For Saint Nicholas, partaking of the Holy Eucharist after proper preparation can be for any Christian-not only the monastics-the most profound moment of mystical communion with the Living Lord. Saint Nicholas also wrote a highly respected commentary on the Divine Liturgy.
The 14th century in Byzantium was also dominated by the remarkable John VI Cantakuzenos (c. 1295–1383). He was a close friend and advisor of Emperor Andronicos Paleologos (r. 1328–1341). In 1347, after a six-year civil war, he agreed to rule as co-emperor with John V Paleologos (r. 1341–1391), who was Andronicos’s son. A capable theologian, John Cantakuzenos called and presided at the Third Palamite Council in 1351.

Cantakuzenos also actively encouraged Byzantine theologians to learn Latin in order to carefully study the Scholastic writings emerging from Western Europe, in anticipation of a non-politically motivated theological dialogue with the Roman Catholics that he hoped would lead to the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches. He and his group hoped that such reunion would be based on the one Faith of the undivided Church of the first thousand years, rather than on the Eastern Church being pressured into accepting Papal authority in order to receive military help against the enemies of the Byzantine Empire. Sadly, such an unpressured dialogue never took place between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches until the second half of the twentieth century.
The longest ruling Byzantine emperor of the fourteenth century, John V Paleologos (r. 1341–1391), continued to hope that the West would come to the aid of the Greeks in the face of the ever-increasing expansion of the realm of the Ottoman Turks that arose in northwestern Asia Minor in the 1280s. In 1369 John personally entered into communion with the Roman Church, though without making an attempt at formal Church union. This act also produced no lasting results, either for the ecclesiastical or political destiny of Constantinople.
The town of Moscow is first mentioned in the historical records in 1147. At first a small trading post, it grew rather quickly due to its strategic location on both east-west and north-south trade routes. After being destroyed by the Tatar invaders in 1238, it was rebuilt and strengthened by Prince Daniel, son of Saint Alexander Nevsky. It grew further under Daniel’s son George, and then under his second son, John Kalita (r. 1328–1341).

For almost 200 more years Moscow was governed by a succession of prudent, shrewd, efficient rulers who were determined to unite the feuding Russian principalities under her authority, with the long-range goal of overthrowing the Tatar yoke. These rulers offered refuge to people fleeing from the Tatar domains to the south, and they learned how to deal skillfully with the Tatar overlords.

With Kievan Rus’ almost entirely devastated by the Tatars, and with the gradual strengthening and expansion of the Muscovite state, it was perhaps inevitable that eventually the Church would move her headquarters from Kiev to Moscow. This happened in 1325 under St Metropolitan Peter (r. 1281–1326), who immediately began construction of the magnificent Cathedral of the Dormition (Uspenski Sobor) in the Kremlin in Moscow. This church remains to this day the main cathedral for the entire Russian Orthodox Church.
The great Saint Sergius was born in 1314 in the northern city of Rostov the Great. His godly parents, Kirill and Mary, were of aristocratic background. His father was a confidant of the prince of Rostov, with whom he traveled when the prince negotiated with the Tatar Golden Horde. In 1328, as Prince John Kalita of Moscow began the process of annexing Rostov, Sergius’s family moved much closer to Moscow, to the town of Radonezh.

Sergius showed a calling to the ascetic, spiritual life from his earliest days. After his parents entered monasticism later in life and died shortly thereafter—they are venerated as Saints Kirill and Mary in the Russian Church—he and his older brother Stephen selected an isolated spot in the dense forest near Radonezh, where they began a life of seclusion and prayer. After a year or two, Stephen returned to “civilization” due to the rigors of life in the wilderness, while Sergius stayed on alone in his forest paradise.

After a few more years, several others joined Sergius in the little monastic community that he dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The number of monks stayed at around twelve for several more years, until in 1347 a rich and famous abbot from Smolensk named Simon came and asked to be received into the community as a simple monk. His gift of money was used to build a new church.

At this point many more came to join the community, and Sergius, very reluctantly, accepted to be officially named the abbot. Yet even after being made abbot, he still continued to serve his monks by chopping wood, drawing water, and making clothes for them, allowing them to copy manuscripts and paint icons. He was a strict ascetic, a practitioner of silent prayer, and a mystic graced with divine visions and living communion with God.

In 1354 word came from the hesychastic Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos of Constantinople that the community should become organized as a cenobitic (communal) monastery. As the Russian Church was still part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the 14th century, Saint Sergius felt obliged to agree to this change, which was also urged upon him by Saint Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow (r. 1353–1378).

Over the years the monastery continued to grow. Eventually it became recognized as the center of Russian monasticism. And as would happen many times as monastics formed communities further and further into the wilderness to the north and east, settlers came to live around the monastery, and a sizable town developed.
Saint Sergius became so well known as a holy, humble man of God that he was often consulted by Saint Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow and other prominent leaders of the country. One of these, Saint Dimitri Donskoi, Grand Prince of Moscow (r. 1360–1389), rebuilt the walls of Moscow in defiance of the Tatar overlords. When the Tatars, in response, amassed a huge military force to mara towards Moscow, Dimitri rallied nearly all the Russian princes to join him in raising a large number of warriors to defend their lands.

At the moment of final decision, Grand Prince Dimitri consulted Saint Sergius, who advised him to advance towards the Tatars, to meet them in battle across the Don River in the Tatars’ heartland in the open steppes. The forces met at the Battle of Kulikovo Pole, on сентябрь 8, 1380. Miraculously, the outnumbered Russian forces prevailed. This victory marked the beginning of the end of the Tatar overlordship, even though the Russians had to continue paying tribute to them until 1480.

The legacy of Saint Sergius to Russia and the Orthodox Church is immeasurable. His direct disciples founded nearly thirty monastic centers in northern Russia around which lands were settled and developed. Between 1400 and 1600, some 250 monasteries were established either through the direct or indirect inspiration of Saint Sergius. The mystical spiritual life of the Russian Church, as well as the interrelation between the Church and the socio-political life of the Russian nation in later times, were rooted in the person and work of the illustrious and exceptionally beloved Saint Sergius of Radonezh.
A contemporary and friend of Saint Sergius, Saint Stephen of Perm (1340–1396), was a learned bishop who undertook missionary work among the Zyrian tribes living just west of the Ural Mountains. Saint Stephen created an alphabet for the Zyrian language, and translated numerous Church writings into this language. Thus he continued the Byzantine tradition of fostering Church life in the vernacular in new regions, and he laid the spiritual foundations for the future missionary work of the Russian Church among the Siberian tribes, and later in China, Japan, and Alaska.
Saint Andrei Rublev

Saint Andrei Rublev (d.c. 1430), the greatest Russian iconographer and perhaps the greatest iconographer in Orthodox history, did his marvelous work at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries. He was a monk of the Holy Trinity Monastery founded by Saint Sergius of Radonezh. Much influenced by the illustrious Byzantine iconographer Theophanes the Greek, Saint Andrei worked together with his friend Daniel the Black.

Rublev’s most famous work is the icon of the Holy Trinity, painted for the iconostasis of the new church built at his monastery. This profoundly moving icon depicts, in a perfect harmony of colors and lines, the Three Angels who visited Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18). During this same period there was a renaissance of Church art in the Byzantine Empire, with many famous frescoes and mosaics coming from this time.
The Serbs

Under Tsar Stephen Dushan (r. 1331–1355), who grew up in Constantinople until the age of 13, the Serbian kingdom reached its greatest heights, encompassing nearly the entire Balkan Peninsula. In 1345, with the approval of the archbishop of Ochrid, the Patriarch of Bulgaria, and representatives of Mount Athos, Dushan raised the Serbian archbishop to the rank of patriarch, with his headquarters at Pec. He took the title “Patriarch of the Serbs and the Greeks.”

On Easter Sunday of the next year, at a national assembly held at Skopje, Dushan was crowned by the new patriarch as emperor (tsar). Tsar Stephen saw himself as the legitimate, natural successor to the Byzantine emperor, since that empire had become so weak, and his had become so strong. At the time of his death, he was actually preparing to launch an attack against the imperial City.

This unilateral double “presumption” by the Serbs naturally scandalized the Byzantines, who excommunicated the Serbian tsar and his religious leaders. But by 1370, with the Serbian Empire in serious decline after the death of Tsar Stephen Dushan in 1355, the excommunications were lifted, and in 1375 the Serbian patriarchate was recognized by Constantinople.

With their defeat at the momentous Battle of Kosovo on июня 15, 1389, despite the heroic leadership of Saint Lazor, their prince, the Serbs fell under the yoke of the Ottoman Turks. On the eve of the great battle, Saint Lazor led his troops in receiving the Holy Eucharist, in a Liturgy during which they all dedicated themselves to die as martyrs in defense of their Church and their nation at the hands of the much more numerous Ottomans. Serbia was then completely integrated into the Ottoman realm. The Serbs did not regain their independence until 1830.
The Second Bulgarian Empire, which had begun in 1187 with the successful overthrow of Byzantine rule by the brothers Peter and Asen, came to an end in 1330 when the Serbs absorbed Bulgaria into her rising Empire. Still, during most of the rest of the 14th century, the Bulgarians maintained a rich cultural and religious life. The Bulgarian monastery of Zoographos on Mount Athos was established in this century.

Patriarch Euthymios (r. 1375–1393), the last Bulgarian patriarch before the Ottoman conquest ended the Bulgarian patriarchate for the second time, ardently promoted hesychastic mystical prayer. He also initiated and led a great pan-Slavic literary revival, based on a return to the original Greek sources and to the original translation work of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

On июля 17, 1393, the Bulgarians were vanquished in battle by the Ottoman Turks. Bulgaria, like Serbia, became completely integrated into the Ottoman realm. The Bulgarians did not regain their independence until the early 20th century.
Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos of Constantinople (r. 1353–1354 and 1364–1376) consolidated the adoption by his Church of the monastic typikon of the Saint Sabbas Monastery in the Holy Land. This helped stabilize the Church’s worship patterns to such an extent that the order of worship in the Church in the 14th century was virtually the same as it is today.

In his *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, Saint Nicholas Cabasilas gave a symbolical interpretation of the liturgy that is still applicable today. The liturgical commentaries of Saint Symeon of Thessalonica (d. 1429), which also provide detailed information about Church worship, are also still relevant.

Saint Symeon’s writings reveal that at this time in the marriage service, the Holy Eucharist was still being given to the bride and groom if they were Orthodox Christians, and the blessed “common cup” was given only to those who were not allowed to receive Holy Communion in the Church. And for the first time, the prothesis (*proskomedia*), as a separate rite preceding the liturgy of the Word, appeared in the liturgical books.
The West

The West in the 14th century saw the “Babylonian Captivity” of the Papacy in Avignon, France (1309–1377), when the Papacy became virtually subject to the kings of France. Then, in the very next year after the return of the Papacy to Rome, the “Great Papal Schism” began, with two rivals claiming to be the legitimate Pope. And from 1409 to 1414 there were three rivals all claiming to be the true Pope. These humiliating developments helped lead to the rise of the Conciliar Movement, which became a powerful force in the Western Church in the next century.

Catherine of Sienna (c. 1347–1380), a remarkable Italian mystic, theologian, and advisor to Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370–1378), lived in the 14th century, as did John Wycliffe (c. 1330–1384), the forerunner of the Protestant Reformation in England. Other important mystical writers of this century were Walter Hilton (c. 1343–1396), Julian of Norwich (c. 1342-after 1416), and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, all of whom were English.

In Holland, Geert Groote (1340–1384) founded the popular and influential group of “secular” (i.e., non-monastic) priests and laity called the Brethren of the Common Life. This movement was part of a general revival and deepening of the spiritual life called the *Devotio Moderna* (Modern Devotion). The Dutch mystical writer Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293–1381) was probably the greatest representative of this movement in the 14th century. Emphasizing as it did the importance of Christian community, heartfelt devotion to Christ, and theological writing in the vernacular, as well as criticizing various abuses in the Church life of the time, this movement can be seen as a precursor to the Protestant Reformation.

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) completed his timeless masterpiece *The Divine Comedy* in the last years of his life. Also in the early part of the 14th century, the famous painter Giotto (c. 1267–1337) began the revolutionary devolvement of religious art in the West away from traditional Byzantine iconographic patterns and towards a more humanistic, naturalistic realism that remained prominent in Western religious art until the 20th century.
Fifteenth Century
The Great Schism in the Papacy, and the Conciliar Movement

The West in the early decades of the 15th century was in turmoil over the relationship between the Papacy and Church councils. Some held that the Papacy was supreme. Others held that the authority of the Church councils supersedes that of the Pope of Rome.

We have already mentioned the beginning of the Papal Schism in 1378, with two men claiming to be the legitimate Pope. In 1409, in order to settle the issue, the Council of Pisa met. This council deposed the two papal claimants and elected a new man, Alexander V, to be the true Pope. However, the two claimants, Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, refused to abandon their claims, so now there were three men claiming to be the real Pope.

This state of affairs convinced the supporters of the Conciliar Movement all the more that another council had to be called to bring an end to this confusion and furor surrounding the Papacy. As a result, in 1414 the Council of Constance met, which would become the pinnacle of the Conciliar Movement. This council, held in southern Germany, deposed all three claimants and then elected Martin V (r. 1417–1431) to be the one and only Pope.

This council, the 16th in the listing of ecumenical councils of the Roman Church, also asserted that even the Pope is to be subject to the dictates of an ecumenical council:

This Ecumenical Council has received immediate authority from our Lord Jesus Christ; and every member of the Church, not excepting the Pope, must obey the Council in all matters pertaining to faith, the putting down of schism, and ecclesiastical reform. If, contrary to this canon, the Pope or anyone else refuses to receive this, or any other Ecumenical Council, he shall be sentenced to penance, and when necessary even be visited with legal punishment.

And to further assert the authority of the council over that of the Papacy, the Council of Constance mandated that future councils would be held according to a regular schedule, rather than relying on the good will of the Pope to call one whenever he so desired.

In 1431, shortly before he died, Pope Martin V called a council to meet in Basel, Switzerland, according to the timetable set by the Council of Constance. But his successor, Pope Eugenius IV (r. 1431–1447), was determined to resist the authority of this council and to reassert Papal supremacy in the Roman Church.
The Council of Florence

In 1438, as the Council of Basle continued to meet, the Byzantine Emperor John VIII (r. 1425–1448) made a fervent appeal to the West for military aid against the Ottoman Turks, who by now had reduced the size of the Byzantine Empire to little more than the city of Constantinople. Independently, both the Council of Basle and Pope Eugenius offered to pay for the Greeks to come and negotiate the basis for a restoration of communion between the Eastern Churches and the Church of Rome, in return for military aid.

Understandably, Emperor John VIII and Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople were much more accustomed to dealing directly with the Bishop of Old Rome rather than with a council—especially a council that the Pope was resisting! So, very fatefuly, they decided to meet with the Pope instead of with the Council of Basle. This decision in itself gave a great boost to the prestige and authority of the Papacy over against the Conciliar Movement.

Pope Eugenius, in order to directly assert his authority over the Council of Basle, summoned it to Ferrara in Italy, which also made it easier for the Greeks to get there. Most of the bishops attending in Basle refused to obey the summons of the Pope. Undeterred, he went on with his small council in Ferrara, and received there the Greek delegation of about 700 people. Early in 1439, this council was moved to Florence, since the merchants there offered to pay its expenses.

The Greek delegation was strongly pressured by both the Emperor and the Patriarch to accede to Rome’s terms for reunion, whatever they might be. So, after long and sometimes bitter debating, the Greeks finally agreed to accept:

- a strong declaration of the Pope as “the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians”;
- a declaration that the filioque, “this truth of faith, must be believed and received by all”—and specifically, that the Holy Spirit “proceeds eternally” from both the Father and the Son “as from one principle”;
- a statement of the medieval Western concept of Purgatory, including the assertion that the souls of unbaptized infants “go down immediately to hell to be punished”;
- the allowance for either unleavened bread (azymes; the Latin custom) or leavened bread (the Orthodox custom) to be used in the Eucharist.

Under severe pressure from the Emperor and the Patriarch, every bishop in the Greek delegation signed this so-called “Decree for the Greeks” promulgated
at the Council of Florence—all except Saint Mark, Bishop of Ephesus. When told that Mark had refused to sign, Pope Eugenius is reputed to have said, “Then we have accomplished nothing.” For he knew that Mark’s resistance to the forced union would be the focal point for its eventual rejection by nearly the entire Orthodox world. And indeed, for his courageous resistance to this unjust union, and for his eloquent defense of Orthodoxy over against the errors of Latin Scholastic theology—especially their positions on the filioque and purgatory—he is popularly venerated in the Orthodox Church as one of the Three Pillars of Orthodoxy, along with Saint Photios the Great and Saint Gregory Palamas, who also fought valiantly against Latin aberrations of the Faith.

When the Greek Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev and All Russia, one of the major architects of the Union of Florence, traveled to Moscow to try to impose the Union there, he was run out of the city, barely escaping with his life. Returning to the West, he was eventually made a cardinal in the Roman Church.

Before Saint Mark of Ephesus died in 1444, he entrusted the leadership of the anti-Union party in Constantinople to a prominent, scholarly monk named George Scholarios, who would become Patriarch Gennadios, the first patriarch of Constantinople under the Ottoman Turks. He is remembered in the Orthodox Church as St Gennadios, Patriarch of Constantinople (Feastday, August 31).

The Union of Florence was not publicly proclaimed in the Eastern Church until декабрь 12, 1452, in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, as the Turks were amassing their forces to begin their siege of the city. Even at that most desperate moment, there was so much popular resistance to the Union that most of the people stood behind George Scholarios, who publicly denounced the so-called “Union Liturgy” held that day. The duke Notaras echoed the opinion of many when he cried out, “We would prefer to see the Turkish turban in our City than the Latin tiara.”
The Fall of Byzantium

On мая 29, 1453, the Ottoman Turks, under their sultan Mohammed II (or Mehmet; г. 1451–1481), captured the city of Constantinople after a furious siege of six weeks. Hagia Sophia was turned into a mosque, and the city eventually became known as Istanbul. This marked the tragic end of the Roman/Byzantine Empire—an empire that had lasted almost 1500 years.

The Ottomans went on to completely subjugate Serbia in 1459, incorporating it directly into their realm. The same happened with Greece in 1459–1460, and Bosnia in 1463. Moldavia managed to resist Ottoman encroachment during the long and illustrious rule of Stephen the Great (r. 1457–1504), but after his death his realm, and the other “Transdanubian Provinces” of Wallachia and Transylvania (regions in modern-day Romania), all became vassal states of the Turks. And Syria, Palestine, and Egypt were taken by the Ottomans from the decaying Arabian Mamluk Dynasty by 1520. From then on, for nearly 400 years the Ottoman Turks would hold sway over the Orthodox Christians in almost all the lands of the former East Roman (Byzantine) Empire.
The Establishment of the Rum Milet

In ruling these vast formerly Christian regions, the Ottomans basically followed the pattern of the Arabs after they conquered so many Christian lands beginning in the decade of the 630s. This pattern was to allow the Christians, as a tolerated minority, to maintain their basic way of life under the leadership of their patriarch, who governed the Christians in his territory as an ethnarch—that is, as ruler of the ethnic minority, or in other words, as ruler of “a nation within a nation.”

Under the Ottomans, the Patriarch of Constantinople quite naturally was made the ethnarch over all the Christians in the realm. This “nation within a nation” was called the Rum milet, the Roman people—since the Turks fully understood that the Byzantines were the perpetuators of the Roman Empire and hence were still Romans, as indeed they still called themselves.

The Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror (r. 1451–1481) was not bent on destroying the very advanced civilization that he had conquered. Rather, he wanted to build upon it, so that his new empire would be the grandest in the world. Hence, he wanted to make sure that the Christians in his realm would contribute positively to the well-being of the Empire.

So concerned was he to assure the continued peaceful existence of the Christians in his newly conquered territory that he personally selected George Scholarios, the head of the anti-Union party in Constantinople, to be the new patriarch (the former one had fled to Italy in 1451). But in the days following the fall of the city, Scholarios disappeared. Agents were sent out, and he was found as a slave in the hands of a rich Turkish merchant in Adrianopolis, in nearby Thrace.

Scholarios was brought back to Constantinople, where the Sultan personally invested him with the patriarchal office on the Day of Theophany, января 6, 1454. According to Sir Steven Runciman, “The Sultan handed him the insignia of his office, the robes, the pastoral staff, and the pectoral cross, a new one made of silver-gilt. As he invested the Patriarch, he uttered the formula: ‘Be Patriarch, with good fortune, and be assured of our friendship, keeping all the privileges that the Patriarchs before you enjoyed.’” Patriarch Gennadios also received a magnificent horse and a handsome gift of gold from the Sultan.

The Patriarchal law-courts alone had penal jurisdiction over the clergy, and over the laity they had full jurisdiction in all affairs which had a religious connotation, such as marriages, divorces, guardianship of minors, and last wills
and testaments. If both disputants were Orthodox, the Patriarchal courts had the right to try any commercial/civil case.

A greatly enlarged Church bureaucracy gradually developed to deal with the increased responsibilities of the Patriarch-Ethnarch, especially in the realm of legal matters. Many lay financiers and lay judges were eventually brought into this growing ecclesiastical administration.

The Sultan expected the Patriarch-Ethnarch to make sure that the Christians of the realm paid their taxes and did not revolt. As long as the Christians were cooperative, the Muslims allowed them freedom of worship, basically respecting them as “People of the Book.”

At this point the bishops, and clergy generally, began to dress publicly like Turkish judges, with the riasson and the cylindrical hat. And in church the bishops adopted the vesting and insignia of the Byzantine rulers, such as the mitre, sakkos, and long hair.

However, the Christians were still never allowed to forget that they were a captive people. They could only build new churches or repair old ones with special permission, which was usually denied. They could make no public display of their Faith-no ringing of church bells, no outdoor processions or services, no attempting to share their Faith with non-Christians. They had to wear a distinctive costume, and except for the Patriarch they were forbidden from riding on horseback. And worst of all, they had to endure the seizure of their young sons to be enrolled in the elite Janissary regiment in the Ottoman military, which also meant being forced to accept Islam and live a life of celibacy.
Russia
The Rise of the Muscovite State

As the Byzantine Empire was falling to the Ottoman Turks, the seeds of the coming Russian Empire were taking root in Moscow. Saint Dimitry Donskoi was succeeded as Grand Prince of Moscow by three outstanding leaders in the 15th century: Basil I (or Vasily; r. 1389–1425), Basil II (r. 1425–1462), and Ivan III (r. 1462–1505).

These rulers were convinced that God had chosen them to lead the Russians in overthrowing the Tatar yoke, and in defending Orthodoxy. They moved cautiously and deliberately to consolidate and expand the power of the Muscovite state. Chiefly through diplomatic negotiations, leading to purchases and annexations, they gradually acquired authority over the neighboring towns and provinces. They, and probably the majority of the people, understood that a strong centralized political state was necessary to unite all the Russians in their resistance to the Tatars, and to protect the land from other enemies to the west.

In 1472 Grand Prince Ivan III married Sophia Paleologa, the niece of Emperor Constantine XI, the last of the Byzantine emperors. Now Ivan was directly connected with the last imperial dynasty of New Rome. He took as his coat of arms the Byzantine two-headed eagle.

In 1479 Ivan succeeded in incorporating the greatly important city-state of Novgorod near the Baltic Sea into the Muscovite state. The unification of the central and northern principalities was given a great boost by this annexation, but it came at a high price. For the Muscovites, suspicious of Novgorod’s active trading relations with Western Europe, closed down the city-state’s connections with the West. As Nicolas Zernov explains in The Russians and Their Church, “The door into Europe was shut, foreign trade came to a standstill, and the spirit of freedom and enterprise so prominently displayed by the people of Novgorod was extinguished.”

In 1480, the very next year, Ivan felt Russia was strong enough to stop paying the annual tribute money to the Tatars. In 1498, he was crowned by Metropolitan Simon of Moscow as “Tsar [Russian for ‘caesar’], Grand Prince and Autocrat of All the Russians.” The metropolitan charged him “to care for all souls and for all Orthodox Christendom.”

By now, all the elements were essentially in place for the ideology of Moscow as the “Third Rome.”
The Rise of the Possessors and the Non-Possessors

In 15th-century Russia, two quite different approaches to the monastic life, and to the relationship between the Church and the State, gradually took shape. The leaders of the two “parties”—both of whom shared the legacy of Saint Sergius of Radonezh, and both of whom are canonized saints of the Church—were Nil Sorsky (1433–1508) and Joseph of Volotsk (1439–1515).

Saint Nil (Nilus) led the party of the “Non-Possessors.” The monastics of this persuasion mostly lived beyond the Volga River, thus they were sometimes called the “Transvolgans.” Preferring the semi-eremitic life in small sketes, the Non-Possessors believed that monasteries should not own and rule over large estates. They held that the Church should be free from the direct influence and control of the State, and strongly opposed the right of the State to execute heretics. They defended poverty as the chief virtue, with humility and spiritual freedom pervading the contemplative, silent, and reclusive life of the monks. They were the inheritors of the mystical, hesychastic, and kenotic traditions of Saint Sergius and the anchorites of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

The “Possessors” were led by Saint Joseph. Hence, they were sometimes called the Josephites. Preferring large cenobitic monasteries, they believed that it was appropriate for monasteries to own large estates, including serfs, as this would provide income for building and maintaining their large establishments, as well as providing income to distribute to the poor. They held that the Church and State should be in close relationship, and that the Church should serve the social and political needs of the emerging Russian nation. They endorsed the right of the State to execute heretics. They emphasized a life of rigorous ascetic discipline and active social service among the people, which would be rooted in the strict observance of liturgical rituals.

In most of these tendencies the Possessors also followed the tradition of Saint Sergius. Both Saint Sergius and Metropolitan Alexis of Moscow had played a prominent role in Russian social and political life of the previous century—as seen especially in the vision and work of St Theodosius of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

Although the spirit of the Non-Possessors was never totally eliminated from the life of the Russian people, it was the way of the Possessors which would dominate Russian ecclesiastical and national development until the early 19th century.
Other Developments in the West

Besides the Conciliar Movement, other movements grew among various elements of the population in Western Europe, many of which contributed in one way or another to the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation early in the following century. One particularly noteworthy “proto-Reformer” was the Bohemian (Czech) churchman and patriot, Jan Hus (c. 1372–1415). Greatly influenced by the writings of the Englishman John Wycliffe (d. 1384), he preached in the Czech language, including making vitriolic denunciations of the widespread immorality of the clergy. He urged that the liturgy be celebrated in the vernacular languages and that the cup no longer be withheld from the laity in the Eucharist. He also advocated a conciliar view of Church government. For these reasons (all of which Orthodox Christians would affirm), and because he was perceived as a political threat, he was burned at the stake by the Council of Constance on July 6, 1415.

The Brethren of the Common Life continued to flourish, especially in providing free education in many parts of the Netherlands and Germany. Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380–1471), author of The Imitation of Christ, a devotional book immensely popular to this day, was one of its more famous members.

In the 15th century the Renaissance was in full swing in Western Europe, with its center at Florence, where the arts were greatly encouraged through the lavish patronage of the famous Medici family. The paintings of Fra Angelico (c. 1395–1455) of Florence, a devout Dominican monk, reveal the growing extent to which Western religious art was abandoning traditional iconographic styles for much more humanistic portrayals. The seminal work of the celebrated sculptor Donatello (c. 1385–1466) greatly promoted sculpture (which by its three-dimensional nature is more humanistic than iconography) as a vehicle for religious art.

The Florentine Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498) was a particularly fiery preacher in the Dominican monastic order. Claiming to have received special revelations from God, he prophesied an impending divine chastisement of the morally corrupt church and society. For his reforming efforts he was executed on charges of schism and heresy in 1498.

The illustrious Italian artist and scientist Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) flourished in the late 15th and early 16th centuries.
Sixteenth Century
Russia
In Russia in the 16th century, the “Third Rome” theory became a political reality. In 1511, only one year after Moscow’s annexation of the important northwestern city of Pskov, the elderly, scholarly monk Philotheus of Pskov informed the Muscovite Tsar Basil III (r. 1505–1533) of his vision, based on the book of Daniel, that the Russian tsardom was to be the final earthly reign of God’s People.

According to Philotheus, the first Rome had fallen through heresy, and the second Rome, Constantinople, had fallen through sin. The third Rome, Moscow, was standing. And according to his interpretation of Daniel 2.44, it was the rising Muscovite tsardom that would be the kingdom that the “God of Heaven” was raising up which “shall never be destroyed . . . and it will stand forever.” Hence, he proclaimed with prophetic confidence that there would never be a fourth Rome.

The Monk Philotheus on Moscow as the Third Rome

It is through the supreme, all-powerful and all-supporting right hand of God that emperors reign .?.?. and It has raised thee, most Serene and Supreme Sovereign and Grand Prince, Orthodox Christian Tsar and Lord of all, who art the holder of the dominions of the holy thrones of God, of the sacred, universal and apostolic Churches of the most holy Mother of God .?.?. instead of Rome and Constantinople.?.?.?. Now there shines through the universe, like the sun in heaven, the Third Rome, of thy sovereign Empire and of the holy synodal apostolic Church, which is in the Orthodox Christian Faith.?.?.?. Observe and see to it, most pious Tsar, that all the Christian empires unite with thine own. For two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and a fourth there will not be; for thy Christian Tsardom will not pass to any other, according to the mighty word of God.

Such a dramatic formulation of this powerful political/religious ideology, articulated by a devout monk of the Church, indicates to what extent the way was prepared for the development of an intimate alliance between Church and State in the Russian Empire.

The strengthening of this alliance was greatly hastened beginning in 1521, when Tsar Basil III presented the Church with a difficult dilemma. After many years of marriage, Basil’s wife had not given him any children. So he appealed to the Church for a divorce, in order to marry another who would presumably provide an heir to assure a peaceful succession to the throne. But in the Russian Church, barrenness was not a legitimate reason for divorce. Holding fast to the
traditions, Metropolitan Varlaam of Moscow refused to allow the tsar to get divorced and remarried.

However, some in the Church, mostly following the Possessor philosophy of close relations between Church and State, felt that in this specific, extraordinary case, the strictness of the canons could be modified through pastoral *economia*, and an exception could be made, in the interest of ensuring that there would be a peaceful succession to the throne after Tsar Basil III’s death. One of those who openly promoted this view was the monk Daniel, a leading Josephite.

In 1522, Metropolitan Varlaam was forcibly retired to a monastery, and Daniel was made the Metropolitan of Moscow. In the next year, he celebrated the wedding of Tsar Basil III to Yelena Glinskaya. Seven years later, in 1530, the future tsar Ivan IV, “the Terrible,” was born of this marriage.

Once the Possessors came to political favor and power, they strove to suppress the Non-Possessors. For example, Saint Maxim the Greek (d. 1556), a skilled librarian from Mount Athos who had been invited by Tsar Basil III to come to Russia to help with translation and revision of the service books, was placed in confinement for twenty years for his support of the Non-Possessor position.

As Pierre Kovalevsky writes in *Saint Sergius and Russian Spirituality*, “The sketes beyond the Volga were closed, and the nationalist tendency definitely took the upper hand over the contemplatives. The idea of Russia as a ‘Third Rome,’ the protector of Eastern Christians, degenerated very quickly into Moscow as the ‘Third Rome,’ which was the only one to profess [true] Orthodoxy, and which considered all other people to be tainted with heresy.”
Tsar Ivan IV the Terrible (r. 1533–1584) established his reign on the foundation of the “Third Rome” ideology. He was crowned tsar in январь of 1547. One month later he married Anastasia Romanova. As long as she lived, she had a salutary influence upon her impetuous, emotionally unstable husband. She bore him six children, but only two of them survived to adulthood.

Later in 1547, a huge fire in Moscow destroyed much of the city. To help in the rebuilding process, Ivan invited numerous technicians, printers, and physicians from the West. In 1550 a National Assembly was called, which approved a new legal code, allowing for extensive local self-government.

Three major local Church councils were held between 1547 and 1551. At the first two, forty-five saints from throughout Russia were glorified. And at the third one, known as the Council of One Hundred Chapters (Stoglav), many necessary reforms were instituted. This council proclaimed the ritual practices of the Russian Church to be superior to those of the other Orthodox Churches.

In 1552, Tsar Ivan conquered the Tatar Khannate of Kazan. In celebration of this victory, the great church on Red Square in Moscow, dedicated to Saint Basil the Blessed Fool for Christ, was built, with Oriental influence in its architecture. It became a national symbol of Russia.

In 1555 the missionary archdiocese of Kazan was established. According to Dimitry Pospielovsky in *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, “Ivan’s missionary guidelines for the conquered Tatar kingdoms of Kazan and Astrakhan stipulated that conversions were to be only voluntary, by education and conviction, not by coercion.” Saint Gury (or Gurias; d. 1563), the bishop of Kazan, was influential in missionary outreach.

In these years Ivan accepted the guidance of a humble, country parish priest named Father Sylvester, who composed a tremendously popular practical guidebook for Christian family life called *Domostroi (The Home-Builder)*.

Tragically, these “thirteen good years” came to an end in 1560. Ominously, one year before, having fallen under the influence of his courtiers who resented the high standing held by Father Sylvester, the simple country priest, Ivan ordered him to leave Moscow. The next year, on August 7, 1560, his beloved young wife suddenly died. He suspected that she had been poisioned.

Thereafter Ivan fell increasingly back to certain cruel tendencies of his youth. According to Nicolas Zernov, “No longer checked by her good influence, he plunged again into the dark passions and lusts of his early years. Ivan
removed, one after another, by execution or exile, his gifted civil and military collaborators and surrounded himself with a crowd of base and unscrupulous men who drove him further along the road of moral disintegration.”

In 1563, Saint Metropolitan Makary (r. 1542–1563) died. He had written twelve volumes called *Monthly Readings*, a vast collection of commentaries on the Bible, the lives of the saints, sermons, and other material for spiritual reading. He also had had a calming influence on Tsar Ivan. But when he died, according to Pospielovsky, “Ivan’s paranoia lost all restraints.” Then, as Zernov relates, “Haunted by fear and suspicion, he embarked in 1564 on a social revolution which in many ways resembled the totalitarianism of the twentieth century.”

Tsar Ivan ruthlessly persecuted his enemies as he subjected both the Church and the State to his direct, personal control. Among his many victims was Saint Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow (r. 1565–1568), who, after numerous unfruitful private consultations with Ivan, dared to deny Holy Communion to the bloodthirsty tsar, openly rebuking him for his persecution of his own innocent people. The tsar had Philip imprisoned, and later strangled.

The last years of Ivan’s reign were filled with unrelieved misery as he continued to oppress and persecute all those he imagined were his enemies among his own people. After marrying for a fifth time, and after killing his son and heir, Ivan V, in a fit of rage, he finally died, in 1584.
Ivan IV was succeeded by his younger son, Theodore (r. 1584–1598), a man with limited mental capacities. But his people loved him for his deep, simple faith and gentle disposition that were like a balm to the nation after the turmoil and terror of his father’s reign. Early on many mornings the people of Moscow would be roused by hearing their tsar ringing the bells of the Kremlin cathedral.

In 1587 the Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremias II (r. 1572–1579, 1580–1584, 1585–1595), came to Moscow in quest of aid for his Church suffering under the yoke of the Ottoman Turks. Seeing this as their opportunity for Moscow to be made a patriarchate, the Russians invited Jeremias to be their patriarch. Apparently he considered the offer for some time, but in январь of 1589, in the midst of his second long winter in Moscow, he recognized Job, the Metropolitan of Moscow, as the first Patriarch of All Russia.

The installation document of the new patriarch repeated almost verbatim the prophecy of Philotheus of Pskov about Moscow as the “Third Rome.” Thus the theory, which had become practice under Basil III, was now officially affirmed by the highest ranking prelate in the Orthodox Church.

In 1593 the Russian Church received approval of its new status as a patriarchate from the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch. The Russians accepted their new patriarchate being placed fifth in honor after the four ancient Orthodox patriarchates.
The Union of Brest-Litovsk

Ever since 1386, the lands that would become modern Ukraine were part of the Roman Catholic kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. Subject to over two centuries of Roman Catholic influence and manipulation, the Orthodox Church in this region gradually grew weaker. The new ruler of Poland-Lithuania, the ardently Roman Catholic King Sigismund III Vasa (r. 1587–1632), ordered the Jesuits to increase their propagandizing efforts among the Orthodox in this region, which was known in Western Europe as Ruthenia.

In 1589 Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople, on his return home from Moscow, tried to bring order and reform to the Church there, but some of the bishops resented his interference. Meanwhile, the Poles were promising the Orthodox bishops privileges equal to those of the Polish bishops, including being seated in the Polish Senate, if they would acknowledge the supremacy of the Roman Papacy.

In 1596, at the Council of Brest-Litovsk, nine of the eleven Ruthenian Orthodox bishops formally accepted union with the Roman Church, with the agreement that the Orthodox would be allowed to maintain all their liturgical rites and customs. This arrangement, built upon the decisions of the Council of Florence in 1439, was contemptuously rejected by many of the Orthodox faithful.

The Orthodox who resisted the forced imposition of this “Unia” arrangement were given much support in their struggle by the Cossack brotherhoods-groups of vigilantes and frontiersmen which formed in defiance of the Polish overlordship of the Ukraine.

In 1619 Patriarch Theophanes of Jerusalem secretly consecrated seven Orthodox bishops in Kiev, in defiance of the Unia. This enabled the Orthodox to reestablish some semblance of regular Church life, especially in eastern Ukraine. But the Unia would continue to hold sway in western Ukraine, and eventually in the traditionally Orthodox lands that would be absorbed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Uniate Christians were steadily subjected to Latinizing influence. The hierarchical, clerical, and academic leadership of their Church was dominated by the discipline and doctrine of the Roman Papacy.
The West
As the culmination of centuries of calls for reform of various abuses within the Roman Church, the Protestant Reformation exploded across western and central Europe in the decade of the 1520s. Martin Luther (1483–1546), an Augustinian monk, precipitated the Reformation when he nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the castle church in Wittenburg, in the German province of Saxony, in 1517. This document was a list of demands for reform, mostly concerning the sale of indulgences (certificates granting full or partial remission of punishment for sins which have already been forgiven). At that point Luther did not envision breaking away from the Roman Church, but when he was officially excommunicated by the Papacy on января 3, 1521, the break became final.

Fueled by anti-Papal, nationalistic feelings among princes and commoners that were fanned by several provocative treatises written by Luther in 1520, in which he attacked Papal supremacy, clerical celibacy, and many other Latin doctrines and practices, the Reformation spread with remarkable speed. John Calvin (1509–1564) of France, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) of Switzerland, and Menno Simons (1496–1561) of Holland led the Reformation movement on the European continent. King Henry VIII of England (r. 1509–1547), after a long struggle with the Papacy over his request for a divorce from his wife, Catherine of Aragon, on the grounds of childlessness, made himself head of the Church in England—which became known as the Church of England, or the Anglican Church—by the Act of Supremacy in 1534. And John Knox (c. 1517–1572) brought the Calvinist faith to Scotland, in the form of Presbyterianism.

The basic Protestant position to this day is founded on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, with salvation understood as a gift from God given at one moment, rather than as an ongoing process with God and man cooperating together in the work of salvation (*Phil 2.12–13*). Protestants believe that the Bible is the sole churchly authority that can be interpreted directly by each believer through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The sacramental life of the Church is reduced to baptism and the Lord’s Supper understood mainly as symbolic actions.
The Catholic Counter-Reformation

In response to the challenge of the Protestant Reformation, and spurred by its demands for widespread ecclesiastical reform, the Roman Church held the Council of Trent (1545–1547, 1551–1552, 1562–1563). While instituting many needed practical reforms, it also officially reaffirmed the aberrant Medieval doctrines and practices of purgatory, indulgences, transubstantiation of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, communion for the laity with the bread only, the mass as a repropitiating sacrifice of Christ made to the Father, and extreme unction (whereby the sacrament of healing with holy oil became last rites for the dying). The Council of Trent also reinforced the supremacy of the Pope of Rome and the authority of the Church hierarchy, denying to the laity any role in the governance of the Church or in Christian teaching.

The Council of Trent, in addition, claimed that grace is a “created effect” or “created entity”-thus affirming the Latin doctrine that human beings can have no real, direct communion, or fellowship, or relationship with God. This understanding of the spiritual life is in direct contradiction to the Orthodox understanding that through the uncreated energies of God, human beings are called and enabled to have real, direct communion with God-as affirmed in the teachings of Saint Gregory Palamas and his coworkers.

The Roman Counter-Reformation was led by the Jesuits, members of the Society of Jesus, founded in 1534 by Ignatius of Loyola (c. 1491–1556). This monastic order was dedicated to direct service in complete obedience to the Papacy, with emphasis on doing mission work beyond Europe. Francis Xavier (1506–1552), one of the original seven Jesuits, conducted extensive mission work in Portuguese Goa, the Molucca Islands, Ceylon, and Japan. The Dutch Jesuit, Peter Canisius (1521–1597), led the Counter-Reformation in Germany, writing his famous Catechism which became a standard text of post-Reformation Catholicism. This catechism was translated into Slavonic and used by many Eastern Christians, both Orthodox and Uniate.

In Spain the mystical writers Teresa of Avila (1515–1582) and John of the Cross (1542–1591) led the reform of the monastic life of the Carmelite Order of the Roman Church. In Geneva, the Catholic bishop of the city, Francis de Sales (1567–1622), wrote his influential works providing guidance in the spiritual life. During this same time the famous Italian artist Titian (c. 1487–1576) created religious paintings “fraught with tragic emotion,” and the greatly influential Italian musician Palestrina (c. 1525–1594) produced his grandiose musical compositions which were used in the Roman Church.
The most famous of the Renaissance painters was the Italian, Raphael (1483–1520). His friend Michaelangelo (1475–1564) executed his magnificent frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican at the behest of Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513).
From about 1575 to 1581 a noteworthy correspondence and theological dialogue took place between the leading Lutheran theologians, teaching at the University of Tubingen in Germany, and Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople. The dialogue was initiated by the Lutherans, who were eager to gain an ally in their opposition to the Roman Papacy. They hoped that their Protestant theology, as summarized in a Greek translation of the Augsburg Confession of 1530, would find favor with the Patriarch. However, the Patriarch, with assistance from advisors, pointed out many theological errors in the Augsburg Confession. The dialogue collapsed principally on the issue of the role of the Church Fathers in the proper interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

Such careful, extended theological dialogue would not take place again between Protestants and the Orthodox until 1716, when some Non-Juror Anglicans entered into theological discussion with representatives of the Patriarchate of Alexandria who were visiting London. Tsar Peter I of Russia (r. 1689–1725) even took interest in this dialogue, but it ended when it was denounced by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the grounds that the Non-Jurors were in schism from the Anglican Church.

The next substantial ecumenical dialogue would not occur until the middle of the nineteenth century, when certain Anglican theologians of the Oxford Movement showed much interest in the Church of Russia. Orthodoxy was very ably described and defended in this unofficial dialogue by the distinguished lay theologian, Alexei Khomiakov (1804–1860).
The Greek Orthodox under the Ottoman Turks

During the 16th century, life for the Orthodox under the Ottoman Turks became more difficult. For example, in 1520 Sultan Selim I threatened to annex all the churches. In 1586, Sultan Murad III arbitrarily annexed the Church of the Pammakaristos that served as the headquarters for the Patriarch in Constantinople. In humiliation, the Patriarch was given the use of a small church owned by the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

In 1601 the Patriarch was allowed to rebuild the Church of Saint George in the heart of the Phanar district of Constantinople. This church has remained the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople to this day.

As early as 1466 an aspirant to the patriarchal throne offered the sultan a large bribe to make him the new patriarch. From then on the patriarchal office increasingly became the object of bribery, as well as intrigue among various factions vying for power within the Christian community. Interference in the life of the Church also came from Protestant and Roman Catholic ambassadors and chaplains attached to diplomatic missions in Constantinople.

Accounts of some twenty martyrdoms have come down to us from this century. The most famous of these martyrs is Saint Philothei of Athens, who was born into the wealthy and illustrious Venizelos family in Athens in 1522. After enduring with Christ-like patience and grace a very difficult marriage and being left a widow at the age of nineteen, she became a nun. Some years later, in response to seeing Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle in a vision, she built two women’s monasteries dedicated to him. She had a hospital built in connection with one of these monasteries, as well as a hostel for the poor. She also gave shelter to a number of women who had been taken captive by Muslims from various parts of the Empire. Irate Muslims stormed into her monastery one day and beat her severely. Eventually, in 1589, she died from the wounds she received that day.
Seventeenth Century
Russia
The Time of Troubles

With the death of the saintly, slow-witted Tsar Theodore in 1598, the dynasty of the House of Rurik, which had ruled Russia since 860, came to an end. With the support of Saint Job, Patriarch of Moscow, a National Assembly elected Boris Godunov, Theodore’s brother-in-law who had acted as the chief administrator of the government during Theodore’s reign, as the new tsar.

Boris’s reign began well enough, but in 1601 a severe famine struck the land, accompanied by epidemics. His measures to alleviate the suffering were insufficient, and in the midst of the disorders, rumors began to spread throughout Russia that there was a male of the House of Rurik who was still alive. In 1591, the last heir, Tsarevich Dmitry, died under strange circumstances at the age of nine. Now, a young man claiming to be this Dmitry, and claiming to be the rightful heir to the throne, was gathering a following. He would become known as the “Pretender.”

As this false Dmitry began to pose a threat to Boris Godunov, the tsar panicked. He responded to this threat with a campaign of terror against real and imagined enemies in his own government—much as his mentor, Ivan IV, had done. In the midst of the struggle, he collapsed and died, in 1605.

Tsar Boris’s death paved the way for the imposter to take control of the government. After ruling for about a year, he was murdered in a coup d’etat organized by a group of boyars (aristocrats) led by Basil Shuisky, who became the new tsar.

The Time of Troubles continued during Tsar Basil’s four-year rule, as a second False Dimitri arose and set up a rival government in the town of Tushino. Then the Poles and the Swedes invaded, intent on seizing as much territory as possible from the Russians in this moment of extreme weakness. Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery became the symbol of national resistance to the Western invaders, as this holy place endured a 16-month siege at the hands of the Polish army. Miraculously, the walled monastery withstood the siege, which included bombardment from 63 cannons.

At the height of the confusion and turmoil, Tsar Basil, deserted by his army and his allies after his forces were defeated by the Poles, was forced to abdicate, and the boyars formed a seven-man provisional government. Then, when the Poles captured Smolensk, the fortress city that guarded the road to Moscow, the terrified and self-serving boyars decided to capitulate to the Poles, in the hope of gaining privileges for themselves in return. In negotiations with Polish King Sigismund III, they selected a young son of King Sigismund,
named Wladyslaw, as the new tsar, and opened the gates of the Kremlin to the Polish army.

Saint Patriarch Germogen (r. 1606–1612) was put under house arrest in the Kremlin by the Poles, but he was still able to send letters all across the nation urging the people to reclaim their homeland. For his efforts, the Poles starved him to death.

Energized by a vision of Saint Sergius of Radonezh, who urged him to take the lead in saving the nation, a wealthy butcher from Nizhni-Novgorod named Kuzma Minin organized a citizens’ army that drove the Poles out of Russia by the end of 1612. This brought to an end the stormy Time of Troubles.
Early in 1613 in Moscow, sixteen-year-old Michael Romanov, a
grandnephew of Tsar IV’s first wife, Anastasia Romanova, was elected to be
the new tsar by the largest and most representative National Assembly ever
held in Russia. This marked the beginning of the Romanov Dynasty, which
ruled Russia until Tsar Nicholas II abdicated early in 1917. In 1619, Michael
Romanov’s father, Philaret, who had been Metropolitan of Rostov, was made
Patriarch of Moscow. Father and son ruled the tightening alliance of Church
and State together.
The Nikonian Reforms

When Tsar Michael Romanov died in 1645, he was succeeded by his son, Alexis (r. 1645–1676), who was 16 when he took the throne. By now a new generation of reform-minded young priests had risen up who believed that spiritual revival would come through liturgical reform—including standardizing the various liturgical books, correcting various copying and translation errors, and celebrating the services whole and entire. In 1652, Tsar Alexis selected one of these energetic priests, the popular and talented—but forceful and rigorous—Nikon, Metropolitan of Novgorod, to be the new patriarch of Russia.

Along with most of the other reforming clergy, Nikon at first was a firm believer in Moscow as the Third Rome—as guardian of the full purity of the Orthodox Faith. But before becoming Metropolitan of Novgorod, Nikon had spent several years as abbot of an illustrious monastery in Moscow. It was in this time that he met several prelates from the Greek Church, especially Patriarch Paisius of Jerusalem, who visited Moscow from time to time seeking support from the Russian Church and State. These Greek churchmen helped him to see that it was very much in the interest of pan-Orthodox unity that the Russians bring their liturgical practices more closely in line with those of the Greek Church. This would also make the Russians more aware of the plight of the Greek Church suffering under the Turkish yoke, and hence more willing to come to their aid. Tsar Alexis strongly supported this program.

At the beginning of Great Lent in 1653, Patriarch Nikon began his reforms of church practices, bringing them into alignment with Greek practices. Among many other things, he issued injunctions that the sign of the cross must be made with three fingers instead of two, and that during Saint Ephraim’s Prayer, the sixteen full prostrations that the Russians were used to making must be changed to four full prostrations and twelve bows from the waist.

Archpriest Avvakum, another leader of the reform-minded clergy, along with many others, responded to the liturgical changes mandated by Patriarch Nikon with great consternation, even shock. For one thing, the two-fingered sign of the Cross had been confirmed by the great Stoglav Council of 1551 (the Council of the Hundred Chapters), with anathemas against any other practice. Also, the Russians were convinced that the Greeks were the ones who had departed from the pristine purity of the Faith-through their scandalous willingness to capitulate to Roman Catholicism at the Council of Lyons in 1274 and the Council of Florence in 1439. Besides this, the Russians were generally scandalized at the liturgical laxity demonstrated by the Greek churchmen.
visiting Moscow, who were not used to the very lengthy Russian services and the meticulous attention to liturgical detail observed reverently by the Russians. This added to the suspicions of Father Avvakum and his group.

In promoting the liturgical reforms, Nikon’s brash self-confidence led him to underestimate the opposition that his blunt, bludgeoning injunctions provoked. While the bulk of the people went along grudgingly with his demands, the reforming priests and their lay supporters declared, according to Nicolas Zernov, that “in no circumstances would they give up their belief in the superiority of Moscow tradition over that of other branches of the Eastern Church.”

This stubborn resistance to his plans infuriated Patriarch Nikon. He was staggered by this defiant disobedience to the Patriarchate. This provoked him to his second big mistake-trying to stamp out the dissent by force. The leading dissenters, according to Zernov, “were arrested, ill-treated, unfrocked, and sent into exile. All these measures were useless??.?. persecution only inflamed their zeal and strengthened their conviction that Nikon was a traitor, a false shepherd, to be opposed to the end by all faithful Christians.”

Patriarch Nikon continued to promote his campaign for liturgical reform through the end of 1656. Then in январь of 1657, Tsar Alexis returned from battles against the Poles to find Moscow seething with discontent against Patriarch Nikon. The Tsar cooled in his support of Nikon, ordering him to restore to communion one of the most out-spoken and prominent opponents of the reform, Father Ivan Neronov, who had been imprisoned in a monastery in 1653. Nikon obeyed, allowing him to use the old service books, and even saying, “Both are good. It doesn’t matter; use whichever books you wish.” From this point on, the Patriarch seemed to lose heart in the campaign for reform, turning to building new monasteries and churches.

Then, on июля 10, 1658, Nikon uttered public complaints against the Tsar at the end of a divine liturgy, and announced his intention to retire from the Patriarchate, probably expecting the Tsar to rush to him to apologize. However, Tsar Alexis only sent two boyars to assure the patriarch of his continuing friendship.

The petulant Patriarch, unsatisfied with this response by the Tsar, remained true to his threat, and retired to a monastery, but without officially resigning from the Patriarchate. For eight years he played for time, neither resigning nor taking up his duties again.

Many consultations were held, including with various Eastern Patriarchs. Several councils were held, but still Nikon remained aloof, and the Church remained in a kind of limbo. Finally, in the Spring of 1666, Tsar Alexis
summoned a major council of all the Russian bishops, which reaffirmed the new service books but did not condemn the old books as heretical. On this basis, many of the clergy who opposed the reforms accepted them. Those who still rejected them, such as Avvacum, were again anathematized. This council went on to address many of the concerns of all the reformers—matters of pastoral care, proper maintenance of the churches, proper records being kept, proper celebration of services (including yedinoglasno—only one voice being heard at a time), etc.
The Council of 1666–1667

However, the issue of the Patriarchate still remained unsettled. The Tsar felt that the presence of the other Orthodox Patriarchs was necessary to decide the issue. So he invited them all to come to Moscow for another council. Two of them came—Patriarch Paisius of Alexandria and Patriarch Makarios of Antioch. Once they arrived, the council began, in ноября of 1666.

The main figure at the council was the Metropolitan of Gaza, Paisius Ligarides. This man, who ironically had formerly been one of Nikon’s most ardent supporters, now turned fiercely against him, and was his chief accuser during this council.

The council addressed the issue of the Patriarchate first. After a month of deliberations, Nikon, the very man who instituted the reforms which this council was to endorse once and for all, was found guilty of unlawfully deserting the Patriarchal throne and showing great disrespect to the Tsar. He was deposed, defrocked, and confined to a monastery 350 miles north of Moscow, and a new patriarch was elected—Joasaph II. Nikon’s ignominious fall helped to make possible the fall of the Patriarchate itself in the time of Tsar Peter the Great.

Second, the revered Council of Moscow of 1551 (the Stoglav) was officially renounced, since that council had declared the Russian Church to be the standard and pattern for all of worldwide Orthodoxy. According to Zernov, “Hard pressed by the arguments of Metropolitan Paisius of Gaza, the Russian bishops reluctantly signed the following statement: ‘We declare the Council of 1551 to be no Council at all, and its decisions not binding, because the Metropolitan, Makary, and those with him acted and made their decisions in ignorance, without reason, and quite arbitrarily, for they had not consulted the Ecumenical Patriarch.’” This Metropolitan Makary was canonized as a saint in 1988 by the Russian Church.

Third, contemporary Greek liturgical practices were affirmed, and the old Russian practices in disagreement with the Greek usages were condemned as heretical. Ironically, this was in direct opposition to a letter sent by Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople and 28 other Greek bishops to Moscow in 1655.

And fourth, all those refusing to accept the liturgical reforms were not only anathematized, but handed over to the secular authorities for punishment as heretics.
True to their word, Avvakum and his group of dissenters refused to obey the dictates of this council, and the Old Believer Schism became a deep and bitter reality, lasting to the present day. During the time of Tsar Peter the Great (r. 1689–1725), whom many of the Old Believers considered to be Antichrist, up to one-third of all Russian Orthodox Christians—many of them among the most pious, most dedicated Christians in the land—were associated with the Old Believer movement.

Avvakum was sent into exile in the north of Russia. In 1682 he was burned alive, along with three of his closest associates, on the charge of blasphemies uttered against the Tsar and his household. Many other Old Believers were persecuted by the Church and State, which only deepened their antagonism. In their desire to preserve pure and unchanged the rituals of the Russian Church of the mid-17th century, the Old Believers have succeeded in preserving ancient Russian forms of iconography and liturgical chant which otherwise would likely have been lost. Most of them have resisted all attempts at reconciliation ever since.
Russian Saints in the 17th century

Besides Saint Patriarch Germogen, the Russians’ heroic defense of their Faith and nation during and immediately after the Time of Troubles was epitomized by Saint Juliana Lazarevskaya (d. 1604), a housewife of the lower nobility who sacrificed herself and her possessions for the poor and needy; the resourceful Saint Dionysius, Abbot of the Holy Trinity-Saint Sergius Monastery; and Saint Dorothy of Kashin, a wealthy widow who restored and led as abbess the women’s monastery in her town. Later in the century, Saint Theodosius of Chernigov (d. 1696) was a particularly effective and beloved abbot of various monasteries before becoming Bishop of Chernigov. Saint Dmitry, Bishop of Rostov (d. 1709), compiled a vast collection of Saints’ Lives that is still the standard in the Russian Church.
During the seventeenth century, in the south of Russia, the Unia continued in force, although large amounts of territory were won back by the Russians from the Poles. The Cossack-led lay brotherhoods in Ukraine and Galicia served Orthodoxy well during this time by their resolute resistance to the Uniate movement. Among these lay leaders were Constantine Ostrozhskii (d. 1608) and Milety Smotritsky, who wrote his *Lamentations of the Eastern Church* in 1610.

In 1620, Patriarch Theophanes of Jerusalem secretly consecrated seven bishops for the Orthodox in defiance of the Unia, without approval from the Roman Catholic government. This greatly aided the survival of the Orthodox Church in these years.

The Orthodox resistance to the efforts of the Uniates to force them to accept the dominion of the Papacy was epitomized by two holy abbots of monasteries in western Ukraine: Saint Athanasius of Brest (d. 1646), and Saint Job of Pochaev (d. 1651).
Saint Peter Mogila

In 1632 Wladyslaw IV, the successor to King Sigismund of Poland, gave permission for the Orthodox to elect their own metropolitan of Kiev. Peter Mogila (1597–1646), the head of the Orthodox theological school that had been founded in 1615 at the Kievan Caves Monastery, was chosen. Mogila was fiercely opposed to the Roman Church and the Unia, but he had been trained in Latin schools and had a deep respect for Latin scholastic educational methods. He introduced these methods into the school at the Kievan Caves Monastery, including the use of Latin in the classroom. This school would become the Kievan Academy, the most influential institution of theological education in all of Russia, the training ground of many bishops and seminary professors. Also through Mogila’s many written works, including a Slavic translation of the famous catechism of the Jesuit Peter Canisius (1521–1597) and a priest’s Service Book, significant Latin influences entered the Orthodox Church in doctrinal formulation and liturgical practice.

Mogila’s writings were judged acceptable by the Orthodox bishops in a council in Kiev in 1640. And in 1642, a council in Jassy, in Moldavia, approved a modified version of Mogila’s *Confession of Faith*. However, even in its modified form, Bishop Kallistos Ware calls this confession the most Latin-influenced document ever endorsed by a council of the Orthodox Church. Together with the westernization forced upon the Russian Church through Tsar Peter the Great’s policies, Mogila’s writings and educational practices were a primary cause of a certain “captivity” to Western influences for some two hundred years in the theology and piety of the Orthodox people of Russia, Ukraine, and Romania. Nevertheless, he was recently canonized as a saint by the Churches in Ukraine, Romania, and Poland.
Cyril Lukaris (1572–1638) served as patriarch of Alexandria (r. 1601–1620), and then as patriarch of Constantinople in five separate periods between 1620 and 1638 under the Ottoman Turks before they finally strangled him on false charges of treason. In his ongoing struggle against Roman Catholicism, beginning in his homeland of Crete, during his education at the Orthodox school in Venice and then at the University of Padua, and in teaching at Orthodox schools in Poland and Ukraine, he was drawn to Protestantism through friendships with various Calvinists. As Patriarch of Alexandria, and then as Patriarch of Constantinople, he became convinced that his flock, suffering under the oppressive hand of the Ottoman Turks, needed rejuvenation that he thought could come through imbibing the enthusiasm, doctrines, and practices of Protestantism.

This is the context in which he wrote his brief *Confession of Faith* in 1629 that was almost entirely saturated with Calvinist thought. It was forthrightly condemned by the same church councils in Kiev and Jassy which upheld the orthodoxy of Peter Mogila’s catechism and service books.

In 1672 the Council of Bethlehem/Jerusalem endorsed the *Confession of Faith* written by Patriarch Dositeos of Jerusalem (r. 1669–1707), which he drew up as a point-by-point refutation of Lukaris’s creed. Unfortunately, this confession also reflects the typical tendency among Orthodox theologians in these years to use Protestant arguments against Roman Catholicism and Catholic arguments against Protestantism. Its last eight chapters are heavily influenced by Roman Catholicism.
The Greek Church under the Turks

In the seventeenth century, the Greek Church continued to suffer oppression and stultification under the heavy hand of Turkish rule. The Bulgarian Church had lost her patriarch and her independence with the Turkish conquest, and Greek influence—most of it unwelcome—increased over the Bulgarian and other Balkan churches. Due to infighting among various groups vying for power within the Christian milet, the interference of Roman Catholic and Protestant diplomats, and the willingness of the Turks to accept, and then expect, bribe money for the acquisition of various church offices, there was much corruption, instability, and strife within the Church administration. For example, between the years 1596 and 1696, there were 61 times when there was a turnover in the office of the Patriarch—with 31 different men involved.
The West

In Western Europe, during the terribly devastating Thirty Years War (1618–1648), fought mostly in Germany between Roman Catholics and Protestants, about one third of the population of the German principalities was decimated. This war started to convince many people that creedal, “revealed” religion had to be rejected—or at least its adherents had to learn not to use force in trying to spread their faith. This realization eventually contributed much to the rise and popularity of Deism, beginning with the work of Lord Herbert (1583–1648) in England. This decidedly non-creedal, generic form of natural religion played an important role in the formation of the United States of America in the following century.

Germany also saw the rise of Pietism, a kind of heartfelt Protestant spirituality and practice that arose at least partly in reaction to the so-called Lutheran Scholasticism that developed after the initial dramatic rise of Lutheranism in the previous century. A Lutheran pastor in Frankfurt, Philip Jakob Spener (1635–1705), is considered to be the founder of the Pietistic Movement. He began holding devotional meetings twice weekly in his home, centered in prayer and Bible study. In 1675 he published his landmark *Pia Desideria (Pious Considerations)*, in which he urged intensified study of the Bible on the part of the laity, greater encouragement of the laity to grow in faith and love and to exercise their spiritual gifts, and a revival of preaching emphasizing practical edification of the faithful rather than discourses on finer theological points. He and his close associate August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) helped to found the University of Halle in 1694 for the training of ministers along Pietist lines.

While Pietism subtly and Deism more dramatically began minimizing doctrinal differences among the various Christian groups during the 17th century, sharply delineated creedal religion still held sway in most of Europe and in the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English colonies in the New World. In the thirteen colonies along the Atlantic seaboard that would become the U.S.A., Puritan Calvinist theocracy prevailed at first in Massachusetts, Congregationalism in Connecticut and New Hampshire, the Dutch Reformed Church in New York, Presbyterianism in New Jersey, Swedish Lutheranism in Delaware, Roman Catholicism in Maryland, and Anglicanism in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia.

Full religious toleration prevailed first in the colonies of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania—both of which were founded on this basis during the 17th century.
Rhode Island was established in 1635 by Roger Williams (1603–1683), who championed the right of every person to worship God “according to the dictates of his own conscience.” The colony of Pennsylvania (Penn’s Woods) was founded in 1682 by William Penn (1644–1718), a follower of the English mystic George Fox (1624–1691), the founder of Quakerism (officially, the Society of Friends); Pennsylvania is still known as the Quaker State. Fox emphasized experiencing through silent meditation the “Inner Light of Christ” within one’s soul.

In England, the publication of the King James Bible in 1611 was an epochal event in the history of the English Bible. In 1646 the Puritan Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) led a coup d’état against King Charles I, who was executed in 1649. Cromwell established a kind of military dictatorship in England that lasted until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The heavily Calvinistic Westminster Confession, endorsed by the Scottish Parliament in 1647 and the British Parliament a year later, became the law of the land, until 1660.

In France, the Roman Catholic Church was troubled by Jansenism, a rigorist (i.e., moralistic and legalistic) movement based on the anti-Pelagian writings of Saint Augustine-especially his emphasis on the irresistible grace of God given only to the elect. The important French theologian and mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) was its most famous convert.

One of Jansenism’s most powerful opponents was Saint Vincent de Paul (c. 1580–1660). He co-founded along with Saint Louise de Marillac the Sisters of Charity, the first women’s religious order without confinement to convents devoted to the care of the sick and the poor. Vincent was partly inspired by Saint Francis de Sales (1567–1622), Bishop of Geneva from 1602, who wrote *Introduction to the Devout Life*, a famous book of spiritual guidance for laypeople living in the midst of worldly distractions.
Eighteenth Century
The Greek Church

Life under the Islamic Turks continued to be very difficult for the Christians living in the Ottoman Empire. Although some Serbs managed to emigrate to Austria and Hungary where they were allowed to have their own dioceses, this was the darkest hour for those Christians who remained under Turkish control.

Yet this was also a time of renewed hope, as seen in the lives of three very remarkable saints who lived in Greece.
Saint Cosmas Aitolos

Plus Saint Cosmas Aitolos (1714–1779) has been called Equal-to-the-Apostles, Apostle to the Poor, and Father of the Greek Nation. From a family of poor weavers, and basically self-taught, he lived as a monk on Mount Athos for seventeen years. Then he felt compelled by God to leave the Holy Mountain in order to rally the discouraged Greeks and Albanians suffering now for three hundred years under Turkish oppression, and to strengthen them in their Orthodox Faith.

Receiving the blessing of Patriarch Sophronios II of Constantinople to do this, Saint Cosmas undertook three apostolic journeys as an itinerant preacher throughout central and northern Greece, the Greek Islands, Epiros, and Albania. Sometimes he would be followed by hundreds, even thousands, of villagers.

His life and preaching were marked by great humility. Once he said to the people, “Not only am I not worthy to teach you, but I am not even worthy to kiss your feet, for each of you is worth more than the entire world.” He was not a worker of miracles in the physical realm, but through his love, humility, and exhortation, many broken relationships were miraculously healed.

He instigated the founding of over 200 schools by urging the elders in the various towns and villages to get one started. His promotion of Christian education significantly raised the educational level of all of Greece, which helped sustain the strength of the Orthodox Faith, and helped lay the groundwork for the overthrow of the Turkish yoke in Greece in the 1820s.

Typically he would come into a town or village and say to the gathered crowds, “So, my children, to safeguard your Faith, and the freedom of your homeland, take care to establish without fail a Greek school in which your children will learn all that you are ignorant of.” And again, “My beloved children in Christ, bravely and fearlessly preserve our Holy Faith and the language of our Fathers, because both of these characterize our most beloved homeland, and without them our nation is destroyed. Don’t be discouraged, my brethren; Divine Providence will one day send heavenly salvation to gladden your hearts and eliminate this dreadful state in which we find ourselves.” He prophesied correctly (at least for central and southern Greece) that “freedom will come in the third generation. Your grandchildren will see it.”

Saint Cosmas was highly respected by many of the Turkish people living in Greece, but he was perceived as a political threat by some of the authorities. Executed by the Turks in Berat, Albania, in 1779, he is one of the hundreds of “New Martyrs” for Christ who died at the hands of the Ottomans.
Saint Makarios of Corinth

Saint Makarios of Corinth (1731–1805) was of aristocratic background. As a young man he was a volunteer school teacher in Corinth, his birthplace, for six years. Then, though still a layman, he was unanimously selected by laity and clergy to be the new archbishop of Corinth.

As bishop, he immediately began improving the state of the Church under his care by more strictly applying the canons regarding Church life. For instance, he prohibited priests from taking part in political affairs, and he strictly honored the canonical age for clerical ordinations. He distributed catechisms to all his priests, discharged all illiterate priests, and sent ordinands to monasteries for training. He also urged the wealthy to donate large baptismal basins to the churches, so that children could be baptized properly. He planned to establish schools throughout his archbishopric, but was prevented from doing so by the Russo-Turkish War in 1768, which ended his episcopacy in Corinth.

After his episcopacy, he went to live on Mount Athos as a monk. Here he devoted much time to editing and writing. In this way he made great contributions to the life of the Church.

While on Mount Athos, he helped to found the Kollyvades Movement. This was a group of fervent defenders of traditional Orthodoxy. Its formation was in response to the innovation of the Skete of Saint Anne on Mount Athos of holding memorial services for the dead on Sundays—which seemed to the Kollyvades to be a violation of the spirit of Sunday as the day for the celebration every week of the Resurrection of Christ. The Kollyvades (from ‘kollyva,’ the boiled wheat eaten after such memorial services) were first called this derogatorily by the innovators.

The dispute spread to other sketes of the Holy Mountain and assumed dangerous proportions, with the innovators insulting and persecuting the traditionalists. Eventually, after much conflict and indecision, the new practice was accepted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Many of the Kollyvades party also espoused more frequent partaking of Holy Communion, since for centuries it had become very widespread practice that people were communing only two or three times a year. The Kollyvades saw this as symptomatic of the severe decline in the spiritual life of the people in this era. In 1777 St Makarios published a book called Concerning Continual Communion of the Divine Mysteries. In 1783, Saint Nikodemos gave this book its final form. Appealing to the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the canons of the
Church, Saint Makarios and Saint Nikodemos in this book specifically refute 13 reasons typically given as to why the Eucharist should be received so infrequently. The book was met with much resistance, before it was finally generally accepted.

The Kollyvades group also revived and cultivated an interest in hesychastic, mystical prayer, which had fallen into relative oblivion. Saints Makarios and Nikodemos helped very much to revive hesychasm in their own day through their publication of the Philokalia—the highly renowned compilation of selected spiritual writings from the 4th through the 15th centuries. In their introduction, the editors say that they have compiled the work from various old manuscripts “found scattered in dark holes and corners.” To this day, the Philokalia is considered among the Orthodox as the greatest anthology of spiritual wisdom ever published.

**Some particularly noteworthy writings in the Philokalia**
- Saint Mark the Ascetic, “On Those who Think that They are Made Righteous by Works” (5th century)
- Saint Diodochos of Photiki, “On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination” (5th century)
- Saint Maximos the Confessor, “Four Hundred Texts on Love” (7th century)
- Saint Symeon Metaphrastes, “Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios of Egypt” (11th century)
- Saint Peter of Damaskos, “A Treasury of Divine Knowledge” (12th century)
- Saint Gregory of Sinai, “On Stillness” (14th century)
- Saint Gregory Palamas, “In Defense of Those who Devoutly Practice a Life of Stillness” (14th century)

Makarios went to Smyrna to raise money to publish the Philokalia, along with Concerning Continual Communion and the Evergetitos (a large collection of lives and sayings of the Desert Fathers, which has deeply influenced monastic spirituality). Saints Makarios and Nikodemos also collaborated in compiling The Extant Works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian.

Saint Makarios also contributed to the publication of a new martyrologium, consisting of the Lives of 75 Orthodox new martyrs who suffered under the Ottoman Turks between 1492 and 1794. He played a role in directly encouraging some of the new martyrs through being a father confessor.
to a number of Greeks who had been converted in one way or another to Islam, but then returned to the Christian Faith and wanted to atone for their apostasy by martyrdom.

Many of the Kollyvades left Mount Athos due to the persecution there. According to Constantine Cavarnos, they “scattered all over Greece, especially the Aegean Islands, becoming spiritual awakers and reformers through their sermons, personal counsels, the establishment of monasteries that developed into luminous centers of spiritual life, and their exemplary Christian character and way of life.”

Saint Makarios was one of the Kollyvades who left the Holy Mountain, eventually settling in a hermitage on the island of Chios. There he lived in peace from 1790 until his death in 1805.
Saint Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain

St Nikodemos (1749–1809) was born on Naxos in the Cyclades Islands to pious parents; his mother eventually became a nun. He was wonderfully pious and intellectually brilliant, with a nearly photographic memory. His first teacher was the brother of Saint Cosmas the Aitolian. In 1775 he became a monk on Mount Athos, where he lived at several monasteries and sketes. He even left Athos for a while to live on a small island near Euboea.

Often working together with Saint Makarios of Corinth, Saint Nikodemos devoted most of his life to writing, editing, and translating. His works include a modern Greek translation of the commentaries by Blessed Theophylact of Ochrid on the 14 Epistles of Saint Paul and on the 7 Catholic Epistles; a modern Greek translation of the Psalms, with extended commentary; the Philokalia and Evergenitos, already mentioned; and the works of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, already mentioned. He also edited the works of St Gregory Palamas, but the manuscript, except for the introduction by Nikodemos and a few parts, was lost in Vienna.

Saint Nikodemos also revised a book on spiritual guidance called The Spiritual Exercises, written by a Roman Catholic priest named Lorenzo Scupoli, which he published with the title Unseen Warfare. He also produced The Rudder, a compilation of the canons of the Church, with commentary in demotic (popular) Greek. And as previously mentioned, he revised Saint Makarios’s Concerning Continual Communion. He also wrote many hymnological works, especially akoluthias and canons for saints.

In addition, Saint Nikodemos wrote a book giving guidance to priests for how to be an effective spiritual father, especially through proper use of the Sacrament of Confession. Unfortunately, this book, entitled Exomologetarion, or A Manual of Confession, reflects considerable Roman Catholic influence, as seen in its tendency towards legalism concerning penances to be given for confessed and absolved sins, and in its apparent acceptance of the Anselmian sacrificial theory of atonement, with Christ’s sufferings in bearing the sins of the world on the Cross understood as appeasing the wrath of God the Father against all of fallen mankind engulfed in sin.
Two other important saints of Greece

Saint Athanasios Parios (c. 1722–1813), was another leading churchman of this era. A disciple of Saint Makarios, he wrote this saint’s biography. Saint Athanasios was also deeply influenced by the revival of hesychasm. He taught at the Academy on Mount Athos, then in Thessaloniki, then on Chios for 25 years. There he had strong influence on hundreds of Greek youths. He loved to bring forth the wisdom of the great Eastern Fathers of the Church, and he especially tried to revive interest in the works of Saint Gregory Palamas.

Saint Nikephoros of Chios (1750–1821) was another important Greek saint in this era. He taught at the famous school at Chios for 20 years, until 1802, when he became abbot of the Monastery called Nea Mone on Chios. After Saint Makarios of Corinth died, Saint Nikephoros wrote hymns honoring him.
The eighteenth century was a period of grave difficulty for the Orthodox Church in Russia. Peter I (the Great) (r. 1689–1725), taking the title of “emperor,” ruled Russia with an iron hand. He became fascinated with Western Europe, especially its advancements in scientific and military technology, and he encouraged the introduction and spread of such technology in Russia. He built the new city of Saint Petersburg on filled in swampland by the Baltic Sea to be Russia’s celebrated “Window to the West.”

As part of his effort to modernize his nation through Westernization, Peter forced the Russian Orthodox Church to accept a radical structural reorganization based on the model of the various Protestant State-Churches in Scandinavia and England. After Patriarch Adrian died in 1700, Peter kept delaying giving his approval for the election of a new patriarch. Finally, in 1721, he issued the Ecclesiastical Regulation. Written by a very Protestant-leaning Ukrainian bishop named Theophan Prokopovich (1681–1738), this document officially abolished the patriarchate of the Russian Church. A standing synod of bishops, priests, and laymen was established in place of the patriarchal office as the highest ruling body in the Church.

All the members of the Holy Synod were appointed by the emperor and were subject to him through its overseer, a government official called the oberprokurator. A Government-supervised diocesan consistory was set up in each diocese, having more authority than the bishop of the diocese. In effect, the Church administration became an arm of the State. The priests became a kind of caste of lower-order civil administrators.

This radical violation of traditional, canonical Orthodox Church order in Russia-imposed on the church by the emperor-was formally ratified and recognized by the other Eastern patriarchs. This arrangement lasted until 1917, when the patriarchate was officially reestablished at the All-Russian Church Council of Moscow of 1917–1918.

The “Western captivity” of the Russian Church deepened in the 18th century as the seminaries and academies fell more and more under Latinizing influence emanating from the Academy of Kiev. As among the Orthodox suffering under the Turkish yoke, leading churchmen in Russia also tended to be either pro-Roman or pro-Protestant, with those of the pro-Roman school using Roman Catholic arguments against Protestant influences, and those on the other side using Protestant arguments against Roman Catholic influences. Very few on either side plumbed the depths of the Patristic Tradition in order to
critique the errors of both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Hence, the living Tradition of the Church was very much obscured through historical circumstances in this era.
By God’s providence, Saint Petersburg, Emperor Peter I’s new westernized, secularized capital city, was not without at least one particularly powerful witness to the truth of the Gospel. Xenia Grigorievna (c. 1730-c. 1800) appeared to have been living a carefree, comfortable, happy life with her husband, an imperial chorister, when suddenly her husband died at a drinking party. She was 26 years old at the time. Stricken with grief at the loss of her husband, she was doubly mournful because they had not been living a Christ-centered life, and her husband had died without having partaken of the holy mysteries of Confession and the Eucharist. She agonized for the soul of her beloved spouse.

Giving to the poor nearly everything she possessed, and giving her house to a friend, she disappeared from the city for eight years. It was said later that she spent those years living with a sisterhood of ascetics, under the guidance of a holy elder. Then just as suddenly, she reappeared in Saint Petersburg, where she walked the streets of the poorest part of the city, the Storona district, and slept in a field under the open sky. She clothed herself in one of her husband’s old uniforms, and from that time on, she took his name, Andrei Theodorovich, as her own. After some time she was granted the gift of clairvoyance, by which she helped many residents of the Storona.

She continued this remarkable way of life for 37 years, until her death at the age of 71. Countless miracles have taken place through her intercessions.
The most well-known saint of the Russian Church in the 18th century was Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724–1783). Tikhon was a gentle, sensitive, scholarly monk who became the ruling bishop of the vast southern diocese of Voronezh in 1763. He poured his heart and soul into reviving the church life in this diocese, beginning with educating and guiding the clergy, many of whom could scarcely even read, and many were very lax in their fulfillment of their pastoral duties. All of this was reflective of the abnormality of the Church being directly subjected to the State. Exhausted and frustrated from all his efforts and little to show for it in his eyes, Saint Tikhon asked for and was granted retirement from active episcopal work after only four years and four months in the Voronezh Diocese.

For the last 16 years of his life he lived in retirement at a monastery across the Don River. In these years he immersed himself deeply in the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Church Fathers, especially Saint John Chrysostom. He knew and appreciated, as well, the Pietist writers of the Christian West, who were calling for and writing about a meaningful living relationship with the Living God, over against the barren intellectualism of both Tridentine Catholicism and Calvinistic Protestantism. Saint Tikhon wrote many books giving practical guidance for living the Christian life, including Journey to Heaven and On True Christianity. Through letter-writing he provided spiritual direction and pastoral counseling to many.
Paisy Velichkovsky (1722–1794) was born into a priestly family in Poltava, in eastern Ukraine. A deeply religious child, he entered the illustrious school at Kiev at the age of 13. However, four years later he fled from there, having explained to the Rector, “I hear only the names of pagan gods and wise men—Cicero, Aristotle, and Plato. By learning their wisdom people of today have become blinded to the end and have digressed from the true way. Intellectuals utter words, but internally, they are filled with darkness and gloom, for their wisdom is of the world only. Not seeing any purpose to such learning, and fearing how I myself cannot but be corrupted by it, I have left it.”

After wandering from place to place for seven years, Paisy reached Mount Athos, where he stayed for about 17 years. Not finding a spiritual father there who could guide him in his quest for direct communion with the living God through hesychastic prayer, he began collecting and translating various writings of the ascetical and mystical Church Fathers. The Fathers themselves became his spiritual fathers through their writings.

In 1763 Saint Paisy left Mount Athos with 63 fellow monks, all speakers of the Slavonic and/or Moldavian languages. Reaching Moldavia, they presented themselves to the Metropolitan of Jassy, who gave them a deserted monastery at Dragomira, which they quickly restored.

Twelve years later, due to the eastward expansion of the Roman Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire, Saint Paisy and his by now 350 monks fled to the east, where they were eventually given the Niamets Monastery to restore and revive. It was here that Saint Paisy completed his translation into Slavonic of an abridged version of the Philokalia, compiled by Saints Makarios and Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain.

Saint Paisy’s role in restoring the hesychastic tradition in Romania and the Slavic lands cannot be overemphasized. He was one of the first to reemphasize the role of the staretz, or spiritual elder, as a guide in the spiritual/mystical life. This kind of spiritual eldership had fallen into nearly complete oblivion for almost 250 years, ever since the victory of the Possessors over the Non-Possessors in Russia in the 1520s. And besides restoring and/or rejuvenating three monasteries in Moldavia, including leading a community of some 500 monks at Niamets, he so inspired his followers with love for Christ and with a missionary spirit to spread the teaching about hesychastic prayer—this glorious way to intensely experience deep spiritual communion with the Living God—that after his death, hundreds of his followers, carrying his Slavonic translation
of the *Philokalia*, streamed into Russia and spread his approach to the monastic life far and wide.
The leading Russian hierarch of the century was Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) of Moscow (1737–1812). He was an especially eloquent preacher; his collected works include about 500 of his sermons. He wrote a catechism for use by the clergy, and another one for children. More tolerant of the Old Believers than most of his contemporaries, he was the first to allow them to have their own chapels in Moscow, and he formalized the arrangement known as the Yedinoverie (one faith) whereby the Old Believers, upon reconciliation with the Church of Russia, were allowed to continue to worship according to their old rites—though very few of them accepted this offer. He was also the first to write a history of the Russian Church.
During the 18th century Russian missionaries began to move across Siberia towards the Pacific Ocean. In 1794 ten monks from the Valaam Monastery in Russian Finland and two other nearby monasteries arrived on the island of Kodiak in Alaska. These first Orthodox missionaries to North America were pleasantly surprised to find nearly all of the Native Americans quite eager to accept the Orthodox Faith. In fact, many of them had already been baptized by laymen working for the Russian American fur-trading Company.

The missionaries were careful to honor the local religion and culture as much as possible, especially as the natives’ basic worldview was in many ways already oriented towards the sacramental, tradition-based worldview of Orthodoxy. This very much helps explain how it was that some 12,000 natives were baptized and/or chrismated by the missionaries in their first two years there.

The missionaries also proved to be ardent champions of the human rights of the natives, who were often abused by the managers of the Russian-American Company. At the same time, many of the fur-traders married native women, and a distinctive creole, Aleut culture gradually developed.

One of the first ten missionaries, Saint Juvenaly of Lake Iliamna, left Kodiak to spread the Faith on the Kenai Peninsula of the mainland, and beyond. He was martyred by natives in 1797, thus becoming the Protomartyr of North America.

Another member of this first missionary party was Saint Herman of Alaska, a deeply pious, hesychastic monk who eventually settled in a hermitage on tiny Spruce Island, near Kodiak Island. His gentle compassion and care for the natives won their hearts. With his glorification as a saint by the newly formed Orthodox Church in America in 1970, he became North America’s first officially canonized saint.
The 18th century in the West was a time of spiritual revival, especially through the spreading of various Pietist movements. In 1722 Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), a godson of Philip Spener, welcomed a group of descendants of the Bohemian Brethren from Austria to settle on one of his estates, called Herrnhut, in Moravia. Thus began what would become the Moravians, a Pietistic group that emphasized intense personal devotion to Jesus Christ as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

Moravians immigrating to America contributed much to the First Great Awakening, a widespread spiritual revival occurring in the English colonies on the Atlantic seaboard from the 1720s through the 1740s. An indefatigable, dynamic traveling evangelist from England named George Whitefield (1714–1770), and America’s greatest theologian of the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), were the principal leaders actively promoting this revival, which cut across denominational barriers as Protestants of all sorts shared similar experiences of dramatic conversion to Christ.

An Anglican priest named John Wesley (1703–1791) was the leader of Methodism, a form of Pietism arising within the Church of England that began among a group of spiritually zealous students at Oxford University in the 1730s-one of whom had been George Whitefield. These students were seen to be so methodical in their approach to the Christian life that they were disparagingly called Methodists.

Wesley wanted his movement to foster and promote spiritual renewal within the Church of England, but in organizing annual conferences for his followers in the 1750s, he in effect laid the foundation for a new Christian denomination. The Methodist Episcopal Church was officially created in America in 1784. In England, the Methodists broke most of their ties with the Anglican Church by 1795, four years after Wesley’s death. John Wesley’s brother Charles (1707–1788) was a gifted, prolific hymn-writer whose 5500 hymns provided inspiration and cohesion for the Methodist movement and beyond.

At the same time, Deism was growing more popular, mostly among intellectuals, in Europe and America. Deism flourished in this era of the so-called Enlightenment, when man’s natural reason was exalted above belief in the supernatural. Deists still held to a belief in God as Creator of the universe, but they generally believed that, like a cosmic Clockmaker who fashioned and wound up the great clock of Creation and then let it go on ticking on its own,
God had little or nothing to do with the ongoing affairs of the world. However, most American Deists, such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, attributed the American colonies’ victory over Great Britain to the working of God’s Providence—or as Washington said, “the propitious smiles of Heaven.”

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) and the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) developed a philosophy which removed God, freedom, and immortality from the realm of human reason. To them, true Christianity was a religion of personal faith and ethical action, without mystical spiritual experience. Their work would have considerable influence in the development of Liberal Protestantism in the next century.

Among the most influential spiritual achievements of Western Christendom in this century was the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), George Frideric Handel (1685–1759), and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791).

The Roman Catholic Church in the eighteenth century continued to promote active mission work, especially in Africa, the Far East, and Latin America, including the American Southwest, where the celebrated Franciscan missionary Junipero Serra (1713–1784) established a number of missions along what is today the coast of southern California. However, a great conflict with the Enlightenment spirit and with growing nationalist and popularist forces led to the violently anti-clerical French Revolution that erupted in 1789.

In 1773 the Jesuit order was dissolved by Pope Clement XIV under secular pressures—though they were restored by the Papacy in 1814. Ironically, many Jesuits found refuge in the Russia of Empress Catherine II (the Great) (r. 1762–1796). Herself a devotee of the French Enlightenment spirit, she closed more than three fourths of the monasteries in Russia during her reign.
Nineteenth Century
The seeds of spiritual renewal, planted in the previous century especially through the work of Saint Paisy Velichkovsky, blossomed in Russia in the 19th century, even though the Church continued to live under the domination of the State. While the Church was subject to strict governmental control and censorship, and while there was no patriarch and no church councils during the entire century, the life of faith continued to show itself in the lives of the Russian saints, missionaries, theologians, and writers of the period.

Many of the disciples of Saint Paisy Velichkovsky in Moldavia returned to Russia in 1801 after the new young Tsar Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) granted political pardon to those who had fled from Russia in the previous years. These disciples spread the ideals and practices of the Non-Possessors-contemplation and mysticism (hesychasm) in hermitages and small monasteries (sketes), spiritual eldership, healing and prophetic gifts, and missionary zeal—all of which had been virtually submerged in Russia ever since the victory of the Possessors in the 16th century. It has been said of Saint Paisy that he “was for Russian monasticism at the end of the eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, as well as for contemporary monks living a true monastic life, the same as Saint Anthony the Great was for the Egyptian monks and the desert dwellers of the Levant. From him stems also that great tradition of Optina elders, headed by Hieromonk Leonid.”
The Elders of Optina

The Optina Pustyn Monastery had dwindled to almost nothing by the end of the 18th century, but Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, seeing its potential, sent a disciple of Saint Paisy, named Avramy, to go there and direct the rebuilding process. The first in the illustrious line of holy, clairvoyant Optina elders (startsi) was Elder Leonid (1768–1841), who came there in 1829 after spending some time at the Monastery of Valaam which had sent the famous missionary team to Alaska, including Saint Herman. Elder Leonid suffered great persecution from his fellow monks, who were not used to the practice of spiritual eldership, and who perhaps resented the many visitors who came to the holy elder seeking spiritual guidance. Eventually Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev intervened to defend him.

At his death, Elder Leonid was followed by Saint Makary (1788–1860) in the office of staretz at Optina. An intellectual from the gentry class, Makary, according to John Dunlap, “carried on a vast correspondence with laymen and clergy from all over Russia. It was during Makary’s tenure as staretz that the Russian intelligensia began to flock to Optina, finding there the light which eluded them in Western philosophy and social action movements.”

Under the protection and patronage of the imposing Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (r. 1821–1867), Saint Makary worked along with the famous Slavophile philosopher Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856) and several excellent Patristic scholars and translators to publish in Russian a number of Patristic writings by Saint Isaac the Syrian, Saints Barsanuphius and John, Saint Mark the Ascetic, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Theodore the Studite, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Saint Gregory of Sinai, and others. Saint Makary wrote to one of his spiritual children, “I have told you nothing that is an invention of my own. All of what I say comes from the writings of the Fathers.”

Saint Amvrosy (1812–1891) succeeded Saint Makary as staretz of Optina in 1865, after Saint Makary groomed him for this office during the many years he served as Saint Makary’s cell attendant. Amvrosy was so impressive as a spiritual teacher and living saint that the great Orthodox Christian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) modeled Elder Zossima in his masterwork, *The Brothers Karamazov*, upon him. Dostoevsky wrote that he also was inspired particularly by Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk of the previous century.

The great line of spiritual eldership at Optina continued into the 20th century with Elder Joseph (1837–1911), who had been Saint Amvrosy’s cell attendant for many years, Elder Anatoly (d. 1922), and Elder Nektary (d. 1928).
Saint Seraphim of Sarov

Probably the greatest Russian saint of the 19th century, who has been called by some the greatest saint in all of Russian Church history, was Saint Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833). Saint Seraphim became a monk at the age of 19. He lived for many years by himself in a hut he built in the woods near the Sarov monastery, devoting himself to intense prayer, fasting, and spiritual exercise. He continued living there for several years even after being terribly beaten by robbers, who later repented after he forgave them.

In 1810 the abbot of the monastery ordered Saint Seraphim to return to the monastery where he continued his life of seclusion and silence, reading through the New Testament once a week, and being granted many spiritual visions. In 1825 he opened the doors of his enclosure to receive visitors, whom he greeted with the radiant joy of the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit. Soon the crowds of visitors were so great that he moved to the Near Hermitage, where he continued to minister to the massive stream of pilgrims-people from all walks of life, rich and poor, high-born and low-born-coming for healing and spiritual guidance. In his spiritual instructions St Seraphim identified the purpose of the Christian life as “the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.”

From Saint Seraphim’s conversation with Nicholas Motovilov, a married layman

And Father Seraphim continued, “When the Spirit of God comes down and confers upon a person the fullness of His presence, the human soul, as does anything else that He may touch, overflows with an inexpressible joy.?.?.?.

“Yet however comforting this joy which you now feel in your heart may be, it can never compare with that joy of which the Lord Himself spoke through the mouth of His Apostle when he said, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him’ (1Cor 2.9).

“We have been given a mere foretaste of that joy right now; and if it has filled our souls with such a sweetness, well-being, and happiness, then what shall we say of that joy which is prepared in Heaven for those who mourn here on earth? You too have shed enough tears in your life here on earth, and just look at the joy with which the Lord now consoles you!”

Other leading figures

Within this movement of spiritual renewal were two bishop-monks who were especially noteworthy teachers of the ascetic life and the practice of the Jesus Prayer: Saint Ignaty Brianchaninov (1807–1867) and Saint Theophan the
Recluse (1815–1894). Saint Ignaty is most well remembered for writing the famous *Arena: An Offering to Contemporary Monasticism*. He intended this work to be his last words to monks everywhere, but much of it is relevant for laypeople. In it he faithfully transmits the teachings of the Holy Fathers. As he says in his foreword to the work, “The teaching I offer is taken entirely from the sacred teaching of the holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church.” He draws especially upon Saint John of the Ladder, Saint Isaac the Syrian, and Saints Barsanuphius and John. He includes quotations from ascetic writers of every century, including his own-men such as Saint Seraphim of Sarov and Elder Leonid of Optina.

Like Saint Ignaty and Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, Saint Theophan the Recluse also retired from active episcopal service to devote himself more entirely to prayer, contemplation, and writing letters and books. He wrote many works on the spiritual life, including *The Path to Salvation*, and *The Spiritual Life and How to be Attuned to It* which consists of a series of letters written to a young woman in the world who was one of his spiritual daughters. His greatest contribution was making a complete translation of the *Philokalia* into contemporary Russian.

Two other extremely popular spiritual writings in circulation in Russia in the latter half of the 19th century were *The Way of the Pilgrim* and *The Pilgrim Continues His Way*. They are a series of travel narratives written by an anonymous pilgrim who wandered across Russia, practicing the Jesus Prayer, which he first learned from a staretz. He then amplified his understanding through reading the *Philokalia*. He was advised to repeat the Jesus Prayer thousands of times a day.

The two leading Russian theologians of the 19th century were the great churchman Saint Philaret (Drozdev), Metropolitan of Moscow (r. 1821–1867) and the layman Alexei Khomiakov (1804–1860). In 1840 Saint Philaret oversaw a reform of seminary education at the Moscow Academy, with all subjects now to be taught in Russian instead of Latin, and with more emphasis on Patristics. As mentioned above, his active support made possible the very significant Patristic publishing efforts led by Elder Makary of Optina and Ivan Kireevsky. He was a key figure in the beginning of the “return to the Fathers” in mid-19th century Russia, and the turning away from the Latin Scholasticism which had strongly influenced Russian theological education ever since Peter Moghila founded the Kiev Academy in the early 17th century.

Khomiakov’s writings—such as the famous essay “The Church is One”—were not originally published in Russia due to government censorship. Considered to be one of the most original and creative of modern theologians,
Khomiakov was among the first to “discover” the traditional Patristic patterns of Orthodox theology and spiritual life. He encouraged Orthodox thinkers to break away from the “Western captivity” of scholastic theology and to meet the intellectual and spiritual world of the West with a sound knowledge and experience of the genuine Orthodox Tradition.

Besides Dostoevsky, another very important Russian novelist of the nineteenth century, who also wove profound spiritual themes into his novels and short stories, was Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). His majestic *War and Peace*, about Napoleon’s invasion of Russia in 1812, is considered by some to be the greatest novel ever written. However, in his later years, in actively pursuing his burning interest in social reform, and in reaction to what he perceived as dry formalism in the Orthodox Church, he became convinced that the moral precepts given by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, and working towards establishing a just society based upon brotherly love, were the essence of the Gospel, rather than Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Second Coming. He was excommunicated by the Russian Church in 1901 for his rejection of the authentic Christian teaching—as seen, for example, in his own edited revision of the New Testament.

In addition to Kireevsky, Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, several other Russian religious thinkers/philosophers, such as Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), Nikolai Fedorov (1829–1903), and the brothers Sergei Troubetskoy (d. 1905) and Evgeny Troubetskoy (d. 1920), made important contributions to the intellectual and spiritual life of the nation. While attempting to create a distinctly Russian form of philosophy, incorporating certain elements from Russian Orthodoxy, these thinkers remained essentially Western-oriented in their basic approach. Still, they helped many of their fellow Russian intellectuals-especially among the Russian emigre community who fled to the West in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—to return to their Orthodox roots.
Russia: Missionary Activity
The nineteenth century in Russia, as in the West, was a missionary century. The priest Makary Glukharev (1792–1847) dedicated his life to the evangelization of the Siberian tribes. The lay professor, Nikolai Ilminsky (1822–1892), translated the Scriptures and Church books of the Orthodox Faith into some of the languages of these peoples. The theological academy founded in 1842 in Kazan, at the ‘Gateway to Siberia,’ became the center of the missionary activity of the Russian Church to the animistic Siberian tribes (some of whom were being converted to Buddhism by monks from Tibet), and to the Muslims living in the south-central parts of the Russian Empire. In the Kazan area alone, in 1903, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in 22 different languages or dialects.
Japan

The first Russian missionary to Japan, Saint Nikolai Kasatkin of Japan (1836–1912), spent six years mastering the Japanese language, and proceeded to convert thousands of Japanese to the Orthodox Faith—despite several periods of persecution by the Japanese government. At his death, as Japan’s first Orthodox bishop, he left a self-governing local church of about 33,000 members, with the Scriptures and liturgical books in the native language, and a number of native pastors. The impressive stone cathedral he had built in Tokyo, affectionately called Nikolai-Do (Nikolai’s house), still is a prominent architectural presence in the city.
In 1970, the Orthodox Church in America glorified its first saint: Saint Herman of Alaska (c. 1758–1837), who was one of the first ten monastic missionaries who arrived on Kodiak Island in 1794. The memory of his extraordinary holiness, expressed by his self-emptying love and care for the Alaskan people—especially in the face of exploitation and abuse of the natives by the Russian-American (fur-trading) Company—and by various miracles accomplished through his prayers, had been kept strongly alive by the descendants of the Aleuts with whom he lived and labored in Kodiak and on nearby Spruce Island.

**From Saint Herman’s conversation with 25 Russian naval officers**

“And do you love God?” the Elder then asked.

All replied: “Of course, we love God. How can one not love God?”

“And I, a sinful one, for more than forty years have been striving to love God, and I cannot say that I perfectly love Him,” answered Father Herman; and he began to show how one should love God, “If we love someone,” he said, “we always think of him, strive to please him, and day and night our heart is occupied with this. Is this the way you, gentlemen, love God? Do you often turn to Him, do you always think of Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?” It had to be acknowledged that they did not!

“For our good, for our happiness,” concluded the Elder, “at least let us make a promise to ourselves, that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall strive to love God above all, and fulfill His holy will!”

Behold what an intelligent, superb conversation Father Herman conducted in society. Without doubt this conversation must have imprinted itself on the hearts of his listeners for their whole life!

Saint Peter the Aleut was a young Aleut Orthodox Christian working for the Russian-American Company. He was one of a party of fourteen fur-hunters sailing near San Francisco whose boat was commandeered in 1815 by the Spanish authorities in the area. Imprisoned by the governor, and threatened with death by the Roman Catholic priest at the mission there if they did not accept Catholicism, all the Aleuts remained true to their Orthodox Faith. According to the eyewitness account of one of these Aleuts, Peter was then cruelly tortured until he died from loss of blood. (The others then were released.) Canonized in 1980 by the Orthodox Church in America, Saint Peter is the first Orthodox martyr of the lower 48 states.

In 1977, Father John Veniaminov (1797–1879) was glorified as a saint by
the Church of Russia as “Saint Innocent of Moscow, Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to America.” As a young priest, he traveled from Irkutsk in central Siberia with his pregnant wife, his son, his mother-in-law, and his brother to begin mission work on the island of Unalaska in the Aleutian chain in 1824. During his pastoral ministry there, after first creating an alphabet for the Aleut language out of Slavonic characters, he translated a number of Scriptural and liturgical texts into the Aleut language. He also wrote a lengthy catechetical book in the Aleut language and in Russian, called The Indication of the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Saint Innocent was a very fine administrator, carpenter, clock and organ maker, and naturalist, besides being a superb teacher, linguist, and pastor. In 1840, one year after his wife Catherine died, he became the first Bishop of Kamchatka and the Aleutian Islands, with his headquarters in Sitka, Alaska, where he built Saint Michael’s Cathedral and a seminary. As bishop he made pastoral journeys of many months and thousands of miles by kayak and dogsled to visit the widely scattered communities of his far-flung diocese. In 1867 he was elected Metropolitan of Moscow. As metropolitan, he continued his interest in mission work by establishing the Russian Missionary Society to raise funds for the support of missions.

At the time of the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, Saint Innocent recommended that all the clergy who did not know the English language be sent home and replaced by those knowing English, and he urged that English be the standard language of the Orthodox Church in America. He urged that seminaries be established for training American-born men to become priests, and he recommended that the headquarters of the Church in America be moved from Sitka to San Francisco. All of this reveals his vision for the growth of Orthodoxy in North America as an indigenous, English-speaking Church.

Saint Jacob Netsvetov (1802–1864) was another outstanding missionary-priest in Russian America. Born to a Russian father and an Aleut mother, he became the first native American to be ordained as an Orthodox priest, upon his completion of seminary training in Irkutsk. Sent back to the island of Atka, his birthplace, in the western Aleutian Archipelago, for 17 years he faithfully ministered there and all across his far-flung “parish” stretching for 2000 miles all the way to the Kurile Islands of northern Japan.

In 1844/1845, when Bishop Innocent opened the Mission to the lower Yukon Delta and Kuskokwim River Basin of the Alaskan mainland, he entrusted it to Saint Jacob, who labored for 18 years among the Eskimo and Athabascan peoples. Like his mentor Saint Innocent, Saint Jacob was an
excellent linguist, translator, and naturalist. A major highlight of his ministry, as recorded in his fascinating journal, was his success in 1852 among the Athabascan Indians along the Innoko River, when he baptized hundreds and narrowly averted a tribal war. In “retirement” he ministered to the Tlingit Indians in the area around Sitka, where he died.
Kronstadt

Saint John of Kronstadt (1829–1908) was an outstanding example of what can be called a “home missionary.” Originally he wanted to be a missionary to eastern Siberia, but he came to realize that there were many in his own region around Saint Petersburg who were very poor and very much in need of the Church’s ministry to soul and body. As a parish priest in the naval city of Kronstadt across the bay from Saint Petersburg, he became famous throughout Russia as a brilliant preacher, healer of the sick, protector of orphans and the poor, teacher of children, ardently loving pastor of his flock, faithful servant at the altar (serving Liturgy every day, at which up to 5000 would attend, necessitating the practice of group confession), and prophet to the nation. His insistence on regular participation in the holy sacraments by those who came to pray with him in his parish helped lead to the Eucharistic revival among Russian Orthodox Christians in the 20th century.

The famous “House of Industry” which Saint John founded in Kronstadt included a free elementary school, a carpentry teaching-workshop, a drawing class, a women’s workshop for sewing, a workshop for shoemaking, a library for children, a zoological collection, a military gymnasium, and a bookshop for children and adults. His powerful and insightful spiritual counsels, as given in his diary, have been published with the title *My Life in Christ.*
The Spread of Orthodoxy in the Lower 48 States in America

The latter part of the 19th century saw the arrival and growth of the Orthodox Church in America’s “Lower 48.” Thousands of immigrants, especially in the years after 1880, came to the New World from the traditional Orthodox homelands of the Old World, seeking economic opportunity. Pan-Orthodox communities developed in Galveston, Texas (perhaps as early as 1862); New Orleans (1865); San Francisco (1867); Pittsburgh (1891); and various other places. The parish in New Orleans was given some of its churchly vessels by the Russian tsar Alexander II (r. 1855–1881).

In 1870 the first bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands was named—Bishop John (Mitropolsky). In 1872 Bishop John moved the center of the diocese from Sitka to San Francisco, to much more readily reach out to the general American public with the story and presence of Holy Orthodoxy. Fluent in English, he was also a well-trained theologian, and until he returned to Russia in 1876, he wrote much in the local press about Orthodoxy. He also wrote a substantial study of the religious environment of the contemporary American society of his day, entitled From the History of Religious Sects in America.

Also in 1870, Nicholas Bjerring (1831–1900), a Danish Roman Catholic married layman teaching in Baltimore, Maryland, converted to Orthodoxy, was ordained a priest in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and was sent to open a kind of embassy chapel in New York City. Father Bjerring translated many liturgical works into English from German, and made great efforts, including publishing for a few years a magazine about Orthodoxy, to make the people of New York (especially Episcopalians) familiar with the faith and worship of the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, funding for the chapel was withdrawn in 1883 by a decision of the Holy Synod of the Church of Russia. Father Bjerring had to close it, and very sadly, he left the Orthodox Church shortly thereafter. The next Orthodox church to be established in New York City was Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, founded in 1891.
Conversion of the Uniates

In 1878, Saint Alexis Toth (1853–1909) was ordained as a priest of the Byzantine Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, in Slovakia. After serving for some time as Director of the Prešov Seminary, where he also taught Church History and Canon Law, he was sent in 1889 to Minneapolis, Minnesota, as a missionary priest to serve the Uniate immigrants there. However, when he reported to the local Latin-rite Roman Catholic Bishop John Ireland, upon his arrival in the city, he was rudely rejected. Two years later, he did what he said was “something which I had carried in my heart for a long time, for which my soul longed: that is, to become Orthodox.” In 1891 Bishop Vladimir (Sokolovsky; r. 1888–1891), head of the Russian mission-diocese, personally received Saint Alexis and his 361 parishioners into the Orthodox Church.

Soon thereafter, Saint Alexis was invited to serve the Uniate parish in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. After receiving the approximately 500 parishioners’ unanimous decision to become Orthodox, he began his 16 years of ministry there, until his death in 1909. In these years, enduring strong opposition from both Eastern- and Latin-rite Roman Catholics, he guided some 29,000 Uniates in 17 parishes, mostly in Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut, into Orthodoxy.

In 1994 the mitred Archpriest Alexis was glorified as a saint, with the title “Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy in America,” in services held at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania.
Attracted by the California Gold Rush, Serbian immigrants began arriving in California in 1850. Some of them became involved in the Russian Orthodox parish in San Francisco established in the 1860s. This was where a Serbian-American child named Sebastian Dabovich (1863–1940) was baptized. In 1892 he became the first native-born American to be ordained as an Orthodox priest. Two years later he built Saint Sava Orthodox Church, the first Serbian Orthodox church in America, in the gold-mining town of Jackson, California. In 2015, Sebastian was canonized by the Serbian Church and became the first American-born saint of the Orthodox Church.

The 1890s also saw the beginnings of the Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago; this would become the “Mother Church” for the Serbian immigrants in America. Also, the first Orthodox church to be established in Cleveland, Ohio, a city that would come to have many Orthodox churches, was Saint Theodosius Cathedral, founded in 1896 by the Serbian Orthodox.
The Syrians

In 1895 the community of Syrian Orthodox immigrants in New York City invited Father Raphael Hawaweeny (1860–1915), a Syrian by birth who had joined the Church of Russia and was then teaching at the missionary seminary/academy in Kazan, Russia, to come and be their priest. He accepted this offer after making it clear to these Syrians that for him to come, they would have to accept the authority of the Russian Administration in America, since he was a Russian clergyman. Thus began 20 years of fruitful ministry to the Syrian Orthodox scattered all across the United States and Mexico, including founding 30 parishes, until his death in 1915. In 1904 he was consecrated as the Bishop of Brooklyn in the first Orthodox episcopal consecration in the New World. He was glorified as a saint in 2000 by the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and the Antiochian Archdiocese in America, at services also held at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery.
The Greeks

As with the Syrians, Greeks began emigrating to America in large numbers after about 1890. Before then, in the 1860s, earlier Greek immigrants, along with some Russian, Serbian, and Syrian immigrants, had been active in establishing the Holy Trinity parish in New Orleans. Before the turn of the century Greek immigrants had established two churches in New York City, two in Chicago, and one in Lowell, Massachusetts.

These parishes were established without reference to the Russian Administration. Priests were sent to these parishes, upon the request of the immigrants, by either the Church of Greece or the Ecumenical Patriarchate, depending on which part of the Old Country the immigrants originally came from.
In the 19th century, the traditionally Orthodox lands of Serbia, Romania, and central and southern Greece gained liberation from the Turkish yoke. The Greek Revolution broke out in февраля of 1821 with the invasion into Moldavia from southwestern Russia led by Alexandros Ypsilantis, who was the Captain-General of the top secret, conspiratorial Society of Friends. However, the revolt did not gain widespread popular support until one hierarch gave his blessing for it. That man was Metropolitan Germanos of Old Patras, who raised the standard of revolt on марта 25, 1821; this date has been celebrated ever since as Greek Independence Day. With the reluctantly given aid of Britain, France, and Russia, the Turks were finally expelled from central and southern Greece by 1829. Northern Greece, however, had to wait until the Balkan War of 1912 to gain its freedom. And of course, Constantinople (Istanbul), Asia Minor (Turkey), and Thrace (European Turkey) remain in the hands of the Turks to this day.

The patriarch of Constantinople at the time of the revolt, Saint Gregory V (r. 1797–1798, 1806–1810, and 1818–1821), and twelve metropolitans, along with as many as 30,000 Greeks in and around Constantinople, were murdered by the Turks when the news of the revolt reached the capital. The patriarch was hung from the gates of the Church of Saint George, his headquarters in the Phanar district of Constantinople, on the morning of Holy Pascha, апреля 10, 1821. He is commemorated as Hieromartyr Saint Gregory V.

At a council in Nauplion in the Peloponnesus in 1833, the Church in newly liberated Greece declared herself to be autocephalous from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This status was accepted and confirmed by Constantinople in 1850. With free Greece now under the rule of the Bavarian King Otto (beginning in 1831), the reorganized Church of Greece was structured along the lines of the Protestant State-Churches in northern Europe. Meanwhile, the patriarchal theological seminary on the island of Halki, near Constantinople, was founded in 1844.

With the liberation of Serbia and Romania from the Ottoman Turks also by about 1830, five self-governing dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church and two dioceses of Romanian Church were set up beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. This gave them the welcomed freedom to use the Serbian and Romanian languages in their services, after many years of enforced Hellenization of their churches under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Within the Empire, the Bulgarian people sought and obtained permission
from the Turks to have their own separate church jurisdiction in 1870. The Bulgarians also had been governed by Greek bishops appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople, and they resented the forced Hellenization of their church life.

However, in 1872, at an important Church council held in Constantinople, any attempt to establish a separate Church administration on the basis of ethnicity or nationality was officially condemned as the heresy of phyletism. When the Bulgarian Christians refused to accept this ruling, the Church of Constantinople excommunicated them, thus creating the so-called Bulgarian Schism. This rupture in relations lasted until 1945, when an independent Bulgarian Church was established within the territorial boundaries of Bulgaria as they stood at the end of World War II. In 1953 the Bulgarian Church regained her patriarchate, which had been lost in 1393 when the Ottoman Turks conquered Bulgaria.

A leading saint of this era in the Eastern Church was Saint Nektarios of Aegina (1846–1920). As Archbishop of Pentapolis in Libya he was known for his evangelical preaching and manner of life, characterized by humility, simplicity, poverty, and love for the brethren. He was being groomed to succeed Patriarch Sophronios of Alexandria as head of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. However, when he was slandered by envious fellow hierarchs and others, the patriarch believed the slander and exiled him out of the Alexandrian patriarchate. He found refuge in Athens, where he served as a “holy preacher” and headed the Rizarios Academy for 15 years before retiring to the island of Aegina. There he restored and shepherded a women’s monastery. Many miracles have occurred through his relics and his many appearances to the faithful since his death.

Another remarkable saint of this period was Saint Arsenios of Cappadocia (1840–1924), an exceptionally holy priest-monk who lived in a Christian enclave in central Asia Minor surrounded by Turks. As there was no doctor in the area, everyone came to him for healing, both Christians and Muslims, and many were healed through his prayers.
The Protestant West in the 19th century was generally characterized by greatly expanded missionary efforts and liberal theology, along with the rise of the powerful Social Gospel Movement in America. Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries worked together with government administrators as the various nations of western Europe carved up Africa and parts of Asia, the East Indies, and the Pacific islands in their colonial conquests.

In Protestant theology, this was the era of rationalistic reinterpretations of the Gospel accounts using the so-called “scientific methods” of historical and biblical criticism. This movement was begun by the Hegelian German scholar David Strauss (1808–1874) with his very controversial book called *The Life of Jesus* (1836), in which he denied the historicity of all the supernatural elements in the four Gospels. This movement peaked with the publication in 1910 of the famous, and also very controversial, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* by Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), the famous theologian and medical missionary to French Equatorial Africa.

Generally speaking, in these years in the West, Protestantism (with the exception of Anglicanism) emphasized either emotional experience (Evangelicalism/Pietism/the Holiness Movement), or rigid dogmatic conservatism (the beginnings of Christian Fundamentalism, usually Calvinistic in doctrinal orientation), or liberal theology expressed especially in social action (the Social Gospel), rather than being centered in the traditional theology and liturgical/sacramental life of historic Christianity.
The Second Great Awakening

In the first decades of the 19th century, America—especially New England, upstate New York, and the Tennessee-Kentucky-Ohio frontier—experienced the Second Great Awakening. This was a wave of Protestant, evangelistic revivalism, centered in a new phenomenon known as the “camp-meeting,” which could last for a week or more. These stirring events featured outdoor preaching, congregational singing, calls for repentance, and fervent prayer, sometimes led by women. Thousands were converted to faith in Christ in these meetings, and several new denominations coalesced in these years. The largest of these was the Disciples of Christ, arising from the Restorationist Movement led by the Presbyterian clergyman Barton Stone (1772–1844), leader of the noteworthy Cane Ridge Revival of 1801 in Kentucky, and by the Presbyterian pastor Thomas Campbell (1763–1854) and his son Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) in western Pennsylvania. The Baptist movement, characterized by hundreds of small churches led by local farmer-preachers, also was given great impetus by the Second Great Awakening.

Charles Finney (1792–1875), a young Presbyterian lawyer who was converted to Christ on октябрь 10, 1821, was the leading traveling evangelist during the Second Great Awakening, followed by Lyman Beecher (1775–1863). In his preaching Finney emphasized the need to combine spiritual growth with active social work, such as participating in the great social movements of his day. In 1835 he became professor of theology, teaching a moderate form of Calvinism, at the newly founded Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. This remarkable school, America’s first coeducational college, became “the abolitionist hotbed of the country.” It was a major stop on the Underground Railroad, helping slaves fleeing from the South.
Rise of the Social Gospel

Politically-minded liberal Christians in America, along with socially-minded evangelical Christians, became greatly involved in interdenominational causes for social justice and moral reform such as the Abolitionist Movement, which helped lead to President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863; the Women’s Rights Movement, which helped lead to the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, giving women the right to vote, in 1920; and the Temperance Movement, which helped lead to the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing the manufacture, importation, and sale of all alcoholic beverages, in 1919. These movements, along with the work of urban ministry groups like the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), founded by George Williams in London in 1844, and the Salvation Army, founded by William and Catherine Booth in London in 1865, all were various aspects of the Social Gospel Movement.

Another aspect of the Social Gospel was the so-called “Gospel of Wealth,” espoused by the wealthy business magnate Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919). In a seminal essay, written in 1889, entitled “Wealth,” he claimed it was God’s will for a few individuals to gain tremendous wealth so they could administer their fortunes during their lifetimes for the public good. He especially advocated the establishment of institutions, such as colleges, libraries, concert halls, and philanthropic foundations.
Responses to the Social Gospel

Many conservative Christians, especially in the American South, tended to maintain a more individualistic understanding of the Christian Faith, at the expense of participation in social justice efforts. As an example, most southern Christians defended slavery—on the basis of what they understood as being a literal reading of the Bible, among other things.

In England, the Oxford Movement arose in the 1830s within the Anglican Church partly in reaction to the spread of Liberalism in theology. John Henry Newman (1801–1890) was the leader of this movement, which was shaped theologically more by the early Church Fathers than by the Schoolmen of medieval western Europe. A great emphasis within the Movement was a restoration of higher standards of worship. Several of its leaders, including Newman, eventually joined the Roman Catholic Church.
Roman Catholicism

In 1854, Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–1878) officially promulgated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. This doctrine, strongly promoted by the Franciscans, had been adamantly opposed by the Dominican Order when it was first proposed in the 13th century. It teaches that Mary’s conception from her parents had to be supernaturally free from original sin so that she could grow up to be Christ’s mother (see Doctrine).

In 1870, the First Vatican Council reaffirmed the doctrines of the Council of Trent, and officially, for the first time in history, legislated the dogma of the infallibility of the pope of Rome. This dogma declares that when the pope speaks ex cathedra on matters of faith or morals, his decision is binding on all Catholics—since it is considered to be infallible. This Vatican dogma states that the infallibility of the pope is binding even if, when he speaks ex cathedra, he is speaking “from himself and not from the consensus of the church.”

This very controversial doctrine was opposed by many at the Vatican I Council, and some Roman Catholic bishops broke away from communion with the Roman Church on this issue. They and their followers became known as the Old Catholics. In America, one such group, the Polish National Catholic Church, declared its independence from Rome in 1897, at a convention held in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Also during the long reign of Pope Pius IX, the Papacy lost the last of its so-called Papal States. By 1861 only the city of Rome was left under the direct governance of the Papacy, and by 1870 Rome itself was lost. At that point the Papacy withdrew into the Vatican City within the city of Rome.

France was blessed with the lives of two remarkable saints in this century: the famous Curé d’Ars, Saint John-Baptiste Vianney (1786–1859), and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897). The Curé d’Ars was a simple parish priest in the small town of Ars whose spiritual guidance attracted thousands of pilgrims from all walks of life. Saint Thérèse, having dedicated herself as a child to the attainment of religious perfection, entered a Carmelite convent at the age of 15. She died of tuberculosis at the age of 24, but not before writing, at the command of her superiors, her autobiography entitled The History of a Soul. She attained such holiness that many miracles have been attributed to her prayers.

In America, the Roman Catholic Church expanded greatly throughout the 19th century, mainly through massive immigration from Ireland, Germany, Italy, Poland, French Canada, and Mexico. By 1850 the Roman Church had
become the single largest Christian group in America, with 1.6 million adherents. By 1860 that number almost doubled. The widespread Roman Catholic parochial school system began to take shape in the 1840s, in opposition to the spread of the Protestant-oriented public school system; it was strongly in place by the turn of the century.
Relations between the Churches East and West

William Palmer (1811–1879), a professor at Magdalen College, Oxford, pursued a serious interest in the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1840 and 1842 he visited Russia to explore possibilities of intercommunion between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches. His work, *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years 1840, 1841*, was edited by John Henry Newman and published in 1882. Palmer had a long correspondence with the important Russian lay theologian, Alexei Khomiakov. He actually inquired into being officially received into the Russian Church, but he was troubled by the fact that the Russian Church would have accepted him by chrismation while the Greek Church would have required him to be baptized. In 1855 he joined the Roman Catholic Church instead.

In 1848, in response to overtures directed to the Orthodox by Pope Pius IX, the Eastern Patriarchs issued an encyclical letter in which the understanding of the conciliar as well as the hierarchical nature of the Orthodox Church is clearly professed. This letter also includes a long list of Roman Catholic errors that the Orthodox have always rejected, most especially the unilateral addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed. Signed by all the patriarchs of the Orthodox Church, together with 29 bishops, and fully endorsed by Saint Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, the encyclical letter of 1848 is considered to be the most authoritative doctrinal statement in modern Orthodox Church history.

In 1895, a similar encyclical letter was issued by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in response to a similar overture by Pope Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903).
Twentieth Century
Orthodoxy in America, Part One: From the Russian Mission to the OCA
Archbishop Tikhon

In 1898, Bishop Tikhon (Belavin) (1866–1925) became the head of the Mission Diocese of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska of the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1900, the name of this diocese was changed to the Diocese of the Aleutian Islands and North America. In 1905, the Holy Synod of the Russian Church elevated the diocese to the rank of archdiocese, with Bishop Tikhon becoming an Archbishop.

In 1904, the headquarters of the American archdiocese were moved from San Francisco to New York City, to the newly built Saint Nicholas Cathedral in upper Manhattan. In 1905, Saint Tikhon’s Monastery and orphanage were founded at South Canaan, Pennsylvania, through the enterprising vision and hard work of Father Arseny (Chagovtsov) (1866–1945), the monk-priest of the parish in nearby Mayfield, Pennsylvania, who later became Archbishop Arseny of Winnipeg.

The First All-American Sobor (Council) of the Church in America took place in 1907, in Mayfield, Pennsylvania. Under Saint Tikhon’s initiative and guidance, each parish sent not only their priest, but also a lay delegate to this sobor. The theme of the sobor was “How to Spread the Mission.”
When all the bishops of the Russian Church were asked their opinions in 1905 regarding Church reform, Archbishop Tikhon stated that the American archdiocese should become a basically self-governing Orthodox Church made up of all Orthodox Christians of all nationalities, using the American civil calendar (i.e., the Gregorian Calendar), and eventually using the English language for its church services and activities. English translations of the main liturgical services of the Church had already been done by then, and in 1906 the landmark service book compiled and translated by Isabel Florence Hapgood was published. Archbishop Tikhon and Bishop Raphael were strongly supported in their advocacy of the use of English by Fr Ingram Nathaniel Irvine (1849–1921), a former Episcopal priest who converted to Orthodoxy in 1905 and was ordained an Orthodox priest in that same year. Saint Tikhon assigned him to “English work” in the American Mission.

Saint Tikhon’s plan for the gradual development of an autonomous American Church included a hierarchy drawn from all the different ethnic Orthodox peoples. In 1904, Fr Raphael Hawaweeny (1860–1915), the Syrian archimandrite who had been shepherding the Arabic-speaking parishes in America since 1895 under the oversight of the Russian Diocesan Administration, was consecrated as Bishop of Brooklyn, auxiliary bishop to Archbishop Tikhon. His consecration in New York City was the first Orthodox episcopal consecration in the New World. In 2000, at a ceremony at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery, Bishop Raphael was glorified as a saint, with the designation “Bishop of Brooklyn, Shepherd of the Lost Sheep of North America.”

A similar plan was set for the consecration of a bishop from among the Serbian clergy in America, who would be responsible for the pastoral care of the Serbian Orthodox Christians scattered across North America. With this goal in mind, in 1905, Father Sebastian Dabovich (1863–1940), after being made an archimandrite, was appointed as “Administrator of the Serbian branch of the Orthodox Church in America,” with his headquarters at the Holy Resurrection Church in Chicago.

In an effort to extend this overarching plan to include the Greeks in America, in 1912 Fr Michael Andreades, a priest of Greek extraction and Dean of the West Coast parishes of the Russian Mission Archdiocese, traveled to Constantinople to request the Ecumenical Patriarch to send a Greek bishop to America, who would serve as head of the Greek-American parishes, all to be
gathered within the Mission Archdiocese. Unfortunately, nothing came of this overture.

In further efforts to extend Archbishop Tikhon’s original plan, in 1916 the former Byzantine-rite Catholic priest Father Alexander Dzubay (1857–1933) was consecrated as Bishop Stephen of Pittsburgh, with special responsibility for bringing the Carpatho-Russians who were still Byzantine-rite Catholics (Uniates) into the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, this mission was unsuccessful, and in disappointment Bishop Stephen returned to his Uniate roots in 1924.

In 1919, at the Second All-American Sobor, held in Cleveland, Ohio, Archimandrite Theophan (Fan) Noli (1882–1965) was elected to be bishop of the Albanian parishes in America, and Archimandrite Mardary Uskokovich (1889–1935) was elected to be bishop of the Serbian parishes. However, with the Church in Russia in turmoil in the midst of the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war, official ecclesiastical approval for these two consecrations never came.

This sobor also discussed positively the possibility of forming a ‘mission’ for Ukrainian immigrants, similar to that of the Serbs and the Albanians. Unfortunately, the Archbishop at that time, Archbishop Alexander (Nemolovsky), did not encourage further development of this idea.

Thus it was the plan to develop a unified hierarchy that would serve the pastoral needs of all the various ethnic immigrant groups in North America. Already in 1905, however, a “Hellenic Eastern Orthodox Church” was incorporated in the state of New York completely independent of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy in America. This was done even though at the time there was no Greek bishop in the country and no plans for a specifically Greek-American diocese—although there were already 29 Greek parishes in America by 1906.
After Archbishop Tikhon was transferred to a diocese in Russia in the Spring of 1907, the American diocese was headed by Archbishop Platon (Rozhdestvensky) (1866–1934; r. 1907–1914 and 1922–1934). One of the highlights of his tenure was moving the ecclesiastical seminary, called St Platon’s, from Minneapolis to Tenafly, New Jersey (across the river from Manhattan), in 1912, so that it could be much closer to the central administration of the archdiocese. He served as Archbishop of the American Church until 1914, when he was recalled to Russia to serve as a bishop there. He was succeeded by Archbishop Evdokim (1869–1935; r. 1914–1917).

From Saint Tikhon’s last sermon preached in America, at Saint Nicholas Cathedral, New York City, on the first Sunday of Great Lent, 1907

But it is not enough, brethren, to only celebrate “The Triumph of Orthodoxy.” It is necessary for us personally to promote and contribute to this triumph. And for this we must reverently preserve the Orthodox Faith, standing firm in it in spite of the fact that we live in a non-Orthodox country, and not pleading as an excuse for our apostasy that “it is not the old land here but America, a free country, and therefore it is impossible to follow everything that the Church requires.” As if the word of Christ is only suitable for the old land and not for the entire world! As if the Church of Christ is not “catholic”! As if the Orthodox Faith did not “establish the universe”!

Furthermore, while faithfully preserving the Orthodox Faith, everyone must also take care to spread it among the non-Orthodox. Christ the Savior said that having lit the candle, men do not put it under a bushel but on a candlestick so that it gives light to all (Mt 5.15). The light of the Orthodox Faith has not been lit to shine only for a small circle of people. No, the Orthodox Church is catholic; she remembers the commandment of her Founder, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature and teach all nations” (Mk 16.15; Mt 28.19).

We must share our spiritual richness, truth, light, and joy with others who do not have these blessings. And this duty does not only lay upon the pastors and the missionaries but on the lay persons as well, since the Church of Christ, according to the wise comparison of the Holy Apostle Paul, is the body, and every member takes part in the life of the body. By means of all sorts of mutually binding bonds which are formed and strengthened through the action of every member according to his capacity, the great Church body receives an
increase unto the edifying of itself (Eph 4.16).

In the first centuries it was not only the pastors who were tortured, but lay persons as well-men, women, and even children. And it was lay people likewise who enlightened the heathen and fought heresies. And now in the same way, the spreading of the Faith should be a matter that is personal, heartfelt, and dear to each one of us. Every member of the Church must take an active part in it—some by personal podvig spreading the Good News, some by material donations and service to “the needs of the holy persons,” and some by profuse prayer to the Lord that He “keep His Church firm and multiply it”—and concerning those unaware of Christ, that He would “proclaim the word of truth to them, open to them the Gospel of Truth, and join them to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.” I have told this numerous times to my flock. And today, upon my departing from this land, I once more command all of you to preserve and act upon this, and especially you brethren of this holy temple.

Farewell to you, this country! For some you are the motherland, the place of birth; for others you gave shelter, work, and well-being. Some received the freedom to profess the right Faith in your liberal land.

Let God’s blessing be upon this country, this city, and this temple. And let “the blessing of the Lord, with grace and love for man,” rest upon you all, “now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

Father Leonid Turkevich (1876–1965), the future Metropolitan Leonty, rector of the Seminary in Minneapolis and then in Tenafly, became the Dean of Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York City. He wrote many articles during this period about the destiny of the American missionary archdiocese to become a self-governing Orthodox Church. Along with Archbishop Evdokim and Father Alexander Kukulevsky (1873–1963), he represented the American diocese at the great Russian Church Council of 1917–1918.
With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the Russian Mission Archdiocese in America was thrown into confusion. Archbishop Alexander (Nemolovsky) (r. 1917–1922), who succeeded Archbishop Evdokim in 1917, was having great difficulty in helping the Archdiocese to adjust to the new conditions, especially the loss of all financial support from the Russian Church and State. When Archbishop Platon returned to America in 1921, Archbishop Alexander asked him to take over as head of the Russian Administration. At the Third All-American Sobor of the American archdiocese, held in Pittsburgh in 1922, Archbishop Platon was accepted to lead the Church once again.

John Kedrovsky, a priest serving in the Russian-American Mission who was suspended in 1918 for attempting to subvert Archbishop Alexander’s authority, returned to America from Russia in 1923 as a “bishop” of the Soviet-mandated and manipulated “Living Church.” He demanded, and received by legal action, possession of a number of Russian Church properties, including the leading church of the archdiocese, Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York City. His actions brought further confusion, turmoil, and financial woes to the archdiocese.

The Church suffered another major blow at this time when it was considered necessary to close the seminary in Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1924; its properties and library were sold. There would be no Orthodox seminary in North America for the next 14 years.

In 1924, the Fourth All-American Sobor of the Russian-American Archdiocese was held in Detroit, Michigan. This sobor, on the basis of Patriarch Tikhon’s decree of ноября 20, 1920 (No. 362)-which declared that all dioceses of the Russian Church cut off from the Moscow Patriarchate should govern themselves and carry on their church life under local supervision-declared that the archdiocese would be a self-governing metropolitanate, maintaining only a spiritual bond with the Church in Russia, until such time as normal relations could be resumed with the Russian Church. Archbishop Platon was officially installed as the metropolitan, and the Church came to be called the American Metropolia. It was legally incorporated as the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America.
In 1926, Metropolitan Platon met with members of the Russian Synod in Exile to discuss the problems involved with caring for the Russian Orthodox Christians in the “diaspora”-meaning everywhere in the world beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. By this time, many new Russian immigrants had come to America and joined the American Metropolia. When the Synod in Exile attempted to extend its jurisdiction over the American Metropolia, Metropolitan Platon objected. Thus, he and his Church were “suspended” by the Synod in Exile in 1929.

At this same time, Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) (d. 1946), head of a number of parishes in Western Europe established by Russian immigrants, also met with the bishops of the Synod in Exile. He likewise was “suspended” by them for refusing to recognize their alleged jurisdiction over all Russian Orthodox Christians outside of Russia.
In the 1930s, pressure was applied by Moscow upon the American Metropolia, as well as upon the Western European Exarchate under Metropolitan Evlogy. In 1933, Archbishop Benjamin (Fedchenkoff) (1880–1961) came to America from the USSR demanding the Metropolia’s allegiance to the Moscow Patriarchate. The fact that a pledge of allegiance to the Soviet State was also demanded showed that the Russian Church was not really free, which made it impossible for the American Metropolia to enter into normal relations with it. In response, in 1934 the Church in Russia officially declared the Metropolia to be illegal, and opened the Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate in America, headed by Archbishop Benjamin. Most of the Russian-American parishes remained faithful to the Metropolia, rather than joining either this new exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate or the Russian Synod in Exile.

In the same year, Metropolitan Platon died. He was succeeded by Archbishop Theophilus (Pashkovsky) (r. 1934–1950), who was elected primate at the Fifth All-American Sobor of the Metropolia, held in Cleveland, Ohio.
American Destiny

In 1937, the Sixth All-American Sobor of the American Metropolia, meeting in New York City, affirmed a “moral” relationship with the Russian Synod in Exile, which restored intercommunion between the two bodies. However, when the Metropolia tried to have closer relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow during World War II, the Synod in Exile disapproved. In 1946, when the Synod renewed its claim to have governance over all the Russian Orthodox in America, this “moral” relationship, including intercommunion, was broken.

The Sixth All-American Sobor also mandated the establishment of two theological schools—Saint Vladimir’s in New York City as a graduate school of Orthodox theology, and Saint Tikhon’s as a pastoral school at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. Both schools opened in 1938.

The Seventh All-American Sobor of the Metropolia, meeting in Cleveland in 1946, requested of the Moscow Patriarchate that there be a close spiritual relationship linking the two bodies. But when, once again, demands were made from Moscow for loyalty to the Soviet government, the “spiritual” relationship was not realized.

In 1950, upon the death of Metropolitan Theophilus, the Eighth All-American Sobor of the Metropolia, meeting in New York City, unanimously proclaimed as primate Archbishop Leonty (Turkevich) (1876–1965; r. 1950–1965), one of the original leaders of the American missionary diocese. He had been the dean of the seminary in Minneapolis, and then in Tenafly, New Jersey. After the death of his wife in 1933, he served as bishop of Chicago.

Also in 1950, the Russian Synod in Exile set up its worldwide headquarters in New York City. Meanwhile, the Moscow Patriarchate was applying its strongest pressure for the reestablishment of its authority over the Metropolia, which it continued to call “illegal.” In response, at this Eighth Sobor, before his election as metropolitan, Archbishop Leonty made a speech reaffirming the specifically American destiny of the Church which had been planted in the New World by the Church of Russia more than a century and a half earlier. The Archbishop declared, “We will follow our line—the foundation of an administratively self-governing Orthodox Church in America.”
Development of the Metropolia

The 1950s and ’60s were difficult years in the American Metropolia. Internal disputes arose concerning the theological and spiritual development of the Church; for example, many began to desire a more adequate church life. There was an eagerness for administrative and liturgical reform that generally took the form of struggles between the clergy and the laity over their respective rights and privileges. By the end of the ’60s, however, a consensus was developing among the majority of priests and people for the implementation of proper liturgical worship, administrative order, and spiritual development in the Metropolia.

The theological schools by this time were firmly established. Saint Tikhon’s Seminary had developed considerably, while Saint Vladimir’s received a number of famous European professors-Nicholas Arseniev (d. 1977), Alexander Bogolepov (d. 1980), George Fedotov (1886–1951), Father Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), Serge Verhovskoy (1907–1986), Father Alexander Schmemann (1921–1983), and Father John Meyendorff (1926–1992). In 1967, Saint Vladimir’s received from the State of New York the right to grant the Bachelor of Divinity degree (now the Master of Divinity).

In 1960, the Romanian Episcopate, led by Bishop Valerian (Trifa) (1914–1987; r. 1958–1982), formally affiliated with the American Metropolia.
Metropolitan Leonty died in мая of 1965. At the Twelfth All-American Sobor of the American Metropolia, held later that year, Archbishop Ireney (Bekish) (r. 1965–1977), the acting administrator of the Metropolia, was made the new Metropolitan.

Immediately upon his elevation, Metropolitan Ireney addressed a letter to the primates of all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, pleading for an urgent discussion about the confused jurisdictional situation of Orthodoxy in America. His appeal went unanswered. His requests made to various Orthodox patriarchs for an audience to discuss the Church in America were also refused.

Metropolitan Ireney presided at the Thirteenth All-American Sobor of the American Metropolia in 1967, where the feeling ran high for action to declare the Metropolia to be the self-governing Orthodox Church in America without recourse to or even recognition by any patriarchate across the seas. Although no official action was taken, a “straw vote” of the council showed the overwhelming majority of delegates ready to drop the word “Russian” from the name of the Church in America, and to carry on officially as a Church in and for America.
In the late 1960s, informal talks began between representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate and the American Metropolia, usually at ecumenical gatherings, about the American problem. Official negotiations to settle the difficulties between the two Churches began in 1969. The official delegates of the American Metropolia—Archbishop Kiprian of Philadelphia, and Fathers Joseph Pishtey, John Skvir, Alexander Schmemann, and John Meyendorff—insisted upon a totally self-governing status for the Metropolia, with the complete removal of all ecclesiastical authority of the Russian Church from American territory.

After long and difficult negotiations, with many hesitations and compromises, and many meetings and discussions within both Churches over this complex and sensitive issue, on марта 31, 1970, Metropolitan Ireney and Metropolitan Nikodim, head of the External Affairs Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, signed the agreement whereby the Russian Church would recognize the American Metropolia as the fully autocephalous (independent) “Orthodox Church in America” (OCA). Some 40 of its parishes, however, wished to stay under Moscow’s control, so they were allowed to join the Patriarchal Diocese established by Archbishop Benjamin in 1934.

On апреля 10, 1970, six days before his death, Patriarch Alexei I, together with 14 bishops of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, signed the official tomos proclaiming the Metropolia to be the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America (OCA).

**From the Tomos of Autocephaly for the OCA**

The Holy Russian Orthodox Church, striving for the good of the Church, has directed her efforts toward the normalization of relations among the various ecclesiastical jurisdictions in America, particularly by negotiating with the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, concerning the possibility of granting autocephaly to this Church in the hope that this might serve the good of the Orthodox Church in America and the glory of God.

In her striving for the peace of Christ, which has universal significance for the life of man; desiring to build a peaceful and creative church life, and to suppress scandalous ecclesiastical divisions; hoping that this act would be beneficial to the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church of Christ and would make possible the development among the local parts of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of such relations which would be founded on the firm ties of the one Orthodox Faith and the love that the Lord Jesus Christ willed; keeping
in mind that this act would serve the welfare of universal, mutual cooperation; taking into consideration the petition of the Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Metropolitanate of North America, which expressed the opinion and desire of all her faithful children; acknowledging as good for Orthodoxy in America the independent and self-sustaining existence of said Metropolitanate, which now represents a mature ecclesiastical organism possessing all that is necessary for successful further growth. Our Humility together with the Sacred Synod and all the venerable Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, who have signified their agreement in writing, having examined the said petition, in sincere love grant autocephaly to the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, that is, the right of a fully independent ordering of church life in accordance with the divine and sacred Canons and the ecclesiastical practices and customs of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church inherited from the Fathers; for which purpose this Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos is directed to His Beatitude, IRENEY, Archbishop of New York, Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America, Metropolitan of All-America and Canada.?.?.?.

Confirming the Autocephaly of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America, we bless her to call herself The Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America; we acknowledge and proclaim her our Sister Church, and we invite all local Orthodox Churches and their Primates and their faithful children to acknowledge her as such and to include her in the dyptichs in accordance with the Canons of the Church, the traditions of the Fathers and ecclesiastical practice.

The newly-established local Orthodox Autocephalous Church in America should abide in brotherly relations with all the Orthodox Churches and their Primates as well as with their bishops, clergy and pious flock, who are in America and who for the time being preserve their de facto existing canonical and jurisdictional dependence on their national Churches and their Primates.

With profound, sincere joy, We announce this to the Fullness of the Church and We do not cease thanking the All-Gracious Almighty God, who directs all in the world by His right hand for the good and the salvation of mankind, for the successful and final formation of Autocephaly, and we entreat the all-powerful blessing of God upon the younger Sister in the family of local Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America.

May the Consubstantial and Life-creating and Undivided Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, acting on Its own wondrous providence, send down on the Archpastors, Pastors and Faithful Children of the Holy Autocephalous
Orthodox American Church Its heavenly, unfailing help, and may It bless with success all her future endeavors for the good of the Holy Church.

At the Fourteenth All-American Sobor of the American Metropolia, held at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, on октября 20–22, 1970, the tomos of autocephaly—which had been formally received on behalf of the American Church by a delegation of churchmen led by Bishop Theodosius (Lazor) of Sitka, Alaska—was officially read and the event was solemnly celebrated. The new status of the Church was accepted and affirmed by the members of the council by a vote of 301 to 7, with 2 abstentions. This council thus became the First All-American Council of the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America.

In 1971, the Second All-American Council of the new Church, also held at Saint Tikhon’s, adopted the official governing statute of the Church. It also accepted the Albanian diocese that had been led by Bishop Theophan (Noli), and was now headed by Bishop Stephen (Lasko), into the Orthodox Church in America.
On August 9, 1970, the OCA celebrated the canonization of its first saint, Father Herman of Alaska. A member of the first group of missionary monks to come to Alaska in 1794 from the Valaam Monastery, Saint Herman, a simple lay monk, remained among the Alaskan people as their protector, teacher, and intercessor before God until his death in 1836. The canonization ceremonies, attended by Archbishop Paaveli of the Finnish Orthodox Church, took place in Kodiak, Alaska.

Two years later, under the heavenly patronage of Saint Herman, the Saint Herman’s Pastoral School was established in Anchorage to train native Alaskan clergy. In the next year it was moved to Kodiak.
Aftermath of the Autocephaly

The act of recognition by the Moscow Patriarchate of its former missionary diocese in the New World as an autocephalous Orthodox Church, as of 2013, had still not been officially accepted by all of the Orthodox Churches worldwide. Only the Churches of Russia, Bulgaria, Poland, Georgia, the Czech Lands, Slovakia, and Finland had issued official statements of recognition.

From the beginning, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, its American Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the other Greek-speaking Churches worldwide strongly opposed and condemned the act of autocephaly. Nevertheless, all Orthodox Churches, including the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the other Greek-speaking Churches, remained in full sacramental and spiritual communion with the Orthodox Church in America.
Continuing Development of the OCA

In 1972, the Orthodox Church in America opened its Mexican Exarchate, headed by Bishop José Cortes y Olmos (1923–1983). Raised in the Roman Catholic Church, he joined the Mexican National Catholic Church in 1951. This group, independent from the Roman Church, was proclaimed the Mexican National Catholic Church in 1928 by the president of the country in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910; its creation, colored by political overtones, was indicative of a broader movement of independence from subjection to the Church of Rome. Bishop José became the head of that church in 1961. Then, after considerable study of Orthodoxy, he and his entire church appealed to the newly formed OCA to accept them. After Bishop José’s death in 1983, he was not replaced until Archimandrite Alejo (Pacheco-Vera) was consecrated as Bishop of Mexico by Metropolitan Herman and other bishops of the OCA in 2005.

In 1976, most of the Bulgarian Orthodox in America—about 15 parishes—were received into the OCA with their Archbishop Kirill (Yonchev) (1920–2007), who was made the OCA Bishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. He led the diocese until his death in 2007. He was succeeded by Bishop Melchizedek (Pleska) (b. 1942).

At the Fifth All-American Council, held in Montreal, Canada, in октябрь 1977, Metropolitan Ireney, due to reasons of health, resigned as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America. As no candidate for the office of Metropolitan received the necessary two-thirds vote for election on the first ballot, the assembly nominated two American-born bishops as candidates: Bishop Dmitri (Royster) (1923–2011) of the Diocese of Hartford and New England, and Bishop Theodosius (Lazor) (b. 1933) of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and West Virginia. Bishop Theodosius was subsequently elected by the Synod of Bishops to succeed Metropolitan Ireney as ruling hierarch, thus becoming the first American-born bishop to hold the office of Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.

Some of the highlights during Metropolitan Theodosius’s tenure were the canonization of Saint Innocent, Apostle to America, by the Church of Russia in 1977; the authorization in 1988 by the State of Pennsylvania for Saint Tikhon’s Seminary to grant the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree; the canonization of Saint Alexis of Wilkes-Barre in 1994 at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery; and the canonization of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn in 2000, also held aaint Saint Tikhon’s Monastery.
In 2002, Metropolitan Theodosius retired for health reasons. At the Thirteenth All-American Council, held in Orlando, Florida, in that year, Archbishop Herman (Swaiko) (b. 1932) was elected to be the new metropolitan. He served until 2008, when he was forced to retire due to a financial scandal. He was succeeded by Bishop Jonah (Paffhausen) (b. 1959), who only 11 days after becoming Bishop of the South was elected to be the new metropolitan at the Fifteenth All-American Council, held in Pittsburgh in November of 2008. Metropolitan Jonah was the first convert to lead the OCA.

In November of 2011 the Sixteenth All-American Council was held in Bellevue, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. The theme for the council was “The Household of Faith.” This was the first All-American Council or Sobor to be held west of the Mississippi River. This allowed for the largest delegation from Alaska ever to attend one of these councils and sobors.

On July 6, 2012, Metropolitan Jonah retired in the midst of controversy. He was followed by the new Metropolitan Tikhon (Mollard) (b. 1966), who had been Archbishop of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania. Metropolitan Tikhon was elected to be the new metropolitan at the specially called one-day Seventeenth All-American Council, held in Parma, Ohio, on November 13, 2012.
Orthodoxy in America, Part Two: Other Orthodox Jurisdictions
The numbers of ethnic Greeks immigrating to America increased dramatically after 1890. Some 400,000 Greeks arrived from Greece in the years from 1891 to 1921, and another 200,000 Greeks came from Asia Minor. Most of these immigrants were single men eager to earn enough money to get married and support a family; many of them returned to the Old Country to marry and get established there after earning enough money in America to do so.

While most of these immigrants came to the United States for economic rather than spiritual reasons, they were very interested in maintaining their Greek identity and culture, which for most of them included the Orthodox Church (the same can be said for all the various ethnic immigrant groups coming from traditionally Orthodox lands). This interest strongly helped promote the efforts that led to the founding of about 150 Greek Orthodox parishes across the United States and Canada by 1918.

These parishes were almost all founded by laymen on their own initiative—organizing some kind of Hellenic society, buying property, building a church, and then seeking a priest. If most of the immigrants in any locale were from Greece, they would request a priest from the Church of Greece; if most of them came from Asia Minor, they would ask the Patriarchate of Constantinople to send them a priest. Apparently this pattern continued even after the Patriarchate of Constantinople officially gave authority over the ethnically Greek parishes in America to the Church of Greece through an official tomos issued in 1908.

The Greek Orthodox in America for the most part organized parishes without any reference to the already established Russian-American Archdiocese. The records in the OCA archives reveal only one instance when Greeks asked the Russian Administration for a priest, and only six times was a request made for an antimension (the “altar cloth” needed for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist). The official lists of parishes of the Russian Archdiocese in 1906, 1911, and 1918 include no churches of Greek ethnic background.

Many of the more traditionally-minded Greeks in America were disappointed that the Church of Greece never sent a bishop to organize the scattered, independent-minded, ethnically Greek parishes until 1918. Finally, in that year, Archbishop Meletios (Metaxakis) (1871–1935) of the Church of Greece came and began the organizational work which led to the official establishment of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America in 1922. This development was given full ratification by the new Ecumenical Patriarch,
who by then was the same Meletios (Metaxakis).

Four *regional* bishoprics were set up—centered in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and New York City—all under the leadership of Archbishop Alexander (Demoglou) of New York. The regional bishops were to be elected by the local clergy and faithful, and to be approved by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (by now, called Istanbul, Turkey)—hence making the Greek Archdiocese in America an *autonomous* jurisdiction.

However, there was much confusion caused by Metropolitan Germanos (Troianos) during his few years in America (he left in 1922) as he urged parishes to stay loyal to the Church of Greece. Several years later, Metropolitan Vasilios (Komvopoulos) did the same thing, but more effectively, as he established the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of the United States and Canada, which had about 50 parishes by 1929. The other 133 Greek parishes at that time remained attached to the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America led by Archbishop Alexander.

All the feuding among the Greek-Americans was exacerbated by their differing intense political views, with some siding with the Royalists back in Greece (supporters of King Constantine I, King Alexander I, and King George II), and others supporting Eleftherios Venizelos, the Prime Minister (from 1910 to 1915, then from 1917–1920, then for one month in 1924, and finally from 1929–1932).

In 1930, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Corinth was sent as an exarch by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to bring to an end the feuding among the Greek-Americans. Through his strength of character and shrewd diplomacy, Metropolitan Damaskinos managed to unite nearly all the Greek parishes under the leadership of a new Archbishop from Corfu, the dynamic and visionary Athenagoras (Spyrou) (1886–1972), who was Metropolitan Damaskinos’s personal choice for the position. The regional bishoprics were eliminated (the bishops became auxiliaries to Archbishop Athenagoras), and the autonomous status of the Greek Archdiocese was lost, as all the Greek churches in America were brought under the direct supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In 1933, Archbishop Athenagoras approached Metropolitan Platon of the Russian-American Metropolia with the idea of founding a pan-Orthodox seminary in America. Metropolitan Platon was open to this possibility, but after his death in the next year, his successor, Metropolitan Theophilus, rejected the idea. With that, Athenagoras worked on his own to establish a seminary for the Greek Orthodox in America. Thus, in 1937, the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological School was opened in Pomfret, Connecticut. It was moved to a prime site in Brookline, Massachusetts, overlooking the city of
Archbishop Athenagoras served in America until his installation as Patriarch of Constantinople in 1949. He did much to bolster the financial foundation of his Archdiocese, and to make Orthodoxy more visible in America. Other highlights of his period of leadership were the founding of the charitable organization called the Ladies’ Philoptochos Society, the establishment of a national periodical called The Orthodox Observer, and the founding of Saint Basil’s Teachers’ College in Garrison, New York, along with the founding of the theological school in Pomfret.

Archbishop Athenagoras was succeeded by Archbishop Michael (Konstantinides) (1892–1958; r. 1950–1958), who led the Archdiocese until his death in 1958. He founded the very successful Greek Orthodox Youth of America (GOYA) in 1951, and by 1958 there were some 250 member groups. Under his leadership, the annual income for the national church increased nearly six-fold. A national Sunday School program was established, with an all-English curriculum. And formal recognition was gained for Orthodoxy as being the “Fourth Major Faith” in America, along with Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople appointed Archbishop Iakovos (Koukouzis) (1911–2005; r. 1959–1995) to succeed Archbishop Michael. The new primate of the Greek-American Archdiocese quickly established himself as the leading figure in Eastern Orthodoxy in America through his participation in the social and political affairs and the ceremonies of the nation.

Archbishop Iakovos was criticized by some in America for being inconsistent in his positions concerning Orthodox unity in the New World. A number in his own archdiocese-mostly recent immigrants-attacked him for his ostensibly pro-American, anti-Greek actions. In reality, the diplomatic Archbishop continued to foster the Greek identity of his archdiocese, following official instructions sent from Constantinople, while keeping close contacts also with the Church of Greece, enhancing the archdiocese’s presence in America, and fostering efforts towards Orthodox unity in America.

Along this line, Archbishop Iakovos maintained friendly relations with all the Orthodox jurisdictions in North America. He was one of the founders in 1960 of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA), and he was elected its first chairman.

Under his leadership the Archdiocese continued to thrive, and to become more visible on the American scene. He encouraged successful Hellenic-American professionals to become more actively involved in church affairs. He developed a property on the Greek island of Zakynthos into the renowned
camping and retreat center known as Ionian Village. And through a new charter for the Archdiocese instituted in 1977, regional bishoprics again were set up, giving the formerly auxiliary bishops their own territories to care for, but with the entire Archdiocese still under the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Archbishop Iakovos led the Greek Archdiocese until his retirement in 1995. He was followed until 1998 by Archbishop Spyridon (Papageorge) (b. 1944), who was forced to retire due to his unpopular leadership. Archbishop Dimitrios (Trakatellis) (b. 1928) succeeded Archbishop Spyridon in 1999, and continued to lead his Church in 2013 as a much beloved hierarch.

The Greek Archdiocese is the largest of all the Orthodox jurisdictions in North America. Several small, Greek, schismatic Old Calendarist groups, however, also exist in America.
The Serbian Orthodox in America

In 1906 there were six Serbian parishes in America, overseen by Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich (1863–1940) in cooperation with the Russian Missionary Diocese. In 1918, the list of parishes under the Russian Administration included 19 Serbian parishes. However, relations between the Serbs and the Russians had been tenuous during the preceding years.

As noted above, Archimandrite Mardary (Uskokovich) was elected by the Russian Missionary Archdiocese in 1919 to be an auxiliary bishop responsible for the ethnically Serbian parishes. But as the Russian Administration in America failed to receive approval for this consecration from the Church in Russia, the Serbian-Americans went ahead with their efforts to have their own diocese under the authority of the Church in Serbia.

Saint Nikolai of Zicha (1881–1956), then a priest of the Church in Serbia, traveled in Great Britain and the United States in 1915 and 1916, giving talks to raise support for the Kingdom of Serbia, which at that time was in the midst of the Great War (WW I). In 1921, Saint Nikolai, by then the Bishop of Zicha in Serbia, again came to America. He, along with Archimandrite Mardary as his deputy, was sent by the Serbian Patriarch Dimitrije. Saint Nikolai stayed about six months, again giving many public lectures, before returning to Serbia. After WW II, during which he suffered for about a year in the Nazi prison camp at Dachau, Saint Nikolai found asylum in the United States, as he was definitely not welcome in the new Soviet satellite state of Yugoslavia under the Communist government headed by Marshall Tito. This is how it happened that Saint Nikolai spent the last five years of his life at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery and Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, where he taught in English-and served as rector of the seminary. He died in his cell there in 1956.

Father Mardary stayed on in America, serving as a parish priest in Chicago, and doing much of the organizational work for the emerging Serbian diocese in America, including purchasing with his own funds the St Sava Monastery site in Libertyville, Illinois.

In 1926, Archimandrite Mardary was called back to Belgrade to be consecrated by Patriarch Dimitrije as bishop and head of the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of America and Canada. Three weeks after his return to the U.S. in the following year, Bishop Mardary convened the first Church Assembly, in Chicago. Despite a gradually worsening case of tuberculosis, Bishop Mardary served the diocese well, until his death in 1935 at the age of 46. In май 2015, in recognition of his tireless efforts and pastoral care of his
spiritual flock, Mandary was canonized a saint alongside Sebastian (Dabovich).

In 1963, the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Church of Serbia, under the new Patriarch Germanus, divided the Serbian jurisdiction in North America into three new dioceses (Eastern America, Western America, and Canada). In the following year three bishops were elected-Sava, Firmilian, and Gregory-to rule these dioceses, all under the authority of the Church in Serbia.

However, the ruling hierarch of the American Serbian Church, Bishop Dionisije (Milivojevich)-Bishop Mardary’s successor-regarded these developments as a Communist-inspired plot to keep the American Serbs under closer watch. So he broke all ties with the Serbian Patriarchate, which then defrocked him. Undeterred, he gathered together a large number of parishes that agreed with him, and thus the Free Serbian Orthodox Church in America was founded. The rest of the Serbian-Americans carried on as members of the three new dioceses, under the authority of the Church of Serbia.

A period of bitter strife between the two jurisdictions followed, lasting until about 1975. Preliminary reconciliation was achieved in 1988. The process was completed by 1992, after the fall of Communism in Yugoslavia, when Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church visited North America and formally reunited the two groups.

In 1991, Bishop Christopher (Kovacevich) (1928–2010), head of the diocese of Eastern America, and the first American-born bishop to serve the Serbian Church in America, was elected by the Assembly of Bishops of the Church of Serbia to be the Metropolitan of the Serbian Church in North America. In 2010, Metropolitan Christopher died, and as of the beginning of 2013 none of the five Serbian bishops in America had been made Metropolitan of the Serbian Church in America. By 2010, the American Serbian jurisdiction included two additional dioceses-Midwestern America, and Canada. The Serbian Church continued to support the Saint Sava School of Theology, a small coeducational school of theology in Libertyville, Illinois, which granted a B.A. in religious studies/priestly formation.
The Romanian Orthodox in America

The first parish in North America founded by Romanian Orthodox immigrants was organized in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1902. The first Romanian parish in the United States was established by laity in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1904. In the next year, the Metropolitan of Transylvania sent Father Moise Balea to be the parish’s first priest and to minister to Romanian immigrants in other cities. Altogether he helped to establish about 20 Romanian Orthodox parishes in North America.

By 1918 there were about 30 Romanian parishes in the U.S. and Canada, but only three of these (in Hamilton, Ontario; Montreal, Quebec; and Rayville, Saskatchewan) were within the jurisdiction of the Russian Missionary Diocese. The others were associated either with the Metropolitan of Moldava or the Metropolitan of Transylvania in the Old Country.

In 1929, at a general congress of Romanian Orthodox clergy and laity held in Detroit, Michigan, an autonomous missionary episcopate was formed, to be under the canonical jurisdiction of the Church of Romania. This resolution was accepted in the next year by the Romanian Patriarchate, which officially established the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America. Then in 1935, the Holy Synod of the Church in Romania elected and consecrated Archimandrite Polycarp (Morusca) (1883–1958) as the first bishop of the new episcopate.

On July 4, 1935, Bishop Polycarp was enthroned during the Congress of the Romanian Episcopate, which was again held in Detroit. This congress also adopted a corporate statute for the episcopate.

During his four years in America, Bishop Polycarp was able to heal various factional disputes among the Romanian parishes. He also laid the foundations for many church organizations, and supervised the acquisition of the Vatra, a property northwest of Detroit, and the establishment there of the headquarters of the Romanian Episcopate.

In 1939, after formally dedicating the headquarters, Bishop Polycarp returned to Romania for a meeting of the Holy Synod of the Church there, but the outbreak of World War II prevented his return to the U.S. After the war, he was prevented by the new Communist government of Romania from returning to his ministry in the States. He was held as a political prisoner by the Communists until his death in 1958.

Meanwhile, the Communist government tried to take over the American Episcopate, but its efforts were thwarted, largely through the diligent work of Father John Trutza, pastor of Saint Mary’s Church in Cleveland from 1928 to
his death in 1954. In 1951 the Episcopate, meeting in council, declared itself to be completely independent from the Church in Romania in both administrative and spiritual matters. The council then elected Viorel D. Trifa (1914–1987), a lay theologian, to be the bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America.

In the following year, the bishop-elect was consecrated with the name Valerian in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by three Ukrainian bishops who were not recognized by the other Orthodox. Under Bishop Valerian the Episcopate entered a new era of activity, even as he came under continuous attack, first in the media and then in the courts, for allegedly having conspired with the Nazis.

In 1960 the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America was received into the American Metropolia, the successor administration to the Russian Missionary Archdiocese, as an ethnic diocese. Archbishop Valerian was made a member of the Holy Synod of the Metropolia, becoming Archbishop of Detroit and Michigan. Then, in the next year, the bishops of the Metropolia consecrated Archbishop Valerian again, to remove any doubts about his priestly ordination or episcopal consecration. In 1970, when the American Metropolia gained its autocephaly from the Church of Russia, the Romanian Episcopate continued within the new OCA.

In 1982, because of the controversy surrounding him, Archbishop Valerian decided it would be best for his American flock if he left the United States. He found refuge in Portugal, where he died in 1987. He was succeeded by Archbishop Nathaniel (Popp) (b. 1940). In 2002, Bishop Irineu (Duvlea) (b. 1962) was consecrated as Bishop of Dearborn Heights to serve as an auxiliary bishop to Archbishop Nathaniel. Archbishop Nathaniel and Bishop Irineu were still leading the Romanian Episcopate within the OCA in 2013.

Not all of the Romanian parishes followed Archbishop Valerian in the fully autonomous Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America created in 1951. Some decided to remain within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Romania, which in 1950 established the Romanian Orthodox Missionary Episcopate in America. The Romanian Patriarchate selected an American citizen, Father Andrei Moldovan, as the first bishop to lead the new Missionary Episcopate. After his consecration in Romania, Bishop Moldovan returned to the U.S. and organized parishes loyal to the new Missionary Episcopate. Subsequently, Bishop Moldovan was succeeded by Bishop Victorin.

By a decision in 1974 of the Holy Synod of the Church of Romania, the Missionary Episcopate was elevated to the status of an autonomous Archdiocese, along with the elevation of the ruling bishop, Bishop Victorin, to the dignity of Archbishop. The name selected for the new archdiocese was the
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada. In 2002 Archimandrite Nicolae (Condrea) (b. 1967) was made the new Archbishop of this jurisdiction, with his headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. He was still serving in 2013.
The Syrian Orthodox in America

From 1895 to 1915, Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) (1860–1915) served first as a priest, and then as a bishop in the Russian Orthodox Mission, taking pastoral care of the Arabic-speaking Orthodox in North America. His consecration as bishop in 1904 was the first Orthodox episcopal consecration held in the New World, as we noted above. During his 20 years of ministry in America, Bishop Raphael helped to organize 30 parishes. Two years after his death, he was succeeded by Bishop Aftimios (Ofiesh) (1880–1971; r. 1917–1931).

Bishop Aftimios’s authority was rejected by Metropolitan Germanos (Shehadi) of Seleucia and Baalbek in Lebanon, who had been in America since 1915. He falsely claimed that he had authority from the Patriarch of Antioch to gather and organize Arabic-speaking parishes to be governed directly by the Patriarchate of Antioch. In 1918 he incorporated his own new diocese as the Syrian Holy Orthodox Greek Catholic Mission in North America, which also included some Ukrainian parishes in Canada. Still, the majority of the Syrian parishes (at least 23 of them) remained faithful to Bishop Aftimios. Bishop Aftimios’s parishes became known as the “Russy” parishes, while Metropolitan Germanos’s were called the “Antacky” parishes.

In 1922, in response to the growing schism between the “Russy” and “Antacky” parishes, and with the Russian Archdiocese still in turmoil after the Bolshevik Revolution, the Patriarchate of Antioch sent a delegation to America consisting of Metropolitan Gerasimos (Messara), Archimandrite Victor (Abo-Assaley), and Archdeacon Antony (Bashir) (1898–1966) to help reorganize and reunite the Syrian factions. In 1924, Archimandrite Victor was consecrated as bishop to lead all the Syrian Orthodox in America, and this Antiochian Archdiocese came to be seen as the “legitimate” Syrian jurisdiction among a large number of the Syrians. Bishop Victor continued to lead this jurisdiction until his death in 1934.

A substantial number of the “Russy” Syro-Arab parishes, however, remained faithful to Archbishop Aftimios (Ofiesh). He remained at least the nominal head of these Syro-Arab parishes under the authority of the Russian Administration in America until 1931, when he was replaced by Bishop Emmanuel (Abo-Hatab), who had been consecrated as bishop of Montreal and auxiliary to Archbishop Aftimios in 1927.

When Archbishop Aftimios abandoned his episcopal rank and got married in 1933, and upon Bishop Emmanuel’s death in 1933 and Bishop Victor’s death
in 1934, and with Metropolitan Germanos’s return to Lebanon in 1933, most of the Syro-Arab parishes gathered under the leadership of Father Antony Bashir, who in 1936 was consecrated as bishop of the Antiochian Archdiocese under the authority of the Patriarchate of Antioch. However, some of the Antiochian parishes-mostly the former “Russy” parishes-followed the newly consecrated Bishop Samuel (David) of Toledo (d. 1958) into a new, separate diocese that also operated under the direction of the Church of Antioch.

Metropolitan Antony (Bashir) was one of the most outstanding bishops in the history of the American Orthodox Church. Ordained a priest in 1922, he served as a missionary among Syrian Orthodox Christians for 14 years until he was made the Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, which since 1931 had operated separately from the Russian mission. He was a pioneer in encouraging the use of English in liturgical worship, and was an outspoken supporter of jurisdictional unity among all the Orthodox in the New World. In 1960 he became a founder and leading member of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA).

Upon his death in 1966, Metropolitan Antony was succeeded by the youthful and dynamic Metropolitan Philip (Saliba) (1931–2014). In 1975, the schism with the Toledo group, then headed by Metropolitan Michael (Shaheen) (d. 1992), was healed, with Michael becoming Archbishop of Toledo and the Midwest within the united Antiochian Archdiocese.

In 1979 Metropolitan Philip purchased a property near Ligonier, Pennsylvania, that would become the elaborate camping and retreat center known as Antiochian Village. In 1987 he received nearly 2000 converts from the Evangelical Orthodox Church, led by Peter Gillquist, Jack Sparks, Jon Braun, Gordon Walker, and other former leaders of Campus Crusade for Christ.

In 2013, Metropolitan Philip still headed the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, which in 2003 received “self-rule” status from the Patriarchate of Antioch. In addition to the metropolitan, the archdiocese was being guided by eight auxiliary bishops. And at that time, the Archdiocese had about 250 parishes and missions, compared with about 65 parishes in 1966, when Metropolitan Philip began his long tenure as metropolitan.
The so-called American Metropolia of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) had its beginnings in 1915, when Bishop Germanos (Shehadi) from Lebanon gathered under his care a number of parishes, mostly in western Canada, where thousands of Ukrainians had recently immigrated. From 1924 this group was led by Archbishop John (Theodorovich) (d. 1971), who had been consecrated by the non-canonical Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) that had been formed in Ukraine in 1921. (This group on their own authority consecrated a number of priests to be their own bishops.) Archbishop John, a skilled administrator, was an ardent Ukrainian patriot who helped expand his church through appealing to the nationalism of Ukrainians who were delighted with the establishment in 1918 of an independent government in Ukraine, free from Russian control.

Another group of Ukrainians, more moderate and wanting to be part of canonical Orthodoxy, formed the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America (UOCA) in 1929. These Ukrainians had been Uniates (Byzantine-rite Catholics) who left the Unia in large part due to the American Roman Catholic Church’s refusal to allow a married priesthood. Led by Bishop Bogdan (Spylka) (d. 1965), this jurisdiction came under the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1937.

Most of the parishes of both of these groups merged in 1950, forming the new, independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A. (UOC-USA). This new jurisdiction was led by the then Metropolitan John (Theodorovich), who in 1949 had submitted to reconsecration as bishop. However, his jurisdiction was still not recognized as being canonical by the other Orthodox Churches. This was partly because one of the bishops who reconsecrated Bishop John, Bishop Mstyslav (Skrypnyk) (1898–1993), had been made a bishop in 1942 in Ukraine by the newly resurrected yet still non-canonical Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Ukraine (UAOC). Metropolitan John ruled the UOC-USA until his death in 1971.

Metropolitan John was succeeded by the then Metropolitan Mstyslav, who led the church until 1990, when he became Patriarch of the UAOC in Ukraine. The new metropolitan succeeding Mstyslav in America was Metropolitan Vsevelod (Maidansky). Also in 1990, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada (UOCC) was received into the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under the leadership of Metropolitan Wasyly (Fedak) (r. 1978–2005). Metropolitan Wasyly’s successor, Metropolitan John (Stinka) (b. 1935), was elected at the Twenty-First Sobor (Council) of the UOCC held in 2005.
Metropolitan John retired as the presiding hierarch in 2012, and was followed by Metropolitan Yurij (Kalistchuk) (b. 1951). The Metropolitanate also has one vicar bishop as an auxiliary, and two territorial bishops.

Back in 1950, however, Bishop Bogdan refused to join the newly unified UOC-USA, for it was still considered non-canonical by worldwide Orthodoxy. Along with about two dozen parishes, he remained loyal to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Partly due to his advancing age, Bishop Bogdan’s group gradually lost more and more parishes to the UOC-USA. Nevertheless, he was a founding member of SCOBA in 1960.

After Bishop Bogdan’s death in 1965, he was succeeded in 1967 by Father Andrei Kuschak (d. 1986), who was elected as bishop by six parishes of the Ukrainians still under Constantinople. Father Andrei was consecrated to the episcopacy by Archbishop Iakovos (Koukouzis) and other bishops of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America. Bishop Andrei then administered about a dozen parishes.

In 1996, the self-proclaimed autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA (UOC-USA) and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America (under Constantinople since 1937) were finally united under the leadership of Metropolitan Constantine (Buggan) (1936–2012). For the first time, nearly all the Ukrainian Orthodox Christians in America were unified and in canonical Orthodoxy, within the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The name Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA was kept for the combined body.

In 2012, Metropolitan Constantine died, and was succeeded by Archbishop Antony (Scharba). In 2013, the UOC-USA had about 85 parishes, and a seminary, Saint Sophia’s, in South Bound Brook, New Jersey.

At the time of the merger in 1996, fourteen parishes of the UOC-USA refused to accept the reconciliation, and instead chose to reestablish ties with the Mother Church in Ukraine. These parishes came under the authority of the self-proclaimed autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP).
Less than half of the Carpatho-Russian, Byzantine-rite Catholics (Uniates) immigrating to America had returned to their Orthodox roots by the late 1920s. Yet many who remained Byzantine-rite were still disgruntled at the Latinizing efforts of the Latin-rite hierarchy in the U.S.-especially the prohibition of married clergy. This was the context in which Father Orestes Chornock (1883–1977) led 37 Uniate parishes into Orthodoxy in the 1930s.

Father Orestes Chornock, born in the Transcarpathian area of central Europe, immigrated to America after his marriage and ordination to the priesthood. In 1911, he was installed as priest of Saint John the Baptist Carpatho-Russian Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he remained until 1947.

In 1924, the Vatican sent Bishop Basil Takach to enforce Latinization on the Greek Catholic Church in America, particularly in regard to the prohibition of married clergy. Various clergy and laity, led by Father Orestes, repeatedly protested against this attack on their religious heritage.

In 1936, with Father Orestes and his brother-in-law Father Peter Molchany providing leadership, the foundation was laid for a new Greek Catholic diocese independent of Bishop Takach, yet still loyal to Rome. But the Vatican refused to accept this arrangement, so by the fall of 1938, those in the new diocese declared their final break from the Roman Church. Two weeks later they were excommunicated by the Papacy.

The new diocese was accepted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Father Orestes was made the first bishop of this new Carpatho-Russian diocese. He was consecrated in Constantinople, and installed in Bridgeport by Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America.

During his first year, Bishop Orestes supported the founding of a national Carpatho-Russian youth organization called American Carpatho-Russian Youth (ACRY), and convened the diocese’s first convention, in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. In 1940, Bishop Orestes led in the formation of a diocesan seminary in New York City; this Christ the Savior Seminary was moved to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1951. The headquarters of the diocese were also moved from Bridgeport to Johnstown, in 1947.

In its first decade of existence, the diocese endured many lawsuits over church property. The Roman Church claimed ownership of its properties on behalf of those who remained loyal to the Unia. The results of these lawsuits depended largely upon how the original charters of the parishes were worded.
In 1965 the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate honored Bishop Orestes for his service by elevating him to the dignity of Metropolitan. Metropolitan Orestes died in 1977. He was succeeded by Bishop John (Martin) (1931–1984). Upon Bishop John’s death in 1984, Bishop Nicholas (Smisko) (1936–2011) became the third hierarch to lead the diocese. In 1997 he was elevated to the rank of metropolitan by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Then in 2011 Metropolitan Nicholas died; he was succeeded by Bishop Gregory (Tatsis) (b. 1958).

In 2013 the diocese had 72 regular parishes and 13 mission parishes, along with Christ the Savior Seminary in Johnstown.
The Albanian Orthodox in America

In 1908, Theophan (Fan) (Noli) (1882–1965), an Albanian, was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Platon, Archbishop Tikhon’s successor as head of the Russian Missionary Diocese, to be the leader of the Albanian Orthodox community in Boston—which was the earliest Albanian immigrant community in North America. He translated the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom into modern Albanian, and conducted the services in that language for the first time anywhere in the world.

In the 1918 list of parishes of the Russian Diocese in America, we find four Albanian churches listed, with “Rev. F. S. Noli” given as the pastor of Saint George Church in Boston. In that year, Bishop Alexander, Metropolitan Evdokim’s successor, raised Father Theophan to the rank of mitred archimandrite and appointed him as Administrator of the Albanian Orthodox Mission in America. At the Second All-American Sobor of the Russian Diocese in America, held in Cleveland in 1919, Archimandrite Theophan was elected to be bishop over the Albanian parishes. However, approval for this consecration never came from the Church in Moscow, as we have noted.

In 1932, after about a dozen years spent in Albania (where he served for a short time as Prime Minister) and then in exile in Germany, Noli returned to the U.S. as a bishop, but without official authorization to oversee the Albanian parishes in America. As a result, several of the 15 parishes at that time stayed aloof from him. In 1949 these few parishes were accepted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople under the leadership of Bishop Mark (Lipa). This new jurisdiction was called the Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America.

Archbishop Theophan was soon generally accepted as the legitimate leader of the Albanian Orthodox parishes which stayed loyal to him. During his long tenure, until his death in 1965, Metropolitan Theophan translated eight service books from Greek into English for his flock, and he was one of the most outspoken of the Orthodox hierarchs in America for Orthodox unity here. He even called for the establishment of a patriarchate for the American Church.

Bishop Stephen (Lasko) was appointed by the Church in Albania in 1965 to be Metropolitan Theophan’s successor. In 1971 Bishop Stephen led his flock into the newly formed Orthodox Church in America (OCA), within which it became a distinct diocese. This move finally resolved the canonical status of the majority of Albanian parishes in America. In 2013, the Albanian diocese of the OCA, under the leadership of Bishop Nikon of New England, had about a dozen parishes.
Meanwhile, Bishop Mark’s diocese continued its existence within the Patriarchate of Constantinople. After the fall of the extremely atheistic Communist government in Albania in 1990, this very small group of parishes helped significantly with the restoration of the Church in Albania, which had been virtually destroyed by the Communists. In 2013 this jurisdiction was led by Bishop Ilia (Katre), who began his tenure in 1982.
Bulgarian immigration to America became significant after 1903, when several thousand Bulgarians arrived as the result of an insurrection in Macedonia. Being quite scattered, they generally attended Russian churches, although as early as 1907 the first Bulgarian parish was established in Madison, Illinois. Gradually, other parishes were formed, and apparently, in 1909, a small Mission was organized for them within the Russian Missionary Diocese. However, in the 1918 listing of the parishes of the Russian Diocese in America there is only one parish that is designated as “Boulgarian”-in Toronto, Ontario.

In 1922, the five Bulgarian parishes in North America came under the care of the Mother Church in Sofia, Bulgaria. Bishop Andrey (Velichky) became the first bishop for this diocese in 1938.

In 1949, the Russian Church in Exile oversaw the establishment of several parishes for recent Bulgarian immigrants. In 1976, most of the parishes of this Bulgarian Church in Exile joined the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), becoming a constituent diocese of the OCA. Its hierarch, Bishop Kyrill (Yonchev) (1920–2007), became the OCA’s Bishop of Pittsburgh (r. 1976–2007). At that time the Bulgarian diocese consisted of about 15 parishes. In 2013, it had about 20 parishes under the leadership of Bishop Alexander (Golitzin) of Pittsburgh (b. 1948), who was consecrated as Bishop of Toledo and the Bulgarian Diocese of the OCA in 2012.

Those Bulgarian parishes that resisted coming into the OCA remained within the Patriarchate of Bulgaria. This jurisdiction, called the Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese of the United States, Canada, and Australia, had 29 parishes in the United States and Canada in 2013, having been enlarged by the addition of several parishes of the Christ the Savior Brotherhood that joined it in 2000. In 2013 this jurisdiction continued to be led by Metropolitan Joseph (Bosakov), with Bishop Daniil (Trendafilov) (b. 1972) as vicar bishop.
There was also an intriguing but very short-lived attempt beginning in 1927 to provide English-speaking Orthodox Americans with their own jurisdiction, called the American Orthodox Catholic Church. Technically this diocese was to be within the Russian Metropolia, but this connection proved to be very tenuous as its leaders actually foresaw an administratively independent Church, eventually to embrace all the Orthodox in America. This effort was led by Archbishop Aftimios (Ofiesh), who as Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny’s successor was the head of the Syro-Arab parishes under the Russian Administration (though some parishes had already accepted the leadership of Bishop Victor [Abu-Asaley]). Strongly encouraged and aided by two converts to Orthodoxy, Father Michael Gelsinger and Father Boris Burden, Archbishop Aftimios actually in some ways was building upon the “English work” initiated by Father Nathaniel Irvine back in 1905 under Archbishop Tikhon.

This “jurisdiction” was first brought into existence through “a solemn Act” signed by Metropolitan Platon himself, as well as by Aftimios, Archbishop of Brooklyn; Theophilos, Bishop of Chicago; Amphilochy, Bishop of Alaska; Arseny, Bishop of Winnipeg; and Alexey, Bishop of San Francisco.

For a short while the new jurisdiction published the *Orthodox Catholic Review* which ardently espoused Orthodox unity in America. However, this experiment never really had widespread support, and within a year or two it began to fade. It was brought to an end in 1933 when Archbishop Aftimios retired from the episcopacy and got married.

*From an article in the Orthodox Catholic Review, апреля-May, 1927, by Archbishop Aftimios of Brooklyn*

With a possible three million or even greater number of Her communicants residing in North America, the Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church should be one of the major religious bodies in America. That it is not is due solely to the failure of its responsible leaders to come together as one Orthodox Catholic body for the organization of the Church in this country. Though the Orthodox Church boasts a litany in Her daily Divine Service beseeching God “for the peace of the churches and the union of them all,” She is Herself in America the most outstanding horrible example of the disastrous effects of disunion, disorder, secret strife, and open warfare that this country of divided and warring sects can offer.

It is true that She is at one and at peace on questions of faith, teaching, and liturgical practice. One would suppose that, therefore, She should find united
ecclesiastical organization and administration an easy adjustment. It would seem that, given unity and uniformity of faith, teaching, rite, and practice, Orthodoxy in America ought to present a most edifying example of that Unity for which all Christian bodies are so loudly calling and for which they are so blindly seeking.

On the contrary, there is no central organization to which all the Orthodox of all racial, national, or linguistic derivation in America yield obedience. There are seven nationalities represented in American Orthodoxy, and these are divided into eighteen distinct groups of churches without any coordinating organization, and almost without any pretense of harmony or cooperation among them. It is time that Orthodoxy in America should take serious note of the causes and effects of its divided condition, and consider the steps necessary to bring about unity and progress for the future of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church and Faith in the New World.

The safety and salvation of thousands of the faithful committed to our trust rests with our defense of the Church and Faith in this country and abroad from the errors and disasters of internal division and external interference and false alliance. Let the Orthodox of America unite for their common Faith and Church at all costs and begin to do the work that lies before them in this land. In spite of all obstacles the Power and Grace of God in our Holy Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church can prevail.
Further efforts at Orthodox unity in America

Besides Archbishop Athenagoras’s overture to Metropolitan Platon about founding a single Orthodox seminary for all the ethnic groups in America, there were several other attempts to forge greater unity among the Orthodox in America. In 1937, the first proposal for a pan-Orthodox council of bishops in America was made by Metropolitan Anthony of the Antiochian Archdiocese, along with support from Archbishop Athenagoras, in a letter written to Metropolitan Theophilus of the Metropolia. Despite the merits of this proposal, however, Metropolitan Theophilus refused to accept it. His continued association with the Karlovtsy Synod (see “Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia,” below) apparently obstructed this collaboration.

In 1941, Archbishop Athenagoras proposed, in another letter written to Metropolitan Theophilus, that an all-English, pan-Orthodox magazine be started. But again, there was no positive response from Metropolitan Theophilus to this idea.

In 1943, the short-lived Federated Orthodox Greek Catholic Primary Jurisdictions in America was established, much through the efforts of Father Michael Gelsinger, who had joined the Antiochian Archdiocese, and Father Boris Burden, who had joined the Russian Patriarchal jurisdiction. The original impetus for this association was to assure that the religion of Orthodox servicemen would be officially recognized by the U.S. Armed Forces (which would entail a kind of official recognition of Orthodoxy by the whole American government). The association was comprised of Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, under the Ecumenical Patriarch; Metropolitan Antony (Bashir) of the Syrian Archdiocese, under the Patriarchate of Antioch; Bishop Benjamin of the Russian Patriarchal jurisdiction; Bishop Dionisije of the Serbian Orthodox diocese, under the Patriarchate of Serbia; Bishop Bogdan (Spilka) of the Ukrainian diocese, under the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and Bishop Orestes (Chornock), head of the Carpatho-Russian diocese, also under the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Since the Metropolia was not in affiliation with a Mother Church in the Old Country, it was not part of this organization.

The organization faltered and collapsed for a variety of reasons, but according to Father Thomas FitzGerald, “its significance cannot be diminished. It was the first formal association of Orthodox bishops in the United States. The establishment of the federation was an indication that the old barriers of language, politics, and cultural suspicion could be overcome and that issues of common concern could be addressed. Bringing together in a consultative body
the primates of six jurisdictions, the federation was an important association that indicated a growing recognition of the critical need for cooperation and the common resolution of problems. As we shall see, the federation provided a historical precedent for the establishment of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA) in 1960.”

In 1956, the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC) was founded by Sophie Koulomzin (1903–2000) of the Metropolia, along with representatives from four other jurisdictions-Greek, Carpatho-Russian, Syrian, and Ukrainian-to coordinate Church school efforts among the various Orthodox groups in America. Having formal recognition by SCOBA ever since that body’s founding, this pan-Orthodox ministry was still active in 2013, continuing to produce educational materials for Orthodox church schools.
In March of 1960, Archbishop Iakovos, head of the Greek Orthodox in North America, hosted a meeting of the primates of all the canonical Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States to discuss the possibility of closer cooperation. On June 7 in the same year, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) was established. Although it was founded as a consultative group with no canonical jurisdiction or authority, SCOBA provided a symbol of Orthodox unity in the New World, and it gave a structure for the coordination of inter-Orthodox activities. The most fruitful of the projects carried on under the official auspices of SCOBA in its first 15 years were the Campus Commission for work among college students-supervising the organization known as the Orthodox Christian Fellowship-and the Orthodox Christian Education Commission.

In 1992, the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) was formed by SCOBA. This organization has proven to be remarkably effective in raising and distributing aid to the poor and suffering of the world, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. By 2013, the IOCC had gained an outstanding reputation for effectiveness in this field, having efficiently distributed millions of dollars worth of aid in many areas around the world.

In 1994, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) was formed by SCOBA, incorporating the Mission Center of the Greek Archdiocese (founded in 1985), with headquarters in St Augustine, Florida. By 2013 the Mission Center was supporting up to about 20 full-time missionaries, in Africa, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. It was also sending out up to 14 short-term mission teams every summer, in fields such as Christian education, construction of church buildings, and medical assistance.
The “Ligonier” Meeting

Also in 1994, for the first time, all the bishops of the canonical jurisdictions in North America met together, at Antiochian Village near Ligonier, Pennsylvania, at the initiative of SCOBA. This unprecedented meeting was hosted by Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Archdiocese, chaired by Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Archdiocese, and moderated by Metropolitan Theodosius of the OCA.

During this three-day conference the bishops formally rejected the understanding of the Orthodox in North America as being in “diaspora,” and resolved to work concretely towards administrative unity. To proceed with their work on an ongoing basis, they resolved to meet annually as an ‘Episcopal Assembly.’ They also resolved to emphasize cooperative efforts to promote mission work in this land.

However, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew rejected the proceedings, with stern reprimands to the Greek Orthodox and other American bishops within the Ecumenical Patriarchate who participated. This halted any further efforts towards administrative unity on the part of the bishops in America, although they did meet again as a group in 2001 in Washington, D.C., and once more in 2006 in Chicago.

The vision for the establishment of jurisdictional unity in North America was rekindled in июня of 2009 when Patriarch Bartholomew, meeting with representatives of all the worldwide autocephalous Churches, mandated that in each of 12 distinct regions around the world that have not been traditionally Orthodox lands, an “episcopal assembly” would be held, which would include all the canonical bishops in each area.

The bishops in North and Central America met in their episcopal assembly for the first time in New York City in мая of 2010. This episcopal assembly established a variety of committees to work out various inconsistencies in pastoral practice among the jurisdictions. It also brought the various SCOBA ministries under its oversight. It requested that Mexico be placed with Central America in a separate episcopal assembly, and that Canada have its own episcopal assembly. And it agreed to meet annually, in preparation for the Great and Holy Council which, it is hoped, will finally bring an end to the jurisdictional confusion and discord in America.

This Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America held its second annual meeting in мая of 2011, and its third annual meeting in сентября of 2012. Both of these conferences were held in Chicago.
The Orthodox Church in Russia
The period from 1900 to 1917 in Russia was a time of spiritual rebirth and ecclesiastical reform. Calls for various reforms after almost 200 years of State control of the Church were heard among clergy and laity in the early 1880s. These reform-minded people were especially concerned to see the restoration of the voice of the laity in the Church, the end of the practice of moving bishops frequently from diocese to diocese, the reduction of the power of government consistories (supervisory boards) in each diocese, and the establishment of conciliarity (sobornost) at all levels of Church administration.

In 1905 an imperial decree granted religious freedom in Russia, ending centuries of official State suppression of all religions except Orthodoxy. This was welcomed by the majority of Church people, such as seen in an open letter supporting the decree issued by 32 priests in Saint Petersburg. This letter also called for “a return to the traditional canonical order, based on self-governance and independence of the Church from the State. This can only be achieved by the convocation of a Council of the whole Russian Church.”

In preparation for such a council, Tsar Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) authorized the formation of a Pre-Conciliar Commission in 1906. The year before, the Holy Synod had asked all the Russian bishops for their recommendations concerning Church reform. Sixty-one out of 63 diocesan bishops responded in favor of significant reform.

However, in апреля of 1907, Tsar Nicholas changed his mind, for political reasons, about allowing the Church to hold a great council. The work of the Pre-Conciliar Commission was halted.

At this time Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra were coming under the influence of a shadowy lay figure with hypnotic healing powers named Gregory Rasputin (1869–1916). Posing as an authentic Orthodox staretz (spiritual elder), he was actually a Khlyst sectarian who had been condemned as a heretic in Tobolsk. Especially because he was able to give relief to the royal couple’s hemophiliac son, the Tsarevich Alexis, he was eventually granted great influence in the affairs of the Royal Family and the Church, to the discredit of both. He was assassinated in декабря of 1916.

On марта 2, 1917, under great pressure for political and ecclesiastical reform, and with Russia suffering severe military setbacks in the Great War, Tsar Nicholas abdicated. A provisional democratic government was set up, led by Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970), which allowed the Church again to undertake preparations for the long anticipated All-Russian Council.
After much debate, it was decided that each diocese would send delegates to the Council from among the clergy and the laity—much as at the First All-American Sobor in Mayfield, Pennsylvania, in 1907—to sit in council with the bishops, who would make the final decisions in matters of Church doctrine and practice. In August of 1917, in the shadow of the impending Bolshevik Revolution, the Council convened in Moscow—rather than in Saint Petersburg, the headquarters of the Holy Synod ever since the Patriarchate was abolished under Emperor Peter I in 1721. This in itself indicated a strong desire on the part of the Church to return to its traditional patterns of life and organization before the era of the Petrine Reform.

The Council’s most momentous act was to restore the patriarchate to the Russian Church. On the morning of ноября 6, 1917, after vigil and prayer, an elderly monk drew the name of one of the three elected nominees from a chalice in front of the icon of the Kazan Mother of God. The name of Archbishop Tikhon (1866–1925) was drawn. Hence, the former primate of the American archdiocese became the first patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church since Patriarch Adrian died in 1700.

The Council continued to meet for nearly a year longer, despite the opposition of the Bolsheviks, and a number of significant reforms were passed before it had to close. These included the formation of a standing Synod of Bishops, and a Higher Church Council with lay participation to assist the Patriarch; bishops in every diocese to be elected by diocesan councils comprised of clergy and laity; bishops normally to be allowed to stay in their original diocese for life; sermons to be given at all services in the vernacular language; the restoration of internal autonomy to the monasteries; and women being encouraged to become members of parish councils.

Unfortunately, the Soviet oppression of the Church prevented many of these reforms from being put into practice. Interestingly, the dioceses which were able to elect their own bishops were most often the ones who stayed loyal to the Patriarchate during the years of Communist rule.
From the very beginning, Patriarch Tikhon struggled to defend the life and organization of the Church in the face of fierce persecution by the Bolsheviks. At almost the same time that Saint Tikhon was selected as the new patriarch, Saint John Kochurov (1871–1917), who as a newly ordained priest had served for 12 years as head of the parish in Chicago, Illinois, became the first priest to die as a martyr at the hands of the Bolsheviks. In 1994 the Russian Church glorified him as “First Hieromartyr under the Bolshevik Yoke.”

On января 19, 1918, with the full approval of the Great Council in Moscow which continued to meet, Patriarch Tikhon excommunicated and anathematized all “the enemies of the Church.” He cried out to them, “Madmen, recover your senses! Cease your bloody vengeance. Your actions are not only cruel, they are satanic.”

This action increased the fury of the revolutionaries against the Church, which they despised for its close alliance with the hated Tsarist regime that they had dedicated their lives to overthrowing. According to James Cunningham, “On января 23, 1918, they issued a decree which separated the Church from the State, took away all schools from the Church, expropriated all ecclesiastical properties, suspended all government subsidies to Church organizations, denied the Church its status as a legal entity, and totally secularized the state.”

Two days later, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev (1848–1918) became the first bishop to be executed by the revolutionaries. During the course of the next three years, at least 28 bishops were murdered, thousands of clergy were imprisoned or killed, and some 12,000 laymen were killed for religious activities. On the night of июля 17, 1918, Tsar Nicholas and his entire immediate family were treacherously and shamefully executed at Ekaterinburg; and the next night Grand Duchess Elizabeth (1864–1918) and other members of the extended Royal Family were murdered near Alapaevsk. They all were recognized as saints among the new martyrs, confessors, and passion-bearers of Russia by the Russian Church in 2000.

On мая 12, 1922, Patriarch Tikhon was imprisoned for his refusal to give up consecrated Church vessels which the government demanded during that time of famine and civil war, ostensibly to sell to help feed the poor. He had offered the unconsecrated treasures of the Church to the Bolsheviks, and he had promised as well to raise money for the afflicted through free will offerings of the faithful that would equal the amount which the government was demanding,
as long as such offerings would be distributed to the people directly by the Church. He was released from prison in июня of 1923, upon making a statement of loyalty to the Soviet government—a step he felt he had to take for the good of the Church.

In his struggles and trials, the patriarch tried to follow a path of political neutrality while defending the rights of the Church. He died in 1925 under mysterious circumstances in a hospital in Moscow, as a confessor for the Faith. In 1989, Patriarch Tikhon was canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate as “Saint Tikhon the Confessor, Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia, and Enlightener of North America.”
Patriarch Tikhon also had to struggle against the Living Church, a group of liberal churchmen supporting the Soviet regime, some quite enthusiastically, who took over the patriarchal administration. This usurpation, fully endorsed if not actually instigated by the Bolsheviks, was begun shortly after Patriarch Tikhon was imprisoned in мая of 1922. The Living Church was recognized by the Soviet State as the official Russian Church, and it was used by the State against those remaining faithful to Patriarch Tikhon. This group of “Renovationists” tried to change various teachings and practices of the Orthodox Church, such as allowing bishops to be married; the Renovationists were hailed by some in the West as bearers of the Reformation in Russia.

At first the Living Church gained some widespread support. But when it held a council in мая of 1923 that attempted to depose Patriarch Tikhon, many of its supporters were alienated. At that point the Soviets realized that the Living Church would not work as a means to bring the Orthodox Church as a whole under their control. So they stopped supporting it, and by the late 1920s its influence had greatly waned, though elements of it lingered on into the 1940s.
Quite a number of young Russian intellectuals, at first enamored with leftist political ideology, made their way “from Marxism to Idealism” and on to an affirmation of the Orthodox Faith. Some of them, such as the philosopher P. B. Struve (1870–1944), the theological writer and professor of dogmatics Archpriest Sergei N. Bulgakov (1871–1944), the existentially-oriented religious philosopher and editor Nicholas A. Berdyaev (1874–1948), the essayist S. L. Frank (1877–1950), and the religious historian George P. Fedotov (1886–1951), became leading figures in the Russian émigré community in Western Europe that coalesced in the early 1920s. Some one million Russians, mostly intellectuals and professionals, fled from Russia in the throes of the Bolshevik Revolution and afterwards. This remarkable group produced some 10,000 books and 200 journals in many different fields in the years between the two World Wars.

These Orthodox Christians did much, through their writing and speaking, to introduce to Western Europe the riches of Orthodox thought and life. The academic center of this Orthodox flowering in the West was the Saint Sergius Institute in Paris, founded in 1925.
The Era of Most Severe Persecution

With the death of Patriarch Tikhon in 1925, the Church in Russia entered its darkest hour. Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) (1867–1944) served as Deputy Locum Tenens of the Moscow Patriarchate from 1927 to 1943. This was the time of Stalin’s purges, when literally millions of people, including thousands of clergy, were imprisoned, exiled, and killed. Stalin’s constitution of 1936 officially called for “freedom of religion and freedom of anti-religious propaganda,” yet hundreds of churches, monasteries, and schools were closed. What little Church life still remaining was limited exclusively to liturgical services. The persecution of the Church by the State was fierce and relentless.
Relative Freedom during the Second World War

A period of relative freedom came to the Russian Church during the Second World War. The government needed the Church’s support for the war effort against Hitler. In return for rallying the people to fight for the fatherland, the Russian Church received concessions from the State. Many churches, monasteries, and schools were reopened. In 1943, Stalin allowed the Church to hold a council, which officially elected Metropolitan Sergius as patriarch. Upon Patriarch Sergius’s death in 1944, Metropolitan Alexei (Simansky) (r. 1945–1970) was elected to replace him at another council, solemnly conducted in the presence of a host of foreign ecclesiastical dignitaries.
The Return of Persecution

In the late 1950s and early “60s, the Soviet State under Nikita Khrushchev again began to severely persecute the Orthodox Church in Russia. There were no violent purges as in the Stalin era; rather, this new persecution came in the form of “administrative” measures with supposedly legal foundation. There was the closing of schools and churches—from 22,000 churches open in 1960 to 7,000 in 1964. There was heavy taxation and restricted registration of clergy. And severe punishments were meted out against churchmen for trivial or nonexistent “crimes.”

In 1961, new decrees of the government gravely limited the powers of the parish priests by giving all legal and administrative authority in the churches to the lay councils, the “twenty” members required by Soviet law for the formation of a local corporation with the right to request a church building for worship. The pastors were thus reduced to mere liturgical functionaries who had no official authority to do any further ministry among their flocks.

All of these “administrative” measures were an attempt to destroy religious faith—which, according to Marxist doctrine, should long ago have died a natural death in the USSR. Official atheist propaganda of the period shows a grave concern over the persistence of religion in the land.
Because the leading members of the hierarchy of the Russian Church were silent and passive in the face of this new persecution of the Church by the State, voices of protest began to arise from various Church members in what became known as the Dissident Movement. The most powerful appeals for just and proper action concerning the Church came from Archbishop Yermogen of Kaluga and the priests Nikolai Eshliman (1928–1985) and Gleb Yakunin (b. 1934). These spokesmen on behalf of the rights of the Russian Church sent open letters of criticism to both Church and State officials in декабрь, 1965. These letters appealed to Soviet law that technically allowed for religious freedom, as well as to the statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church promulgated at its council in 1945. As a result, together with a number of lesser known colleagues, these priests were deprived of their ecclesiastical positions. Nevertheless, agitation among the clergy and laymen for reform in the Russian Church, for strong leadership and just treatment, continued until the fall of the Soviet government in 1991.
Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn

In addition to churchmen, men from academic and literary fields also made appeals in the name of faith and freedom in Russia. Boris Pasternak (1890–1960) and Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008), both Nobel Prize winning authors and Christian believers, were in this number. Solzhenitsyn addressed his famous Lenten Letter to Patriarch Pimen in 1972. This letter was extremely critical of the policies and actions of the Russian Church in the face of State control. It received great international attention, and caused much controversy within the Russian Church. It received, however, no official response from the Moscow Patriarchate.
After the death of Patriarch Alexei I in 1970, Archbishop Pimen (Izvekov) (r. 1971–1989) was chosen as primate of the Russian Church at its council in 1971. This same council officially confirmed the administrative decrees of the State, promulgated in 1961, which at that time had been strongly opposed by many of the parish clergy. Patriarch Pimen, who made visits to the other patriarchates while patriarch of Russia, was silent in response to all criticism of Church leadership in Russia. He continued the policies of cooperation with the Soviet authorities that had been followed by Patriarchs Sergius and Alexei before him—including refusing to admit the existence of State persecution of the Church in Russia.
Glasnost, and Freedom to Rebuild

Preparations for the celebration of the millennium of the Christianization of Kievan Rus’ in 1988 coincided with a general relaxation of the authoritarianism of the previous decades, under Premier Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of glasnost (openness). The Church gained more freedoms as the Iron Curtain began to fall. Once it collapsed, in 1991, the Church was free to recover and rebuild.
After Patriarch Pimen’s death in 1989, Metropolitan Alexei (Ridiger), from Estonia, was elected the new Patriarch. He guided the Church through the new post-Soviet era when millions of Orthodox came back to the Church, thousands of churches and monasteries were reopened and refurbished, and a new national constitution provided for full freedom for the Church, now fully recognized as a legal entity. The Church was greatly challenged in this time with ministering to so many new members, with very strained relations with the Uniates, especially in western Ukraine, and with various ultra-conservative right-wing groups.
A month after Patriarch Alexei’s death in декабря of 2008, Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyayev) (b. 1946) was elected as the new Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. By 2010 he had taken steps to develop closer relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, including supporting the 12 Orthodox ecclesiastical assemblies that Patriarch Bartholomew was setting up around the world. Metropolitan Kirill continued to lead the Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia in 2013.
Among the last acts of Patriarch Alexei I was the official declaration in 1970 of the autonomy of the Orthodox Church in Japan. Bishop Vladimir (Nagosky) (1922–1997), the American-born primate of the Japanese Church, which had been affiliated with the American Metropolia since World War II, was made Metropolitan of Tokyo. The Moscow Patriarchate reserved the right to confirm the election of the Japanese primate and to participate in his consecration, but in all other respects the Church in Japan became self-governing. At the time of Japanese autonomy, the founder of the Church in Japan, Archbishop Nikolai (Kasatkin) (1836–1912), was glorified as a saint by the Russian Church.

In 1972, Metropolitan Vladimir returned to the United States, and the native-born, American-educated Metropolitan Theodosius (Nagashima) (1935–1999) replaced him as primate of the Japanese Church. He was followed by Metropolitan Daniel (Nushiro) (b. 1938), who was born into a Japanese Orthodox family. Installed by Patriarch Alexei II of the Church of Russia in 2000, Metropolitan Daniel was still guiding the Japanese Church in 2013. It numbers about 30,000 faithful.
The Church in Greece

In 1907, Father Eusebios Matthropoulos (1849–1929) founded the Zoe Brotherhood in Greece, an organization dedicated to the “enlightenment” and “reevangelization” of Christian Greece. The Brotherhood founded thousands of Sunday schools and study groups. However, it also brought some Protestant doctrines, practices, and forms of piety into the life of many Greek Orthodox Christians.

The first quarter of the century saw the influx of many Greeks from the Turkish territories into Greece, particularly at the time of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1923 in which Greece was defeated by the newly emerging Republic of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881–1938). In this era the Patriarchate of Constantinople lost a vast number of members, many of whom emigrated to other places, including the New World. This natural emigration was forcefully increased by the so-called “population exchange” of 1923–1924. As stipulated by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, signed by all the major European powers, Greece agreed to deport as many Turks as possible to Turkey, and Turkey in turn agreed to deport as many Greeks as possible to Greece and the Greek islands.

This was deemed the best solution to the recurring animosity between the Greeks and Turks in Turkey. But it was a violent measure in itself; hundreds lost their lives in the forced marches of this population exchange. At the age of 83, Saint Arsenios of Cappadocia (1840–1924) successfully shepherded some 480 families from Cappadocia, in central Turkey, to the Greek islands in the population exchange. He died on one of the Aegean islands forty days after his arrival there, just as he had predicted.

In 1923 the Church of Greece adopted the Revised Julian Calendar, and the State banned the use of the old Julian Calendar everywhere except on Mount Athos. This led to the rise of several Old Calendarist groups which were persecuted by the State. This persecution added to the strength of these groups, which exist to the present day in schism from the Church.

Christians in Greece suffered persecution during the civil war (1944–1948) between Royalists and Communists. Then, the coup of the military junta in 1967, as well as its subsequent overthrow in 1974, brought turmoil in Church affairs, particularly at the hierarchical level.

In recent times, the Church has shown leadership in supporting new Orthodox communities in Africa, and in reaching out to the youth of modern Greece. In 2013 the ruling hierarch of the Church of Greece was Archbishop
Ieronymos (Liapis) (b. 1938), who followed the popular Archbishop Christodoulos (Paraskevaidis) (r. 1998–2008).
From 1948 to 1972 the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was led by the imposing figure of Patriarch Athenagoras (1886–1972). This world famous hierarch was concerned primarily with the survival of his patriarchate in Turkey, and with ecumenical activity. In January of 1964, in Jerusalem, the patriarch met with Pope Paul VI of the Roman Catholic Church. This was the first meeting between the primates of the Orthodox and Roman Churches since 1439 at the Council of Florence. In December of 1965, they issued statements nullifying the anathemas of 1054 (see Eleventh Century), thus signaling an era of friendship between the Churches in the mutual quest for complete unity in truth and love. The two prelates met again in 1967 in Constantinople and in Rome. Patriarch Athenagoras also met personally with leaders of the Church of England and the World Council of Churches.

For his bold words and deeds directed toward Christian unity-particularly in his relations with the Roman Church-Patriarch Athenagoras was both admired and attacked. While being virtually identified with the whole of Orthodoxy in the minds of most non-Orthodox people, the patriarch was severely criticized by some members of the Orthodox Church for acting independently and irresponsibly, without proper consultation with the leaders of all the Orthodox Churches. Others in the Church, primarily in the Church of Greece, on Mount Athos, and in America, criticized not merely the manner of the Patriarch’s actions, but also the actions themselves, as betraying the Orthodox Faith.
The Proposed Great Council

In 1961, Patriarch Athenagoras called the first conference of representatives of all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches to discuss the common problems facing the Orthodox, and to begin serious preparations for the calling of a Great Council of the Orthodox Church—a proposed council which had been discussed for decades. This conference was held on the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea.

In 1967, the Ecumenical Patriarchate refused to place the problem of the Orthodox jurisdictions in America on the agenda of the pan-Orthodox conference held that year in Switzerland. The request was made by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (see SCOBA, above).

Since then, there have been four specifically designated Pre-Conciliar Conferences—at Chambésy, a suburb of Geneva, Switzerland, in 1976; at Rhodes in 1982; at Chambésy in 1986; and again at Chambésy in 2009. It was at this last conference that the plan was first proposed for the meeting of assemblies of bishops of all canonical jurisdictions in regions not traditionally Orthodox.
Various Troubles

The Ecumenical Patriarchate continued to have trouble with the Turkish government. The hasty election of Patriarch Demetrios (Papadopoulos) (r. 1972–1991), to succeed Athenagoras in 1972, showed the continuing power of the Turkish authorities over the affairs of the Orthodox Church within its territory. The patriarchal seminary on the Island of Halki was closed in 1971 because of new Turkish regulations.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate also was engaged in controversy with the Church of Greece over the jurisdiction of dioceses in the “new lands” of northern Greece. And many of the monks on Mount Athos continued to express their discontent with the Constantinopolitan leadership because of its ecumenical policies and activities. (From about 6500 at the beginning of the century, the number of monks on Mount Athos dwindled to about 1500 by 1960. Since then, there has been a steady revival in numbers and spiritual life on the Holy Mountain, thanks to an infusion of young monks from around the world.)
Patriarch Bartholomew

Patriarch Demetrios was succeeded by Patriarch Bartholomew (Archontonis) (b. 1940) in 1991. Patriarch Bartholomew has been so involved with ecological concerns that he has been nicknamed “the Green Patriarch.” At his initiative, the Chambésy conference of 2009 proposed the formation of episcopal assemblies in each of 12 regions not traditionally Orthodox, as mentioned above. These assemblies first met during 2010, and continued to have annual assemblies into 2013.
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The Orthodox Church in Serbia declared its autocephaly in 1832, after the success of the Serbian Revolution against the Ottoman Turks. This status was officially recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1879. In 1920 the Serbian patriarchate-which was lost in 1459, regained in 1557, and lost again in 1766-was restored, with its headquarters located in the capital city of Belgrade. In this same year of 1920, the Church was officially separated from the State.

During World War II, the Serbian Church suffered terribly at the hands of the Croatian Ustashi, in alliance with the German Nazis. Patriarch Gavril (Dozich) (1881–1950), as well as Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, were incarcerated in the Nazi prison camp at Dachau, and some 800,000 Serbians were uprooted or massacred by the Ustashi. Sometimes they were killed for refusing to convert to Roman Catholicism.

From 1945 to 1990, the Church in Serbia (Yugoslavia) continued to suffer persecution under the Communist regime established by Marshal Tito (1892–1980). In 1990, when the Soviet era came to an end, Patriarch Pavle (Stojchevich) (r. 1990–2009) publicly apologized for any collaboration with the Communists, and offered to step down from office. This offer was rejected by the Church, and he continued as the Patriarch until his death in 2009. He was succeeded by Patriarch Irenej (Gavrilovich) (b. 1930), who continued to rule the Church of Serbia in 2013.

In 2010 the Serbian Church glorified as saints two famous Serbian ascetics: Father Justin Popovich (1894–1979) of the Chelije Monastery, and Father Simeon Popovich (1854–1941) of the Dajbabe Monastery.
The Romanian Orthodox Church declared its autocephaly in 1859, when the modern Romanian nation was formed. This status was officially recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1885. In 1925, the Romanian Church received a patriarch for the first time, with his headquarters located in the capital city of Bucharest. To this day this Church remains the state-church of Romania, which is the most thoroughly Orthodox nation in the world. Liturgical services are done in the modern Romanian language.

The Romanian Christians suffered much during the Communist era after WWII. The persecution was moderated by the fact that the Church was firmly under State control, and because of close personal relationships between some of the Communist and Orthodox leaders. Unlike the Soviet government in Russia, the Romanian government was not determined to create an atheist state and society.

Freedom for the Church came at the end of 1989 with the fall of the brutal dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (1918–1989). Patriarch Teoctist (Arăpașu) (r. 1986–2007) resigned under pressure for alleged collusion with the Ceausescu regime, but he was reinstated by the Holy Synod of the Church in апре́ля of 1990.

In мая of 1999, Pope John Paul II visited Romania at the invitation of Patriarch Teoctist. This was in all probability the first time any Roman bishop ever visited Romania.

Upon Patriarch Teoctist’s death in 2007, he was succeeded by Patriarch Daniel (Ciobotea) (b. 1951), who continued to rule the Church of Romania in 2013.

According to the census of 2011, the Church of Romania had over 16 million adherents, who made up about 86% of the population.
In 1899 the Antiochian Patriarchate in the Middle East received its first Arab primate since 1724, with considerable help from the Russians. This was Patriarch Meletius II (Doumani), who ruled until 1906. At present, all the higher clergy are Arabs.

In 1942 a youth movement was started, called simply the Orthodox Youth Movement. Comprised mostly of laity, it has been especially important in bringing new vitality to the Church in Syria and Lebanon. The group has been active in book publishing and in various forms of social outreach. Their work was especially appreciated during the long years of civil war from 1975 to 1990.

Patriarch Ignatius (Hazim) IV (1921–2012), who was a member of the Orthodox Youth Movement along with others who have become bishops of the Church, began his reign as Patriarch of Antioch in 1979. In 1988 he founded the University of Balamand, which now has oversight of the Saint John of Damascus School of Theology (founded in 1970), the patriarchate’s only seminary for training priests.

In 2012 Patriarch Ignatius died. He was succeeded by Patriarch John X (Yazigi) (b. 1955).
The Patriarchate in Jerusalem continues to the present to have a Greek primate, who must be a member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre that is responsible for the upkeep of the holy sites in the Holy Land. A council of Arab priests and laymen was formed in 1911 to participate in Church government.

While the Church hierarchy is still predominantly Greek, the faithful are predominantly Arabs living in the Palestinian Authority and Jordan. This has been a source of discontent among the Arab Orthodox, as they have felt that their particular needs have not been sufficiently addressed by the Greek hierarchy.

In 2013 the patriarch of Jerusalem was Patriarch Theophilos (Giannopoulos) III (b. 1952).
For centuries, the ministry of the Patriarchate of Alexandria was mostly confined to a relatively small Greek community in Egypt that was surrounded by Copts, who have had their own (Non-Chalcedonian) Church since the 6th century, and also by Muslims since they took over the country in the mid-7th century.

In the late 1800s, the character of the Patriarchate began to change, as Greek and Lebanese merchants fanned out across the continent, sometimes establishing churches on their own. Jurisdictional confusion was avoided by a general agreement made in the 1920s that all Orthodox churches in Africa would be included within the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

In the 20th century, the Patriarchate also made efforts to nurture Orthodoxy among Africans living south of the Sahara Desert. These efforts were aided by the Churches in Greece and Cyprus, which in the early 1970s built the Archbishop Makarios Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, to serve all of East Africa.

In the 1920s several native Africans in Kenya discovered the Orthodox Church through their own studies, and gathered followers. In 1946, the Orthodox Christians in Kenya and Uganda were officially received into the Patriarchate of Alexandria. In 1973, four bishops were consecrated for the Orthodox in East Africa, including two of the group’s original leaders—Reuben Spartas Mukasa (1899–1988) and Theodore Nankyamas. Mukasa had first been ordained as a priest in 1932 by a bishop of the non-canonical African Orthodox Church that originated in America in the 1920s under Marcus Garvey.

From 1997 to 2004, Patriarch Petros (Papapetrou) VII (1949–2004) guided the expansion of his Church all across Africa, including into some Arab Muslim countries. His ministry was tragically cut short when he was killed in a helicopter crash that also took the life of the dynamic bishop of Madagascar, Bishop Nektarious. Patriarch Petros was succeeded by Patriarch Theodoros II (Choreftakis) (b. 1954) in 2004. He continued to rule this Patriarchate in 2013.

While the patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa has continued to be a Greek, in 2013 there were several native African bishops, including the dynamic Metropolitan Ieronymos (Muzeeyi) of Mwanza, Tanzania (b. 1963).
The Orthodox Church in Poland received autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1924. This was recognized by the Church of Russia in 1948.

When the Soviet Union annexed eastern Poland after WWII, the Polish Orthodox Church lost about 80% of its membership.

After political freedom came to Poland in 1991, ending its status as a satellite state of the Soviet Union, the new government granted the Orthodox Church equal legal status with the predominant Roman Catholic Church. This law also allowed the Orthodox to reclaim properties previously seized by the Roman Church.

Since 1998 the Polish Church has been led by Metropolitan Sava (Hrycuniak) (b. 1938). In 2013 the membership of the Polish Church was estimated at about 600,000, spread across seven archdioceses, including one in South America centered in Rio de Janeiro.
The Czech Republic and Slovakia

By 1925, there were two dioceses of Orthodox Christians in Czechoslovakia, both under the authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In 1942, during WWII, the especially effective and beloved bishop of the Czech diocese, Bishop Gorazd (Pavlik) (1879–1942), a former Roman Catholic priest, was executed by the German Nazi occupiers, along with hundreds of clergy and laity, and the Czech Orthodox Church was outlawed. Bishop Gorazd was glorified as a New Martyr by the Church in Serbia in 1961.

After WWII, the restored Czech diocese, along with the Diocese of Presov in Slovakia, came under the authority of the Church of Russia. In 1951, the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia was granted autocephaly by the Church of Russia.

This was not recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but after the fall of Communism and the establishment in 1993 of the separate nations of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia was recognized as autocephalous by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This happened in 1998, as a unilateral action taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate solely on its own accord (i.e., without reference to the previous autocephaly granted by the Church of Russia).

In 2013, Metropolitan Christopher (Pulets) (b. 1953) was the ruling hierarch of this Church, having succeeded Metropolitan Nicholas (1927–2006) in 2006. As of 2013 there were 82 parishes in the Czech Republic and 90 in Slovakia.
Albania

The Albanian Church in the motherland was granted autocephaly in 1937 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1939, after Fascist Italy occupied the country, an attempt was made to unite the Albanian Orthodox Church with the Church of Rome, but this failed.

In 1945, with Albania falling to the Communists, the Church was subject to various forms of persecution. Beginning in 1967, the Communist government of Albania began subjecting the Christians and Muslims to the most intense persecution anywhere, as it tried to establish a completely atheistic state and society.

In 1991, after the fall of the Communist regime, the Ecumenical Patriarch appointed Anastasios (Yannoulatos) (b. 1929) as patriarchal exarch. In the next year he was made Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania, along with three other diocesan metropolitans, all of Greek descent. The civil authorities strongly opposed this development for nationalistic reasons. They finally accepted the arrangement after two of the Greek metropolitans were replaced with native-born Albanians, and a synod was formed that officially elected Anastasios as primate.

The Church in Albania has made a miraculous recovery under the energetic, mission- and social-minded leadership of Archbishop Anastasios. He was still leading the Church in 2013.

As of 2013, the Albanian Church had 909 parishes and about 500,000 faithful.
In 1870 the Bulgarians in the Ottoman Empire gained permission from the sultan to have their own churches, to be under an exarchate of the Church of Constantinople. A Church council held in Constantinople two years later condemned this development as the heresy of phyletism (or ethnicism; defined as setting up any church based on the ethnicity of its members). When the Bulgarians refused to yield, they were excommunicated, and the so-called “Bulgarian Schism” began.

Reconciliation was not achieved until 1945, when the Patriarchate of Constantinople recognized an independent Bulgarian Church within the boundaries of the modern Bulgarian nation. In 1953 the Bulgarian Church proclaimed Metropolitan Cyril of Sofia as patriarch, thus restoring the office that was lost in 1393 when the Bulgarians became subject to the Ottoman Turks. Constantinople officially recognized the Patriarchate of Bulgaria in 1961.

Patriarch Maxim (Minkov) (1914–2012) shepherded the Bulgarian flock from 1971 until his death in 2012. With the collapse of the Communist government, in the early 1990s some of the parishes broke away from Patriarch Maxim, accusing him of collaboration with the former regime. They organized themselves into an Alternate Synod. Reconciliation had still not been achieved by 2013.

Patriarch Maxim died in ноябрь of 2012. In феврале of 2013, he was succeeded by Patriarch Neofit (Dimitrov) (b. 1945), who had been the Metropolitan of Ruse (Rousse) in Bulgaria. An expert Church musician and erudite theologian, he was known to have had a close relationship with Patriarch Maxim.

The Bulgarian Church had about 6.5 million members as of 2013, with an additional 1.5 to 2 million scattered in other parts of the world.
The Church in Ukraine, the original heartland of Orthodoxy in the lands of Rus, has been within the Patriarchate of Moscow since 1686, but there was always a yearning among many of the Ukrainian Orthodox to have their own autocephalous Church. When an independent Ukrainian state emerged after WW I, a self-proclaimed independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church was also established, at an assembly in Kiev in 1921. But since no bishops could be found to endorse the movement, the delegates decided to have priests (presbyters) consecrate their own bishops.

The resulting “self-consecrated” Ukrainian hierarchy was never accepted by worldwide Orthodoxy. Yet in the 1920s this non-canonical Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) flourished, with some 2500 priests and 2000 parishes. In the 1930s Stalin completely suppressed this Church. It was revived in the German occupation during WW II, this time with an episcopacy with a legitimate apostolic succession, but after the war Stalin suppressed it again.

Negotiations between the Ukrainian “self-consecrated” jurisdiction and the Patriarchate of Constantinople developed in the 1970s, but without clear and conclusive results.

As an independent nation of Ukraine was again being established as the Iron Curtain was collapsing, the UAOC was again revived, though still without recognition by the other Orthodox Churches worldwide. By 1992, this group had about 1500 parishes, but it was split into two parts. Among the 5500 Ukrainian parishes still under the Moscow Patriarchate, there was also a split, with some of them proclaiming themselves to be independent.

At the same time, the Eastern-rite Greek Catholics (Uniates) in Ukraine had about 2700 parishes. These parishes had been either closed or forced to become Orthodox by Stalin. With the fall of the Soviet regime, they were free to return to Eastern-rite Catholicism. There was still much antagonism on this account in 2013 between the Orthodox and the Eastern-rite Catholics.
According to tradition, the Apostle Andrew was the first missionary to preach Christianity in what is today the Republic of Georgia in the region of the Caucasus Mountains east of the Black Sea. Around the year 330, a woman from Cappadocia in central Asia Minor named Nino (or Nina) came to Georgia as a missionary. Having brought King Mirian and Queen Nana to the Christian Faith, the entire country became Christian. Thus Georgia became the second Christian nation, after Armenia (in about 300). Saint Nina of Georgia is the patronal saint of the nation.

Through the centuries the culture and society of Georgia have been deeply penetrated with Orthodox Christianity, enabling the people to stay firm in their Faith during periods of rule by Zoroastrian Persians and Muslim Arabs, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks. Ten years after Georgia became absorbed into the Russian Empire in 1801, the Church was subordinated to the Russian Church. The Church regained its autocephaly in 1917, but in the Soviet era it experienced drastically severe persecution. From 2455 churches in 1921, there were only 25 left open in 1977, along with only four small monasteries.

Beginning in 1977, the Georgian Church has revived greatly under the leadership of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia (Ghudushauri-Shiolashvili) II (b. 1933), sparked by his open critique of Soviet ideology. By 2003 there were 550 parishes with 1100 clergy, along with 65 monasteries. In 2013 about 80% of the population was Orthodox, with the Church still being led by Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia.

As of 2013, the Church in Georgia had about 3.6 million members, who made up about 84% of the population, according to the 2002 census. The Church has about 33 dioceses, with some 550 parishes served by 730 priests.
In 1918 the Orthodox Church of Finland became the second “established” (State-supported) Church in Finland, after the Lutheran Church. Due to heavy pressure from the State, the Finnish Church is the only Orthodox Church that always celebrates Pascha on the same date as Western Easter.

In 1923 the Church in Finland was granted a fully autonomous status by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, although this was not accepted until 1957 by the Church of Russia, which had missionized the region in the Middle Ages. The local bishops of the Finnish Church are elected by the general assembly of clergy and laity; only the Archbishop’s election must be ratified by the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

After WWII, when eastern Finland (Karelia) was annexed by the Soviet Union, 75% of the Orthodox there fled to the western part of the country, where the government generously helped them restore normal church life. The New Valamo Monastery has become a place of pilgrimage for the whole nation, and in many other ways the small Orthodox Church contributes to the religious and cultural life of Finland.

Archbishop Paavali (Paul) (Olmari) (r. 1960–1987) was an especially beloved primate of the Church of Finland. He was followed by Archbishop John (Rinne) (r. 1987–2001), who was a convert from Lutheranism. He was the first western convert to become the head of any Orthodox Church in the world. Upon his death, Archbishop John was followed by Archbishop Leo (Makkonen) (b. 1948). Archbishop Leo was still leading his Church in 2013.

The Orthodox Church of Finland had about 60,000 members as of 2013, out of a total population of over 5 million.
Western Europe

**Russian Exarchate of Western Europe within the Ecumenical Patriarchate**

During the 1920s, the Moscow Patriarchate demanded a pledge of loyalty to the Soviet regime from the Russian Church in Western Europe. Metropolitan Evlogy (Georgievsky) (1868–1946; r. 1921–1946), appointed by Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, refused to comply, and appealed to Constantinople. Thus, in 1931, the Russian Church in Western Europe became an exarchate of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Many famous Russian churchmen and theologians were in this exarchate led by Metropolitan Evlogy, who in 1925 founded the Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris.

This spiritual and academic institute became the center of Orthodox learning in the West, where such notable men were gathered as Father Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944); Father Vasily Zenkovsky (1881–1962); Bishop Kassian (Bezobrazov) (1892–1965); Archmandrite Cyprian (Kern) (1899–1960); Father Nicholas Afanasiev (1893–1966); Father Georges Florovsky (1893–1979), who became dean of Saint Vladimir’s Seminary in New York and later taught at Holy Cross Theological School in Brookline; and Professor Anton Kartashev (1875–1960), who was the last (de facto) oberprokuror of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, serving under the very short-lived provisional government led by Alexander Kerensky. Kartashev helped organize and served as secretary of the great Russian Church Council held in Moscow in 1917–1918.

Mention also must be made of the Russian priests Father Alexander Elchaninoff (1881–1934) and Father Sergei Chetverikoff (1880–1959). Working in France along with many of the professors of the Saint Sergius Institute, they labored closely with the Russian Student Christian Movement, which did important work among Russian émigrés during this period.

In 1965 the Russian Exarchate of Western Europe was made a vicariate, but in 1999 its status was restored as an exarchate. In recent times the primates of this jurisdiction have been Archbishop George (Tarassov) (r. 1960–1981), Archbishop George (Wagner) (r. 1981–1993), Archbishop Serge (Konovalov) (r. 1993–2003), and Archbishop Gabriel (de Vylder), a Belgian, who was still leading this Church in 2013. Its parishes number about 100, with 40 in France and the others scattered across most of Western Europe and Britain, especially in Scandinavia.

The Moscow Patriarchate continued to operate its exarchate in Western Europe, with Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh (1914–2003) in
London and Archbishop Basil (Krivosheine) (1900–1985) in Brussels as its most well-known leaders. Metropolitan Anthony was nationally recognized in Great Britain for his teaching, writing, and radio broadcasts, while Archbishop Basil was a renowned Patristics scholar.

**Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR)**

Immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution, a group of Russian emigre churchmen, together with leading monarchist laymen, formed themselves into the Russian Orthodox Synod in Exile, also called the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). This group, led by Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky) (1863–1936), established its center in Sremski-Karlovtsy in Serbia, where it received the right to function independently from the local ecclesiastical hierarchy. Because of its location in Sremski-Karlovtsy, the group also received the name Karlovtsy Synod.

In 1930, ROCOR founded Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, which in 2013 was this body’s largest monastery. In 1948, Holy Trinity Seminary opened on the monastery grounds; this institution continued serving in 2013 as ROCOR’s only seminary.

Except for the years from 1937 to 1946, ROCOR and the (Russian) Metropolia in America were not in communion, and both groups remained alienated from the Moscow Patriarchate-until 1970, when the Metropolia was granted autocephaly by Moscow and became the OCA. Under Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) (r. 1964–1985) and Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov) (r. 1986–2001), ROCOR continued to defend and propagate strict anti-ecumenical and anti-New Calendar views.

From 1962 until his death in 1966, the renowned wonderworker and clairvoyant elder Saint John (Maximovitch) (1896–1966) was the ROCOR Archbishop of San Francisco. He was glorified as a saint by ROCOR in 1994.

Under Metropolitan Laurus (Skurla) (r. 2001–2008), relations improved considerably between ROCOR and the Patriarchate of Moscow, leading to full reconciliation in мая of 2007, with ROCOR continuing its independent administrative existence. By 2013, there were still a number of its parishes which had not accepted the reconciliation and hence remained in schism.

**Other Orthodox Dioceses in Western Europe**

In 1922 Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) (1871–1935) established the Diocese of Thyateira to care for all the Greek Orthodox Christians living in Western and Central Europe. Beginning in 1988 and continuing into 2013, this body has been headed by Gregorios (Theocharous), Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, and Exarch of Western Europe, Ireland and Malta. In 2013 this jurisdiction had about 100 parishes in Great
Britain, along with the celebrated Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, founded in 1959 in Essex, England, by Father Sophrony (Sakharov) (1896–1993), the most famous disciple of Saint Silouan of Mount Athos (1866–1938).

About 20 former Anglican parishes joined the Antiochian Orthodox Church in the 1990s. From 2008 to 2012, these parishes were under the care of Metropolitan John (Yazigi) of Western and Central Europe, residing in Paris.

Now known as the Antiochian Archdiocese of Europe, this jurisdiction also has parishes in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, as well as France. By января of 2013, a successor had not yet been appointed to follow Metropolitan John, who was elected to be the new Patriarch of Antioch in декабря of 2012.

Metropolitan Laurus was succeeded in 2008 by Metropolitan Hilarion (Kapral). Born in Alberta, Canada, in 1948, he continued to lead this Church in 2013.

Significant numbers of Serbian and Romanian parishes also existed in Britain and Western Europe in 2013.
Ecumenical Movement
Beginnings in the Early 20th Century

The movement for closer cooperation among the many various Christian groups, which began among Protestants in the 19th century, developed more strongly in the first quarter of the 20th century with the establishment of the International Missionary Council in Edinburgh in 1910. In 1920, Metropolitan Dorotheus, the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, issued an encyclical letter entitled “Unto All Churches of Christ Wheresoever They Be.” Calling for “a closer relationship and a mutual understanding” among all the different Christian groups, this letter sparked the chain of events that eventually led to the formation of the World Council of Churches.
In 1948, the World Council of Churches was formed in Amsterdam from the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements which met in Western Europe in the 1920s and ’30s. Throughout the process there was substantial Orthodox participation, led by the outstanding historian and theologian, Father Georges Florovsky (1893–1979). The Roman Catholic Church refused to take part in the founding of the WCC, along with many conservative Protestant and Pentecostal denominations.

By the time of the second worldwide assembly of the WCC, held in 1954 in Evanston, Illinois, the Orthodox patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch; the autocephalous Church of Greece; the Russian-American Metropolia; and the Romanian Episcopate in America all had become official members of the WCC. During this period, the leaders of the Russian Exarchate in Western Europe, as well as certain Russians who remained faithful to Moscow such as Vladimir Lossky (1903–1958) and Nicolas Zernov (1898–1980), also played a major role in ecumenical activity.

In 1961, at the third worldwide assembly of the WCC in New Delhi, India, the Churches of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland joined the WCC. The Russian Church in the ’60s was extremely active ecumenically, being led in this area by Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) (1929–1978), head of the Office of External Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate. This activity was greatly curtailed in the ’70s, most likely due to the changing political needs of the Soviet government, which continued to dominate official Church policy.

One major highlight for Orthodox involvement in the WCC came in 1982 with the publication of the *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry* (BEM) document. This work shows very substantial Orthodox influence, especially concerning the real presence of the Holy Spirit in baptism, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon.

Nevertheless, in the 1980s and ’90s, it became increasingly difficult for the Orthodox representatives in the WCC to make the voice of Orthodoxy clearly and unambiguously heard, since there were less than 20 Orthodox member Churches, but up to more than 300 Protestant bodies, all with an equal vote. Mounting frustration over this situation was manifested by the Georgian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches dropping their membership in the WCC in 1997 and 1998 respectively, while the Russian Church suspended active membership in 1998.

To address the concerns of the Orthodox, a special Commission was
established at the eighth worldwide assembly of the WCC, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998. At the next worldwide assembly, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006, the Commission’s recommendations were adopted, including a shift to decision-making based on “consensus-building” rather than by “democratic” voting.

The tenth worldwide assembly of the WCC was scheduled to be held in Busan, Korea, in ноября of 2013, to be attended by delegates from each of the 349 Churches that now make up the WCC.

Besides participation in the WCC, many of the Orthodox Churches have participated in various bi-lateral dialogues, such as with the Oriental Orthodox Churches (of Egypt, Ethiopia, Syria, Armenia, and India; sometimes called the Non-Chalcedonian Churches), the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Reformed Churches. In the U.S. there was also a dialogue with Evangelical Christians. These dialogues were still in existence with varying degrees of activity in 2013.

As a whole, the Orthodox continued to stress the top priority of faith and order in the ecumenical dialogue, and to insist on full-fledged unity in the Orthodox Faith as the condition for full Christian unity and sacramental intercommunion. The bishops of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) issued an official encyclical on this issue in 1973.
In the late 19th century and on into the 20th century, many conservative Protestants felt challenged, even shaken, by certain developing strands of thought and action that seemed to undermine traditional faith in the Gospel—especially Darwinism, German Biblical Criticism, and the American philosophical school known as Pragmatism. The Process Philosophy developed by Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) eventually led, in the 1980s, to the radically non-traditional Process Theology, according to which God is in a process of development along with all of Creation, which is held to be co-eternal with God.

In response to the many various forms of Protestant Liberalism and secular humanism/modernism, a movement arose within conservative Protestantism in America in the early 20th century known as Protestant Fundamentalism. The Movement’s specific roots can be traced to the publication and widespread distribution of a series of 90 essays in 12 volumes entitled The Fundamentals. Published between 1910 and 1915, this project was financed by a wealthy California oilman, Lyman Stewart, and his brother Milton. The various authors, some of them quite well-known scholars such as James Orr (1844–1913) of Scotland and Benjamin B. Warfield (1851–1921), drew upon the previous work of the annual Niagara Bible Conferences; the work of the great urban evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837–1899), founder of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago; and the Scofield Reference Bible, annotated by C. I. Scofield (1843–1921) and published by Oxford University Press in 1909.

About a third of these essays defended the Bible against German higher Biblical criticism, another third presented basic traditional Protestant doctrines, and the rest of them included personal testimonies, practical applications of Christian teaching, appeals for missions and evangelism, and attacks on various “isms” such as Liberalism, Modernism, Secular Humanism, and Darwinism. Presented as a united conservative “testimony to the truth,” some three million of the volumes were sent free of charge to Protestant religious workers all over the world.

The World’s Christian Fundamentals Association, organized in Philadelphia in 1919 by a group of interdenominational Protestants, urged the founding of “Bible-based” institutes and colleges to offer a clear alternative to the growing liberalism in the denominational seminaries and colleges. The new schools were to preserve the non-negotiable, foundational, fundamental truths
of Christianity: the Virgin Birth of Christ, His miracles, His sacrificial atoning death, His real resurrection, His Second Coming, the Last Judgment, and the eternal existence of heaven and hell. The famous Dallas Theological Seminary and Bob Jones University were founded in the 1920s as part of this movement.

In 1922, the nationally known liberal Baptist preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969), preached his most famous sermon, entitled “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” in which he challenged their belief in the Virgin Birth, the inerrancy of the Scriptures, and the literal Second Coming of Christ. He argued for the necessity of interdenominational Christian fellowship that is “intellectually hospitable, open-minded, liberty-loving, fair, and tolerant.”

In 1923 J. Gresham Machen (1881–1937), professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary, published *Christianity and Liberalism*, in which he defended Protestant orthodoxy in the face of the growing challenges of liberalism. In this book he argued that liberal Christianity and historic Christianity were two entirely different religions. In 1929 he and other traditionally-minded professors left Princeton Seminary to establish the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. And in 1936 he led a conservative group that left the Presbyterian Church and founded a new denomination-the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.
Protestant Neo-Evangelicalism

In the 1940s, a new generation of young preachers and scholars from within conservative, fundamentalist Protestantism began calling for “a new Fundamentalism” that would reject Fundamentalism’s historic anti-intellectualism, divisiveness, lack of social conscience, and uncritical alliance with political conservatism. Major developments in this rise of Neo-Evangelicalism were the establishment in 1942 of the National Association of Evangelicals; the publication of Carl F. H. Henry’s The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (1947); the founding in 1947 of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California; the founding of Campus Crusade for Christ by Bill Bright (1921–2003) in 1951; the launching in 1955 of the periodical Christianity Today; and the rising popularity of a dynamic young traveling evangelist named Billy Graham (b. 1918).

Neo-Evangelicalism continued strongly in this period, while the increasingly liberal “mainline” Protestant denominations were losing members in greater and greater numbers. Besides Billy Graham, Rex Humbard (1919–2007) and J. Vernon McGee (1904–1988) were leading evangelical preachers, while the traveling evangelists Oral Roberts (1918–2009) and Jimmy Swaggart (b. 1935) preached the Pentecostal message to broader and broader audiences. In general, the evangelicalism of the latter half of the twentieth century and into the 21st century included much more emphasis on involvement in social action work.

The early years of the 21st century saw continuing development of the megachurch movement—the rise of numerous, mostly evangelical and Pentecostal churches each with a stated membership of over 2000—though by 2013 this movement seemed to be tapering off. The mainline denominations continued to decline in membership.
Major denominational mergers among Protestants

While small splinter groups of mostly conservative Protestants continued to be formed throughout the twentieth century, there also were a number of significant mergers of smaller denominations into larger, united Churches. For example, the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 with the merger of the Evangelical Brethren Church with the much larger Methodist Church. In 1939 the northern and southern wings of the Methodist Church had rejoined after about 80 years of separation resulting from the Civil War. The Protestant Methodist Church also participated in this reconciliation in 1939. The Evangelical Brethren Church also resulted from a previous merger, when the Church of the United Brethren and the Evangelical Church joined together in 1946.

In 1957, the United Church of Christ (UCC) was formed through the merger of the Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church. At least four previous mergers had occurred to create these two Churches that merged to form the UCC.

In 1983 the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA) began the merger process with the Presbyterian Church in the US (PCUS) to form the Presbyterian Church (USA), known as the PCUSA.

In 1987, the largest Lutheran body in the U.S., called the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), was formed through an amalgamation of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

The United Church of Canada, the largest Protestant body in Canada, was formed in 1925 as a blend of Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, and Evangelical United Brethren Churches. The United Church of Canada took its final shape in 1968, when the Canada Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren joined it.

Mention must also be made of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), first begun in 1962. This has been a very serious, ongoing effort to forge at least some degree of unity among nine mainline Protestant Churches: the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ (UCC), the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and the International Council of Christian Churches.
In the 1980s, rather than continuing to press for full integration of the ecclesiastical structures of these denominations, the COCU movement shifted to the more realistic goals of intercommunion, mutual recognition of ordination, and increased joint fellowship and service. In 1989 a definitive plan, called “Churches in Covenant Communion: The Church of Christ Uniting,” was offered along this line for consideration by the nine member Churches. In January of 2002, this plan resulted in the establishment of full intercommunion among the nine member Churches, in a relationship that was officially named Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).
The Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement

The most dramatic development within Protestantism in the early years of the twentieth century was the rise of Pentecostalism. This movement placed great emphasis on the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 12.8–10), especially including speaking in unknown languages (tongues).

Pentecostalism arose most directly out of the Holiness Movement within American Methodism, with the emphasis by America’s first major female evangelist and theologian Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874) upon the spiritual experience of “entire sanctification” which she called the “Baptism in the Spirit” (but without speaking in tongues). This experience was also emphasized among Methodists by the National Campmeeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness, founded in 1867.

William E. Boardman (1810–1886), a Presbyterian minister, published *The Higher Christian Life* in 1859, thus spreading to non-Methodists the idea of sanctification as a second work of grace, subsequent to the experience of justification by faith.

The early Pentecostal leaders, such as Benjamin Hardin Irwin (1854–?); founder of the Fire Baptized Holiness Association in 1898 in Anderson, South Carolina); Charles Harrison Mason (1866–1961; co-founder of the Church of God in Christ); Charles Fox Parham (1873–1929; founder of the Bethel Bible School near Topeka, Kansas); and William J. Seymour (1870–1922; initiator of the world famous, bi-racial Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles from 1906 to 1909), all emphasized a third distinct experience, after justification and sanctification—that of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire,” accompanied by speaking in unknown tongues.

The largest Pentecostal body in America was the Assemblies of God, formed in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914. This group claimed nearly three million members in the U.S. in 2013, and some sixty million worldwide. Most Pentecostals in the U.S., however, were scattered among over three hundred denominations, or are members of innumerable completely independent congregations.

Beginning in 1959, the Charismatic Movement took a more modernized, more sophisticated, more middle-class based, and less legalistic form of Pentecostalism into nearly all of the major Protestant denominations. This movement began with Reverend Dennis Bennett (1917–1991), an Episcopalian priest in California, who received the “Baptism in the Spirit” in a private home meeting, and who was dismissed from his parish after preaching about his
experience. He then took over a dying parish in Seattle, Washington, which he rejuvenated through his emphasis on the “Baptism of the Spirit” and the operation of the nine gifts of the Spirit. The movement quickly spread to other mainline denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, which it suddenly swept into in 1967 beginning at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, and very shortly thereafter at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.

Oral Roberts (1918–2009), raised in the Pentecostal Holiness denomination, greatly broadened his base of support and his scope of ministry when he became an ordained United Methodist preacher in 1970. Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma, founded by Oral Roberts in 1963, was the world’s first Charismatic Christian college. A Graduate School of Theology was added in 1976.

Demos Shakarian (1913–1993), a wealthy Armenian-American dairyman from California, together with Oral Roberts, founded in 1951 the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International, which spread quickly among classic Pentecostals and later among Charismatic Christian businessmen. Beginning in the 1960s, this group, with its monthly meetings of businessmen and the Voice magazine published monthly, has served to a large extent as “the organizational cohesion for the Charismatic Movement.” In 2013 it had about 7,000 local chapters in 142 countries around the world. Since 1993, its international president has been Richard Shakarian, son of Demos Shakarian.
The dynamic leadership of Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903; r. 1878–1903) brought the Roman Catholic Church into the 20th century with a new and strong commitment to work in the midst of contemporary issues and struggles, rather than tending to romanticize the past (especially the 18th century, up until the French Revolution) as the bygone days of glory for the Church. Pope Leo and his successors (Pope Pius X; r. 1903–1914; Pope Benedict XV; r. 1914–1922; and Pope Pius XI; r. 1922–1939) urged Catholics to get involved in social action and political affairs. Some Catholic political parties and labor unions were formed, as well as religious orders dedicated to social work.

In response to intellectualist criticisms of the Church, Pope Leo and his successors affirmed Thomism as the official Roman Catholic doctrinal standard, with its assertion that there is no opposition between religious faith and empirical science.

During WW II the Papacy, under Pope Pius XII (1876–1958; r. 1939–1958), maintained relations with all the warring nations. Pope Pius was later criticized for not speaking out against the Nazi atrocities committed against the Jews. It was also Pope Pius XII who proclaimed the doctrine of the bodily Assumption of Mary as dogma, in 1950.
In 1959, Pope John XXIII (r. 1958–1963) announced the convocation of an “ecumenical council” of the Roman Catholic Church. This council, called Vatican II, was opened in 1962 by Pope John. Upon his death in 1963, Pope Paul VI (r. 1963–1978) followed him. The Council continued under Pope Paul’s leadership until it finished its work in 1965. Attended by nearly all the Roman Catholic bishops worldwide, and with many non-Catholic observers also in attendance, the Vatican II Council published many official documents concerning all aspects of Roman Catholic life.

Vatican II precipitated great changes in the Roman Church, and the post-conciliar period has been one of much confusion and conflict. All Roman Catholic Churches everywhere were strongly urged to begin celebrating the mass and the other services in the local vernacular languages rather than always in Latin. From the Orthodox point of view, this was a very long overdue change. But this development also precipitated new, modern translations of the services which, in the opinion of many, often tended to diminish the grandeur and doctrinal integrity of the original Latin services.

While Vatican II fostered a greater emphasis on the conciliar nature of the Church yet still being under Papal authority, in some quarters there was radical questioning of the Papal system of ecclesiastical authority. The Vatican II Council also prompted the enthusiastic entrance of many Roman Catholics into ecumenical activity.
Pope John Paul II (1920–2005; r. 1978–2005) was the first Polish pope, and the first non-Italian pope since the 1520s. He was the most well-traveled pope ever, visiting 129 nations during his long tenure. This, along with his prolific writings and compelling presence, raised the prestige of the Papacy worldwide. He maintained a generally conservative stance in the face of Liberation Theology, which emphasized social work to and political—even revolutionary—involvement with the poor and oppressed, and he opposed the priesthood being open to married men (in most cases), or to women, or to active homosexuals. He also is credited with helping to bring down the Communist government in his native Poland in 1989.
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (b. 1927), former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (from 1981 to 2005; this is the Papacy’s office charged with protecting and defending Christian dogma), was elected to succeed Pope John Paul II in 2005. He took the name Benedict XVI. By 2013 Pope Benedict had established himself as a worthy successor to John Paul II, having continued his predecessor’s basic approach to the Christian life, and to the responsibilities of the Papal office.

In at least one way, however, he showed himself to be more conservative than John Paul II. Whereas under John Paul II, the old Latin (Tridentine) Mass was only allowed upon petitioning the local bishop, Pope Benedict in 2007 declared that any local priest has the authority to hold a Tridentine Mass. He also declared that generally speaking, the Latin Mass should be made available whenever it is requested.

Like John Paul II, Pope Benedict made significant overtures to the Orthodox Church. But also like his predecessor, he did not suggest that there might be a substantial reconsideration of the nature of Papal authority, including the Papacy’s claims to worldwide jurisdiction over all Christians. This issue remains the most fundamental obstacle to any possible reconciliation between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the future.
Pope Francis

In февраля of 2013, Pope Benedict XVI unexpectedly stepped down from the Papacy, citing his declining health. He was succeeded in the next month by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio (b. 1936), an Argentine, who was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998 to 2013. He becomes the 266th Pope in the history of the Roman episcopacy, and the first ever from the Western Hemisphere. Even though a Jesuit, the new pope took the name Francis, after Saint Francis of Assisi (1181–1226), the founder of the Franciscan Order.

Pope Francis was welcomed with great optimism and excitement. He is known for his simple way of life and his concern for the poor, while also remaining firm in his support of traditional Roman Catholic theological and moral teachings.
Resources


Ware, Timothy (Father Kallistos). The Orthodox Church. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1964.

History Questions and Reflections for Discussion

Introduction

When Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko of blessed memory was in the process of revising his series The Orthodox Faith, he requested the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America, which had originally published the series, to create questions to accompany the texts of each volume. The following questions are the fulfillment of his request for the Church History volume of the series.

There are questions for each chapter of this volume, for each century from the first to the twentieth. They can be used to review the material in the chapter, and page numbers follow each question to show where it came from.

A separate document gives numbered answers. We would suggest that a discussion leader, after the group has read a chapter, give each participant a copy of the questions for that chapter. They can then answer them together. The leader can have a copy of the answer pages for that chapter to check answers if need be (though most of the answers should easily be found in the chapter text.) A reader going through the book on his or her own can use the questions and answers in whatever way is most helpful.

Some of the answers also offer points for reflection. Father Thomas always liked to reflect further on things as he taught, and we hope readers will want to do the same. Most of all we hope that many people will use and benefit from the revised edition of Father Thomas’ wonderful gift to the Church, his series The Orthodox Faith.

Department of Christian Education
Orthodox Church in America
First century
How many of the 27 writings selected by the Church to be the New Testament were written in the first century? In what language were they written? (p 20)
Did most of the early Christians come from rural and impoverished backgrounds? (p 20)
Did the first-century Church require non-Jewish members (Gentiles) to follow the Mosaic Law? (p 21)
Second century
Roman law declared, “It is not lawful to be a Christian.” Why was this so? (p 23)
In what 3 ways did Saint Irenaeus distinguish true Christian Churches
What are some features of Christian worship as described by Saint Justin Martyr (155 AD) that continue to be part of our liturgical life today? (p 30)

Third century
- Who were the “lapsed” and how did the Church care for them? (p 32)
- How did Origen view pagan philosophy? (p 36)
- In what ways is Hippolytus’ description of baptism similar to present practice? (pp 39–40)

Fourth century
- How did Constantine’s dream or vision influence him to issue the Edict of Milan? (p 44)
- How did Constantine form what we know as the weekend? (pp 46–47)
- What was the main teaching of Arius/Arianism? (p 49)
- Why did Saint Basil emphasize the communal form of monasticism? (p 53)
- Did monastics reject or turn their backs on the world as evil? (pp 56–57)

Fifth century
- Who was Saint Pulcheria and how did she influence Orthodox worship? (pp 61–62)
- What was the teaching of the Monophysites? (p 63)
- How did Saint Augustine’s view of marital relations differ from the traditional view of marriage and sexual relations reflected at the Council of Nicaea? (p 66)

Sixth century
- What is the Code of Justinian? (p 72)
- Who created the “Monastic Rule” that would guide monasticism in the Roman Catholic Church for the next 500 years? (p 75)
- Why did the Spanish Church add the words “and the Son” (the phrase known as the *filioque*) to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed? (pp 76–77)

Seventh century
- How did Saint Maximus the Confessor respond to the popular ideas called Monothelitism and Monoenergism? (p 82)
- What significant ruling about clergy marriage came at the Trullo/Quinisext Council? (p 84)
- How does Canon 102 of the Quinisext Council direct the pastor to deal with a penitent? (p 85)
- How did the Arab Conquest affect efforts by Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians to discuss and resolve their differences? (p 90)
What was the major objection of the Iconoclasts to the veneration of icons, and how did Saint John of Damascus address it in his treatises called *On the Holy Images*? (pp 92–93)

How did the emperor Charlemagne have an impact on the understanding of icon veneration and the inclusion of the *filioque* in the Creed? (p 101)

Ninth century

What do Empress Irene (8th century) and Empress Theodora (9th century) have in common? (p 104)

Why did Prince Rastislav seek Byzantine missionaries to bring the Christian faith to his Moravian people? (pp 105–106)

What contributions did the Studion Monastery make to our order of worship? (p 112)

Tenth century

What changes concerning marriage came about in the 10th century? (p 117)

Why was it significant that the Archbishop of Bulgaria was granted the title of Patriarch? (p 118)

What similar experience did Saint Paul and Saint Vladimir have? (pp 120–121)

Eleventh century

Other than the *filioque*, what issues enlarged the divide between the Eastern and Western Churches in the 11th century? (p 124)

What dramatic, decisive event took place in 1054 in Constantinople? (pp 125–126)

What was the original purpose of the Crusades, as called for by Pope Urban? (p 128)

What are “Passion-Bearers” and how were Saints Boris and Gleb examples? (p 129)

Twelfth century

What official proclamation concerning Mount Athos was made during the 12th century? (p 133)

With what name was the Serbian ruler Stephan Nemanya glorified as a saint by the Church, and why? (p 135)

Thirteenth century

How did the Fourth Crusade deepen the split between the Eastern and Western Churches? (p 139)

For what purpose did Saint Sava travel through the Middle East, Europe and the Holy Land? (pp 141–142)

Why did Saint Alexander Nevsky consider the Swedes and Germans a
greater threat to the Orthodox Church than the Tatars? (p 143)
What 3 orders of Western monasticism were founded in this century? (pp 144–145)

Fourteenth century
What did Saint Gregory Palamas teach about the possibility for human beings to know God? (p 148)
How did Saint John Cantakuzenos want Byzantine theologians to prepare for dialog with Roman Catholic theologians? (p 150)
Why were the Orthodox Church’s headquarters moved from Kiev to Moscow? (p 152)
How did Saint Sergius of Radonezh influence Russian monasticism? (p 154)

Fifteenth century
The Council of Florence was an attempt to unite the Eastern and Western Churches. What were some conditions of this unity? (pp 161–162)
What is the Rum Milet? (p 164)
What is the Possessors and Non-Possessors controversy? (p 167–168)

Sixteenth century
What 2 events probably turned Tsar Ivan IV (“the Terrible”) toward certain cruel tendencies he had as a youth?
What is the basic Protestant doctrine of salvation? (pp 178–179)
How were the claims of the Council of Trent in opposition to the teachings of Saint Gregory Palamas? (p 179)
Who was Saint Philothei of Athens? (p 182)

Seventeenth century
Who were the Old Believers? (p 189–190)
Why did 2 Church councils condemn the Confession of Faith written by Cyril Lukaris? (pp 192–193)
What was Deism, and why did it emerge? (p 194)

Eighteenth century
Why did Saint Cosmas Aitolos undertake 3 apostolic journeys? (p 197–198)
What is the Philokalia and what spiritual quality did Saint Gregory of Sinai and Saint Gregory Palamas emphasize in their writings about this work? (pp 200–201)
What did Saint Tikhon appreciate in the Pietist writings of the Christian West? (p 207)
What was the attitude of the Russian Orthodox missionaries toward the native Alaskan culture and religion? (p 209)
Nineteenth century
Upon what 2 monks did Dostoevsky model his character Elder Zossima in his masterwork The Brothers Karamazov? (p 215)

What did Saint Seraphim emphasize in conversing with Nicholas Motovilov? (p 216)

In what 2 languages did Saint Innocent write his Indication of the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven? (p 222)

What “first” took place in San Francisco, CA in 1892? (p 226)

How did Father Raphael Hawaweeny contribute to the growth of the Orthodox faith? (p 227)

What is the “Gospel of Wealth” and with whom is it closely associated? (p 232)

What controversial decisions were made by the Roman Catholic Church in the second half of the 19th century? (p 233)

Twentieth century (into the early Twenty-First)
Saint Tikhon gave his last sermon in the United States in 1907. What did he say was the duty of lay people as well as pastors and missionaries? (p 241)

At the 8th All-American Sobor (Council) in 1950, Archbishop (later Metropolitan) Leonty made a statement about the Church in America that was fulfilled 20 years later. What did he say? (p 246)

What were some of the ways Archbishop Athenagoras helped the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America advance and grow? (p 257)

How did Saint Nicholas of Zicha, a priest of the Church in Serbia, spend the final five years of his life? (p 259)

Bishop Polycarp was the first bishop of the new Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, elected in 1935. Besides healing internal disputes and laying the foundations for several Church organizations, what center did he establish? (p 262)

In what way was Syrian-born Metropolitan Antony (Bashir) a “pioneer” and to what did he give outspoken support? (p 266)

In 1929 a group of Ukrainians who had been Byzantine-Rite Catholics formed the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America. What was the significant reason for their leaving Roman Catholicism? (p 267)

In 1940 Bishop Orestes (Chornock) led in the formation of a seminary for the Carpatho-Russian Diocese. What is its name, and where is it located? (p 270)

Father (later Archbishop) Theophan Noli conducted the Divine Liturgy in a certain language for the first time anywhere in the world. What language was it, and how did this “first” come about? (p 271)
Why were the years 1949 and 1976 notable for Bulgarian Orthodox immigrants to the United States? (p 273)

What organizations are OCEC, SCOBA, IOCC and OCMC? (pp 277–278)
An assembly of canonical Orthodox bishops of North and Central America first met in New York City in 2010. They agreed to meet annually to prepare for what event? (p 279)

Why might restoring the Patriarchate be called the “most momentous act” of the Council of Moscow in 1917–18? (pp 281–282)

How did the fall of Communism in 1991 change previous decades of “administrative persecution” of the Russian Church? (p 289)

What official declaration was made by Patriarch Alexei in 1970 concerning the Japanese Orthodox Church, and who was glorified as a saint at this time? (pp 289–290)

How did the Greco-Turkish War (1919–23) and the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) affect the population of the area overseen by the Patriarchate of Constantinople? (pp 290–291)

Why is the present Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew known as the “Green Patriarch?” (p 294)

Who are the two recently glorified saints of the Serbian Church? (p 295)

The Romanian Church was harshly persecuted by the Communists. What fact slightly moderated the suffering of that Church, as compared to the Church in Russia? (p 295)

According to the 2011 census, what percentage of the Romanian population is Orthodox? (p 296)

What are two notable activities of the Orthodox Youth Movement, which brought new vitality to the Church in Syria and Lebanon? (p 296)

Patriarch Ignatius Hazim was a member of the Orthodox Youth Movement. What institution did he found in 1988? (p 296)

What Patriarchate encompasses all the Orthodox churches in Africa? (p 297)

In 1991 the Polish government granted the Orthodox Church equal status with the predominant Roman Catholic Church. What did this enable the Orthodox Church to do? (p 299)

What was the legal status of the Czech Orthodox Church during the Nazi occupation? (p 299)

What leader helped the severely persecuted Albanian Church make a remarkable recovery when Communism fell in 1991? (p 300)

In 1953 the Bulgarian Church restored something that had been lost since 1393. What was it? (p 301)
What change came about for Eastern-Rite Catholics in Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet regime? (p 302)

Harshly persecuted in Soviet times, the Georgian Church has recently had excellent leaders. What percentage of the present Georgian population is Orthodox? (p 303)

What are the 2 established (State-sponsored) Churches in Finland? (p 304)

Archbishop John (Rinne) was head of the Finnish Orthodox Church from 1987 to 2001. What was noteworthy about him? (p 304)

What is Saint Sergius Institute? (p 305)

What group has sometimes been known as the Karlovtsy Synod? (p 306)

What significant reconciliation was reached in 2007? (p 307)

What well-known Orthodox monastery is located in Essex, England? (pp 307–308)

What is the significance of the letter written by Metropolitan Dorotheus of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, entitled “Unto All Churches of Christendom Wheresoever They Be”? (p 308)

What does the Orthodox Church as a whole see as a condition for sacramental communion with other Christian groups? (p 310)

Billy Graham was a leading member of the younger generation of preachers and scholars calling for a “new fundamentalism.” What did they object to in historic fundamentalism? (p 313)

What is a main emphasis of Pentecostalism? (p 315)

What new emphasis did the popes of the early 20th century encourage in the Roman Catholic Church? (p 318)

Both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI made overtures of reconciliation to the Orthodox Church. What remains as the most basic obstacle? (p 320)

What was unique about Pope Francis’ background? (p 320)
History Answers and Reflections for Discussion

First Century
All were written in the first century and all were written in Greek, which was the predominant language of the Roman Empire. This is why the Orthodox Church continues to use the Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint.

No, the Church developed largely in urban areas and from among the middle classes. Some members, like Joanna the wife of Chuza, had prominent places in society.

No. The Council of Jerusalem, in about 49 AD, decided that Gentile converts would not be subject to Mosaic Law. This Council is the prototype for all Church Councils that followed.

Second Century
The Christians, though they dutifully prayed for the civil authorities, refused to honor the emperor as a god, which was required of inhabitants of the Empire.

All true Churches share these things: They (a) hold the same basic doctrines, (b) trace their origins back to one of the original apostles with their line of bishops coming from that apostle, (c) consider only the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to be divinely inspired.

Gathering on Sunday, reading from Scripture, prayers of thanksgiving, distribution of the Eucharist and collection for the needy.

Third Century
The “lapsed” were those Christians who denied Christ under threat of torture and persecution. Though some felt that the Church could and should never excuse this, most bishops came to realize that the Church must allow for the possibility of heartfelt repentance even for the worst of sins.

Origen believed that whatever partial truths were discerned by pagan philosophers pointed to and were fulfilled in the truth of the Christian faith.

Water, affirmations of personal belief, anointing with oil, new clothing, sealing with consecrated oil.

Fourth Century
Constantine had a great military victory after of a vision of the Cross of Christ in the sky with the words “In this sign conquer.” His belief in the Christian God deepened, and he issued the edict, giving Christians freedom to practice their faith.

He made Sunday a holiday so that people could more easily attend church, and along with the established Saturday Sabbath it became the weekend. (For
Though some think of Sunday as the sabbath, Orthodoxy sees every Sunday as the day of Resurrection, the Lord’s Day. Saturday is the sabbath, the seventh day, on which God rested.)

Arius taught that the Son of God is a created being and not the eternal and ever-existing second Person of the Trinity. The First Ecumenical Council, called by Constantine at Nicaea, confirmed that the Word and Son of God is uncreated, ever-existent, and fully divine. (For reflection: The divinity of Christ was not an “idea” imposed on the Church by Constantine for political reasons, as the book The Da Vinci Code claims. Christ’s divinity was stated as fact in the Gospels and in the letters of Saint Paul, the latter being written no more than 30 years after the Lord’s death. See, for example, John 1: 1, 14 and Philippians 2: 9–11.)

Saint Basil said that “man is by nature a social creature.”

No, they didn’t reject the world, but chose to serve God and humanity by praying constantly for the whole world, and by offering spiritual counsel.

Fifth Century

Saint Pulcheria was the elder sister of Emperor Theodosius II. She became empress after her brother’s death and championed the veneration of Mary, the Mother of God, using the traditional title of Theotokos.

The Monophysites rejected the Council of Chalcedon and taught that Christ has one rather than two (united) natures.

Saint Augustine wrote that sexual relations cannot take place without the sin of lust. This attitude is the basis of the Roman Church’s insistence on clerical celibacy.

Sixth Century

Emperor Justinian oversaw a massive codification of the laws of the Empire. It was known as the Code of Justinian, and in it he declared his Christian faith.

Saint Benedict of Nursia.

The addition was meant to emphasize Christ’s divinity to the invading Visigoths, who were Arians, denying Christ’s full divinity. But it distorts the traditional understanding that the Son and Holy Spirit both proceed from the Father, as stated in the Nicene Creed.

Seventh Century

Saint Maximus insisted that Jesus Christ’s divine nature and human nature each had their own will and energy rather than one united will and one united energy. Christ had the same fullness of human will, energy, action, operation and power as every other human being has. Only by fully assuming these human elements could He save them. This view was upheld at the Sixth
Ecumenical Council.

The Council affirmed that entering holy orders should not dissolve their marriages, as the Roman Church was requiring.

Canon 102 states: “The pastor must neither cast the sheep down to the depths of despair, nor loosen the bridle thus leading them to a dissolute way of life.” In other words the pastor must employ both discernment and mercy when dealing with a penitent.

The Arab conquest isolated the non-Chalcedonian Churches, thus preventing attempts to meet with the Chalcedonian Churches.

Eighth Century

The iconoclasts considered icons to be idols. Saint John of Damascus countered that in former times God could not be depicted, having neither form nor body, but since the Incarnation-God being seen in the flesh-we can depict the God whom we see.

The emperor objected to icon veneration based on a faulty Latin translation of the documents from the Second Council of Nicaea, which gave the mistaken impression that icons were to be adored. He had grown up with the *filioque* and used his position to promulgate the addition of the *filioque* in the Western Church.

Ninth Century

Both women ended waves of persecution against those who venerated icons. The Church’s celebration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy began with the huge public procession, led by Empress Saint Theodora, restoring the icons to their proper place in Orthodox worship.

Prince Rastislav realized that the faith would be most meaningful to the people if presented in their native language rather than in the Latin of the Frankish missionaries who were already at work in his land.

The monks of the Studion Monastery developed service books for Great Lent and Pascha, as well as the liturgical typicon, which continues to be the normative order of worship for the entire Orthodox Church.

Tenth Century

The Rite of Crowning began to be served apart from the Divine Liturgy; legal marriage was established as a civil entity apart from the sacramental marriage of the Church; no fourth marriages would be granted.

This was the first Patriarchate to be established beyond the original five of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

When Saint Vladimir was baptized he was cured of a serious eye disease, just as St. Paul’s sight was restored when he was baptized by Ananias. *(For reflection: How do St. Paul’s words “For we walk by faith and not by sight” in*
2Corinthians 5 relate to these experiences of restored physical sight?

Eleventh Century
Different languages reflected differing world views; differing approaches to theology; papal claims of authority over all the Churches of Christendom.
(For reflection: What are some steps that could be taken to restore unity?)
Mutual excommunication between Cardinal Humbert, Pope Leo’s delegate, and Michael, the Patriarch of Constantinople.
To liberate the Holy Land from the Muslim Arabs.
Passion Bearers maintain their faith while enduring undeserved suffering. Saints Boris and Gleb refused to fight their elder brother in a power struggle and thereby saved the lives of many on both sides of the dispute.

Twelfth Century
The Emperor proclaimed Mount Athos as the center of Orthodox monasticism.
He was given the name Saint Simeon the Myrrh-Flowing because after his death his relics began exuding myrrh.
The Archbishop wrote to protest the excessive claims of primacy by the Papal See.

Thirteenth Century
Constantinople was brutally sacked during the first three days of Holy Week in 1204.
He wished to share the story of the Christianization of the Serbian people with other Christians, but also impressed many Muslim leaders with his generosity and care for the poor.
While the Tatars offered a certain amount of freedom and protection to the Orthodox Church, the Swedes and Germans would have imposed their Roman Catholic faith on the Orthodox.
The Franciscan, Dominican, and Carmelite orders.

Fourteenth Century
Saint Gregory taught that God’s Essence or Super-Essence is unknowable. But the divine actions, operations or Energies of God are communicated to people by divine grace and are open to human knowledge and experience. This is the meaning of the phrase “partakers of the Divine nature” in 2 Peter 1:4.
He encouraged Byzantine theologians to learn Latin and study the Scholastic writings emerging from Western Europe.
Kievan Rus had been nearly devastated by the Tatars, while the Muscovite state was growing and getting stronger.
Russian monasticism grew dramatically during the time of Saint Sergius of Radonezh, producing a tremendous and long-lasting effect on the culture and
piety of Russia. (For reflection: What personal qualities of Saint Sergius contributed to the effect he had on Russian culture and piety?)

Fifteenth Century

The conditions included acceptance of papal authority, the *filioque*, the allowance of leavened as well as unleavened bread in the Eucharist and a statement of the Western concept of Purgatory. Saint Mark of Ephesus courageously resisted this union, leading to its eventual rejection by the entire Orthodox Church.

The Christians under Ottoman rule were a “tolerated minority” with certain privileges. The Patriarch was the ethnarch, the ruler of an ethnic minority. This was the *Rum Milet* or Roman people-a “nation within a nation.” Even with limited privileges the Christians were subject to many humiliating restrictions as a captive people.

The controversy resulted from concern about the possession of property and material goods by monastic communities. Possessors felt that monastic communities cold own large estates and have a close relationship with the State. Non-Possessors held to a more semi-eremitic life, favoring small sketes and minimal involvement with the State.

Sixteenth Century

Jealous courtiers convinced Ivan to dismiss Father Sylvester, who had given him good guidance. In addition, his beloved wife died, having possibly been poisoned.

The Protestant position was founded on the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone, with salvation understood as a gift from God given at one moment rather than being an ongoing process of cooperation between God and His people. (For reflection: How do the verses I Corinthians 1: 18 and Philippians 2: 13 relate to the idea of salvation being a cooperative process?)

The Council of Trent supported the Latin doctrine that human beings can have no real, direct communion, fellowship or relationship with God. Grace, in this understanding, is a “created effect” or “created effort.” The Orthodox understanding, championed by Saint Gregory Palamas, is that through the uncreated Energies of God, human beings are called and enabled to have real, direct communion with Him.

Saint Philothei was a member of a prominent Greek family. As a widow, and then a nun, she built two monasteries, a hospital and a hostel. She also sheltered women escaping Muslim oppressors. She later died from injuries inflicted by those oppressors.

Seventeenth Century

The Old Believers were members of the Russian Orthodox Church who
reacted to the attempts of Patriarch Nikon to alter the practices of the Russian Church and bring them in line with those of the Greek Church. Without the Old Believers’ efforts some forms of ancient Russian iconography and liturgical chant would have been lost.

Lukaris believed that the oppressed Church would be rejuvenated by taking on attitudes and practices of Protestantism. His Confession of Faith was nearly saturated with Calvinist thought.

Deism emerged as a result of the devastation and displacement caused by the Thirty Years War, fought between Roman Catholics and Protestants, largely in Germany. Disillusioned with creedal religion, many people turned to Deism, a non-creedal generic form of natural religion. In the following years its popularity would continue to grow in Europe and America.

Eighteenth Century

He wanted to rally the discouraged Greeks and Albanians who were suffering under Turkish oppression and to strengthen them in their Orthodox faith.

The Philokalia is the highly-regarded compilation of selected spiritual writings from the 4th through the 15th centuries. Both saints emphasized stillness as a spiritual quality.

He appreciated their call for a meaningful relationship with the Living God, which he found more compatible than the intellectualism of Tridentine Catholicism and Calvinistic Protestantism.

They were careful to honor the local culture and religion as much as possible, especially because the natives’ basic worldview was already oriented towards the sacramental, tradition-based worldview of Orthodoxy. (For reflection: One example of honoring the local culture was that Saint Innocent learned several native languages and devised an alphabet. He then could translate holy texts into words the people readily understood, rather than insisting that they learn and be taught only in Russian. What effect might his efforts have had on their embrace of the faith?)

Nineteenth Century

Elder Zossima is modeled on Saint Amvrossy and Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk.

The conversation was about the joy that comes upon a person through the fullness of the Holy Spirit’s presence. But this joy is only a foretaste of heavenly joy.

In Aleut and Russian.

Father Deacon Sebastian Dabovich, a Serb, was the first American-born man ordained to the Orthodox priesthood in North America. Later he replaced
Saint Alexis Toth as priest of Saint Mary’s Cathedral in Minneapolis.

Syrian by birth, Father Raphael was invited by the Syrian Orthodox in New York City to come to the US and be their priest. This was the beginning of 20 years of fruitful ministry in North America. He was consecrated as bishop of Brooklyn in the first Orthodox episcopal consecration in the New World. He founded 20 parishes and was glorified as a saint in 2000.

The “Gospel of Wealth” claims that God wills for a few people to gain immense wealth so they can use it for the public good. It’s closely associated with Andrew Carnegie.

In 1854 the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary; in 1870 the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope.

Twentieth Century (into the early Twenty-First)

Saint Tikhon said the duty was to “share our spiritual richness, truth, light and joy with others who do not have these blessings.” He added that the Church, according to Saint Paul, is a body, and every member takes part in the life of the body. *(For reflection: How well and effectively are we in the Church carrying out Saint Tikhon’s message today?)*

He said, “We will follow our line-the foundation of an administratively self-governing Orthodox Church in America.” On марта 31, 1970, a signed agreement stated that the Russian Church would recognize the Metropolia as the fully autocephalous Orthodox Church in America. In апреля of that year, Patriarch Alexei I signed the official tomos.

Archbishop Athenagoras established the women’s charitable organization Philoptochos, bolstered the Archdiocese’s financial foundation, started the Orthodox Observer newspaper, and established Saint Basil’s Teachers College in Garrison, New York. He also hoped to start a pan-Orthodox seminary, but this didn’t work out. Instead he established Holy Cross Theological School in Massachusetts.

Saint Nikolai spent those years teaching, in English, at Saint Tikhon’s Seminary.

Bishop Polycarp established the Vatra in Michigan, headquarters of the Episcopate.

Metropolitan Antony was a pioneer in the use of English in the Liturgy and gave outspoken support to unity among all Orthodox in the New World.

The Roman Catholic Church’s refusal to allow a married priesthood.

Christ the Savior Seminary is in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Archbishop Theophan conducted the Liturgy in Albanian for the first time.

He had translated it, and several other services, into Albanian. Notably, he also called strongly for Orthodox unity.
In 1949 the Russian Church in Exile established parishes for these immigrants; in 1976 most of these parishes joined the Orthodox Church in America.

OEC is the Orthodox Christian Education Commission, which produces pan-Orthodox curriculum for church schools. SCOBA is the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America. IOCC is International Orthodox Christian Charities. OCMC is the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

They would prepare for the future Great and Holy Council.

There had not been a Patriarchate since the 1700’s, when Emperor Peter I, known as Peter the Great, abolished the position. Thus the restoration was a return to the Church’s traditional pattern of life and organization. The Council’s important decisions included having lay participation in decisions, having sermons given in the vernacular, internal autonomy for monasteries, providing stability by having bishops stay in one diocese for life, and encouragement of women’s membership on parish councils.

Millions of people returned to the Church, monasteries and churches were reopened and refurbished, and the Church regained its status as a legal entity.

The Japanese Church was declared autonomous, or self-governing. Archbishop Nikolai Kasatkin, the found of the Church in Japan, was glorified as a saint.

The Greek defeat led many Greeks to emigrate, some to the New World. The Treaty of Lausanne stipulated that Turkey deport as many Greeks as possible to Greece and the Greek islands, and that Greece deport as many Turks as possible to Turkey. This was seen as a way of reducing the recurring animosity between the two peoples, but in the forced marches many lives were lost.

Patriarch Bartholomew is deeply and publicly involved in ecumenical issues.

Father Justin Popovich and Father Simeon Popovich.

The Romanian government, unlike that of Soviet Russia, was not determined to create an atheist state and society.

86%. Romania is the most thoroughly Orthodox nation in the world.

Book publishing and social outreach are two of the group’s notable activities.

The University of Balamand, which also oversees the training of priests at the Saint John of Damascus School of Theology.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria.

The Orthodox Church was able to retrieve properties previously seized by the Roman Catholic Church.
It was outlawed.

Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos has done remarkable work in building up the Orthodox Church in Albania.

The office of Patriarch of the Bulgarian Church, which had been lost when the Bulgarians became subject to the Ottoman Turks, was restored.

They became free to return to Eastern-Rite Catholicism, after having had their parishes closed, or having been forced to become Orthodox by the Soviet government under Joseph Stalin. (For reflection: This is a reminder that not only the Orthodox suffered under the Soviet regime. The Church’s prayers are for the whole world because all human beings share both suffering and joy.)

84%.

The Lutheran Church and the much smaller Orthodox Church.

As a convert from Lutheranism, Archbishop John was the first Western convert to become the head of any Orthodox Church in the world. (For reflection: What did Archbishop John find in Orthodox Christianity that led him to embrace not only the faith but a very responsible position?)

Founded in 1925, Saint Sergius Theological Institute in Paris was both a spiritual and academic institute. It became the center of Orthodox learning in the West.

The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, or ROCOR.

The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia was reconciled with the Patriarchate of Moscow.

The Monastery of Saint John the Baptist. It was founded by Father Sophrony Sakharov, the most famous disciple of Saint Silouan of Mount Athos.

The letter called for closer understanding among all Christian groups, and was a spark to events leading to the formation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948.

Sacramental communion would be based on full-fledged unity in the Orthodox faith.

They objected to its anti-intellectualism, divisiveness, lack of social conscience, and unquestioning alliance with political conservatism.

Pentecostalism stresses the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially speaking in unknown languages or tongues. (For reflection: The Orthodox perspective on speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, is that while it is not ruled out as a gift of the Holy Spirit, it is also not considered one of the more important gifts. The Church has always relied on the words of Saint Paul: “...in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (I Corinthians 14: 18.))

They urged involvement in contemporary social action and political
affairs.

The most basic obstacle is the papacy’s claim of worldwide jurisdiction over all Christians.

Pope Francis was the first pope to come from the Western Hemisphere.
Volume IV – Spirituality
Orthodox Spirituality
Spirituality in the Orthodox Church means the everyday activity of life in communion with God. The term spirituality refers not merely to the activity of man’s spirit alone, his mind, heart and soul, but it refers as well to the whole of man’s life as inspired and guided by the Spirit of God. Every act of a Christian must be a spiritual act. Every thought must be spiritual, every word, every deed, every activity of the body, every action of the person. This means that all that a person thinks, says and does must be inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit so that the will of God the Father might be accomplished as revealed and taught by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

.. *whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (1Cor 10.31).

Doing all things to the glory of God is the meaning and substance of life for a human being. This “doing” is what Christian spirituality is about.
Christian spirituality is centered in God; in fact, its very goal is communion with God, which is attainable through the accomplishment of His will. To be what God wants us to be and to do what God want us to do is the sole meaning of our human existence. The fulfillment of the prayer “Thy will be done” is the heart and soul of all spiritual effort and activity.

In the Old Testament law, it is written:

*I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy* (Lev 11:44).

In the New Testament, the first letter of Saint Peter refers to this fundamental command of God.

*.?.?. as He who called you is holy, be holy yourself in all your conduct; since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1Pet 1:16).*

That human beings should be holy by sharing in the happiness of God Himself is the meaning of union with God. All are “called to be saints” (Rom 1.7) by becoming “partakers of the nature of God” (2Pet 1.1). This is what Jesus meant when He said in Sermon on the Mount, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5.48).

The teaching that man must be holy and perfect like God Himself through the accomplishment of the will of God is the central teaching of the Orthodox Christian faith. This teaching has been stated in many different ways in the Orthodox spiritual tradition. Saint Maximus the Confessor (7th c.) said it this way: “Man is called to become by divine grace all that God Himself is by nature.” This means very simply that God wills and helps His creatures to be like He is, and that is the purpose of their being and life. As God is holy, man must be holy. As God is perfect, man must be perfect, pure, merciful, patient, kind, gentle, free, self-determining, ever-existing, and always, for eternity, the absolute superabundant realization of everything good in inexhaustible fullness and richness .?.?. so man must be this way as well, ever growing and developing in divine perfection and virtue for all eternity by the will and power of God Himself. The perfection of man is his growth in the unending perfection of God.
Christian spirituality is centered in Christ. Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God who was born as a man of the Virgin Mary in order to give man eternal life in communion with God His Father.

In Jesus Christ “the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2.9). In Him is the “fullness” of “grace and truth” (Jn 1.16–17) and “all the fullness of God” (Col 1.19). When one sees and knows Jesus, one sees and knows God the Father (Jn 8.19, 14.7–9). When one is in communion with Jesus, one is in abiding union with God (cf. Jn 17, Eph 2, Rom 8, 1Jn 1).

The goal of human life is to be continually “in Christ.” When one is “in Christ,” according to Saint John, one does God’s will and cannot sin.

You know that He [Jesus] appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has either seen Him or knows Him. He who does right is righteous, as He is righteous. No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil; whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother (1Jn 3.4–10).

Jesus Christ is “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14.6). He speaks the words of God. He does the work of God. The person who obeys Christ and follows His way and does what He does, loves God and accomplishes His will. To do this is the essence of spiritual life. Jesus has come that we may be like Him and do in our own lives, by His grace, what He Himself has done.

Truly, truly I say to you, He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father (Jn 14.12).
The Holy Spirit

A person can abide in Christ, accomplish His commandments and be in communion with God the Father only by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in his life. Spiritual life is life in and by the Holy Spirit of God.

If you love Me [says Christ], you will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you (Jn 14.15–17).

When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine (Jn 16.12–15).

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent into the world through Christ so that human persons can fulfill God’s will in their lives and be like Christ. The spiritual fathers of the Orthodox Church say that the Holy Spirit makes people to be “christs,” that is, the “anointed” children of God. This also is the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament writings:

But you have been anointed by the Holy One and you know all things. and the unction [chrisma] you have received from Him abides in you. His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His own Spirit (1Jn 2.20–27, 3.24, 4.13).

This teaching of Saint John is the same teaching as that of Saint Paul.

God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through His Spirit which dwells in you. for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rom 5.5, 8.1ff; cf. 1Cor 2, 6, 12–14; Gal 5).

It is the classical teaching of the Orthodox Church, made popular in recent times by Saint Seraphim of Sarov (19th c.), that the very essence of Christian spiritual life, the very essence of life itself, is the “acquisition of the Holy
Spirit of God.” Without the Holy Spirit, there is no true life for man.

*In spite of our sinfulness, in spite of the darkness surrounding our souls, the Grace of the Holy Spirit, conferred by baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, still shines in our hearts with the inextinguishable light of Christ.?.?. and when the sinner turns to the way of repentance the light smooths away every trace of the sins committed, clothing the former sinner in the garments of incorruption, spun of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. It is this acquisition of the Holy Spirit about which I have been speaking?.?.?.* (Saint Seraphim of Sarov, *Conversation with Motovilov*).
Man

Man, according to the scriptures, is created “in the likeness of God” (Gen 1:26–27). To be like God, through the gift of God, is the essence of man’s being and life. In the scriptures it says that God breathed into man, the “breath [or spirit] of life” (Gen 2:7). This divine teaching has given rise to the understanding in the Orthodox Church that man cannot be truly human, truly himself, without the Spirit of God. Thus Saint Irenaeus (3rd c.) said in his well-known saying, often quoted by Orthodox authors, that “man is body, soul, and Holy Spirit.” This means that for man to fulfil himself as created in the image and likeness of God—that is, to be like Christ who is the perfect, divine, and uncreated Image of God—man must be the temple of God’s Spirit. If man is not the temple of God’s Spirit, then the only alternative is that he is the temple of the evil spirit. There is no middle way. Man is either in an unending process of life and growth in union with God by the Holy Spirit, or else he is an unending process of decomposition and death by returning to the dust of nothingness out of which he was formed, by the destructive power of the devil. This is how the Orthodox spiritual tradition interprets the “two ways” of the Mosaic law:

*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse, therefore choose life that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord, obeying His voice and cleaving to Him, for that means life to you* (Dt 30:19–20).

It is this same teaching that the Apostle Paul gives in his doctrine of the “two laws” at work in the life of man.

*For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. .?.%. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. .%. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace* (Rom 7:14–8.17).

Every human being is confronted with these two possibilities, ultimately the only two possibilities of human existence. Either a person chooses life by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit—the “abundant” and “eternal life” given by God in creation and salvation through Jesus Christ—or the person chooses death. The whole pathos of human existence consists in this choice, whether a person is aware of it or not. Christian spiritual life depends on the conscious choice of the “way of life.” To “choose life” and to walk in the “way
of life” is the way that man shows himself to be in the image and likeness of God.

For by the hands of the Father, that is by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not merely a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. For the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul, receiving the Spirit of the Father and the fleshly nature which was also moulded after the image of God. The man becomes spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God.

If in a man the Spirit is not united to the soul, this man is imperfect. He remains animal and carnal. He continues to have the image of God in his flesh, but he does not receive the divine likeness through the Holy Spirit (Saint Irenaeus, 2nd c., Against Heresies).
Sin

Sin, according to the scriptures is “lawlessness” and “wrongdoing” (1Jn 3.4, 5.17). To do wrong and to be unrighteous is to sin. In the Greek language the word sin originally meant “missing the mark,” that is, moving in the wrong direction, toward the wrong aims and goals. It means choosing and going in the way of death, and not the way of life.

There are many scriptural expressions for sin, all of which presuppose a primordial rightness and goodness. The word fall indicates a movement down and away from an original high and lofty state. The word stain reveals that there was once an original purity that has been defiled. The word transgression means a movement against that which is primarily right. The word guilt reveals prior innocence. The words estrangement and alienation indicate that one was first “at home,” living in a sound and wholesome condition. The word deviation means that one has gone off his original way.

There are no words for sin which do not reveal in their very utterance that sin is an unnatural state of man, a condition brought about by the destruction, distortion, and loss of something good which was originally present. Every sin and wickedness exists only because man’s being and life are naturally positive and good. Every evil and sin act only as “parasites” on that which is primarily perfect and whole. Thus, in the Orthodox tradition, sin is not considered to be a normal and natural part of human being and life. To be human and to be a sinner is contradictory. Rather, to be truly human is to be righteous, pure, truthful, and good.

Spiritual life, in this sense, consists of only one thing: not to sin. Not to sin is to be like God and His Son Jesus Christ. It is the goal of human life.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that Christ appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has either seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as He is righteous. He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. By this it may be seen who are children of God, and who are children of the devil; whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother (1Jn 3.4–10).

Not to sin is the goal of human life. But in fact all people do sin. It is for this reason that the possibility to be freed from sin and to overcome sin comes
through the saving work of Christ, who forgives the sins of the world.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. ...by this we may be sure that we are in Him: he who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked (1Jn 1.8–2.6).
The Devil

The scriptures and the lives of God’s saints bear witness to the existence of the devil. The devil is a fallen bodiless spirit, an angel created by God for His service and praise. Together with the devil are his hosts of wicked angelic powers who have rebelled against the goodness of God and seek to pervert and destroy God’s good creation.

How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Day Star, son of Dawn!
And the angels which did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day?.?.?. (Jude 6, cf. 2Pet 2.4).

.?.?. the devil and satan, the deceiver of the world-he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him (Rev 12.9).

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus speaks of the devil whom He called “prince of this world” (Jn 12.31, 14.30, 16.11) in this way:

He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn?8.44).

The devil and his multitude of evil spirits, “the principalities .?.?. the powers .?.?. the world rulers of this present darkness .?.?. the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places” (Eph 6.12) war against man seeking to destroy him by ensnaring him in sin.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1Pet 5.8).

Christ has destroyed the power of the devil. He came into the world precisely for this reason. If one is “in Christ” he is led out of temptation and delivered from the evil one. If one is in Christ, the evil, who is also called Satan, which means the Adversary who “disguises himself as an angel of light” (2Cor 11.14), cannot deceive or harm him. To be victorious over the alluring and deceiving temptations of the devil is the goal of spiritual life.
In the scriptures and in the spiritual tradition of the Church, the expression “the world” has two different meanings. In the first, “the world” is the expression of all of God’s creation. As such it is the product of God’s goodness and the object of His love.

According to the scriptures, God creates the world and all that is in it. He creates the heavens and the earth as the declaration of His glory (Ps 19.1). He creates all living things, crowned by the formation of man in His own image and likeness. According to the scriptural record, God called His creation “good... very good” (Gen 1.12, 18, 25, 31). And according to the Gospel, Christ has come as the “savior of the world” (Lk 2.11, Jn 4.42).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (Jn 3.16–17).

In addition to this positive scriptural understanding of “the world,” there is also a negative use of the expression which has caused confusion about the proper understanding of Christian faith and life. This negative use of the term “the world” is presented not as God’s object of love, but as creation in rebellion against God. Thus Christ spoke:

If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Jn 15.18–19; cf. Jas 4.4).

Saint John continues to speak of the enmity between Christ and “the world” in his first letter where he gives the following commandment to Christians.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1Jn 2.15–17).

The same ambiguity as that concerning “the world” exists with the expression “the flesh.” In some instances, the term flesh is used in a positive sense meaning the fullness of human existence, man himself. Thus it is written about the incarnation of Christ that the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1.14). It is also written that on the day of
Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit “on all flesh” (Acts 2.17, Joel 2.28). The word “flesh” in this sense carries no negative meaning at all. Rather it is the affirmation of the positive character of created material and physical being, exemplified by Christ who “became flesh” and commands men to “eat of my flesh” (Jn 6.53–56).

In the scriptures again, particularly in the writings of Saint Paul, the expression “the flesh” is used in the same negative way as “the world.” It is employed as the catchword for godless and unspiritual existence.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s Law, indeed it cannot please God (Rom 8.5–8).

Here, for Saint Paul, the term “flesh” is not a synonym for man’s body which is good, and the apostle makes this perfectly clear in his writings.

The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. … Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? … Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1Cor 6.13–20).

In the spiritual tradition of the Church the ambiguity about “the world” and “the flesh” is treated carefully. It has been explained without confusion by the spiritual teachers and proclaimed clearly in the Church’s sacraments. God’s good creation is not evil. Material existence is not evil. Man’s fleshly body is not evil. Only sinful passions and lusts are evil. They are evil because they treat the created world and the fleshly body of man as ends in themselves, as objects of idolatrous adoration and godless desire. They are evil because, as Saint Augustine puts it, they express the “worship of the creature rather than the Creator.”

By nature the soul is without sinful passion. Passions are something added to the soul by its fault. The natural state of the soul is luminous and pure through absorbing the divine light.

The state contrary to nature is found in passionate men who serve passions.

When you hear that it is necessary to withdraw from the world to purify yourself from what is of the world, you must understand the term world. “World” is a collective name embracing what are called passions. When we speak of passions collectively, we call them the world. The world is carnal life and minding of the flesh (Saint Isaac of Syria, 6th c., Spiritual Training).
The Church

The new and abundant life given by God to man through Christ and the Holy Spirit in creation and redemption is the life of the Christian Church. The life of the Church is the life originally willed for man and his world by God. It is the life of God Himself originally given in creation. It is the spiritual life.

One should not think of the spiritual life of the Church as some particularly special kind of “religious life” different from life itself as we have received it in our creation by God. There are not “two lives,” one “natural” and one “religious.” There is only one life that is real, genuine and true. It is life with God, the life of the Church. Any other life is not life at all: it is the way of death.

What differentiates the life of the Church from the life of “this world,” also called life “according to the flesh,” is only evil and sin. Everything positive is created life, which God has called “good .?.?. very good,” is what is saved and sanctified in the life of the Church. Only falsehood and wickedness are excluded, certainly not creation itself.

In the Orthodox tradition, the Church is called the Kingdom of God on earth, “the re-creation of the world” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, 4th c., On the Canticles). In the New Testament it is also called the “new creation” (2Cor. 5.17), the Body and Bride of Christ Himself (Rom 12.5; 1Cor 12.27; Eph 5.23ff; Rev 21.1ff).

God has put all things under the feet of Christ and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (1Tim 3.15).

The Apostle Paul also refers to “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1Tim 3.15).

Genuine life, true and real life in perfection and abundance, is found only in the Church of Christ. People who are not formally in the Church are living truly and genuinely only to the extent that they follow the law of God “written on their hearts” by the Spirit of God in creation (Rom 1.12–16), which is the same law clearly revealed and given in Christ and the Church. And those people who are formally members of the Church are living truly and genuinely only to the extent that they actually live the life of the Church. For the sad fact exists that one may be formally a member of the Church and still live according to the law of the flesh, the law of sin and death, and not of Christ. The spiritual life, therefore, consists in actually living the life of the Church.
The Sacraments

The spiritual life of the Church is given to men in the sacraments. The sacraments are called the holy mysteries, and the entire life of the Church is considered to be mystical and sacramental.

The new life in Christ, the genuine life of God, is given to man in baptism, the new birth and new creation of man in Christ by the Spirit of God. In baptism the person who rejects Satan and all of his evil works and accepts Christ and the gift of eternal life, dies and rises again with Jesus to “newness of life.”

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6.3–11; cf. also Col 2–3, Gal 3).

The new life in Christ Jesus given in baptism—a perpetually dying and rising daily with Jesus—is made possible in man by “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” in the mystery of chrismation (cf. 2Cor 1.22, Eph 1.13). Chrismation follows baptism, and is essentially connected to it, as the Holy Spirit comes with Christ, Pentecost comes with Easter, and life comes with birth. There is no new life in the new humanity of divine childhood in Jesus without the life-creating Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit in chrismation who makes possible and powerful the spiritual life into which men are born in Christian baptism.

The new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church is nourished and sustained in the mystery of the eucharist-Holy Communion. The “mystical supper of the Son of God” is the center of the spiritual life. For Christians there is no life at all without it:

I am the bread of life. If any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so He who eats Me will live because of Me. he who eats this bread will live forever (Jn 6.32ff).
When a person falls away from the life of God in the Church, he or she may be reunited to Christ by the mystery of reconciliation through penitential confession. The abundant mercy of God abides in the Church by the presence of Christ, and the Lord who “desires not the death of a sinner” but that he might “turn from his wickedness and live” (Ez 18.32, 33.14) will forgive those who come to Him in repentance (cf. Jn 6.37). Continual repentance for sin is a central element in the spiritual life of men who choose life in God, but continue, inevitably, to sin.

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us (1Jn 1.8).*

In this life still bound by the sin of the world, man inevitably suffers and dies. His outward nature is wasting away while his new nature in Christ is being perfected. The mystery of the anointing of man’s suffering soul and body is the sanctification of man’s “perishable nature” that his “mortal nature” might “put on immortality” (1Cor 15.51ff). Through holy unction a person is given the grace of the Spirit to make his suffering and death an act of victory and life.

*If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. .?.? (2Tim 2.11; cf. Jas 4.13ff).*

In this life as well, God has created human beings in His divine image and likeness as male and female. The union in love between one man and one woman forever is the created expression of the perfect love of God for His creatures. The mystery of marriage is the human image of the “great mystery” of “Christ and the Church” (Eph 6.21–33). In the sacrament of marriage, human love is made eternal and divine by the grace of Christ’s Spirit. There is no parting in death, but fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.

All of the sacramental mysteries of the Church are effected in the Church through the sacrament of the ordained priesthood. The bishops and priests are the ministers within the community who guarantee the reality of the mystical life of the Church in all times and places. Through the ordained ministers within the communion of the Church, Christ Himself is present and powerful in the fullness of His saving activity.
God’s gift of eternal life in Christ and the Holy Spirit is the Kingdom of God. Jesus has brought the Kingdom of God to the world through the Spirit in the Church. Spiritual life is life-already now-in the Kingdom of God.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also (Lk 12.32–34).

To live already now in the Kingdom of God is to live in freedom from sin and death in the gracious life of Christ and the Church. A person who has died to sin with Christ in baptism and has been sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in chrismation and who participates in Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist is already a member of the Kingdom of God.

.?.?. for through Christ we have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph 2.18–22).

The Church is called the Kingdom of God on earth; and the presence and power of the Kingdom is identified with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who abides in the faithful bringing to them the presence and power of God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ.

Thus the Apostle Paul has said, “The Kingdom of God is .?.?. righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men” (Rom 14.17–18). And Saint Gregory of Nyssa (4th c.) citing the earlier tradition of Christians said simply: “The Kingdom of God is the Holy Spirit.?.?. The Kingdom of the Father and the Uction of the Son.” It has always been understood in the spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church that to the measure with which one is filled with the Spirit of God, to that same measure he is united with Christ and is in communion with the Father, becoming His child and a member of His Kingdom. Thus it is the teaching that the “acquisition of the Holy Spirit” in “seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Mt 6.33) is the sole purpose and content of man’s spiritual life. It is for this, and this alone, that man has been created by
Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other. Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. Those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal 5.16–21).
The Beatitudes
The Beatitudes

In the Gospel writings, the beatitudes introduce the teachings of Jesus and are traditionally considered to contain the most concise summary of the spiritual life of man. In the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, the beatitudes are chanted when the Book of the Gospels is carried in solemn procession to the sanctuary to be proclaimed as the Word of God to the faithful. Thus it is the clear teaching of the Gospel and the Church that one enters into the mysteries of Christ and the Kingdom of God only by way of following the Lord’s teachings in the beatitudes.

*And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:*

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for your reward is great in heaven.”

(Mt 5.2–12; cf. Lk 6.20–26)
“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5.3). This first beatitude is the fundamental condition for all man’s spiritual progress and growth. Before everything else, if a person wants to live the life of God, he must be poor in spirit.

To be poor in spirit is to recognize clearly that one has nothing which he has not received from God, that one is nothing except by the grace of God. This blessed poverty is called “spiritual” in Saint Matthew’s Gospel because, first of all, it is an attitude of mind and heart, a conviction of the soul. It is the condition of man in total emptiness and openness before God, primarily in relation to the things of the Spirit, that is, to understanding and insight, to will and desire.

To be poor in spirit is to be devoid of all pride and trust in the power of one’s own spirit. It is to be freed from all reliance on one’s own ideas, opinions and desires. It is to be liberated from the “vain imaginations” of one’s own heart (Jer 23.17, Rom 1.21). For as the holy Virgin Mary, the perfect model of poverty in spirit, has sung in her magnificent song:

*God has shown strength with His arm,*
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And has exalted the humble and meek,
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty (Lk 1.51–54).

Jesus Himself was poor, not only in body but in spirit. Not only was the Lord a poor man, without “place to lay His head” (Mt 8.20) but His physical poverty was the direct result of His perfect poverty of spirit.

*Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.* I can do nothing on my own authority (Jn 5.19, 30).

If a person wishes to embark on the spiritual life, he must abandon all things and follow Christ in poverty of spirit. To be poor in spirit is simply to be wholly set free from the sinful lusts of this world.

*If anyone loves this world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever* (1Jn 2.15–17).

The first revelation of the will of God is that His creatures must be poor in
spirit. The violation of this spiritual attitude is the original sin and the source of all sorrows.
Blessed Mourning

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5.4). This is the second beatitude, and it logically follows the first. If one is poor in spirit, liberated from the spiritual and physical lusts of this world, he will necessarily mourn and weep over the conditions of man.

The poor in spirit know how foolish and sad it is to be caught by sin, to be victimized by falsehood and evil, to be wedded to destruction and death. Viewing the realities of this world without God, the world captivated by its own vain imaginations, the world thinking itself rich and prosperous and needing nothing but in fact “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3.17), the spiritually poor man can only mourn. Knowing what could be from God, and what is actually with God, he will mourn and weep like the prophets over sinful Israel, like Jesus over the corpse of Lazarus and the city of Jerusalem (Jn 11.35, Mt 23.37), like Jesus Himself in the garden, confronted by His own cup of suffering which was so senseless and cruel.

Blessed mourning for sin is essential to the spiritual life. But in the victory of Christ, it is not morbid or joyless. On the contrary, it is filled with hope, with gladness and with light.

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you .?.?. (2?Cor 7.9–11).

In his writings, Saint John Climacus (7th c.) follows this teaching of Saint Paul. It is the classical teaching of the Christian spiritual tradition. The end of blessed mourning is not despondency or remorse, it is repentance and salvation. It is the “mourning which causes joy.”

Mourning, according to God, is sadness of soul and the disposition of a sorrowing heart which ever madly seeks for that which it thirsts?.?.?.

Mourning is a golden spur in a soul which is stripped of all attachment and all ties?.?.?.

Keep a firm hold of the blessed joy-grief of holy mourning and do not stop working at it until it raises you high above the things of this world and presents you pure to Christ.

The fruit of morbid mourning is vain glory and self-esteem, but the fruit of blessed mourning is comfort.

He who is clothed in blessed and grace-given mourning .?.?. knows the
spiritual laughter of the soul.

My friends, God does not ask or desire that man should mourn from sorrow of heart, but rather out of love for Him he should rejoice with spiritual laughter.

When I consider the actual nature of compunction, I am amazed at how that which is called mourning and grief should contain joy and gladness within it, like honey in the comb (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 7).

“So do not make a passion the remedy against passion,” says Saint Nilus of Sinai, “est you anger .?.?. Him who granted you this blessing [of mourning and tears]. For in shedding tears for their sins many people forget the purpose of tears, and getting into a frenzy, they go astray” (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., Texts on Prayer).
Meekness

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5.5). Meekness is an essential possession of the spiritual person. Jesus Himself was meek.

All things have been delivered to me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Mt 11.27–30).

The apostles of Christ taught meekness. Saint Paul mentions it in all his writings and Saint James insists upon it.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as it comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits. (Jas 3.13–17).

To be meek means to be gentle and kind, to be empty of all selfishness and earthly ambition. It means, in a word, never to return evil for evil, but always in everything to overcome evil by good (cf. Rom 12.14–21).

Meekness means to distrust and reject every thought and action of external coercion and violence, which in any case can never produce fruitful, genuine and lasting results.

Meekness is to have the firm and calm conviction that the good is more powerful than evil, and that the good ultimately is always victorious.

To refer once more to Saint John Climacus:

Meekness is an unchangeable state of mind which remains the same in honor and dishonor. Meekness is the rock overlooking the sea of irritability which breaks all the waves that dash against it, remaining itself unmoved. Meekness is the buttress of patience, the mother of love and the foundation of wisdom, for it is said, “The Lord will teach the meek His way” (Ps 24.9). It prepares the forgiveness of sins; it is boldness in prayer, an abode of the Holy Spirit. “But to whom shall I look,” says the Lord, “to him who is meek and quiet and trembles at my word” (Is 66.2). In meek hearts the Lord finds rest, but a turbulent soul is the seat of the devil (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 24).
“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Mt 5.6). Strictly speaking, this beatitude of the Lord blesses, not the righteous, but the seekers of righteousness. It is those who are hungry and thirsty for what is just and good who receive the blessings of God, who also says:

Do not be anxious, saying “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we wear?” For the heathen seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and its righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (Mt 6.31–33).

Man’s life consists in seeking, in hungering and in thirsting for righteousness. This is the spiritual teaching of the scriptures and the saints. The satisfaction and rest comes from God, but is a satisfaction and rest which itself always and for eternity becomes the basis of a new hunger and thirst. This is not in contradiction to Christ’s teaching that “he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (Jn 6.35). It is rather the affirmation that the “inquiet” of man’s heart, as Saint Augustine (5th c.) has said, is created “toward God,” and that the “rest” which is found in Him is itself, as Saint Maximus (7th c.) has said, an “ever-dynamic rest,” always growing and developing in ever greater union with the uncontrollable and inexhaustible richness and fullness of divine being and life.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa (4th c.) said it this way:

.?.?. the human mind .?.?. constantly flowing and dispersing to whatever pleases the senses .?.?. will never have any notable force in its progress towards the True Good [i.e. God].

For it is impossible for our human nature ever to stop moving; it has been made of its Creator ever to keep changing. Hence when we prevent it from using its energy on trifles, and keep it on all sides from doing what it should not, it must necessarily move in a straight path towards truth (On Virginity).

Thus, in a certain sense, it [our humanity] is constantly being created, ever changing for the better in its growth in perfection; along these lines no limit can be envisaged, nor can its progressive growth in perfection be limited by any term. In this way, in its state of perfection, no matter how great and perfect it may be, it is merely the beginning of a greater and superior stage (Commentary on the Song of Songs).

This spiritual teaching means that the truly spiritual person will not merely move from unrighteousness to righteousness, but will move for all
eternity in God to ever-greater righteousness and perfection, The hunger and thirst in this way is an essential characteristic of the living soul of the righteous person; it is the essential dynamic of spiritual life. The Apostle Paul has given this very doctrine:

..?. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded?.?.?. (Phil 3.13–16).

And we all, with unveiled faces, reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the spirit (2Cor 3.18).

There is no satisfaction for man’s spirit but God. It is the satisfaction of perpetual growth in union with God. To hunger and thirst for God, “for the living God” (Ps 42.2) is spiritual life. To be filled and contented with anything else is death for the soul.
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5.7). To be merciful is to be like God, for “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (Ps 103.8).

The Lord passed before Moses and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin??.?” (Ex 34.6–7). This also is the teaching of Christ in His Sermon on the Mount:

”.?.?. love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Lk 6.35–36). (Exodus 34:6–7)

To be merciful does not mean to justify falsehood and sin. It does not mean to be tolerant of foolishness and evil. It does not mean to overlook injustice and iniquity. God is not this way, and does not do this.

To be merciful means to have compassion on evil-doers and to sympathize with those who are caught in the bonds of sin. It means to forego every self-righteousness and every self-justification in comparison with others. It means to refuse to condemn whose who do wrong, but to forgive those who harm and destroy, both themselves and others. It is to say with utter seriousness, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Mt 6.12).

According to Jesus, the spiritual person will be merciful because he himself is in need of mercy. The spiritual person will be merciful because he knows that he himself is a sinful man in need of God’s mercy and help. There is no one without sin, no one who can claim righteousness before God. If one claims to have no sin, says Saint John, he is a liar, and makes God a liar as well (1Jn 1.10,2.4). The spiritual person, because he is in union with God, acknowledges his sin and his need for forgiveness from God and from men. He cannot condemn others for he knows, but for the grace of Christ, that he himself stands unworthy and condemned.

If Thou O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayst be feared (Ps 130.3–4).

The merciful person is merciful toward himself as well as others. This does not mean that he makes light of his sins and takes God’s forgiveness for granted. It means rather that he does not plague himself with neurotic guilt and remorse, surrendering to sinful scruples which are the death of the soul. It means that he trusts in the loving-kindness of God and knows, as Saint Paul has
said, that no works of his own will ever deliver him from the need of God’s mercy and love.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this not your own doing, it is the gift of God-not because of works, lest any man boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph 2.8–10).

Thus it is the continual reception of the mercy of God and nothing else which empowers the soul to good works. And it is only the merciful who attain mercy from God. For all eternity man will be at the disposal of God’s mercy. At whatever stage of development he will reach, man’s prayer will always remain the central prayer of the Church: Lord have mercy on me a sinner! The holier the person, the greater is his sense of sinful unworthiness, the stronger is his dependence on the mercy of God, and the more he is merciful to the weaknesses of others.
“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5.8). Purity of heart means to be free of all wicked motivations and sinful intentions, and to have no unworthy interests and self-seeking desires. It means to be totally free from anything which blinds and darkens the mind so that it cannot see things clearly and honestly. It means to be totally liberated from anything which captivates and darkens the soul so that it cannot reflect and shine with the pure light of God.

In another place in His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord has said:

*The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* (Mt 7.22–23).

The pure in heart are those whose eyes are sound. The pure in heart are those who can say with the psalmist:

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Thou hast said, “Seek ye My face!” My heart says to Thee, “Thy face, O Lord, do I seek.” Hide not Thy face from me (Ps 27).*

To seek but one thing, the face of the Lord, is purity of heart. To will but one thing, the light of the Lord in the depth of one’s soul, is to live in utter purity. It is for this reason that Christ’s mother Mary is the image of perfect purity. The holy Virgin is “all-pure” not merely because of her bodily continence, but also because of her spiritual soundness. Her heart was pure. Her mind was sane. Her soul magnified the Lord. Her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. Her body was His spiritual temple. For this reason God regarded her humility and did great things for her. For this reason all generations call her blessed. For this reason she is “full of grace” and the Lord is with her. For she, in her simple purity, could say to God: “Let it be to me according to Your
In the spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church, purity of heart is an essential condition for union with God. When man’s heart is purified from all evil, it naturally shines with the light of God, since God dwells in the soul. This is the doctrine of the saints as expressed by Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

The man who purifies the eye of his soul will enjoy an immediate vision of God. It is the same lesson taught by the Word [i.e. Christ] when He said, “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Lk 17:21).

This teaches us that the man who purifies his heart of every passionate impulse will see the image of the divine nature in his own beauty.

You must then wash away, by a life of virtue, the dirt which has clung to your heart like plaster, and then your divine beauty will once again shine forth (On the Beatitudes, Sermon 6).

The Apostle Paul has said the same thing in his pastoral letters.

To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and faithless nothing is pure; their minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed (Titus 1.15–16).

If anyone purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel of noble use, consecrated and useful to the master. Ready for any good work. So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart (2Tim 2.21–22).
“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Mt 5.9).

Christ, the “prince of peace,” (Is 9.6) gives the peace of God to those who believe in Him.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (Jn 14.27).

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace (Jn 16.33).

This is the peace which St Paul lists as one of the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Gal 5.22); the “peace of God which passes all understanding” (Phil 4.7). It is peace understood as “the liberation from passions, which cannot be attained without the action of the Holy Spirit” (Saint Mark the Ascetic, 4th c., Two Centuries on Spiritual Law). The peacemakers are those who have the peace of God in themselves and spread this peace to those around them. This peace, first of all, is the freedom from all anxiety and fear. It is the peace of those who are not anxious about their lives, about what they shall eat and drink, about what they shall wear (cf. Mt 6.25–33). It is the peace with which men’s hearts are not troubled nor afraid of anything (cf. Jn 14.27). It is the peace which exists in men even in the most terrible of human situations, in suffering and in death. It is the peace which is in the one who can say:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? As it is written, “For Thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered” (Ps 44.22).

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8.35–39).

The inner peace of God is not the absence of external conflict. The peacemakers of God are not those who are freed from terrific struggles in life, or those who can cause the absence and disappearance of strife among men. Christ Himself did not do this. On the contrary, the Prince of Peace Himself, the Lord who gives strength and peace to His people (Ps 29.11), has claimed that He Himself will be the cause of much conflict among men.

Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a
daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for My sake will find it (Mt 10.34–39; Lk 12.49–53).

The blessed peacemaker is the one who bears witness to Christ and takes up his cross and loses his life for the Lord without fear or anxiety. He is the one who enters every human conflict until the end of time, fortified by the peace of God. He is the one who does not deny the Lord or compromise His truth by the exercise of violence, but bears witness by his own peace in the midst of conflict, the peace which is “not as the world gives” (Jn 14.27). Thus, the peacemaker does not provoke others to irritation or violence, except by the truth and love of his life, and leaves all vengeance to the Lord. He is the one who follows Jesus in overcoming evil only by good.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourself, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Lev 19.18, Deut 32.35). No, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head” (Prov 25.21–22). Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12.18–21).

In making peace, the peacemaker himself is a son of God like the Lord Jesus Himself, who paradoxically and inevitably is the cause of much scandal and strife (cf. Lk 2.34–35, 7.23, 21.18).
“Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake” (Mt 5.10–11). In saying these words, Christ promised that those who would follow Him would certainly be persecuted. This is a central prediction of the Gospel and an essential condition of those who accept it.

Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecute Me, they will persecute you; if they have kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all this they will do to you on My account, because they do not know Him who sent Me (Jn 15.20–21).

True Christians will always be persecuted for Christ’s sake. They will be persecuted with Christ and like Christ, for the truth that they speak and the good that they do. The persecutions may not always be physical, but they will always be spiritual and psychological. They will always be mindless, unjust, violent, and “without cause” (Ps 69.4, Jn 15.25). They will always be painful and the cause of much suffering. For “indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2Tim 3.12).

A person embarking on the spiritual life must expect persecution and slander. He must be wary, however, of any false persecution complex, and must be absolutely certain that the suffering he meets is solely “for righteousness’ sake” and not because of his own weaknesses and sins. The apostolic scripture makes this precise warning:

For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it, you take it patiently. But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God’s approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God (1Pet 2.19–21, 4.14–16).

The suffering of Christians must be accepted gladly, with mercy and love to those who inflict it. Here once again is the Lord’s own example, as well as that of His prophets, apostles, martyrs and saints. As Christ said, “Father, forgive them .?.” (Lk 23.34), while hanging on the Cross; and as the first
martyr Stephen prayed, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7.60), while being stoned, so all those who follow God’s righteousness must forgive their offenders “from their hearts” (cf. Mt 18.35).

But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well .?.?. Love your enemies, and do good, and give, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you .?.?. (Lk 6.27–38).

The generous and loving forgiveness of the persecuted for the persecutors is an essential condition of the spiritual life. Without it, all suffering “for righteousness’ sake” is in vain, and does not lead to the Kingdom of Heaven.
Rejoice and Be Glad

“Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.?.?.” (Mt 5.11). Joy is an essential element of the spiritual life, and is one of the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Gal 5.22). There is no genuine spirituality without joy. From the first pages of the Gospel, until the very end, the apostles of Christ, with Mary His mother and all Christians, are continually rejoicing in the salvation which Jesus has given.

By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (Jn 15.8–11).

.?.?. your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you .?.?. ask and you will receive that your joy may be full (Jn 16.22–24).

Christian joy is not earthly happiness, pleasure or fun. It is the “joy in believing” (Rom 15.13). It is the joy of knowing the freedom of truth in the love of God (cf. Jn 8.32). It is the joy of being made worthy to “share in Christ’s sufferings” (1Pet 4.13).

By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen Him, you love Him, though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy (1Pet 1.3–8).

Spiritual joy goes together with spiritual suffering. It is wrong to think that joy comes only at the end when the suffering is over. Joy in Christ goes together with suffering in Christ. They co-exist and are dependent on each other for their power and strength. As blessed mourning over sin is the mourning that comes with the joy of salvation, so suffering in the flesh, in this world, is consonant with-and in a real sense is even caused by-the unspeakable joy of salvation. Thus Saint James can say that Christians should “count it all joy” when they “meet various trials,” knowing that the “full effect” of their steadfast
faith is that they may be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1.2–3). And this is the firm conviction of Saint Paul as well.

we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom 5.2–5).

It is the spiritual joy of Christians, the joy of the martyrs, which, more than anything else, is the invincible witness to the truth of the Christian faith and the genuineness of the Christian spiritual life.
The Virtues
In addition to the beatitudes of Jesus, there are many fruits of the Holy Spirit enumerated in the apostolic scriptures and referred to in the writings of the saints of the Church. These fruits of the Spirit are often called the Christian virtues, which literally means those powers and possessions of the mind and the heart which all men should have if they are truly human, fulfilling themselves as created in the image and likeness of God.

Generally speaking, all of the human virtues are attributes of God Himself. They are the characteristics of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God in human flesh. They are the divine properties which should be in all human persons by the gift of God in creation and salvation through Christ.

It has been said, and it is true, that the Christian virtues are not all particularly “Christian” in the sense that only Christians know about them and are committed to attain them. Most, if not all, of the Christian virtues have been honored, respected and recommended by all great teachers of the spiritual life. This in no way detracts from their Christian value and truth, for Christ and His apostles and saints have not taught and practiced something other than that which all men should teach and practice. As the fulfillment of all positive human aspirations and desires, it is quite understandable that Jesus Christ, the perfect “man from heaven” and “final Adam” (1Cor 15.45–47, Rom 5.14), should fulfill and realize in Himself that which all men of wisdom and goodwill have sought for and desired in their minds and hearts, enlightened by God.

For in truth, whatever is found in man to be good and beautiful and true, is found there because of God and is from God. This is the case, whether it is realized or not, “for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (Jas 1.17), and it is Christ Himself, the eternal Son and Word of God, who is the light and the life of every man who has ever lived and been enlightened on this earth (cf. Jn 1: 1–10). Thus the Apostle Paul has counseled Christ’s faithful:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about those things (Phil. 4.8).

As we “think about those things,” we will refer to the teaching of the apostle himself, and to all of the apostles and teachers of the Christian faith who have been enlightened and inspired by God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.
Faith

The foundation of all Christian virtue and life is faith. Faith is the natural possession of all men who are wise and virtuous. For if a person lacks faith in man’s ability to know, to do good and to find meaning in life; if he does not believe that this is possible, profitable and worthy of man’s efforts, then nothing wise or virtuous can be achieved. The striking characteristic of all prophets of doom, apostles of despair and preachers of absurdity is the absence of faith in man’s capabilities for goodness and truth, and the absence of faith in the meaning and value of life. It is also an absence of faith in God.

Faith in God is the fundamental virtue of all the saints (cf. Heb 11). The prototype of the believer in God is Abraham, the father of Israel.

The promise to Abraham and his descendants that they should inherit the world did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

That is why righteousness depends on faith in order to guarantee it to all his descendants .?.?. who share the faith of Abraham, for he is the father of us all .?.?. in the presence of God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised. That is why his faith was “reckoned to him as righteousness” (Gen 15.6). But the words “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake only, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in Him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification (Rom 4.13–25).

Faith in God is fundamental for the spiritual life. And to believe in God is to believe in His Son Jesus Christ as well.

Let not your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. [.?.?] Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the sake of My works themselves (Jn 14.1–11).

Faith in Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is the center of the Christian life and the foundation of the Church (Mt 16.16). It is the source of all wisdom, power and virtue. It is the means by which man can know and do all things, for “all things are possible to him who believes” (Mk 9.23, Mt 17.20).

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much
fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing (Jn 15.4–5).

Faith, first of all, is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11.1). It is confidence in the spiritual capabilities of man and in the goodness and power of God. It is intellectual assent and existential everyday trust in the promises and gifts of God, given to the world in creation and in salvation in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Faith itself is a “gift of God” given to all and accepted by the poor in spirit and the pure in heart, who are open to the activity of God in their lives (Eph 2.8).

Genuine faith is not a blind leap in the dark, an irrational and unreasonable acceptance of the unreasonable and the absurd. Genuine faith is eminently reasonable; it is rooted and grounded in man’s reasonable nature as made in the image of God. Not to believe, according to the scriptures and the saints, is the epitome of absurdity and foolishness.

*The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”*

They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none that does good.

The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
to see if there are any that act wisely that seek after God.

(Pss 14.1–2, 53.1–2)

Man was made to have faith in God. Not to believe in God is a perversion of human nature and the cause of all evils. The weakness and absence of faith in God is rooted in sin, impurity and pride. It is never simply the result of an intellectual mistake or mental confusion. It is always the result of the suppression of the truth through wickedness, the exchange of God’s truth for a lie, the refusal, consciously or unconsciously, to acknowledge God with honor and thanksgiving (cf. Rom 1).

You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall see, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has drawn dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and bear with their ears, understand with their heart, and turn to Me to heal them (Is 6.9–10, Mt 13.14–15).

The spiritual person lives “by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2.20). The spiritual person is the one who, by the grace of God’s Spirit, is faithful in all things.
Hope

The virtue of hope goes together with the power of faith. The patriarch Abraham “in hope believed against hope that he should be the father of many nations” (Rom 4.18). And hope, like faith, is in that which is not seen.

For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom 8.24–25).

Hope is the assurance of the good outcome of our lives lived by faith in God. Hope is the power of certain conviction that the life built on faith will produce its fruits. Hope is the confidence that, despite all darkness and sin, the light of the loving forgiveness of God is upon us to do with us and for us what we ourselves cannot do.

Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and shield. Yea our hearts are glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Thy steadfast love, O Lord be upon us, even as we hope in Thee (Ps 33.20–22).

The opposite of hope is despondency and despair. According to the spiritual tradition of the Church, the state of despondency and despair is the most grievous and horrible condition that a person can be in. It is the worst and most harmful of the sinful states possible for the soul.

The loss of hope is the worst possible state because without hope, nothing else is possible; certainly not faith. If a person is faithless, he can be chastised and convinced. If a person is proud, he can be humbled; impure, he can be cleansed; weak, he can be strengthened; wicked, he can be made righteous. But if a person is despondent and despairing, the very condition of his sickness is such that his heart and soul are dead and unresponsive to the grace of God and the support of his brothers.

.?.?. the force of despondence .?.?. overwhelms him and oppress his soul; and this is a taste of hell because it produces a thousand temptations: confusion, irritation, protesting and bewailing one’s lot, wrong thoughts, wandering from place to place, and so on (Saint Isaac of Syria, 6th c., Directions on Spiritual Training).

The demon of despondency, which is called the “noon-day demon” (Ps 91.6) is more grievous than all others. .?.?. It arouses in him vexation against the place and mode of life itself and his work, adding that there is no more love among the brethren, and no one to comfort him. .?.?. Then it provokes in him a longing for other places .?.?. (Evagrius of Pontus, 4th c., To Anatolius: On Eight Thoughts).
The only remedy for despair is humility and patience, the steadfast holding to the life of faith, even without conviction or feeling. It is the simplification of life by going through each day, one day at a time, with the continual observances, however external, of scriptural reading, liturgical worship, fasting, prayer, and work. In the advice of Saint Benedict (6th c.), it is to remain stable in one’s place, and to “do what you are doing” as well as you can, with all possible attention. In the advice of Saint Seraphim (19th c.), it is to visit with spiritual friends, with those who are hopeful, merciful, joyful and strong. It is to stand fast to the end while passing through aridity and darkness, until the light of blessed hope and comfort are found. There is no other way, and “those who find it are few” (Mt 7.14). But when one “fights and conquers against despondency and despair, this struggle is followed by a peaceful state and the soul becomes filled with ineffable joy” (Evagrius, *To Anatolius: On Eight Thoughts*).

When we are attacked by the demon of despondency—the most grievous of all, but who more than all makes the soul experienced—let us divide our soul in two, and making one part the comforter and the other part the comforted, let us sow seeds of good hope in ourselves, singing with David the psalmist: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I will again praise Him, my help and my God” (Ps 42.5; Evagrius of Pontus, *To Anatolius: Texts on Active Life*).

Sometimes people think that a certain “lack of hope” is a Christian virtue. They think that by proclaiming that “all is lost” they please God by their humility and sorrow over sins, their own and those of the world. They think that the more they concentrate on the evils of men, the more they exalt the strength of the wicked, the more they sigh and say, “There is no help for us in God!”, the more righteous and pious they become. But this is all wrong. It has nothing to do with the patient suffering at the hands of the wicked, and the patient struggle against the powers of evil that the righteous must endure, being absolutely certain of their ultimate and total victory in God, the source of their strength and their hope.

It is no virtue to feel weak and helpless in the presence of the wicked. It is no virtue to consider oneself totally at the mercy of evil and sin. It is a virtue rather to be always “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation” knowing and believing that the final victory is God’s (Rom 12.12).
Knowledge

Faith and hope go together with knowledge. They are built on knowledge and lead to knowledge. For what is “not seen” is believed and hoped on the basis of what is seen. And the understanding of what is seen depends on belief and hope in what is not seen. One’s belief and hope in the ability to know, to trust his senses, his mind and the revelation of his God, are the foundations of all knowledge.

Man was created to know God; not only to believe in Him and to hope in Him, but to know Him and so to love Him and to serve Him. Knowledge of God is the aim and goal of man’s life, the purpose of his creation by God.

And this is eternal life, that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

O Righteous Father, the world has not known Thee; and these know that Thou hast sent Me. I made known to them Thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them (Jn 17.3, 25–26).

Faith, given as a gift by God, results in the knowledge of God. The Lord desires that man would “know the truth,” and so become free from all blindness, ignorance and sin (Jn 8.32). This is the central teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the law and the prophets of the Old Testament and of the apostles and teachers of the Church.

That men might know wisdom and instruction, understand words of insight, receive instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity, that prudence may be given to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov 1.1–7).

In all of his letters, the Apostle Paul prays that the faithful would “be filled with the knowledge of Christ’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” since “God our Savior desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Col 1.8–9, 1Tim 2.4).

In all of his writings, the apostle insists as well that the faithful have “all the riches of knowledge of God’s mystery of Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” and that the “spiritual man” has “the mind of the Lord. the mind of Christ” (Col 2.2–3; 1Cor 2.6–16).

The Apostle John gives the same doctrine as Saint Paul when he claims
that the “Spirit of Truth” whom Christ has given in order to “teach you all things” and to “guide you into all the truth” (Jn 14.26, 16.13), is truly living in the midst of the believers.

... you have been anointed by the Holy One and you know all things. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

I write this to you about those who would deceive you; but the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him (1Jn 2.20–29).

This teaching of Saint John is in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, quoted directly by Jesus Himself, that in the Messianic Age of the new covenant church, “... they shall all be taught by God” (Jn 6.45; Is 54.13).

In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the knowledge of God and His truth is the main goal of life. “For what meaning would there be for creation,” asks Saint Athanasius the Great (4th c.), “if man should not know God?” (On the Incarnation, Book 1). Knowledge of God, indeed knowledge itself, according to the scriptures and the saints, is not mere “knowledge about,” the abstract knowledge of information and rational propositions, devoid of living experience. Knowledge is primarily and essentially an existential union, a cleaving together of the spiritual man and the object of his knowledge. Saint Gregory of Nyssa (4th c.) has said, “The Lord does not say that it is blessed to know something about God, but rather to possess God in oneself.” (On the Beatitudes, Sermon 6) The possession of God within the mind and heart is the true knowledge of God. It comes through faith and repentance in the life of the Church. It comes essentially through the gracious purification from all sinful passions. Saint John of the Ladder (6th c.) has written:

*The growth of fear is the beginning of love, but a complete state of purity is the foundation of all divine knowledge.*

He who has perfectly united his feelings to God is mystically led by Him to an understanding of His words. But without union one cannot speak about God.

The engrafted Word (Jas 1.21) perfects purity and the disciple of divine knowledge is illumined. but he who has not come to know God merely speculates.

Purity makes a theologian [i.e. one who knows God], who of himself grasps the teachings of the Trinity (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 30).

The listing of knowledge among the virtues of man is critically important
because in the present time there exists the widespread conviction that man is condemned to ignorance in the areas of religion and spiritual life. While most people would grant that knowledge is possible in the realm of natural sciences, they would deny genuine knowledge in the realm of the Spirit. They would say that one can know the things of this physical world but cannot know the mysteries of God, and God Himself. Thus religion becomes a matter of personal choice and subjective taste, devoid of any pretension to objective truth and genuine knowledge. As we have seen, this is precisely not the teaching of the Scriptures and the saints.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known of God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen (Rom 1.18–25).
Wisdom

The virtue of wisdom differs from knowledge in that wisdom is normally understood as the immediate insight into things, the practical understanding and grasping of what is true and right in its living expression and form. The wise man is the one who sees clearly and deeply into the mysteries of God. He is the one who can give concrete advice in the everyday affairs of life, the one who can point out the will of God to man who is confronted by actual problems and decisions. He is the one, who like Jesus, knows not only what is in God, but “what is in man” (cf. Jn 2.25).

In the Old Testament, a whole body of literature developed concerning the theme of divine wisdom. (See Doctrine & Scripture, Part 2.) The Psalms, Proverbs and other wisdom writings such as Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom of Solomon and Jesus, Son of Sirach show clearly what wisdom is, and what it is to be wise.

Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights beside the way, in the paths she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:

“To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the sons of men. O simple ones, learn prudence; O foolish men, pay attention. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right; for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

They are all straight to him who understands and right to those who find knowledge.

Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

I, wisdom, dwell in prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.

Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

I have counsel and sound wisdom, I have insight, I have strength” (Prov 8.1–14).

In the New Testament, divine wisdom is found in Jesus Christ, who is Himself, “the wisdom of God” (1Cor 1.24).

.?.?. among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we
impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But, as it is written, “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him” (Is 64.4, 65.17) God has revealed to us through the Spirit. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit (1Cor 2.6–15).

In the holy Scriptures, the Spirit of the Lord is called “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Is 11.2). It is this Spirit that the Lord gives to those who believe in Him.

For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.

For this reason, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe.

For this reason I, Paul have written, to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known. (Eph 1.9–10, 19–19, 3.1–10).

In the Church, as Saint Paul says, the divine wisdom is given to the spiritual person. The wise man, who possesses the Spirit of God, can show forth the “knowledge of salvation to His people. to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk 1.77–79). The opposite of divine wisdom is sinful foolishness which brings man to calamity, sorrow, ruin and death (cf. Prov 10–14). In the spiritual life of the Church, it is the wise men, the spiritual masters and saintly teachers, who have gained divine wisdom and so are made competent to direct and guide the destiny of men’s immortal souls. It is for this reason that all men should submit themselves to their instruction and rule.
Honesty

The wise man who has knowledge lives according to the truth through a totally honest life. Honesty means first of all, to speak the truth and never to “bear false witness” (Ex 20.16).

There are six things which the Lord hates, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to do evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers (Prov 6.16–19; cf. 11.1, 12.17, 17.4, 21.28, 25.14, 18).

This basic scriptural teaching is also that of the apostles.

For we pray to God that you may not do what is wrong .?.?. but that you may do what is honest .?.?. for we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth (2Cor 13.7–8).

Honesty also means to act truly and openly, without pretense, or the presentation of a false image of oneself. It means, in a word, not to be a hypocrite.

Above all things, Christ the Lord hated and condemned hypocrisy, lying and deceit. He accused the devil himself, first and foremost, of being a deceiver and liar, pretending to be other than he is, presenting himself and his teaching as totally other than the falsehood and wickedness that they actually are (cf. Jn 8.44–47). This is the way of all the false prophets, and of the antichrist himself.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist (2Jn 7).

Take heed that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name saying “I am the Christ,” and they will lead you astray. .?.?. and many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. .?.?. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Mt 24.4, 11, 24).

In His fierce condemnation of the evil of the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers, Christ was most violent against their hypocrisy. Of all the evils of men, the most vile in the sight of the Lord is undoubtedly hypocrisy.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside you are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like
whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of
dead men’s bones and all impurity. So you also outwardly appear righteous to
ten, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Mt 23.25–28).

The spiritual person is not a hypocrite. He shows himself honestly for
what he is, and does not pretend to be what he is not. He reveals himself to all
exactly as he actually is. He does not say or do anything that would lead people
to have a false impression of him or of anyone or anything. He is utterly honest
and pure in all that he thinks, says and does, knowing that God sees all and
judges with righteousness all those who “walk in integrity” (cf. Ps 26.1, 11).
Humility

In the Orthodox tradition, humility has often been called the “mother of all virtues,” and pride has been named “the cause of all sin.” The wise and honest person is the one who is humble.

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor, than to divide the spoils with the proud.

A man’s pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will retain honor (Prov 16.18, 16.19, 29.23).

According to the Gospel, in the Song of the Virgin, the Lord scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts and exalts those who are humble and meek (cf. Lk 1.51–52). This is the exact teaching of Jesus.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Lk 14.11, 18.14, Prov 3.34).

Humility does not mean degradation or remorse. It does not mean effecting some sort of demeaning external behavior. It does not mean considering oneself as the most vile and loathsome of creatures. Christ Himself was humble and He did not do this. God Himself, according to the spiritual tradition of the Church, has perfect humility, and He certainly does not act in this way.

Genuine humility means to see reality as it actually is in God. It means to know oneself and others as known by God—a power, according to Saint Isaac, greater than that of raising the dead! The humble lay aside all vanity and conceit in the service of the least of God’s creatures, and to consider no good act as beneath one’s dignity and honor. Humility is to know oneself, without the grace of God, as dust, sinful and dead.

God is humble because He cares about the least: the birds in the air, the grass in the fields, the worst of sinners (cf. Mt 6.25–30). Christ is humble because He associates with the lowly, becoming the slave of all in taking on Himself the sins of the world.

*If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you (Jn 13.14–15).*

You know that the rulers of the pagans lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of Man came not to be served,
but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mt 20.25–28).

All Christians are to follow the example of Christ in His divine humility. Saint Paul teaches:

_Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2.3–11)._ 

The exaltation of Jesus as a man depended entirely on His self-emptying humility. True greatness, divine greatness, is the ability to be the least and to the least with the absolute certitude that it is externally and divinely important, that it is an imitation of God Himself.

True humility for the sinful man is to know that indeed, according to one’s own possibilities and gifts, each one is truly the first and greatest of sinners (cf. 1Tim 1.15), for each one has sinned in his own way “like no other man” (Saint Andrew of Crete, 7th c., Penitential Canon). The truly humble person is the one who, confessing his sins, is “faithful over little,” and doing so, is exalted by the Lord and is “set over much.” Only such a person will “enter into the joy of his Master” (Mt 25.14–23, Lk 19.17).
In speaking of Christ’s humility, Saint Paul said that Jesus was obedient to God His Father “unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2.8). In truth, Jesus obeyed God in all that He did.

_For I have come down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of Him who sent me. And this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day (Jn 6.38–39)._  
All that Jesus has and is, He has received from God the Father. From all eternity, the Son has listened to the Father in order to do His work and to accomplish His will. The will of God is that the Son should become a man, take up the sins of the world and die in the flesh in order to raise the dead that “nothing would be lost.” Jesus has accomplished this in divine and perfect obedience, giving the example to all.

_My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. if this cannot pass until I drink it, Thy will be done (Mt 26.39, 42)._  
There is no degradation in obedience to God, nothing shameful or demeaning. On the contrary, to do the will of God is glory and life. It is the highest dignity of man, his greatest joy and delight (cf. Ps 119). It is the way of perfection for all, even for the man Jesus Himself.

_Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered, and being made perfect He became the source of salvation to all who obey Him (Heb 5.8–9)._  
Disobedience to God and His Son Jesus Christ is the source of all sin. Refusal to submit to God in all things is the cause of all sorrow and death. Those who hear the Gospel and fail to enter into the eternal rest of God, do so only “because of disobedience” (Heb 5–6, cf. Deut 4.29–31).

In the Orthodox spiritual tradition, obedience is a basic virtue: obedience to the Lord, to the Gospel, to the Church (Mt 18.17), to the leaders of the Church (Heb 13.7), to one’s parents and elders, to “every ordinance of man” (1Pet 2.13, Rom 13.1), “to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 6.21). There is no spiritual life without obedience, no freedom or liberation from sinful passions and lusts. To submit to God’s discipline in all of its human forms, is the only way to obtain “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom 8.21). God disciplines us as His children out of His great love for us. “He disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness” (cf. Heb 12.3–11). Our obedience to God’s commandments and discipline is the exclusive
sign of our love for Him and His Son.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him…. If a man loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me (Jn 14:21–24).
Patience

To be obedient in all things to God requires the virtue of patience. Saint Paul lists this virtue as one of the “fruits of the Spirit” (Gal 5.22). Christ Himself in His humble obedience to God was exceedingly patient.

To be patient literally means to suffer and endure. It means to wait on the Lord through all tribulations and trials with courage and hope. It means to put up with oneself and others, growing gradually in the grace of God through the daily effort to keep His commandments and to accomplish His will. Only those who are patient, according to Christ, bring forth fruit from the seeds of God’s Word that are sown in their hearts.

And as for that in the good soil, they are these who, hearing the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience (Lk 8.15).

In times of persecution, when Christians are delivered up to answer for Christ, being “hated by all for My name’s sake,” the Lord counsels His followers: “in patience, possess ye your souls,” which means, “through your endurance you will gain your lives” (Lk 21.19).

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble .?.?. against one another, that you may not be condemned; behold the Judge is standing at the doors. As an example of suffering and patience .?.?. take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful (Jas 5.7–11).

Too often people embarking on the spiritual life forget that patience is a virtue, and that, because of man’s freedom, the effort to cleanse one’s life from sin is tiresome and long. Everything is expected at once, with little striving and small effort.

Too often, also, people who wish to be patient forget that the virtue is a grace of God and a fruit of the Spirit. They think that they can attain patience with themselves and with others by will power alone; by rationalizations and human considerations. Such people never find peace for their souls.

The virtue of patience is found in the steadfast endurance given by God. It is the power to “stay on the cross” no matter what, doing only the will of the Lord. Patience is united with faith, hope, love, humility and obedience, which
alone brings the strength to go on. It must be renewed daily through fasting, prayer and communion with God in the Church. It is found when one trains oneself to remember God, to abide in Christ and to see all things in the light of the Kingdom of God. If one wishes to be patient, one must be united with Christ and live by the power of the Spirit. According to the spiritual teachers, there is no other way.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1Cor 10.13).

Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved (Ps 55.22; cf. 1Pet 5.7).
Courage

The virtue of courage and strength must accompany patience. Only the one who has courage can truly be patient in all things. To be courageous means simply not to be afraid. Many times in the Gospels, Christ speaks of this virtue and commands it to His disciples, in so doing, He follows the Old Testament example.

*The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?*

The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord! (Pss 27.1,14; 31.24).

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear; fear Him who, after He has killed, has the power to cast into hell, yes, I tell you, fear Him! (Lk 12.32,4–5).

*In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world* (Jn 16.33).

The apostles were utterly courageous, and counseled all men to follow their example.

*Be vigilant, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong* (1Cor 16.13).

*Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you will be able to stand.* (Eph 6.10).

*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* Take your share of sufferings as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2Tim 2.1–3; cf. Heb 11.32–38).

The virtue of courage is expressed not only in times of persecution and suffering, but also in the face of ridicule and disdain. It is expressed as well simply, in the, smallest, most common things of everyday life. In Christ’s parable of the talents, the man with little lost even the little that he had and was cast into out darkness because he failed to use his small gift through lack of courage: “and I was afraid and hid your talent in the ground” (Mt 25.25–30).

The person with courage faces all things with strength and lives ever day, in every little thing, with the power of Christ. To be “faithful in little” is a sign of great courage. The saints were eminently courageous in their lives and considered this virtue to be central in the spiritual life.
Courage, according to Saint Gregory of Sinai, is the first of the “four original virtues,” one of the four parent virtues which contain and constitute all others (Saint Gregory of Sinai, 14th c., Instructions to Hesychasts).

If you wish to make a right beginning in your spiritual activity, first prepare yourself for the temptations that will befall you. For the devil has the habit of visiting with terrible temptations those whom he sees starting a righteous life with ardent faith. Therefore prepare yourself to meet courageously the temptations which will surely assail you, and only then begin to practice them (Saint Isaac of Syria, 6th c., Directions on Spiritual Training).

If you pursue virtue, you are most likely to be attacked much by fear. Such a person should make every effort to overcome cowardice, that daughter of unbelief and that offspring of vain-glory.

Cowardice is a childish disposition in a vain-glorious soul. A failing away from faith that comes through expecting the unexpected. A rehearsing of danger beforehand in fear, a loss of conviction.

A proud soul is a slave of cowardice; it vainly trusts in itself and fears any shadow and sound of creatures.

All cowardly people are vainglorious and often have mental breakdowns.

He who has become the Lord’s servant fears the Master alone, but he who does not yet fear Him is often afraid of his own shadow.

He who has conquered cowardice has clearly dedicated his life and soul to God (Saint John Climacus, 7th c., The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 21).
Faithfulness

According to the scriptures, one of the main characteristics of God is His absolute faithfulness. This virtue in man is also considered to be one of the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” (Gal 5.22).

To be faithful means to be absolutely true to one’s word, to be totally loyal in one’s devotion, to be completely steadfast and unswerving in one’s own calling and vocation. It also means to remain in humble service, in truth and in love, no matter what the conditions or consequences. To be faithful means to be courageous and to be and to do that which one must be and do by God’s will, regardless of any rejection by others and in spite of any lack of recognition or appreciation. God Himself is perfectly faithful. He has made promises and declared covenants, keeping His word no matter what man does. When men are adulterous and faithless, God remains faithful (cf. Jer 3, Ezek 16); for “the Lord has sworn and will not change His mind” (Ps 110.4, Heb 7.21).

if we deny Him, He will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself (2Tim 2.12–13).

Christ is faithful to His Father and to His creatures until the end. He does not swerve from His mission but accomplishes all that God the Father has given Him to do (cf. Jn 17.4). According to the book of Revelation, the name of Jesus, the Word of God, is “Faithful and True”; He is called “the faithful witness” by John (Rev 19.11, 1.5).

The spiritual person is the one who is faithful to his calling, fulfilling every good resolution, and bearing fruit patiently with the gifts and talents given by God. The spiritual person is faithful in every little thing—every thought, every word, every deed—“according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him” (Rom 12.3), “according to the measure of Christ’s gift” which is “given to each” (Eph 4.7). Such faithfulness is the main teaching in Christ’s parable of the talents. The one who faithfully and without fear develops and grows with that which the Lord has provided is the one who hears the voice of the Master.

Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little—faithful in a very little (Lk 19.17); I will set you over much, enter into the joy of your master (Mt 25.23).

The main enemies of faithfulness to God and man are pride, covetousness, cowardice, envy and the refusal to serve humbly where one is, with the conditions and gifts which God has provided. Faithlessness is born when one “thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12.3), fears that
he cannot do with what God has given, covets his neighbors’ talents and gifts, and moves from place to place seeking to be satisfied and filled by the things of this world.

Faithfulness is characterized by stability of body and soul; the utter refusal to move or be moved for any unworthy reason; the complete dedication to what God gives one to do, with the faith, grace and strength that God gives to do it. As it is written in the sayings of the fathers of the desert: “As a tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted, no more can a monk (or any person) that is often changing his mind and moving from place to place.” The only way to receive the “crown of life” is to be “faithful until death” in the place where God has put us (Rev 2.10). The only way to find joy, wisdom and peace is to be faithful to one’s own uniqueness, knowing that each person has his own specific life and vocation from God which no one else has; his own specific mission which no one else can perform. The spiritual person develops his own life in faithfulness, without envy or fear, and so accomplishes and becomes that which God has willed for him before the dawn of creation.
Self-control is also listed by the Apostle Paul as a “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5.22). This virtue is one which is not often easily attained because people forget that, like patience, it is a grace of God and they must seek it from the Lord. Instead they think that it can come from human effort and will power alone.

Self-control is one of the main characteristics of God and is one of the main gifts to man as created in God’s image. According to the saints, self-control is one of the main elements of the divine image in man, coextensive with the gift of freedom which is often explained as the essential and basic element of man’s likeness to his Creator. When one is perfectly free by the grace of God—“where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2Cor 3.17)—there is also perfect control over oneself.

Man loses his self-control when he sells himself to sin and becomes a slave to the corruption of his fleshly passions. Such a man has been characterized well in the second letter of Saint Peter.

... those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority... irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are ignorant... They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation... They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin... They have hearts trained in greed... They have gone astray... These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm... For, uttering loud boasts of folly, they entice with licentious passions of the flesh men who have barely escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved (2Pet 2.10–19).

The man without self-control is enslaved. He is the captive of sin, the willing instrument of carnal passions, the victim of all foolishness and evil. He is bound in his mind and heart by “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1Jn 1–17). He is a “child of the devil” (Jn 8.44, Acts 13.10, 1Jn 3.10) and possesses a “carnal mind” (Rom 8.7).

... following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we also once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the body... (Eph 2.3–4, Rom 1.18–32).

Self-control, according to the spiritual tradition of the Church, is the spiritual mastery over the lusts of the mind and the flesh. It is often called
“passionlessness” by the spiritual masters. Passionlessness (apatheia) does not mean the destruction of the natural drives and desires of the body and soul, such as the need for sleep, food and drink; or the emotions such as spiritual desire, zeal, excitement, joy, awe, sorrow or fear. It means rather the control of the feelings that are normal, natural and healthy, and the mortification of the feelings that are wicked and evil.

*Evil is to be seen, not in the nature of creatures, but in their wrong and irrational movements.*

Passionlessness is a peaceful state of the soul in which it is not readily moved to evil.

In the soul are its spiritual powers. In the body are its senses and members. Around the person are food, possessions, money, etc. A right or wrong use of things, and the resulting effects show us as being either virtuous or sinful.

The scriptures do not forbid eating or bearing children or having money and spending it rightly, but they forbid gluttony, fornication, and so on. They do not even forbid us to think about such things but only forbid us to think of them with passion and lust.

When the mind is not the master, the senses hold sway, and as a rule the senses are mixed with the power of sin which, through pleasure, leads the soul to pity the flesh. As a result, it undertakes, as if it were natural to do so, a passionate and lustful and pleasure-loving care of the flesh and leads man away from the truly natural life, urging him to be for himself the instigator of evil.

Evil for a rational soul is to forget its natural good, thanks to a passionate attitude to the flesh and the world. When the mind becomes the master, it abolishes such an attitude. rightly interpreting the origin and nature of the world and the flesh.

As the mind, keeping passion in its power, makes the senses the instruments of virtue, so the passions, captivating the mind, move the senses to sin. It is necessary to see how the soul should keep a suitable mode of action by using for virtues what was formerly used for sin.

A soul moves rationally when its desiring power has acquired self-mastery, its excitable power strives after love and its mental power abides in God by prayer and spiritual contemplation (Saint Maximus the Confessor, 7th c.).

Thus it is only communion with God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, that gives the power of self-control to the rational creature of God.
Kindness

The spiritual person is kind. He never practices cruelty in any of its forms, but is always gentle in his relations with others. Kindness, according to the Apostle Paul, is also a “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5.22).

According to the scriptures, God Himself is kind. For all of His anger and wrath over the sins of men, the Lord is “kind to the ungrateful and selfish” (Lk 6.35).

For great is His merciful kindness toward us; and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever (Ps 117.2; cf. Pss 31.21,119.76).

Christians are urged to follow God in His kindness and to do all things gently and with tenderness. Especially when rebuking and correcting others, the spiritual person must be kind.

?.?. the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome, but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing; correcting one’s opponents with gentleness .?.?. (2Tim 2.24; cf. Gal 6.1).

Parents especially are urged not to “provoke their children to anger” by unkindness and cruelty (Eph 6.4, Col 3.21).

Very often it happens that people can be kind to strangers and to those with whom they have but a passing and casual relationship, but with persons with whom the relationship is longer and deeper-family, relatives, co-workers, fellow members in the same church community—it is sometimes assumed that they may be unkind, and that they even have a certain right to act carelessly and with harshness. This is a great temptation. Familiarity and everyday contact do not give one the right to act unkindly or to behave cruelly. To those closest and nearest, the need for continual gentleness, tenderness and kindness in every action and word is especially necessary. There can be no excuse for insensitivity and harshness, whatever the relationship. Spiritual persons must “do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6.10).

?.?. for we are members one of another. Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil (cf. Ps 4). .?.?. Let no evil talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear .?.?. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you (Eph 4.26–32).

Kindness does not mean overlooking people’s sins; it means forgiving
them. Kindness also does not mean “being nice” to everyone, whoever they are and whatever they do. It does not mean “going along” with others in every way. A kind person will correct others, if need be, and his very kindness will be shown by his care and concern for the well-being of his fellow creature “for whom Christ died” (Rom?14.15).

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother (Mt 18.15).

The correction by a kind person is never with contempt or cruelty. It never ridicules, demeans or condemns. It always encourages and edifies with gentleness and understanding.
The spiritual person is the one who is grateful for everything. He is the one who receives everything with thanksgiving, and who knows that he has nothing except what he has received from God (cf. Jn 3.27).

And from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace (Jn?1.16).

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving was central in the life of God’s people. The temple liturgy offered sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise, and psalms sang continually of thanksgiving to God.

Sing praises to the Lord, O you His saints, and give thanks to His Holy Name.

Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving. Let us enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name!

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High; to declare Thy steadfast love in the morning, and Thy faithfulness by night.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious, for His mercy endures forever! (Pss 30.4, 95.2, 92.1, 107.1).

In the New Testament, thanksgiving is the very essence of the Church’s life. The word eucharist means thanksgiving, and the very center of the Church’s liturgical worship of God is when, in remembrance of all His saving acts in Christ, the faithful “lift up their hearts” and “give thanks unto the Lord.”

The apostolic scriptures and the lives of the saints abound with thanksgiving to God for all things.

Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving .??. always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father (Eph 5.4, 20).

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thess 5.16–18).

Rejoice always in the Lord; again I say, Rejoice! Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4.4–7).

The spiritual person has thanksgiving and gratitude in all circumstances, in everything and for everything. This thanksgiving is rooted in the firm conviction of God’s merciful providence and care in all things, in the steadfast
The spiritual teachers, especially Saint John Chrysostom (4th c), are very strict in this teaching. The spiritual man does not thank God only for what he considers to be good. Rather, he thanks God for everything, even for what appears to be bad, knowing that God’s tender care is over all, and that the evil in this world—which is always present and inevitable (cf. Jn 17)—can itself be the vehicle for spiritual growth and salvation if rightly understood and overcome by the grace of God.

The opposite of gratitude is bitterness and complaining; it is bemoaning one’s lot in life because of pride and covetousness. It is caused by the absence of humble trust in the Lord. It is rooted in an attitude of life which does not allow the person to exclaim with the righteous Job:

Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1.21).

To thank God in everything and for everything is the result of faith and faithfulness in God. It is the result of absolute trust in the Lord who knows best what we need for our salvation and does all that He can within the evil conditions of the world to bring us to eternal life, to peace and to joy. It is the product of believing, with Isaiah, the Word of the Redeemer who says:

For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love will I have compassion on you.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts .?.?.

And you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing .?.?.

Keep justice and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come .?.?.

A person is grateful to the extent that he trusts in the Lord and has love for God and man.
The Greatest Virtue is Love
God is Love

According to the Christian faith “the greatest virtue is love” (1Cor 13.13). Love is the “fulfilling of the law” of God (Rom 13.10). For God Himself is Love.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His own Spirit.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the World. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.

We love, because He first loved us (1Jn 4.7–19).

In these inspired words of the beloved Apostle John, one sees that man’s communion with God, his entire spiritual life, is expressed in love. Where there is no love, God is absent and there is no spiritual life. Where love is, God is, and all righteousness.

Man’s love has its origin in God. God’s love always comes first. Men are to love God and one another because God Himself has loved first.

God’s love is shown in the creation and salvation of the world in Christ and the Holy Spirit. All things were made by, in and for Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the “Son of His love” (Col 1.13–17; Jn 1.1–3; Heb 1.2).

When the world became sinful and dead, “God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son .?.?. not to condemn the world, but to save the
world” (Jn 3.16, 12.47).

But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5.8). But when the goodness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that we might be made righteous by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life (Titus 3.4–7).

God’s love for man and His world in Christ is given in the Holy Spirit. This love is the first and greatest “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5.22), “for God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5.5).

In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the aim of life as the “acquisition of the Holy Spirit” is expressed most perfectly in love (cf. Saint Macarius of Egypt, 4th c., Spiritual Homilies; Saint Seraphim of Sarov, 19th c., Conversation with N. Molovilov). Indeed, the Holy Spirit Himself is identified with God’s love by the saints, as witnessed in the writings of St Simeon the New Theologian.

O Holy Love [i.e., the Holy Spirit of God], he who knows you not has never tasted the sweetness of your mercies which only living experience can give us. But he who has known you, or who has been known by you, can never have even the smallest doubt. For you are the fulfillment of the law, you who fills, burns, inflames, embraces my heart with a measureless love. You are the teacher of the prophets, the offspring of the apostles, the strength of the martyrs, the inspiration of the fathers and masters, the perfecting of all the saints. Only you, O Love, prepare even me for the true service of God (Saint Simeon the New Theologian, 11th c, Homily 53).

Thus God who is Love enters into union with man through the Son of His love by the Spirit of love. To live in this divine love is the spiritual life.

The first definition of love as agape is love as the action of perfect goodness for the sake of the other. This is the most basic meaning of love: to do everything possible for the well-being of others. God Himself has this love as the very content of His being and life, for “God is agape.” It is with this love that spiritual persons must love first of all.

The second definition of love as eros is love for the sake of union with the other. Erotic love is no sin when it is free from sinful passions. It can be the utterly pure desire for communion with the other, including God. All spiritual writers have insisted that such love should exist between God and man as the pattern for all erotic love in the world between husband and wife (See
Sexuality, Marriage, and Family). Thus the mystical writers and spiritual fathers have used the Old Testament’s Song of Songs as the poetic image of God’s love for man and man’s love for God (Philo the Jew, Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, Richard Rolle in England, et al.). Indeed the prophets have used the image of erotic love in explaining the Lord’s relation with Israel (Is 54; Jer 2–3,31; Ezek 16; Hos). And Saint Paul uses this image for Christ’s love of the Church (Eph 6). In the scriptures, the union of man with the Lord in the Kingdom of God is primarily revealed in the image of eros (Mt 22, Rev 19–22).

“For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted to her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev 19.7–8).

“Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Rev 21.9).

The third type of love is friendship-phila. This also should exist between man and God. Man has no greater friend than God, and God Himself wants to be man’s friend. According to the scriptures, the very purpose of the coming of Christ was to dispel all enmity between God and man, and to establish the co-working of Creator and creature in the fellowship of friendship.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex 33.11).

Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants [or slaves], for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you (Jn 15: 13–15).

So it is that love as goodness, love as union, love as friendship are all to be found in God and man, between God and man, and between human beings. There is no form of true love which lays outside the realm of the spiritual life.
The first and greatest commandment of God is that His creatures should love Him.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength (Mk 12.29–30, Mt 22.37, Lk 10.27, Deut 6.4–5).

This is the great and first commandment (Mt 22.38).

To love the Lord God with all one’s heart means to desire nothing but Him and His holy will. The heart is the center of man according to the scriptures and the teachings of the saints. It is the “deepest part” of man, the foundation and guide of his life. What is in a man’s heart, and what his heart desires, is what determines the whole life and activity of the person.

For the inward mind and the heart of man are deep (Ps 64.6).

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart produces evil; for out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth speaks (Lk 6.45, Mt 12.34–35).

For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a man (Mk 7.21–23).

My son, says the Lord, give me your heart, and let your eyes delight in my ways (Prov 23.26).

According to the scriptures and the saints, man’s heart grows hard, fat, cold and corrupt when it is stubborn and rebellious against God, depriving itself of His Holy Spirit. Many times and in many different ways this is said in the holy writings (Deut 6.7, Is 6.10, Jer 5.23, Zechariah 7.12, Mk 8.17, Mt 19.8, et al.). But when man sins, the Lord still loves him faithfully and purifies his heart by grace in order that he might be saved for everlasting life.

I will give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I shall be their God.

Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all transgressions which you have committed against me and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.

God gives a clean heart and a new and right Spirit to man that he might love Him in return with all of his heart. This is given in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in the Church of the new and everlasting covenant. It is given that man might fulfill the first and greatest commandment of God (cf. 2Cor 3–5).

To love God with all one’s soul means to love Him with every spiritual power and with the whole of one’s life. Sometimes the word soul is used as a synonym in the sacred writings for life itself. Man’s soul is his life, all of his life. When one loves God with all his soul he loves Him and serves Him in whatever he does, doing all things “to the glory of God” (cf. 1Cor 10.31).

To love God with all one’s mind is to love God’s Word, to serve God’s trust, to delight in God’s righteous commandments.

I find my delight in Thy commandments which I love, I revere Thy commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on Thy statutes.

O, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation.

Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold, above fine gold. Therefore I direct my steps by all Thy precepts; I hate every false way. give me understanding that I may live.

The sum of Thy word is truth, and everyone of Thy righteous ordinances endures forever.

I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight (Ps 119).

The love of God with all one’s mind is the “love of the Truth,” and those who refuse such love are those who will perish (cf. 2 Thess 2.9–11). The mind of man is the guide of his life, directed to truth by the purity of his heart. When one loves God with all his mind, he is not “conformed to this world” but proves “what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12.2). He is the one who follows the advice of Saint Paul, and thinks solely and continually about “whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise.” (Phil 4.8). He is the one, in a word, who has “the mind of Christ” (1Cor 2.16).

To love God with all one’s strength is to be spiritually violent in the pursuit of God’s ll, in order to do it.

.?.?. the kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the men of violence take it by force (Mt 11.11).

It means to do everything to please Him, with all of one’s energy and power, to serve Him faithfully and patiently in all things until death. It is to
struggle to resist sin and every evil “to the point of shedding your blood” (cf. Heb 12.4). It is to have, once again, the attitude and virtue of Saint Paul.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way through great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watchings, hunger; by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true, as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing everything (2Cor 4.7–11, 6.4–10).

The one who loves God perfectly is the one who loves Him with the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the “power .?.?. made perfect in weakness” (1Cor 12.9).
### Love of Neighbor

After the love of God, the greatest commandment is the love of one’s neighbor.

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets* (*Mt 22.37–40, Mk 12.30–31, Lk 10.27, Lev 19.18*).

*There is no commandment greater than these* (*Mk 12.31*).

Love of neighbor necessarily follows from the love of God, and there can be no true love of God without it.

*He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause of stumbling. He who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going for the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

If any one says “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God, should love his brother also (*1Jn 2.9–11, 4.20–21*).

The love of the neighbor and the brother does not mean the love of only those who love us and are good to us. The neighbor and the brother mean anyone near at hand, everyone made by God, all “for whom Christ has died” (*Rom 14.15*). The neighbor and the brother include also the enemies. This is the point of Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk 10.29–37*). It is also the Lord’s specific teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the heathen do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (*Mt 5.44–48*).

*But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you*
hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to the ungrateful and selfish (Lk 6.27–35).

This teaching of Jesus is conveyed also in the writings of the apostles.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection .?.?. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them .?.?. No, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink .?.?. Owe one another nothing, but to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,” and any other commandment are summed up in this sentence, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom 12.9–10, 14–20; 13.8–10; cf. Mt 25.31–46).

Genuine love is expressed in deeds, and not in words alone. It is expressed through what one actually does in one’s life. It is manifested in concern for others through kindly speech and generosity with one’s earthly possessions given by God. It is revealed in one’s works of faith in keeping all of God’s commandments.

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that Christ laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth (1Jn 3.14–18; cf. Jas 2.8–17).

The love of neighbor “as oneself” is sometimes misunderstood. One should, of course, love oneself in the sense that one is faithful to God and grateful for his life. And certainly one should love oneself in the sense that he sees himself as uniquely important in the eyes of God and the object of God’s own unfailing love and mercy. One should not hate oneself in the sense that he despises the life given to him by God, rejecting his own talents and gifts because he is envious of others. Neither should one hate oneself for being a sinner, since, as the masters teach, such a self-hate is only the subtle form of a more grandiose price which vaunts a person to stature of judgment greater than that of God Himself, who is merciful, loving and forgiving (cf. Father Alexander Elchaninoff, 20th c. Diary of a Russian Priest; Father John of Kronstadt, 20th c. My Life in Christ).

One should certainly “hate himself,” however, in the sense that he despises and crucifies his “old self” corrupted by sin in order to “put off the old nature
with its evil practices” and to “put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator” (Rom 6.6, Col 3.10).

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal 2.20; cf. 5.24, 6.14).

This is also what Christ undoubtedly meant when He spoke those most violent and terrifying words in the Gospel.

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple (Lk 14.26).

This is the extreme and terrifying warning against all passionate attachments stronger and more powerful than one’s passionate attachment to Christ alone. And the greatest passion of all which keeps one from the love of God and the love of one’s neighbor is the sinful passion for oneself. Sinful self-love, says Saint Maximus the Confessor, is the “mother of all evils,” and the “original sin” of man’s heart.

One must “hate oneself” in this sense, even as he must hate his family and friends. He must hate them as objects of his sinful self-love, that he might love them, and himself most truly in Christ.
The New Commandment

The commandments to love God and neighbor are found in the law of Moses. They are not commandments for God’s people. They are the commandments “written on men’s hearts” and given “by nature” itself (Rom 2.14–15). They are the commandments given by God, in His Words, to man “from the beginning” (1Jn 2.7).

In the new covenant Church of Christ, however, there is a “new commandment” (1Jn 2.8). It is the “new commandment” given by Jesus Himself to those who believe in Him.

A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13.34).

The new element in this “new commandment” is not the teaching of love, for this was written in the law. The new element is that believers in Christ must love as Christ Himself loves. The new commandment is to love “as I have loved you.”

Christian love must be the perfect love of Christ Himself which is wholly divine. Christian love must be the totally self-emptying love of the Lord Himself. It must be the divine love of God the Father poured into men’s hearts by the very Spirit of God. It must be the love that is absolutely faithful, perfect, eternal and divine.

Of all the men who ever lived on this earth, or who ever will live, only one has fully fulfilled the two great commandments of God; only one has lived absolutely and perfectly according to God’s laws; only one has loved the Father with all of His heart, mind, soul, and strength, and His neighbor as Himself. This is Jesus Christ, the child of Mary according to the flesh.

There is no one righteous before God’s law but Jesus. Only He has lived according to the law and by the teachings of the prophets. He alone is the one who has “fulfilled the law and the prophets” (cf. Mt 5.17, 7.12). He alone, of all men, has loved with perfect, sinless, dispassionate love.

He committed no sin; no guile was found on His lips. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed (1Pet 2.22–24; cf. Is 53).

Having no sin, Jesus took our sins upon Himself and became sin “for us men and for our salvation” (Nicene Creed). In this the perfect love of God was
perfected in a human being, that all humans might share in the love and glory of God. As all of the holy fathers have said, “He became what we are, that we might become what He is .?.?. God became man that man might become god.”

For our sake God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2Cor 5.21).

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness .?.?. that you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the nature of God (2Pet 1.3–4).

Since .?.?. the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.

Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself suffered and was tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.

For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize [i.e., co-suffer] with our weaknesses, but One who in every respect has been tempted as we, yet without sinning (Heb 2.14–18, 4.15–16).

God has given us His love in Jesus. When a person is “in Christ” he can love with the love of God. This is the “new commandment,” that men filled with the Holy Spirit should love with the love of God Himself.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul describes the perfect love which is Christ’s gift of God to men in the Holy Spirit. He describes what Christian love is: the chief gift of the Spirit of God, who is love.

Through the love of Christ, men are called to bear, believe, hope and suffer all things. This is what Christ has done. This is what love does. The one who does this has fulfilled the “new commandment” of Jesus and abides in the love of God. The one who does this abides in God Himself, and already possesses eternal life as a member of His Kingdom.

The Gift of Love

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for the prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

(1Cor 13.1–13)
Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving
Prayer

All of the virtues and powers of God are attained primarily by prayer. Without prayer, there is no spiritual life. As the Russian bishop, Theophan the Recluse, has said, “If you are not successful in your prayer, you will not be successful in anything, for prayer is the root of everything” (Theophan the Recluse, 19th c., The Art of Prayer, Igumen Chariton, ed.).

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Mt 6.5–6).

Prayer must be in secret. This is the first rule given by Christ. The person who prays must do so in such a way that he would not be seen by men to be praying.

In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the words of Christ “go into your room” have been interpreted in two ways. First of all, they have been understood to be a literal commandment. The praying person must close himself off physically during times of prayer in order to pray secretly and to avoid being seen.

Secondly, these words of Christ have been understood to mean that the praying person must enter within himself, praying secretly in his mind and heart at all times, without displaying his interior prayer to others. Thus the “room” which one must “go into” is the “room of the soul.”

The room of the soul is the body; our doors are the five bodily senses. The soul enters its room when the mind does not wander here and there, roaming among the things and affairs of the world, but stays within, in our heart. Our senses become closed and remain closed when we do not let them be passionately attached to external sensory things and in this way our mind remains free from every worldly attachment, and by secret mental prayer unites with God its Father.

God who sees all secret things sees mental prayer and rewards it openly with great gifts. For that prayer is true and perfect which fills the soul with divine grace and spiritual gifts (Saint Gregory Palamas, 14th c., How All Christians Must Pray Without Ceasing).

Thus, in the spiritual tradition of the Christian teachers of prayer, the unification of the mind and the heart within the soul is seen to be the fulfillment of the basic condition of prayer as commanded by Christ (cf. The
And in praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the heathen do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not he like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him (Mt 6.7–8).

God knows the needs of His people. Man prays in order to unite his mind and heart with God. He prays in order that God’s will would be done in his life. He prays so that whatever he needs from God would be given. He prays so that he would consciously and with full awareness express the fact that all that he is, has and does is dependent on God. It is man who needs to pray. It is not God who needs man’s prayers.

True Christian prayer must be brief. It must be simple and regular. It must not be many-worded. Indeed it need not have words at all. It may be the totally silent inner attitude of the soul before God, the fulfillment of the words of the psalmist:

Commune with your hearts .?.?. and be silent. Be still, and know that I am God (Ps 4.4, 46.10).

The teaching about brevity and silence in prayer is found in all of the spiritual teachers. Saint Dimitry of Rostov sums up this teaching when he says that the publican prayed only “God be merciful to me a sinner” and was justified; the repentant thief prayed only “Remember me .?.?.” and received paradise; and the prodigal son and the tax-collector, Zacchaeus, said nothing at all, and received the mercy of the Father and the forgiveness of Christ (Lk 15.20, 18.13, 19.5, 22.42; cf. St Dimitry of Rostov, 17th c., The Art of Prayer, Igumen Chariton, ed.).

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened?.?.?. If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in My name, I will do it (Jn 14.13–14).

Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (Jn 16.23–24).

Whatever one asks in the name of Jesus will be given. This does not mean that man can ask God for anything at all. He cannot ask for what is not needed, or for what is evil. He can ask, however, and must ask for “good gifts,” for whatever can be asked in the name of Christ, for whatever is holy and sinless and good. If one asks for good things in faith, he will certainly receive them if
God thinks that he should have them for his life and salvation. This is the promise of the Lord Himself.

*If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you* (Jn 15.7).

*And whatever you ask in prayer, if you have faith, you will receive* (Mt 21.22, cf. Lk 18.1–8).

Every prayer directed to God in faith is answered. This does not mean that what is asked is always given, for God knows better than the person who prays what is good for him. For this reason the spiritual teachers warn man against being too long and insistent in his concrete demands of the Lord. God knows best what is needed, and in order to prove this to His servants, He may at times yield to their insistent demands and give what they want, but should not have, in order to show them quite clearly that they should have trusted in His wisdom. Thus it is always best to be silent and brief in prayer, and not too specifically demanding. It is always best to pray: “Give what is needed, O Lord. Thy will be done.”

*How many times have I prayed for what seemed a good thing for me, and not leaving it to God to do, as He knows best, what is useful for me. But having obtained what I begged for, I found myself in distress because I had not asked for it to be, rather, according to God’s will .??.* (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., *Texts on Prayer*).
The Lord’s Prayer

When teaching men to pray, Christ said,

Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Mt 6.9–13, cf. Lk 11.2–4).

This is the usual translation of the prayer used in the Orthodox Church. It begins with a petition to God as “our Father.” There was no such prayer before this teaching of Christ. The Old Testament people did not address God as “Abba: Father” (Rom 8.15, Gal 4.6). This name of “Father” for God is given by Christ, the divine Son of God. Men can dare, “with boldness and without condemnation” to call upon the “heavenly God” with the name of “Father” only when they are made worthy to do so by Christ (cf. Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). In the early church the prayer “Our Father” was taught only to the baptized members of the church.

The statement that the Father is “in heaven,” or literally “in the heavens,” means that He is everywhere and over all things. The heavens are over all and encompass all. Wherever man goes on the earth or in the air, or even in space, the heavens are around him and over him. To say that the Father is “in the heavens” means that He is not tied down or limited to any one location-as were the gods of the heathens. The heavenly God is the “God of gods” (Deut 10.17, 2Chron 2.5), the “Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4.5), the one in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17.28). To say that God is “in heaven” is not to place Him somewhere; it is rather to say that He transcends all things and yet is present to all.

“Hallowed be Thy name” means that God’s name is holy and should be treated with respect and devotion. In the old covenant it was the custom of the Jews never to say the sacred name of God: Yahweh, the I AM (cf. Ex 3.13–15). This was to guard against defilement of the divine name, and to safeguard against transgressing the commandment: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Ex 20.7).

In the New Testament, God gives Jesus the “name which is above every name” (Phil 2.9) and in making the name of the Father holy, Christians do so in the name of His Son.

“Thy Kingdom come” in the Lord’s Prayer is first of all the prayer for the
end of the ages. Christians want the world to end so that God’s Kingdom would fill all creation with divine glory and life. “Come Lord Jesus; Maranatha!” is the prayer of the faithful, the last prayer of the Scriptures (Rev 22.20, cf. 1Cor 16.22). It is the calling for the final appearance of the Lord.

In the spiritual tradition of the Church, the prayer “Thy Kingdom come” has also been understood as an invocation of the Holy Spirit to dwell in God’s people. In his commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, Saint Gregory of Nyssa says that there was another reading for this petition which said “Thy Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us.” Thus he says, following the scriptures, that the presence of the Holy Spirit in man is the presence of Christ and the Kingdom of God.

For the Kingdom of God is .?.?. righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14.17).

.?.?. it is God who establishes us with you in Christ .?.?. He has put His seal upon us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2Cor 1.22).

In Him .?.?. you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory.

.?.?. do not grieve the Holy Spirit in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph 1.13–14, 4.30).

The seal of the Holy Spirit on men’s hearts is the pledge and guarantee of the Kingdom of God still to come in all power and glory. In the prayer “Thy Kingdom come,” believers in Jesus ask that the Kingdom of God “not coming in external signs of observation” for the faithless to behold, might dwell powerfully and secretly within the faithful (cf. Lk 17.20–21).

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is the center of the Lord’s Prayer, the central desire of Christians. The whole purpose of prayer, the very purpose of man’s life, is to do the will of God. This is what Jesus prayed and did (cf. Mt 26.42). And this is what His followers must pray and do. There is but one purpose of prayer, say the spiritual teachers, to keep God’s commandments so as not to sin, thus leading to deification and divine sonship with Christ.

The only thing that God demands of us mortals is that we do not sin. But this .?.?. is merely keeping inviolate the image and rank we possess by nature. Clothed thus in the radiant garment of the Spirit, we abide in God and He in us; through grace we become gods and sons of God and are illumined by the light of His knowledge .?.?. (Saint Simeon the New Theologian, 10th c., Practical and Theological Precepts).

To pray “Thy will be done” according to the spiritual teachers, is a daring
and dangerous act. This is so, first of all, because when one makes this prayer, he must be ready, like Christ, to follow where it leads. God will answer this prayer, and make known His will. The person who prays must be ready to obey, whatever the consequences. When asked why many Christians are frustrated and irritated, grouchy and mean, and sometimes even somewhat “unbalanced,” one spiritual teacher responded that the reason is clear. They pray “Thy will be done,” and continue daily to do so, while at the same time they resist God’s will in their lives and so are always ill at ease. Then they begin to justify their attitudes and actions, to explain and to rationalize their behavior, before their own consciences and others. A person in such a state can never be at peace, for “it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God” (Heb 10.31).

The second reason why it is said that the prayer “Thy will be done”—and prayer generally—is daring and dangerous is because the devil ferociously attacks the person who prays. Indeed one of the greatest proofs of demonic temptation, and the reality and power of the devil, is to be fervent in prayer. For the devil wants nothing so much as for man to fail to accomplish the will of God which is the purpose of all prayer.

If you strive after prayer, prepare yourself for diabolical suggestions and bear patiently their onslaughts; for they will attack you like wild beasts .?.?. Try as much as possible to be humble and courageous .?.?. He who endures will be granted great joy (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., Texts on Prayer).

The prayer for our “daily bread” is normally understood to signify generally all of our bodily needs and whatever we require to sustain our lives in this world. In the spiritual tradition however, this petition, because it literally says our “essential” or “super-essential” bread, is often understood in the spiritual sense to mean the nourishment of our souls by the Word of God, Jesus Christ who is the “Bread of Life;” the “Bread of God which has come down from heaven and given life to the world” (Jn 6.33–36); the bread which “a man may eat of it and not die,” but “live forever” (Jn 6.50–51). Thus the prayer for “daily bread” becomes the petition for daily spiritual nourishment through abiding communion with Christ so that one might live perpetually with God.

The prayer “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” has been especially emphasized by the Lord.

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Mt 6.14–15).

This is the point of Christ’s parable about the unforgiving servant (Mt 18.23–35). All men need the forgiveness of God and must pray for it. All men are indebted to God for everything, and fail to offer the thanksgiving and praise
and righteousness that are due. The only way that God will overlook and forgive the sins and debts of His servants is if they themselves forgive their brothers, not merely in words and formal gestures, but genuinely and truly “from their hearts” (cf. Mt 18.35). In the prayer taught by Christ this is clearly acknowledged.

“Lead us not into temptation” should not be understood as if God puts His people to the test or brings them in to the occasion of evil.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God;” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death (Jas 1.13–15).

“Lead us not into temptation” means that we ask God not to allow us to be found in situations in which we will be overcome by sin. It is a prayer that we be kept from those people and places where wickedness reigns and where we in our weakness will certainly succumb. It is a prayer that we will be liberated from the deceit and vanity of our minds and hearts, from the carnal lusts that dwell in our bodies. It is a prayer that God Himself would be man’s shelter and refuge (cf. Ps 91).

“Deliver us from evil” says literally “rescue us from the evil one,” that is, the devil. The meaning is clear. There are but two ways for man: God and life or the devil and death. Deliverance from the devil means salvation and redemption from every falsehood, foolishness, deceit, wickedness and iniquity that leads to destruction and death.

Thus, as Metropolitan Anthony of Sorouzh has explained, the Lord’s Prayer shows the whole meaning of the life of man (cf. Anthony Bloom, Living Prayer). Delivered from evil, man is saved from temptation, in so doing he is merciful to all and receives the forgiveness of his own sins. Being forgiven his sins, by his mercy to others, he has all that he needs for life—his “daily bread”; and being nourished by God, he accomplishes His will. Having accomplished His will, God’s Kingdom is present, His name is sanctified and He becomes the Father of the one who shows himself to be in truth the child of God who can say, “Our Father.”
Intercessory Prayer

In praying to His Father, Jesus prayed for His people (cf. Jn 17), He Himself is the only competent intercessor for men before God.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave Himself as a ransom for all (1Tim 2–3).

Jesus, in His resurrected glory, prays eternally to His Father on behalf of His creatures.

He holds His priesthood permanently because He continues forever. Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

For Christ has entered, not a sanctuary made with hands .?.?. but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb 7.24–25; 9.24).

In and through Christ, Christians become competent to intercede before God. In the name of Jesus, Christians are commanded and empowered to pray for each other and for all creation: “on behalf of all and for all” (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

First of all I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions??.?. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1Tim 2.1–4).

Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like natures with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain and .?.?. it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit (Jas 5.16–18).

Intercessory prayers can be made for every “good gift” from God for the sake of the salvation of others. Such prayers can include petitions for every kind of blessing, both for the body and the soul. They can be made for the inspiration and instruction of men, as well as for their healing and salvation. Whatever one can ask for oneself, one can ask for all men. Whatever one does ask for oneself should be entreated for all. “It is right to pray not only for one’s own purification, but for the purification of every man .?.?.” (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., Texts on Prayer).

To understand intercessory prayer, one must remember the eternal providence of God. One must grasp the fact that God knows all things eternally
and takes into consideration each act of man in His overall plan. With this perspective one can then see that even before the creation of the world, God has heard, or rather, more accurately, eternally hears, the cries of His people. He considers man’s prayers in all that He does in His dealings with men. Thus it is the case that God does not wait to see what we do or how we will pray. He considers our actions and prayers from the perspective of eternity. And in the light of our desires and deeds He sees that “all things work together for good for those who love God” (Rom 8.28).

If we understand this we can see how our prayers are considered by God, for ourselves and for others. We can understand as well how we can pray even for those who are dead, whose lives on this earth are over and done. For the Lord does not hear our prayers “after” something is finished, because for God there is no “after” at all. God knows what we ask before we even ask it, for He knows all of man’s life in one divine act of all-embracing vision and knowledge. Thus all of our prayers, even for those who are dead, are heard and considered by God before we even make them. If we fail to pray, this too is known to God, and it takes its effect in God’s plan of salvation. Therefore we have to “pray for one another” and our prayer will have “great power in its effects” through the eternal and providential action of God.
In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul instructs Christians to “be constant in prayer” (Rom 12.12). In his first letter to the Thessalonians he says simply, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5.17).

These two commands of the apostle have been interpreted in the Orthodox tradition in two different ways. The first way, mentioned by Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Dimitry of Rostov, is that Christians should have regular times for prayer which they never skip—“in the evening and the morning and at noon day” (Ps 55.17)—and then in between they should always remember God and do all things to His glory (cf. 1Cor 10.31), offering up supplications and petitions as the need may arise, praising and thanking when the occasion requires it. Such is the normal way that all Christians must live.

Prepare for your set times of prayer by unceasing prayer in your soul, and you will soon make progress (Saint John of the Ladder, Step 28).

The set times of prayer are very important, and should not be put aside for any reason, even when one prays continuously in his heart. This is the teaching and practice of the saints. Each person desiring to live the spiritual life should have his own rule of prayer. It should be brief and regular, such that it could be kept in all conditions and circumstances. In this set rule of prayer, the prayers of the Church should be used, the Lord’s Prayer and those from the prayer book. This gives discipline in prayer and provides instruction and inspiration in prayer which is perfectly trustworthy and sound, having demonstrated its power in the lives of the saints. A person who does not follow a set rule of prayer using the traditional prayers of the Church runs the great risk of impoverishing his prayer and reducing its dimensions and scope to the limited perspective of his own individual desires and needs.

When praying with a set rule of prayer, the spiritual teachers tell us to put our whole mind and heart into the meaning of the words, not merely “saying prayers,” which is not prayer at all, but genuinely praying through personal attention and fervor. They tell us to allow our mind not to wander from the words of the prayer, but to use the given words as the basis of our own personal devotion, even allowing our mind to go beyond the given words to our own words, or to no words in the prayer of silence, if the Lord leads us this way. They also tell beginners—and Saint Dimitry of Rostov says that we are all beginners, no matter how advanced—never to go back and repeat prayers done poorly. They tell us rather to put ourselves at the mercy of God, and to try to do better the next time. This method reduces the possibility of thinking that God
hears our prayers according to the perfection of our performance and not according to the greatness of His mercy, and safeguards against both pride and despair. It gives humility and hope, and keeps us always forging ahead (cf. Lk 9.62, Phil 3.13–15).

Thus when one finishes his rule of prayer, however well or poorly he has done it, he should say “Amen,” and go about his business of living in Christ, remembering God and doing His will until the next time comes for the rule of prayer to be done. Then he should do it as well as he can, beginning all over again.

The second way of interpreting the teachings about unceasing prayer is that men should actually pray with conscious awareness at every moment of their lives, and even in their unconscious selves while their bodies are sleeping. This understanding of “unceasing prayer” was developed in the monastic tradition, but then spread rapidly throughout the whole membership of the church. It became very popular in recent times, mostly through the appearance of the book by the anonymous Russian peasant called The Way of the Pilgrim.

The search for active “unceasing prayer” has its source not only in the instruction of Saint Paul, but also in the literal interpretation of such words of the psalmist:

* I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continuously be in my mouth (*Ps 34.1*).
* And of the Song of Solomon:  
  * I slept, but my heart was awake* (*Song 5.2*).

The method of “unceasing prayer” is to have a brief prayer verse, usually the Jesus Prayer (see next section), which is repeated over and over, literally hundreds of times throughout the day and night, until it becomes perpetually implanted in the heart as a “bubbling spring,” a continual presence in the soul calling out to the Lord (cf. Theophan the Recluse, 19th c., *The Art of Prayer*). It is often, but not necessarily, connected with one’s breathing, so much so that it is uttered “with every breath” (Saint Gregory the Theologian; Saint John Chrysostom). It begins by being said vocally, silently with the lips, and then it becomes wholly mental. The claim is made that one can continue this “unceasing prayer” even while engaged in the normal activities of life, while reading or writing, and even while sleeping, thus the “body sleeps,” but the “heart is awake.” Then, whenever one’s attention to the affairs of life cease, or when one awakes from one’s bed, one finds that the prayer is continuing itself.

The prayer is also known to break through one’s consciousness with power in times of temptation or stress, appearing, as it were, of its own accord (cf. *The Art of Prayer*, Igumen Chariton, ed.).
We are not commanded to work, keep vigil or fast without ceasing, but we are commanded to pray without ceasing. For prayer purifies, and strengthens the mind which was created to pray and to fight the demons for the protection of all the powers of the soul (Evagrius of Pontus, 4th c.).

He who has entered his room [i.e. his heart] and prays without ceasing has included in this all prayer everywhere (Saint Mark the Ascetic, 4th c., Direction from Discourses).

Let no one think, my brother Christians, that it is the duty only of priests and monks to pray without ceasing, and not of laymen. No, no; it is the duty of all Christians to remain always in prayer. bear in mind the method of prayer-how it is possible to pray without ceasing, namely by praying in the mind. And this we can do always if we wish. For when we sit down to work with our hands, when we walk, when we eat, when we drink we can always pray mentally and practice this mental prayer-the true prayer pleasing to God.

Blessed are those who acquire this heavenly habit, for by it they overcome every temptation.

This practice of inner prayer tames the passions. by it the dew of the Holy Spirit is brought down into the heart. This mental prayer is the light which illumines man’s soul and inflames his heart with the fire of love for God. It is the chain linking God with man and man with God. Oh, the incomparable blessing of mental prayer. It allows a man constantly to converse with God.

And what other and greater rewards can you wish than this, when you are always before the face of God, constantly conversing with Him-conversing with God, without whom no person can ever be blessed, either here or in the life still to come (Saint Gregory Palamas, 14th c., How All Christians In General Must Pray Without Ceasing).
The most normal form of unceasing prayer in the Orthodox tradition is the Jesus Prayer. The Jesus Prayer is the form of invocation used by those practicing mental prayer, also called the “prayer of the heart.” The words of the prayer most usually said are “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” The choice of this particular verse has a theological and spiritual meaning.

First of all, it is centered on the name of Jesus because this is the name of Him whom “God has highly exalted,” the name given to the Lord by God Himself (Lk 1.31), the “name which is above every name” (Phil 2.9–10, cf. Eph 1.21).

... for there is no other name given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4.12).

All prayer for Christians must be performed in the name of Jesus: “if you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (Jn 14.13–14).

The fact that the prayer is addressed to Jesus as Lord and Christ and Son of God is because this is the center of the entire faith revealed by God in the Spirit.

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

And Jesus answered, “Blessed are you.?.?. for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven .?.?. and on this rock I will build my Church .?.?.” (Mt 16.16–18).

That Jesus is the Christ, and that the Christ is Lord is the essence of the Christian faith and the foundation of the Christian church. To believe and proclaim this is granted by the Holy Spirit.

... no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit (1Cor 12.3).

... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2.11).

In calling Jesus the Son of God is to acknowledge God as His Father. To do this is, at the same time, to have God as one’s own Father, and this too is granted by the indwelling Spirit.

And when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” (Gal 4.4–6).

When we cry “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with...
our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom. 8:15–16).

Thus, to pray “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God” is already to be a child of God, and already to be certain that the Holy Spirit is in you. In this way, the Jesus Prayer brings the Spirit of God into the heart of man.

“Have mercy on me a sinner” is the publican’s prayer. When uttered with humble conviction it brings divine justification (cf. Lk 18:9–14). Generally speaking, divine mercy is what man needs most of all. It is for this reason that the numberless repetition of the request for the Lord’s mercy is found everywhere in the prayers of the Church.

And finally, all men are sinners. To know this is a fact, and to confess it with faith is to be justified and forgiven by God (cf. Rom 3:10–12, Ps 14:1–3).

The Jesus Prayer basically is used in three different ways. First as the verse used for the “prayer of the heart” in silence in the hesychast method of prayer. Second as the continual mental and unceasing prayer of the faithful outside the hesychast tradition. And third as the brief ejaculatory prayer used to ward off temptations. Of course, in the actual life of a person these three uses of the prayer are often interrelated and combined.

In the hesychast method of prayer the person sits alone in a bodily position with his head bowed and his eyes directed toward his chest or his stomach. He continually repeats the prayer with each aspiration and breath, placing his “mind in his heart” by concentrated attention. He empties his mind of all rational thoughts and discursive reasoning, and also voids his mind of every picture and image. Then, without thought or imagination, but with all proper attention and concentration he rhythmically repeats the Jesus Prayer in silence—hesychia means silence—and through this method of contemplative prayer is united to God by the indwelling of Christ in the Spirit. According to the fathers, such a prayer, when faithfully practiced within the total life of the Church, brings the experience of the uncreated divine light of God and unspeakable joy to the soul. Its purpose is to make man a servant of God.

the mind when it unites with the heart is filled with unspeakable joy and delight. Then a man sees that the Kingdom of heaven is truly within us.

When you enter the place of the heart, give thanks to God, and praising His mercy, keep always to this activity, and it will teach you things which you will learn in no other way.

when your mind becomes established in the heart, it must not remain idle, but it should constantly repeat the prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!” and never cease.

For this practice, keeping the mind from dreaming, renders it invincible against all suggestions of the devil and every day leads it more and more to
love and longing for God (Saint Nicephorus, 14th c., *Discourse on Sobriety*).

To practice the hesychast method of prayer requires always and without exception the guidance of a spiritual guide, one must not use this method unless one is a person of genuine humility and sanity, filled with all wisdom and peace. To use this method without guidance or humble wisdom is to court spiritual disaster, for the temptations that come with it are many. Indeed, the abuses of the method became so great in recent centuries that its use was greatly curtailed. Bishop Theophan tells that the bodily postures and breathing techniques were virtually forbidden in his time since, instead of gaining the Spirit of God, people succeeded only “in ruining their lungs” (cf. *The Art of Prayer*, Igumen Chariton, ed.).

Such abusive and abortive uses of the method-itself something genuine and richly rewarding-were already known in fourteenth century Byzantium when Saint Gregory Palamas defended the tradition. And evidence exists from as early as the fourth century to show that even then people were using the prayer foolishly and to no avail by reducing it to a “thing in itself” and being captivated by its form without interest in its purpose. Indeed, the idolatrous interest in spiritual technique and in the pleasurable benefits of “spirituality” and “mysticism” are the constant temptations of the spiritual life-and the devil’s most potent weapon. Bishop Theophan called such interest “spiritual hedonism”; John of the Cross (16th c. Spain) called it “spiritual gluttony” and “spiritual luxury.” Thus, by way of example from various times and places, come the following admonitions.

*Those who refuse to work with their hands under the pretext that one should pray without ceasing, in reality do not pray either. Through idleness .?.?. they entangle the soul in a labyrinth of thoughts .?.?. and make it incapable of prayer* (Saint Nilus of Sinai, 5th c., *Texts on Prayer*).

*As long as you pay attention only to bodily posture for prayer and your mind cares only for the external beauty of the tabernacle [i.e. proper forms], know that you have not yet found the place of prayer and its blessed way is still far from you.*

Know that in the midst of all spiritual joy and consolation, that it is still more necessary to serve God with devotion and fear (Saint Nilus of Sinai, *Texts on Prayer*).

*It is natural for the mind to reject what is at hand and dream of something else to come .?.?. to build fantasies and imaginings about achievements before he has attained them. Such a man is in considerable danger of losing what he has and falling into self-delusion and being deprived of good sense. He becomes only a dreamer and not a man of continual prayer [i.e. a hesychast]*
If you are truly practicing the continual prayer of silence, hoping to be with God and you see something sensory or spiritual, within or without, be it even the image of Christ, or an angel, or some saint, or if an image of light pervades your mind in no way accept it. Always be displeased with such images, and keep your mind clear, without image or form, and you will suffer no harm. It has often happened that such things, even when sent by God as a test before victory, have turned into harm for many who have then done harm to others equally unwise, leading to pride and self-conceit.

For the fathers say that those who live rightly and are faultless in their behavior with other men, who seek God with obedience, questioning and wise humility, will always be protected from harm by the grace of Christ (Saint Gregory of Sinai, Instructions to Hesychasts).

The use of the Jesus Prayer outside the hesychast method for unceasing prayer is to repeat the prayer constantly and continually, whatever one is doing, without the employment of any particular bodily postures or breathing techniques. This is the way taught by Saint Gregory Palamas in his short discourse about how unceasing mental prayer is the duty of all Christians. Anyone can do this, whatever his occupation or position in life. This also is shown in The Way of the Pilgrim.

The purpose and results of this method of prayer are those generally of all prayer: that men might be continually united with God by unceasing remembrance of His presence and perpetual invocation of His name, so that one might always serve Him and all men with the virtues of Christ and the fruits of the Spirit.

The third method of using the Jesus Prayer is to have it always ready for moments of temptation. In this way, as Saint John Climacus has said, you can “flog your enemies, i.e. the temptations, with the name of Jesus, for there is no stronger weapon in heaven or on earth” (The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 21). This method works best when one practices the prayer without ceasing, joining “to every breath a sober invocation of Jesus’ name” (Evagrius of Pontus). When one practices the continual “prayer of the heart,” and when the temptations to sin enter the heart, they are met by the prayer and are defeated by grace.

Man cannot live in this world without being tempted. When temptation comes to a person, there are only three possible results. Either the person immediately yields to the temptation and sins, or he tries to ward off the temptation by the power of his will, and is ultimately defeated after great vexation and strife. Or else he fights off the temptation by the power of Christ
in his heart which is present only by prayer. This does not mean that he “prays the temptation away.” Or that God miraculously and magically descends to deliver him. It means rather that his soul is so filled with the grace and the power of God that the temptation can have no effect. It is in this sense that the Apostle John has written: “no one who abides in Christ sins” (1Jn 3.6).

He who sins is of the devil .?.?. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God commits sins; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin for he is born of God. By this мая be seen who are children of God, and who are children of the devil (1Jn 3.8–10).

One becomes a child of God, born of God in the Church through baptism. One continues as a child of God and does not sin only by continual prayer: the remembrance of God, the abiding in Him, the calling upon His name without ceasing in the soul. The third use of the Jesus Prayer, like the first two, is to accomplish this end: that man might not sin.
Liturgical prayer is not simply the prayers of individual Christians joined into one. It is not a corporate “prayer service” of many persons together. It is rather the official prayer of the Church formally assembled; the prayer of Christ in the Church, offering His “body” and “bride” to the Father in the Spirit. It is the Church’s participation in Christ’s perpetual prayer in the presence of God in the Kingdom of heaven (cf. Heb 7.24–25, 9.24). The model of liturgical prayer is in the book of Revelation, and not in the gospel events of Jerusalem or Galilee.

In the Orthodox Church there is no tradition of corporate prayer which is not liturgical. Some consider this a lack, but most likely it is based on Christ’s teaching that the prayer of individuals should be done “in secret” (Mt 6.5–6). This guards against vain repetition and the expression of personal petitions which are meaningless to others. It also protects persons from being subjected to the superficialities and shallowness of those, who instead of praying, merely express the opinions and desires of their own minds and hearts.

When a person participates in the liturgical prayer of the Church, he can only do so effectively to the extent that he prays by himself, at home, and in his own mind and heart. The one who “prays without ceasing” is the one who offers and receives most in liturgical prayer.

When one participates in the liturgical prayer of the Church, he should make every effort to join himself fully with all the members of the body. He should not “say his own prayers” in church, but should pray “with the Church.” This does not mean that he forgets his own needs and desires, depersonalizing himself and becoming but one more voice in the crowd. It means rather that he should unite his own person, his own needs and desires, all of his life with those who are present, with the church throughout the world, with the angels and saints, indeed with Christ Himself in the one great “divine” and “heavenly liturgy” of all creation before God.

Practically this means that one who participates in liturgical prayer should put his whole being, his whole mind and heart, into each prayer and petition and liturgical action, making it come alive in himself. If each person does this, then the liturgical exclamations become genuine and true, and the whole assembly as one body will glorify God with “one mouth, one mind and one heart” (See Worship, Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).
Meditation differs from prayer, even from silent prayer, in that meditation is thought about God and contemplation of His word and His works.

Meditation normally begins by reading from the holy Scriptures, the Word of God. This is called in the spiritual tradition *lectio divina*. It is the slow and attentive reading of the Bible, or perhaps the writings of the church fathers and saints, not for the purpose of gaining information, but for the purpose of communion with God.

Such meditative reading may be of the sort where the person tries, with the power of his thought and imagination, to enter into the event about which he is reading in order to become its contemporary participant. Or, it can be of the sort where the person merely reads and listens in silence, without imagination or rational thought, in order to let the Word of God enter his mind and heart in order to remain there, to bring forth its fruit at the appointed time.

Psalmody, done either alone or in the churchly assembly, exists for this latter purpose. When reading or chanting the psalms, the person does not try to think about each word and phrase. Rather he cuts off all reasoning, and opens his heart to the Lord, uniting “his mouth with his mind,” (Saint Benedict) and allowing the Word of God to be planted within him to blossom in his soul with the fruits of the Spirit. This also is the case with church hymnography. It is sung for the glory of God and the edification and expansion of the soul through the contemplation of the Lord in His words and works of salvation, much more than for any intellectual instruction. This type of meditation is especially advised in times of despondency.

There is also the type of meditation and contemplation done totally in silence, without any words or images or thoughtful activity at all, not even psalmody. The person merely sits in silence, often in the presence of holy icons, and emptying his mind of all thoughts, imaginations and desires, listens to God in silence, the divine “language of the Kingdom of heaven” (Saint Isaac of Syria). This type of meditation, for a person of unceasing prayer, will be the “prayer of silence,” with the “bubbling spring” of the Jesus Prayer as its only foundation and background. In such contemplative prayer and prayerful contemplation, the spirit of man becomes one with the Spirit of God (cf. 1Cor 6.17).
All Christian prayer must be prayer in the Spirit; and all genuine prayer most certainly is. Men pray to the Father, through Christ the Son and Word of God in the Holy Spirit. This is the case wherever men pray, whatever their method, whether they know it or not. For prayer is not man’s lonely cry across empty spaces to a far-off God. Prayer is man’s being in God; being in the Holy Spirit, as made in Christ’s image, the dwelling place of God.

_Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? God’s temple is holy, and that temple you are_ (1Cor 3.16–17, cf. Deut 30.9–14, Ps 139.7–14, Rom 10.5–13).

Christian prayer is done consciously in the Holy Spirit, with all faith and awareness. It is addressed to and through Christ, to the Father. In the Orthodox Church there is only one prayer among all the prayers of the Church addressed to the Holy Spirit. This is the prayer O Heavenly King, which begins all prayers and clearly creates the conditions in which all prayer is performed.

_O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth,_

_You are everywhere and fill all things,_

_Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life,_

_Come and abide in us, cleanse us from every impurity_

_And save our souls, O Good One._

Even on Pentecost Sunday in the Orthodox Church the three special prayers of the feast are addressed to Christ and the Father.

The prayer to God for the coming of the Spirit is itself a sign that the Spirit is already in man enabling him to call to the Father. This is the mystery of man’s nature and existence; that he is only truly man when the Holy Spirit is in him. This is the mystery of God’s gracious work in man. It is the mystery of prayer and life itself.

One calls God “Our Father” only in the Spirit. One calls Jesus “Lord” only in the Spirit. One prays to God in any manner or form only in the Spirit. The words of the psalms, the prayers of the saints, the liturgical worship of the Church, is the “breathing of God’s Spirit” in man (Saint John of Kronstadt, _My Life in Christ_). For all prayer, like the scripture itself, is by the inspiration of God.

Even when men do not know how to pray or for what they should ask, it is the Holy Spirit who prays in them that they would have what is needed, that God’s will would be done.

_Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to_
pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with signs too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Rom 8.26–27).

Thus the prayer in the Spirit, as well as the prayer for the Spirit, has as its purpose the “acquisition of the Spirit” so that by the “fruits of the Spirit” man would be holy and divine by God’s grace. This is the basic mystery of the spiritual life. For as Saint Augustine has said, the person who seeks the Lord has already been found by Him. The very seeking in prayer, when one knows not how to pray, makes a person already the dwelling place of God.

In his first letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul speaks of a special kind of prayer in the Spirit. It is the spiritual gift of “speaking in tongues.” With this particular gift the person praises God in a language he cannot understand. His “spirit prays” with ecstatic utterances, but his “mind remains unfruitful.” According to the apostle, who himself had this gift and says that it should not be forbidden, such prayer in the Spirit is without benefit to man unless it is accompanied with “some revelation or knowledge or prophecy [i.e. the directly inspired Word of God] or teaching.” He says that it should not be done in the public gathering of the church unless there be some interpretation and that even then there should be “only two, or at most three,” and that those who are “eager for manifestations of the Spirit should strive to excel in building up the church” and should “not be children in their thinking.?.?. but in thinking be mature.” He says that all should seek rather to prophesy, i.e. to speak the Word of God clearly and plainly so that those who observe Christians would declare that God is really among them and not consider them mad. He says finally that “all things should be done decently and in order” (cf. 1Cor 12–14).

It is apparent that the gift of praying in the Spirit with tongues was the cause of no small confusion and disorder in the Corinthian Church, and that those having this gift of ecstatic prayer were disturbing and dividing the community by considering themselves more spiritual than others. Saint Paul insists that not all have the same gifts, and that tongues are but one of the gifts, the last of those mentioned, to serve as a sign not for those who already believe, but “for unbelievers” (1Cor 14.22). In general it is clear that the sole purpose of the apostle’s extended discussion of the spiritual gifts, and his insistence on giving up “childish ways” in the pursuit of perfection when one becomes mature, was to rebuke the members of the Corinthian Church for their misuse and abuse of the spiritual gift of tongues.

There is no evidence in the spiritual tradition of the church that any of the
saints had the gift of praying in tongues or that such kind of prayer was ever a part of the liturgy of the church. The only mention that can be found of it, to our knowledge, was at the baptism of Montanus, a third-century heretic who left the Church to found his own spiritualist sect. If any of the saints or spiritual masters had this gift, they did not write about it or propagate it openly. It was unknown, for example, to Saint John Chrysostom by his own report, (cf. Commentary on Corinthians). Since a number of believers have this gift in our time, and since there are persons who seek it, it is critically important that this method of prayer be understood according to the counsels of St Paul and in the light of the teaching of the spiritual masters on prayer.
Fasting

Jesus Himself fasted and taught His disciples to fast.

And when you fast, do not look dismal like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men, but your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Mt 6.16–18).

The purpose of fasting is to gain mastery over oneself and to conquer the passions of the flesh. It is to liberate oneself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God. It is to give power to the soul so that it would not yield to temptation and sin. According to Saint Seraphim, fasting is an “indispensable means” of gaining the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one’s life (cf. Conversation with Motovilov), and Jesus Himself taught that some forms of evil cannot be conquered without it (Mt 17.21, Mk 9.29).

Man does not fast because it pleases God if His servants do not eat, for, as the lenten hymns of the Church remind us, “the devil also never eats” (Lenten Triodion). Neither do men fast in order to afflict themselves with suffering and pain, for God has no pleasure in the discomfort of His people. Neither do men fast with the idea that their hunger and thirst can somehow serve as a “reparation” for their sins. Such an understanding is never given in the scriptures or the writings of the saints which claim that there is no “reparation” for man’s sin but the crucifixion of Christ. Salvation is a “free gift of God” which no “works” of man can accomplish of merit (cf. Rom 5.15–17, Eph 2.8–9).

Men fast, therefore, and must fast, only to be delivered from carnal passions so that the free gift of salvation in Christ might produce great fruit in their lives. Men fast so that they might more effectively serve God who loves them and has saved them in Christ and the Spirit. Fasting without effort in virtue is wholly in vain.

Why have we fasted, and Thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and Thou takest no knowledge of it?

Behold, in the day of your fast, you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and fight .??. Fasting like yours .??. will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness .??. to let the oppressed go free .??. is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and
bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them.

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall protect you. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; then you shall cry, and He will say: Here I am (Is 58.3–9).

“Fasting in the body, O brethren, let us also fast from sin.” This is the Church’s song in the lenten season of fasting. It is also the teaching of the saints.

_in fasting one must not only obey the rule against gluttony in regard to food, but refrain from every sin so that, while fasting, the tongue may also fast, refraining from slander, lies, evil talking, degrading one’s brother, anger and every sin committed by the tongue. One should also fast with the eyes, that is, not look at vain things. not look shamefully or fearlessly at anyone. The hands and feet should also be kept from every evil action._

When one fasts through vanity or thinking that he is achieving something especially virtuous, he fasts foolishly and soon begins to criticize others and to consider himself something great.

A man who fasts wisely wins purity and comes to humility. and proves himself a skillful builder (Saint Abba Dorotheus, 7th c., Directions on Spiritual Training).

Saint Paul himself fasted, and in his teaching on food insists that men fast and do so in secret, without mutual inspection and judgment.

_Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. For many of whom I have often told you and now tell you with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things (Phil 3.17–19)._ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1Cor 6.12–13).

Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains, pass judgment on him who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.
Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of him for whom Christ has died. For the Kingdom of God does not mean food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Do not for the sake of food destroy the work of God. The faith that you have keep between yourself and God. Whatever does not proceed from faith [whether eating or abstaining] is sin (cf. Rom. 14).

The spiritual fathers, as strictly ascetic as they were, are very clear in their teaching about fasting. They insist with the Lord and the scriptures that men must fast in order to be free from passions and lust. But they insist as well that the most critical thing is to be free from all sin, including the pride, vanity and hypocrisy which comes through foolish and sinful fasting.

Eating beyond the point of being satisfied is the door of madness through which lust enters, for the belly is the queen of passions which man serves as a slave.

But you, firm in this knowledge, choose what is best for you, according to your own powers. For the perfect person, according to Saint Paul ought both “to be full and be hungry.” And do all things through Christ who strengthens (Phil. 4:12–13).

Thus a man who strives for salvation must not allow himself to eat to fullness. But should still eat all kinds of food so that on the one hand he avoid boastful pride and on the other not show disdain for God’s creation which is most excellent. Such is the reasoning of those who are wise! (Saint Gregory of Sinai, Instruction to Hesychasts).

Saint Isaac of Syria says, “Meager food at the table of the pure cleanses the soul of those who partake from all passion. For the work of fasting and vigil is the beginning of every effort against sin and lust. Almost all passionate drives decrease through fasting.”

For the holy fathers taught us to be killers of passions and not killers of the body. Partake of everything that is permissible with thanksgiving, to the glory of God and to avoid boastful arrogance; but refrain from every excess (The Monks Callistus and Ignatius, 14th c., Directions to Hesychasts).

If such is the teaching to hesychast monks, it is certainly applicable to all Christians as well. The whole essence of the matter is put simply and clearly in these two short stories from the fathers of the desert.

A certain brother brought fresh loaves of bread and invited his elders. When they had eaten much, the brother, knowing their travail of abstinence, began humbly to beg them to eat more. “For God’s sake, eat this day and be filled.” And they ate another ten. Behold how these that were true monks and
sincere in abstinence did eat more than they needed, for the sake of God.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, called the abbot Hilarion to see him. A portion of fowl was set before them and the bishop invited the abbot to eat. The old man said, “Forgive me, Father, but since the time I took this habit I have never eaten anything that has been killed.”

And Epiphanius said to him, “And from the time I took this habit I have let no man sleep who has anything against me, and neither have I slept holding anything against anyone.”

And the old man said to him, “Forgive me, Father, for your way of life is greater than mine” (The Sayings of the Fathers).
In Christ’s teaching, almsgiving goes together with fasting and prayer. We have seen that this is also the teaching of Isaiah (See Fasting) and of the Old Testament generally. When one prays and fasts, one must show love through active generosity to others.

_Beware of practicing your piety before men, in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do. That they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you._ (Mt 6.1–4).

As with fasting and prayer, the gifts of help to the poor must be done strictly in secret, so much so that one should, as it were, even hide from himself what he is giving to others, not letting one hand know what the other is doing. Every effort must be made, if the gift will be pleasing to God, to avoid all ostentation and boastfulness in its giving.

As we have already seen, there is no real love if one does not share what he has with the poor.

_If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?_ (1Jn 3.17).

Such was the command of the law of Moses as well.

_If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, “The seventh year, the year of release is near,” and your eye be hostile to your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and it be sin in you. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land._ (Deut 15.7–11).

Such also was the teaching of Wisdom.

_The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends._

He who despises his neighbor is a sinner, but happy is he who is kind to
the poor.

He who mocks the poor, insults his Maker, he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished (Prov 14.20–21, 17.5).

According to Saint John Chrysostom, no one can be saved without giving alms and without caring for the poor. Saint Basil the Great says that a man who has two coats or two pair of shoes, when his neighbor has none, is a thief. All earthly things are the possessions of God. “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it” (Ps 24.1). Men are but stewards of what belongs to the Lord and should share the gifts of His creation with one another as much as they can. To store up earthly possessions, according to Christ, is the epitome of foolishness, and a rich man shall hardly be saved (cf. Lk 12.15–21).

How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”

But he said, “What is impossible with men is possible with God” (Lk 15.24–27, Mt 19:23–26, Mk 10.23–27).

Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full now, for you shall hunger (Lk 6.24–25).

For He who is mighty has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He sent away empty (Lk 1.53).

The reason why a rich man can hardly be saved, according to Jesus, is because when one has possessions, he wants to keep them, and gather still more. For the “delight in riches chokes the word of God, and so it proves unfruitful” in man’s heart (Mt 13.22, Mk 4.19, Lk 8.14).

According to the apostle Paul, the “love of money”—not money itself—is the “root of all evils.”

There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs (1Tim 6.6–10, cf. Heb 13.5–6).

The apostle himself collected money for the poor and greatly praised those who were generous in giving.

The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, but he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has
made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever” (Ps 112.9).

You will be enriched in every way for great generosity which will produce thanksgiving to God (2Cor 9.6–12).

The spiritual person must share what he has with the poor. He must do so cheerfully and not reluctantly, secretly and not for the praise of men. He also must do so, as the poor widow in the gospel, not out of his abundance, but out of his need.

And Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And He called His disciples to Him, and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living” (Mk 12.41–44, Lk 21.2).

Giving alms, therefore, must be a sacrificial act if it has any spiritual worth. One cannot give merely what is left over when all his own needs are satisfied. One must take from oneself and give to others. In the spiritual tradition of the Church it is the teaching that what one saves through fasting and abstinence, for example during the special lenten seasons, should not be kept for other times but should be given away to the poor.

In recent times the teaching has developed that the spiritual man should work within the processes and possibilities of the free societies in order to make a social structure in which the poor will not merely be the object of the charity of the rich, but will themselves have the chance to work and to share in the common wealth of man. In this way the poor will have dignity and self-respect through assuming their just place as members of society. “We do not want hand-outs,” say the poor, “we want to be able to learn and to work for ourselves.” The spiritual person is the one who works to make this happen; and it is right and praiseworthy to do so. The only temptations here would be to have this attitude and to undertake this action without personal sacrifice, and to think that when such a “just society” will exist-if it ever will-all of men’s problems will be solved. The spiritual decadence of many wealthy persons demonstrates that this is not the case. Thus the words of Christ remain forever valid and true:

“.?? the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me
if you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, and follow me” (Mt 19.21, Mk 14.5–7, Lk 18.22, Jn 12.8).

The one who is truly perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect is the one who gives all for the sake of others, in the name of Christ, with Him, and for His sake. Such a person is most truly living the spiritual life.
Sexuality, Marriage, and Family
The sexual character of human persons has a positive role to play in human spirituality. Like all things human, sexuality must be sanctioned by God and inspired with the Holy Spirit, used for the purposes God has intended. And like all things human, through its misuse and abuse, sexuality can be perverted and corrupted, becoming an instrument of sin rather than the means for glorifying God and fulfilling oneself as made in His image, and according to His likeness.

The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two shall become one.” But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1Cor 6.13–20).

The teaching of Saint Paul about sexuality is analogous to his teaching about eating and drinking and all bodily functions. They are given by God for spiritual reasons to be used for His glory. In themselves they are holy and pure. When misused or adored as an end in themselves, they become the instruments of sin and death. The apostle specifically says that all sexual perversions have as their direct cause man’s rebellion against God.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them (Rom 1.24–32).
That those who “do such things deserve to die” was taken literally in the law of Moses; thus adulterers, homosexuals, incestuous people and those committing sexual acts with beasts were ordered to be “put to death” (Lev 20.10–16).

In following this teaching, while hoping on the mercy of God and the forgiveness of Christ for all sinners, the New Testament scriptures are even more strict in their demands regarding sexual purity. Jesus, who forgave the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8.7–11) and the repentant harlot who washed His feet with her hair (Lk 7.36–50), gave the following teaching in His sermon on the mount:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

It was also said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Mt 5.27–32, see also 19–3–9, Rom 7.3).

The Apostle Paul says simply that unrepentant adulterers, fornicators, and homosexuals will not enter the Kingdom of God (cf. 1Cor 6.9–10, Gal 5.19).

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and the adulterous (Heb 13.4).

Thus, according to the revelation of God, sexual relations are holy and pure only within the community of marriage, with the ideal relationship being that between one man and one woman forever. Those who are not married and those who choose by the will of God not to marry must abstain from all sexual relations since such relations cannot possibly fulfill the function given to the sexual act by God in creation. This does not mean that there will be no sexual character to the unmarried person’s spiritual life, for the unmarried man and the unmarried woman will still express their humanity in masculine and feminine spiritual forms. The virtues and fruits of the Spirit in each, as in those who are married, are identical, but the manner of their incarnation and expression will be proper to the particular sexual form of their common humanity, as well as the individual uniqueness of each person.

The single person who lives his or her whole life without husband or wife is called to virginity as a witness in this world of the Kingdom of God where “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mt 22–30). It is for this reason that those following the
monastic life are said to have taken the “angelic habit.” This does not mean that they become disincarnate or unsexual. It means rather that they perpetually serve and praise God as His children, comprising, as it were, the universal family of God without being themselves the leaders of families on this earth. In this way they express themselves as the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of all mankind in Christ.

“Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” And stretching out His hands toward His disciples, He said, “Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Mk 3.34–35).

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity (1Tim 5.1–2).

These words, of course, are intended for all, married and unmarried, but they also most obviously have special significance for those who, for Christ’s sake, are living the unmarried life. For as those who are married have the task of living their spiritual lives with the cares of the family, and within the context of its needs and demands, the Christian who is single lives his or her life in Christ without these conditions.

I wish that all were as I myself am [i.e. unmarried, says Paul]. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. .?.?. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor?7.34–35).

So he that marries .?.?. does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better (cf. 1Cor 7.7–40).

The teaching here is clear. People can serve God and live the spiritual life both in marriage and in the single life. And people can sin in both as well. “Each has his own special gift from God” (1Cor 7.7). Saint Paul thinks, however, that among those who want to do as perfectly as they can, they who do not marry “will do better” (1Cor 7.38–40).

The spiritual tradition of the Church clearly agrees with the apostle. This does not mean that marriage is in any way disparaged or disdained. It is given by God and is a sacrament of the Church, and those who abhor it for “spiritual reasons” are to be excommunicated from the Church (cf. Canon Laws of the
Council of Gangra). It means only that, most practically, one can be a greater servant of God and more perfectly a witness to His unending Kingdom if he gives up everything in this world, sells all that he has, and follows Christ in total detachment and poverty.

The idea, however, that a single person can indulge oneself in the things of this world, including sexuality, and still be the servant of God in Christ is totally rejected and condemned. One can forsake marriage in the body only for greater freedom from “anxiety about worldly affairs” in order to be concerned with “the affairs of the Lord .?.?. how to be holy in body and spirit.” The single person who is “holy in body and spirit” has sexual relations with no one.
Marriage

Marriage is a part of human life on this earth as created by God. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh (Gen 2.24, cf. Mt 19.5–6).

God created male and female so that man and woman would live their lives together in marriage as one flesh. This union should be broken for no earthly reason.

What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

They said to Jesus, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?”

He said to them, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife except for sexual impurity and marries another, commits adultery.”

The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.”

But he said to them, “Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it” (Mt 19.6–12).

Human marriage exists by the will of God on the earth as the created expression of God’s love for man and as man’s participation in the creative love of God. The union of man and woman in the community of marriage is used in the Bible as the image of God’s faithful love for Israel, and Christ’s sacrificial love for the Church (cf. Is 54, Jer 3, Ezek 16, Hos).

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the church to Himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his
father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Eph 5.22–33).

These words of Saint Paul, read at the sacramental celebration of marriage in the Church, contain the whole program for spiritual life in the community of marriage. The husband must love his wife to the point of death, as Christ loves the Church. And the wife must be totally given to her husband in everything as the Church is given to Christ. The union in love must be perfect, total, complete, enduring and lasting forever. Within this union, the sexual act of love is the mystical seal of the total union in love; the act whereby the two are united in mind, heart, soul and body in the Lord.

According to the spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church, marriage, and so the sexual act of love, is made perfect only in Christ and the Church. This does not mean that all those who are “married in church” have an ideal marriage. The sacrament is not mechanical or magical. Its reality and gifts may be rejected and defiled, received unto condemnation and judgment, like Holy Communion and all of the sacramental mysteries of the faith. It does mean, however, that when a couple is married in the Church of Christ, the possibility for the perfection of their marriage is most fully given by God.

When a man and a woman truly love one another, they naturally desire that their love would be perfect. They want their relationship to be filled with all virtue and every fruit of the Spirit. They want it to be ever more perfectly expressed and fulfilled. They want it to last forever. Those who do not desire such perfection for their love, do not really love.

When a man and woman have such a love, they can find its fulfillment only in Christ. He makes it possible; no one and nothing else can do it. So, for those who love truly, the savior and accomplisher of their love is Christ. He gives every virtue and every fruit of the Spirit. He allows them to grow ever more perfectly one. He allows them to live and to love for eternity in the Kingdom of God. A marriage in Christ does not end in sin; it does not part in death. It is fulfilled and perfected in the Kingdom of heaven. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that those who seek true love and perfection in marriage come to the Church to be married in Christ.

A truly Christian and spiritual marriage is one where true love abides. In the community of marriage true love is expressed in the total union of the couple in all that they are, have and do. It is the love of each one living completely for the good of the other, the love of erotic union in total oneness of mind, heart and flesh; the love of perfect friendship.(See “God is Love,”
Within such a community of love, the sexual act is the expression of all of this. It was created for this purpose by God. It is the intimate act which finds its total joy when perfected by those who are fully devoted and dedicated to each other in all things, in every way, forever. It is for this sacred and divine reason that the sexual act cannot be done casually or promiscuously for one’s own spiritual or bodily pleasure. It is the act of loving self-sacrifice in eternal fidelity. Only when accomplished in this way does it yield divine satisfaction and infinite delight to the lovers who enact it.

Sexual dissatisfaction in marriage is virtually never simply a bodily or biological problem. It is with almost no exception, the result of some defect of mind, heart and soul. Most basically, it is the defect of love itself. For when each considers only the good of the other, desiring total spiritual and bodily union in perfect friendship, the sexual act is always most satisfying. When this is absent, and something other is central, the gratification of some unworthy passion of body or mind, then all is lost and the perversion of love brings sadness and death to the union.

Normally the sexual act in marriage bears fruit in the procreation of children. The marriage ceremony in the Church prays for “chastity, a bed undefiled, the procreation of children, and for every earthly blessing that they may in turn bestow upon the needy.” The sexual act of love, however, is not limited merely to the bearing of children. It exists as well for the union in love and the mutual edification and joy of those who are married. If this were not the case, the Apostle Paul would not have given the following counsel:

Each man should have his own wife, and each wife her own husband. The husband should give the wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through each of self-control (1?Cor 7.2–5).

The apostle does not say that the married couple should be separated and come together only with intentions of bearing a child. He says rather that they should stay together, separating “by agreement, for a time,” and that for the purpose of being devoted “to prayer.” The words “by agreement” are central in this counsel, for each one must live totally as belonging to the other.

Sexuality in pure marriage is pure. For, as the apostle says in another context:

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing
is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God but they deny Him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed (Titus 1.15–16).

There are those whose marriages are impure because they are corrupt and unbelieving, unfit for any good deed. Even though they are married and the sexuality is, as they say, “legal,” nevertheless it is ungodly and impure. The fact that a couple is “legally” or even “sacramentally” married does not make their marital life pure and free from sinful passion, perversion and lust. Only those who truly live the spiritual life in genuine love and devotion have sexual lives that are holy and pure, mutually satisfying and fulfilling, and well-pleasing to God. This is guaranteed when the spiritual life is in Christ and the Church. But as Saint John Chrysostom has said, even heathen marriages are holy and pure when true love is present and the couples are eternally given to one another in unending fidelity and mutual devotion. For where such love is present, there is the presence of God.
True love in marriage supposes the bearing of children. Those who truly love in marriage will naturally have children as the fruit of their love and the greatest bond of their union. Those who despise children and refuse to offer them care and devotion do not truly love.

Of course there are those whose marriages will be childless because of some tragedy of nature brought on by the “sin of the world.” In such marriages perfect love can exist, but the mutual devotion in the service of God and man will take on other forms, either the adoption of children or some other good service for the sake of others. The childless marriage, either by voluntary choice or natural tragedy, which results in self-indulgence is not a spiritual union.

The voluntary control of birth in marriage is only permissible, according to the essence of a spiritual life, when the birth of a child will bring danger and hardship. Those who are living the spiritual life will come to the decision not to bear children only with sorrow, and will do so before God, with prayers for guidance and mercy. It will not be a decision taken lightly or for self-indulgent reasons.

According to the common teaching in the Orthodox Church, when such a decision is taken before God, the means of its implementation are arbitrary. There are, in the Orthodox opinion, no means of controlling birth in marriage which are better or more acceptable than others. All means are equally sad and distressing for those who truly love. For the Christian marriage is the one that abounds with as many new children as possible.

The abortion of an unborn child is absolutely condemned in the Orthodox Church. Clinical abortion is no means of birth control, and those who practice it for any reason at all, both the practitioners and those who request it, are punished according to the canon law of the Church with the “penalty for murder” (Council of Trullo, 5th and 6th Ecumenical Councils).

In extreme cases, as when the mother will surely die, if she bears the child, the decision for life or death of the child must be taken by the mother alone, in consultation with her family and her spiritual guides. Whatever the decision, unceasing prayers for God’s guidance and mercy must be its foundation. According to the Orthodox faith, a mother who gives her life for her child is a saint who will most certainly be greatly glorified by God; for there is no greater act of love than to give one’s life so that another might live (cf. Jn 15.13).

Within the life of the family, the father must be the leader and head. He
must love his wife and children as Christ loves the Church—and Christ died for the Church. He must never be harsh. The wife must be totally devoted to her husband and must demand, encourage and enable his leadership. This is the normal way of family life prescribed in the scriptures, for “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1Cor 11.3, Eph 5.22–23, Col 3.18–19, 1Pet 3.1–7).

When the husband or wife is an unbeliever—and such should be the case only when one member of the marriage becomes Christian after being married, or when one member of a married couples loses his or her faith, for a Christian should not normally enter into marriage with an unbeliever—the couple, according to Saint Paul—should not separate or divorce, but should continue to live together. The believer should show the best example of the spiritual life of love to the unbeliever in every word and deed, totally without coercion or compulsion regarding the faith, and certainly without accusation or condemnation.

For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? (1?Cor 7.13–16, cf. 1Pet 3.1–7).

Here the apostle, for the sake of peace, permits separation, but does not encourage it. Nevertheless, in dire circumstances, such as when there is spiritual or physical danger, the Church itself counsels separation as the lesser evil. However, in such cases the Church also counsels the separated Christian, if possible, to “remain single” (1Cor 7.10). Second marriages, even for widows and widowers, are allowed and blessed by the Church, without the penalty of excommunication, only, in theory, in those cases where the new marriage has the possibility of being holy and pure (See Worship, “Marriage”).

Within the family, the spiritual life of love should be sought and lived as fully as possible. This means that every member of the family should live for the good of the other in all circumstances, “bearing one another’s burdens” and in this way fulfilling “the law of Christ” (Gal 6.2). There should be the constant presence of mercy and forgiveness and mutual upbuilding. There should be every expression of true love as is generally found in those who are holy.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things,
believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1?Cor 13.4–7).

Such love is the basis of enduring family life, lived and expressed joyfully and cheerfully, without reluctance or compulsion (cf. 2Cor 9.6–12). For marriage is not “holy deadlock” as one cynical writer has put it, but, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, a “small church” in the home where the grace and freedom of God abounds for man’s salvation and life.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother .?.?. that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth” (Eph 6.1–3, Ex 20.12).

There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers .?.?. If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness (Prov 30.11, 22.20).

For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death; he who has cursed his father or his mother, his blood is upon him (Lev 20.9).

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord (Col 3.20).

Saint John Chrysostom says that those who cannot honor, love and respect their parents can certainly not serve God, for He is the “Father of all” (Eph 4.6), the One “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph 3.15).

The true father loves and disciplines his child as God loves and disciplines His people (cf. Heb 12.3–11).

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Prov 13.24; 22.6,15; 23.13).

The love of the father for children is expressed in loving discipline without hypocrisy. The best teacher is one’s own example.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up with discipline and instruction in the Lord (Eph 6.4).

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (Col 3.21).

Like the pastors of churches, the fathers of families must be “temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome and no lover of money” (1Tim 3.2). He must be an example for his children “in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1Tim 4.12). Like the father in Christ ’s parable, the human father must always
be ready to receive home with joy his prodigal children. The wives and mothers of families must be fully devoted to their husbands and children. They must be the very embodiment of all of the fruits of the Holy Spirit as those who give life, both physical and spiritual.

_A good wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her. She does him good and not harm all the days of her life._

Strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth in wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, he praises her, saying: “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.”

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is greatly to be praised (Prov 31.10–31).

This teaching of Wisdom is found also in the writing of the apostles of Christ.

_I desire then that in every place women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire, but by good deeds as befits women who profess piety (1?Tim 2.8–10)._”

_Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you (1?Pet 3.1–6)._”

Thus in the “small church” of the family, with each member living according to God’s will, the Kingdom of God is already present and active, waiting to be perfectly fulfilled in the Kingdom of heaven which never will end, where all are God’s children, the bride of His Son.
Sickness, Suffering, and Death
Sickness exists in the world only because of sin. There would be no sickness at all, neither mental nor physical, if man had not sinned. According to Christ sickness is bondage to the devil (Mt 8.16, 12.22; Lk 4.40–41, 13.10–17). And Christ has come to “destroy .?.?. the devil” (Heb 2.14). With Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, the healing of the body, the destruction of the devil and the raising of the dead are all one and the same act of salvation.

*For which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or to say “Rise and walk”?* But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins-He then said to the paralytic-“Rise, take up your bed and go home.” And he rose and went home (Mt 9.4–7, Mk 2.9–12, Lk 5.23–25).

In that hour He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight (Lk 7.21).

Doing these things Jesus showed that He is Christ the Messiah, the fulfillment of the prophets who brings the Kingdom of God to the world.

.?.?. the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news of the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not scandalized at Me (Lk 7.22–23; cf. Is 29.18–19, 35.5–6, 61.1; Mt 4.23–24, 11.4–6).

When one is delivered from sin and evil, one is also freed from sickness and death. In the Kingdom of God there will be “no sickness or sorrow or sighing, but life everlasting” (Requiem Kontakion of the Church).

When one is visited by sickness in this world, whether bodily or mental, he is a victim of the devil and the “sin of the world” (Jn 1.29). This does not mean that people are necessarily being personally punished with their diseases. It means rather, as in the case of those born with infirmities and children who are ill, that where sin abounds, sickness and disease are also rampant. It is the teaching of the Church that those who are innocently victimized by sickness, such as small children and the developmentally disabled, are certain to be saved in the Kingdom of God.

This is the teaching of the book of Genesis. God did not say to man, “Sin and I will kill you.” He said, if and when you sin, “you will die” (Gen 2.17, 3.3). Thus when man sins and ruins himself by evil, he brings the curse of sickness and suffering to the world for himself and his children; and his life becomes toil until he returns to the dust out of which he is made-and which he is by nature without the grace of God in his life (cf. Gen 3.17–19). It is in this sense that the “prince of this world” is the devil (Jn 12.31, 14.30, 16.11).
Given the sinfulness of the world, its bondage to the devil, its “groaning in travail” (cf. Rom 8.19–23) until its salvation in Christ, God Himself uses sickness and death for His own providential purposes as the means for man’s salvation. God is not the cause of sickness, suffering and death; but given their existence because of the devil’s deceit and man’s wickedness and sin, God employs them that man might be healed and saved in the forgiveness of sins. In this sense, and this sense only, can it be said that “God sends sickness to man.”

When a spiritual person is sick he recognizes that his illness is caused by sin, his own and the sins of the world. He does not blame God for it, for he knows that God has not caused it and does not wish it for His servants. He knows as well, through the providential plan of God and the salvation of Christ, that his sickness will be healed. He knows also that if God so wills, he can be healed of his sickness in this life in order to have more time to serve God and man on earth, and to accomplish what he must according to God’s plan. He knows as well that the very sickness itself can be the means for serving God, and he accepts it in this way, offering it in faith and love for his own salvation and for the salvation of others.

There is no greater witness to the love of God and faith in Christ than sickness endured with faith and love. The one who bears his infirmities with virtue, with courage and patience, with faith and hope, with gladness and joy, is the greatest witness to divine salvation that can possibly be. Nothing can compare to such a person, for God’s praise in distress and affliction is the greatest possible offering that man can make of his life on earth.

Every saint who ever lived suffered bodily infirmities. And all of them, virtually without exception—even when healing others by their prayers—did not ask for or receive deliverance for themselves. This is the case most evidently of Jesus Himself, the suffering servant of God.

*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; as one from whom men hide their faces.* . . .

Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, upon Him was the chastisement that healed us, and with His wounds we are healed . . . . the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man [i.e. Joseph of Arimathea, cf. Mt 27.57] in His death . . . . when He makes Himself an offering for sin . . . . (Is 53, cf. Pss 22, 38, 41).

Christ “poured out His soul to death” (Is 53.12) when He was only in the third decade of His life. Many of the saints hardly lived longer, and virtually all
suffered, as did Saint Paul, from some “thorn in the flesh,” normally understood as some bodily affliction.

a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness,” that the power of Christ may rest upon me. for when I am weak, then I am strong (2Cor 12.7–10).

All spiritual persons follow the example of Christ and Saint Paul and all of the saints in their appreciation of sickness. They say to the Father, “Thy will be done,” and transform their weakness, by the grace of God, into the means of salvation for themselves and others.
Suffering

There is no life in this world without suffering. The cessation of suffering comes only in the Kingdom of God.

There are generally three sources of suffering in this world: suffering from the persecution of others in body and soul, suffering from sickness and disease, and suffering in spirit because of the sins of the world. There are only two possible ways to deal with such sufferings. Either one humbly accepts them and transforms them into the way of salvation for oneself and others; or one is defeated by them with rebellion and rejection, and so “curses God and dies” both physically and for eternity in the ages to come (cf. Job 2.9–10).

We have seen already that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (1Tim 3.12); and that Christians should “count it all joy” when they “meet various trials” (Jas 1.2), “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5.41).

We have also seen that those who suffer through sickness and disease with every virtue of Christ will receive “sufficient grace” from God to be strong in the Lord in their bodily weakness, and so direct their sufferings “not unto death” but to the “glory of God” (cf. 2Cor 12.7–10, Jn 11.4).

Since therefore Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of time in the flesh no longer by human passions, but by the will of God (1?Pet 4.1–2).

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the church .?.?. (Col 1.24).

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Here indeed we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling, so that by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. (2Cor 4.16–5.6).

The spiritual person, when suffering in the flesh, uses his afflictions to be set free from sin, and to be made “perfect through suffering” like Jesus Himself (Heb 2.10). He knows that as his “outer nature is wasting away” he is being born into the Kingdom of God if he suffers in and with Jesus the Lord.

In a very real sense the most grievous suffering of all is not in the flesh but the spirit. This is the suffering which torments the soul when, by the grace of God and in the light of Christ, the spiritual person sees the utter futility, ugliness and pettiness of sin which is destroying men made in the image of God. According to one great theologian of the Church, this suffering was the most grievous of all for the Lord Jesus Himself (cf. Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitskii, 20th c., The Dogma of Redemption).

Jesus knew the fullness and perfection of the divine beauty of God; He knew His mercy and love, the glory of paradise, the goodness of His creation. Beholding all of this, given to man as a gift, and beholding it scorned and rejected in His own person, was infinitely more painful and torturing to the Lord than were any beatings and scourging and being nailed to the cross. For the cross itself was the great scandal of man’s hatred and rejection of the love and light and life of God as given to the world in the person of Christ. Thus the agony and torment of the Lord in His being killed on the cross was the divine agony, in body and soul, of man’s refusal of divine life. No greater agony than this can possibly exist, and no human mind can fathom the infinite scope of its horror and tragedy.

The spiritual person, according to the measure of grace given by God, participates spiritually in this agony of Christ. It is the greatest suffering of the saints, infinitely more unbearable than any external persecution or bodily disease. It is the torment of the soul over the utter foolishness of sin. It is the agony of love over those who are perishing. It was in such straightness of soul that the Apostle Paul could exclaim: “...I have great sorrow and anguish in my heart, for I wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race” (Rom 9.3).

It is with this same agony of love that Saint Isaac of Syria could say about the saints, “if they were cast into fire ten times a day for the sake of their love for man, even that would seem to them to be too little.” (Mystic Treatises, Wensinck, ed.) This same Saint Isaac himself was known to weep fervent tears of suffering love for all men, the whole of creation, and even the devil himself.

Thus the ultimate form of all suffering which leads to salvation is compassionate love for all that are perishing through the ridiculous foolishness
of sin. Christ suffered from such love to the full and unlimited extension of His divinity. And each person suffers it as well to the extent that he or she is deified in Christ by the grace of the Spirit.
Death

There is no person who will not die. The preparation for death is at the center of the spiritual life.

*Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is! Behold, Thou hast made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in Thy sight. Surely every man stands as a mere breath! Surely man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nought are they in turmoil; man heaps up, and knows not who will gather! (Ps 39–4–6).*

That man should die is not the will of God, for as the scripture says, “God did not make death.”

*God did not make death, and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any living thing; He created all things that they might have being (Wisdom of Solomon 1.13).*

*For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn and live (Ezek 18.32).*

Death is the result of sin. It is the final victory of the devil, the result of his destructive activity. If man had not sinned, he would not have died. His body might have changed and evolved over great periods of time, but it would not have been separated from his spirit to return to the dust, and man’s soul itself would not have been corrupted, losing power over its body and becoming its slave. This is the meaning of the sin of Adam, that man has emerged on the face of the earth, made in God’s image and inspired with His Spirit, and has chosen death instead of life, evil instead of righteousness, and so through defilement of his nature in rebellion against God, brought corruption and death to the world (cf. Gen 3, Rom 5.12–21).

“Sin spread to all men because all men sinned” (Rom 5.12); and in sinning man brought death to the children who partake of this mortal nature and life. In a sin-bound world, no person escapes, even those who are personally guiltless and innocent, for all are caught up in the sins of the world.

*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps 51.5).*

Even the all-pure Virgin Mary who gave birth to Christ in the flesh could not escape the snares of death. For all her innocence and spiritual perfection, she too needed salvation from death by her Son, and her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior (cf. Lk 1.47).

According to the Orthodox Christian faith, Jesus Christ alone, of all men, as the incarnate Son and Word of God, need not have died. His death alone of
all human deaths was perfectly voluntary. He came in order to die, and by His
death to liberate all who were held captive by death’s power.

For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may
take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I
have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again; this charge
I have received from My Father (Jn 10.17–18).

Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? “Father, save Me from this
hour?” No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.

Now is the judgment of the world, now shall the prince of the world be
cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.
He said this to show by what death He was to die [i.e. crucifixion].
The crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ
[i.e. Messiah] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be
lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?”

Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer .?.?” (Jn

Jesus came “for us men and for our salvation” in order to die (Nicene
Creed). He came that through His death and resurrection all men might be
raised from the dead for eternal life in the Kingdom of God. This is the
Christian faith.

.?. for the hour is coming when all who are in the graves will hear the
voice of the Son of God, and come forth, for those who have done good, to the
resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of
damnation (Jn 5.25–29).

This, too, is the apostle’s doctrine (cf. Acts 2.22–36).

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those
who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also
the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all
be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at His
coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the
kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and
power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The
last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1Cor 15.20–26).

For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and
we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable,
and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on
the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass
the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is
thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor 15.52–57).

The whole essence of the spiritual life is to die with Christ to the sins of this world and to pass through the experience of bodily death with Him in order to be raised up “on the last day” in the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn 6.39–44, 54).

By the power of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, Christians can and must transform their deaths into acts of life. They must face the tragedy of death with faith in the Lord, and defeat the “last enemy-death” (1Cor 15.26) by the power of their faith.

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself If we live, we live to the Lord, if we die, we die to the Lord, so whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living (Rom 14.8–9).

Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has eternal life; he does not come to judgment, but has passed from death to life (Jn 5.24, cf. Jn 6.29–58).

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die (Jn 11.25–26).

For Christians, as for all men, death remains a tragedy. When confronted by death, like all men, and like Jesus Himself and His apostles, Christians can only mourn and weep (cf. Jn 11.35, Mt 26.37–38, Mk 14.33–34, Lk 22.42–44, Acts 8.2). But for Christians, filled with faith in Christ and His Father, the tragedy of death can be transformed into victory.
The Kingdom of Heaven
The Final Judgment

Every man will stand judgment before God for his life in this world. Each person will be judged according to his words and his works.

*I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every idle word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned* (Mt 12.36).

*For the Son of Man is to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay every man according to his works* (Mt 16:27, cf. Rev 2.23).

The judge will be Christ Himself, for He is the one who, by His suffering and death, has received the power to judge. It is the Crucified One who will call men to account at the end of the ages. He has won this right as a man through the perfection of His human life.

*For the Father has given Him the authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man* (Jn 5.27).

Christ will judge all men exclusively on the basis of how they have served Him by serving all men—the least of the brethren.

*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will place the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left.*

Then the King will say to those at His right hand, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

Then the righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee, or thirsty and give Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger and welcome Thee, or naked and clothe Thee? And when did we see Thee sick or in prison and visit Thee?”

And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”

Then He will say to those at His left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in
prison and you did not visit Me.”

Then they also will answer, “Lord, when did we see Thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?”

Then He will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me.”

And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Mt 25: 31–46).

All spiritual life is fulfilled in this one parable of Christ, for the heart of it is love, both for God and for man.

In commenting on this teaching about the final judgment, Saint Augustine has said that Christ Himself is truly the one who is found in all of these conditions, just as He is the one who is the Savior in each of them.

He Himself was hungry; who is the “bread of life,” which if a man eats of it, he will never hunger again (Jn 6.35).

He Himself was thirsty, crying out “I thirst!” (Jn 19.28); who gives the “living water,” which, if a man drinks of it, he will never thirst again (Jn 4.13, 6.35, 7.37).

He Himself was a stranger with “no place to lay His head” (Mt 8.20, Lk 9.58), who “came to His own home, and His own people received Him not” (Jn 1.11); who brings all men home to the heavenly house of the Father (Jn 14.1–2).

He Himself was naked, in the manger in Bethlehem, in the streams of the Jordan, and on the cross of Golgatha; who clothes all men with Himself (Gal 3.27), and with the “robes of salvation” (Is 61.10, Rev 6.11).

He Himself was sick, “wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities,” left alone hanging on the cross (Is 53.5, Mt 26.56); who Himself heals all the wounds of men, for “with His wounds we are healed” (Is 53.5).

He Himself was in prison, arrested as a criminal and thrown into jail, forsaken by His disciples (Mt 26.56, 27); who Himself proclaims “liberty to the captives” (Is 61.1, Lk 4.18), setting men free from everything that binds them, and forgiving their crimes.

Since Christ has identified Himself wholly with every man, in every one of his sad and most sorrowful states, the person who “does it to the least of his brethren” does it to Christ Himself—not “as if” to Christ, but to Christ in reality, for Christ is most truly within every man, and every man is the bearer of Christ, the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1.15).

Saint Simeon the New Theologian gives the following teaching about the parable of the final judgment:

_The Son of God has become the Son of Man in order to make us men sons of God, raising our nature by grace to what He is Himself by nature, granting_
us birth from above through the grace of the Holy Spirit and leading us straightway into the Kingdom of heaven, or rather, granting us the Kingdom of heaven within us.

A man is not saved by having once shown mercy to someone. for “I was hungry” and “I was thirsty” is said not of one occasion, not of one day, but of the whole of life. In the same way, “you gave me food,” “you gave me drink,” “you clothed me,” and so on, does not merely indicate one incident or action, but a constant attitude to everyone always. Our Lord Jesus Christ said that He Himself accepts such mercy in the persons of the needy.

it is Him whom we feed in every beggar. Him whom we have left to die in our neglect.

Our Lord was pleased to assume the kindness of every poor man in order that no one who believes in Him should exalt himself over his brother, but seeing his Lord in his brother, should consider himself beneath him and honor him, and be ready to exhaust all his means in helping him, just as our Lord exhausted His blood for our salvation.

A man who is commanded to love his neighbor as himself should do so for his entire lifetime. A man who loves his neighbor as himself cannot allow himself to possess anything more than his neighbor; so that if he has more and does not distribute them without envy he does not fulfill our Lord’s command exactly.

If he who possesses disdains even one who does not he will still be regarded as one who has disdained Christ our Lord.

His words, “you have done it unto Me,” are not limited only to those to whom we have been unkind, or whom we have wronged, or whose possessions we have taken, or whom we have harmed, but include also those whom we have disdained.-This latter alone is sufficient for our condemnation for, in disdaining them, we have disdained Christ Himself.

All this may appear too hard for people and they may think it right to say to themselves: “Who can strictly follow all this, satisfying and feeding everyone and leaving no one unsatisfied?” Let them listen to Saint Paul: “For the love of Christ compels us.” (2Cor 5.14).

. a man who gives all has fulfilled the particular commandments in one stroke. as he who prays constantly has fulfilled the rules of prayer. and he who has God in himself has accomplished everything. (Practical and Theological Precepts).

It is also the teaching of the spiritual masters that what must be given to all men is Christ Himself: the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the Home of the Father, the robes of salvation, the healing of wounds, the liberation and
forgiveness of all sins. In this sense every man, no matter how rich or how righteous, is poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, sinful and imprisoned by evil and death. Thus to “do it to the least of the brethren” is to offer Christ to all men, to give them the eternal and unending satisfaction of all their needs and desires: bread which is never consumed, water which eternally satisfies, a home which is never lost, garments which do not grow old, healing which never suffers again, liberation which can never revert to captivity. Thus, “to do it to the least of the brethren” is to bring them the Kingdom of God. In doing this one offers to all men and so to Christ Himself what already belongs to them from God; as in the liturgy of the Church we offer to God that which already is His. In every case, this is Christ Himself.

We offer to Thee, what is already Thine, on behalf of all, and for all (Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom).

This, therefore, is perfect love; the love of God and the love of man, the love for God and the love for man, becoming one and the same love. It is accomplished in Christ and is Christ. To love with this love is to love with the love of Christ and to fulfill His “new commandment” to “love one another even as I have loved you” (Jn 13.34–35, 15.12). In this is the whole of spiritual life. In this, and this alone, man will be finally judged. It is the crown of all virtue and prayer, the ultimate and most perfect fruit of God’s Spirit in man.
Heaven and Hell

The Kingdom of heaven is already in the midst of those who live the spiritual life. What the spiritual person knows in the Holy Spirit, in Christ and the Church, will come with power and glory for all men to behold at the end of the ages.

The final coming of Christ will be the judgment of all men. His very presence will be the judgment. Now men can live without the love of Christ in their lives. They can exist as if there were no God, no Christ, no Spirit, no Church, no spiritual life. At the end of the ages this will no longer be possible. All men will have to behold the Face of Him who “for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate .?.?. who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried?.?.?” (Nicene Creed). All will have to look at Him whom they have crucified by their sins: Him “who was dead and is alive again” (Rev 1.17–18).

For those who love the Lord, His Presence will be infinite joy, paradise and eternal life. For those who hate the Lord, the same Presence will be infinite torture, hell and eternal death. The reality for both the saved and the damned will be exactly the same when Christ “comes in glory, and all angels with Him,” so that “God may be all in all” (1Cor 15–28). Those who have God as their “all” within this life will finally have divine fulfillment and life. For those whose “all” is themselves and this world, the “all” of God will be their torture, their punishment and their death. And theirs will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8.21, et al.).

The Son of Man will send His angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Mt 13.41–43).

According to the saints, the “fire” that will consume sinners at the coming of the Kingdom of God is the same “fire” that will shine with splendor in the saints. It is the “fire” of God’s love; the “fire” of God Himself who is Love. “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12.29) who “dwells in unapproachable light” (1Tim 6.16). For those who love God and who love all creation in Him, the “consuming fire” of God will be radiant bliss and unspeakable delight. For those who do not love God, and who do not love at all, this same “consuming fire” will be the cause of their “weeping” and their “gnashing of teeth.”

Thus it is the Church’s spiritual teaching that God does not punish man by some material fire or physical torment. God simply reveals Himself in the risen
Lord Jesus in such a glorious way that no man can fail to behold His glory. It is the presence of God’s splendid glory and love that is the scourge of those who reject its radiant power and light.

Those who find themselves in hell will be chastised by the scourge of love. How cruel and bitter this torment of love will be! For those who understand that they have sinned against love, undergo no greater suffering than those produced by the most fearful tortures. The sorrow which takes hold of the heart, which has sinned against love, is more piercing than any other pain. It is not right to say that the sinners in hell are deprived of the love of God. But love acts in two ways, as suffering of the reproved, and as joy in the blessed! (Saint Isaac of Syria, Mystic Treatises).

This teaching is found in many spiritual writers and saints: Saint Maximus the Confessor, the novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. At the end of the ages God’s glorious love is revealed for all to behold in the face of Christ. Man’s eternal destiny—heaven or hell, salvation or damnation—depends solely on his response to this love.
When Christ will come in glory at the end of the ages, and God will be all in all, then will come the new heaven and new earth foretold by the prophet Isaiah and described in the book of Revelation (cf. Is 65.17–66.24).

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

And He who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Also He said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev 21.1–8).

Behold I am coming soon, bringing my recompense to repay everyone for what he has done (Rev 22.12).

To gain the “heritage” of the New Jerusalem is the whole meaning of life, the sole purpose of man’s being created by God. “He who conquers shall have this heritage.” And as Saint Paul has said simply, “We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom 8.37).

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8.38–39).

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of...
Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3.14–19).

To be “filled with all the fullness of God”-this, and this alone, is what Orthodox spirituality is about.
Selected Bibliography


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Spirituality Questions and Reflections for Discussion

Introduction

When Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko of blessed memory was in the process of revising his series *The Orthodox Faith*, he requested the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America, which had originally published the series, to create questions to accompany the texts of each volume. The following questions are the fulfillment of his request for the Spirituality volume of the series.

There are questions for each chapter of this volume, based on the text. They can be used to review or further consider the material in the chapter. A page number follows each question to show the part of the text it’s based on.

A separate document gives numbered answers. We would suggest that a discussion leader, after the group has read a chapter, give each participant a copy of the questions for that chapter. The group can then answer them together, as a way of reinforcing and reviewing what they have read.

Another way of using the questions is to give them to participants before they read the text, and then have them find the answers together. The group leader can check the answers with the answer sheet, though most should be easy to find within the text.

A reader going through the book on his or her own can use the questions and answers in whatever way is most helpful.

Some of the answers on the sheet also offer points for reflection. Father Thomas always liked to reflect further on things as he taught, and we hope those who use the books will want to do likewise. Most of all we hope that people will benefit from this revised editions of Father Thomas’ valuable gift to the Church, his series *The Orthodox Faith*.

Department of Christian Education
Orthodox Church in America
Chapter 1: Orthodox Spirituality

In the book’s first paragraph Fr. Thomas defines spirituality as “the everyday activity of life in communion with God.” What familiar prayer words does he say are the heart and soul of all spiritual effort and activity? (p. 16)

What two things do people not do if they are not “of God”? (p. 18)

What did St. Seraphim of Sarov say was the essence of Christian life, in fact of life itself? (p 20)

Why is it “contradictory” to be both human and a sinner? (p. 23)

How does 2Cor 11 describe Satan? (p. 25)
How does the Church differentiate two meanings of the words world and flesh? (p. 26–7)
Who is St. Paul referring to when he writes about the law of God written on their hearts? (p. 30)
What does the grace of the Holy Spirit enable a person to do through Holy Unction? (p. 32)
Chapter 2: The Beatitudes
What is the “source of all sorrows”? (p. 38)
To what does St. John Climacus compare honey in the comb? (p. 39)
How does Fr. Thomas distinguish between being “tolerant” and being “merciful”? (p. 44)
Fr. Thomas writes that a Christian must expect persecution. How does a person’s attitude toward persecution determine whether it is, as it should be, “for righteousness’ sake”? (p. 52)
Chapter 3: The Virtues
Are the Christian virtues, or Fruits of the Spirit, things that only Christians know and try to attain? (p. 56)
Is weak faith often the result of an intellectual mistake or mental confusion? (p. 59)
What is the “noonday demon”? (p. 61)
What foolish exchange does St. Paul say human beings make? (p. 66)
What is the “most vile” of evils in God’s sight? (p. 70)
How do God the Father and Jesus Christ show their humanity? (p. 72)
What connection is there between patience and will power? (p. 76)
What does each person’s “uniqueness” have to do with finding joy, wisdom and peace? (p. 81)
What is “passionlessness”? (p. 82–3)
Why does St. John Chrysostom tell us to be thankful to God even for things that seem evil? (p. 87)
Chapter 4: The Greatest Virtue is Love
Of the three types of love-agape, eros and philo—which can exist between God and human beings? (p 92–3)
Fr. Thomas writes about loving and hating oneself. What is the one way in which it is appropriate to hate ourselves? (p. 100)
What is the “new element” in the new commandment Jesus Christ gives us in Jn 13:34? (p. 102)
Chapter 5: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving
What problem in prayer is described by St. Nilus of Sinai? (p. 109)
What does it mean to say that God is in the heavens as we do in the Lord’s
Prayer? (p. 110)
   Why is it a “daring and dangerous” to pray to God, Thy will be done? (p. 112)
   Are we tempted by God to sin? (p. 114)
   What kind of prayer has great power in its effects according to the Letter of James? (p. 116)
   Why do Orthodox spiritual teachers advise us not to go back and repeat prayers we may have said poorly? (p. 118)
   The hesychast method of contemplative prayer is based on the Jesus Prayer. Aside from that method, though, anyone can use the prayer. How is it done? (p. 125–6)
   What is the model of liturgical prayer in the Orthodox Church? (p. 127)
   What is lectio divina? (p. 128)
   What assurance did St. Augustine give to those who seek God in prayer? (p. 131)
   Is it possible to fast “foolishly”? (p. 135)
   Why does Jesus Christ say that a rich person can hardly be saved? (p. 140)
Chapter 6: Sexuality, Marriage and Family
   Under what conditions can sexual relations be “holy and pure”? (p. 148)
   Can people serve God as well in the single life as they can in marriage? (p. 149–150)
   What makes the sexual act satisfying in marriage? (p. 153)
   How does loving, honoring and respecting one’s parents relate to one’s service to God? (p. 158)
Chapter 7: Sickness, Suffering and Death
   What is the greatest possible witness to love of God and faith in Christ? (p. 164)
   What was the greatest agony suffered by Jesus Christ? (p. 167)
   In what way is Jesus Christ’s death different from the deaths of all others born on this earth? (p. 170)
Chapter 8: The Kingdom of Heaven
   On what basis will Jesus Christ judge us at the last judgment? (p. 174)
   Fr. Thomas writes that each person’s eternal destiny “depends solely” on his or her response to one thing. What is it? (p. 180)
Chapter 1: Orthodox Spirituality

“Thy will be done.” (For reflection: Is it possible to be “spiritual but not religious?”)

They do not do right, and they do not love their brother-meaning all people.

The acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God.

Because our human being and life are naturally positive and good, evil and sin are not normal for us. So it is a contradiction to be both human and a sinner.

Satan is the Adversary who disguises himself as an angel of light. (For reflection: The word “disguise” reminds us that Satan is always lying, hiding himself, pretending-nothing he does is straightforward.)

The word world can refer to God’s good creation, which His Son came to save. It can also refer to the world as the place of temptation and sin, in rebellion against its Creator. The word flesh can refer to the positive character of created being, and to Christ becoming part of it in His incarnation, as in John’s Gospel: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. But it can also have the negative meaning of a godless and unspiritual existence.

He is referring to every human being, especially those who are not formally part of the Church.

It enables a person to make suffering and death an act of victory and life.

Chapter 2: The Beatitudes

Violation of the spiritual attitude of being “poor in spirit” is the source of all sorrows. To be poor in spirit is to be wholly set free from the sinful lusts of this world.

He compares it to mourning and grief, which have within them joy and gladness. If we mourn and grieve for our sins and for the sinful world (not morbidly or hopelessly) that godly grief will bring us to repentance, salvation and joy.

To be merciful means to refuse to condemn, to be compassionate and sympathetic toward those caught in sin, and to forgive. This is not the same as being tolerant of sin and foolishness in ourselves or others.

The persecuted person must genuinely forgive those who persecute. Persecution “for righteousness’ sake” is always “without cause”, as Psalm 69: 4 says.

Chapter 3: The Virtues

The virtues are for everyone, not just Christians. They are things that all
people desire and seek, as creatures made by God.

No. It is the refusal, either conscious or unconscious, to acknowledge God with honor and thanksgiving.

The “noonday demon” is the demon of despondency. (For reflection: That two great teachers of the Church could describe despondency so vividly, as they do here, tells us that they, like many of us, must have been familiar with this destructive emotion. The remedies Fr. Thomas writes about—taken from the teachings of the Fathers—are worth discussing, since they are things we don’t always talk about.)

They exchange the truth about God for a lie, which leads them to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.

Hypocrisy. (For reflection: This answer might surprise some people. What does it mean “not to say or do anything that would lead people to have a false impression of [oneself] or of anyone or anything”? How do we do it, living in a world in which the appearance of things is considered to be so important?)

They show it by humility—by caring for the lowliest and worst of sinners, and for the birds, the grass, and all the “least important” things and beings.

Patience is a virtue that comes through our willingness to “stay on the cross” and do God’s will no matter what. It cannot come through an effort of our own will power alone.

Each of us has a unique life, mission and vocation from God, which no one else can fulfill. Working in faith to accomplish this, without fear and without envying anyone else’s life, is the way to joy, wisdom and peace.

Passionlessness is spiritual mastery over the lusts of the mind and flesh.

Because even the things that are evil—and they do exist—can be vehicles for spiritual growth and for our salvation. They are not stronger than God, and His tender care is over all.

Chapter 4: The Greatest Virtue is Love
All three.

The only way in which it is appropriate for us to hate ourselves is in despising and putting off our “old nature with its evil practices” so that we can “put on the new nature which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator.”

Jesus Christ calls us not only to love, which was already commanded in the Old Testament law, but to love as Christ Himself loves. Christian love must be totally self-emptying, as Christ’s love is.

Chapter 5: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

St. Nilus says that if we ask for something we want and God grants it, we
will then be distressed because we haven’t left it to God to give what He knows is needed.

It means that God is everywhere and over all things.

It’s daring and dangerous because it means we must follow wherever it leads, as Christ did. Also, the devil will fiercely tempt anyone who truly tries to live according to God’s will.

No, we are only tempted by our own desires.
Intercessory prayers, for the salvation of others.
Because doing so would tempt us to believe that God hears our prayers according to how well we’ve said them, rather than simply through His great mercy. Therefore, we should just forge ahead in our prayers.

We can say the prayer constantly, whatever we are doing, without any particular bodily postures or breathing techniques.
The model is the Book of Revelation.

*Lectio divina* is slow and attentive reading of the Bible or possibly other writings, for the purpose of communion with God.

He says that even if a person doesn’t know how to pray but does seek God, that person is already the dwelling place of God.

Yes. According to St. Abba Dorotheus, if when we fast we think we’re achieving something virtuous, we are foolish. It leads us to look down on others and think we are “something great”-just the opposite of the attitude we should have.

A rich person will want to keep them and gather even more, and this delight in riches “chokesthe word of God, and so it proves unfruitful.”

Chapter 6: Sexuality, Marriage and Family

They are holy and pure within the communion of marriage, ideally of one woman and one man forever.

Yes. Both married and single people can serve God and live the spiritual life.

The sexual act is satisfying when it is the expression of the couple’s total union, each living completely for the good of the other.

Honoring, respecting and loving our parents enables us to serve God, who is the “Father of all.”

Chapter 7: Sickness, Suffering and Death

The greatest witness is sickness endured with faith and love.

Jesus knew the glory of paradise and the perfect love of God. All this was given to human beings, and the greatest agony Christ suffered was to see the gift scorned and rejected in His own person.

His death is the only one that is completely voluntary. *(For reflection:*)
Christianity is based on the willingness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to live with us and die for us. This is unique to the Christian faith—no other faith teaches that God would do this amazing thing for His creatures, out of completely self-emptying love for them.)

Chapter 8: The Kingdom of Heaven

We will be judged solely on the basis of how we have served Him by serving others, including the “least” among us.

It is God’s glorious love, which will be revealed to everyone at the end of the ages.
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