

THE ORTHODOX FAITH

WHAT EVERY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MUST BELIEVE

ONE GOD

Every Orthodox Christian must believe that there is but one God, a pure Spirit, Creator of heaven and earth, Who has neither beginning nor end. God is always the same. He did not make Himself, for it would mean that He was acting before He existed, which is impossible. God always was, is and will be because He is eternal. He knows and sees everything, and nothing can be hidden from His sight. God can make everything that can exist. He is infinite in all His perfections: infinitely wise, good, merciful, parable, just, etc. He is the only Ruler of the universe because there can be just one Being infinitely perfect.

HOLY TRINITY

In God there are three distinct Divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. They are perfectly equal in all perfections because they have the same divine substance and nature. The three divine Persons are equally wise, beautiful, merciful, omnipotent, etc. They differ, however, because they are different persons. The Father proceeds from no one. The Was Born of the Father before all ages. The Holy Ghost proceeds eternally from the Father as from one principle.

CREATION

God created heaven and earth; the Angels were destined to be with Him forever in heaven. Since heaven is a reward, God put His Angels on trial. A great number of them disobeyed God. This was a mortal sin through which they fell away from Him and became **devils**. Thus the devils are nothing else but **sinful** fallen away Angels who cannot repent for their sins and be saved.

God also created Adam and Eve, the first parents of the human race, and place them in an earthly paradise, a beautiful garden full of trees, animals and birds. When they were created, they were raised to the supernatural state of sanctifying grace. Besides, they were made immortal, free from concupiscence, ignorance, sickness, sufferings, old age and death. All men, being born of Adam and Eve, would inherit their privileges and would have lived in paradise until the moment of their entry into heaven. Unfortunately Adam and Eve were seduced by the devil, ate the forbidden fruit, for which they were justly banished from Paradise, deprived of sanctifying grace and other preternatural gifts, such as freedom sufferings, pains, concupiscence and death.

The transgression of our first parents is called original sin. All men, being descendents of Adam and Eve, are conceived and born in original sin, except the Blessed Virgin Mary.

JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is our only Savior. We would have been lost forever, if God had not sent His only begotten Son to redeem us and to reopen heaven for men.

Jesus Christ is true God and true man as God He is eternal and equal to His Father in all things. He is also a perfect Man from the time of His coming down from heaven, having a body and soul like ours. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost within the most chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin.

In view of the future divine maternity, the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved from the stain of original sin. It would have been unbecoming for the Mother of the Son of God to become a slave of Satan even for an instant. Mary remained a virgin before and after she gave birth to the Son of God. St. Joseph was her spouse and the Guardian of Jesus.

Jesus came to earth to **teach** us about the law of God and to enlighten our minds by showing us what is good and what is bad, what we should do and what we must avoid in order to obtain our eternal salvation. The Gospel and the teaching of the Church constitute the supernatural light for our minds.

The Holy Bible ought to be in every Orthodox home. It should be read frequently and the whole family should conform to its maxims. “Where there is a Bible, there is God,” says the proverb.

Jesus also came to **redeem** us from our sin and to reopen heaven for all men. At first He led a hidden life in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter without manifesting His divinity. When He was 30 years old, he was baptized by St. John the Baptist and began His public life by preaching the Gospel of Redemption.

He preached His Gospel for three years. The great majority of the Jewish people rejected His teaching, for they dreamed of an earthly Messiah that would free them from Roman subjection and constitute them rulers over the whole world. At the end of His three-year career, Jesus, being that 33 years old, offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, by dying on the cross to a chain mercy, grace, forgiveness of sin and salvation for us.

Jesus also came to **sanctify** us, that is, to make us holy. He makes us holy through sanctifying grace which is a supernatural quality that makes us resemble God and become His children and heirs of heaven. This resemblance to God is interior, produced by the grace changes the human soul from within. Sanctifying grace is usually received through the Sacraments. There are **seven Sacraments** instituted by our Lord. They resemble spiritual channels through which sanctifying

grace flows into the souls, because the Sacraments are mysterious signs and instrumental causes of Divine grace in our souls.

What are the seven Sacraments?

Baptism is a sacrament that cleanses the soul of original sin, imparts sanctifying grace, and makes him/her a child of God and a member of the Church.

Chrismation (Confirmation) is a sacrament that increases sanctifying grace and makes the soul a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Holy Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. It is a spiritual food for our souls.

Penance is a sacrament in which the priest in the name of God forgives sin committed after baptism, when the sinner is heartily sorry for them, sincerely confesses them and is resolved to amend his life and to perform any penance imposed upon him by the confessor.

Holy Anointing (Extreme Unction) wipes away the remains of sin and fortifies the soul with a special grace of God in times of sickness and sometimes restores physical health if such is the will of God.

Holy Orders is a sacrament by which the ministers of Christ are ordained to continue the mission of salvation among men.

Matrimony is a sacrament which unites a man and a woman in a holy bond forever and imparts to them a special grace to rear children and thus propagate the human race on Earth.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST really died and was buried and rose from the dead on the third day never to die again. After His glorious resurrection He remained on Earth for 40 days, appearing to His apostles at different times to complete their spiritual training for the great mission in the world:

“Go and teach all nations ...” Then, in their sight, He ascended into heaven where as God-Man He continually intercedes for us. 10 days after His Ascension Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon His apostles to fortify them and to guide them and their lawful successors, the bishops and priests, in all truth, assisting them in their work of salvation of the world.

ONE TRUE CHURCH

There is but one true Church founded by Jesus Christ outside of which there is no salvation. This true Church of Christ is the Orthodox Church. The Church is holy in teaching a holy doctrine, in the inviting all to a holy life and in the eminent holiness of many of its children known as Saints. The Church is universal (catholic), for it exists for all times, nations, races, cultures and social classes. It cannot be national, for it would cease being Christ's Church if it became limited to one nation or one culture or race. The Orthodox Church is apostolic, for it derives its teaching and mission from the Apostles of Christ by an uninterrupted succession, while the other religious denominations were organized in the course of centuries by men through schisms and heresies. The great schism of 1054 tore away the Western part of Christianity known as the Roman or Latin Church. The Lutheran Church was established in 1517 by Martin Luther and the Anglican body in 1534 by Henry VIII, the English King. Practically all other Protestant denominations sprang either from the Lutheran or the Anglican denomination. If a person knowingly remains outside the Orthodox Church, he cannot be saved. If he is born outside the true Church and sincerely believes that his “church” is true because he has no means of finding out the truth, he can be saved, if he does what his church commands him to do, because God will not condemn those who lived outside the true Church through no fault of their own.

THE BIBLE

The Holy Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are the word of God and must be accepted as infallible truth. The Holy Scriptures together with Sacred Tradition (the truth is handed down from one generation to another without being found in the Holy Scriptures) constitute the source of our Faith. The Church is the Guardian and interpreter of the Bible and Tradition. St. Augustine said: “I would not believe even in the Bible, if the Church did not assure me that it is the word of God.” (See: 2 Peter 1, 20)

The more we read the Gospel, the stronger our Faith becomes. Good Orthodox Christians have the Bible in their homes and read it often.

There are many, Catholic and Protestant versions of the Bible. Orthodox Christians may only read the Bible's approved by an Orthodox or Catholic Bishop because Protestant versions are incomplete. They omit several books, known as deuterocanonical (Tobias, Judith, Wisdom,

Sirach, Baruch and two books of Maccabees) and some parts of Esther and Daniel. Besides, their versions are often twisted to fit their erroneous teachings.

LITURGY

Jesus Christ has instituted the Holy Eucharist. In this sacrifice, called the DIVINE LITURGY, Christ is mystically immolated every day upon our altars by the priests, being Himself the offering (victim) and the offeror or priest. The Divine Liturgy is an act of official public worship of the Orthodox Church, in which and through which we unite ourselves with Christ to adore God, to give Him thanks for His benefits, to obtain new graces and blessings, and to atone for our sins.

The Divine Liturgy is infinitely superior to all other acts of worship, such as the Moleben, Suplikatsia, Akafist, Panakhyda etc. because in the Divine Liturgy Christ is he under the appearances of bread and wine adoring, thanking, propitiating and petitioning His Father through the voice and actions of the Church, that is, through the lips of all the living members of the Church who constitute His Mystical Body, Christ is the Head, and all baptized souls on earth in Hades and in Heaven are His members. Thus, in the Divine Liturgy, Christ is glorifying God and praying for the whole world.

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

There is a Communion or union Saints by means of which we communicate with all holy persons in heaven, on earth and in Hades, whereby we may help each other with our prayers and good works, especially those who are suffering in Hades. We may offer prayers, this sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy and alms to God for the souls in Hades, thus paying their debts to divine justice.

CONFESSION

Christ endowed His priests with a special power of forgiving sins. The Church has the power of applying the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints to other members of Christ's Mystical Body.

GRACE

Grace is a supernatural gift. There are two kinds of grace: **sanctifying** grace which is a supernatural quality making us children of God and heirs of heaven, and **actual** grace which helps man to perform some good work. Grace is absolutely necessary for salvation. No one can make a single step towards heaven without God's help. All our good works and merits are the gift of God. God gives said fishing grace to every soul, for Christ died for the salvation of all men. Christ wants all men to be saved. However, He does not force man's free will by His grace. Free will is a precious gift bestowed by God upon man.

LAST JUDGMENT

The world will come to an end. Christ will descend from heaven on the last day to judge all mankind. All the dead, both good and bad, will arise from their graves and appear before the tribunal of Christ to render account of all their thoughts, words and deeds, and to be judged according to their works. Everything shall be revealed at the last Judgment. The sins of the wicked shall be known to the whole universe, to men, to Angels and even to the devils. After the a revocable sentence pronounced by the impartial Judge, the Lesson shall go to heaven to enjoy everlasting bliss. There are souls shall be happy and their bodies shall be immortal, radiant like the sun and filled with the enjoyment of an infinite beatitude, while wicked and damned shall be cursed by Christ, and sent to hell. They shall be condemned, both body and soul, to everlasting torments of fire and other pains.