

SHARING THE HOPE THAT IS IN US

TUESDAY MORNINGS
APRIL 28 - JUNE 2
10:00 - 11:30 A.M.

OR

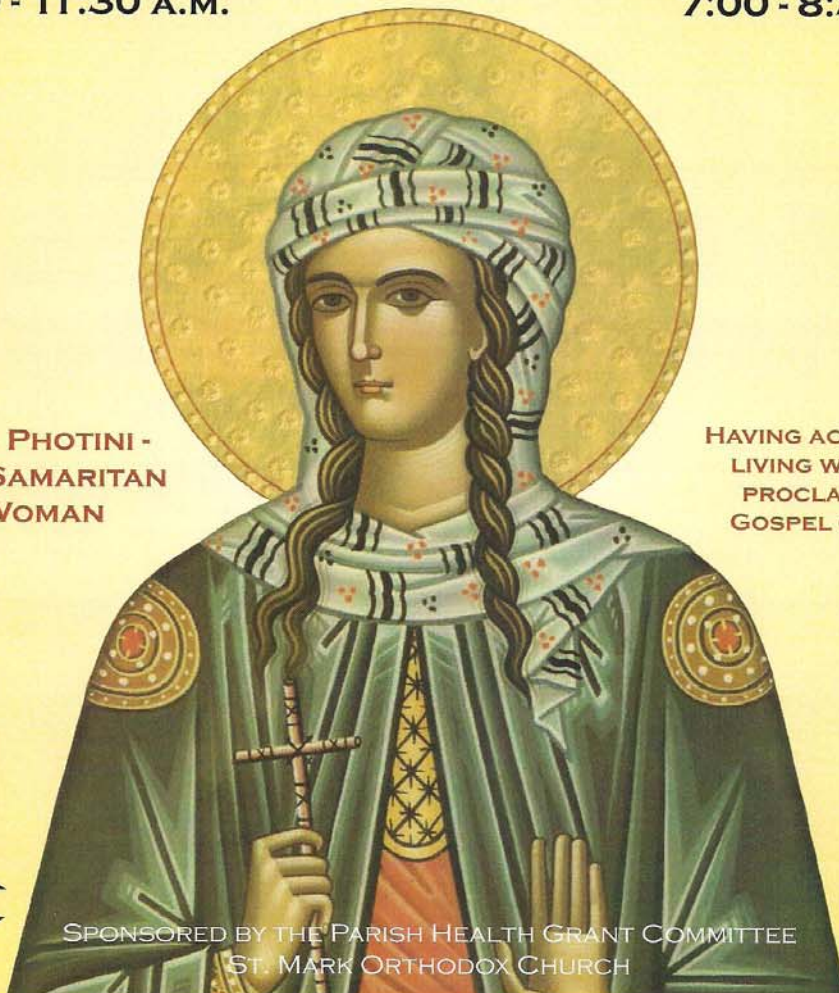
TUESDAY EVENINGS
APRIL 28 - JUNE 2
7:00 - 8:30 P.M.

- ST. PHOTINI -
THE SAMARITAN
WOMAN

HAVING ACCEPTED THE
LIVING WATER, SHE
PROCLAIMED THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST



SPONSORED BY THE PARISH HEALTH GRANT COMMITTEE
ST. MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH



St. Mark Orthodox Church
Rochester Hills, Michigan
Diocese of the Midwest
Orthodox Church In America

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

A Preparatory Program for Orthodox Faithful

St. Mark Parish Health Grant Committee

On our Cover: St. Photini lived in first century Palestine. She was the Samaritan woman who Christ visited at the well asking her for water. It was she who accepted the “living water” offered her by Christ Himself after repenting from her many sins (John. 4:5–42). She went and told her townspeople that she had met the Christ. For this, she is sometimes recognized as the first to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

“But sanctify the Lord God
in your hearts, and always
be ready to give a defense
to everyone who asks you
a reason for the hope that
is in you.”

(1 Peter 3:15)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This curriculum has been prepared under the auspices of a Parish Health Grant bestowed by the Parish Health Program of the Diocese of the Midwest to St. Mark Orthodox Church in Rochester Hills, MI, 2008-2009.

The grant proposal called for a preparatory program to equip our parishioners to share our Orthodox Christian Faith and Worship confidently and effectively to non-Orthodox seekers who approach our doors. Tasks included a) identifying the difficulties that non- Orthodox Christians encounter when approaching our faith, and b) training our parishioners to deal with the intellectual, emotional and spiritual obstacles that such seekers face. For the purpose of discovering what the difficulties are for both inquirers and parishioners as they encounter one another, two surveys were executed – one to converts in the Diocese at large, and one internally to our parishioners. The content of this curriculum reflects the subjects identified by the surveys as important to address.

In addition to the preparation of this curriculum the Parish Health Grant Committee carefully reviewed available literature suitable for instruction to newcomers seeking to convert to Orthodoxy. Having selected “the best,” packets were prepared for both Protestants and Catholics with materials that would be instructive to the serious seeker. Welcome packets for first-time visitors were also prepared and greeters instructed in their use. The church brochure and the contents of the brochure rack were updated. New books were placed in the library. All this information is available upon request. Anyone is welcome to copy all or portions of this curriculum.

Our vision was for a parish membership prepared and equipped to welcome seekers into our midst with a ready smile and an informed answer to their varied questions. We trust that we have met that goal.

We extend our appreciation to Joe Kormos, Parish Health Facilitator, who was very helpful and supportive throughout the entire process of grant implementation.

Parish Health Grant Committee Members

V. Rev. Andrew Yavornitzky, Parish Priest

Edith Marshall Roberts, Grant Writer and Committee Facilitator

Irene Bokas

Dion Roddy

Robert Meyer

Linda Saieg

Rosalie Meyer

Larissa Thornton

John Roberts

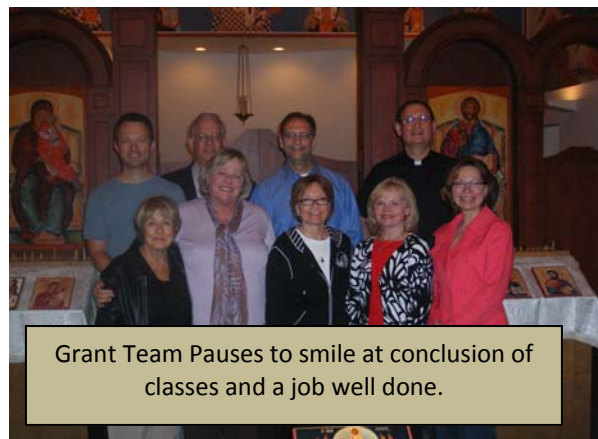
User Notes

Dear User of this document:

As will be obvious this document contains materials for six preparatory classes developed for use at St. Mark Orthodox Church in Rochester Hills MI. The classes were designed, created and in part presented by a team of dedicated laypersons from that parish under the guidance and assistance of their pastor Fr. Andrew Yavornitzky. A significant portion of each class was taught by Fr Andrew with contributions from members of the team. The team included persons with varying professional backgrounds including educators. Members of the team also represented a variety of religious backgrounds. Some are lifelong Orthodox Christians, former Roman Catholics, mainline and evangelical Protestants. Some are catechumens.

The classes were designed for the needs of this specific parish. Using these materials in your parish will most likely require some customization. Each class included multiple presentations which fit the backgrounds, personal styles of the presenters and the parish audience.

At St Mark's the classes were conducted on Tuesday's, both in the morning and repeated in the evening, for six weeks after Pascha 2009. The parish, which has a membership of just over 100 adults, supported the classes vigorously. Combined attendance for the morning and evening sessions averaged between 55 - 60 persons for the six weeks. It is therefore safe to say that attendees found the sessions valuable or they would not have returned. When we asked attendees why they participated they cited the obvious professionalism of handouts and the quality delivery of class materials; the belief that they were preparing themselves for an important role in their lives as Orthodox Christians, and that content was kept at understandable and approachable level.



Your parish will be different. It is unlikely that you can simply copy what was done at St Mark's and expect it to be valuable and attractive to your parish. *But now you have an example framework.* You know it can be done and that is has been found valuable in one parish. *Your task is to figure out how to make this work in your parish.* If you create new modules on different topic areas please share them with others. Our Diocesan Parish health Ministry is available to assist you.



If you have questions please feel free to contact us.

In Christ

[Joe Kormos](#) 513 683-1911

Leader, Parish Health Ministry

Diocese of the Midwest, Orthodox Church in America



Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Outline

Week One

Introduction

The Lesson: **THE LITURGY**

Practice Session

Background Readings

Week Two

Introduction

The Lesson: **THE SACRAMENTS**

Practice Session

Background Readings

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Introduction

The Lesson: **THE THEOTOKOS**

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Background Readings

Week Four

Introduction

The Lesson: **ICONS**

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Week Five

Introduction

The Lesson: **THE SAINTS**

Practice Session

Background Readings

Week Six Tradition

Introduction

The Lesson: **TRADITION**

Practice Session

Background Readings

Abridged Glossary and reading list

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Week One

Outline: Week One

Prayer

Welcome

Brief Overview of Curriculum and its Purpose

The Call to Share: The role of the Laity

Survey Result:

What do we know about the people that are coming through our doors?

- Seekers from Protestant and Catholic Traditions

 - Well educated

 - Hungry spiritually

 - Intellectually curious

- Engaged or married to someone who is Orthodox or wants to be Orthodox

 - Confused

 - Maybe initially resistant

- Transfer from another parish

 - Hesitant, worried, will they find what they're looking for

- Non-churched

 - Curious, desire for something more

Engagement Skill: Empathy

- See it from their side

- Empathy means being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they feel. Try to view situations and responses from another person's perspective. Ask for feedback, and an understanding of who they are and why they're here.

Topic Justification: LITURGY

- What we know from the surveys

- Specific contrast with Western Church views

The Call to Share: Week One

The Role of the Laity

Hello and welcome again. This is a short segment that we'll start each class with and its entitled "The Call to Share".

First let me explain the title. It references the scripture verse that you'll find on the cover page of your materials there. It's from the first book of the epistles of St. Peter:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you."

And it really kind of nails the intent of this class overall in that we're hoping to develop our collective ability to share our faith (that's the hope that is in us) with those who come seeking it.

So today I want to present a very traditional Orthodox perspective of sharing our faith. To those of you who did not grow up in the Orthodox church please use this following description as an opportunity to "exchange places" with those of us who did and try to see this effort from our vantage point---Edith will talk more in a few minutes about empathy and perspective.

But for those of you who did grow up Orthodox, I hope this perspective sounds familiar....I want to talk about the role of Godparents. Oh, we Orthodox kids were taught to love our godparents! We knew they loved us and were there to help teach us about Christ and His church. As kids, we were often told that so-and-so was our "godmother " or "god-father" At first, we excepted that on the surface, you know, godmother, aunt, uncle, what do those words really mean. Then as we got a little older, we needed a definition. And so we were told just that, that your godparents were there to help instruct you in the ways of our faith. And as adults now we understand the role of being godparents or even choosing godparents for own children: to be or select someone who will pray for the child, be a good example of a Christian life. In fact the Church teaches that the godparent actually assumes some responsibility before God for the faith of the god "child". I'll explain my quote marks in a minute.

Well, what is so familiar to us -- the concept of godparents—is actually our experience with the broader Orthodox role of "sponsor". We here at St. Mark's have seen enough adult conversions to know that even an adult who wants to convert must have an Orthodox sponsor. So when I refer to god "child" I really mean the neophyte, the newbie to the faith.

Of course, growing up Orthodox, we also had, and I'm sure you did too, many, many others at church who affected us, and strengthened or deepened our Faith; other adults (church school teachers, choir directors, camp counselors) and other peers (the other altar boys or kids at church, our "church friends"). The other adults were people who were comfortable and willing to share their faith. And the other kids, our peers, were people with whom you grew together in the faith. We learned things

together and struggled through the disciplines of the faith together. In reality it's not just the godparent's job to bring us up in the church! The godparent or sponsor ideally is the *representative* of the local faith community that is receiving the child (or adult). They are not the only ones who have influence or provide support.

So this is and always has been the Tradition given to us by the Church. That the Laity must sponsor,-- must vouch for--any person (child or adult) before they can be received in to the faith. And the laity must accept responsibility before God in person of the sponsor, for the faith of the initiate. So, the first step is to assimilate into the community of the faithful, then, to be received sacramentally into the Faith.

This class is designed to help us work on our role as that broader faith community that's represented by the "godparents", the extended community of the congregation. That we be more comfortable with engaging visitors to St. Marks. It's not a concept that is foreign to our experience as Orthodox Christians. What's new about it compared to our experiences growing up is that it involves adults and interaction on a mature level. More than just being friendly, (though that's a fundamental component), it's about building our skills at expressing our faith. We're probably all comfortable instructing a youngster on the commonplace acts of entering the church reverently or how to (or why we) venerate icons, but when the person who needs the information is an adult, a peer today, well that's likely a little trickier, more out of our "comfort zone". And chances are that when the "newbie" at church is an adult instead of a child, well, they're not starting with a "clean slate". They've had other experiences with religion, a different upbringing. And we can't help them out appropriately unless we know them, unless we know their story and background. So in this class, we'll get to know our seekers, and we'll work on our skills at sharing the faith

Next we will talk about what we've learned about the people who have come as adults interested in the Orthodox Faith. And over this series of classes we'll learn more about what topics are important to them and we'll practice how to best express the Orthodox teaching on those topics.

The Nicene Creed

I 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 on 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 in glory to judge the living and the dead and His kingdom shall have no end.

†††

And 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.

The Lesson

Week One: LITURGY

Objectives:

- Recite the Nicene Creed from memory with special attention to the part about Jesus.
- Name the 12 major Feasts and be able to describe each one
- Trace the biblical origins of ritual worship in Old Testament law and the book of Revelation
- Define worship as practiced by the Church

1. What is contained in the Nicene Creed we say, especially in reference to Jesus?

2. What are the 12 major Feasts and what happens on each Feast?

3. How does our ritual worship relate to the writings in the Old Testament and the book of Revelation?

4. What is worship?

Comparative View: Western Church View: Liturgy

By Linda Saieg

I would like to give you a brief background of my journey to Orthodoxy so you know where I am coming from. I was baptized and raised in the Methodist Church. My husband was raised Orthodox and we were married in the Orthodox Church but I did not understand it so we continued in the Methodist faith. When I was forty years old, I became very involved in a fundamentalist Bible study and grew tremendously in my faith at that time. I then realized the Methodist church was too liberal for my two boys, so we joined an evangelical mega church. My sons grew and went to an evangelical university in Denver. While there, my oldest son met an Orthodox monk, studied and became Orthodox. As a mother, I asked why. He sent me books and we had a lot of in depth discussions and I realized that Orthodoxy was the true faith. I was chrismated after about two years of study.

Now here is a short discussion of views on liturgy. As the Westerner enters the Orthodox Church they are struck by how different it is from their church experience. The icons, iconostas, candles, incense, room lay out are all very new to them. Then the Divine Liturgy begins and they are overwhelmed.

A Roman Catholic visitor will adapt more easily to the Divine Liturgy than a protestant. They have a liturgical service with a lot of similarities to the Orthodox.

Protestant churches vary widely in their use of the liturgy. The Episcopal Church is highly liturgical whereas the Evangelical and Bible churches are freer flowing. The main focus of the service is the sermon. The focal point of the room is the pulpit. Sometimes there is an altar and sometimes not. They come to church to hear the sermon, to worship and to pray, in that order. This is why many Protestants have a pretty good knowledge of the Bible. The parishioners need to be comfortable, relaxed and ready to learn and hopefully be inspired to serve God.

The Feast Days in Protestantism are Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter and sometimes Pentecost. That is about all. All other feast days in Christianity are unknown to most of them.

When they come into a Divine Liturgy, they do not like nor understand the need for all of the standing. They also are surprised by all of the prayers repeated over again. The homily is not the main focus of the service. They notice the music doesn't necessarily correlate with the homily. Music in the Western church usually helps to make the point of the sermon.

The protestant does not view the church service as a mystical movement toward God and His Kingdom. The mystical aspect of faith is not usually present. The protestant, therefore, does not see communion in a mystical sense. It is a memorial of Christ, a symbolic event. It is a solemn time to remember His great sacrifice. Anyone who believes in Christ can and is encouraged to participate. The fact that Orthodox communion is closed can be offensive and viewed as being unwelcoming.

The services in a protestant setting can change in format. Modern music, dramas, sermons and events change according to the current ideas of the culture. The point is to make the gospel message appealing, especially to the young adult. The focus is on the parishioner, not on worship of God. Parishioners are often encouraged to engage their emotions and imaginations in worship. They may sing with raised hands and tears are not uncommon.

An unchanging liturgy may seem odd and maybe even dry to the visitor. The protestant service does not relate to the Old Testament liturgy and views it as not relevant to today's services. The Orthodox liturgy grew out of Old Testament liturgy and is a completion of it.

The Nicene Creed is said in the Catholic and main line protestant churches. The non-denominational churches tend not to say it. There is one difference in that they say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. My understanding is that the filioque (that is what it is called) came from a perceived need to emphasize the deity of Christ to the parishioners. The understanding of the protestant church of the holy catholic and apostolic church is that the one true Church is "where the Spirit of the Lord is" (taken from the Modern Affirmation in the Methodist Church) and not a particular institution.

Another reason the protestant churches don't have much liturgy, icons, statues, priests, etc. is because they are still protesting the Roman Catholic Church. They do not want to have much in common with the Roman church at all. That is why so many changes have occurred over the years. The priesthood is viewed with suspicion, the church bureaucracy as potentially corrupt. Icons, statues, and praying to the Theotokos and the saints are viewed as idolatry.

Even though there are many differences between us, many wonderful, strong believers come out of the protestant tradition. Many have been martyred for the sake of the gospel. I believe many protestant visitors coming here will be very committed Christians.

I hope you find this information helpful in understanding where some of our visitors are coming from. This is just a brief overview and by no means covers all the variations of practices and beliefs that are out there but at least it's a start.

Practice Questions

Week One: THE LITURGY

Discuss in Small Groups

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. Is Orthodox worship scriptural?
2. Why don't you have any musical instruments in your church?
3. Why do you stand through the whole service? The service is so long!
4. Why do you repeat so many things over and over in your liturgies?
5. What is the purpose of making the sign of the cross?
6. Why do you say "Lord have mercy" so many times?
7. I've heard you have Feast Days. What are those for?

Background Readings –Liturgy

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 task. (Hopko, **Worship**, 154)

The Basic Rites of Liturgy

The [Liturgy] is a sacred **action**, i.e., a sequence of movements or rites, and not only readings and prayers. A community is praying and worshipping God not in words only, but in certain bodily representations and movements. Kneeling, bowing of heads, prostrations, kiss, etc. are religious rites as old as humanity itself. In addition to them there are several basic rites, which we find in all liturgical services:

- Censing – i.e., burning of incense. It is a natural symbol of religion: of its transforming power (incense becoming fragrance) and adoration (smoke going upwards).
- Processions and entrances –i.e., the moving forward. This rite symbolizes and manifests the movement of man towards God, the movement of God towards man, the movement of the whole history of salvation towards its ultimate consummation in the Kingdom of God.

- Light and darkness – besides lighting candles before icons, there are also the liturgical rites of light. The newly baptized are given candles as are the newly-wed. The liturgical Rubrics prescribe that the church be illuminated at certain moments and then darkened at others. The light always stands for Christ and for the enlightenment he brought to us.
- The sign of the Cross. This simple act is the essential rite of Christian blessing, expressing faith of the Church in the saving power of the Cross of Christ. (Schmemmann, **Liturgy and Life**, 30-31)

The Heavenly Liturgy

The heavenly liturgy is revealed to us in Revelations (chs 4 and 5). St. John allows us to share in the heavenly vision where a multitude of angels sing the glory of God around the throne of the slaughtered Lamb. Our liturgies here on earth are directly connected to the eternal, divine celebration. This is why the piece of bread placed on the paten, which we incense and over which we invoke the Holy Spirit, is called the LAMB and becomes the body of Christ.

The liturgical hymns invite us to share in the praise which the angels who surround the celestial throne offer the divine Lamb. At the Cherubic Hymn, we prepare for the thrice-holy chant which the seraphim and cherubim, with six wings and many eyes, never cease to proclaim: Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Sabaoth!

Practice Questions Responses

Week One: THE LITURGY

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. Is Orthodox worship scriptural?

Yes. It is patterned after Old Testament worship (see Lev., Dt., Is 6, Ez. 1, Psalms) as well as the heavenly worship depicted in Revelation chapter 4. Psalms are extensively used, and much of the language of the liturgy is direct Biblical quotes or paraphrases.

2. Why don't you have any musical instruments in your church?

Worship is praise, thanksgiving and glory given to God. Sound alone, without words, cannot adequately offer that. The melodic voice offering words is God's greatest created instrument.

3. Why do you stand through the whole service? The service is so long!

We are in the presence of our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Standing (or prostrating) is the appropriate posture in such a Holy and regal presence.

4. Why do you repeat so many things over and over in your liturgies?

(a) So that we may better learn them through repetition, and (b)so that we may have repeated opportunity to offer the worship apart from the inattentiveness and distractions which constantly plague us.

5. What is the purpose of making the sign of the cross?

It is an affirmation of our participation in the saving death, resurrection, ascension and coming again in glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The cross is an iconic presence through which we "touch" eternal salvation while in this world.

6. Why do you say "Lord have mercy" so many times?

During the litanies it is a response in dialog: "...For the salvation of our souls let us pray to the Lord" we respond in prayer: "Lord have mercy". It might have been rendered similarly, though not as explicitly, with a simple "Amen" – so be it.

7. I've heard you have Feast Days. What are those for?

Feast days are an annual series of “themes” or focal points through which we enter the heavenly realm. They reflect both God’s salvation history and the cyclical nature of our created reality. We simply cannot “handle” all of the Kingdom of God at one time.

End of Week One

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Week Two

Week Two Outline

Prayer

Welcome

The Call to Share: A Balancing Act

Engagement Skill: Pay attention to others.

Observe what's going on in other people's lives. Acknowledge their happy milestones, and express concern and sympathy for difficult situations such as an illness or death.

Make eye contact and address people by their first names. Ask others for their opinions.

Topic Justification: THE SACRAMENTS

What we know from the surveys.

Specific contrast with Western Church view.

A Call to Share: Week Two

A Balancing Act

I want to talk for a few minutes about our Call to Share. Last week I talked about the role of the laity in the form of the godparents or sponsors in sharing our faith. And I hope you could relate to that perspective.

Today I want to talk about perspective again. But this time not just about one specific point of view but more about the whole spectrum or range of forms that sharing one's faith can take.

When we think about sharing one's faith we all too often conjure up images of televangelists "sharing" with loud voices –quoting scripture chapter and verse or door-knocking missionaries with colorful magazines filled with personal testimonies of believers who were "saved" by joining that faith.

These examples aren't uncommon in the American Christian world. They certainly prove the point that we are welcome in their faith. So welcome in fact that they'll come to my house to invite me to join them! And I'd likely be a full-fledged member from the very moment I agree that I'm interested. Although common, they still are pretty much the extreme example. Though they're an extreme example of what we should admit is a valid Christian hope and maybe even a responsibility: to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Here today- especially here in the US where we're leading the way into the Information age, the demands on people's attention, senses and time are huge! The "conventional wisdom" among these extreme examples has been to not only enter the battle for people's time and attention but they intend to win that battle: to reach people by being so obvious that they can't be ignored. But as you must realize by now, this is NOT what we mean here when we talk about the Call to Share.

Yet we can consider the opposite end of the spectrum as well, where someone might feel like an outsider to the faithful community, lost and completely unwelcome, even if the intention of the well-meaning congregation was to respect the visitor and preserve their right to choose their own religion.

Of course, neither extreme is our goal. We need to give some thought to striking the balance between both extremes. So where are we today?

Well, we are members of the Orthodox faith and it has two important aspects to consider when we think about our "approachability". Our Orthodox Christianity and faith experience intersects our daily life, our daily habits: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, these are daily activities, and they accompany our corporate worship. And it is also a faith that teaches the importance of receiving, living and passing on a tradition, an inheritance of the salvation of God.

Understanding these two pillars of Orthodox Christianity—that it is to be lived out in our daily lives and that it is passed on tradition, we can begin to understand the --well – the sort of “pickle” that the Orthodox Church has found itself in here in the US. Because as previous generations in many countries lived out their daily lives in the Orthodox faith, it was natural to have those traditions intersect with the local contemporary cultural aspects of their lives and as the faith/Tradition was passed on, so were the cultural and ethnic aspects. Then, being transplanted to the US and it being modern times, the next generation was afforded the opportunity to recreate the old ethnic traditions as well as preserve the religious teachings. So, blessing of food became blessing of specific ethnic foods or daily prayers became an opportunity to practice the ancestral language, almsgiving became sharing with the needy people of similar background or back in the “mother country”. In an effort to hold on to the Church Tradition **and** a cultural heritage, both aspects of daily life (religious and secular) got intertwined, maybe even blurred.

An unfortunate result of this “mixing” is that the Church community became homogeneous and to some extent insular and closed to diversity, seemingly only interested in sharing the faith with those who want to embrace the ethnic heritage.

So consider these 2 extremes and let me hypothesize that Orthodoxy doesn’t belong over at that that extreme and never will. One reason we’ll never be overwhelmingly welcoming is our closed communion where only members can participate, or the whole period of being a catechumen and the expectation that one must learn the teachings of the Church before “joining”.

Still the church does not belong at the other extreme either, where it’s uncomfortable to attend services or to get answers to your questions unless you fit in.

So we need to be mindful of what makes it hard for people to get to know Orthodoxy? Our survey of seekers and converts yielded some pretty profound results in this regard. In answer to the question: What aspect of Orthodoxy did you find the most difficult? -- 41% of respondents stated that the ethnic features of the church culture were DIFFICULT for them when they first became interested in Orthodoxy. In fact as I recall this was the one issue with the most agreement among the 180+ respondents –41%. That’s statistically significant.

Now what’s also important to know about these difficulties in getting started at something or as they say in the business world, these ‘barriers to entry’ –is that it is perception that is fundamentally important. It’s not what we are or what we’ve been working hard at becoming but it’s what others perceive us to be. So if we ask ourselves here at St. Mark: are we friendly? Are we welcoming? Are we ethnically influenced? If we asked ourselves we may get a different answer than if we asked our seekers.

From the perspective of where many of us came from – we see St. Marks as multi ethnic, which it is and therefore less entrenched in mixing up the cultural/secular tradition with Orthodox teachings on our daily life. Fasting means fasting: not merely eating some specific Lenten ethnic foods, etc. Looking from here (the enclave extreme) St. Mark's looks progressive, welcoming, multi ethnic, etc.

But there are some folks and certainly many among the seeker/convert respondents who come from (or in their religious search have experienced) that end of the spectrum (overly welcoming). That end can be more welcoming, and more rooted in the contemporary experiences of current secular society. And when they look from there to see St. Marks or any Orthodox Church, we still seem way over there. Maybe too close to the unwelcoming closed community described.

And so we need to strike a balance. We need to keep in mind the perspective of the inquirer. Get to know them so that we might have some insight into how we're coming across. We are called to share our faith but we can't share what we can't express. We need to be able to explain "closed communion" or the diversity of ethnic influences and have these explanations still extend a welcome to the newcomer –not a barrier. We hope that working together these next few weeks, we can find that balance.

The Lesson: Week Two

THE SACRAMENTS

Objectives:

- Identify the origin of the words “sacrament” and “mystery”.
- Define the word sacrament.
- Name and briefly explain all seven mysteries/sacraments.
- Explain why mysteries belong to a community of faith and are not extended to those outside that community.

1. Where does the word “sacrament” and “mystery” originate?

2. What is a sacrament?

3. What are the seven mysteries/sacraments? How can they be explained?

4. Why do mysteries belong to a community of faith and are not extended to those outside the community?

Comparative View

FROM A ROMAN CATHOLIC/PROTESTANT POINT OF VIEW: SACRAMENTS

By John Roberts

Given the short time I have to deliver this, I am going to paint with a rather wide brush. It would also be helpful if you would follow along with the brief outline and the summation on the handout.

If you would look at the handout now, you will see, as you already know, the Great Schism of 1054 AD when the Roman Catholics split off over papal and other serious issues. You will also see at 1534 AD when King Henry VIII separated himself and England from Rome over the issue of his divorce. And the Church of England (Anglican/Episcopalian) was born. The Lutherans split off from Rome in 1519 due to Martin Luther's 95 theses and his excommunication. The reformer John Calvin in Switzerland led the split of the Presbyterians in 1559. Then if you follow the Church of England branch-off, you can see that the (1) Methodists (with Pentecostals and the Salvation Army branching off from them) and the (2) Congregationalists (with the Baptists and the Quakers, i.e. "Society of Friends" breaking away from them and the (3) Brethren breaking away. And the break-away continues! And every time there has been a schism something is lost of the original church.

OK, I've given you this brief synopsis. This will provide a point of reference for my brief presentation regarding different views of the meaning of sacrament.

Let's start with the Roman Catholics. They continue to be closest to the Orthodox view. They believe that the seven sacraments are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work; it is Christ who baptizes, Christ who is present in the Eucharist. And the sacraments are necessary for salvation. The Spirit heals and transforms those who receive Him by conforming them to the Son of God.

Theirs is a theology of transubstantiation which in its simplest terms means that the accidents of bread and wine remain bread and wine while the substance becomes the body and blood of the Lord. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "The complete substance of the bread is converted into the complete substance of Christ's body and the complete substance of the wine into the complete substance of Christ's blood. Hence this change is not a formal change, but a substantial one.

In the medieval period of church history there were vigorous debates over the Catholic construct of transubstantiation – some arguing that it was contrary to Scripture and unsupported by church tradition. This debate reached its climax in the 16th century when Luther, Calvin and the Anabaptists defined the Lord's Supper in ways that differed radically from the medieval Catholic view. Roman Catholicism kept its ground and in the decree of Trent reaffirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation.

The Protestant or “reformed” churches took a stance of “Sola Scriptura”, meaning “if it's not in the Bible we're having no part of it” Because there are just two sacraments ordained of Christ in the Gospels, the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist were understood to be the only visible sacraments ordained of God. Therefore, every Protestant denomination going forward will only have two or no sacraments in their traditions.

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin held a doctrine of baptism that was very close to the Catholic Church in that both espoused infant baptism. However, Luther was strongly opposed to the Catholic doctrine of ex opere operato. (The efficacy of the sacrament is a fact despite the moral condition of the one receiving or dispensing it). For Luther, intent as he was on his doctrine of justification by faith,-- the idea that the power of salvation is inherent within the sacrament and automatically conferred through the receiving of the sacrament was non-scriptural.

He thus rejected the Catholic view of transubstantiation and placed the saving action of Christ in what is stated in the Bible, putting great emphasis on the words of Institution of the Lord's Supper: “This is my body; this is my blood”. Luther said it needed to be taken literally. Thus Lutherans did believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but add the idea that the words need to be added by faith as well. Thus the idea of consubstantiation is born.

When it comes to baptism, Luther stood on the divine promise which says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”. Here, again, you see Luther's strong emphasis on being justified by faith.

John Calvin, the father of Presbyterians, understood baptism in relation to the biblical interpretation of predestination. He argued that God always takes the initiative to come to us. We do not initiate grace. Rather, it starts in God's choosing. Sacrament for him is defined as “an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our conscience the promises of His good will.”

Calvin struggled, as did Luther, with the question of “real presence” in the Eucharist. But unlike Luther, Calvin came to the conclusion that the real presence of Christ could not be present in the Eucharist. He believed that “the finite could not hold the infinite” and so Calvin and his followers tended toward the more figurative interpretation of the words “This is my body.” It is complicated to explain, but suffice it to say that Calvin used words like participation in communion, and his emphasis is best expressed in words such as sign, witness, and testimony.

Methodists and the Anabaptist groups (Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren) see baptism as a symbolic act as well, and are not concerned with the real presence issue in the Eucharist. Their main concern is with the remembrance of the death of Christ through the symbolism of the act.

Our chart doesn't do it justice, but during the last 100 years there have been so many fractures of independent churches rising up – each with its own version of what truth is – that it's almost impossible to keep track of it. However, it can be stated, that with few exceptions, all of the new independent, so-called Bible churches, have dropped the idea of sacraments all together. So-called baptisms can be held in swimming pools, in lakes, in bathtubs placed in the middle of halls, all symbolizing “rebirth”. Communion has become a passing of a tray containing squares of Pepperidge Farm Bread and small glasses containing Welch's grape juice. Edith was recently in Ft. Worth visiting her son and his family. She tells the story of entering their mega-church and the ushers offering her (and everyone entering) a piece of bread and some juice as she entered the church – a kind of hospitality gesture she supposed.

So, we will find that other than the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Main-line Denominational Presbyterians, Lutherans and Methodists, and nondenominational folks coming in from time to time. There is great diversity, as you can now understand – but none have the richness of sacramental knowledge that Father will explain.

Practice Questions

Week Two: THE SACRAMENTS

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. What does the Orthodox Church mean by “sacraments”? What are they?
2. What does the Eucharist mean in the Orthodox Church?
3. Why can't I receive Communion when I come to your church? I've been a Christian all of my life!
4. What is the extra bread and wine people get after communion?
5. I've never seen babies receive communion! Please explain that to me.

Background Readings: Sacraments

Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation

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 and 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. (Hopko, Doctrine, 129)

Holy Communion

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 Holy Spirit. (Hopko, Doctrine, 130)

Scriptures Describing Ordination

The scriptures below are useful as background to understanding the Mystery of Ordination; ordained leaders were present in the Church from the earliest days.

“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Acts 14:23

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit had made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28

“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the eldership” 1 Timothy 4:14

Monastics and Marriage

Monastics and married couples have the same goal: salvation. Monastics and those married both sacrifice: monastics sacrifice the comforts and pleasures of the world; those married sacrifice themselves for each other. The crowns of the wedding ceremony are the “crowns of martyrdom” representing the willingness of the couple to sacrifice daily for each other and for the children God may give them. Monastics and those married are co-workers, aiming to manifest the spiritual life on earth for the salvation of all. (OCEC, The Way The Truth The Life, pg 75)

Practice Questions: Responses

Week Two: THE SACRAMENTS

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. What does the Orthodox Church mean by “sacraments”? What are they?

Sacraments are visible and tangible encounters with the Grace of God which otherwise would not be seen.

2. What does the Eucharist mean in the Orthodox Church?

It is “The Sacrament of Sacraments” – a true participation and consuming of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. His presence, that is, His life in us, enlivens all things of God offered for our salvation.

3. Why can't I receive Communion when I come to your church? I've been a Christian all of my life!

Anyone can receive communion in the Orthodox Church – provided he or she is a recognized member of the Orthodox Church and has prepared for it according to the sacramental disciplines followed. Mysteries, or Sacraments, belong to a community of faith. All are invited to explore, accept and share the Orthodox faith. Only then will communion (common union) be a reality.

4. What is the extra bread and wine people get after communion?

Precisely that, bread and wine which remains after the Eucharistic elements have been selected for offering. The faithful eat a bit of bread and sip some wine to “wash down” as it were, the Holy Eucharist. The bread is often piously taken as a token of the Divine Liturgy to family members who could not attend that day. It is not, however, the Holy Eucharist.

5. I've never seen babies receive communion! Please explain that to me.

All Baptized and Chrismated members of the Church can receive communion as it is Christ's gift to the Church. Non Baptized children do not receive communion as they are not yet entered into the church. There is no requirement that anyone, adult or child, “understand” the Holy Eucharist in order to participate. As a mystery from God, understanding is simply impossible.

End of Week Two

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Week Three: The Theotokos

Week Three: Outline: The Theotokos

Prayer

Welcome

The Call to Share: The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

Engagement Skill: Practice active listening

To actively listen is to demonstrate that you intend to hear and understand another's point of view.

It means restating, in your own words, what the other person has said. In this way, you know that you understand their meaning and they know that your responses are more than lip service.

Topic Justification: THE THEOTOKOS

What we know from the surveys.

Specific contrast with Western Church view.

The Call to Share: Week Three

Hi. Welcome back again. Well I'd like to speak to you again about the Call to Share. And since in the past we've talked about the **sharing** part of the title, today, I want to talk to you about the **calling** part.

When we say "call to share", you know it implies sharing our faith with newcomers to St. Mark's. But let's discuss who it is that doing the calling.

I think St. Mark's has a pretty good track record of calling on its membership to welcome visitors and to answer questions. So it's easy to look and say that it's at the parish level where this calling is coming from. And since there can be a lot of variation from parish to parish, that kind of supports the influence of the parish calling. So there's definitely a parish component. But there's more.

From another angle, we could say that this class in particular is calling us to improve our ability to share our faith. And this class, although developed by members of St. Mark on the committee, is really encouraged (and funded!) by the diocese and so in this case, maybe the diocese of the Midwest is also doing the calling.

So, let's take it up another notch. Let's look at what the Church teaches about being called to share. There is scripture about being called to teach and share our faith. The scripture passage when Christ calls the disciples together and speaks to them about spreading His teachings is called "The Great Commission". If that doesn't sound familiar, here's a little more background. It is the Gospel Reading on Great and Holy Saturday, the day before Pascha. Oh, I know, there are a lot of Scripture readings on that day. But this one is the Gospel Reading that Fr. Andrew does. It's from the Gospel of St. Luke 28:1-20.

It starts with the women approaching the tomb and the angels proclamation that "**He is risen!**", but it continues to Christ's last commandment on earth: "**To 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 things that I have commanded you...**"

So there we go – God (Christ) calls us to share –oh and this isn't some isolated tidbit of Holy Scripture. No, this is scripture verse that is incorporated into the liturgical calendar. That means we hear it every year. The Church has prioritized this lesson by incorporating it into the Feast of Feasts. I don't think anything happens by accident in the liturgical cycle. The Church has perfected it over thousands of years. I think it deliberately has this place of priority.

Of course there are other ways that the Church reinforces its teachings . She reinforces things by holding up examples for us to follow: by selecting the best examples to be canonized as Saints for us to study and follow. There are plenty of saints who in their lifetime lived out this commandment: who answered the call to go and make disciples of all nations...

The examples are numerous and familiar. St. Photini, on our cover, and of course St. Vladimir of Kiev, both spread the gospel in their homelands. And many others like St. Nina, St. Innocent, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who traveled and spread the gospel. I'm sure there were probably lots of reasons why each was canonized, but surely their effectiveness in answering the call to share the gospel was one of the reasons.

In some western denominations of Christianity this calling to spread the gospel is given primary importance. In Orthodox Christianity we talk a lot about the fullness of the faith. There's a lot going on in Orthodoxy. But among those many things in Orthodoxy, worship, prayer, fasting, sacraments, tradition, well we need to know that this last commandment, this Great Commission, well "It's in there". It is not foreign or at all contrary to Orthodoxy. It's an integral part of it.

So over these few weeks as we're working on our ability to share our faith or the Hope that is in us, we can keep in mind that we're called on a lot of levels all in harmony: Called by the parish, called by scripture, called by the examples of the saints, all called to share.

The Lesson

Week Three: THE THEOTOKOS

Objectives:

- List three meanings for the name Theotokos and who that name belongs to.
- Explain why she is venerated as a person.
- Explain the way in which she is a metaphor (image) for the church.
- Explain why the Theotokos is seen as a great example rather than as an exception.

1. What does the name Theotokos mean? To whom does that name belong?

2. Why is the Theotokos venerated as a person?

3. In what ways is she a metaphor (image) for the church?

4. How is the Theotokos a great example rather than an exception?

Comparative View: The Theotokos

Orthodox	Roman Catholic	Protestant
Refer to her as Theotokos (Birth-giver of God) and Ever-Virgin Mary	Refer to her as Blessed Virgin, Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, Mother of God	Refer to her as the Virgin Mary
<p>Christ is fully human and fully divine. Christ is God and therefore the ever-blessed and most pure Theotokos is the Mother of God.</p> <p>She is honored and venerated as the greatest of the saints who has completely achieved the goal of deification and is the fulfillment of the holiness to which the Church is called. She was the first person in all of history to give her life over fully to Jesus Christ and submit to the will of God.</p> <p>Because the Theotokos is in complete union with God, she is the chief intercessor for all people who are attempting to achieve such union and the Orthodox pray to her, invoking her aid. She is the model of holiness and example of Christian service and because she has crossed the threshold of the eternal Kingdom, it is believed that she was bodily resurrected after her death and burial.</p> <p>The Theotokos holds a</p>	<p>“The Virgin Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer...She is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ’ ...since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the church...</p> <p>“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory”...The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. “</p> <p><i>(Catechism of the Catholic Church)</i></p> <p>The Virgin Mary is never mentioned in the Sunday liturgy (except in the Creed) unless it is a major feast directly related to her. Private devotion is practiced primarily through the recitation of the Rosary and other private prayers.</p>	<p>Major figures of the Reformation and the first Protestants recognized Mary as being in a place of highest esteem and honor but did not refer to this as veneration because of the special religious significance that this term had in Catholic practice.</p> <p>Protestantism rejects the practice of addressing Mary and other saints directly with prayers of admiration or petition because of the fear of idolatry and giving religious service to other than Jesus Christ.</p> <p>There is no recognition of the Virgin Mary privately or in worship services except to refer to her during the reciting of the Nicene Creed and the reading of the scriptures where she is present at Christ’s birth, finding Jesus in the temple, the wedding at Cana and at Christ’s crucifixion.</p>

<p>prominent position in the liturgy. Private devotion outside of the worship of the community in the church is not practiced.</p> <p><i>(Facing Up to Mary – Peter E. Gillquist)</i> <i>(Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes – Donald Fairbairn)</i></p>		
<p>Feast Days:</p> <p>September 8 Nativity of the Theotokos</p> <p>November 21 Presentation of Mary in the Temple</p> <p>March 25 Annunciation</p> <p>August 15 Dormition</p>	<p>Feast Days:</p> <p>December 8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception</p> <p>January 1 Mary, Mother of God</p> <p>March 25 The Annunciation of the Lord</p> <p>August 15 The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary</p>	

Practice Questions

Week Three: THE THEOTOKOS

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. Why is there such a strong emphasis in Orthodoxy on Christ's mother?
2. Do you worship Mary?
3. Theotokos is an odd name. What does it mean?
4. Do you really think Mary prays for you? Why can't you go directly to Jesus yourself?
5. Do you really think Mary has anything to do with saving us?
6. Why is Mary right in the front of the church and the first thing you see when you come in? Why is she so big?

Background Readings

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Theotokos

The Mother of God is called the “Theotokos”, commonly translated as “God-bearer”. We see many icons depicting the Theotokos. She is always pictured with Jesus, as her veneration is directly connected to her role as the Mother of God. (OCEC, [The Way The Truth The Life](#), 109)

The Incarnation

The Virgin Mary holds a unique place for us Christians. The very basis of our faith is the Incarnation: God has become man, and to accomplish this he dwelled in the womb of a woman, the ever-virgin Mary.

This is precisely why we begin [the liturgical year] with the feast of the birth of [Mary], who will be the Mother of God, the dwelling-place of the Most High. Without her, God could not have taken on flesh, nor dwelled among us. (Aslanoff, [The Incarnate God Vol. 1](#), 27)

The New Eve

Tradition calls Mary the new Eve. She did what the first Eve failed to do.In love and obedience she expected the initiative of the Other (i.e., God). And when it came, she accepted it, not blindly –for she asked “how shall this be?” –but with the whole lucidity, simplicity and joy of love. The light of an eternal spring comes to us when on the day of annunciation we hear the decisive: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). This is indeed the whole creation, all of humanity, and each one of us recognizing the words that express our ultimate nature and being, our acceptance to be the bride of God, our betrothal to the One

who from all eternity loved us. (Schmemmann, [For the Life of the World](#), 84-86)

The Temple

Mary enters the Temple and prepares to become herself the house of the Lord. It is through the Holy Spirit that the Word of God takes on flesh in her. She thus becomes the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

What Mary has accomplished in her own life, we are in our turn called to realize.

...Of course, only Mary has given birth to the Son of God. But it remains true that our vocation is to become, each one of us, the dwelling of God, the repository of His grace, just like Mary. (Aslanoff, [The Incarnate God Vol. 1](#), 48)

Both Son of God and Son of Man

St. 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....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 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! (Hopko, [Doctrine](#), 76)

Practice Question Responses

Week Three: THE THEOTOKOS

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. Why is there such a strong emphasis in Orthodoxy on Christ's mother?
She is the one and only person in history through whom God Himself entered into creation. She is the Mother of God, and that is awesome!
2. Do you worship Mary?
No. We regard her very highly as the Mother of God, but worship is offered to God alone.
3. Theotokos is an odd name. What does it mean?
From the Greek – Theos (God) and tokos (a form of tikto – to bear or bring forth children). Hence, it means "God Bearer" or, commonly, "Mother of God".
4. Do you really think Mary prays for you? Why can't you go directly to Jesus yourself?
Yes, we believe that Mary prays for us with the special intimacy that only a mother would have with her son. It is quite common to ask others to pray for us. While we can directly pray to Jesus we must remember that we do not encounter Jesus individually, but communally as the Church. His mother will always be there.
5. Do you really think Mary has anything to do with saving us?
Yes. (see #1) Our salvation is dependent on Jesus Christ becoming a man. It does not happen apart from her.
6. Why is Mary right in the front of the church and the first thing you see when you come in? Why is she so big?
She is important. She is the image of the redeemed, that is, she stands for all of those whose body is Christ's Body. Hence she is also the image, or metaphor, for the entire Church – the Body of Christ. We stand with her before our Lord. As to size, quite often it is determined by aesthetics and composition of the décor. She is never larger than the Savior.

End of Week Three

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Week Four: Icons

Outline

Week Four: Icons

Prayer

Welcome

The Call to Share: Always/Never Ready to Share

Engagement Skill: Communicate Clearly – Part I

Pay close attention to both what you say and how you say it

Be clear

Keep it simple; no need to be lofty

Be thoughtful in what you say

Exercise humility

Topic Justification: ICONS

What we know from the surveys

Specific contrast with Western Church view

The Call to Share: Week Four

Never/Always Ready to Share

Well this week, and this entire class actually is about how prepared are we to share our faith. So, first I want to share with you the results of the survey we did last February. I think you will all recall the questionnaire that was handed out. There were two different areas in it: one concerning Orthodox beliefs and practices and one area about what might constrain us from being as welcoming as possible. Today I want to review the results about the Orthodox beliefs and practices since it might speak to how prepared we felt about talking on aspects of our faith.

As you might remember, the survey asked how CONFIDENT you felt in articulating various Orthodox beliefs and practices and it asked you to choose very confident, somewhat confident and not confident.

I'll hand out this chart and ask you to look at the bigger chart of results here. This shows the topics which ranked the "highest", if you will, with which our faithful felt less than "very confident" (so that's "somewhat confident" and "not confident" added /stacked together). And they are in descending order. In other words the topic with which we collectively were most uncomfortable explaining was "END TIMES", and on down the list.

Those headings are in a kind of shorthand and if they're not making sense to you please feel free to ask and I'll word it the same way it was on the survey to help jog your memory.

Now if you'll look at the smaller graph in the upper right corner. This shows the results of the converts/seek survey (high level) and when we try to line these areas up with what our faithful struggle with, well that's where we decided to focus the class topics.

But I'd like to go back to our input and review what it says about our readiness to share our faith.

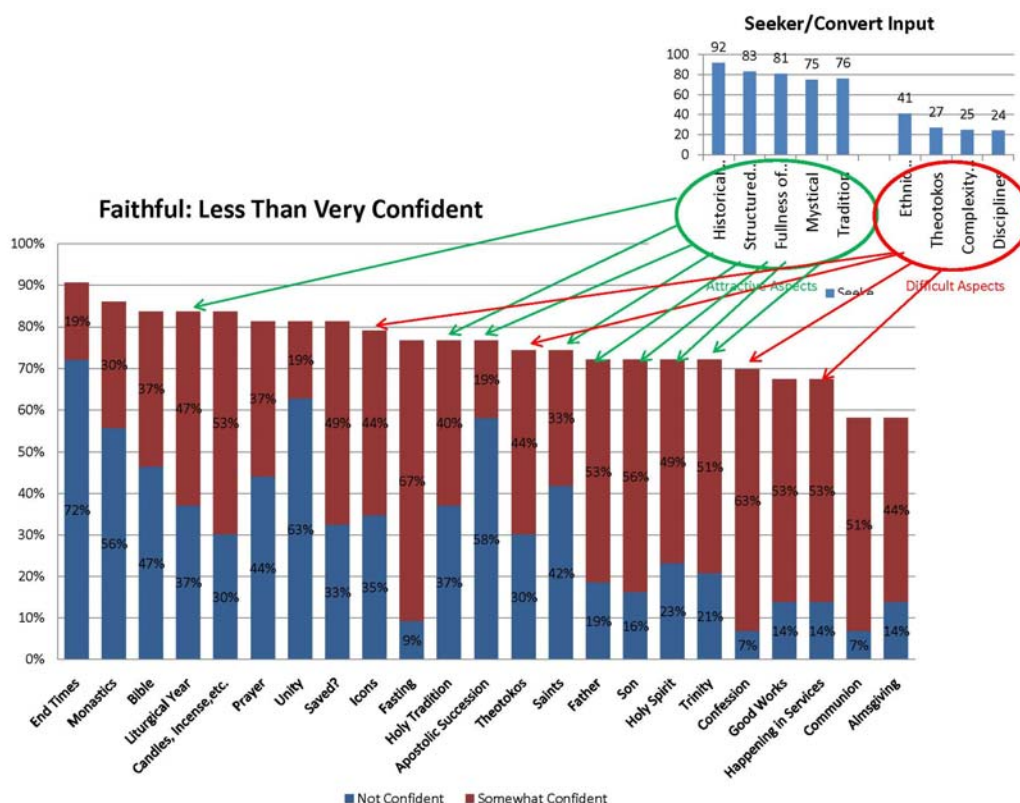
Now the blue portion of the bar is how many people felt "not confident" to speak on the topic and the maroon portion is how many felt "somewhat confident". What's left is how many felt "very confident". As you can see, there wasn't even a single topic where the majority of our faithful felt "very confident". I think that's due to an appreciation of the fact that these topics aren't easy to articulate: that the Orthodox teaching on it (whatever it is) is often mystical and transcendent, more than the human description can sum up or that we continue to grow in the faith and know that there is still more to some of these subjects than we understand.

Of course, we also think that some portion of the lack of confidence comes from just a lack of practice in putting these things into words, that's what this class is addressing.

So from the looks of this data it would seem that we don't feel ready on most of these topics. Well that's what the class is for but even after these six weeks, we may not "feel ready". However, waiting until we're ready almost always ensures us of never being ready. Just as the "directions" on the Answers to Practice questions points out: There are no complete answers for these subjects. We are preparing for the dialog. So if we're always growing in our faith, always learning more, then we're never complete. So we can't wait until we're done learning to start sharing or teaching. As we share our faith and discuss these things, we'll continue to grow as well. The two go hand in hand.

So that's a summary of our survey results and a little of how it became the topics for this class. And while we hope to improve our articulation of some of the major topics, we also hope to improve our overall confidence in sharing our faith that is still (we hope and pray) growing.

Survey Data



The Lesson

Week Four: ICONS

Objectives:

- Define veneration.
- Contrast “veneration” and “worship”.
- Explain how icons are Theology written in form and color.
- Explain why icons are “windows to heaven”
- Define a graven image. Define an idol.

1. What is veneration?

2. What is the difference between “veneration” and “worship”?

3. What is an icon as it relates to theology?

4. Why are icons “windows to heaven”?

5. What is a graven image? What is an idol?

Comparative View

ICONS: WEEK 4

This week we are going to be looking at icons-what kinds of ideas our non Orthodox visitors might have about them, and then Father will present a clearer understanding of what we as Orthodox believers know and understand about icons.

Icons define an Orthodox Church building. I can enter into most any Protestant Church and not know whether I'm in a Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran or Baptist Church. When you enter into an Orthodox Church there is an awesome explosion of holiness --- or is it a den of idolatry. Many Protestants have false preconceived ideas about our religion. We've been accused of worshipping Mary, Angels and the Saints; we're called "picture kissers". Others might think that we are superstitious with our various forms of veneration and crossing ourselves. This, of course, is not true, and we must help them understand what it is that we are doing in our various forms of piety. The Roman Catholic Church does not adhere to the positive teachings of their sacred art as Orthodox Iconographers do to their icons. At the Council of Trent (1563, the twenty-fifth and last session) merely pronounced what sacred art should not be, that is false dogma or provocative images to name a few. Many Catholic Churches do have icons but statues are more prominent. Never let it be said that Orthodox Churches don't have statues. Father John Matusiak said we have them, and they're called altar boys.

Our survey showed that 52% of converts report finding beliefs and practices regarding icons attractive, while at the same time 18% report finding beliefs and practices regarding icons one of the most difficult aspects of Orthodoxy. This means that newcomers will in all likelihood want to have a conversation about the use and meaning of icons at some point in their journey towards Orthodoxy. After today we hope this class will help you in this task.

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.

Defending and explaining our dogma on the use of icons should be relatively easy, since we have much scripture to back us up. We need to just memorize the verse from John 1:14, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The very essence of the Christian faith is the incarnation of the Son and Word of God. God indeed is invisible; but in Jesus Christ, the invisible God has become visible. The one who sees Jesus sees the invisible Father. (John 14:8) When icon veneration in the Church is denied, the true humanity of Jesus is denied. Thus our veneration of icons is a reflection of our belief in the incarnation.

Historically, not all Orthodox were in agreement as to the use of icons and there was what is called the Icon Debate. A council held in 753 formally condemned the veneration of icons. It called for the

removal of all images from the churches, public buildings and homes of the faithful. The basis of this position of the council was taken primarily from the biblical teaching that God is invisible; therefore visible, graven images are not to be made and adored by true believers.

A Protestant may quickly point to the first of the Ten Commandments that says: “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make 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...” Wow, what do we do with that? Our Orthodox Study Bible says that an idol, or graven image, depicts some god (with a small d) as having a form or shape, but the true God has no form or shape. Why therefore did Israel use images in their worship? Because all these images foreshadowed the Incarnation of the Son of God, who we worship both as God and Man. Also, icons used in Church worship do not depict the divine nature of Christ. They draw attention to the Incarnation.

For the next 34 years a vicious persecution of those who continued to keep and venerate icons followed. Hundreds of Christians, mostly monks, were imprisoned, tortured and even martyred for harboring icons.

Finally in 787, a council, now known as the “Seventh Ecumenical Council”, held in Nicaea, defined the legitimate and proper use of icons in the Church. In the course of its history, the Church has triumphed over heresy many times. But of all its victories, only the victory over iconoclasm, the victory of the icon, was solemnly proclaimed as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy”, a victory which we celebrate each year on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

The art of writing an icon follows certain symbolism that carries a meaningful message. For example; the eyes and ears on a figure in an icon are disproportionately large, because a spiritual person spends time listening to God’s word and seeking to do God’s will. The head may also be larger because the saint spends much time meditating and studying about God. On the other hand, the mouth which can be the source of empty or harmful words is small.

During the process of writing an icon the Iconographer must follow a religious discipline of fasting and prayer. St. Luke, the Evangelist was the first recognized Iconographer.

It is necessary not to rush an icon, we are meant to gaze upon it in patient prayerful attendance, to wait so that it may speak to us. A believer meditates on Christ, or the Saint who is portrayed in the icon. In this way an icon may lead to greater imitation of the life of the person in the icon, and to a deeper spiritual life and ultimately sanctification.

Practice Questions

Week Four: ICONS

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. Do Orthodox worship icons?

2. Why do you kiss the icons?

3. It seems to me that having icons is like idol worship. What do you think?

4. Why do the people that are depicted on the icons look so different than our artwork?

5. Are there special prayers that should be prayed when the icons are venerated?

Background Reading: Icons

Iconostasis

The iconostasis is not intended to separate the faithful from the clergy - though some/many might mistakenly treat it in such a way, seriously or jokingly. These icons are meant to help us 'see' what our sinful eyes are not able to see: heaven. The Divine Services are shadows of the heavenly worship we catch glimpses of in Old Testament prophecies and in Revelations, and yet we materialist sinners see a simple priest, [and] fidgety altar servers... We do not see Christ offering and being offered, so we have icons of Christ on the iconostasis. We do not see the Mother of God interceding with her Son on our behalf, so we have her on the iconostasis. We do not see the angels ministering to Christ and praising God along with all of the saints, so we have icons of the angels and the saints. These icons help us to see what our sins keep us from seeing, what we refuse to see because we prefer our sin, our material life. (frstephen.wordpress.com)

Veneration versus Worship

...It is essential to stress that, despite first impressions, the Orthodox Christian does not worship icons; she venerates them. The church fathers of the Eastern Church made a clear distinction between *proskynesis* (veneration, bowing down, showing respect) and *latereia* (worship, adoration). Veneration is due such people as kings and queens, elders, or perhaps ancestors, while worship is reserved for God alone...it's important to keep in mind the difference between the two as we consider the celebration of matter and the material world, which has been transfigured by grace. This celebration lies at the heart of

Orthodoxy...Central to the Orthodox worldview is an appreciation of all creation as the evidence of God's love.

(Zelensky and Gilbert, **Windows to Heaven: Introducing Icons to Protestants and Catholics**)

Salvation in Words and Images

- An icon is not intended to be a work of art illustrating an incident from Christ's life or a theme of Christian theology (although some people use it as such).
- An icon is not simply a material reflection of a spiritual reality.
- An icon is not an accessory or accoutrement to the act of worship.
- An icon is not an idol.

...When asked to describe what an icon represents, an Eastern Orthodox Christian will explain that

- an icon is an instrument through which the knowledge of God, in his mysterious human incarnation, becomes accessible to humankind.
- an icon is a physical witness to the sanctification of matter.
- an icon is a means by which both iconographer and worshipper can participate in the realm of eternity.

...icons are central to the communication of faith. Along with Scripture and the ancient liturgy, which embodies the teachings of the earliest church fathers, they serve as means through which humankind communicates with God and through which God reveals himself to humankind...In the Orthodox tradition, the word and the image are treated as equally important to the economy of salvation.

(Zelensky and Gilbert, **Windows to Heaven: Introducing Icons to Protestants and Catholics**)

Practice Question Responses

Week Four: ICONS

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. Do Orthodox worship icons?

No. Worship is offered to God alone.

2. Why do you kiss the icons?

It is a sign of affection, reverence and veneration extended to the person or event depicted - not unlike a deployed soldier kissing the photo of his family who are far away.

3. It seems to me that having icons is like idol worship. What do you think?

Graven images, which are objects of worship usually carved from wood or stone, are forbidden by God in the Ten Commandments. Icons are in no way used for that purpose. They depict a presence in Christ which otherwise would not be seen.

4. Why do the people that are depicted on the icons look so different than our artwork?

The purpose of the icon is to depict the "Holy" or "Transfigured" person redeemed in Christ. There are a number of stylistic techniques to show that which otherwise could not be seen. Realistic images are what we normally see. Transfigured images are the substance of an icon.

5. Are there special prayers that should be prayed when the icons are venerated?

Yes. If it is an icon of a Feast it is appropriate to pray the troparion of the Feast. For a saint, the prayer may include the saint's troparion and a request for his or her intercession. Also, there are a number of prayer services devoted to saints which offer our veneration and request their prayers on our behalf.

End Week Four

Week Five: The Saints

Week Five Outline: The Saints

Prayer

Welcome

The Call to Share: Network of Trust

Engagement Skill: Communicate Clearly – Part II

- The importance of removing barriers

 - Understanding cultural differences

 - Understanding mistaken assumptions

- Less is more

Topic Justification: THE SAINTS

- What we know from the surveys.

- Specific contrast with Western Church view.

The Lesson

Week Five: THE SAINTS

Objectives:

- Contrast “veneration” and “worship”.
- Explain how saints are theology in life and “Christ-likeness”.
- List the different kinds of saints and the reasons for such diversity.
- Explain the Hebrews 12:1 reference about the “clouds of witnesses” as it relates to the saints.

1. What is the difference between “veneration” and “worship”?

2. How are saints theology in life and “Christ-likeness”?

3. What are the different kinds of saints and why is there such diversity?

4. What does the “cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 12:1 refer to?

Comparative View

Week 5 – Saints

By Robert J. Meyer

What is a Saint? Author Kenneth Woodward remarks, “A saint is always someone through whom we catch a glimpse of what God is like – and of what we are called to be.”

Who the saints are and their role in the Christian life is at opposite ends of the spectrum for the Eastern Orthodox/Roman Catholic and that of the vast majority of Protestant sects.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox beliefs regarding saints are, as far as I can tell, in complete agreement. In *“Faith of Our Fathers”*, Eamon Duffy says that saints offer “both a sense of familiarity and a sense of Otherness, of possibilities both within and beyond the range of our own lives...for they help to domesticate the holy, to enable us to grasp that it is accessible to us...The saints are people like us, and remain our friends, supporting and sustaining us from the other side of death...they are visible signs of a call to transcend the ordinariness of our own lives, and evidence the possibility of heroism and wonder.” On the official side, I do not believe the following quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] regarding saints would be found contrary to Eastern Orthodox thought:

“The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles...is the place where we know the Holy Spirit...in the witness of saints through whom He manifests His holiness and continues the work of salvation”. [CCC 688]

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*“The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today...Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.” [CCC 2683]*

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“...In Baptism, the Lord’s name sanctifies man, and the Christian receives his name in the Church. This can be the name of a saint, that is, of a disciple who has lived a life of exemplary fidelity to the Lord. The patron saint provides a model of charity; we are assured of his intercession...Parents, sponsors and the pastor are to see that a name is not given which is foreign to Christian sentiment.” [CCC2156]

The major difference regarding saints between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church is how one is declared a saint.

In the Orthodox Church saints are usually first recognized by a local community and as their popularity grows through favorable responses as a result of their intercession and other miracles, they are often recognized by the entire local church. The *formal* process of recognition involves deliberation by a synod of bishops and if this is successful, it is followed by a service of *Glorification* in which the saint is given a day on the church calendar to be celebrated by the entire church.

In the Roman Catholic Church there is a lengthy formal process toward *canonization*. This usually takes many years, maybe even centuries! First there is an in-depth investigation into the candidate's life, which is presented to the local bishop. Following this report more study is done. The report is then sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. If they approve it the person might be granted the title of "Venerable". After further investigation the candidate would be given the title "Blessed". At a minimum, two important miracles as a direct cause of the candidate's intercession are required to be formally declared a saint. Much weight is put on these miracles as they are seen to demonstrate the saints continued special relationship with God after death. When all this is completed the Pope canonizes the saint.

In direct contrast to this is the Protestant view of saints.

Unlike the Orthodox who have the *Canons* and the Roman Catholics who have *The Catechism*, there is no definitive authority in the Protestant world, except the Bible, which is interpreted as the individual believer is inspired. However there does seem to be consensus among Protestants that "saints" refers to *all* believers in Christ.

The majority of Protestants believe that once you die you have no effect on this world, they do not believe in intercession or praying to saints. The Protestant position is: we pray *for* one another, not *to* one another. Prayers are directed through Christ to the Father by the Holy Spirit.

In the Anglican tradition a saint refers to a person who has been elevated by popular opinion as a pious or holy person. The saints are seen as models of holiness to be imitated. Since the English Reformation, only King Charles I has been canonized in the Church of England. Recent figures have been added to the Anglican calendar, such as C.S. Lewis (November 22) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4).

Lutherans recognize pre-reformation saints and have some post-reformation people on their calendar but who are not called saints. Lutherans have no official canonization process. These people are simply seen as ones who have played an important role in the history of their church.

Protestants generally reserve the title of "Saint" for people mentioned in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

As with so many aspects of the Orthodox faith, “the saints” is another area where the Roman Catholic will feel entirely at home. The Protestant on the other hand, will undoubtedly find the veneration of the Saints and seeking their intercession a stumbling block to embracing Orthodoxy.

Again from Eamon Duffy, “The Protestant reformers worried that the celebration of the saints diminished the work of God, and believed that the saints were the rivals of Jesus. The opposite is the case: the saints are the expression of our deep conviction of the inexhaustible greatness and the accessibility to all that was achieved in Christ.”

Practice Questions

Week Five: THE SAINTS

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. Why do you pray to saints? Can't you go directly to God?
2. Why do you have "pictures" of the saints all over your church?
3. Why do you think some people are so good that they are saints? Aren't we all saints since Christ died and washed us whiter than snow?
4. So you really believe that saints hear prayers said to them even though they are dead? Do they have any power to effect change?
5. Isn't praying to saints like idol worship?

Background Reading

Week Five 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.” (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16) The lives of the saints bear witness to the authenticity and truth of the Christian gospel, the sure gifts 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. (Hopko, Doctrine, 26)

The Saints Paved Our Path

There is in man an innate sense of reverence for moral greatness. In Orthodox Christianity this reverence finds expression in the veneration of the Saints, the moral giants of our faith. The Orthodox believer’s daily association with the Saints, whose lives glorified Christ, serves to form the Orthodox lifestyle. (Coniaris, Introducing the Orthodox Church, 102)

Transformed by Christ

The saints were just as human as we are. They were jealous, spiteful, scheming, lustful, often depressed and utterly discouraged. They did not walk through life with halos gleaming, with kindness and love streaming from them 24 hours a day. There were strong disagreements among them. St. Paul and St. Barnabus, for example, had a strong difference of opinion as to whether to take John Mark along with them on a missionary journey. Their disagreement was strong enough to make them agree to go their separate ways. Writing to the saints at Corinth, St. Paul reminds them that some of them had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, covetous, extortioners....but now in Christ they were washed and sanctified, he tells them. Thanks be to Christ who washes our soiled humanity and transforms it into an attractive image of Christ that serves as an inspiration to others. (Coniaris, Introducing the Orthodox Church, 95)

Reverence for the Saints

We do not worship saints but venerate, or reverence them. To worship is to bow down before One essentially greater than we are. We reserve this act for God alone. To venerate, revere, or show reverence is to offer great respect and honor. We revere the saints, fellow human beings who achieved theosis in their lives. (OCEC, The Way The Truth The Life, 56)

Practice Question Responses

Week Five: THE SAINTS

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. Why do you pray to saints? Can't you go directly to God?

We regularly ask each other to pray for us or for others. Saints are members of the Body of Christ who have demonstrated a Christlikeness which is venerable. They have shown themselves to pray well. (cf. the Theotokos #4 response).

2. Why do you have "pictures" of the saints all over your church?

The Church is "decorated" to depict the Kingdom of God in the presence of the enthroned Christ. The Saints' images are showing the "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) which, again, otherwise could not be seen.

3. Why do you think some people are so good that they are saints? Aren't we all saints since Christ died and washed us whiter than snow?

Some people have demonstrated a stellar following of Jesus Christ in their lives, others not so much so. We are not judging, rather, we are accentuating the identifiable positive that was shown in the lives and work of the saints. It is for Christ alone to judge, but some have done an exceptional job of revealing Christ in their person. We follow their lead.

4. So you really believe that saints hear prayers said to them even though they are dead? Do they have any power to effect change?

The Gospel clearly indicates that those who are in Christ are alive in Christ. We don't pray to saints as independent contractors of grace. We pray "in Christ" where they are alive. We certainly believe and experience that all prayer in Christ can be effective and productive according to God's will.

5. Isn't praying to saints like idol worship?

No. We do not worship saints. Worship is offered to God alone. We engage them as we would anyone else who is "in Christ".

End Week Five

Sharing the Hope that is in Us

Week Six: Tradition

Week Six Outline: Tradition

Prayer

Welcome

The Call to Share: A Fundamental Part of Orthodox Tradition

Engagement Skill: Bring positive interpersonal skills to bear amongst ourselves

- Smile

- Be appreciative

- Bring people together

- Use your sense of humor

- Don't complain

Topic Justification: TRADITION

- What we know from the surveys.

- Specific contrast with Western Church view.

The Lesson

Week Six Tradition

Objectives:

- Define “Paradosis”.
- Define “tradition: within the context of the Church.
- List the 6 sources of Holy Tradition and describe the aspects of each one

1. What does “paradosis” mean?

2. What is “tradition” as it relates to the church?

3. What are the 6 sources of Holy Tradition? What are the aspects of each of these sources?

Comparative View

A Brief Overview of Holy Tradition from Various Christian Perspectives

Holy Tradition, for the Eastern Orthodox, is the deposit of faith given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles and passed on in the Church from one generation to the next without addition, alteration or subtraction. Vladimir Lossky, a well known twentieth century Orthodox theologian, famously described Tradition as "the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church." Father Thomas Hopko, Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Seminary, says that it is essentially the, "ongoing life of God's people." It is dynamic in application, yet unchanging in dogma. It is growing in expression, yet ever the same in essence. The Orthodox Church does not regard Holy Tradition as something which grows and expands over time, forming a collection of practices and doctrines which accrue, gradually becoming something more developed and eventually unrecognizable to the first Christians. Rather, Holy Tradition is that same Faith which Christ taught to the Apostles and which they gave to their disciples, preserved in the whole Church and especially in its leadership through Apostolic Succession.

But do Non Orthodox Christians hold this same view of Tradition? The short answer is no, they do not. What exactly, then, do other Christian groups make of Tradition? How important is it in the life of their churches? Is it seen in a positive or negative light? Let's take a brief look at other faith "traditions" and get an idea of what Tradition means to them.

Roman Catholics hold Tradition, or more precisely for them, Sacred Tradition, in high regard. It is a primary source of authority for Christian doctrine and practice, the other source being Holy Scripture. Rome tends to set these two authorities as two separate entities with Scripture making up the written authority and Tradition encompassing those teachings not written down, but rather passed on orally or through the practices of the faithful. Both of these sources are interpreted through the official organ of tradition within the church, the magisterium, or teaching authority. The magisterium determines what is considered true Christian teaching and dogma by interpreting Scripture and Tradition.

There are some similarities between Roman Catholic and Orthodox perspectives on Tradition. Both acknowledge that many fundamental Christian teachings do not derive from Scripture, but have their origins in the unwritten Tradition of the Church. Both also would be quick to say that the Scripture itself cannot be properly interpreted apart from the unwritten Tradition.

However, the tendency of Roman Catholics to separate Tradition and Scripture is foreign to the Orthodox. The Orthodox see both as within the whole of Holy Tradition, Scripture being simply the *written* Tradition of the Church. Also, and probably one of the biggest differences between

the two, Roman Catholics see tradition as ever growing and expanding as the magisterium continues to interpret and expound on the original deposit of faith. Because of this attitude toward Tradition, over the years a number of new doctrines have come into existence that are unknown within Orthodoxy; for example, papal supremacy and infallibility, the immaculate conception of Mary, transubstantiation and the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed. Doctrinal development has caused our two churches, which used to be one united Church, to look and act quite differently today in the twenty-first century. In fact, by the sixteenth century, five hundred years after the split between the Eastern and Western Churches, the Roman Catholic innovation of granting, and particularly selling, indulgences, a practice of remitting a portion of one's punishment for sins committed, was the subject of Martin Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*, the treatise that commonly marks the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation was an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church by stripping it of all extraneous and non Christian doctrines and practices. The primary means of doing this was by using Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) as the source of authority to determine whether something was to be kept or eliminated. Tradition was seen as the primary culprit that allowed errant teachings to creep in; subsequently, Tradition was either greatly minimized or essentially eliminated. Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin and those of the English Reformation; who were founders of the Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian and Anglican (Episcopalian) denominations downplayed Tradition and set Scripture over and above it as its interpreter. Others like Huldrych Zwingli and those known as Radical Reformers considered all tradition as a human addition to God's revelation which was contained solely in the Bible. For many of the radicals, if something wasn't specifically alluded to in the Bible, then it was considered unchristian. These reformers gave rise to such denominations we know today as Baptists, Mennonites and Church of Christ. Along with this removal of Tradition came a distrust of the Church as teaching authority. Each person was considered able to interpret the Scriptures on his or her own, without the guidance of the Church. In hindsight we can see what this has led to, with at last count about 25,000 different groups who call themselves Christian.

A great way to plainly see a Protestant attitude toward Tradition is to look at how they translate the Scriptures. In the New International Version of the Bible, a translation popular among Evangelicals and other Protestants, the Greek word commonly translated as tradition, *paradosis*, which means to pass or hand on, is translated as *tradition* only when seen in a negative light, as in Mark 7:8 where Jesus makes reference to the "traditions of men". But when that same word is seen in a more positive light, for instance in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, it is translated as *teaching*. Therefore you can probably see that when those coming from a

Protestant background, as I did, come into an Orthodox church and begin to learn how important a role Holy Tradition plays in the life of the Church they may have a difficult time accepting it. They may at first think that we are corrupted by a bunch of extra doctrines made up by men and are not “Bible based”. It is important that we share with those coming to our church from these backgrounds how important the Holy Scriptures are to us. It is also important that we try to explain how Scripture is simply the written Tradition of the Church and that there were many things Christ taught His disciples that were never written down, but were passed on by the faithful through the centuries and have been preserved in tact by the Orthodox Church without additions or subtractions.

In conclusion, we can see that Tradition means different things to the various Christian groups in the world today. While the Roman Catholic Church embraces and looks to Tradition, it has over the years added to it and gradually veered away from the ancient faith of the Apostles. On the other hand, Protestants have gone so far as to try to do away with Tradition altogether, throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, and have deprived themselves of an important anchor of the Faith which has opened the door to sectarian chaos. On top of this, our Western culture is one that values “new and improved” as nearly always better than “old fashioned”. Many churches are no different. In the midst of all this, many Christians are trying to wade through all the additions and “improvements” to get back to the “New Testament Church”. This journey often will lead them to our door. As Orthodox, we have been entrusted to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all delivered to the Saints. We have a unique opportunity to share this pearl of great price, this living water, this Good News to those who are desperate for a rooted, historical and continuous Christianity that has not changed. We are the New Testament Church. Let us humbly live out that Holy Tradition that has been passed on to us down through the centuries.

Practice Questions

Week Six Tradition

Here is a sampling of questions Non-Orthodox might ask you. Work in your small group to develop good answers based on what you now know about non-Orthodox views, and what the Orthodox belief is. Practice good engagement and communication skills.

1. How does the Orthodox Church regard the Bible? A lot of what you believe isn't in the Bible. Where does that other "stuff" come from?
2. Why do you think you have the fullness of faith? Is everyone else wrong?
3. What does "Orthodox" mean?
4. What do you mean by Holy Tradition? Isn't it just the handing on of what people before you have said and done, and thus is subject to human error?
5. Why do you call your priest "Father"? Jesus warned not to call any one Father but God alone.
6. Why do you only say written prayers? Do you ever pray prayers from the heart? Who wrote those prayers?

Background Readings: Tradition

...living continuity is summed up for the Orthodox in the one word Tradition

A tradition is commonly understood to signify an opinion, belief or custom handed down from ancestors to posterity...But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this. It means the books of the Bible...the Creed...the decrees from the Ecumenical Councils and the writings of the Fathers...the Canons, the Service Books...Holy Icons – in fact the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, spirituality and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages. Orthodox Christians of today see themselves as heirs and guardians of a rich inheritance received from the past, and they believe that it is their duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future...(the) Orthodox, while reverencing this inheritance from the past, are also aware that not everything received from the past is of equal value... (Ware, *The Orthodox Church*)

Why Include All Those Man-Made Traditions?

The Bible forms the cornerstone of her (the Church's) tradition, for the "Church recognizes one and only one source of authority for her faith and practice: the apostolic tradition. The Divine Scriptures are part –albeit the most important part – of that tradition. To set Scriptures up as something over and apart from tradition is to have the tail wagging the dog. It is a teaching of the Orthodox Church that Sacred Scripture and Tradition are inextricably intertwined and it is this bond that preserves its unity of doctrine.

(Whelton, *The Pearl: A Handbook for Orthodox Converts*)

Apostolic Tradition

...or Holy Tradition is the Word of God which enters into the hearts of the apostles through the Holy Spirit, and which this same Spirit transmits to the conscience of the Church. This Word is thus lived within the Church and is expressed by a manner of life, by gestures, writing, ways of thinking, praying and acting which characterize the Body of Christ, of Christ who is the same both when he speaks through Scriptures and when he lives in his Church.

(*The Living God, Volume 2*)

Scripture and Tradition

...By specifying "Scripture and Tradition," the two-source idea (of tradition) rightly retains the special place of Scripture among the authoritative sources. The problem is that Tradition isn't just a compendium of texts; it's a way of reading Scripture. The word Tradition, it must be said, is used to cover many (too many) ideas, and I would propose the following attempt at summarizing the main ways we may conceive of Tradition...Tradition is an activity or dynamism; it is the "handing down" or "handing over" of faith and practice from one person to another, one generation to another. It is an ongoing activity, which is why we continue to speak of "the living Tradition."...Tradition is...associated closely with the Holy Spirit, who inspires not just the writing but the reading of Scripture...The relationship between Scripture and Tradition is circular. Tradition represents the right reading of Scripture. But how do we identify what is of Tradition? By referring to Scripture. So something is traditional only if it is scriptural, but we rightly read Scripture only in Tradition. (Boueteneff, *Sweeter than Honey: Orthodox Thinking on Dogma and Truth*)

Practice Question Responses

Week Six: TRADITION

These are a list of responses to the questions asked. They in no way should be understood to be THE ANSWER or THE WHOLE ANSWER or THE ONLY ANSWER to the questions. All of the questions asked involve a depth that cannot be answered simply. The responses are meant to help you in your dialog with seekers who may ask.

1. How does the Orthodox Church regard the Bible? A lot of what you believe isn't in the Bible. Where does that other "stuff" come from?

The Bible is the inspired word of God in written form. Everything that we believe is in the Bible. However, a number of expressions of that belief have been articulated in a variety of ways in addition to, and complementary to, the Biblical texts.

2. Why do you think you have the fullness of faith? Is everyone else wrong?

We believe that we participate in the Faith as the Apostles themselves received and practiced it. We also believe that the historical record supports our view. "Full" and "not full" do not necessarily indicate right and wrong, though it may.

3. What does "Orthodox" mean?

From the Greek orthos (straightly, rightly, correctly) and doxa (a form of dokeo – respect, honor, glory, praise, dignity, majesty). It is usually rendered in English as "right belief", "right glory" or "right worship".

4. What do you mean by Holy Tradition? Isn't it just the handing on of what people before you have said and done, and thus is subject to human error?

Holy Tradition is that which is "handed over in Christ". The Bible is contained in Holy Tradition as it was "handed over in Christ". St. Paul "handed over in Christ" his teaching about the Eucharist (1Cor. 11:23). There is no human error "in Christ". There are only those who are not fully in Christ.

5. Why do you call your priest "Father"? Jesus warned not to call any one Father but God alone.

The Church recognizes that that is not to be taken literally as a prohibition against using the word "father". Jesus uses it in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus referring to "Father Abraham" (Lk 16:24). St. Paul calls himself "your Father in Christ" (1Cor. 4:15) and speaks about male parents as "fathers" (Col. 3:21). Jesus was warning against calling hypocrites "father" or "rabbi" or "teacher" undeservedly (Matt. 23:8-10).

6. Why do you only say written prayers? Do you ever pray prayers from the heart? Who wrote those prayers?

We do not exclusively pray written prayers, but we do recognize that well crafted and articulate prayers are more expressive, edifying and revealing than what can be spur of the moment ramblings. "Prayer from the heart" tends to focus on ourselves while prayer of the Church helps to put our heart where it belongs in Christ. Authorship of our prayers is sometimes known (like a

certain saint) and sometimes unknown, though the Church still holds it as Her prayer since it speaks “in Christ”.

End Week Six

Supplemental Materials

Glossary

Angels: from the Greek *angelos*, which means “emissary, messenger.” These are invisible and incorporeal creatures which ceaselessly praise God, and who serve as messengers of His work of salvation in the world, particularly to humans.

Askesis: from the Greek, to exercise. Man is composed of soul and body. The body must, through fasting, giving alms, vigils, prostrations, etc. –i.e., through askesis—support the soul in its struggle.

Chrism, Holy: an oil composed of olive oil and a number of precious spices. It is consecrated by bishops, and a supply is kept in every church. Chrismation, which is the anointing with this Holy Chrism, immediately follows baptism.

Cherubim: are part of the angelic hierarchy and along with other immortal beings, seraphim, etc., they fulfill a mysterious role as God’s messengers to humanity.

Church: a translation from the Greek that means “the assembly of people.” It is the assembly of the people called by God. It was born when the apostles chosen by the Lord received the Holy Spirit, on the day on Pentecost. The assembly of the faithful gathered around the bishop, the successor of the apostles, to celebrate the Eucharist constitutes the local Church, which possesses the fullness of “catholicity.” The Orthodox Church is the communion of all the local churches.

Communion of the Saints: is the link of mutual love and prayer among the faithful (dead, alive, and not yet born), all called to holiness, as well as between those who have fully realized this sanctity during their lives and who now stand before God. The faithful ask the saints to pray for them and the saints intercede for the faithful before God. The earthly and heavenly Church is indissolubly linked through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Cosmos: a Greek word meaning “order.” It refers to the universe in its totality as the harmonious creation of God. Human sin has introduced disorder into the cosmos. Because of His love, God has sent His Son to restore the image of God which had been damaged in humanity, as well as to transfigure the entire universe.

Creed: from the Latin *credo*, “I believe.” This is the title of the Symbol of Faith that we recite during the Eucharistic liturgy. It is the expression of baptismal faith within the Orthodox Church since the beginning of the fifth century.

Epistle: a letter written by an apostle or disciple to a community of Christians instructing them how to live as followers of Christ.

Eternity: That which is outside of time. In fact, any notion of time is linked to that of creation. Time is something created. Eternity belongs to God alone, it is uncreated.

Eucharist: from the Greek *eucharistia*, “thanksgiving.” The Eucharist is the sacrament par excellence. At the institution of the Last Supper, before going to offer His life –His body and His blood –for the life of the world, Christ “gave thanks” and blessed the bread and the wine. When the bishop, or the priest in his place, presides at the Eucharist in the center of the assembly of the faithful, the Church participates in this thanksgiving and celebrates the sacrifice of Christ. The holy gifts are consecrated through the operation of the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, and at communion they are distributed to the faithful.

Faithfulness: the truly faithful one is the person who fulfills his obligations out of love and not only from a sense duty. God has never stopped showing his faithfulness to the people of Israel. Christ will be “the faithful servant” foretold by Isaiah. Christians are called “the faithful,” because they are committed to respect the Lord’s commandment and to follow him.

Fathers of the Church: these are Christian writers who, because of their sanctity and the truth of their writings, are privileged witnesses of the Church’s teaching and tradition.

Gentiles: for the Jewish people of the Old Testament, the “gentiles” (or “nations”) were pagans who did not recognize God. About them Christ said: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). Christ came to unite all men.

Gospel: translated from the Greek meaning “good news.” This Good News is contained in divinely inspired writings by his disciples: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These writings are collected into four books, of gospels, recounting the life of our Savior and the “good news” of the salvation He has come to bring. Actually, the Gospel is Jesus Christ himself, the Word of God incarnate, whose death and resurrection proclaim to us the good news of life: the Kingdom of God.

Gifts, Holy: This is what we call the bread and the wine which are offered to God at the Divine Liturgy –the commemoration of the Last Supper and of the death and resurrection of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, they are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ and are given out in communion to the faithful. From the very beginning, the bread and the wine were brought by the faithful themselves (the word *prosphora* still used today, means “offering”).

Glory: The glory of God is the manifestation of His holiness and His power. In particular, this glory was revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Ex 33:18), and as light to the apostles on Mt. Tabor (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:3; Lk 9:29). Christ emptied Himself of His glory at His incarnation. Paradoxically, it was again revealed on the cross, then at His resurrection and ascension. Man is also called to share in divine glory: “the Glory of God is the living person” (St. Irenaeus).

Grace: it is love, the gift of God, which bestows His divinity on us through His energies, in order to make us partakers of divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). The Fathers of the Church insists on the fact that God bestows His grace, but it is up to us to receive it and make it operative.

Icon: an image of the Savior, His Mother, the saints, or a feast. An element of the liturgical life, the icon must be totally faithful to the dogmas and tradition of the Church.

Incarnation: Jesus Christ is simultaneously true God and true man. The incarnation is the coming into the flesh of the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, in the person of Jesus Christ, who has assumed our human nature, excepting sin.

Incense: an aromatic resin which, when burned, releases a perfumed odor. The Magi brought incense, among other gifts, when they came to Bethlehem. Incense was burned on the altar of God in the Temple. To offer incense, to incense something, therefore, is prayer, offering, greeting, praise.

Justice: the word justice usually evokes notions of law, with appropriate punishment if the law is not obeyed. For Christians, the juridical aspect is not the most important, because the justice of God is primarily love and mercy. “Faith and love united: this is a brief phrase which summarizes all justice” (St. Irenaeus)

Kenosis: a Greek word which means “to empty oneself,” “to destroy oneself.”

Liturgy: a word of Greek origin meaning the “work of the people.” Liturgy is in effect a common task, for it is celebrated by the priest in the name of the Lord, with the assembly of the faithful, who are co-celebrants. The word liturgy is most often used for the celebration of the Eucharist, with the consecration of the Holy Gifts and communion.

Mercy: this is the translation for a number of Hebrew and Greek words expressing love compassion, pardon, fidelity, grace, clemency. These are the attributes of the “God of tenderness and mercy,” “gentle and humble of heart.”

Mystery: this word refers to the truth of the faith not accessible to reason. The Greeks called the sacraments mysteries. For Christians, the word mystery refers to the divine reality revealed

in Scripture. We can participate in this reality through the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the life of the Church, and it will be fully revealed in the Kingdom of God.

Redemption: from the Latin word meaning “ransom.” Through the fall, humanity became enslaved to sin and death. In order to restore human liberty, God Himself became incarnate and saved all men by His passion and resurrection. St. Paul expresses this: “You were bought with a price [the blood of Christ]” (1 Cor 6:20).

Repentance: repentance, together with the confession and absolution which accompany it, is a sacrament. A person becomes cognizant of his sins –of what separates him from God –and, having repented, confesses them to God, , through the ministry of the priest who grants him pardon, absolution, in the name of the Lord.

Revelation: this word designates what God has revealed of Himself to humanity, his activity and his plan of salvation. He first spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament, then the Son became man and revealed His divinity and His message. The evangelists witnessed to what was revealed to them, and, together with the letters of the apostles, this constitutes the New Testament.

Sacrament: the possibility of “being in Christ,” of “sharing in divine life,” is essentially manifested in the sacraments. These are ritual acts, aspects of the unique mystery of the Church, in which God shares divine life with humanity, redeeming man from sin and death. The Greeks called sacraments “mysteries.” The chief sacraments are: baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, repentance (with confession and absolution), the laying on of hands (ordination), marriage, anointing of the sick.

Saints: sanctity is a fundamental attribute of the living God. But man, created in the image of God, is also called to sanctity. The saints to whom we pray in the Church are persons who, through humility, prayer, love, renunciation of their own will, have become transparent to the Holy Spirit and share the holiness of the Lord already in this life,

Salvation: this term designates God’s work to save humanity. After the fall, man lived in a world of sin and death. By becoming incarnate, Christ united divine power with human nature. He came to save man by freeing him from sin and by vanquishing death.

Scriptures: the life of the Christian Church is based on divine revelation, which is expressed in Holy Scripture, i.e., in the Bible, the written expression of God’s revelation to humanity, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Septuagint: the Greek translation of the Old Testament, ascribed to seventy translators. It is used by most Orthodox churches today. The translation was made in approximately the third century before Christ by 72 Jews in Egypt in order to make the biblical message available to Jews living outside of Judea and in the Greek speaking world.

Seraphim: angels are traditionally considered to fall into several categories, among which are the seraphim. This name comes from a Hebrew word meaning “the one who burns.”

Symbol: a symbol is a reality in the visible world which is linked to and corresponds to another higher reality, which is sometimes also visible, but which is always beyond what is represented, and which the symbol makes present.

Theology: the science of religion and God. It must not be intellectual or rational, but must first consist of love and the lived experience of God, prayer, contemplation of the Holy trinity and of the Scriptures, at the service of true knowledge which must transform humanity.

Theotokos: from a Greek word which means “she who bears God.” Mary is the Mother of God because she gave birth to the Word of God who became flesh, simultaneously both true God and true man.

Tradition: this is the living transmission of the teaching given by Christ to His apostles, and the life of Christ in the Church. It is an ever-renewing Pentecost, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. While its central content is unchangeable, its expression must allow it to be accessible to persons in each generation.

Trinity: Christians believe in one God, one in essence, but who is at the same time three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The living God is not only a unity but a union, and not only a union, but a communion,

Word: a translation of the Greek logos. Throughout the Old Testament, the living God speaks to humanity. He speaks in various ways to select men, the prophets. The New Testament reveals to us that God has become man for our salvation; His Word, His eternal Logos, has become flesh (Jn 1:14).

BOOKS ON ORTHODOXY WHICH MAY BE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO ROMAN CATHOLICS

Popes and Patriarchs: An Orthodox Perspective on Roman Catholic Claims Michael Whelton*, Conciliar Press, 2006.

The Great Divide: The West severs itself from its Orthodox Christian roots: an historical overview Fr. Alexey Young, Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1989.

The Pearl: A Handbook for Orthodox Converts Michael Whelton, Regina Orthodox Press, 1999.

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The Truth: What Every Roman Catholic Should Know About the Orthodox Church Clark Carlton, Regina Orthodox Press, 1999.

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You Are Peter: An Orthodox Theologian's Reflection of the Exercise of Papal Primacy Oliver Clement, New York City Press, 1997.

GENERAL INTEREST

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Our Hearts' True Home: Fourteen warm, inspiring stories of women discovering the ancient Christian Faith Virginia Nieuwsma, ed., Conciliar Press, 1996.

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Vol. 1 Doctrine

Vol. 2 Worship

Vol. 3 Bible and Church History
Vol. 4 Spirituality

Toward the Authentic Church: Orthodox Christians Discuss Their Conversion

Thomas Doulis, ed., Light and Life Publishing Company, 1996.

*Michael Whelton is an Orthodox convert from Roman Catholicism.

To be included in a “Roman Catholic Packet”

Booklets:

Building a Habit of Prayer Marc Dunaway, Conciliar Press, 1989.

Orthodoxy and Catholicism: What Are the Differences? Fr. Theodore Pulcini, Conciliar Press, 1995.

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Pamphlets:

A Timeline of Church History

Are You Looking For a Church That Is: orthodox in doctrine, orthodox in worship, orthodox in values?

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The Orthodox Church: Timothy Ware, Penguin Books, 1997.

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Orthodox Answers To Frequently Asked Questions: Thorough and Biblical answers to eight of the most common questions Protestants ask about the Orthodox Church presented in a simple and straightforward outline form Fr. Marc Dunaway, Conciliar Press 2002.

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12 Things I wish I had Known: Before your first visit to an Orthodox Church