

Councils and Creed

Orthodoxy affirms that the Christian Faith expresses and points to the gracious and mysterious relationship between God and humanity. God became man in the person of Jesus Christ not to institute a new philosophy or code of conduct, but primarily to bestow upon us "new life" in the Holy Trinity. This reality, which is manifest in the Church, cannot be wholly captured in language, formulas, or definitions.

The content of the Faith is not opposed to reason, but is often beyond the bounds of reason, as are many of the important realities of life. Orthodoxy recognizes the supreme majesty of God, as well as the limitations of the human mind. Only when the fundamental truths of the Faith are seriously threatened by false teachings does the Church act to define dogmatically an article of faith. For this reason, the decisions of the seven Ecumenical Councils of the ancient undivided Church are highly respected. The Councils were synods to which bishops from throughout the Christian world gathered to determine the true faith. The Ecumenical Councils



Gathering of Orthodox Christian bishops of North America

cils did not create new doctrines but proclaimed, in a particular place and a particular time, what the Church has always believed and taught.

The Nicene Creed, which was formulated at the Councils of Nicaea in 325 and of Constantinople in 381, has been recognized since then as the authoritative expression of the fundamental beliefs of the Orthodox Church. The Creed is often referred to as the "Symbol of Faith." This description indicates that the Creed is not an analytical statement, but that it points to a reality greater than itself and to which it bears witness. For generations, the Creed has been the criterion of authentic Faith and the basis of Christian education. The Creed is recited at the time of Baptism and during every Divine Liturgy.

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*St. Demetrios
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*What do Orthodox
Christians Believe?*



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."

John 1:14

What do Orthodox Christians Believe?



The Twelve Apostles

The Orthodox Church throughout the ages has maintained a continuity of faith and love with the apostolic community which was founded by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy believes that she has preserved and taught the historic Christian Faith, free from error and distortion, from the time of the Apostles.

Orthodoxy believes that the Christian Faith and the Church are inseparable. It is impossible to know Christ, to share in the life of the Holy Trinity, or to be considered a Christian apart from the Church. It is in the Church that the Christian Faith is proclaimed and maintained. It is through the Church that an individual is nurtured in the Faith.

Revelation

God is the source of faith in the Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy believes that God has revealed Himself to us, most especially in the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom we know as the Son of God. This Revelation of God, His love, and His purpose, is constantly made manifest and contemporary in the life of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

While the inner Being of God always remains unknown and unapproachable, God has manifested Himself to us; and the Church has experienced Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is central to the Orthodox Faith, is not a result of pious speculation, but of the overwhelming experience of God.

Incarnation of Jesus Christ

Together with the belief in the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of the Incarnation occupies a central position in the teaching of the Orthodox Church. According to Orthodox Faith, Jesus is much more than a pious man or a profound teacher of morality. He is the "Son of God who became the Son of Man." In Him, divinity is united with humanity without the destruction of either reality. Jesus Christ is truly God who shares in the same reality as the Father and the Spirit. Moreover, He is truly man who shares with us all that is human. The Church believes that, as the unique God-man, Jesus Christ has restored humanity to fellowship with God.

Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures are highly regarded by the Orthodox Church. Their importance is expressed in the fact that a



A decorated Gospels Book

portion of the Bible is read at every service of Worship. The Orthodox Church, which sees itself as the guardian and interpreter of the Scriptures, believes that the books of the Bible are a valuable witness to God's revelation.

Tradition

While the Bible is treasured as a valuable written record of God's revela-



A priest celebrating a divine service

tion, it does not contain wholly that revelation. Scripture is a part of the treasure of Faith which is known as Tradition. Tradition

means that which is "handed on" from one generation to another. In addition to the witness of Faith in the Scripture, the Orthodox Christian Faith is celebrated in the Eucharist; taught by the Fathers; glorified by the Saints; expressed in prayers, hymns, and icons; defended by the seven Ecumenical Councils; embodied in the Nicene Creed; manifested in social concern; and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is lived in every local Orthodox parish. The life of the Holy Trinity is manifested in every aspect of the Church's life. Finally, the Church, as a whole, is the guardian of the authentic Christian Faith which bears witness to that Revelation.

For Further Information

Our Archdiocese: www.goarch.org
Our Metropolis: atmetropolis.org
Ecumenical Patriarchate: ec-patr.org
Nat'l Media Ministry: www.myocn.net
Missions: ocmc.org
Charity: iocc.org