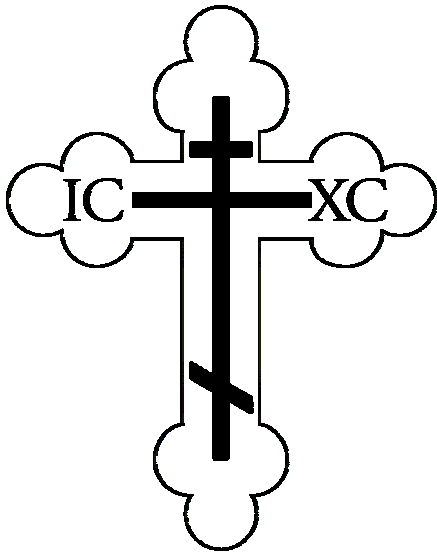


**“The Orthodox Church is not only for one nation, one civilization,  
one continent. It is like God Himself, for all and for every place.”**  
*Patriarch Ignatius IV*

North Texas Orthodox Missions  
1355 Hillcrest Rd.  
Dallas, TX 75240





*The Orthodox Church sometimes displays the Cross as 'budded' cross. The rounded 'buds' on the top, bottom, and both sides of the Cross indicate eternal life. The letters IC and XC form an abbreviation, in Greek, for the name above all names : Jesus Christ.*

# The Faith For All Ages

# Orthodox Christianity

Thank you for your interest in the Orthodox Christian Church. The word 'ortho' means straight, or true; and the word 'dox' means worship. Orthodox therefore means true worship. Orthodox worship is authentic, timeless, and sacramental. The Sunday worship service follows an order established and experienced in the New Testament era.

Many people are surprised to learn that churches mentioned in the New Testament, (like those in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Thessalonica) are still in existence - and they are Orthodox! The Orthodox Church has not strayed from the apostolic foundation, but has remained true to what was taught and practiced from the beginning. There is an unbroken continuity of faith, worship, and doctrine established by Jesus Christ, and still present today.

## Organization

There is only one Orthodox Church, which is administratively organized into several jurisdictions. This is why you will find Greek Orthodox, or Russian Orthodox, and others. The faith, worship, and doctrine is the same; the only thing that is different is the language and the administration. There are indigenous Orthodox churches from Japan to Norway, and from Alaska to Alexandria. In most countries, there is only one Orthodox administration; but because the United States is a nation of immigrants, the situation here is a little different. As Orthodox immigrants from around the world came to Amer-

ica, they would form church communities which were administered from the 'old country'. The thousands of American born converts who have joined the Orthodox Church have added to the ethnic diversity.

## Ancient Unity

There is absolute unity in terms of faith, worship, and doctrine; and we also maintain those important ethnic and administrative links to our Old World sponsors. The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest American archdiocese, and it was of course founded by Orthodox Christians from Greece and the surrounding areas. The Archdiocese of Antioch (where the disciples were first called Christians) also has a large contingent in the U.S.; and it was established by immigrants from the Middle East; such as Palestine, Syria, and Jordan. The Orthodox Church of America (OCA) has its roots in Eastern Europe and Russia; and it is the first group to function in United States as a locally administered jurisdiction.

## Come and See!

This pamphlet is meant to help you gain an introductory understanding of the Orthodox faith. The best way to understand Orthodoxy is to visit a church service. The Orthodox Church is friendly, warm, courteous, and respectful of those from different beliefs and backgrounds. A list of Orthodox parishes along with the service schedule is found on page 11. We hope you can visit us soon.

## North Texas Orthodox Missions

### Contact Information:

**Phone:** 800-753-1926

**Web Site:** [www.ntom.org](http://www.ntom.org)

**Email:** [info@ntom.org](mailto:info@ntom.org)

**Address:** 13555 Hillcrest Road  
Dallas, TX 75240

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# Orthodox Churches of the Metroplex at a Glance

Denton



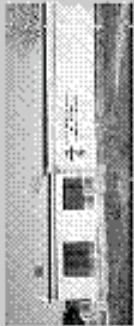
St. Maximus  
Orthodox  
Church, O.C.A.\*

Wichita Falls



Holy Cross  
Greek Orthodox  
Church

St. Benedict  
Antiochian  
Orthodox Church



Dennison

St. Paul  
Orthodox Church,  
O.C.A.\*

St. Sava  
Orthodox Church  
O.C.A.\*



Louisville  
Grapevine

Holy Trinity  
Greek Orthodox  
Church



North  
Carrollton

Carrollton

Falling Asleep  
of the Exord  
Virgin Mary  
Romanian Orthodox  
Church, O.C.A.\*



St. Dorotheos  
Greek Orthodox  
Church



Irving Ss. Constantine and Helen  
Antiochian Orthodox  
Church



Irving Hierarchs  
Serbian Orthodox  
Church, O.C.A.\*



St. John the Baptist  
Greek Orthodox  
Church



St. Barbara  
Orthodox Church  
O.C.A.\*



St. Peter  
Antiochian Orthodox  
Church



Arlington

FORT WORTH

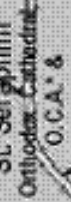
Grand  
Prairie

Hurst

St. John the Baptist  
Greek Orthodox  
Church



St. Sava  
Orthodox Church  
O.C.A.\*



St. Sergiyim  
Orthodox Cathedral  
O.C.A.\* &



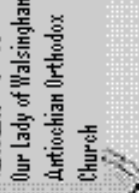
St. Nicholas  
Greek Orthodox Church

Waco

St. Nicholas  
Greek Orthodox Church



Holy  
Transfiguration  
Hermitic Ortho  
x Church, O.C.A.\*



Our Lady of Walsingham  
Antiochian Orthodox  
Church

# Church Directory

**Falling Asleep of the  
Ever-Virgin Mary  
Romanian Orthodox Church  
O.C.A.**  
3801 Glade Rd.,  
Colleyville, TX 76043  
Fr. Dumitru Paun  
817-858-0801  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

**Holy Apostles Orthodox Chapel**  
Tyler, TX 75702  
Fr. Daniel Keller  
972-216-9625  
Saturday Mass 10:00 AM

**Holy Cross Greek Orthodox  
Church**  
3804 Old Seymour Road,  
Wichita Falls, TX 76309  
Fr. Nektarios Morrow  
940-692-0860  
Sunday Orthros 9:15 AM.  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

**Holy Transfiguration Hispanic  
Orthodox Mission, O.C.A.**  
628 N. Tyler,  
Dallas, TX 75208  
Fr. Ephraim Najera-Fuentes  
214-942-4304  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

**Holy Trinity  
Greek Orthodox Church**  
13555 Hillcrest Road  
Dallas, TX 75240  
Fr. Anthony Savas, Fr. Nicholas Kati-  
nas, Fr. Gregory Hohnholt  
972-991-1166  
Sunday Orthros 9:00 AM.  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

**Our Lady of Walsingham  
Antiochian Orthodox Church**  
4321 North Beltline Rd.,  
Suite #400,  
Mesquite, TX 75150  
Fr. Daniel Keller  
972-216-9625  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

**St. Barbara's Orthodox Church  
O.C.A.**  
6525 Dan Danciger Rd.  
Fort Worth, TX 76133  
Fr. Basil Zebrun  
817-294-0325  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM  
Sunday Matins 9:15 AM

**St. Benedict Antiochian  
Orthodox Church**  
3808 Old Seymour Road  
Wichita Falls 76309  
Fr. James Rooney  
940-692-3392  
Sunday Matins 9:15 am  
High Mass 10:00 am

**Saints Constantine and Helen  
Antiochian Orthodox Church**  
3755 Walnut Hill Rd  
Dallas, TX 75229  
Fr. Antony Elbahou  
214-350-2104  
Sunday Orthros 9:00 AM  
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

**St. Demetrios  
Greek Orthodox Church**  
2020 NW 21st St.  
Fort Worth, TX 76106  
Fr. Michael Stearns  
817-626-5578  
Sunday Orthros 9:00 AM.  
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

**St. John the Baptist  
Greek Orthodox Church**  
303 Cullum Drive  
Euless, TX 76040  
Fr. Luke Kontgas  
817-283-2291  
Sunday Orthros 9:00 AM  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM

**St. Maximus the Confessor  
Orthodox Church, O.C.A.**  
2026 W. Oak St.  
Denton, TX 76201  
Fr. Justin Frederick  
940-565-6753  
Divine Liturgy Sunday 9:00 AM

**St. Nicholas  
Greek Orthodox Church**  
617 N. 17th Street,  
Waco, TX 76707  
Fr. Theodore Tsitsilianos  
254-754-6519  
Call for service schedule

**St. Paul the Apostle  
Orthodox Church O.C.A.**  
181 Preston Rd.  
Denison, TX 75020  
Fr. Michael Storozuk  
903-327-8188/469-688-7644  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM

**St. Peter Antiochian  
Orthodox Church**  
7601 Bellaire Drive South  
Fort Worth, TX 76132  
Fr. Anthony Miller  
Fr. Michael Moore  
817-263-5554  
Sunday: Mass 8:30 AM  
Sunday High Mass 10:45 AM

**St. Sava Orthodox Church, OCA**  
1614 Mollimar Dr.  
Plano, TX 75075  
Fr. Seraphim Hipsh  
972-612-3881  
Sunday Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM

**St. Seraphim Orthodox Cathedral  
O.C.A.**  
4208 Wycliff Ave.  
Dallas, TX 75219  
His Eminence Archbishop DMITRI  
Fr. John Anderson  
214-528-3741  
Sunday Hours 9:00 AM  
Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM

**Three Hierarchs  
Serbian Orthodox Church, O.C.A.**  
909 Balleewood Rd.  
Irving, TX 75060  
Fr. Milan Zbiljich  
972-953-1365  
Call for service schedule

## VISITING AN ORTHODOX CHURCH

To begin with, it might help to understand that the times posted for the schedule of services are approximate. The main Sunday service is called the Divine Liturgy; and it is preceded by another hour-long service called Orthros. There is no break between the two—as Orthros ends, the Divine Liturgy begins. It might seem like you are late, because a service is already in progress. Please be assured that you are simply entering an ongoing experience of worship.

Orthodox worship is different that what is found in other Christian churches. About three-quarters of the service is sung; either by the priest, the choir, or the congregation. There's quite a bit of movement; and the sermon is not the focal point of the service. The atmosphere is reverent but not rigid. We gather as children in the Father's house. Some aspects of Orthodox worship may seem strange at first. Be assured that the worship service is based solidly on the Bible. Scripture is woven into Orthodox worship like precious pearls on a necklace.



Saint Seraphim Orthodox Cathedral  
Dallas



Holy Cross Orthodox Church  
Wichita Falls

The pattern of worship is the same as was described by Justin Martyr in 155 AD. The order of worship in use today by Orthodox churches throughout the world is exactly the same as was used by Saint John Chrysostom in 400AD. The service is called 'The Divine Liturgy'. The word *liturgy* translates from Greek as 'the work of the people'.

Upon entering an Orthodox Church, you find yourself in an entry room called the narthex. You will see Orthodox Christians lighting candles, making the sign of the cross and kissing icons. Christ, major events in the life of Christ or the Church, the Theotokos (Virgin Mary), and the Saints are depicted in icons. Icons are like windows to heaven, which transcend time and space, reminding us that we are in communion with the saints who have gone before us but yet stand with us in heavenly worship. (Rev. 4, 5, & 7)

Next you will enter the nave, the main area used for worship. Most Orthodox Churches in the United States have pews. In some countries, there are no pews and worshippers stand during the services. As you look forward, you will see the icon screen, which separates the altar area from the nave.

### *Did you know....*

- **There are nearly 250 million Orthodox Christians world-wide.**
- **There are indigenous Orthodox churches all over the world, including : Japan, Ethiopia, Norway, Kenya, Australia, Egypt, China, Mexico, Canada ...and Texas!**
- **The first Orthodox church in Alaska was founded in 1794. The first Orthodox church in the continental United States was established in 1864, in New Orleans.**
- **The Sunday church service in an Orthodox Church includes over two hundred quotes from the Bible.**

Usually, the front icons are placed in the following order: to the right of the central doors is the icon of Christ; next is St. John the Baptist; and the third icon is that of the Archangel Gabriel. To the left of the center doors is an icon of Mary holding her Son Jesus; next is an icon depicting the name of the church; the third icon is of the Archangel Michael.

Service books are provided—in English!—to help you follow along. If you get lost, just ask. There are times during the service when people stand. Particularly during the reading of the Gospel, we all stand as an expression of attentive respect to the words of our Lord. You will notice the use of candles, which convey the illumination we receive from Christ the True Light. We use incense as a physical expression of prayer (Mal 1:11, Rev. 5:8). And, there are processions, pointing to the spiritual reality of a procession towards God.

Holy Communion is offered during the Sunday service. Because of the unfortunate divisions within Christendom and the importance of properly receiving Communion (1 Cor. 11:29), only baptized and properly prepared Orthodox Christians may receive Holy Communion. At the end of the Liturgy, the faithful come forward to receive the a small cube of bread called the "antidoron"; which expresses fellowship. This is bread of fellowship, not Communion bread, and it is distributed to all including visitors.

The weekly services include Vespers on Saturdays and the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. Pascha (Easter), is the most important feast of the Orthodox Calendar. The Pascha celebration is an event of exuberant joy; something like Christmas and Fourth of July rolled into one. Every Sunday is also a celebration of the Resurrection, like a little Pascha.

When you visit an Orthodox church, please feel free to observe or participate in as much of the service as you would like. You are among friends, so please relax. We respect you, and we leave it to God and His timing whether a person becomes Orthodox. We pray that your visit will be enjoyable and edifying; to the glory of God.

## My Journey to Orthodoxy

By Steve Wu

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Dallas

Religion was never deeply interesting to me until I met my wife, nineteen years ago. Opheila was a member of the Church of Christ and challenged my Presbyterian beliefs by providing Bible verses for everything they believed and practiced. As I continued to study with her, I played what I call 'preacher pong'. The preacher would ask question about a belief or practice for which I had no answer. I would ask our pastor for his response and deliver it their preacher. The questions and answers would go back and forth, and eventually I became a member of the Church of Christ. I will always be grateful that God led me down this path, as I developed a solid understanding of the Scriptures. I also became a proficient song leader, and over time I became a Bible teacher and occasionally substituted as a lay preacher around the metroplex.

### The Journey Begins

The journey really begins with my efforts to try to convert a co-worker from Roman Catholicism. As we discussed our differences, my friend would give me materials which referenced or quoted the early Church fathers and historical scholars. I decided that I would read these materials and find where the Catholics had twisted the historical documents to support their position.

I focused on several areas: What kind of Church did the early church writers describe, the development of the Church, and the doctrine of 'sola scriptura' – the concept that the Bible is all you need for faith and practice. Many of the materials I obtained were from Protestant authors. The overriding theme was that the Church was established by Jewish Christians, and for years after Pentecost, the Church worshiped in the Temple and partook of the Lord's Supper in their homes (Act 2.46). It also became clear that the Jewish Christians carried many of their practices forward into the Church. This would mean that the Church's worship would be liturgical and their structure hierarchical.

**How could people who were so close to the Apostles, and yet described a worship service that was liturgical and a Church structure that was hierarchical, get it so wrong so quickly? The impression that I was slowly developing was that they didn't get it wrong - they were right.**

Around this time I had my first introduction to the Orthodox Church. My Catholic friend had an appointment that took him by an Orthodox church, and we stopped in for a brief tour. I was intrigued with the architecture and iconography, and wanted to know more. Soon afterwards I attended my first Vesper Service and was fascinated with the chanting, incense, and prayers. Immediately, I made the historical connection from what I had been reading about the early church, and what I saw in the Orthodox Church. As I continued my studying, I start visiting the church on Wednesday nights for Vesper services and 'Orthodoxy 101' class.

### Faithful Martyrs

My next reading assignment was the early Church Fathers. Previously, I had been taught that an apostasy took place almost immediately after the start of the Church. However, as I read the letters written by Christians from the first century to the fourth century I was struck by the fact that the martyrs died horrendous deaths, and that their primary goal was that they might have the courage to glorify God in their death. I was also astounded by the amount of Scriptural references made by these authors. These were not people who had strayed from the faith, but were people whose sole desire was to please God. How could people who were so close to the Apostles, and yet described a worship service that was liturgical and a Church structure that was hierarchical, get it so wrong so quickly? The impression that I was slowly developing was that they didn't get it wrong - they were right.

I scheduled a lunch with an Orthodox priest and presented him with a two-page list of questions regarding the Church and their position on various topics. The priest was very patient and calm, an approach that was far different from what I was used to. Over time he presented me with materials on the

Orthodox Church, including The Way by Clark Carlton. I began to realize that I wasn't the only person who had made this journey.

### Scripture Alone?

For me, the most critical point was the concept of 'sola scriptura', the bedrock of my belief. History had already convinced me that the church had operated nearly two hundred years without a formal New Testament. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel on their missionary journeys, how did they accomplish it? They simply told their converts about Jesus Christ and how to practice their faith. How did the Church continue throughout the ages? They faithfully handed down the Apostolic Traditions from person to person.

Perhaps the most popular 'proof text' for sola scriptura is 2 Tim 3:14 - 16. *"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing from whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works"*. This text supposedly proves that the Bible is all we needed for faith and practice.

We see that Paul is encouraging Timothy to hold to the Scriptures. The New Testament hadn't been compiled, so clearly Paul is stating that the Old Testament scriptures provided enough evidence to lead a person to Christ. Paul is *not* stating the Scripture alone is our complete guide. In the same chapter, Paul mentions Jannes and Jambres. Who were Jannes and Jambres? They were magicians that resisted Moses. However, Jannes and Jambres are *(continued on page 4)*

## *You might be Orthodox if....*

- **When you buy church shoes, you select comfort over style.**
- **You know how to say, “Lord, have mercy!” in at least two languages.**
- **Your pastor is called a priest, and he’s married.**
- **You think ‘fast food’ refers to a vegetarian meal during Lent.**

### **My Journey to Orthodoxy** *(continued from page 3)*

mentioned nowhere in Old Testament – Paul’s comment comes to us from Jewish oral tradition.

This led me to 2nd Thess 2.15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” This passage clearly points out that we should hold to two items, tradition taught by word and those things found in epistles. Nowhere in the Bible does it state or imply that any tradition was put to writing. This revelation was profound. What became clear is that God has always used Scripture and oral tradition. ‘Scripture only’ is a relatively new phenomenon with origins in the Reformation.

#### **The Next Step**

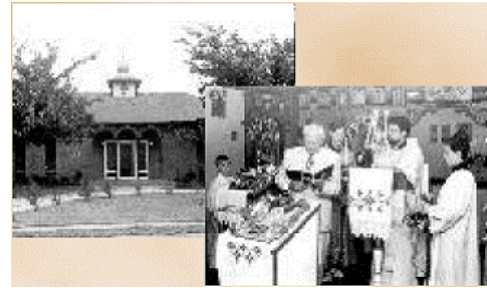
Around this time I told my wife and children of my concerns, and as you can imagine this came as an enormous surprise. I spent a great deal of time discussing everything that I had learned. They had numerous questions and doubts. I wanted to make sure, absolutely sure, that I hadn’t overlooked or misinterpreted anything. I then went to the elders of the church and told them of my concerns. The initial reaction was casual, and the information that they provided for my study was equally superficial. It was when I challenged their position further that things changed rapidly.

I’m not sure what we were expecting, but the hostility and anger that we encountered became very difficult to endure. It wasn’t long after that that we left the Church of Christ

and came to the Orthodox Church. The next four months were filled with countless situations where preachers, family members, members of the church and friends engaged in lengthy Bible studies, trying to persuade us of our error. The capstone came when the church sent a letter dis-fellowshipping us, at which time contact with us ceased.

Probably the most difficult situation to handle has been with our families. The family, which had always been very close, now kept their distance. We found out about birthday parties and other family events after the fact. Gatherings with them are always tense. However, the Orthodox Church in its wisdom has provided us with another family. Upon entering the Church we were asked to select godparents. They have been our mentors and have welcomed us into their families in a very real way. The children are now completely immersed in the church attending all the youth activities and have made new friends. The church has also opened their arms to us by asking us to participate in many of the church activities as well as including us in the social events.

The experience that we have in the Church and its fullness is hard to describe. While our journey has been long and difficult, it has also been very fulfilling. I pray that God may enlighten the eyes of those who have never experienced the one true and Holy Apostolic Church ... the journey is worth the travel.



Saint Barbara Orthodox Church  
Forth Worth



Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church  
Waco



Saint John the Baptist  
Greek Orthodox Church  
Euless



St. Demetrios Orthodox Church  
Forth Worth



Saint Maximus the Confessor  
Orthodox Church, Denton

## How We Came to Orthodoxy

John and Laura Rutledge

St. Peter's Antiochian Orthodox Church  
Fort Worth Texas

When the leaders of the church to which we formally belonged decided to let the culture define its truth and morality, we knew we had to find another spiritual home for our family. But where? There seemed to be so much confusion in Christianity today. We wondered how the ancient church worshipped and what they believed. Where could we find that kind of faith today?

Unbelievably, we found it around the corner from our home. Almost at our doorstep! With outstretched arms an Orthodox Church community received us even with all of our "baggage" and scars from splits and division over doctrines of basic truths. The experience we felt the first time we stepped into a worship service can be likened to no other experience we had had before. It took us away from the pain of our broken world to a place of oneness with God.

To see a faith that truly and appropriately focused on repentance, forgiveness, sacrifice, thanksgiving, and

communion with God humbled us beyond words. The sacramental aspect of the liturgy forever changed our opinion of what Sunday worship is and should be about. God truly was in our midst as well as the heavenly hosts. Those who have gone before us in the faith are remembered throughout the church year as inspiration for us to press on.

We realized that the joining together of our family and church community with God through sacramental worship is truly the focus of worship and our lives should reflect that. The wisdom of our priest, who draws from the wisdom of the two-thousand year old Church and the Church Fathers rather than the culture at large, has brought new clarity to many perplexing topics of faith, such as salvation, baptism, and original sin.

Although we can never fully grasp the mind of God, the Orthodox Christian Church is truly a place where the timeless truths of the scriptures, forgiveness, love, and communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are preached and lived out with a sincere faithfulness. Our family has found our spiritual home here on earth and daily thanks the Lord for His goodness. We hope and pray you will find your way home too!

in baptism. We are *being* saved, growing in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church and an ongoing relationship with Christ. We will be saved, by the mercy of God, at the Last Judgment. Are we saved? Yes—we have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved, by the grace of God.

### *Why do we need tradition when we already have the Bible?*

The Bible is the supreme expression of God's revelation to man and Holy Tradition protects, defends, and interprets the Bible. Did you know that there are over 2,200 denominations in the United States today? Many of these denominations claim that they alone correctly interpret Scripture, but they contradict each other. Sometime it seems that there are as many interpretations of Scripture as there are interpreters.

Our Lord has harsh words for the empty and vain traditions of men; but this does not mean that all traditions are bad. The word 'tradition' means that which is handed down. In 2nd Timothy 2:2, for example, Paul exhorts Timothy, 'And the things that you have heard from me among many faithful witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.'

Holy Tradition is the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It was not the New Testament that produced the early Church—it was the early Church that produced the New Testament, through the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has guided the Church to the correct interpretation of Scripture. Every time a Christian use expressions such as 'the Holy Trinity', or 'the two natures of Christ'; they are borrowing from Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church, from whence these expressions came.

**“He who does not know the truth cannot truly have faith; for by nature knowledge precedes faith. What is said in Scripture is said not solely for us to understand, but also for us to act upon.”**

*Saint Hesychios the Priest  
(d. 434 AD)*

### *Busy Brothers...*

Two brothers, Cyril and Methodios, were sent as missionaries to the Slavic people in 862 AD. They not only preached the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the region— they also created the first written language for the Slavic people. They used a combination of Greek and Hebrew letters, to form what is now known as the **Cyrillic** alphabet!



Our Lady of Walsingham  
Orthodox Church  
Mesquite

### **Ortho FAQ** (continued from page 8)

by the Lord and the three disciples as being quite alive! So it is with all the saints who have departed this life in faith (Hebrews 12:22-24). The Orthodox practice of making requests to Mary and the saints is Scriptural, and expresses faith in the power of God (Matt 22:29).

#### **Are Orthodox Christians saved?**

Yes! Orthodox Christians:

- Confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord. (Romans 10:9)
- Are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit. (Matt. 28:19, Romans 6:3-11)
- Receive the holy and precious Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. (John 6:51-54)
- Repent of and confess their sins. (I John 1:9)

The Orthodox look at being saved in terms of past, present, and future. We *have been* saved, being joined to Christ



Saints Constantine and Helen  
Orthodox Church, Dallas



Saint Benedict Orthodox Church  
Wichita Falls



Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church  
Dallas

### A 20 YEAR QUEST

*Stan Shinn*

*Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church,  
Dallas, Texas*

There was one moment of near despair that I recall, which came over me as I sat reading a dusty tome at the university library. It was 1986, and the midpoint of my 20 year quest to find Orthodoxy, though I didn't know it at the time.

I was raised in the Assemblies of God, and at that time attending a Disciples of Christ seminary, taught by an ecumenical melting pot of Methodist, Roman Catholic, Baptist, and Presbyterian professors. I sought a denomination that most closely matched the faith and practice of the early church. So I went to the library, intent on discovering the denomination I would call home.

My denominational research left me disappointed. For many days, I scanned over eight thousand Protestant denominations, trying to find the true church. I wasn't satisfied with any of them. In the following years, my wife and I floated in and out of several denominations, never finding a place we could truly call home.

Then a friend told me about Eastern Orthodoxy. They're a branch of Roman Catholicism, right? Wrong. As I began to devour early church writings and history, I found many of my perceptions of the early church were simply untrue. The Eastern Church had preserved the early beliefs and practices of the Apostles without alteration, unlike the cauldron of changing beliefs and practices in the West. Nowhere in the Bible or in early history was it taught that the foundation of truth was 'scripture alone' (Sola Scriptura). Rather, Scripture itself reveals the church is the pillar and foundation of truth. (1 Timothy 3:15).

Orthodoxy I discovered a vibrant spirituality whose practices produced holiness and knowledge of God like nothing else I'd ever encountered.

Less than three years after I'd first discovered Orthodoxy, my wife and I with our three children were blessed to be received into the Orthodox Church. We left our shaky raft of spiritual uncertainty and found haven in the protecting embrace of the Orthodox Church.

During our first months within Orthodoxy we still had many questions. Wouldn't liturgical worship become dull and boring? We'd been steeped in rock-style Evangelical worship, entertained in all varieties of ways in church. Would our kids really "get it" and come to a personal relationship with Christ? We'd left behind a world of Protestant resources where there was no lack of classes and programs to educate and entertain.

We look back now and find no regrets. Our fears were groundless. Liturgical worship? It is so refreshing to say the prayers of our Fathers, and to know each word is right and true. Do our kids "get it?" As I watch our family in preparation to receive communion and our children actively seek forgiveness from those they've wronged, I see the spirit of Christ's grace made manifest in our family.

It's good to be home.



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church  
Denison



Falling Asleep of the Ever-Virgin Mary  
Romanian Orthodox Church  
Colleyville



Saint Sava Orthodox Mission



Saint Peter's Orthodox Church  
Fort Worth

## Ortho FAQ!

### Frequently Asked Questions Concerning the Orthodox Faith

#### **What's with all the paintings?**

We call the paintings 'icons', which means image. Jesus Christ is the Image of God (Col. 1:15), and we are made in the *image* of God (Gen 1:26). In Exodus 25 and 26, God commanded that *images* of cherubim should be constructed on the cover of the Ark and on the curtains. These are images connected with the presence of God, and *commanded* by Him.

But suppose you saw someone bowing before an icon, perhaps even kissing it? Are they engaged in the worship of idols? No, because in the image, we see and honor the prototype. An icon of Christ reveals to us the Original. And through Him, as He taught us, we also glimpse the Father. Icons become for us windows to heaven, revealing the glory of God. Thus, we bow before the icons of Christ, seeing through it Him and His Father. Icons of the miracles of Christ, of His followers, and of the angels—all reveal the glory of God.

Saint John of Damascus reminds us, "Abraham bowed down to the sons of Hamor, men who had neither faith nor knowledge of God...Jacob bowed to the ground before Esau, his brother, and also before the tip of his son Joseph's staff. He bowed down, but he did not adore. Joshua, the son of Nun, and Daniel bowed in veneration before an angel of God, but they did not adore him."

The icons are not mere decoration, nor objects of worship. Icons reveal and manifest our Lord and the unseen heavenly host (Hebrews 12:1) of angels, saints, and martyrs.

#### **Why do you call your pastors, 'Father'?**

In Matthew 23, Jesus says, "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers, for One is your teacher, the Christ." Clearly, anyone who believes that another human being is the source of their being and salvation is in grave error. Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).

You will find the word 'father' is also used in Scripture to describe a paternal and pastoral relationship. For example, Job is described as 'a father to the poor' (Job 29:16) and Paul tells the Corinthians that he is their father in Christ. (1 Cor. 4:15) This is the context of the word 'father' when we address our pastor, who cares for us like a father cares for his children. The term is simply an affectionate and respectful way of recognizing his paternal and pastoral role in our lives.

#### **Why do you honor Mary?**

You used the correct word in your question, because we honor Mary; we do not worship her. Worship is for God alone! We really like Mary, a lot. She's His mom! Like Abraham in the Old Testament, Mary showed perfect obedience to God. She was, after all, the first to receive Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. Mary was present throughout His life, at His death, in the Upper Room at Pentecost, and at the Ascension. Over time, the Orthodox Church has identified with Mary as a supreme example of the faithful Christian. She received Christ, followed Him faithfully, and told others to listen to Him. Mary did all of these things, and hence is worthy of our honor. The angel Gabriel said she was full of grace, and the prophetess Elizabeth said she was blessed among women. Can we say anything less?

The Orthodox view on Mary should not be confused with the doctrinal position of the Roman Catholic Church. We do not preach Mary—we preach Jesus Christ. Mary is the family favorite, a person that we are all proud of. For us, she represents the best that humanity has ever produced, a person who offered themselves totally to God.

We have a special name for Mary, 'Theotokos', which expresses the truth that Jesus Christ is one Person, Who is fully God and fully Man. Because the Person of Jesus is both God and Man, who was in the womb of Mary? We answer that God in the flesh was in the

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#### **You Can Always Come Home**

By Marilyn Gabler  
Saint Constantine and Helen  
Orthodox Church, Dallas

**R**aised in a Protestant church, I always had a keen interest in other types of churches and even other types of religions. As I grew towards adulthood, my curiosity changed into a search for the truth about Jesus Christ. The first major step, or really, quantum leap, in my journey was when my husband, Bill, said that he needed to show me the sacramental life, and took me to the Episcopal Church. We were in this church together for five years and witnessed many changes in the teachings and moral fabric of the Episcopal Church.

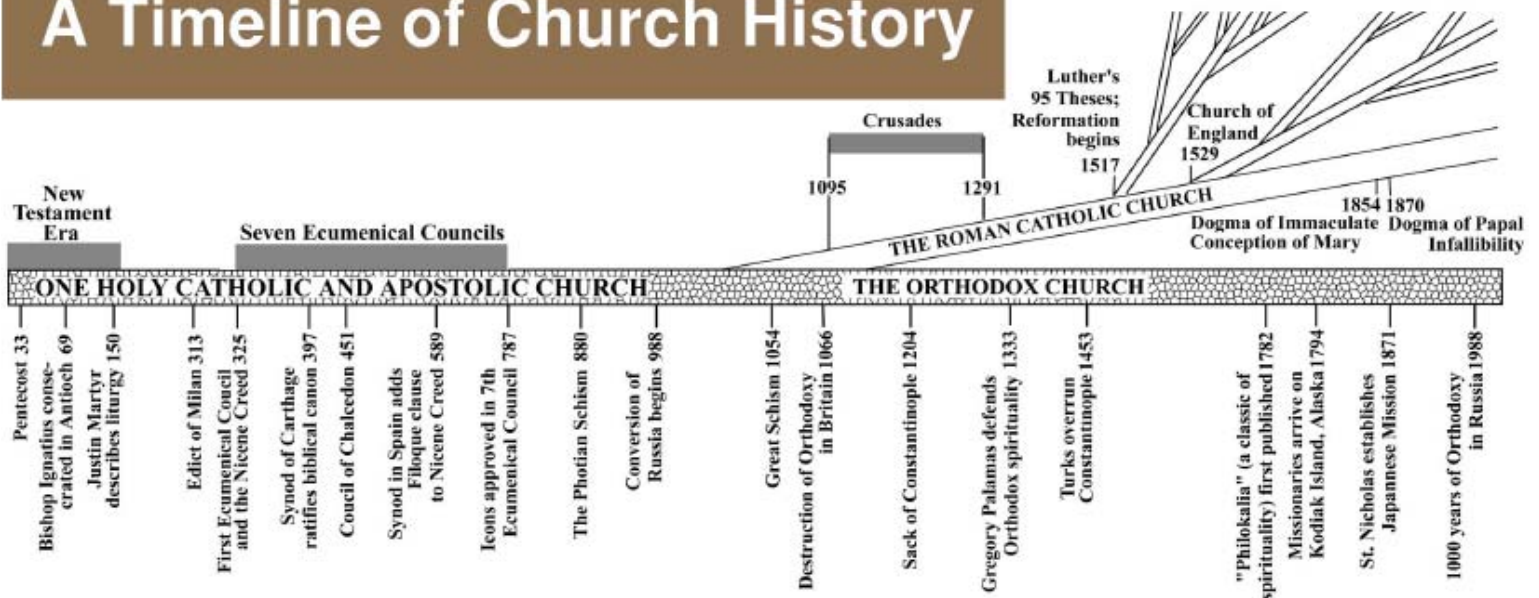
After much prayer and spiritual direction, it was time for another step along the way. Bill encouraged me to go to a two week seminar at the University of Notre Dame so that I could explore Roman Catholicism, and compare and contrast this doctrine with what I was learning about Orthodoxy. During my two week stay in the Roman Catholic Church where I was taught by the master leaders of their church, my thoughts and prayers never strayed from my initial quest for the truth about Jesus.

As I neared the end of this spiritually uplifting two weeks, I felt nurtured but somewhat confused about many things. Suddenly, one of the other attendees at the seminar said, "You can always come home!" At that moment I realized that the homecoming for all Christians must be the Orthodox Church, the church which was ordained by Jesus and became the Mother of all future churches. When I arrived back in Fort Worth, I told my spiritual director that I had come home to Orthodoxy. Several months later, I was chrismated and have always known that I was welcome "at home."

**"There is something worse than not reading the Scriptures, and that is to believe that this reading is useless."**

*Saint John Chrysostom  
Pastor of Constantinople  
(d. 407 AD)*

# A Timeline of Church History



## Historic Roots

The Acts of the Apostles records the birth of the Church at Pentecost, the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Twelve Apostles and those gathered in the Upper Room. On Pentecost, about three thousand souls believed in Christ and were baptized. The first Christian community was established and Church history began. (Acts 2:1-4, 41-47) The Orthodox Church traces its roots in unbroken continuity to that first Christian Church founded by Jesus Christ and described in the New Testament. It has kept intact the Apostolic Faith.

During the first thousand years of church history, the Church was one in faith. This faith began in the days of the Apostles, survived the persecutions, and was preserved from the internal challenges of heretical teachings by the Church Fathers who remained true to the Apostles' doctrines.

An Ecumenical Council is a gathering of bishops concerning matters that affect the entire church, world-wide. Seven Ecumenical Councils were held which settled many issues and confirmed the beliefs handed down since the times of the Apostles. At the first two Ecumenical Councils held in 325 AD and 381AD, a statement of faith, which witnessed to the truth always held by the Church, was precisely expressed. This is known as the Nicene

Creed, the basic creed of the Orthodox Church. At the Council of Carthage held in 397, the canon of the Bible, listing all the books which make up the Bible, was confirmed. Ecclesial authority was vested in the four ancient Patriarchal jurisdictions of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople in the East; and the Western jurisdiction of Rome.

Over time, many political, geographical and linguistic factors had an effect on the unity of the one holy catholic (the word 'catholic' in this sense means universal) and apostolic church. Toward the end of the first thousand years, the unity between the churches of the East and the churches of the West began to be lost, and they gradually pulled apart. In 1054, the Great Schism occurred which separated the Roman Catholic Church from the Orthodox Churches of the East. The history of the Roman Catholic Church from that point on is well known. What is not well-known is what was happening in the East. The intent here is not to present historical details. Instead, two important points will be made. First of all, the Orthodox Church remained one united Church. The national jurisdictions that exist in the Orthodox Church, they do not represent differences in belief, worship or structure. They recognize one another's members and leaders and are in full communion with each other. Secondly, the Orthodox Church

has preserved unchanged the original Faith of the Church, the Faith of the Apostles and of the Seven Ecumenical Councils. In Orthodox Christianity, the precious treasure of the early Church, true worship and true teaching, is alive and well in our day.

### Wait a minute!

The claims of the Orthodox Church can sound a little arrogant. Please understand that the Orthodox Church does not claim to be the perfect church! It is full of sinners and hypocrites, so much so that the words 'forgive me' are part of every Sunday service.

The Orthodox Church would get along just fine without us, so we certainly can't boast about ourselves. However, there is an undeniable 'paper trail' as well as historical and archeological evidence which points to a single, glorious fact: The Lord Jesus did not leave us as orphans to be subjected to conflicting doctrines and speculative interpretations. No! Our Lord sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Church in all truth, the truth 'once and for all delivered' (Jude 3). The New Testament church never died out. Jesus Christ kept His promise to keep His church preserved and protected forever.

## Ortho FAQ (continued from page 5)

womb of Mary. Mary is a human person, just like us. And yet, because God became Man in Mary's womb, the Person born of her is truly Man and truly God. She is therefore called *Theotokos*, which literally translated from the Greek means God-bearer, or the Mother of God. The use of the word *Theo* (God) is a reference to Christ's divinity. This is not to say the Mary is equal to God, we are saying that the Son of God is One Person Who is fully God and fully Man.

***I've heard Orthodox Christians say that they pray to a saint. What's that all about?***

Let's start with the word 'pray'. The first definition of the word concerns praying to God in worship. The second definition of the word is to make a fervent request. In the King James Bible, for example, those who refuse the invitation of the great feast (Luke 14) say, "I pray thee, have me excused." The word 'pray' in this context means to make a request. Christians often ask others to pray for them, as did Paul (1 Thess 5:25). Applying the two meanings of the word 'pray', we see that Paul is praying (making a request) to the Thesalonians to pray (to God) for him. There is indeed one Mediator between God and Man, Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5); but that does not exclude the practice of praying or making intercessions for one another, for "the prayers of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

When we pray as worship, we pray to God. When we pray to Mary or the saints, we are asking them to pray to God for us. But, how can this be? How can we make a request of a person who had had died? It is very simple: the faithful who have departed this life are not dead. They are alive in Christ, for "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him." (Luke 20:38).

There is no better example of someone conversing with a departed saint than our Lord Himself, who spoke with Moses at the Transfiguration (Matt 17). Moses had been dead and buried for over a thousand years, and yet he is seen

(continued on page 9)

# HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

There are many ways to obtain more information about the Orthodox Christian Church. The first recommendation is to contact one of the Orthodox Churches listed in this pamphlet. Many of them conduct inquirer's classes or offer other classes about the Orthodox Faith. All welcome inquiries and will assist you in learning about the Orthodox Church. Literature on Orthodoxy is available from a variety of sources. Many churches have a well-stocked book store. Catalogs are available from Orthodox seminaries or publishing companies. Eight such sources are:

**Conciliar Press**  
(800) 967-7377  
www.conciliarpress.com

**Eighth Day Books**  
www.eighthdaybooks.com

**Holy Cross Bookstore**  
www.holycross.hhc.edu

**Light & Life Publishing**  
(952) 925-3888  
www.light-n-life.com

**St. Nectarios Press**  
http://www.orthodoxpress.org

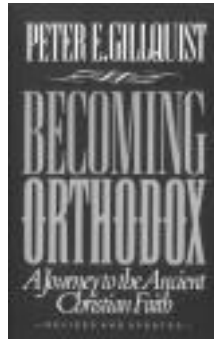
**Regina Orthodox Press**  
800-636-2470  
www.reginaorthodoxpress.com

**St. Tikhon's Bookstore**  
(888) 454-6678  
www.stots.edu/bookstore.htm

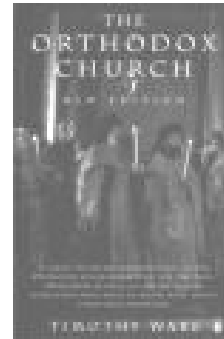
**St. Vladimir's Bookstore**  
(800) 204-2665  
www.svspress.com

## Recommended Reading:

There are many excellent books about the Orthodox Church. Among the most popular are:



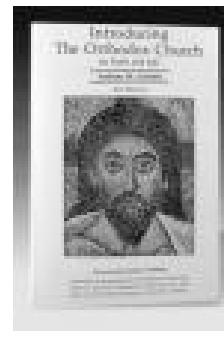
**Becoming Orthodox** by Fr. Peter Gillquist. The inspiring story of how a group of over two thousand evangelical Christians discovered the Orthodox Faith.



**The Orthodox Church** by Bishop Timothy Ware is the classic English language introduction to the history, doctrines, and worship of the Orthodox Church.



**Facing East: A Pilgrim's Journey into the Mysteries of Orthodoxy** by Frederica Mathewes-Green. A hilarious and heartwarming journal of one woman's discovery of the Orthodox life.



**Introducing the Orthodox Faith** by Fr. Anthony Coniaris. An introduction to the beliefs, practices, and patterns of Orthodox Christianity.