



# Inquirer Questions and Answers

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

## THE SACRAMENTS

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| <p>1. What does the Orthodox Church mean by “sacraments”? What are they?</p>                              | <p>Sacraments are visible and tangible encounters with the Grace of God which otherwise would not be seen.</p>  |
| <p>2. What does the Eucharist mean in the Orthodox Church?</p>  | <p>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.</p>   |
| <p>3. Why can’t I receive Communion when I come to your church? I’ve been a Christian all of my life!</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>4. What is the extra bread and wine people get after communion?</p>                                    | <p>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.</p>           |
| <p>5. I’ve never seen babies receive communion! Please explain that to me.</p>                            | <p>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.</p> |

## THE THEOTOKOS

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| <p>1. Why is there such a strong emphasis in Orthodoxy on Christ's mother?</p>  | <p><b>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!</b></p>   |
| <p>2. Do you worship Mary?</p>  | <p><b>No. We regard her very highly as the Mother of God, but worship is offered to God alone</b></p>  |
| <p>3. Theotokos is an odd name. What does it mean?</p>  | <p><b>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".</b></p>  |
| <p>4. Do you really think Mary prays for you? Why can't you go directly to Jesus yourself?</p>                          | <p><b>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.</b></p>   |
| <p>5. Do you really think Mary has anything to do with saving us?</p>   | <p><b>Yes. (see #1) Our salvation is dependent on Jesus Christ becoming a man. It does not happen apart from her.</b></p>  |
| <p>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?</p> | <p><b>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.</b></p> |

## ICONS

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| 1. Do Orthodox worship icons?   | <b>No. Worship is offered to God alone.</b>  |
| 2. Why do you kiss the icons?   | <b>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.</b>  |
| 3. It seems to me that having icons is like idol worship. What do you think?            | <b>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.</b>   |
| 4. Why do the people that are depicted on the icons look so different than our artwork? | <b>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.</b>  |
| 5. Are there special prayers that should be prayed when the icons are venerated?        | <b>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.</b> |

## THE SAINTS

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| <p>1. Why do you pray to saints?<br/>Can't you go directly to God?</p>  | <p><b>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).</b></p>  |
| <p>2. Why do you have "pictures" of the saints all over your church?</p>  | <p><b>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.</b></p>  |
| <p>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?</p> | <p><b>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.</b></p> |
| <p>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?</p>       | <p><b>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.</b></p>   |
| <p>5. Isn't praying to saints like idol worship?</p>  | <p><b>No. We do not worship saints. Worship is offered to God alone. We engage them as we would anyone else who is "in Christ".</b></p>  |

## TRADITION

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| <p>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?</p>              | <p><b>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.</b></p>  |
| <p>2. Why do you think you have the fullness of faith? Is everyone else wrong?</p>   | <p><b>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.</b></p>  |
| <p>3. What does "Orthodox" mean?</p>   | <p><b>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".</b></p>  |
| <p>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?</p> | <p><b>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.</b></p>   |
| <p>5. Why do you call your priest "Father"? Jesus warned not to call any one Father but God alone.</p>   | <p><b>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).</b></p>        |
| <p>6. Why do you only say written prayers? Do you ever pray prayers from the heart? Who wrote those prayers?</p>   | <p><b>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</b></p> |

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|  | <b>holds it as Her prayer since it speaks "in Christ".</b> |
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