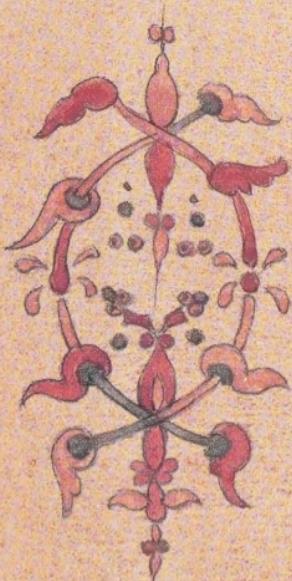


# ENTERING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE CATECHISM AND BAPTISM OF ADULTS

METROPOLITAN OF NAUPAKTOS  
HIEROTHEOS





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# **Entering the Orthodox Church**

*A Contribution to the Pastoral Ministry  
for the Catechism and Baptism of Adults*

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**Metropolitan of Nafpaktos  
Hierotheos**

# **Entering the Orthodox Church**

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Translated by  
**Marina Mary Robb**

**Birth of the Theotokos Monastery**



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## **Prologue**

*St. Gregory Palamas says somewhere that when Christ became man “Being the pre-eternal God, he also became a theologian for us”. Thus, the greatest theologian for man is the Son and Word of God, who became man and revealed eminent truths to us; truths that the greatest philosophers were unable to discover. Naturally, the theology that God revealed is not ideology, but true life, because it is linked to man’s rebirth.*

*Christ once had a theological conversation with the Pharisee, Nicodemus, when he was still a secret disciple. He later became an open and bold disciple because- together with Joseph of Arimathea - he took Christ’s body down from the cross and buried Him. In the conversation, the important issue of man’s rebirth was discussed.*

*From the outset of the conversation Christ said to Nicodemus, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3). Here, a distinction is made between birth from below and rebirth from above. The former clearly refers to biological birth that takes place through marriage, whereas the second refers to spiritual birth, which is rebirth and takes*

*place through the sacrament of Baptism. Man is reborn spiritually; the members of his body become members of the Body of Christ. According to commentators on the Scripture, we receive the light of divine grace through baptism. Through that light we see the God-Man, we become members of Him, we enter into his kingdom, and we fulfil the aim of our being.*

*Nicodemus could not understand much of this teaching. He asked how it was possible for someone who was an old man to be born again, that is, how is it possible for him to pass through his mother's womb again and be reborn. Christ solved his doubts, answering, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-6).*

*According to the Holy Fathers, birth "by water and spirit" has two interpretations. One is that, since man is made up of body and soul, this means that, "the visible reception of water pertains to the purification of the body" whereas the Spirit acts "invisibly concurring with the rebirth of the invisible soul." Thus, the Holy Spirit that acts and works with the water of the baptismal font regenerates the whole human being, body and soul. The other interpretation denotes baptism by water and baptism by the Spirit. That is*

*to say, that the baptism that we receive in the holy font must, without fail, be connected with Baptism by the Holy Spirit, which is the advent of the Holy Spirit within the heart, when prayer of the nous and heart begin. When man becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, he then automatically has ceaseless remembrance of God.*

*The baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit can be combined together, when correct Orthodox catechism takes place. However, they may not be combined absolutely, from the point of view that baptism by water takes place first and the baptism by the Spirit follows. It is quite characteristic, from the Acts of the Apostles, that the Christians of Samaria had indeed received baptism by water, that is, they had been baptised in the name of the Lord, but they had not received the baptism of the Spirit. Therefore, the Apostles Peter and John were sent to them to baptise them with the Holy Spirit. The Acts of the Apostles says, “[Peter and John], when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:15-17).*

*Of course, this passage refers to the sacrament of Baptism and the sacrament of Chrismation.*

*However, in the Orthodox Tradition, as evident in many places, baptism refers to the purification of the image and man's induction into the Church, whereas chrism refers to the illumination of man's nous. This illumination is revealed by the advent of the Holy Spirit in the heart and the activation of the soul's noetic energy, with prayer of the nous and heart. This is why it is also called confirmation in English; in other words, it confirms that the baptised person is a member of the Church.*

*The fact of the matter is that, as Christ said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6-7). Biological birth makes man carnal, whereas spiritual rebirth, being born again, makes man spiritual. Without baptism in the name of God in Trinity, we are carnal and the flesh cannot naturally inherit the Kingdom of God.*

*For all these reasons Holy Baptism is an "introductory sacrament," it is a very important sacrament, which introduces us to Christ's Body, the Church. It is a great blessing from God. This is the reason why a serious and responsible act from the Church is recommended. Baptism by water must, however, be connected with baptism by the Spirit, according to the Orthodox patristic tradition.*

*In this small book, we are mainly concerned with the baptism of those entering the Church from other religions or from atheism. Many points in the book, however, concern infant baptism as well. Infants receive the grace of Holy Baptism as vaccination against the demons and death. Moreover, the catechism lessons also help in the Catechism of those who are already baptised. However, here we are more concerned with the baptism of adults, since, considering that things are better grasped, the Catechism should take place with seriousness and responsibility.*

*We will examine how the ancient Church prepared catechumens to become members of her. We will present a plan of catechism lessons. We will advise a typical connection of the sacrament of Baptism with the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist. In addition, we will underline certain points that the Catechist-Priest must bear in mind, to help guide these new Christians after Baptism. Thus, the Catechism will not be presented as an ideology; instead, it will offer life.*

*If, for reasons of economy or particular circumstances the Catechism has to be shortened or simplified more than usual, then the Catechist-Priest may use the diagrams that are suggested for each catechism lesson. He may also go ahead based on the questions and answers that are in chapter four.*

*All those who are sensitive and sense the great gift that they have of being members of the Church, through Baptism and Chrism, also consider their day of baptism like a “birthday” and they celebrate it. All those who have seen the darkness of sin through the radiance of the Divine Light and have started repentance; all those who once attained illumination of the nous and experienced the great gift of prayer of the heart and nous; all those who have attained knowledge of God; all those who during Holy Communion feel that they become “of the same body” and “of the same blood” with Christ, precisely because they were already members of the Church through Holy Baptism, all these people will consider the day that the priest baptised them in the font and traced the seal of the Holy Spirit upon their body to be the greatest blessing of their lives “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”*

*I wrote this in Athens on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1992 on the day in which we celebrate the consecration of the church of the Resurrection, the forefeast of the Venerable Cross and we remember the Holy Martyr Cornelius the Centurion and the blessed Father Hierotheos of Iberon.*

*Archim. Hierotheos Vlachos*

## Introduction to the English Edition

Nowadays, there is great interest in the worship and theology of the Orthodox Church, and the Church itself. This is because the Orthodox Church preserves the authentic elements of Patristic and Apostolic teaching.

The Fathers of the Church are the successors of the Holy Apostles throughout the ages; they are the bridge between the Holy Apostles and us. They entrust us with revealed life and truth. As we know, the Holy Fathers are not highbrow intellectual teachers and intelligentsia but they are those people who have experienced Pentecost in their personal life.

Thus, the Orthodox Church is the Body of Christ and the communion of those being deified but it is at the same time the Church of the Apostles, of the Fathers, the Martyrs, the Saints and the Ascetics, the Church of the Ecumenical Synods. Overall, the Orthodox Church is the Church which preserves the richness of the Tradition in both Christ and the Holy Spirit, as this has been manifested through the ages.

It is not easy for someone to enter this great ancestral treasury, the treasury of the Holy Spirit. This is why, from the very beginning, the Church laid down a special way by which to receive people who want to be baptized.

This way is described briefly in this small book, that is, it lays out the preparation of the Catechumens from the point of view of spiritual life and worship in reference to the teaching of the Church. It is also lays out the content of Catechism, the Baptism of those who have been already catechized as well as the life of the faithful within the holy and blessed body of Christ.

Since there is a great quest for the Orthodox life in the West among English-speaking peoples, I hope that the translation of this book, which has been published repeatedly in Greek, will help in the appreciation of what a great gift this to an Orthodox Christian.

I thank Miss Marina Robb, an Anglo-Cypriot, a philologist and a theologian who has translated this book, as well as the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos, which has undertaken this publication.

I sincerely ask the readers of this book and all those who may benefit from the reading of it to pray for me also, so that I will live in the Orthodox Church till the end of my natural life and fall asleep within the Church – that when the

time of my departure from this life comes, by the prayers of our spiritual fathers, to be worthy of meeting the forefathers whom I loved and who loved me in the heavenly Divine Liturgy.

Written in the Metropolis of Nafpaktos  
on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2003  
Feast of Saint Silouan the Athonite.

†The Metropolitan of Nafpaktos  
Hierotheos.



# 1

## Catechism in the Tradition of the Church

A person's introduction into the Body of Christ, which takes place through Baptism, is a serious and responsible matter for the Church of Christ.

Today, we see that many people are asking to be baptised and become members of the Church. On the one hand, it is very good news, since it is not a small thing for someone to wish to become a member of the Body of Christ, and as a member of the Church to be made worthy of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. However, this task must be performed with responsibility and seriousness. Knowledge of the Tradition of our Church will help us in this regard. We must see how baptism took place within Tradition. If we do not do this, we will make our own proposals with unforeseen consequences for our ecclesial body. Unfortunately, we also see that secularisation has even made inroads into this

serious matter, as it has done in all aspects of our ecclesial life, and thus we do things superficially and without discretion.

To begin with, we must look at how people were prepared before receiving Holy Baptism within Church Tradition, and then go on to see how all those who take on this responsible ministry can put this into practice today.

There is a characteristic canon of the Second Ecumenical Council that defines the way in which heretics should be received into the Church. When the Holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council mention the heretical Eunomians, who practised single immersion, or the Montanists and Sabellians, who taught the identity of the Son with the Father (*Hyiopatoria*), as well as the other heresies, they advise that we receive them as we receive pagans. It seems that at that time (4th Century) there was a particular order of receiving people into the Church. They write:

*On the first day we make them Christians; on the second, catechumens; on the third, we exorcise them by breathing thrice in their face and ears; and thus we instruct them and oblige them to spend time in the Church, and to hear the Scriptures; and then we baptise them.” Canon viii, Second Ecumenical Council*

This canon is very important and may assist us in understanding the manner of reception of those entering the Church. Indeed, I can maintain

that it is only by this means that we can determine the motivations and incentives of those who ask for an Orthodox baptism. This lengthy procedure will help them to approach the sacrament of Baptism in an honest way. We will make a small analysis of this important Canon.

The person who wanted to be baptised, became a Christian on the first day. This means that a special prayer was read for the Catechism to begin. It is suspected that, and this seems to be true, this is the prayer we read today “to the sealing of a child who receives his name on the eighth day.” This prayer calls upon God to lift up the light of His countenance, and the Cross of His Only-begotten Son in the heart and in one’s deliberations. The prayer asks for this in order to “flee the vanity of the world, and every evil intention of the enemy, by following your commandments”. At the same time we read the prayer addressed to God, so that His Holy Name will remain upon the person approaching and that he will be made worthy to join “your Holy Church in due time and be perfected by the dread Mysteries of Christ”. These prayers seem to be the ones that were read in the ancient Church on the first day.

The fact that they were first called Christians and then Catechumens is quite remarkable. This means that after this special prayer was read,

their name was then written into special lists and they started their struggle against the devil and the passions. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, talking to those who are to be enlightened, those awaiting baptism, says amongst other things “For there has been an inscription of your names and a call to service”. Thus, after this particular prayer, they are included in the order of Catechumens and their therapeutic treatment begins, in order for them to approach the sacrament of Baptism fully prepared.

On the third day the exorcisms begin, i.e. the prayers for demons to leave man's heart. Here we are not concerned with demoniacs, where the demon possesses even man's citadel, i.e. the intellect, but we are concerned with Catechumens who are possessed by a variety of passions and shameful desires. According to the whole of tradition, these are demonic influences. According to St. Cyril of Jerusalem, exorcisms are done either with breathings or with anathemas. In the Pilgrimage of Etheria it says, “The custom here is for those who are about to be baptised, for the whole period of forty days, first to receive the exorcisms from the clergy, in the morning after the dismissal from the Resurrection.” It seems that the exorcism prayers are those that we still read today during the service for the Catechumens, which precedes the sacrament of Baptism.

Together with the exorcisms, the Catechism took place, so that they would learn about the faith. Etheria says that every morning immediately following the exorcisms they placed the bishop's throne in the Church of the Martyrdom and the relevant teaching took place. They studied the books of the Old Testament, the Symbol of Faith, the service of the sacrament of Baptism and so on. The teaching took place for three hours a day throughout the whole of Lent.

The Catechism, however, was not limited to prayers and theoretical teaching of the truths of the faith, but it was linked to the worship of the Church. The Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council advise that "they spend time in the Church, and hear the Scriptures". The Catechumens were obliged to participate in the Church's life of worship, so that they would pray to God, and also so that the faithful would pray for them. Theoretical teaching is not enough, but prayer is needed so that God's grace will help. This is also apparent in the arrangement of the Divine Liturgy, in which the Epistle and the Gospel are read, the sermon is given, the relevant prayers of the faithful for the Catechumens are expressed and they are called towards holy enlightenment. "That He will catechise them with the word of truth; that He will reveal unto them the gospel of righteousness; that He will unite them to His

Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." This work should not take place according to man, but according to the God-Man. The Catechism should be from God Himself, just as the revelation of the Gospel should also be by the grace of God. So, it is not a matter of a dry, intellectual, teaching of the truths of faith. Here we must note that in the Tradition of the Church the sermon took place after the Gospel so that the Catechumens would have the opportunity to hear it, since they left the church building right after it.

After following this whole procedure, which demanded a long period of time, even as long as three years, the Church appointed the day for the Catechumens' Baptism. Yet, even then, there was some corresponding preparation. The Pilgrimage of Etheria describes the way in which the Catechumens were included in the list of those who were to be enlightened. This period coincides with a great season of the Church, that of Great Lent:

*"The person who gives the name, gives it on the eve of Great Lent and a priest writes down all the names; that is to say, this takes place on the eve of all the eight weeks that are included in Lent here. When the priest writes down all the names, on the next day, the beginning of Lent, the day on which the eight weeks begin, they place a seat for the Bishop in the middle of the Church, i.e. in the place of Martyrdom. The priests sit*

*on either side and the rest of the clergy remain standing. Then they bring in the candidates one by one. If they are men they come with their male sponsors; if women, with their female sponsors. Then, for each one, the bishop questions those next to the person approaching, saying, "Does he lead an honourable life? Does he respect his parents? Is he perhaps governed by drunkenness and lies?" He asks each one the same questions, with some severity, about all their sins. If the candidate is a person who is not burdened by all that he has been asked before witnesses, then the bishop writes his name down in his own hand. However, if he is accused of certain faults, the bishop does not accept him, and says, "Correct yourself, and when you become better, then approach baptism." This is done, first for the men and then for the women. Those who are foreigners, unless they have witnesses who know them, approach baptism with greater difficulty."*

From all this, it is obvious that the Church prepared someone that wanted to become a member of her very well. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, speaking to the enlightened, advises them to be suitably prepared for the day of Baptism. They should confess: "the present is the time of confession. Confess what you have done in word or in deed, by night or by day. Confess at an acceptable time, and on the day of salvation receive the heavenly treasure." They also had to participate in the daily exorcisms and the Catechism lessons: "Devote your time to the exorcisms; be diligent at the Catechisms, and remember the things that

shall be spoken.” They were not only obliged to listen, but what they heard should be sealed by faith. Together with the Catechism a struggle against themselves and their passions was required: “Erase all human concerns from within you... neither lend a willing ear to denigrators; but rather be prompt to prayer. Show, through ascetic exercise, that your heart is strengthened. Cleanse your vessel, that you may receive grace more abundantly.”

So, it seems that within the Tradition of the Church preparation for Baptism was taken very seriously. There was a combination of exorcisms, catechism lessons, prayer, ascesis, and participation in the worship of the Church. Baptism only went ahead when it was confirmed that the Catechumen was ready. Consequently, there was complete pastoral concern (one could say a therapeutic science) for someone’s entrance into this membership of the Church. In the same way, they even examined the intentions of the person asking to be baptised. If someone did not have good intentions, he would be unable to stay in the class of Catechumens for very long.

The fact that the Church carefully considers the intentions of those who are going to be baptised is clear in a canon from Neocaesarea. There it says that if someone is baptised because of sickness, he cannot become a priest, unless, of

course, he repents; this even if men who want to be ordained are rare. Justifying this ban it says: "his faith was not by choice, but of necessity." It is important whether faith is by choice or from necessity. This canon states: "if anyone be baptised when he is ill, in that his faith was not voluntary, but of necessity, he cannot be promoted to the presbyterate, unless he later shows eagerness and faith, even if there is a lack of men." St. Nikodemos the Athonite interprets this canon saying: "The present canon determines that a Catechumen who put off Baptism while healthy, yet was baptised out of fear, when he fell into mortal danger through illness, cannot become a priest, for it seems that he was not baptised of his own free intention, but from the necessity of his illness."

This canon, amongst other things, demonstrates that there was pastoral concern for the Catechumen. It does not mean that since he was baptised he was now free to do what he liked. Indeed, we know very well from other canons that if the candidate was approaching the day of his baptism and committed a grave sin, he was put in order by the Bishop and started the Catechism again from the very beginning. In this way, Catechism was a journey towards purification, so that once purified the person would be baptised, chrismated and become a temple of the

All-Holy Spirit. From this purification of his heart, he then had to attain illumination and theosis.

In what follows we will try to present, in general terms, a diagram of the ministry of Catechism for those people who come to be baptised. An attempt will be made to combine worship with Catechism and all this within the perspective of the Orthodox Church. In this way, we will be able to do this work with a great sense of responsibility and seriousness for the benefit of those who are going to be baptised.

## 2

### **Joining the Catechumens to the Church Community**

Anyone who wants to be baptised and to become a Christian must be sent to diocesan headquarters in the area where he lives, where he will meet the bishop or his representative. It needs to start from there, because it is necessary to know that the bishop is the head of the local Church and is in the place and type of its Head, i.e. Christ.

During the meeting with the bishop, or his representative, there is a relevant conversation, in which they can throw light on the reason for the desire to be baptised. I think that this is a very important point, since it shows if his desire is true. Naturally, some discretion is needed so that it does not appear as if the person is being psychoanalysed or coerced.

Once the Catechumen has been registered in the relevant list, the Catechist is appointed who will instruct him in the faith according to Christ.

This Catechist must be, in principle, a well taught and experienced priest, who had been suitably educated about these situations beforehand and can instruct people who have come from all religions or even from atheism. Thus, he is aware of the particular attributes and characteristics of each one.

The best thing is for the Priest-Catechist to have a parish, so that the Catechumen can be included in the parish community and follow the worship schedule of that parish. This is very important, because during the Catechism period the Catechumen must realise that the parish is the active cell of church life, that the parish functions as a place of healing - a hospital, and as a spiritual family. It is not a matter of intellectually learning the faith, as though it was some private individual work; rather it is about church faith and life. Before he begins the Catechism, the priest must read the relevant prayer to the Catechumen. It is the prayer that we read for an infant eight days after his birth. This can also take place the same day, by the bishop himself. Thus, with this prayer and the blessing of God he starts the serious and responsible work of Catechism. The prayer is the following:

*"O Lord, Our God, we pray Thee and we beseech Thee.  
Lift up the light of Thy Countenance upon Thy servant  
N., and lift up the cross of Thine only-begotten Son*

*within his heart and his reflections, into fleeing the vanity of the world, and every evil intention of the enemy, following your decrees. And grant, O Lord, that Thy Name remain upon him undeniably, he may be united with Thy Holy Church in due time and may be perfected by the awesome Mysteries of Thy Christ, so that leading a life according to Thy commandments, and preserving your seal unbroken he may chance to enter into the blessedness of the elect in Thy Reign. Through the grace and love for man of Thine only-begotten Son, with whom Thou art blessed, and Thine All Holy and Good and Life Giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

After the reading of this prayer, the person is registered in the list of Catechumens. He is called a Christian, even if he is only a Catechumen, since in theory he has accepted that Christ is the true God and he wishes not only to keep His commandments, but also to imitate His life, that is, to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. He must clearly and consciously realise that he is not called to be an adherent of Christ, but a disciple of Christ, who will continually learn the living experience of the Reign of God.

If the Baptism is to take place on Great Saturday he should participate in the daily exorcism service, which takes place mainly during Lent. Exorcisms are those prayers that are today read during the service for the Catechumens that precede the sacrament of Baptism. The fact that

those prayers will be read daily, or regularly, does not mean that they will not be read before the service of the sacrament of Baptism. In any case, the exorcism prayers will precede the Catechism. That is to say, when the Catechumen approaches in order to be taught in the faith, the service of exorcism should take place before the Catechism begins. All of these prayers or just some of them will be read accordingly.

However, the true meaning of the prayers is not just for them to be said, as a matter of outward form, rather they should contribute to the expulsion of Satan from the heart of the Catechumen. We know very well from our Tradition that purification always precedes Baptism, and that with Holy Baptism and especially with Chrismation the Catechumen has attained illumination. This is why Baptism itself is called illumination and Chrismation is also called Confirmation - since it evidence that through Baptism and Chrismation the person has become a member of the Body of Christ and a Temple of the Holy Spirit. This purification of the Catechumen cannot be realised just by reading prayers, it also needs his own personal effort and struggle. Besides, man's salvation is *synergy*, co-operation between God who operates and man who co-operates.

The synergy of the Catechumen is seen in the efforts that he makes to be freed from the tyranny

of the passions. For this reason, the Catechumen is taught and given guidance about what impassioned thoughts (*logismoi*) are, what the development of these thoughts are, i.e. how they become a desire and action. Then, naturally, he tries to be healed, not only with his own ascetic endeavour, but mainly through the action of divine grace. He is guided in this point paternally, discreetly and in a therapeutic manner by his Priest-Catechist. He must learn the ways of internal warfare so that he can be freed from the power and energy of the passions. His heart must be freed from sin, from desires and impassioned thoughts (*logismoi*) so that when the priest puts the question to him before Baptism: "Do you reject Satan?" he will tell the truth when he says, "I have rejected him". The rejection of Satan does not take place with theoretical teachings, nor with prayers, but mainly with the personal effort made by man against the passions, desires and impassioned thoughts.

Consequently, the exorcisms must be combined with the ascetic effort to purify the heart from the passions and impassioned thoughts (*logismoi*). Otherwise, they do not truly come up to their goal and mission.

Since the Catechumen is called a Christian, after having been recorded in the parish register and having received the introductory prayer, he

belongs to the church community, according to his position. In other words, a clear distinction is made between Catechumens and the Faithful. This means that the Catechumen must also take part in the worship of the Church under certain pre-conditions. However, he cannot take part in the celebration of the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist and especially in the liturgy of the faithful, in which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

More particularly, the Catechumen takes part in the services of Vespers, Orthros (Matins), in the Paraklisis (Supplicatory Canons) that take place within the church building, the Akathist Hymn to the All-Holy Theotokos and all the worship of the Church in general. The Catechumen even participates in the first half of the Divine Liturgy until the reading of the Gospel and the relevant prayers that are said afterwards. We know very well that after the Gospel certain relevant entreaties are made towards God and then the deacon announces:

*"All that are catechumens, depart. catechumens depart.  
Let no catechumen remain. Let us, the faithful, again  
and again in peace, pray unto the Lord."*

Following this announcement, the Catechumens leave the church, and the Faithful remain inside while the Divine Liturgy continues.

Consequently, the Catechumens do not show up during a few evening hours, simply to hear some teaching about the Church, like at Sunday School. Rather, they belong to a particular order, the order of Catechumens, who live a life of worship within the parish community and undergo therapy, so that they are freed from the passions. They then go on to receive Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation.

The Catechumen may even come into contact with an Orthodox Monastery, where he will meet the truth that the Orthodox Church is a spiritual therapeutic community, a spiritual hospital that heals the soul's sicknesses and there he will find people who are striving to be cured. Orthodox monasteries, which are inspired by the Orthodox Tradition, are genuine spiritual medical schools, which teach, via practical ascetic exercise, the way of therapy.

The association of the Catechumen with worship and ascetic practice is absolutely necessary, because in this way the Catechumen will be initiated into Orthodox life and conduct. Otherwise the Catechism will be theoretical and cerebral and it will not offer many things. Certainly, in these preliminary stages, he will not learn many things, but it is important that he starts. He will gain greater experience after Baptism, when he will live in the parish community. In any case, this

spiritual trial, which will last for a long time, even as long as three years maximum - and it depends on the eagerness and desire of the Catechumen - is important so that it can be determine whether his desire to be baptised is real or not.

# 3

## Orthodox Catechism

The way in which the Catechism takes place will help the Catechumen to enter into the innermost parts of Orthodox theology and be initiated into the Orthodox Faith. This is especially true if the exorcisms and the ascetic endeavour of the Catechumen assist the cure of the soul from passions and if worship connects the Catechumen with the parish community. Catechism is absolutely necessary, for revelatory truth is shown through it and the Catechumen is urged to live out that truth. In the beginning the Catechumen must acquire faith by hearing and then go on to attain, with his own personal effort and struggle and with God's grace, faith from the vision of God (*theoria*), to have, that is, personal knowledge of God.

The Catechism lessons are necessary for initiation into the Orthodox Faith. The Orthodox Tradition recognises their importance and worth. The Catechetical Homilies of St. John Chry-

sostom are well-known, as are sacrament based Catechisms of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, “The Great Catechetical Oration” of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the Catechisms of St. Symeon the New Theologian and many other homilies of the Holy Fathers, with similar content. They are all intended to impart the revealed truths to the Catechumens, and even to the faithful.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says that the word of Catechism is necessary to augment the Church with the accumulation of the saved. However, the way of teaching is different for those entering the Church. Thus, it is necessary for the Catechism to be adjusted “according to the differences between religions”. Really, there are differences between the religions that people who want to be catechised come from. So, Catechism must be altered and its contents adjusted accordingly. These various erroneous convictions are spiritual sicknesses. For this reason, the medicine must be given correspondingly. “The manner of therapy is adapted according to the kind of illness.”

St. Gregory of Nyssa then goes on to observe that a Jew thinks differently from a Helleniser (a pagan), an Anomoian heretic thinks differently from a Manichaean one. This is why one cannot treat the polytheism of a pagan in the same way that one treats the disbelief of a Jew in the only-begotten Son of God. Moreover, pagans belong

to different categories. One can be completely without belief and an atheist, that is, not accepting that God exists at all, whereas someone else may believe in the existence of many gods. This means that there will be a different answer for these two disparate cases. The same thing is true for all those with different beliefs.

Consequently, when we give Catechism to particular people it is necessary to determine their way of thinking and to handle them accordingly. The Catechumen may have the best of intentions, to learn about the faith and to become a good Orthodox Christian, but we must grasp, precisely, his way of thinking, his views about God and basically, know the basics of the faith that he was raised in. In this way, we will adapt the medicine in a suitable manner and we will help him understand the differences.

We will go on to give a general framework of catechetical homilies- teachings. The experienced Catechist can adapt the message each time, according to the requirements and interests of the Catechumen. We have divided the Catechism lessons into large units. These can form one day of Catechism. That is to say, each unit can be studied in one day, or the Catechist can break them up and assign them to two or more days. Again, I must underline that it is just a general framework, which demonstrates how contempo-

rary catechism can be applied to adults approaching Baptism.

A

THE PARABLE  
OF THE PRODIGAL SON



# *First Catechism*

## **Christ and Christians**

### *Outline*

1. *We are called Christians because we are joined to Christ.*
2. *Christ is both God and Man, that is to say He is the God-Man, the Theanthropos.*
3. *All Humanity Expected Him.*
4. *We see His Life and Teaching in the Holy Bible.*
5. *We experience Him within the Church through the Sacraments (Mysteries).*
6. *The Parable of the Prodigal Son.*

All those who are baptised become members of the Church and are called Disciples of Christ, Christians. In Orthodoxy, we also add the title Orthodox to demonstrate the true faith. Orthodox means, “correct opinion” or “right belief”. Since there are Christians who have mistaken views about God, man and man’s salvation, it was considered necessary to talk about Orthodox Christians.

The members of the Church were called Christians because they follow Christ in their lives.

That is to say, they obey His will, his commandments and are united with him through the sacraments, especially through the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist.

The word Christ comes from the Greek word for the anointing, and denotes the Anointed one, the person anointed by God. This is identified as the Messiah of the Old Testament. Thus, the word Christ shows that the human nature, which was taken on by the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, was anointed by His divinity. This means that Christ is both God and Man. We can use the Greek compound word Theanthropos, which means God-Man. Thus, the name Christ denotes that God became man to save men (human beings) without losing His divinity.

Men always longed for salvation and, for this reason, expected redemption and a saviour. They had the memory of a blessed life, while at the same time experiencing the tragedy of life, with death, sicknesses, wars, hatred of other men and so on. This is why they expected a Redeemer. The whole of mankind hoped for a Redeemer God.

In China, from the 6th Century BC, they expected the “Holy One from the West”, Confucius calls him the “God-Man”. Moreover, the Babylonians expected a saviour and redeemer “as a god who became man.” The Hindus expected

the arrival of a saviour who would redeem the world and return it to its “original golden age”. According to Vedas, an ancient form of Hinduism, the God of fire and the Sun, Agni, was expected to become man from a virgin, sent from the father of heaven “as a mediator between God and the world”. The ancient Greeks also expected a redeemer and saviour. In Prometheus Bound, it is said that the redeemer of Prometheus, who was fastened to the Caucasus and suffered terribly because of his disrespect to the God Zeus, would be the offspring of the virgin Io and God. In his Apology, Socrates refers to the redeemer that God would send in his concern for the human race. There was a rumoured belief amongst the ancient Greeks that there was another, unknown God. For this reason, there was a statue in Athens dedicated to “the unknown God”. We see the same quest and hope amongst the Romans, and amongst all peoples. Naturally, the Jews awaited a Redeemer and Saviour, since the Prophets - especially the Prophet Isaiah, who has been called the loudest of Prophets and fifth Evangelist - describe many details about the descent, the life and the suffering of the Son of God.

So, the God who all human beings expected throughout all the ages was Christ. In His person, God and man were united. He was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. His conception

and birth are miraculous. The Son of God became son of man in order to save men. If we study His words and His work, we will appreciate that he is clearly superior to the leaders of all other religions. While they are men, He is the God-Man. He spoke about love, about purity of heart and of intentions. He overcame sin, the devil and death. He was raised from the dead. No other leader of a religion has risen again from the dead. Christ was resurrected and so overcame death and the devil. This is why He is the unique God-Man.

We are called Christians because we believe that He is the true God and because we keep His commandments in our own personal life. We attempt to conform our lives to His own life.

Christ is not a perfect philosopher and a good lawgiver. He is not a moraliser and the leader of a religion, even the most perfect one. Rather, He is the champion over death, the devil and sin. He did not come simply to change the external conditions of man's life; He came to make man holy, to transfigure him, to deify him, to make him a son of God by grace. He is the Son of God by nature (natural child); we must become children of God by grace (adopted children).

We witness the earthly life of Christ in the New Testament, especially in the four Gospels, which were written by His disciples. There are

only a few details about His birth and upbringing. Mainly three points are described. First, what Christ said. Second, what Christ did. Third, what Christ suffered for men. What Christ *said* can be seen in His words, His parables and His teaching. What Christ *did* can be seen in the miracles that He performed both out of compassion and love for men and to underline His lofty teachings. That is to say, He healed the blind man, blind from his birth, to reveal the truth that He is the light of the world. What Christ *suffered* can be seen in the passion He suffered for the salvation of the human race. Naturally, the sequel to His suffering is His Resurrection, which means that Christ, as God, resurrected the whole of human nature, which died upon the Cross. We can clearly see, within these three points, the Person, the work and the mission of Christ.

Certainly, we do not only read about this great work of Christ and His divinity in the Holy Bible, we also experience it within the Church. Through the sacrament of Baptism, we become members of the Body of Christ and in our personal life we experience the Suffering Passion, the Cross, the Burial and the Resurrection of Christ. Thus, we experience all these events in our life. In Baptism, we die to the world and are buried. This is shown by the triple immersion in the font. Through Holy Communion, we receive the Body and Blood of

Christ within us and with theosis (deification) we ascend together with Christ.

Accordingly, we are Christians, Disciples of Christ, because we are united with Him. Just like a school pupil has a teacher as a model for his life, we too have Christ as a model for life and conduct. Just as the artist has a model in mind, and this is what he wants to represent, we also have Christ as a model for our lives and we want to transfigure our life, making it life in Christ.

St. John Chrysostom says, that, within the Gospels, Christ is called the Way, because we go up to the Father through Him. He is called the foundation stone because He supports everything. He is called the root, because we flourish because of Him. The Shepherd, because we are fed by Him. The Lamb, because He was sacrificed for us and He saved us. He is called Life, because while we are dead in sin, He revives us, He resurrects us. He is called Light because He delivered us from the darkness. He is called a garment because we have put Him on in Baptism, even though we are naked. He is called a banquet because we eat Him in the sacraments. He is called a mansion because we live within Him. He is called a dweller because we are His temples.

All these names, most of which were revealed to us by Christ Himself through His teaching, show what Christ's work is, the reason why He

became man, and also what our relationship with Him is. He is not simply the leader of a religion. He is not a social reformer. Rather, He is our Light and our Life, our Head and our Sanctification, our Saviour and Redeemer, our Father and Mother. This relationship with Christ is very real, vital and not abstract and intellectual. The fact that we are called Christians demonstrates this organic and essential relationship with Him.

The well-known parables are preserved amongst those things Christ told His disciples. "Parables" is the name given to certain images and stories that Christ told. Great truths are hidden within these parables. For example, by using marriage parables, Christ shows that the Divine Eucharist, as well as the Kingdom of God, is a spiritual marriage, for man is actually united with God.

One of Christ's parables is the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). It is a distinguished parable, which has great truths hidden within it. One may say that it reveals the whole reason why Christ became man, what man's Fall is, what the work of the Church is and how one can be saved. The whole of Christian life is brought to light within this framework.

In simple words the parable is as follows:

"A man had two sons. Once, the younger son asked his father for his share of the possessions

that belonged to him and went far away from his house. He lived a reckless life; he wasted his possessions away. Finding himself in great need, he ended up as a servant, looking after pigs for a citizen of that far off country. In his sorrow, he remembered the happiness of his father's house and decided to return home, but as a hired worker, not as a son. As he was returning, his father saw him, and was expecting him. His father ran to him first; he embraced him and kissed him. The prodigal son asked for forgiveness from his father and said that he was unworthy to be called his son. He said that he wanted to be a hired servant, as he had spent his share of the property. However, his father gave an order that they would dress him in the first robe, and that they would put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. They would also kill the best calf. So, the feast began.

When his oldest son returned, hearing the celebrations at home, he asked what was happening. When they told him that his brother had returned, he was angry and did not want to enter the house. His father tried to persuade him. He, however, used rational arguments, which basically displayed jealousy and envy, and said he did not want to enter the house. He let it be understood that he would not participate in the gladness over his "dead" and lost brother's return."

This excellent parable shows all of Christ's work, but also the life of the Church. In the following Catechism lessons we will study this parable further and we will look at its spiritual significance.

What we should remember from this first Catechism is that Christ is both God and man, and for this reason, He is the true Saviour of men. There is no other saviour and redeemer. Christian life must be founded upon this rock of faith and this confession. All of us that live in the Church are called and actually *are* Christians. This is because we should be closely connected with Christ, be nourished by His Body and His Blood and live out all the events of His life within our own personal lives.

## *Second Catechism*

# **The Christian God**

### *Outline*

1. *God is our Father.*
2. *God is Trinity.*
3. *We Accept This Truth First by Reason and then We Experience It Personally.*
4. *God is a Person and Love.*
5. *The True God and Religious Idols.*
6. *Christ is a Friend and Brother.*

In the parable of the prodigal son, which we looked at in the previous Catechism, God is presented as a Father. It says, “A certain man had two sons.” It then goes on to say that the younger son sought his share, saying “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me” (Luke 15:11-12). The central figure in this parable is the father. Hence, there are some interpreters who do not call this the parable of the prodigal son, but prefer to call it the parable of “the compassionate father” or the “goodness of the father”. The father in the parable handles his younger son with love and

compassion, yet he also handles his older son's resentment with charity.

The image of the father in reference to God has a double significance. First, it refers to the first person of the Holy Trinity, from Whom the Son was begotten before all ages of time, and from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds. Second, it refers to his relationship with man, since He created man and the whole world.

The true God, who we Orthodox believe in, is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Holy Trinity are equal in honour, glory and power. This means that the Father is not superior to the Son, nor is the Son inferior to the Father or superior to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not inferior to the Father and the Son. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are as equal as the three sides of an equilateral triangle. The only difference is that the eternal and timeless origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit is from the Father; the Son is born from Him and the Spirit proceeds from Him.

This truth was revealed to us by Christ Himself, with His incarnation, so that St. Gregory Palamas would tell us that the aim of Christ's Incarnation was to reveal God's Trinity, which man was previously unaware of.

We see God's Trinity in the Jordan River, during Christ's baptism as a man. The Son is

baptised; the Father confirms that He is His beloved Son and the Holy Spirit descends “like a dove” (Luke 3:22). We see the same thing at Christ’s Transfiguration on mount Tabor. The Son is transfigured before the disciples, and His face shone like the sun, revealing His Divinity. The Father confirms that He is His beloved Son and the Holy Spirit is there in the presence of the bright cloud.

Christ repeatedly talked about His Father. Once he said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17). Elsewhere He says, “I and My Father are One”. He calls Himself the Son of God. Towards the end of His life He revealed the existence of the Holy Spirit: “But when the Comforter (*Paraclete*) comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26).

Following His Resurrection Christ sent His disciples out into all of the world to teach people, “baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). For this reason, during the sacrament of Baptism, the immersion takes place in the name of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. “The servant of God is baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Moreover, in all our services, we end by calling upon God the Trinity,

"For unto you are due all glory, honour and worship, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages."

Christ's Disciples and Apostles, who received the Revelation, also confirmed God's Trinity. They comprehended that God is Trinity through their own personal experience. This is why St. Peter would say, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). We see the same thing in many passages from the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle. Quite characteristic is the apostolic blessing, which the Church placed within the Divine Liturgy: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14).

This witness of the saints is significant. In the beginning, we must accept this revelation rationally and then we can go on to attain its personal confirmation. We must accept the witness of billions of saints who assured us that God is Trinity. Some people have gone to outer space and have landed on the moon and we all accept their testimony. Only a few historians preserve some historical event and we consider it to be a certainty. We should do the same thing and more

concerning the revelation of the God in Trinity. A revelation given to us by a saint, who has confirmed this witness with his or her own blood and self-sacrifice.

What is true for human science should also be true here. We all accept the discoveries of a scientist, even if we do not understand them intellectually. We accept them, even if the senses give a different impression. When we accept the conclusions of the scientists, we can then go on to make our own personal experiments and come to our own personal confirmation of these conclusions. The same thing is true concerning spiritual life. At first, we accept the testimony of the saints and then we struggle to follow the way of life that they followed. Thus, we arrive at the point where we affirm the truth of God's Trinity.

No-one can uphold this truth with example, because God is uncreated, whereas the world is created. Nevertheless, the Holy Fathers used some examples, such as the existence of three suns in one. There is one sun, with the same brilliance, but there are also three different suns (the disk, the rays and the brightness). Thus, the Persons of the Holy Trinity have personal attributes, but have the same brilliance, in that all three are God. Certainly, the best confirmation, and proof, of the existence God in Trinity is for one to purify his heart of the passions. Then God's grace

enters within the purified heart and man gains knowledge of God in Trinity. He then becomes a dwelling place of the Holy Trinity; God becomes an inhabitant of man. Man is then called a dwelling-place of God.

The fact that God is Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons, but One Essence is significant for spiritual life. The difference between Christianity and other religions can be found here.

First of all, God is a Person. This means that He is not an abstract, higher power that rules the world, because such an irrational power is destructive. God has love. Impersonal higher powers cannot have love for man. The Revelation that God is a Person and that man is a person shows that man's relationship with God is a personal one. This means that man is not lost like a drop in God's ocean. In Hinduism, however, there is just such an understanding of God and man. There, the individual *atman* must completely identify with the universal *Brahman*, and this constitutes salvation. However, such identification does not mean love, since, as we know, love requires communication, a right relationship, and preservation of freedom. Salvation without love is hatred and love that does not preserve freedom is destruction.

Hence, God is Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This means that God is love. When we

use the verb “I love”, it immediately poses the question, “Who do you love?” If the other person does not exist then love cannot exist. The Metropolitan of Ochrid, Nikolai observes: *“For someone to conceive of God without the Son, is the same as conceiving of Him, without love. Since all love demands its object. When some man says, ‘I love’ on our part, the question ‘who do you love?’ follows automatically. Who then, would God the Father have loved in eternity, before the creation of the world, if He did not have the Son as an object of His love? It would mean that He did not know how to love, nor was Love in His essence, before He created the world as an object of His love. This would then mean that God acquired something with his act of creation that He did not have before, and thus, He changed. However, this is neither logical, nor does it have any significance. At the same time, it conflicts with Holy Scripture, in which heaven bore witness that in God there is no change nor ‘shadow of turning.’”*

Consequently, if we do not accept that God is Trinity, we will regard God as being without love. Instead, He would merely be just. However, this misconstrues our relations with Him. Not only does it distort the revealed truth, but it also distorts man’s salvation, as well as man’s very own existence.

We come across this in Islam. In Islam, there is no talk of the Son of God, only of Allah. Therefore, in the relations between man and Allah, love is not emphasised, whereas mercy and justice are. Nikolai, the bishop of Ochrid, notes, in relation to this: “*Despite being one of the higher religions Islam can in no way whatsoever accept the teaching concerning God as a Holy Trinity. In the Qur'an, this teaching is ridiculed. At the Omar Mosque in Jerusalem the following commandment is engraved on the wall, ‘O Faithful, know that Allah has no Son.’ Precisely for the reason that, according to this religion, God does not have a son, there is no mention of God's love within the Qur'an, only of mercy and justice. This, of course, perverts man's whole life. Since, someone's love for their own self is not love, but selfishness and egotism. This is why Muhammad never mentions love with regard to Allah, at all. He only mentions justice and mercy.”*

In antiquity, pagans believed in many gods, but these were dominated by human passions and weaknesses. These gods who are involved in hatred and wars are unable to save man. For this reason, they are idols and delusions.

Nikolai, the Bishop of Ochrid again notes: “*There was a belief in trinity in the then pagan world. However, it was not one that was holy*

*and unique. The Hindus believed, and still believe today, in the Trimurti, i.e. in the three highest deities. Of these Shiva, is the devil and destroyer of all that which the first two, Brahma and Vishnu, have created. In Egypt, they also believed in three deities, but as a family with carnal love from which Osiris and Isis had a son, Horus, who Osiris kills, and thus this monstrous marriage comes to an end. Before Christ, men, through mind and effort, managed to form great civilisations, on all the world's continents. Yet, they could not conceive of the correct view of God, as a Holy Trinity in Unity, and, consequently, they also could not conceive of God as love."*

From all the aforesaid, it seems that faith in God in Trinity is absolutely necessary; both because this is the truth as revealed to us by Christ, and because love cannot exist apart from this Revelation. A god who is a higher power, which created and rules the world, a god that is considered to be a value and a unit, cannot have love. Naturally, without love interpersonal relations and true communion cannot develop. In such circumstances God is an oppressor and impassioned; man would lose his personal character. We cannot speak of true love apart from the God's Trinity.

Within Holy Scripture, apart from the image of the Father, there are many other images that

apply to God. These mainly define Christ's relations with men. Two of these images are those of the "friend" and "brother." These images mainly refer to Christ, Who became man out of love. He lived with us and saved us from sin, the devil and death. When they announced to Christ that His brothers and mother, according to the flesh, were looking for Him, He pointed to His disciples and said: "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:46-50). Again, immediately following His Resurrection He said to the myrrh-bearing women, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me" (Matthew 28:10). Christ Himself uses the image of the friend to demonstrate the personal relationship with those who keep His will. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you to do. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:14-15).

St. John Chrysostom presents the Son as saying: "I am Father, I am brother, I am bridegroom, I am dwelling place, I am food, I am raiment, I am root, I am foundation, I am whatever you want Me to be. I will even serve, for I

came to minister, not to be ministered to. I am friend, and member, and head, and brother, and sister, and mother; I am all; only stay close to Me. I am poor for you, and a wanderer for you, on the cross for you, in the tomb for you. Above I intercede for you to the Father; on earth I am an ambassador from My Father for your sake. You are all things to Me, brother, and joint heir, and friend, and member. What more do you want?"

Consequently, God is love and loves man excessively, precisely because He is Personal and Triune. The teaching about God in Trinity is the alpha and the omega of our faith<sup>1</sup>. In Greek the word that means, "I love" αγαπώ (*agapō*) starts with alpha and ends with omega. This is why we can say that the Triune God is love and loves man excessively, even unto the sacrifice of the cross.

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1. Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christ says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Revelations 1:8, 21:6, 22:13. Translator.

## *Third Catechism*

### **Man and his Fall**

#### *Outline*

1. *The Word (Logos) is the Son of God according to Nature, whereas Men are Sons of God according to grace.*
2. *The Creation of the World.*
3. *Man in the Image and Likeness of God.*
4. *Original Paradise*
5. *The Fall of Man.*
6. *The Consequences of the Fall.*

After the analysis of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, that is, following all what we have said, referring to the Father, we must now go on to make a man-centred analysis of this parable. It will show us the true value of man and what true life is.

The father in the parable had two sons. Both sons lived at home and enjoyed their father's goods.

God is called Father both in relation to His only-begotten Son and in relation to man. How-

ever, there is a vast difference between the two. The Father gave birth to the Son before all ages, whereas He created man within time. Man is also a child of God, but by grace, whereas the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is a Son by nature.

We can use an example to make this more comprehensible. An artist constructs a painting, which is his own spiritual creation, his own work. In a way, you could call it ‘his child’, because it expresses his thoughts and his gifts. At the same time, he begets children. Thus, he makes the painting, but begets the child. The same thing, with appropriate analogy, happens with God the Father in relationship to the Word (Logos) and men.

God created the whole world. In the beginning, He created the angels, what is known as the noetic realm. He then went on, within the space of five days, to create all the sensible world, nature, birds, fish, animals, plants and so on. Then, on the sixth day He created man, who was both noetic and sensible, i.e. he had a soul and body. As the Fathers of the Church say, first He created the Kingdom, the palaces, and then He created the King, man. From his very creation, man was called to be king of the world.

The Holy Scriptures say that man was made by God in His Image and Likeness. The “Image” refers to the noetic faculty and his free-will, i.e.

he has a nous and freedom. Whereas the “Likeness” refers to the fact that, he was created to become by grace what God is by nature. That is to say, he was created to become a God through grace. Of course, according to the Holy Fathers, the “Image” refers to the triune nature of the soul. Just as God is Nous, Logos and Spirit man also has a nous, logos and spirit. The nous is the centre of his personality. The logos or reason is the articulated and spoken word that is formulated with reason. Finally, the spirit, which is man’s noetic *eros*, his intense longing, the power he has within him to achieve deification (theosis).

This means that the archetype of his creation, we could say the model of man’s creation is God, and more especially the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Man did not happen alone; he had a model. We can compare man to having a film and printing off many photographs. In this case, the film is Christ, and man is in the image of the Word, a photograph of the Word. This is why he should be like its original archetype. He must keep his photograph clean; otherwise it does not correspond to its original creation, and, therefore, loses its value completely.

The term “the image” demonstrates his ontology, that is, the reality of his nature. Whereas “the likeness” demonstrates where he should go and what his objective is. This means that man

must always bear his noble lineage in mind. He is a prince and noble. He comes from an important and elevated family. He should also know that he ought to strive to live up to this great mission. Man's objectives are not exhausted on himself. That is to say, he should not only consider his food, drink, clothing and recreation, instead he should have high targets. Nor yet is it man's goal to study, work get married etc. He will do these things to provide for and serve his life here. Ultimately, however, the deeper aim of his life is to become God by grace. St. Gregory the Theologian would make an amazing definition of man's purpose. Man, he said, is a "living creature sustained here, but transferred elsewhere, and, the completion of the mystery, is deification through its inclination towards God." That is to say, man lives and is provided for in this earthly existence, but he is journeying to the other life. This journey from biological life to spiritual life is called a mystery. Furthermore, the end of the mystery is to become deified, by God's grace.

In the parable that we studied the two sons are shown living in their Father's house. According to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, this shows that immediately following his creation man lived in the house of God, i.e. in Paradise, and he had true communion with God. Paradise was both sensible and noetic. That is to say, it

was a special place, but also a personal relationship with God. In the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis, in particular, we see that Adam had grace from God immediately following the Creation. This is why both he and Eve lived just like the angels in heaven.

The younger son in the parable sought his own share of his inheritance:

*"Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." So he divided them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:12-16)*

At this point, the parable is fully compatible with the Fall of man and his detachment from God. We will look at its more central points.

According to St. Gregory Palamas, the younger son sought his corresponding property from his father, which means that sin comes later, whereas virtue is first-born. God created man pure, with the capacity to attain deification (theosis). Whereas, sin is ‘younger’, a “discovery born later”. It is the result of man’s bad choice. Man used his

freedom to choose abandonment of God and his detachment from Him. Man's sin was that he sought to appropriate God's work and he attempted to continue his life according to his own will, and not according to the will of God. As can be seen in the Old Testament, man wanted to be obedient to himself and his own reason, and not to the will of God. He made himself and his desires the centre of everything, instead of God. This is the essence of the tragedy of ancestral sin, and, indeed, of all sin.

In reading the parable of the prodigal son, we observe the stages of the Fall, as well as the tragic figure of the younger son. We can delineate it as follows: appropriation of the property, emigration, squandering of the essentials, deprivation and subjugation. Within this framework, we can see the tragedy of the sin of the forefathers, as well as the tragedy of every other sin that man commits.

When one tries to expend all his life within the bounds of his biological life, interpreting it rationally, this constitutes a departure from God. Man emigrates to a far country. He loses his communion and unity with God. From the moment of his creation man has a body and soul inseparably joined together. The soul is the life of the body, whereas the life of the soul is the Holy Spirit. Thus, without the Holy Spirit, man

is spiritually dead. It is characteristic that, when his son returns, the father in the parable says, "for this my son was dead and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). This means that departure from God creates this death. Indeed, without God, man is spiritually dead. He may move, work, have a high place in society, yet, without God, everything is dead and life is insipid.

St. John the Damascene, in mentioning the Fall of Adam and Eve, says through sin man lost divine grace, his image was darkened and he was stripped of divine grace, resulting in the feeling of nakedness in the body, too. The consequences were horrific. Having lost divine grace, death came. First, spiritual death and then bodily death, i.e. sicknesses, mortality and finally, later, the separation of the soul from the body.

The life of a man without the God Who created him is true deprivation. In that case, nothing has meaning in his life. He is completely discontented, because he has lost his archetype, God. He loses true love; he is even deprived of real freedom. This means that he is subjugated to the citizens of that country, faraway from his father's house. These citizens of Hell are, in fact, the devil. He becomes the devil's minion. This is true deprivation and subjugation of man. He was made to be a prince, to live in the royal palace and he preferred to be naked, in rags, a swineherd. That

is to say, he preferred to expend himself solely on his biological strengths and the indulgence of his senses.

We said, previously, that without the Holy Spirit, man is spiritually dead. St. Makarios the Egyptian uses two images to make this reality comprehensible. The first image is of unsalted meat. In this case, it quickly goes off and gives off a terrible stench. The other image is of a coin that does not have the King's image upon it. Such a coin would be a counterfeit and would be completely worthless. The same thing is true of a man who does not have the energy of the All-Holy Spirit within him. He is not a natural man, and he does not have the true life.

St. Gregory of Nyssa would say something quite characteristic: "The person who does not live truly, does not have a true life; the life of sinners is not a life, as such, it is merely labelled as one." This means that God is man's life. Besides, Christ Himself said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). Whoever lives apart from God does not have actual life. This is why the life of sinners is simply called life, in name only, but in actual fact, it is not a life at all. This means that it is tragic. He is locked up within the prison of his senses, of mortality and of corruption. He cannot reach out to the clear skies of freedom. He is tormented by all life's

tragic problems. He can find no escape. He is exiled to a desert island and there is no hope of salvation, unless he returns to God, through his own free-will.

Far from God, man is a prodigal. He loses his beauty and his worth. He has no father. He has no house. He does not have love. He has no friends. Everybody takes advantage of him. This is why, sometimes, from within his bitterness and tragedy, he seeks for God. The desire for Baptism can be seen in precisely this perspective. He wants to obtain life, which is God, and he wants to have a personal relationship with God, who is his archetype. The quest for Baptism does not have a social character; it should not be inspired by external, human questions. Rather, it must be placed within this perspective. Someone wants to be baptised so that they can return from death to life, from that far country to his father's house, from deprivation to abundance, from being an orphan to having a father.

## *Fourth Catechism*

# The Church and her Work

### *Outline*

1. *The Church - the New Paradise*
2. *Outside the Church there is Waste*
3. *Return to the New Paradise*
4. *The Three Central Sacraments*
5. *The Church is the Real Body of Christ.*

Since man's true life is found with God he must return to his father's house. So far, we have said that this house is Paradise and it is man's communion with God. Following the Fall, this communion takes place within the Church, which is the true Paradise. Consequently, fallen man must return to his house again; this house is the Church. In the following section, we will look at the ecclesial and Eucharistic dimension of the parable of the prodigal son, as analysed by St. John Chrysostom.

This analysis is given to the Christians and the Catechumens, specifically, to those who were preparing for Baptism, the "illumined", as they

were known. For this reason, it has strong Eucharistic content. It is a fact that during the Triodion season, Lent, the Church prepared the Catechumens for Baptism more intensively. St. John Chrysostom says that we should consider God's love for man, especially during this period. This is both for common gain and for the benefit it will give the future shining stars who will rise up from the baptismal font, because the grace of the Holy Spirit illuminates them. God is a brilliant sun and those who are baptised receive the light of the noetic sun of righteousness.

Wherever the wheat of prudence and the vine of self-control are not cultivated great hunger prevails, a great famine. This, of course, means that outside the Church, there is famine and spiritual deprivation. Whoever experiences this reality decides to return to the home that he left. His benevolent father is waiting for him. He is ready to show him His love and compassion. It is not a commercial transaction, but an overflow of love and charity. Naturally, this love and communion takes place within the sacraments of the Church. All that follows, including the orders the father gave, demonstrate this reality:

*"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry'" (Luke 15:22-24)*

The robe, which the father ordered them to dress the son in, is the spiritual robe that was made from the fire of the Holy Spirit. This robe is woven in baptismal water and shows that man is naked apart from God and he loses his beauty. God's grace dresses him and adorns him. According to St. John Chrysostom, the Father is represented as saying, characteristically, "adorn the dearest members of my son. I can no longer bear to see him unadorned. I cannot bear to have my own image abandoned naked." Through Holy Baptism, one puts on God's grace. This is why we chant, "All those who have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ." Moreover, through Holy Baptism the image, which was blackened and darkened, is cleansed.

The ring that they put on his hand denotes the spiritual betrothal and that he is guarded by the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of adoption. When he wears this ring, all God's enemies fear him. It demonstrates his communion with God. Even from a distance, it shows that he is the son of God by grace.

The shoes that they put on his feet are God's strength, so that the evil one will not find his heel naked and strike him again. Instead, the baptised person will trample upon the dragon and crush him.

The fatted calf is Christ Himself, who sacri-

ficed Himself for the human race. He is "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). This symbolises the Divine Eucharist, where man is gladdened spiritually and gains new life. Beyond the Church and the Divine Eucharist is the world of corruption and sin.

According to Nicholas Cabasilas, there are three basic sacraments that make up spiritual life. The first is Baptism, the second, Chrismation and the third, is the Divine Eucharist. Through Baptism, man is born spiritually, since the baptismal font is the spiritual womb of the Church. Just as we acquire biological life within our mother's womb, likewise, we acquire spiritual life in the Church's womb, the sacred font. Chrism is the movement that activates the grace, which we received with Holy Baptism. It is not only necessary for someone to be born; he must also live after the birth. This takes place with Holy Chrism. The Divine Eucharist is also life, because we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ.

We are baptised and chrismated, so that we can become members of the Church, commune the immaculate mysteries and live. This is why the Divine Eucharist and Holy Communion should follow Holy Baptism. The Divine Eucharist is the centre of all the sacraments and the whole of Church life. It is what shows that the Church is the Body of Christ. A materialist phi-

osopher once said, "you are what you eat." He wanted to demolish metaphysics and all its theories, and stress that the only reality is material. We can also accept this phrase in the sense that when man eats only material food, he is carnal, or materialistic. When he eats spiritual food, the flesh of the Son of man, he is spiritual, i.e. mature and whole.

After examining this Eucharistic dimension of the parable of the prodigal son, St. John Chrysostom concludes by exhorting both the baptised and the illumined, who were at the threshold of Baptism. He admonishes them to reject "every foreign thought" and to direct their souls towards the heavenly Bridegroom, in order to enjoy the grace of the Holy Spirit. "The Redeemer is standing at the door. The physician is in attendance to the faithful. The surgery is open. The medicine is available. The font welcomes all. Grace has spread out. The spiritual robe has been woven by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Blessed are those who are considered worthy to wear the robe."

Here we find the opportunity to stress that the Church is not a human organism. It is not a social and charitable organisation. It is the Theanthropic Body of Christ. This means that there is inner spiritual communion between Christians

and Christ. Christians are not members of a corporation, but members of the Body of Christ.

In the West, a theory has been developed that differentiates between two kinds of Body. It says that the mystical Body of Christ, where those baptised are members, is one thing. Whereas, the real Body of Christ, which is the Eucharist bread, found on the Altar Table, is another. However, in the Orthodox Church there is no such distinction. We stress that the Church is the Body of Christ. At the same time it is the body, which He received from the Virgin Mary, deified, and resurrected, it is the Eucharist bread found on the Altar Table, and it is the saints who make up the members of Christ's Body. Thus, we fully comprehend the value of being a Christian, a member of the Body of Christ. In this perspective, we really feel the great gift of Holy Baptism and of the Divine Eucharist.

With Holy Baptism, our members become members of the Body of Christ. This means that each personal sin has weighty significance. St. Paul says that when we sin, we sin against Christ of Whom we are members. We do not own ourselves; we belong to Christ, who made us holy and attached us to Him. It is a sin to trample upon the Body of Christ, which is found in the Holy Chalice. Also, it is a sin to trample upon

and ignore the tabernacle (*artophorion*). What is more, it is just as much of a sin when we sin with our bodies, which are members of the Body of Christ.

We should regard the Church as a house of celebration, where the fatted calf is sacrificed and spiritual gladness prevails. The Church is the spiritual charity of all mankind, “an assembly of heaven and earth”.

## *Fifth Catechism*

# **The Communion of Saints**

### *Outline*

1. *The Servants of God.*
2. *The Apostles of God.*
3. *The Clergy.*
4. *The Church Triumphant.*  
*(Prophets, Apostles, Saints).*

Following the prodigal son's return, and the embrace of his father, who ran to meet him, the compassionate father ordered that the son be dressed up. He told his servants to prepare a feast so that they could all be glad and celebrate the son's return. The parable says that the father gave an order to his servants, "the father said to his servants" (Luke 15:22). Who are these servants that fulfil the will of the Father? According to the Fathers of the Church, since the house is the Church, the servants are the clergy. They receive God's command to dress up the prodigal son.

Christ chose twelve Apostles. He made them holy. He educated them. He gave them the Holy

Spirit and sent them into the world to baptise and instruct people. Indeed, He said to His Disciples, “He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and He who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16). Therefore, the Apostles are not Christ’s representatives or delegates. They are, in fact, the mystery of the tangible presence of Christ among us. This means that the clergy are not like the ambassadors of one state to another. They are not like our ruler’s emissaries. Rather, Christ Himself acts through the Apostles. When the Apostles forgive, God Himself forgives and approves.

The clergy includes bishops, presbyters and deacons. The bishops are the visible head of the particular Church, in the place and type of the Head of the Church, that is, Christ. We receive Christ in the person of the bishop. There is apostolic succession. For example, using one candle we can go on to light a second, a third and so on, and we pass the light on to the whole world. The same is true of apostolic succession. Through ordination and living out the Orthodox Tradition the grace of the Apostles, and the blessing that they received from Christ, is passed on from generation to generation. A breach of the apostolic tradition creates heresy. This is why it is very important to ascertain which other bishops a bishop commemorates during the Liturgy. If this bishop has commu-

nion with the other Orthodox Churches, it means that he is canonical and Orthodox. If he does not have this communion, we should keep away.

The bishops ordain presbyters and deacons for people's salvation. They are the leaders of the people of God, who minister to the people so that they can reach Paradise, the Promised Land. The clergy do the same thing that Moses did when he led God's People to the Promised Land. They lead God's people to Paradise.

This is why respect for the clergy is necessary. We cannot say, "I love the Church, but I don't want to have anything to do with the clergy." This is spiritual schizophrenia. The clergy baptise us, chrismate us, nourish us with the sacrament of Holy Communion, confess us, crown us in marriage, and generally, carry out all the sacraments. Of course, we should state that the clergy do all this work with the grace and blessing of God, and not through their own strengths. During the prayer of the Cherubic Hymn (during the Liturgy) the bishop or priest prays to Christ, "For Thou art He who offers and is offered, He who receives and He who is received and distributed, Christ our God..." The clergy pray to the Father for the sanctification of the Holy Gifts; the Father sends the Holy Spirit who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ and this is offered to the people through the priests.

However, the Church is also a communion of saints, an assembly of angels and men, of the heaven and of the earth. Thus, the Church is divided into what is known as the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. All those who are baptised and sure in their faith, i.e. all those who having been baptised keep the grace of Holy Baptism alight, belong to the Church Militant, the part of the Church that is on earth. Whereas, the Church Triumphant, the part that is in heaven, consists of the saints.

Good people are not simply called saints. Saints are those people who partake of the deifying and sanctifying energy of God. God created the world with His creative energy; He sanctifies it with his life-giving and governing energy. The life-giving and governing energy does not save. That is to say, the fact that God sanctifies the world does not mean that all those who have been created will be saved. All those who partake of the deifying energy of God are saved. In order to partake of this energy we must first purify the heart of passions. In other words, intense preparation is required.

The Theotokos, who gave her flesh to Christ, holds a central position within the Church. The name Theotokos means Birthgiver of God. She is called the Theotokos, or Mother of God, because by the Holy Spirit she gave birth to the Second

Person of the Holy Trinity in the flesh. That is to say, she did not give birth to a good man, who later became a Prophet, who received God's grace and became the Son of God. The Word of God was God both before His conception and after His birth from the Theotokos. Mary, the Theotokos or Panagia is also called Ever-Virgin. She was a Virgin before childbirth and remained a Virgin after childbirth. There is only one mediator between Man and God, Christ. The Virgin Mary is a mediator between Christ and us. We love the Virgin Mary for two reasons. First, because we love Christ, and second, to attain Christ's love. So, our love for the Virgin Mary is either the fruit of our love for Christ or a way towards love for Christ.

The saints also belong to the Church Triumphant. These are the Prophets and the righteous of the Old Testament, the Apostles and the saints throughout the ages. The latter include martyrs, who gave witness and suffered martyrdom for Christ, the monastic saints, who lived the ascetic life for Christ in monasteries and in the desert, and married saints, who kept God's will while living the family life. There are saints from every social level of the people, of all ages, from every nation and from every era. This shows that we cannot use the excuse that salvation and sanctification is impossible today. Man's most deep-seated aim is to become a saint.

At this point we can mention the life and conduct of certain saints who bear some relation to the country they come from, their age, their job or profession and so on. We should give an extended account of the life of the saint that the Catechumen especially loves, and whose name he shall bear after Baptism. This is very important, for it will show that salvation is possible in all ages.

## *Sixth Catechism*

# The Ascetic Life

### *Outline*

1. *The Prodigal Nous.*
2. *Consequences of the Detachment of the Nous from the Heart.*
3. *The Essence of Sin.*
4. *True Repentance.*

We have already studied the theological, anthropological and ecclesiological aspects of the parable of the prodigal son. The parable also has ascetic import.

In analysing the parable of the prodigal son, St. Gregory Palamas says that man's nous is prodigal, because it departs from God. Or to put it in a better way, the property, which man received from his father and squandered wastefully, is the nous. "Above all our property and possessions is our own innate nous." Man's soul has nous, reason and spirit, according to the original model of God the Trinity. The nous in its natural condition is illumined and directs reason. Thus,

a prodigal person is someone whose nous is squandered on other things. It does not have remembrance of God.

The nous is the faculty of the soul, which could be called “finest attention.” When one follows the ways of salvation, then one’s nous stays both within itself and within the first Nous, God. However, when we open the door to the passions, the nous is dissipated on carnal and earthly things, on sensual pleasures and impassioned thoughts. Prudence, which distinguishes good from evil, is the wealth of the mind. The more the nous keeps God’s commandments and remains in God, the more prudence functions normally. It distinguishes good from evil and prefers the former to the latter. However, when the nous is unrestrained, then prudence is dissipated in fornication and foolishness.

The nous, then, is the central faculty of the soul, which conducts it, and ultimately directs the entire man. It keeps desire pointed towards God. However, when the nous becomes torpid, the soul’s faculty, which is directed towards love, falls away from God and is dissipated to other things. Hence, the passions of self-indulgence, love of money and ambition develop. In its natural state, the nous directs anger against the devil. However, when the nous is dissipated and becomes torpid, anger is aimed at other people and it fights

against them. Consequently, man becomes a prodigal and his nous becomes demonic and bestial.

This means that in relation to sin man's nous is the first to suffer. The tempting suggestion enters man through impassioned thoughts, sensible things and fantasies. Its sole aim is to take over his nous, his finest attention, which is the centre of man's personality. For example, a certain impassioned thought comes, saying that for someone to become rich he must steal and wrong others. The beauty of wealth, and all that is related to it, enters the soul as images, with the aim of taking over the nous. If captured, it then becomes a desire; it is then committed and finally, the recurring act becomes a passion. Thus, man is completely enslaved to the devil, just as the prodigal was enslaved to the citizens of that town.

Consequently, man's freedom is, in reality, internal. One can be outwardly free, living in a free nation; but when inner freedom is absent, one experiences tragedy within one's life. Conversely, with existential freedom, one can endure the most oppressive tyrannies and actually feel free. During the time of the persecutions, the martyrs had inner freedom; whereas many contemporary Christians, who have external freedom, do not keep God's will and are slaves.

The parable of the prodigal son says:

*"Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed the swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything."*

(Luke 15:15-16).

The citizens and political leaders of that city, which is far from home, are the demons. In the Orthodox Church, we say that the demons are evil spirits who hate man excessively and will do absolutely anything to separate him from God. In the beginning, the demons were angels, who glorified God, but they fell because of their pride and became demons. They spawned evil of their own accord, and want to lead man to apostasy. The greatest passion is pride, because it is the first sin that caused the fall of both demons and man.

The swinish life is every passion, due to its great filth. The "swine" are those people who roll in the passions. A passion is the movement and function of the powers of the soul contrary to nature. The three basic passions are ambition, love of money, and self-indulgence. The centre of these three passions is love of self, which is irrational love of our own body, i.e. when someone loves his body independently of the soul and wants to indulge it carnally. Other passions,

which torment man, sprout and proceed from these passions. In the Orthodox Church, we say that passions are the energies of man's soul that are contrary to nature. In other words, love exists within man so that he can turn to God and desire Him. However, when that love is not turned to God, but, instead, is turned to created things, in an impassioned manner, we are then talking about a passion of the soul.

The prodigal man cannot satisfy his hunger with the pods that swine eat. That is to say, it is impossible for him to fully satisfy his desire. He is always left hungry. The more property someone gains, the more his deprivation is increased, and moreover, his desire to acquire more also increases. Then man wants, if it is at all possible, to acquire the whole world. However, since there is only one world, but many greedy people, the lover of money can never be satisfied.

In consequence, when the nous is captured by an impassioned thought or a fantasy, it entices the desiring faculty and the temper far away from God. Thus, the whole of man is captured and becomes sick, with horrific consequences both for himself and for society. This is the tragedy of sin. Naturally, as we mentioned above, this begins from the nous that is captured.

In this way, we gain a good understanding of what sin is precisely. We usually associate sin

with certain external events and external acts. Without doubt, these are also sins, but we can say that these acts (stealing, lies, anger etc.) are the result and fruit of the darkening and capture of the nous. Sin is the darkening of the nous, followed by the contranatural movement of the soul's faculties and man's separation from God, from his real home. In this condition, whatever a man does, he is still a sinner. St. Gregory Palamas reaches the point of saying that when man does not have God's grace within him, then, whatever he does, is sinful. Also, Christ, mentions a relevant parable. He says that, the five foolish virgins practised virginity and self-control. Yet, because they did not have oil in their lamps, i.e. they did not have God's grace within themselves (something that is evident from the existence of prayer of the nous), they did not enter into the Kingdom of God.

This is why ascetic practice consists of how to keep our nous pure, how it will be illumined from the darkness, and will have constant memory of God. Orthodox asceticism is not spent on certain external works, but it is for the purification of the heart and the illumination of the nous. When the nous has the right orientation, then the entire organism of man functions correctly.

If sin is the darkening of the nous and depar-

ture from God, repentance is the illumination of the nous and the return to God. The parable of the prodigal son clearly shows what repentance is. It says characteristically:

*"But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants".' And he arose and came to his father."*

(Luke 15: 17-20)

We may see in this text certain attributes of true repentance.

First, he came to himself. This shows that, from its confusion, the nous returned to the heart. Throughout the whole time when he was starving, his nous was outside, dissipated on the world, through the senses. A point comes when man wakes up and understands his frightful condition.

Secondly, the virtue of self-reproach is strongly developed. He condemns himself and considers himself unworthy of being a child of God. He does not blame anyone else. He does not regard others as the reason for his departure from his father's house. He considers himself unworthy of being his father's son. He considers it a great thing to be even a hired worker.

Thirdly, this awakening and self-reproach, that is self-accusation, is not a human task, but the time of God's grace. Through divine grace, he compares his own frightful condition with the one that existed in his father's house. Truly, God, in His love for man, sometimes reveals a few rays of His glory, so that man will become aware of his horrific condition. Nobody can appreciate his condition if he is not first inspired by God's grace. Repentance is a divine inspiration.

Fourth, he is not satisfied with good intentions, but he also activates the incensive part of his soul. No one can return to God if the incensive faculty does not collaborate towards this. Therefore, it says that, immediately following his deliberation on the matter the prodigal son "arose and came to his father."

Fifth, the final outcome of the return is entering the house and participation in the celebration taking place there. As well as, his participation in the thanksgiving dinner, the Eucharist or Divine Liturgy, with the eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ. So, we now realise that the forgiveness of sin is attendance and participation in the Church. The capture and darkening of the nous mean that we leave the Church, but freedom and illumination of the mind herald our return.

Everything discussed in this Catechism shows

that sin is the departure of man and his nous from God; whereas, repentance is the return of man and his nous to God, which occurs with the illumination of the nous. This is very important; it helps us to fully comprehend why Holy Baptism is also called “illumination”. The nous illumines all the faculties of the soul. The nous is illumined, and so desire, reason and temper, are sanctified and given grace; thus, the whole man is sanctified.

## *Seventh Catechism*

# **The Healthy and Sick Members of the Church**

### *Outline*

1. *The Elder Son*
2. *Healthy and Sick Members*
3. *The Attributes of a Real Christian.*

The father in the parable, which we are studying, had two sons, the younger son and the elder son. The younger son left home for somewhere far away and one day returned. Whereas, the elder son stayed at home, observed his formal duties, but in the end, he left, because he was scandalised by his father's love towards his returning younger son.

When told that his younger brother had returned, the elder son "was angry and would not go in." His father pleaded with him, so that he would also be glad about the return of his younger brother, but the elder son answered:

" 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I have never transgressed your commandment at any time; and

*yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours comes home who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found'.*

(Luke 15:25-32)

The conduct of the elder son is quite characteristic of those people who remain in the Church only formally. In analysing the condition of the elder son's soul, we note that he feels that he keeps his father's commandments. In reality, he is a legalist. Naturally, he does not exactly abide by the law, because keeping the law without love does not constitute a true child of God. In addition, he feels that, staying in his father's house, he has rights. He has demands that come from the faithful keeping of his father's commandments. He still does not have love, sympathy and compassion. He is unfeeling about his weary brother's return. This lack of love is expressed with immense aggression. He is not his brother, but "this son of yours"; he is the prodigal "who has devoured your livelihood with harlots." Consequently, while the younger son was showing his repentance and enjoying the celebration at home, the elder son showed his spiritual sickness and stayed outside the home.

Within the Church, there are healthy and sick members. I would mainly like to look at the spiritual sickness of members of the Church.

Through the sacrament of Baptism and Chrism, we become members of the Church, members of the Body of Christ. Baptism is preceded by a period of asceticism, which is the period of Catechism, and it is followed by an ascetic life, which is the keeping of Christ's commandments. In reality, Baptism is the start of a new life in Christ; it is not the end. Christ said to his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising 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" (Matthew 28:19-20). The disciples had to do two things. First, to baptise people, and then to teach them to keep Christ's commandments. Therefore, Baptism alone is not enough; the keeping of Christ's commandments is also needed.

In order for someone to obtain his salvation, he must be both baptised and sure in his faith, as St. Symeon the New Theologian notes. This means that he must be baptised, because, "He who believes and is baptised will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Following this, he must live according to the mission of an Orthodox Christian. We also see this in every human association or organisa-

tion. One does not simply join a club, but one also sticks to the obligations that apply to members of that organisation.

Of course, the grace of Holy Baptism is never lost; it remains in the depth of man's heart. However, as the Holy Fathers teach, when man commits sin, this grace is covered by the passions. Thus, in this condition, he is a potential member of the Church, but not an active one. That is to say, he has the potential of attaining theosis, however, through his own free choice, he himself does not activate this potential. He is like a machine that has the capacity to do work, but is not connected to the energy supply. He is like a switched off television, which has all the potential to make images appear.

It is in this sense that, in the Scriptures and the texts of the Holy Fathers, there is talk of sick and dead members of the Church. The Church is life, since it is the body of Christ, which is the light and life of men. Whoever does not live really and truly within the Church, also does not have life, and is, therefore, dead. Of course, this person has biological life, but lacks God's grace within.

We will go on to see how a member of the Church can be like the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son. In order to see this somewhat better we must examine what being a living

member of the Church consists of. This will immediately reveal the sickness of the other members.

A true member of the Church and a real Christian is the person who has the following attributes:

First, he remains within the Church, without leaving it through atheism or heresy. He is not cut off from this living organism and does not participate in heretical sects. This means that he accepts the faith confessed in the Symbol of Faith absolutely, that he participates in the sacraments of the Church, is sanctified by them and practises asceticism in his personal life so that he will keep God's commandments. He feels that he remains within the Church in order to be saved rather than to save, because the Church does not need saviours.

Second, he feels that he is a son of God, that is, he has a father and is not an orphan. His great Father is God. Yet, the clergy are also fathers, because they are the type and place of Christ's presence. Hence, a real member of the Church is obedient to the bishops, the clergy and has a spiritual father, who guides him in his spiritual life. Of course, he also accepts the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Church and tries to imitate their life, that is to say, their ascetic practice and witness.

Third, he feels that he belongs to a family,

and, therefore, has spiritual brothers and sisters. He is not alone within the Church. This chiefly means that he loves his brothers and sisters. He does not judge them, regardless of the mistakes they may have made and he does not condemn them. He is tolerant and shows forbearance towards their chance weaknesses. In addition, he shows his love in a variety of ways. He participates in their pain and in their joy. The happiness of other people is his own happiness, their sorrow is his own sorrow, their love is a fellowship of love and their faith a unity of faith. He should feel that everything is in common. He should feel that the Church is a family, just as the first Christians felt her to be, according to the description in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:41-47). If he tries to keep God's law, but does not have love, he is not a real Christian; he is a sick member of the Church.

Fourth, in the instance of sin, he follows a therapeutic course of treatment. Man is changeable. This means that he alters and is wounded throughout his life. In consequence, he sins. The Holy Scriptures say, "Who can become clean from filth? But no-one, even if his life on the earth is only for a day" (Job 14:4-5 *Septuagint*). St. John the Evangelist writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Sins are not guilty acts or simple rejections of the law; they are first and foremost wounds or sicknesses. The sinner is spiritually sick. Consequently, sin should be encountered within a therapeutic and healing framework. The priest is a healer or doctor, who practises this function in the name of the Great Physician, Christ. He cleans and dresses the wounds, intervenes surgically, if necessary, and in general, heals the wounds. Within this framework, we should look at repentance, confession and the orders of the spiritual father, i.e. what is known as penance. We must repent. We must really feel our fault and our illness, we should want to be cured, and resort to the therapist disclose our illness and reveal all the hidden and concealed points of the sickness. We will then follow the therapeutic advice of the spiritual doctor with zeal and resolve. The Church has the sacrament of repentance and of confession.

In the ancient Church when someone committed a grave sin, i.e. when he fell seriously ill, he was demoted into the order of Catechumens once again. This is why in the Catechumens, the demon possessed and the penitents are all included the category of those being purified. All these people follow an appropriate course of treatment. The sinful and repentant Christians, who have already been baptised, are, of course, not

baptised again. However, they had to go through the stage of repentance and feel that the grace of God was working within their hearts again.

When the baptised Christian leaves the Church and falls into heresy, he must then go through a certain procedure before he is re-included within the Church. Repentance was required, as well as the signing of a written declaration (*libellus*), by which he denounced the heresy that he had fallen into, followed by Chrism.

From all this we realise that Baptism alone is not enough; one must also live in accordance with God's commandments in order to become a true member of the Church. If a Christian happens to fall ill, there is a special method through which he will gain his health again.



**B**

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH



## *Eighth Catechism*

### **The Use of Creeds**

Following the analysis of the parable of the prodigal son, where all the basic truths of our faith can be seen, we are now able to proceed to an analysis of the established “Symbol of Faith”. Before his Baptism the illumined person declares this creed, and then, as a member of the Church, he continually recites it.

First of all, we must say a few things about the use of creeds in the ancient Church.

From the very beginning, the Church considered the use of credal texts, i.e. brief confessional statements, necessary. This occurred for two reasons. The first reason is to define the limits between truth and error. That is, to express the Orthodox faith in a few words, so that heresies could be confronted. The second reason is for use in baptismal confessions, so that the Catechumens could give a confession of faith before their Baptism.

The study of ancient creeds shows that in the beginning they referred to the confession that

Christ is the Son of God. They later added the confession of the divinity of the Father and the Son, and were called two-part creeds. Subsequently, three-part creeds, which refer to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, were developed and these evolved into other confessional statements.

The first and briefest doctrinal formula, which constituted the start of the development of all the other confessional texts, is Christ's exhortation to His disciples to go out into all the world and baptise people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Christ said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The fact that those being baptised had to make a confession of faith before Baptism in the ancient Church is evident within Holy Scripture and shows the practice of the apostolic Church. There is often talk about preserving the "deposit", "commission" and "confession". A characteristic passage is the one in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, where he discusses the instruction of baptisms. "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of

repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, of the instruction of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement" (Hebrews 6:1-2). This passage reveals the practice of the ancient Church: first, the instruction of Baptism and a confession of faith before entering the Church.

Many people maintain that there are whole phrases in the New Testament, which probably were confessional statements, used before Baptism. I will mention three passages, which were most probably used as baptismal creeds.

The first comes from the epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to his disciple Timothy. The Apostle says:

*"God was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Preached amongst the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up in glory"* (1 Timothy 3:16).

This is called the mystery of godliness.

The second passage comes from St. Paul's Epistle to the Church in Corinth, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas and then by the twelve..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

The third passage is from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, "*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Philippians 2: 5-11).

These passages reveal the confession that Christ is truly God, Who became man for man's salvation. They seem to have been liturgical phrases of the Church and capable of influencing the creation of similar confessional texts. Whatever the case may be, it is a fact that, in the beginning, baptismal candidates gave a confession of faith saying that Christ is true God, as well as confessing the God in Trinity, too.

It was necessary to compose creeds that would confront the heresies, which immediately sprang up in the early Church. Many such texts have been saved, such as those of St. Ignatius, St.

Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and Philosopher and so on.

In general, the use of creeds in order to confront heretics and the confession of those being baptised is evident in the tradition of the life of the ancient Church.

The “Symbol of Faith” that we use today, both for the Catechumens confession before Baptism and for the confession of the faithful after Baptism, is the work of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils. The first articles were composed by the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea and the rest of the articles, as well as its final formulation, were made by the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople.

The heretics, who distorted the revealed truth of faith, using philosophy and speculation, had already increased. The Arian heresy, especially, as well as the Gnostic heresies that preceded it is, and those that followed, created the need for the composition of the “Symbol of Faith”, which is a summary of Orthodox teaching.

## *Ninth Catechism*

### **Reading and Clarification of the Symbol of Faith**

We will read over and learn the “Symbol of Faith” used by the Church today. It is the Creed established by the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, which took place in Nicaea of Bithynia in 325 and in Constantinople in 381, respectively. Some italicised comments are provided in brackets, in order to explain some of the more difficult concepts. The Priest-Catechist will aim to have the Catechumen learn the Creed by heart.

#### **The Symbol of Faith**

1. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty [*Master of the Universe*], Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light [*because Christ was born of the Light, i.e. the Father*]; true God

[*Christ*] of true God [*i.e. the Father*]; begotten, [*was born*] not made [*not created*]; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.

3. Who for us men [*human beings*] and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate [*made flesh*] of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

4. And He was crucified for us under [*during the time of*] Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

5. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures.

6. And He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.

7. And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom [*Reign*] shall have no end.

8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

9. In one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

10. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.

11. I look for [*I expect, anticipate*] the resurrection of the dead,

12. And the life of the age to come.  
Amen.

### Central Points

There are five central points to the Creed. (i) The first refers to the Father, who created the whole world through the Son. (ii) The second, mentions the Divinity of the Word (Logos), the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and refers to Him becoming man, for the salvation of human beings. The incarnation includes all the events of Divine Economy, i.e. the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Second Coming of Christ to judge men. (iii) The third is the confession of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, who is the Third Person of the All-Holy Trinity. Accordingly, God is One and He has three Persons. In the Divine Liturgy we sing: “Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the Trinity, one in essence and undivided.” (iv) The fourth refers to the Church and the sacramental life, which starts with Holy Baptism. (v) Finally, the fifth point mentions the resurrection of the dead and the future life.

The whole faith of our Church is found within these five central points of the Creed. They are most basic and necessary, because without this faith, our salvation is uncertain. If we do not

believe in the God's Trinity; if we do not believe that God took on human nature in order to save man; if we do not believe in the uniqueness of the Church and if we do not believe in the resurrection of the dead, we then shake the foundations of our entire faith. By rejecting any one of these beliefs we show, in practice, that we are not real Christians.

In the Catechism lessons that follow we will study the "Symbol of Faith" further.

## *Tenth Catechism*

### **God the Creator and Creation**

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

“I believe”. The term ‘believe’ is written in the first person singular because it wishes to denote the personal faith that we should have in the revealed truths preserved by the Church. However, the Fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils wrote it in the plural - “we believe”. This is because it presupposes the confession of faith of the members of the Church, since they read it during the Divine Liturgy, and during various other services, where many members can be found. Also, people were baptised in groups.

Faith is a revelation. We do not reveal the truth. Rather, Christ revealed it. In the Old Testament to the Prophets, and in the New Testament to the Apostles and Saints, in that He was incarnate and became a man. At first, we accept this

revelatory experience. Then, if we strive to purify our hearts of the passions, we can confirm this revelation. Christ said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Here, the same thing occurs as with human science. University students are taught about the discoveries of preceding scientists. Later, however, if they themselves make personal experiments, they can also be led to confirm the discoveries, as well as to the discovery of new things. In any case, scientist is the term given not only to those who accept the science of others, but also, and more so, to those who advance science. Thus, we have two kinds of faith. Faith from hearing, when we listen to the experience of saints and accept it and faith from vision (theoria), when we attain the revelation ourselves.

**"In one God".** God is one. In the Church we do not believe in the existence of many deities independent of one another. Certainly, we talk of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but these are not three separate gods. All three have the same essence (one God), but they are three particular Persons. This cannot be comprehended by human reason. Rather, it is a case of revelation from God. All those who have achieved the experience of deification (theosis) and have seen God know this truth personally. We can use an example,

with great care, because an exact equivalence does not exist. All men have a common nature, a common essence, i.e. body, soul, noetic and rational energy, imagination and so on, yet they are different persons. The same is true with God, with the appropriate analogies, of course. The Three Persons have a common nature and essence, but particular attributes.

**“Father”.** Here we make particular mention of the First Person of the Holy Trinity, who is called Father, because He gave birth to the Son. This occurred before the creation of the world. Since time was created concurrently with the creation of the world, the Son was born outside of time, before all ages. Moreover, the Father never existed without the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**“Almighty”.** God is the Almighty, the *Pantocrator*, which means that He upholds the Universe. This concept is related to God’s governing energy. That is to say, following the Creation of the world God preserves the world. God is not like a watchmaker, who makes a watch, winds it up and abandons it, letting it work of its own accord. Rather, He continues to govern the world Himself personally. The world was created from nothing, i.e. there was no matter at all beforehand. It cannot return to nothingness, because God upholds it with His energy.

**“Maker of heaven and earth, and of all**

**things visible and invisible".** God created the heaven and the earth, that is, the heavenly bodies, the sun, the moon; as well as the entire earth, with all that exists upon it, that is, the plants, the animals, the birds and man. Moreover, He created what is visible and what is invisible. All that is visible includes the things we see. All that is invisible includes all that we cannot see with our eyes.

The angels belong to the invisible. They are liturgical spirits and minister for man's salvation. There are saints who purified their hearts of the passions, and became worthy of seeing angels. For example, St. Spyridon, who saw the angels celebrating the liturgy together with him. Likewise, the shepherds, at Christ's birth, saw angels and heard their songs of praise. Many Prophets of the Old Testament, such as Isaiah, saw angels and the works that they do. The angels are divided into nine orders namely: the Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Rulers, Archangels, and Angels.

Demons also belong to the invisible world. In the beginning, they were good angels. However, they fell because they became proud and wanted to acquire even greater glory from God. Thus, from being good spirits, they became evil ones. From angels of glory, they became demons. The demons hate man excessively and want to destroy

him. Through thoughts and other means, they attempt to lead him away from God. The saints have often seen demons and apprehended their destructive madness. Certainly, before Christ became man, the demons had great authority, but they lost it following the Incarnation, and now man can overcome them with the power of Christ.

Man, who is the pinnacle of creation, belongs to the visible realm. Indeed, God first created the noetic spirits, i.e. the angels, then the sensible realm and finally, on the sixth day, He created man. Man consists of soul and body, and is, therefore, a microcosm of the world, the recapitulation of creation and the choicest thing that exists in the world. Man is God's most perfect creation.

In the beginning man lived in Paradise, in a special place where he had communion with God. The Old Testament presents the blessed life that he led there. However, at the devil's instigation and through his own consent he was disobedient towards God and lost His grace and communion with Him. So, he left Paradise, and corruption and death entered his life. Christ delivered him from this death and this power of the devil with His Incarnation.

## *Eleventh Catechism*

### **The Divinity of the Word**

*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.*

**“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God”.** The word “Lord” means “ruler” or “master”, because Christ is also Lord of the world, like His Father. The Father created the world through the Son, with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. All Three Persons uphold and rule the world, since they are equal in both honour and power. The Son is not lower than the Father; He is God. In the Creed we see that the Father is called the Almighty, the Son, Lord and the Holy Spirit also, Lord. “Jesus” means “saviour” (Matthew 1:21) and refers to the human nature that was deified by the Divine Nature. “Christ” means the “anointed one”, the “Messiah”. Thus, “Lord” denotes the divine nature, “Jesus” the human nature of Christ, whereas

“Christ” denotes the union of human and divine nature in the Person of the Word.

**“The Son of God”.** Christ is the Son of God, who was born of the Father before all ages. The Father Himself revealed this truth at the Jordan River and on Mount Tabor, when His voice was heard saying, “This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him” (Mark 9:7).

**“The Only-Begotten”.** The Father has no other Son according to nature. He is the only one. We, human beings, can also become sons of God, but according to grace. We can use an example. A father begets a child, while at the same time he adopts another. Both children live in the same home, but there is a vast difference. The first child is natural offspring, whereas the other child is adopted. This is just one image to show the difference between Christ and man.

**“Begotten of the Father before all ages”.** We cannot understand what the birth of the Son is, or what the procession of the Holy Spirit is, by using our reason. This was revealed to us by the Son in human images. The fact of the matter is that the word “begotten” denotes the Divinity of the Word, His relationship with the Father, that He has the same essence as Him. The terms “begotten” and “proceeded” show the particular way in which the Persons of the Holy Trinity have their existence. It shows that while they have

the same essence, nevertheless, they have particular attributes. The saints understand this when they become worthy of seeing God. The same thing that we maintained in another Catechism also holds true here. We accept the revelation of Christ and the saints and later, when we attain a personal revelation, we can come to know the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity by experience.

**“Light of Light”.** When the saints attain the experience of the revelation, they then see that God is light. In Church, we chant, “God is Light, the Word is Light, the Holy Spirit is Light”. This was clearly manifest at Christ’s Transfiguration. The face of Christ shone from His Divinity, the Holy Spirit was present with the “bright cloud”, and the Father was heard through the voice, which shed light. In liturgical texts God is hymned as light much more often than He is as love.

This light is Divinity. It is not created light. That is to say, it is not the light of the sun, which is created; rather, it is the light of divinity, which has not been created; it is uncreated. Of course, we must say that we are made worthy to partake of God’s energies and not of His essence. An example from sensible light: the sun lies beyond the earth’s atmosphere, yet we partake of its energy. The same thing also happens comparatively

with God. The Persons of the Holy Trinity partake of God's essence, whereas we partake of His energies; we partake of divine grace.

**"True God of true God".** The term "true God" is used in contrast to false gods. This is the faith of the Church. Many things presented and present themselves as gods, but they are not true gods, since they are fabrications of human imagination. We believe in the true God solely within the Church, because Christ revealed Him to us. For this reason, we entrust our salvation to Christ alone.

**"Begotten, not made".** We mentioned some things about the term "begotten" above. Here it is contrasted with the term "made", because the Arian heresy was current at the time. According to this heresy, Christ is a creature, made by God. This, however, shakes the very foundations of the faith. Being begotten is one thing, and being made is quite another. A blacksmith begets children, but he also produces iron. There is a vast difference between the two. Thus, the word "begotten" denotes the Divinity of the Son.

**"Of one essence with the Father".** This term was also added to combat Arianism. The Son has the same essence as the Father. In the example of the blacksmith, mentioned above, it is obvious that the children he begets are of one essence and the iron objects he produces are quite another.

**"By whom all things were made".** In a previous Catechism we said that God created the world. The Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council said this, because, at the time, there were certain heretics who maintained that a lower god, which they identified with the Word, made the world. In this way, they explained the evil that exists in the world. However, the Fathers teach that the world was created by the Father, through the Son with the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. With this, they wanted to show that the Son was God. The evil that exists in the world is a result of man's fall; it is an interloper and parasite and not the creation of a lower god. Just as a parasite can sprout upon a tree, without bearing any relation to the nature of the tree the same thing can be said about the evil that exists in the world. God made the world so that it was very good ("And God saw that it was good" Genesis 1), but the disorder found its origin in man's Fall.

## *Twelfth Catechism*

### **The Incarnation of the Word**

*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.*

Man is God's most perfect creation. However, through his Fall he was enslaved to the devil, sin and death. God could not bear to see his creation suffering and tormented. Therefore, out of love, He sent His Son, to become a man and to save man. This work is called the work of Divine Economy, because it shows how God accommodated things in order to save man.

**“Who for us men”.** The Word (Logos) of God did not need to become man for His own sake; He became man solely for man alone. This shows God's great love, in taking on human nature and uniting it with divine nature.

**“And for our salvation”.** The salvation spoken of here is not the deliverance of the soul from the body, which the ancient philosophers taught, and which many oriental religions also teach

today. Rather, it is man's deliverance from sin, death and the devil, and his union with God.

**"Came down from heaven".** This phrase does not mean that the Word stopped being God, when He became man. Nor does it mean that He abandoned the heavens and the throne of God. In the Akathist Hymn we say, "This was a divine condescension, not a change of place." By the expression "came down" we mean that the Son and Word of God took on human nature in order to save man.

**"And was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary".** Christ's Incarnation is a great mystery. Christ was not conceived in the way that men are conceived. The conception took place from the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Consequently, a man did not participate. We can see this if we study the event of the Annunciation of the All-Holy Theotokos (see Luke 1:26-38). The Virgin Mary is called the Theotokos, which is a Greek word, used by the Fathers. It means Birthgiver of God. This is because she gave birth (*tokos*) to God (*Theos*) and not to a mere man. The Third Ecumenical Council concerned itself especially with this point. The Panagia was a Virgin before the conception, Virgin after the conception and Virgin after the birth. We see this in every icon that represents the Panagia; she is depicted with three stars on

her, one on her head and the other two on each shoulder. The Panagia was completely pure. In the Holy of Holies she had achieved theosis. The purity of Panagia was due to the grace of God, her own personal ascetic effort, and the successive purification of her ancestors. All the purifications in the Old Testament had the Panagia in view. Indeed, the Panagia's parents conceived her with prayer, fasting and obedience to God; this is why the seed of Joachim (the father of the Panagia) is called "immaculate seed".

**"And became man".** The term "became man" is highly significant and shows that Christ is perfect God and perfect man. That is to say, the true God took on real and true human nature. We must underline a few truths about this fact.

First of all, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became man, since man in the image of the Word and his creation occurred through Him. Moreover, this is because the Son proclaims the Father's will as the Word, and furthermore, because the Son of God had to become the son of man, so that the peculiarity of the son would be fixed.

When we talk about Christ becoming man we mean that He took on the whole of human nature, and not only the body. That is to say, He took on body, soul, nous and all the characteristics of human nature. He took them on and deified them.

Since Christ is perfect God and perfect man, He has two natures, two energies, two wills, that are united between themselves, without confusion, without division, without change and without separation. This means that there is no confusion between the natures, nor is there any change in them. The divine nature keeps its own peculiarities and the human nature keeps its own peculiarities. In the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, His human nature cried, not, however, His divine nature, whereas, His divine nature resurrected Lazarus and not His human nature. In any case, both natures work in communion with each other. This means that the two natures are inseparable and indivisible. They have never been separated or divided. This is a great mystery. One example we can use is that of burning iron. If we put the iron in the fire, both natures, that of the iron and that of the fire, are united. However, each nature keeps its own peculiarities, because if the burning iron cools, the iron remains and is not destroyed. Of course, this example is used in condescension, because there is no analogy, since Christ has both an uncreated nature and a created one, whereas in a burning iron both natures are created.

The human nature, which Christ received from the Virgin Mary, was pure and without sin. Christ never committed a sin in his whole life. Although

His human nature was pure and holy, nevertheless Christ freely took on what are known as the “blameless passions”; that is to say, passions that do not constitute sin, such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, and even mortality. The blameless passions did not work forcibly, but the Divinity mastered them. We know, from Moses on Mt. Sinai and others, that the bodily functions of saints who attained theosis were postponed during the experience of theosis. Moses stayed on Sinai for forty days and nights without food or material goods. With this in mind, we can say the same thing and more about Christ. He had a real human body, but He Himself mastered the blameless passions.

Ultimately, the mystery of Christ becoming man becomes somewhat comprehensible from the saints who attain theosis and come to know the transfiguration of their nature from the uncreated energy of God. Reasonably, nobody can grasp it in its fullness. We accept it and proceed to sanctification.

## *Thirteenth Catechism*

### **The Passion and Resurrection of Christ**

*He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.*

*And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures.*

*And He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.*

*And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

“**He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate**”. Christ really did die on the Cross. The death from the Cross was most painful and terrible. The fact that His body was crucified and died on the Cross shows that it was a real body and not an imaginary one. Christ died for us, so that His death would become our life. He was not crucified to appease divine justice; such a view shows God being insulted as though He suffered from passion. God is not passionate, nor

did He need to sacrifice His Son to satisfy His justice. Christ was crucified out of love for man. He died in order to free man from death and freely to give him life. The fact that this took place under Pontius Pilate is stressed to show that this event actually did take place within history.

**“And suffered”.** When Christ suffered His divine nature did not suffer in itself, rather, his human nature did. However, His divine nature did undergo this suffering together with the human nature. We can use two examples to make this more comprehensible. Let us suppose that there is a tree lit by the sun. The sun’s rays fall upon this tree. The lumberjack who cuts the wood into pieces cannot cut up the sun’s energies. The other example is of burning iron. When we throw water on it, the fire suffers, since it goes out. Yet, the iron does not suffer, since it is not destroyed by water. We can say the same thing, by analogy, about Christ’s passion. His human nature suffered, but not His divine nature, which did however undergo the passion together with the human nature.

**“And was buried”.** Christ really did die on the Cross, and He was then buried in a new tomb. Nicodemus and noble Joseph of Arimathea took Him down from the Cross. Thus, following His death and burial, Christ’s body is found in the grave together with His Divinity, whereas the

soul, together with His Divinity, descended into Hades where the souls of the dead were. That is to say, His Divinity was not separated from His soul and His body. Hence, the body remained unharmed and incorruptible in the grave, while the soul freed all the righteous of the Old Testament, who were in Hades. This means that the body did not undergo any change at all when the soul had departed from it. We can understand this by making an analogy with the relics of saints; they give off sweet fragrances, while many of them remain completely uncorrupted.

**“And the third day He rose again”.** Three days later the soul returned to the body and thus rose again. That is to say, Christ’s Divinity resurrected His human nature. The Gospels describe how Christ appeared to the Myrrh-bearing Women and to His Disciples. He gave them peace, joy, blessing and the Holy Spirit to forgive sins. Following the Resurrection the body was incorruptible and spiritual; distances or limitations did not bind it. The bodies of the righteous will be like this following the resurrection of the dead. Christ’s resurrection is a prelude to our own resurrection.

**“According to the Scriptures”.** The amazing thing is that Christ revealed all that was going to happen to the Prophets and the righteous of the Old Testament. Thus, many years beforehand, the

Prophets described everything that was going to happen. The Prophet Isaiah is called the loudest of prophets and the fifth Evangelist, because he made the most detailed description of event eight hundred years before.

**“And He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father”.** The fact that we say He ascended into heaven does not mean that He also descended, as we mentioned in a previous Catechism. The descent is understood in the sense of taking on human nature - the fact that He became a man, while still remaining God. Christ, as God, was both in Heaven, united with His Father, and on earth, associating with men. The phrase “ascended ... and sits at the right hand of the Father” means that He also raised up human nature and glorified it. It is precisely because Christ deified human nature, and because He is at the right hand of the Father, that we also can be saved.

**“And He shall come again with glory”.** Here the second coming of Christ is mentioned. The first coming occurred when He became man, with his birth from the Virgin Mary; it was poor and unknown to most people. The second coming will occur with great glory, since He will come with His angels and everyone will see Him on a throne of glory. The time of this Second Coming is completely unknown to us. (See Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:7).

**"To judge the living and the dead".** At the time of Christ's Second Coming the judgement of men will occur. Everybody who is alive will be judged, as well as everybody who has died, since they will be resurrected. Christ mentioned everything that would happen in the future judgement (see Matthew 25: 31-46). This passage clearly shows that everybody will see God, but for some people God will become Paradise and for others Hell. In other words, everybody who has acquired a pure spiritual eye in this life will see God's glory, and this is called Paradise. Whereas, all those who are spiritually blind will experience the fire, which is Hell. For example, we can say that the sun has an energy that gives light and another one that gives heat or burns. Everyone who has eyes sees the energy that gives light; all those that are blind feel the heat-giving energy. This, essentially, is Paradise and Hell, just as they are presented in the iconography of the Second Coming. Here, the righteous are within bright clouds, whereas the sinners are in a river of fire, which flows from the throne of Christ.

**"Whose kingdom shall have no end".** The Kingdom or Reign of God is Paradise, man's communion with God. We experience this Kingdom now as a betrothal, but then we will experience it as a marriage. The Kingdom of God has no end. It will be eternal and endless, just as Hell will be eternal.

## *Fourteenth Catechism*

### **The Divinity of the Holy Spirit**

*And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.*

The Second Ecumenical Council mainly concerned itself with the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, because it was at this time that the fact that the Holy Spirit is God was questioned.

**“And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life”.** The three titles - “Holy, Lord, Giver of Life”- demonstrate the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these three titles are also given to the other Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit created and give life to the whole of creation.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in third place, just as the Son is in second place. However, this does not suggest that the Son is lower than the Father, nor that the Holy Spirit is lower than the Son and the Father. The Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are one essence, one honour and one

glory, equal between themselves. One example is the sides of a equilateral triangle. There is no side that is higher or lower than the other. The Father is given first place because He is the cause of the Son's birth and the Holy Spirit's procession. The Son is given second place because He was born from the Father and because we feel closer to Him because He became man. Besides, the order of the Persons is often changed to reveal their equality. For example, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:13). Here Christ takes first place, the Father follows and the Holy Spirit is placed after Him.

**"Who proceeds from the Father".** The Son is born from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. We cannot understand this using our reason. Christ revealed this to us when He said, "But when the Comforter (Paraclete) comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me" (John 15:26). Here it is clear that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son, but ultimately the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ, and the formation of Christ within us occurs through the Holy Spirit.

The Franks added a phrase known as the *fi-*

*lioque* to the Creed, between the words “proceeds” and “from the Father”. They say, “who proceeds from the Father and from the Son.” However, this is mistaken and creates huge problems. First of all, they did not have the right to do it, since the Third Ecumenical Council said that not one syllable should be added to the Creed or taken away from it, by anyone at all. Moreover, as in the case of the Son, who is begotten of the Father alone, the same is true of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father alone. This teaching of the Franks leads to the depreciation of the Holy Spirit or the dissolution of the Holy Trinity. Because, if the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, it means that it is below them, because It does not participate in the existence of the other Persons Itself. If, however, It must also participate, then the hypostatic particulars would be dissolved, since the Son could be seen as also being born from the Holy Spirit. There could even be another person that comes from the Holy Spirit, whereby the Holy Trinity is dissolved.

Christ clearly revealed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent forth by the Son. The Franks arrived at their heretical teaching because they had lost contact with the Church’s theology of experience. They lost the presuppositions for true orthodox theology. They distorted

the way in which we achieve communion with God and formed the impression and the opinion that their own speculative theology was superior to the theology of our Holy Fathers. We base ourselves on everything that Christ revealed to us and everything that was lived out by the saints.

**“Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified”.** This phrase demonstrates the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the Holy Spirit is not lower than the other Persons of the Holy Trinity, since He is worshipped and glorified together with them.

**“Who spoke by the prophets”.** The Holy Spirit spoke to the Prophets and revealed the truths of the faith to them. Of course, we know that the revelations in the Old Testament are revelations of the unincarnate Word. Nevertheless, these revelations occur through the Holy Spirit. In general, we can say that the work of Christ is not different from the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ sends forth the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit forms Christ within our hearts. The heart is purified and we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit. As long as we are united with Christ, we feel the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

## *Fifteenth Catechism*

### **The Church and her Attributes**

*In one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.*

The “Symbol of Faith” is the work of the Church, just as the Holy Scripture is also, naturally, the work of the Church. The Church writes the Holy Scriptures, the Church interprets them, the Church formulates the doctrines, that is to say, she sets the boundaries between truth and deception and the Church composes rules in order for her to function regularly and well, as well as to cure her sick members.

The Orthodox Church is the Body of Christ, which Christ took on from the Virgin Mary and deified. The Church is not a human corporation or organisation; it is the Body of Christ.

There is a close relationship between Orthodoxy, the Church and the Divine Eucharist. Orthodoxy is the true faith of the Church and the Divine Eucharist is the true act of the Church. If there is a Church without Orthodoxy and the Eucharist, it is not a Church. If there is Ortho-

doxy outside the Church and the Divine Eucharist, it is not Orthodoxy. Moreover, if there is Divine Eucharist, without Orthodoxy and the Church, it is not the Divine Eucharist. This is why we maintain that outside the Orthodox Church there is no other Church, only heresies. Thus, the return of the heretics to the only true Church, the Orthodox Church, is needed.

In the “Symbol of Faith” we confess and believe in four basic attributes of the Church.

“**In one**”. The Church is one, not many. Despite the wealth of many local Churches, there is only one Church. There are many Orthodox Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches. Inasmuch as they have the same faith and communion amongst themselves they constitute that one Church. We can use an example. There is only one loaf of communion bread upon the Holy Altar Table. Whoever has communion does not commune only a part of Christ, but the whole of Christ, since “broken and distributed is the Lamb of God; broken but not divided.” The same thing happens with the Orthodox Churches. They make up the one, unique Body of Christ. This is why all those who have left the Church, through heresy, must return.

“**Holy**”. The Church is holy, because her head, Christ, sanctified it. The Church is not made holy by her members; rather, she makes her members

holy. We must remain within the Church in order to become Holy. Outside the Church our salvation is uncertain.

“**Catholic**”. She is called catholic for many reasons. First, because she is found throughout the world. Second, because she preserves the whole truth. Third, because her life is common to all. The adjective catholic is identified with the adjective orthodox. A true Catholic is an Orthodox believer, because he possesses the whole truth and is completely transfigured by it.

“**Apostolic**”. The Church is called Apostolic because her head is Christ, who is an Apostle and High-Priest. It was founded on the foundation stone of the Apostles and is patristic. Besides, the Fathers are the successors of the Holy Apostles, both in terms of priesthood and in terms of teaching. They have the same faith, and the same life as them.

We remain continually within the Church; we accept the teachings of the saints; we are obedient to the commandments and the teaching of the Church; we are sanctified by the sacraments and in this way we hope in salvation. We never feel that we should save the Church. Rather, that we remain within her in order to be saved. Every member of the Church who separates himself from her body destroys himself; he dies spiritually, just as every member of the human

body dies when it is separated from the whole of the human body. Such separated members are heretics, schismatics and atheists.

## *Sixteenth Catechism*

### **The Sacramental Life of the Church**

*I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.*

The Church “is declared in mysteries”. Through the sacraments of the Church the Christian proves that he is a member of the Body of Christ, because he is united to the Theanthropic Body of Christ and tastes of divine grace, through the sacraments.

“**I acknowledge one baptism**”. Holy Baptism is called and actually is an introductory sacrament, because it introduces us into the Church and makes us members of the Body of Christ. Baptism grafts us onto the new life. In the ancient Church, the sacrament of Baptism was preceded by Catechism, which prepared the person and gave him the ability to become a real member of the Body of Christ. A study of the prayers of the sacrament of Baptism shows what its aim is and the great value that it has.

Christ called upon His Disciples saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Hence, they are called to establish men as Disciples of Christ by baptising them and teaching them to keep His commandments. Consequently, Baptism is required, but so is ascetic practice, which is nothing more than the attempt to keep Christ's commandments within our life. Sacraments without ascetic practice do not help, and ascetic practice without sacraments does not constitute communion with Christ.

Christ said to Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). According to the interpretation of St. Symeon the New Theologian, the baptism of water must be joined with the baptism of the Spirit, which is the advent of divine grace within the heart. A characteristic example is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. The Christians of Samaria had been baptised in the "name of the Lord Jesus", but they did not have the Holy Spirit. So, Peter and John went to Samaria and "laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8: 14-17). The laying on of hands is today associated with Holy Chrism.

**"For the remission of sins".** Holy Baptism grants the "remission of sins". This should not be

considered in legalistic terms, as something like the deliverance from the guilt of original sin; it should be considered in terms of therapy. That is to say, the image in man is purified, the nous is illumined and he returns to natural life. It is in this context that we talk of remission of sins. Besides, sin is the darkening of the nous and the obscuring of the image.

Holy Baptism is an introductory sacrament, because it introduces the person into the Church. The aim of Baptism is to lead man into the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, the Divine Eucharist is the centre of all the sacraments and of man's ecclesial and spiritual life. No-one can live without Holy Communion. However, participation in Holy Communion is according to the degree of a person's purification, illumination and deification (theosis).

## *Seventeenth Catechism*

### **The Resurrection of the Dead and the Life to Come**

*I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
And the life of the age to come  
Amen.*

"I look for the resurrection of the dead." In the Creed we confess that we expect the resurrection of the dead. Of course, when we say the resurrection of the dead, we mean the resurrection of bodies. Bodies, which are separated from the soul at death, will be resurrected, i.e. the souls will return to their bodies and will give them life. The entire man should live eternally.

All bodies will be resurrected, those of the righteous and the unrighteous, saints and sinners alike. Thus, we can talk of the "restoration of nature", not, however, of the restoration of will. The gift of resurrection will be given to all men, the righteous and unrighteous alike. Hence, everyone will be resurrected, but it is only the righteous who will be caught up "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Christ's resurrection is a prelude to our own resurrection. The saints already enjoy the resurrection of the body, the abolition of death and the fact that the departure of the soul from the body is really a sleep. We can also enjoy this great truth. The relics of saints are proof that the saints are sleeping and that death has been abolished. Their incorruptible bodies, which give off sweet smelling fragrances and work miracles, are a foretaste of the coming resurrection. Thus, Church's task is to make man's body a "relic".

The resurrection of the dead will certainly happen. We have Christ's absolute confirmation of this. However, we do not know when it will happen. The time of Christ's Second Coming is unknown; even the angels do not know when it will happen. Only God the Father knows.

The resurrected bodies will be spiritual. St. Paul writes concerning the subject "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

This will take place for those who have fallen asleep. However, regarding those people who will still be alive at the moment of the Second Coming of Christ, St. Paul says that they will immediately

change, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15: 51-52).

**“And the life of the age to come”.** At the end of the Creed we confess that we believe in eternal life. Truly, man’s life is not used up in this earthly life, nor does the soul disappear after it leaves the body. Man’s soul is immortal by grace. This means that every created thing, by nature, has a beginning and an end. However, God willed that man’s soul would be immortal. Certainly, this is said while bearing in mind that the body and the soul do not make up the whole man on their own, but both of them do so together. Thus, the whole man will live eternally.

There are two ways of experiencing eternity. The first is to be “forever well” and the other is “adversity forever”. The first is associated with man’s communion with God, the participation in God as light. The second is associated with estrangement from God, or the experience of God as darkness. Everybody will see God, but for the righteous He will be vision and participation, whereas for sinners, there will be no participation, but it will be hell.

**“Amen”.** The term “Amen” has two meanings. The first is a prayer and the second is a confirmation. In reciting the Creed, we both confirm what is confessed, and pray that all this is realised within our own personal life.

May this confession of faith become a living experience for us, may it enter into our personal life and become our blood and our nourishment.

## 4

### Questions and Answers

At the end of the period of Catechism, questions can be put to the Catechumen, during a spoken encounter, that will refer to the contents of the Catechism lessons.

Certainly, these questions are not an examination, although that is often necessary even just for his intellectual edification on matters of the faith. Their real purpose is a summarised presentation of the truths that he has been taught. Besides, as we said elsewhere, introductory faith is faith from hearing; it is known as intellectual faith.

Mainly, however, the questions and answers refer to two realities:

*First*, the revision of all that the Catechumen has been taught. Through the questions and answers, the Catechumen will be given the opportunity to remember the central points of the Catechism lessons and to retain them in memory. This intellectual knowledge, combined with experience of Church life, will help him learn the

teaching of the Church, which is the bare truth of our faith. *Second*, it will also help the Catechist-Priest to see the summarised course of the Catechism in a simple way. So that, when he does not have enough time, he can still catechise the Catechumen on the basis of these short questions and answers and also use the outlines that exist for each Catechism lesson.

The full answers for all the questions can be found in the relevant Catechism lessons. Therefore, the questions are arranged according to the order of the Catechism lessons. This aids both the Catechist and the Catechumen.

## FIRST CATECHISM

*1. Why are we called Christians?*

Because we are associated with Christ.

*2. What does the word “Christ” mean?*

Christ means the ‘anointed one’, because human nature was anointed by the Divine.

*3. Who is Christ?*

He is the Messiah, perfect God and perfect man, the God-Man or Theanthropos.

*4. Which peoples of the earth hoped for a redeemer and saviour?*

All the people. The Greeks, the Romans and the Oriental peoples.

5. *Where can we see Christ's superiority in comparison with the gods of other religions?*

Christ is not a man, but the God-man; He rose from the dead and is the champion over death.

6. *What is Christ's mission?*

The salvation of man, i.e. the abolition of the devil, death and sin.

7. *Where can we see Christ's mission and work?*

In the New Testament. In the Gospels, we see what He said, what He did and what He suffered, and in the Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles, we see the fruits of His Incarnation and the deification (theosis) of man.

8. *How can we live His life?*

Within the Church through the sacraments (mysteries) and through keeping His commandments.

9. *Can you remember some of the names given to Christ in Scripture to show His relationship with us?*

Way, foundation stone, root, vine, shepherd, lamb, life, garment, and so on.

10. *What are parables?*

Images and stories that have great truths hidden within them.

11. *Can you retell the parable of prodigal son?*

## SECOND CATECHISM

### *1. Why is God called Father?*

The first Person of the Holy Trinity is called Father because the Son is born from Him before all ages of time and the Triune God is called Father because He created the man within time.

### *2. Who is the true God?*

The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### *3. How do we know that God is Trinity?*

From Christ's Revelation, the events of His Baptism and His Transfiguration and from the witness of saints, who experienced Him personally.

### *4. How can we get personal experience of God the Trinity?*

We receive the witness of saints, then we purify our hearts, we participate in the sacraments and we can attain the Revelation.

### *5. Are there examples in nature that can show that God is Triune?*

We only use such examples by default. One example is of the trinity of sun. There is one sun with the same brightness, but it is a sphere, rays and light.

### *6. What do we mean when we say God is a*

*Person and not a higher power or that He is a Trinity and not a Unity?*

That God has love, which cannot be possessed by a higher power or by a unity.

*7. What is the significance of the fact that, in Islam, God does not have a Son?*

It means that in terms of the Muslim faith God does not have eternal love. Therefore, Islam talks about mercy and justice, but not about love.

*8. How is salvation understood in Hinduism?*

As completely identification of the individual soul (atman) with the universal soul (Brahman). The abolition of the person is not true salvation.

*9. Why are pagan gods not really gods?*

Because they are dominated by passions and essentially they do not exist.

*10. Did ancient religions talk about a Divine Trinity? What did they mean?*

They did talk about it, but they saw it in carnal terms, as in Egypt, or considered it destructive as in India.

*11. Apart from the image of the Father are there other images in the Bible that represent Christ?*

There are many. Two such images are the images of Christ as friend and as brother.

### THIRD CATECHISM

*1. What is the difference between the Word (Logos) as Son of God and man as son of God?*

The second person of the Holy Trinity is a Son by nature (a natural child); man is a son by grace (an adopted child). Furthermore, the Word is uncreated (without beginning); man is created (with a beginning).

*2. What came before the creation of man?*

The creation of the noetic world (the angels) and the sensory world (the whole of creation).

*3. How should the expression “God is made according to the image and according to the likeness of God” be understood?*

The ‘image’ refers to his nature, that he has a nous and freedom or that he has nous, reason and spirit. The ‘likeness’ refers to the theosis (deification), when he is united with God.

*4. Who is the original, the archetype of man?*

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word (Logos) of God, Christ.

*5. What is man’s purpose?*

To attain theosis (deification), in communion with God.

*6. What is Paradise?*

Through the senses, it is a blessed place; noetically, it is the communion of man with God.

*7. What is the essence of man's fall?*

His separation from God; his detachment from Him. Relying on his human strength and not on obedience to God.

*8. What are the consequences of the Fall?*

The darkening of the nous. Being stripped of divine grace. Corruption and mortality, deprivation and enslavement.

*9. What does the phrase 'Man is spiritually dead mean'?*

That he lives biologically, but he does not have the Holy Spirit, God's grace.

*10. How can the desire for Baptism be explained?*

We want to return to Paradise, to regain union with God and be freed from deprivation and alienation.

## FOURTH CATECHISM

*1. What is the new Paradise?*

The Orthodox Church, by which we attain theosis (deification).

*2. How does St. John Chrysostom interpret the parable of the prodigal son, in relation to the Baptism of Catechumens?*

The house is the Church. The robe is the grace of the Holy Spirit. The ring denotes the spiritual betrothal, that the Holy Spirit encompasses him. It denotes the adoption. The shoes are the strength of God so that the devil will not strike his heel. The fatted calf is the Divine Eucharist. The feast is the joy of the Church over man's return to Paradise.

*3. What are the central sacraments (mysteries) of the Church?*

Baptism, Chrismation, and the Divine Eucharist.

*4. Where is the importance of the Divine Eucharist seen?*

In that, it is the centre of all the sacraments, in that, we eat His Body and drink His Blood.

*5. What are the other sacraments (mysteries)?*

Confession, priesthood, marriage and holy unction.

*6. What is the Church according to Orthodox teaching?*

It is the Body of Christ (that was received by the All-Holy Virgin Mary and made divine) and the communion of saints.

## FIFTH CATECHISM

*1. Are the clergy representatives of Christ?*

No, they are not representatives, but are the mystery of the tangible presence of Christ; they are in the place and type of Christ.

*2. What are the stages of priesthood?*

There are three, that of the bishop, that of the priest (presbyter) and that of the deacon.

*3. What does apostolic succession involve?*

The continuation of the grace of priesthood from the time of the Apostles until today and in the preservation of truth.

*4. What is the work of the clergy?*

To cure people and to celebrate the sacraments of the Church.

*5. What is the Church Militant and what is the Church Triumphant?*

The Church Militant are the Christians who are alive and are striving to be united with God. The Church Triumphant are the saints who have fallen asleep in the Kingdom of God.

*6. Who are called saints?*

All those who partake of the deifying energy of God.

*7. What designations has Tradition given to the Mother of God?*

Many. Amongst them: Theotokos, Mother of God, Panagia, Ever-virgin.

*8. How is the Theotokos understood as a mediator?*

The mediator between God and men is Christ. The Theotokos is a mediator between people and Christ.

*9. Why do we love the Theotokos?*

Because we love Christ and so that we can attain Christ's love.

*10. How many categories are the saints divided into?*

They are Prophets, Apostles and then all the other saints, who are divided into martyrs, hieromartyrs, and the saintly and married saints. There are saints of all ages, all professions, all ethnicities, all eras.

*11. Tell me about the life of the saint whose name you will bear and who will be your guardian.*

## SIXTH CATECHISM

*1. St. Gregory Palamas says that the prodigal son is the nous of the man that leaves God and the heart? How do you understand that?*

The natural life of the nous is for it to dwell in God and in the heart. When it is dispersed towards created things and creatures through the senses, when it departs from God, it is a prodigal, a wastrel.

*2. What are the three powers or faculties of the soul?*

Nous, word (logos) and spirit.

*3. What is the nous?*

The most refined attention, the eye of the soul, the centre of man's being.

*4. What is the movement of the nous according to nature and what is its movement contrary to nature?*

The movement according to nature, and beyond nature, is when the nous is turned towards God and keeps all the soul's powers turned towards that direction. The movement contrary to nature is when it leaves God and destroys all the other powers of the soul.

*5. What is sin?*

The darkening of the nous, separation from God, the movement of the soul's powers contrary to nature.

*6. How does sin progress?*

Provocation - impassioned thoughts (logismoi), coupling, desire, the act, and passion.

*7. What is true freedom?*

Inner, existential freedom. Freedom from passions and from death.

*8. What are demons?*

Evil spirits that hate man.

*9. What are passions?*

The movement of the soul's energies contrary to nature. Passion is when love does not turn towards God, but towards creatures. The same thing is true with all the other powers of the soul.

*10. What are the basic passions?*

Self-love, which gives rise to ambition, love of money and self-indulgence.

*11. What do we mean when we say Orthodox ascetic practice?*

Following Christ's commandments, by which the heart is purified and we attain illumination of the nous.

*12. What is repentance?*

The movement of the soul's energies according to nature. The return to God. The illumination of the nous.

*13. What are the characteristics of true repentance?*

The return of the nous into the heart, self-ac-

cusation, the inspiration for change, the activation of the soul's incensive part, entrance into the Church and participation in the Eucharist Supper.

## SEVENTH CATECHISM

### *1. How would you describe a legalist?*

Someone who keeps up the appearance of the law, but does not have love.

### *2. Is Baptism alone sufficient for salvation?*

Ascetic practice after Baptism is also needed. Those who are baptised and sure in their faith are saved. Baptism and keeping of the commandments are needed. "Baptising them and teaching them to keep the commandments," says Christ.

### *3. Is the grace that one receives with Holy Baptism lost after a sin is committed?*

It is not lost, but it is hidden by the passions.

### *4. What is the meaning of the term "potential" and "active" members of the Church?*

The phrase "potential members" denotes those who have been baptised and therefore have the capacity to attain theosis. The phrase "active members" denotes those who have, through their freedom, activated this capacity and have attained theosis.

*5. How can we recognise the living members of the Church?*

They remain within the Church, i.e. they do not participate in secret heretical meetings. They feel that they have God as a Father and the clergy as fathers. They feel that they have brothers who they love and when they sin, they return through repentance.

*6. Sin is a sickness. What can we do to be cured?*

We feel that we are ill. We want to be cured, we resort to the spiritual therapist and we accept his medicine, his orders.

*7. How did they heal the spiritually sick in the ancient Church?*

Gathering them together in the order of penitents, where they received treatment. This was, of course, without them being baptised again. Repentance was considered to be a baptism, called the second baptism, the baptism of repentance.

## EIGHTH CATECHISM

*1. Why did the Church use Symbols of Faith or Creeds from the very beginning?*

To draw the lines between truth and deception and to use them as baptismal confessions.

2. *What are the most basic points of these ancient confessional texts?*

That God is Trinity. That the Second Person of the Holy Trinity became man in order to save man.

3. *Are there passages in the Bible that seem to be confessional texts?*

There are three basic passages. The first is from the First Epistle to Timothy (3:16); the second from the First Epistle to the Corinthians (15:3-8) and the third is in the Epistle to the Philippians (2:5-11)

4. *What is the basic factor that caused these creeds to be written?*

The appearance of heresies, which distorted the revealed truth of faith. Also, the brief confession of the baptised.

5. *Who composed the Symbol of Faith, the Creed, which we use today?*

The Fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils.

## NINTH CATECHISM

1. *Can you recite the Symbol of Faith, the Creed, by heart?*

2. *What are its central points?*

That we believe in the Father who created the world, the Son who became man, suffered, was crucified, was buried, rose again, is seated at the right hand of the Father and will come to judge men. We believe in the divinity of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Church is one, holy catholic and apostolic, and that there is one Baptism. We believe that the dead will be resurrected and that there will be life eternal.

## TENTH CATECHISM

### *1. What are the two stages of faith?*

Faith through hearing, when we listen to God's word and faith through vision (*theoria*), when we see God.

### *2. Why do we confess that the Father created the world?*

Because in the old days there were heretics who maintained that the world is evil and was created by a lower god.

### *3. Who belong to the invisible world?*

The angels and the demons.

### *4. What are the angels?*

Noetic and liturgical spirits. There are nine different orders of angels: the Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Rulers, Archangels, and Angels.

*5. Were the demons angels?*

They were good angels, but sinned out of pride and became evil spirits.

*6. What is man (i.e. a human being)?*

The most perfect creation of God. He created him on the sixth day, after creating the noetic and the sensible world. He is the summary of creation, since he has a body and a soul. His body and soul are closely interconnected.

**ELEVENTH CATECHISM***1. What does the phrase “Lord Jesus Christ” mean?*

It denotes that Christ is perfect God and perfect man, that He is “Theanthropic” or “Theandric” - the God-Man. “Lord” denotes His divine nature, “Jesus” denotes His human nature and “Christ” is the union of the divine nature with the human nature in the Person of the Word (*Logos*).

*2. What does the “only-begotten Son” mean?*

That the Word is the only, the unique, Son born of the Father, because the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him. Thus, the Word is God, of one essence with the Father.

*3. Why was the Word born and not created?*

Because He is true God. Birth is one thing,

creation is quite another. Just like a craftsman, who is a father, will beget his child, but will create the work he makes.

#### *4. Why is the Father called Light?*

Because all those who have seen God have seen Him as Light. The Father is Light, the Son is Light and the Holy Spirit is Light. This shows the divinity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

#### *5. What is essence and what is energy?*

Energy comes from essence. For example, sun is an essence, out in space, and its energies are the light and warmth that come to us. We receive the sun's energies, not its essence. The same thing happens with God. We partake of God's energies. The disparity with the example of the sun is that the essence and energy of God are uncreated (divine), whereas the sun, and all sensible things, is created (they have a beginning).

### **TWELFTH CATECHISM**

#### *1. Why is the Incarnation of the Word also called Divine Economy?*

Economy means stewardship, dispensation, management or administration. The Incarnation shows how God managed things to provide for man's salvation. Through this, He shows His great love for man.

*2. How many births does Christ have?*

Two births. One is his divine birth, which took place before all ages from the Father, without mother. The second is his human birth, which took place in time from the All-Holy Virgin Mary (*Panagia*), without a carnal father.

*3. Why did the Second Person of the Holy Trinity become man and not the others?*

Because the Word announces the Father's will. Because man is according to the image of the Word and had to be deified through Him. Also, because the Son of God had to become the son of man, so that the Word's particularity, His hypostatic mark, would remain constant.

*4. Did Christ only take on man's body in the Incarnation?*

Not only the body, but the whole of human nature, nous, reason, soul and body. He did not just take it on in appearance, but in actual fact.

*5. Does Christ have one nature or two?*

Christ has a divine nature and a human nature, since He is perfect God and perfect man. The two natures are united, without confusion, without division, without change, without separation. This is a great mystery. Using the example of burning iron, in condescension, we can say that its two natures are united, that of the iron and that of

the fire. Of course, in this example the two will separate at some point, but in Christ they have never been separated, nor will they separate.

*6. How did the two natures act within Christ?*

When one nature acted, it acted in communion with the other. In the resurrection of Lazarus the divine nature brought the dead Lazarus back to life, but it was the human nature that wept. Yet, the two natures were united by reason of the Hypostasis (*Person*).

*7. Did Christ have one energy or two?*

Since He had two natures, He also had two energies. No nature can exist without an energy. The difference is that uncreated nature has uncreated energy, whereas the created nature has created energy. Christ had both created and uncreated energy.

*8. Can we say the same thing about the will?*

Of course, Christ had two wills.

*9. Since Christ took on the whole of human nature, does it mean that He took on the consequences of the fall, i.e. the passions and death?*

The human nature that Christ received from the Virgin Mary was completely pure and holy. However, He had what are known as the blameless

passions, i.e. hunger, thirst, fatigue and the propensity for death. This was because He received a real body. However, Christ had authority over the blameless passions, they did not have authority over Him.

*10. Why is His Mother called Theotokos?*

Precisely because she did not give birth to a simple man, who later received the Holy Spirit, but because she gave birth to God according to the flesh, i.e. she gave human nature to the Son of God.

*11. Where did the Virgin Mary's purity come from?*

From God's grace, her own personal ascetic effort and the successive purification of her ancestors.

### THIRTEENTH CATECHISM

*1. Why is the fact that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate emphasised in the Creed (Symbol of Faith)?*

To show that it was a historical fact. Christ lived in a specific place and a specific time as a man.

*2. Did Christ's Divinity suffer or was it just His flesh?*

God voluntarily wanted His flesh to suffer, but

His Divinity did not suffer through the flesh. The divine nature was never separated from human nature, not even on the Cross. Human nature, which can suffer, suffered. However the divine, who is without passion, and therefore cannot suffer, did not suffer with it. Two examples illustrate this fact. When a tree that has light shining on it is chopped up, the tree is chopped up, but the sun remains whole. The same happens when we throw water on a fired piece of iron. Then the fire suffers (it goes out), but the iron is unharmed, because it is not affected by water.

*3. Did Christ actually die on the Cross?*

His human nature really did die. However, His Divinity did not die, it remained immortal.

*4. Did Christ go down into Hades?*

His soul, together with His Divinity went down into Hades, while His body again with His Divinity remained in the Tomb and thus the body did not corrupt. He was not separated from His Divinity, despite the fact that the soul separated from the body.

*5. What do we mean when we say Christ was resurrected?*

That His human nature was resurrected by His divine nature. Christ, as God, raised up human nature.

6. *What was Christ's body like after the Resurrection?*

Incorruptible, as men's bodies will be after the resurrection of the dead.

7. *What do you know about Christ's Ascension?*

Christ went up into the heavens, which He had never left as Son of God, forty days after His Resurrection. That is to say, with His Ascension He went up with His human nature as well, and sits with this at the right hand of the Father.

8. *When will Christ's Second Coming take place?*

We do not know. However, He will come and He will judge men.

9. *What is Paradise and what is Hell?*

Everybody will see God, but the righteous who have acquired a pure spiritual eye will see His illuminating aspect as light, and this is Paradise. Whereas, sinners, being without a pure spiritual eye, having a darkened nous, will feel the burning aspect of the light, and this is Hell.

10. *What is the Kingdom (literally "Reign") of Heaven?*

It is the communion of man with God, the participation in God's glory. We now experience it like a betrothal through the sacraments, through

keeping Christ's commandments and the illumination of Divine Light, whereas at the Second Coming it will be like a marriage.

## FOURTEENTH CATECHISM

*1. Which Council discussed the Divinity of the Holy Spirit?*

The Second Ecumenical Council, of 381 AD, in Constantinople.

*2. What are the terms used to describe the Holy Spirit in the Creed?*

Holy, Lord, Giver of Life. Also it says that He proceeds from the Father and is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. This shows His Divinity.

*3. Why do we use the same adjectives for all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity?*

Because the Three Persons are of one essence, one honour and one glory. The names express God's energies.

*4. Is the Holy Spirit lower than the other Persons of the Holy Trinity, because He is third in order after the Father and the Son?*

No. The numbering of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is not according to value, higher or lower, but according to their way of existence. The Father is the cause of the existence of two Persons,

the Son by birth and the Holy Spirit by procession. That is to say, the way in which the Son exists is through birth and the way in which the Holy Spirit exists is through procession. The three Persons of the Holy Trinity are equal. The Father is placed first because He is the cause of the other two Persons. We do not understand this through our reason, but Christ Himself revealed this to us and it becomes apparent in the Revelation.

*5. On what basis do we say the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father?*

On the words of Christ “But when the Comforter (Paraclete) comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:21). Procession is one thing, being sent is quite another.

*6. Why did the Franks add the Filioque to the Creed, that is, why did they say that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son?*

Because they became disengaged from the teaching of the Fathers. They did not have personal experience of this truth and they were convinced that their theology surpassed the theology of the Holy Fathers. They also used it for political reasons, to dominate the western part of the Roman Empire.

*7. Did the Franks have right to add the Filioque?*

No, because the Third Ecumenical Council and others said that nobody should add or subtract even one syllable from the “Symbol of Faith”. Besides, just as we understand by the Creed that the Word (Logos) was born from the Father alone, we also understand that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone.

## FIFTEENTH CATECHISM

*1. What is the Orthodox Church?*

The Body of Christ.

*2. Is this Church invisible?*

No, it is real and apparent. It is the communion of saints.

*3. Are there many Churches?*

The Church is one, for the Body of Christ is one.

*4. What are the other so called churches?*

Heretical assemblies.

*5. What are the four attributes of the Church, as we confess them in the Creed?*

One, holy, catholic and apostolic.

*6. Why is it called one?*

Because, despite the existence of various local

Orthodox Churches, there is One Body of Christ.

*7. Why is it called Holy?*

Because its Head is holy and this Holy Head sanctifies the entire Body.

*8. Why is it called catholic?*

Because it can be found throughout the world, because it preserves the truth, whole and unadulterated, and because its life is common to all.

*9. Why is it called apostolic?*

Because its Head is Christ, who is an Apostle and High Priest, it was founded on the foundation of the Apostles and it is patristic, since the Fathers are successors to the Apostles.

## SIXTEENTH CATECHISM

*1. Why is Baptism called an introductory sacrament?*

Because we are introduced into the Church, the Body of Christ, by it.

*2. What is the basis for the sacrament of Baptism in the Bible?*

There are many passages that refer to it. I will only mention Christ's words to His Disciples after the Resurrection "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising 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" (Matthew 19:20).

*3. Is Holy Baptism sufficient for salvation?*

It is also necessary to observe Christ's commandments. "Baptising them and teaching them to observe."

*4. Why is Baptism associated with the remission of sins?*

Because the original image of man is purified, his nous is illumined and he returns to the life according to nature. Baptism does not free man from guilt, as some people say, but it heals him and leads him towards deification (theosis).

*5. Why do we confess one baptism?*

Because it happens only once. If someone leaves the Church he returns by being chrismated. The same Baptism can not occur twice, because one is only born once.

*6. What is the aim of Baptism?*

To introduce a person into the Church and to make him worthy of communicating the Body and Blood of Christ. Therefore, Baptism is connected with the Divine Eucharist.

## SEVENTEENTH CATECHISM

*1. What do we mean when we say the resurrection of the dead?*

We mean the resurrection of bodies, because souls do not die.

*2. Will only the bodies of the righteous be resurrected?*

All bodies will be resurrected, both those of the righteous and those of sinners.

*3. How do we know that the resurrection of the dead will take place?*

Apart from the fact that Christ told us this, Christ was resurrected Himself, and the saints already enjoy the resurrection of the bodies now, with the glory they receive from God's grace in their holy relics.

*4. What will men's bodies be like after the resurrection?*

They will be spiritual. St. Paul says that they will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

*5. What will happen to the bodies of those who will still be alive at the Second Coming?*

They will change at that hour. St. Paul says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be

changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

*6. What does eternal life mean?*

It is man's life after death but, first and foremost, it is the participation in the glory of God by the righteous.

*7. What will be the difference between the righteous and sinners (after death)?*

The righteous will live "forever well", whereas sinners will experience "adversity forever".

*8. What does the word "Amen" mean?*

It has two meanings. The first is a confirmation, that is, we admit that it is all true. The second is a prayer, that is we pray for Christ's Second Coming to happen soon, to come quickly, so that we can enjoy His glory.

These questions and answers refer to the truths that the Catechumens have been taught. If the Catechist-Priest mentions other matters, like the difference between the Orthodox Church and other confessions ('Roman Catholicism' - Protestantism), relevant questions must again be put.

The fact is that, in this way, the knowledge that the Catechumens acquired during the Catechism lessons will be consolidated.

## 5

### The Rite of the Sacrament of Baptism

Everything we have looked at so far has shown that the Catechism of Catechumens is a serious matter and should not be taken lightly, because doing things in haste and superficially is a secular practice. Instead of contributing to the increase of the Church, it contributes to the increase of a secular Church.

The same applies to the rite of the sacrament of Baptism. This should also be placed within a traditional and an Orthodox framework. Otherwise, it will not help the baptismal candidate appreciate its great value and importance for the rest of his life. Besides, the sacramental rite is not sufficient in itself; it is also necessary to lead a life in Christ. In order to make things somewhat easier we will make a few practical suggestions about the Baptismal service for adults.

*First.* As we pointed out earlier, it is preferable that Catechism is associated with the great and

reverential seasons of our Church. Of course, Catechism can take place throughout the year, but the final stage, as we see in the “Catechisms” of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and in the teaching of the Holy Fathers, must be connected with Holy and Great Lent. This season is appropriate for this task for the following reasons:

First of all, it is a reverential period, with prayer and fasting, established by the Church. The Church services increase, the fast is strict, the hymns and all the themes throughout the Lenten Sundays help. The hymns refer to repentance and return, the passages from the Gospel and the Epistles, both in the Triodion period before Lent, and throughout Lent itself, refer to the basic points of the Orthodox Faith. The grand stature of the saints who are celebrated and the various events aid Orthodox Catechism a great deal. The Catechumen will be given the opportunity to hear the parables of the Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son. He will be able to understand what the exile from Paradise is through worship in Church. He will celebrate the grandeur of Orthodoxy and understand what the Orthodox Faith consists of. He will find out about the great importance of the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas. He will see the strength of the Venerable Cross. He will find out about the very essence of Orthodox ascetic practice, as it appears

in "The Ladder", the book by St. John of Sinai. He will be encouraged by the great repentance of St. Mary of Egypt. Finally, he will personally experience the Passion, Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

Furthermore, he will experience all the various Liturgies that the Church has, i.e. the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In the last service, in particular, he will hear the petitions of the faithful, the members of the Church, on behalf of the Catechumens, that are still intoned even today. This will make the work of the Priest-Catechist easier.

Moreover, the Baptism of the Catechumens that will take place on Great Saturday will help them appreciate their own resurrection in Christ and their entrance into the resurrected Body of Christ. The paschal season that follows will be their first joyful experience of the new life that they received with Baptism. They will be given the opportunity to take communion every day throughout Bright Week, as they did in ancient times. The Pentecost season will be an effective aid. Besides, the subject matter of most of the Sundays leading up to Pentecost has been chosen to help the Catechumens become consciously aware of what life in Christ is, in practice. We know that most Gospel passages of this season

mention water, the font, the advent of the Holy Spirit, who quenches man's thirst, about the healing of the eye, and so on. The Church never does anything aimlessly.

*Second.* The Baptism of Catechumens should be associated with great feasts. As we mentioned earlier, the most fundamental feast is Easter. Thus, the Baptism will take place on Great Saturday, because the whole service is suited to this aim. According to the readings for Vespers of Great Saturday, the Baptism takes place in an adjoining baptistery or in a chapel. Immediately following this, the newly baptised Catechumens enter the main church and everybody chants in the place of the thrice-holy hymn: "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia." The whole community rejoices over the event. If there is no baptistery or chapel, the Baptism takes place somewhere in the narthex of the church building.

However, Baptism can also be linked with every feast of the Lord. Besides, during all the Feasts of the Lord, Christmas, Theophany, Easter and so on, the thrice-holy hymn, "Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal" is not sung and the hymn "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ..." is sung instead. It is the entire community's joy over the new members joining it.

*Third.* The sacrament of Baptism, in this case, must be combined with the Divine Eucharist. In modern times, the association of the sacrament of Marriage with the Divine Eucharist has been introduced into the *typikon*. However, this should primarily occur with Holy Baptism, since this is its inherent position. In ancient times, as we saw above, Baptism was always combined with the Divine Liturgy. Besides, this is evident in practice, since we are baptised in order to commune the Body and Blood of Christ, as members of the Church.

Of course, the best thing is for Baptism to be combined with the Liturgy on Great Saturday, where it is much more suitable, since this liturgy also occurs together with Vespers. Since, immediately following the Baptism, the replacement thrice-holy hymn “As many of you as have been baptised in Christ” is chanted and the Divine Liturgy follows. In this case, a baptistery is required or a small chapel next to the main church.

The sacrament of Baptism can also take place between Matins and the Divine Liturgy in the central church or the chapel, as St. Nikodemos the Athonite recommends. The sacrament can even take place in a chapel next to the main church until the actual Baptism, while Matins is being chanted in the main church. Then the Di-

vine Liturgy continues. The “dance” takes place during the chanting of the thrice-holy hymn and the Liturgy continues.

However, I would like to go on to present a *typikon* for combining the sacrament of Baptism with that of the Divine Eucharist.

The service of the Catechumens is celebrated the day before the Baptism, following Vespers.

The sacrament of Baptism takes place during the Liturgy.

First of all, the service of Matins is celebrated in the usual manner. Following the doxology, the dismissal takes place, either aloud or in secret. Immediately following this the sacrament of Baptism is celebrated. It must be noted that on this day the Liturgy of the Catechumens is omitted, i.e. from the “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father...” until the small entrance, because the Baptism will take place during this section. Consequently, the whole arrangement of the combination of Baptism and the Divine Liturgy is as follows:

Following the doxology and the *apolytikion* or *theotokion* we intone the phrase “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father...” and we say the baptismal petition for peace. Then the whole service of Baptism as laid out in the service book of the Church takes place until the dressing of the baptismal candidate in the robe. That is to say, we

read the prayer of the blessing of the waters and the prayer for the anointing with oil. We anoint the person being baptised with exorcising oil. We baptise him in the sanctified water of the font. We say Psalm 31 (32 *Septuagint*), “Blessed are they whose transgression is redeemed”. We read the relevant prayer and anoint the person being baptised with Holy Myrrh. We dress him in the robe and we immediately sing the *troparion*, “Give me a bright robe.”

At this point, the priests enter the Holy Altar, following the chanting of the apolytikion for the day, the entrance of the Holy Gospel takes place. On this day the entrance hymn is replaced with chanting of “Blessed are they whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Save us, O Son of God...”

The *apolytikia* of the day are chanted, as well as the *kontakion* and the hymn “As many of you as have been baptised in Christ...” While the *apolytikia* are being chanted we read the prayer of the thrice-holy hymn. “As many of you as have been baptised in Christ...” is chanted in the middle of the Church, around the font. Immediately after this the Epistle and Gospel are read.

Following the Gospel and the petition, “Have mercy upon us, O God...” the prayers of the faithful are read and the Cherubic hymn is chanted. That is to say, the Divine Liturgy con-

tinues in the usual manner. With the words, "In fear of God, with faith and love draw near." The newly baptised person approaches to commune the Divine Mysteries first, together with his sponsor. In this way, the words of St. Nicholas Cabasilas are put into practice. He says that following the Baptism we proceed to Holy Communion. This also establishes the credibility of the God-parent, because if he cannot take communion (because he is outside the Church, or because he has had a civil wedding rather than a Church one) he cannot baptise.

Following the prayer of the ambo, we read the rest of the baptismal service in full. That is to say, we read the prayers of ablution, of cutting of the hair, the priest's blessing, "O Lord our God, from the fullness of the font..." the tonsure takes place and the relevant petitions are made on behalf of the newly illumined person and his sponsor. The dismissal takes place immediately after the prayer "The blessing of the Lord..." The newly-baptised person and the God-parent receive the *antidoron* first, and the rest of the congregation follows.

Following the Divine Liturgy, if possible, we chant the first *Eothinon* or the *Theotokion* of vespers in the first mode. Then, with the priest preceding, together with the sponsor and the baptised person we go either to the house of the

baptised person (if it is nearby) or to church hall (if there is one). There, wishes are exchanged and a modest reception can be held.

This association of Baptism with the Divine Liturgy will help the Catechumens and the faithful a great deal, and will contribute to the revival of our liturgical life. I believe that it will be the culmination of Orthodox Catechism and will show that the Church carries out this task seriously and responsibly. It will also be the start of a new life after Baptism.



# 6

## Guidance after Baptism

### *Outline*

1. *Entering a Church Community*
2. *Continuing Catechism*
3. *Time is Needed for Personal Experience of the Truth*
4. *Avoiding the Trap of Fanaticism*
5. *Confrontation of possible sense of scandal.*
6. *Guidance during the period of the withdrawal of divine grace.*

The pastoral ministry of Christians and especially of Catechumens demands a journey of the cross, a responsible mission and a life of witness. The priest is not satisfied with a formal presentation of the truths of the faith. He does not expend himself on social work. Rather, he is crucified and he sacrifices himself every day, so that Christians will be reborn. The model of a true pastor should be Christ's words, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep" (John 10:11). Also, the words of St. Paul,

which express the life of sacrifice, "My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you!" (Galatians 4:19). The Priest-Catechist is primarily interested in forming Christ in the heart of the Catechumen and the newly illumined person. This means that his catechetical efforts do not end with Baptism. They are extended beyond it, and continue throughout the baptised person's life.

I would like to go on to underline some basic points that the Catechist-Priest must bear in mind after the Baptism of the Catechumens. I believe that they are essential for the correct treatment of newly baptised Christians.

*First.* They must become an organic member of a parish community. Of course, this presupposes that the parish is organised correctly, that it has a life of worship, charitable and social action and so on. The new Christian must feel that through Baptism he has joined a family. He must feel that he has become a member of the body of Christ and of the particular parish. He must experience the reality of the fact that he has a spiritual father and spiritual brothers and sisters. Faith is church faith and not an individual event. He was not catechised and baptised in order to continue living as an individual and to feel that with Baptism he simply acquired a better doctrinal formulation about God, the creation of the

world and man's salvation. He must experience all this personally in his life within the parish.

For this reason, today, experienced spiritual fathers advise against the baptism, if we cannot guarantee this parish community, this spiritual family, because we create split personalities. For example, if a Protestant becomes Orthodox on Mount Athos, unless his membership of a parish community in his own country is guaranteed for him, he will find himself in tragic situation. He will be neither a Protestant nor an Orthodox Christian, since he will be unable to participate in Protestant gatherings, and he will not even belong to an Orthodox community. This means that in these cases we must do all we can to find a way for him to join an Orthodox community.

*Second.* We continue to catechise and guide the newly illumined Christians spiritually. They must learn many things and mainly they should live the life in Christ. Just as Catechism is required for the faithful the same applies to the newly baptised. When the apostles created a Church they maintained continual contact with it. St. Paul was personally interested in the Churches that he founded. He faced all the problems that cropped up in a pastoral manner. He catechised the newly baptised in the life according to Christ and solved the differences that arose.

The Clergy advise the baptised to keep God's

commandments in their everyday life. In this way, they will achieve perfection and sanctification. When we talk of an ascetic life, we mean, first and foremost, the keeping of Christ's commandments. They urge the baptised to commune of the Immaculate Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. This is a very basic point, because without Christ there is no virtue in life. Naturally, in the case of some grave sin, repentance and confession is required.

*Third.* The Catechist-Priest must be aware of the fact that although the newly baptised Christian has learnt many of the truths of the faith in theory, nevertheless, it will take quite a while until these become a part of his personal life experience. That is to say, the newly baptised Christian comes from a different religion and is influenced by a different religious and cultural tradition. He understands the truths of Orthodoxy intellectually, but it will take time for them to be established and to become a way of life. He tries to understand them rationally, but many years will pass before they become a true personal conviction and before they change all his former religious and cultural tradition. This is why continuous guidance and repentance is necessary. Thus, we understand the difference between those who were "born" into the Orthodox Church and find that many things are given and entrenched within

themselves, and those who were baptised at an older age. Certainly, their great enthusiasm can overcome many problems.

*Fourth.* Serious and responsible guidance is needed for the way in which the newly baptised should react. The experienced Catechist is clearly aware that the person who has converted to Orthodoxy can easily fall into fanaticism, which is expressed in two ways. One way, is that of accusing his former religion, the other, is setting himself up as a "teacher" of other Orthodox Christians. He may consider himself to be in a better position than they are. Therefore, the priest-catechist should be very careful. Without disappointing him, he should help him.

Primarily, this means that when he hears the baptised person mock his former religion, he should not take part in what he says. It is probable that the newly baptised Christian will regret what he said during his first bout of enthusiasm. However, if he remembers that other Orthodox Christians or the priest took part, or worse, if he remembers that others urged him to do this, he will then be angry with them. He will think that they had made him fanatical or that they proselytised him. The result is that he will return to his former religion with hatred against Orthodoxy. Many such spiritual mistakes have occurred.

Moreover, he will not let the newly baptised

Christian play the teacher to other Orthodox Christians. It is possible that the newly baptised Christian belongs to a higher social class, has many experiences, has exceptional intellectual qualities, is a great writer and so on. This arouses the interest of other Orthodox Christians. They consider it an honour that this person is a member of their Church. Consequently, they praise him and invite him to speak to the people. This increases the fanaticism and zeal of the newly baptised Christian. It causes conceit and egotism with destructive consequences for his future development. It is not right for a "neophyte" to be a teacher of other believers. This is the reason why St. Paul advises his disciple, Timothy, not to ordain as a bishop "a recent convert, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

The case of St. Paul the Apostle is most characteristic. Following Christ's revelation to him, he did not journey towards his relatives according to the flesh and according to the spirit. He did not even go to Jerusalem to meet the other apostles; instead, he went to Arabia (Galatians 1:16-18). The divine apostle stayed in the Arabian Desert for three years, weeping over his former fall, the persecution of the Church of Christ. Throughout his whole life he remembered that horrific condition where he persecuted the Church

and this increased his humility, despite the many and great revelations that he had.

We must bear all this in mind so that we can succeed in this great mission of catechising new members. Complete repentance is required, on the part of the baptised, throughout their whole life. If this great, all-encompassing repentance does not exist then the former life will leave some ugly marks, resulting in their return to their former faith. In general, we should not encourage the newly illumined Christians to be teachers and to teach the other Orthodox.

*Fifth.* There is a great danger that the newly illumined Christians will be shocked by the bad behaviour of other Orthodox Christians. Although they received Catechism as therapeutic treatment, it is possible, that upon entering the Church, they will come across various passions and will be scandalised spiritually. Therefore, the Catechist-Priest should prepare the Catechumen to face this situation. He must consciously realise that within the Church there are living and dead members, those who are healthy and those who are sick. If someone is not careful in his life, he may lose the grace of Christ, which he received at Holy Baptism, and he may become worse than unbelievers. This is because Baptism and the advent of divine grace do not abolish man's freedom.

Indeed, the chance existence of spiritual im-

propriety in members of the Church should become an opportunity to teach the newly baptised Christian, because it could possibly happen to him, if he is not careful in his life. Ultimately, the newly baptised Christian should learn that the Church is a body with various members, who are struggling to achieve perfection and sanctification. They should learn that Holy Baptism is only the start of the journey and not the end of it. They should realise that personal effort and struggle is also needed. The same thing that happened with the Hebrews who were journeying to the Promised Land happens here. Many left the land of Egypt; however, they did not all arrive in the Promised Land. The Church is "militant" in that it battles, fights, is victorious, but it also has wounded soldiers. The Church is a Hospital - a place of healing. Its members are divided into three categories: those, whose souls have been healed (saints), those that are being healed, and those that are still sick in soul, who may someday start being healed (therapy).

In this spirit, the person being baptised will be brought back down to earth. He will apprehend the reality. He will not be flying up in the clouds and he will become spiritually mature. He will realise that the life in Christ is a personal matter. Despite the various scandals, there are saints; there are fighters and "violent" Christians (see

*Matt. 11:12).* Besides, those that sin today may repent and be saved tomorrow. The final verdict, the separation of what is good from what is rotten will be given at Christ's Second Coming (Matthew 13: 24-30).

*Six.* There is a fine detail that we must underline so that we are aware of the way in which we should edify the baptised.

From Orthodox teaching, we know that there are three spiritual stages related to God's grace. The first is the advent of uncreated grace within man's heart. The second is the withdrawal of grace, for reasons known to God. Finally, the third is the return of grace into the heart. All people, at a certain moment, feel the advent of divine grace within the heart. They all lose it, because God wants their personal freedom to be activated; hence the spiritual struggle starts: pain and ascetic practice. Naturally, only a few people manage to acquire divine grace gain and have it remain in their hearts permanently. Very discreet and wise guidance is needed during the withdrawal of divine grace.

This happens, mainly, to those who are catechised and baptised. If a traditional Catechism has taken place beforehand, then they feel the divine grace within themselves during the baptism. The prayer of the heart and nous grows within them and they have all the results of this

condition, i.e. tears of repentance and joy, prayer, love for the whole world, zeal and inebriation for God and so on. The clergy must be aware of this course of divine grace, so that when the time comes, a few months or a few years later, and the newly baptised lose this divine grace, they will not be disappointed. Indeed, the clergy should guide them telling them that this is a natural condition, and in this way, their freedom is activated all the more. God withdraws the grace out of love; so that we can both learn of His love for man, and go on to make our own personal effort.

If the Catechumen does not learn about this delicate spiritual task, he may well become disappointed, give up, and wither, falling into immediate spiritual danger. Experience has shown that this is the greatest temptation that the newly baptised undergo. Following the Baptism they feel like they are "drunk"; they are existentially glad, everything is pleasing and joyful. However, in the period of the withdrawal of divine grace they find themselves in a tragic condition. It is then possible for them to believe that their former condition was simply enthusiasm, a psychological feeling of well-being, or they may think that their current condition is proof that they have become psychologically ill. Sensible guidance and paternal care will help them understand that this is the road

towards sanctification. All the saints passed through this stage in their spiritual lives. In this way, God's gifts will become their permanent spiritual condition.

Bearing all this in mind, we can say that the Catechism of those already baptised is much more difficult and painstaking than the Catechism of Catechumens before Baptism.



## **Epilogue**

Preparation for Baptism and spiritual guidance of the baptised is a cross and a responsible mission. It is not a matter of a superficial, social task, but a very serious matter.

Through Holy Baptism and church life we aim at a person's full involvement in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and a community of deification. Man, from being "according to the image", must become "according to the likeness". That is to say, man must be deified; he must attain theosis. Whereas, by his birth, he feels that God is the Creator, through Baptism he feels that He is his Father and through Holy Communion, he feels that He is Bridegroom and Mother. Through his birth from his mother, he acquires biological life; through his re-birth within the Church, he acquires spiritual life. From being fleshly, he becomes spiritual.

St. Nicholas Cabasilas says that in Holy Baptism we are born spiritually and in reality. Just as we gain the flesh of our parents from our birth in the flesh, likewise, with our spiritual birth, we

gain the flesh and bones of Christ. However, there is a vast difference between these two births. During our natural birth, our blood came from our parents, but it is now ours. Whereas, with our spiritual birth, our blood comes from Christ. We cannot live otherwise. Christ did not offer us His life and then depart. He is always present and united with us, if we do not flee from Him. When we leave our mother's womb and leave our parents, we still continue to live. Whereas, if we depart from Christ, we die. Children do not mature, unless they depart from parental dependency. Whereas, if we depart from Christ, death follows.

Consequently, both, preparation for Baptism, and the asceticism and guidance following it, are responsible tasks. Therefore, an Orthodox Catechist-Priest, who is knowledgeable about all this spiritual working, is needed. Only someone who has spiritual sensibility can truly respond to this great mission. It is not drudgery, it is a blessed ministry, that one undertakes with gladness and honour, because the Church has made him worthy of leading brides to Christ.

When someone cures a fatal disease of the body it is considered to be something highly significant, a miracle. However, to cure spiritual sickness is an even higher vocation. When someone gives birth to children, it is considered

to be a special blessing from God. However, when someone gives birth according to God and makes people members of the Body of Christ, leading them to Paradise, it is a much more important undertaking.

The fact is, the way in which the Church catechises and baptises those who want to become members, shows how well it responds to this high calling. Consequently, we also heal the secularised Church by avoiding secularised Catechism.



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