

DEAR FRIEND

50 Simple Letters to a Dear Friend About the Ancient Orthodox Church



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Discovering the Church Jesus founded, one letter at a time.

This booklet is a collection of letters written as a gentle introduction to the Orthodox Christian faith. They are addressed to a “dear friend,” someone who loves Christ but may be unfamiliar with the Orthodox Church.

The goal of these letters is very simple — to explain the faith of the Church that Jesus founded and the Apostles spread, in a way that is easy to understand. Each letter covers one topic—such as the Bible, prayer, the sacraments, the saints, worship, and daily Christian life. Every letter includes passages from the Holy Scriptures, so that the reader can see how the teachings of the Church are rooted in the Word of God.

The Orthodox Church is not a new movement or one denomination among many. It is the original Church, handed down from the Apostles, preserved through the centuries by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These letters invite you to learn about this ancient faith that is still alive and unchanged today.

Whether you are curious about Orthodoxy, exploring the Christian faith more deeply, or simply searching for truth, these letters are written for you.

The History of the Church

Dear Friend,

I am very glad to hear that you are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Church. I know that some of the words and practices can feel unfamiliar, but I will try to explain things as simply as I can.

The Orthodox Church is the continuation of the very same Church that Jesus Christ founded through His Apostles. After His Resurrection and Ascension, the Apostles went out into the world to preach the Gospel, baptise new believers, and form local Christian communities (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:42). Those communities, guided by the Apostles themselves and then by the bishops they appointed (Titus 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:2), became what we now call the Church. In other words, the Orthodox Church is not something that began later on—it is the direct life and worship of the first Christians carried forward without interruption.

For example, the Apostle Peter preached in places such as Antioch and Rome (Galatians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:13). The Apostle Paul travelled throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire, writing letters to the churches in Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and many others (Acts 16:9–10; 18:1; 19:1). The Apostle John cared for the church in Asia Minor (Revelation 1:4, 11). The same pattern of worship, prayer, and faith that they taught is still kept today in the Orthodox Church. We see ourselves not as something new, but as keeping alive the faith and practice of the Apostles and the early believers.

The word “Orthodox” means “right belief” or “right worship.” Our goal has always been to remain faithful to what was handed down from Christ through His Apostles, without adding or taking away from it. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). This is why we place such importance on history—we see ourselves as part of the very same family of faith that began in the New Testament.

In the early centuries, all Christians were one Church. Over time, divisions sadly arose. But the Orthodox Church continues to live as the ancient Church did, keeping the same Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16–17), the same sacraments or “ordinances” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17; Acts 2:38), and the same way of worship (Hebrews 13:15). When you step into an Orthodox Church today, you are stepping into a community that has prayed and worshipped in the same way for nearly two thousand years.

I hope this helps you see that Orthodoxy is not something foreign or strange. It is the life of the Church that began with the Apostles themselves. As you learn more, you will find that what may at first seem unfamiliar is actually the fruit of a very simple truth—the Church has always held fast to the faith that Jesus Christ gave to His followers at the very beginning (Jude 3).

In this series of letters I provide some scriptures so you can research on your own.

Our Beliefs

I want to share a little more with you about the heart of what we believe in the Orthodox Church. The words and practices may sometimes feel unfamiliar, but the foundation is simple and straight from the Bible.

We believe in one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is called the Holy Trinity. God the Father created all things (Genesis 1:1). The Son, Jesus Christ, is the Word of God who became man for our salvation (John 1:1, 14). The Holy Spirit is the Comforter whom Jesus promised to send to guide us (John 14:26). These three are not three separate gods, but one God in three Persons, as we see when Jesus commands baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

We believe that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man. He is the eternal Son of God, yet He was born of the Virgin Mary and became truly human

(Luke 1:35; Philippians 2:6–7). He died on the Cross for our salvation (1 Peter 2:24), rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3–4), and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9–11). This is at the centre of our faith.

We believe the Church is the Body of Christ. When we are baptised, we are joined to Christ and made part of His Body, the Church (Romans 6:3–4; 1 Corinthians 12:27). The Church is not only a place to gather, but the living community where Christ Himself is present (Matthew 18:20). The Apostles and their successors were given the responsibility to guide the Church (Acts 20:28).

We believe in the sacraments (what you may know as ordinances). These are holy actions through which God gives His grace to us. Baptism makes us new in Christ (John 3:5). The Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, is more than a symbol—it is truly the Body and Blood of Christ, as Jesus said: "This is my body ... this is my blood" (Matthew 26:26–28; 1 Corinthians 10:16). In these gifts, Christ gives us His very life.

We believe in the authority of the Bible together with the living tradition of the Church. The Scriptures are inspired by God and guide us in all things (2 Timothy 3:16–17). At the same time, the Apostles taught not only by their letters but also by word of mouth, and the Church has preserved both faithfully (2 Thessalonians 2:15). This is why we hold to the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

We believe in life after death and the hope of the resurrection. When we die, we go to be with the Lord (Philippians 1:23). At the end of time, Christ will return to judge the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1), and all the dead will be raised (John 5:28–29). For those who belong to Christ, this will be eternal life with Him (Revelation 21:3–4).

These are the heart of what it means to be Orthodox. Everything else—our worship, our prayers, our practices—flows from these truths. They are the same truths that Christians have believed since the time of the Apostles.

Worship

Now that I have shared with you the history of the Church and her core beliefs, I would like to tell you a little about how we worship. At first, the services may look very different from what you are used to, but everything has a biblical foundation and points us to Christ.

Worship is at the heart of the Church. From the very beginning, Christians gathered together to pray, hear the Bible readings, and celebrate the Lord's Supper. The book of Acts tells us: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This is still what we do in every Orthodox service.

We celebrate the Divine Liturgy (the main service of the Church). The word "liturgy" simply means "the work of the people." In it, we hear readings from the Bible, we pray together, and we receive Holy Communion. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), and the Apostle Paul reminded

the Church in Corinth that “the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). For us, Communion is the very centre of Christian life.

We use icons (holy images) in our worship. An icon is not a replacement for God, but a window that helps us remember the reality of Christ and His saints. In the Old Testament, God commanded Moses to place images of cherubim in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:18–22). Later, Solomon decorated the Temple with carved images of palm trees, flowers, and angels (1 Kings 6:29–30). When we use icons, we are following the same principle — images that turn our minds to heavenly realities. Most of all, because Jesus became a man whom people could see and touch (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1), we can rightly depict Him in images.

We use incense in worship. Incense is mentioned many times in the Bible as a sign of prayer rising up

to God. “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you” (Psalm 141:2). In the book of Revelation, the saints in heaven are seen holding “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8). So when we use incense, we are simply joining in the worship that is already taking place in heaven.

We sing hymns and prayers. Singing is an important part of Orthodox worship. Saint Paul wrote, “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart” (Ephesians 5:18–19). Our services are almost entirely sung, to remind us that worship is not just talking about God but lifting our hearts to Him.

We face east in worship. The early Christians prayed facing east, waiting for the coming of Christ, whom the Bible calls the “Sun of righteousness” (Malachi 4:2). Jesus said His return will be like lightning that comes from the east and shines to the west

(Matthew 24:27). This simple act helps us remember to keep our eyes on His promised return.

When you visit an Orthodox Church, you will see these things—the Scriptures being read, prayers being sung, incense rising, and icons all around. None of these are meant to distract us. They all come together to help us focus our minds and hearts on the Lord Jesus Christ, just as Christians have done from the beginning.

Orthodox View of Saints

I would like to share with you something that often seems unusual to Christians from Baptist or other Protestant backgrounds: why the Orthodox Church honours the saints and asks for their prayers. I hope this explanation will show that it is very much rooted in the Bible.

All believers are part of one Body. Saint Paul teaches us: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). This means that in Christ, there is no separation between Christians on earth and those who have already gone to be with Him. We are one family, united in Him.

The saints are alive in Christ. When Christians die, they do not cease to exist. Jesus said, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Luke 20:38). In the book of Revelation, we see the saints in heaven worshipping God and even interceding for us. “The twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of

incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8).

The Bible encourages us to pray for one another. We are told, “Pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). If we ask our brothers and sisters here on earth to pray for us, how much more can we ask the saints who are already close to Christ to pray on our behalf? They are not replacing Christ, but helping us in Him.

The saints are examples of faith for us. Hebrews 12:1 says, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” The saints are this great cloud of witnesses. Their lives encourage us, and their prayers support us as we continue our own race of faith.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, has a special place. When the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, he said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28).

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, called her “blessed among women” (Luke 1:42). Because she said yes to God and gave birth to Jesus, we call her Theotokos, which means “God-bearer” or “Mother of God.” We honour her not as a goddess, but as the woman chosen by God to bring the Saviour into the world. Just as at the wedding in Cana, she interceded with her Son (John 2:3–5), we believe she continues to pray for us now.

When Orthodox Christians ask for the prayers of the saints, we are not worshipping them. Worship belongs to God alone (Matthew 4:10). We honour the saints as friends of God and members of His household (Ephesians 2:19), just as you might respect a godly pastor or elder and ask for their prayers.

The saints are our brothers and sisters in Christ, already in His presence, praying with us and for us, as we all await the day when we will be united forever in His Kingdom.

Orthodox View of Salvation

I would now like to share with you how the Orthodox Church understands salvation. This is at the heart of everything we believe and practice, and I hope you will see that it is very much in line with the Scriptures.

Salvation is a gift of God through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). We cannot save ourselves. It is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are given new life and forgiveness of sins.

Salvation is more than a single moment—it is a life with God. In the New Testament, salvation is described in different tenses: 1) we have been saved (Ephesians 2:5), 2) we are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18), and 3) we will be saved (Romans 5:9–10). This shows that salvation is not just a one-

time event, but the whole journey of living with God —past, present, and future.

Faith and works go together. We believe, as the Bible teaches, that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Good works do not replace faith, and faith does not remove the need for a life of love and obedience. Instead, faith is the root, and works are the fruit. Jesus Himself said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

We are called to grow in holiness. The Orthodox Church teaches that salvation is about becoming more like Christ. Saint Paul says, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Another verse says, “We all ... are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is why we speak of salvation as a process of healing and transformation, not just forgiveness.

The Church is the place where salvation is lived. The Bible shows that baptism unites us with Christ. “Do

you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? ... so that we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3–4). In Holy Communion, we are nourished by Christ Himself (John 6:53–56). Through prayer, worship, and the sacraments, we receive God’s grace to help us grow in faith and holiness.

Salvation is the hope of eternal life with God. Jesus said, “He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25–26). At the end of time, Christ will return, and those who belong to Him will share in His Kingdom forever (Revelation 21:3–4).

The Orthodox Church understands salvation as both a gift and a journey. It begins with God’s grace, received in faith, but it continues as we live in Christ, are changed by Him, and grow in love until the day we see Him face to face.

The Bible and Tradition

In this letter, I would now like to explain how the Orthodox Church understands the Bible and Tradition. These two are not in conflict—they go together, just as they always have since the time of the Apostles.

The Bible is the inspired Word of God. We believe, as the Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is central to everything we believe and do. In every service of the Church, the Holy Scriptures are read aloud and explained.

The Bible came from within the life of the Church. The New Testament did not drop down from heaven complete. It was written by the Apostles and their followers to the churches they served (for example, Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Philippians). The Church then prayerfully gathered these writings and recognised them as Holy

Scripture. This is why Paul could say to the Church, “the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Apostles taught both by word and by writing. Not everything Jesus and the Apostles said was written down. John ends his Gospel by saying: “There are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). Paul also instructed the Thessalonians, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). This means the Church has always treasured both Scripture and the living teaching (Tradition) handed down.

Tradition means the living faith of the Church. When we say “Tradition,” we do not mean human customs or inventions. We mean the living faith that has been handed down from generation to generation

since the Apostles. This includes how we worship, how we pray, how we understand the Bible, and how we live as Christians. It is what Jude refers to as “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

The Bible and Tradition belong together. The Bible itself came from Tradition, and Tradition always agrees with the Bible. They are like two streams flowing from the same source—Christ Himself. The Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures also guides the Church to keep that same faith alive. Jesus promised His disciples, “The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

The Orthodox Church does not see the Bible and Tradition as separate authorities, but as one living voice of God’s truth, passed down faithfully from the Apostles. When we read the Scriptures in the Church, we hear them in the same Spirit in which they were first given.

Differences with Catholics and Protestants

At this point, you may be wondering why the Orthodox Church is not the same as the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant churches you are familiar with. We share much in common, since all of us confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. But there are important differences that come from history and from how we understand the faith handed down by the Apostles.

The Orthodox Church is the original Church of the Apostles. The Church founded by Christ and the Apostles continues unbroken in Orthodoxy. Jesus said, “I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). We see Orthodoxy as that same Church, still living the faith, worship, and teachings of the Apostles without change.

For the first thousand years, all Christians were united in one Church. But over time, the Church of

Rome began to add new teachings that were not part of the ancient faith—such as the universal authority of the Pope over all Christians. The Orthodox Church never accepted this, because in the New Testament the Apostles led the Church together (Acts 15:6, 22), and no single Apostle ruled over the others. In the year 1054, the Church of Rome and the Orthodox Church sadly went separate ways. We pray for unity again, but without changing the ancient faith.

About 500 years ago, the Protestant Reformation began as a reaction against errors in the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers rightly pointed back to the Bible, but they also rejected many of the ancient practices and teachings that the Apostles themselves had passed on. For example, many Protestant churches see Communion as only a symbol, while the Bible says, “The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). Also, many Protestants believe in “Scripture alone,” while the Bible itself tells us to hold to the teachings of the

Apostles given “by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

The Orthodox Church holds to the fullness of the Apostolic faith. Orthodoxy is not a “middle way” between Catholicism and Protestantism. It is the continuation of the one faith given by Christ. We have kept the same worship, the same sacraments, the same understanding of the Bible, and the same structure of the Church that the Apostles gave. This is why we sometimes say the Orthodox Church is the Church of the New Testament still alive today.

What unites us with all Christians? Even though we are different, we know that God loves all who call on the name of Jesus. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). We do not reject our Roman Catholic or Protestant brothers and sisters. Instead, we invite all Christians to discover the ancient faith in its fullness.

The ancient Orthodox Church is different because it has not added to or taken away from the original

faith of the Apostles. It is the same Church they founded, still worshipping and living in Christ as they did.

The Dangers of Cults

In this particular letter I would like to share with you something very important for every Christian to remember. We must always be on guard against false teachings, dangerous religious groups, and cults. The Orthodox Church teaches that we must hold firmly to the faith that was given once for all by the Apostles, without adding to it or taking away from it.

Jesus warned us about false teachers. Our Lord Himself said, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). Not everyone who speaks in His Name is truly following Him. Some groups may use Christian words, but twist them away from the truth of the Gospel.

The Apostles also warned the Church. Paul told the elders of Ephesus, “From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). He also

wrote, “Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). This shows us that any new teaching that contradicts what the Apostles handed down must be rejected.

We are called to guard the faith. Paul instructed Timothy, his spiritual son: “Guard the good deposit entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). The “deposit” is the faith delivered by Christ through His Apostles. Jude also urges us to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). This means the faith does not change; we must remain faithful to it.

Why cults are dangerous. Cults often isolate people, demand blind obedience, or claim to have “new revelations” beyond the Bible and the Apostolic teaching. They can appear friendly at first, but their teachings pull people away from Christ. Jesus said, “See that no one leads you astray” (Matthew 24:4).

The Orthodox Church protects us from this by holding fast to what has always been believed everywhere, from the time of the Apostles.

The safeguard is the Apostolic Church. The Church, described as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), is where we remain safe in the true teaching of Christ. When we stay rooted in the worship, the Scriptures, and the traditions handed down from the beginning, we can recognise and resist false teachings.

In short, it is very important to stay close to the faith of the Apostles. The Orthodox Church does not invent new doctrines or follow passing trends. Instead, she preserves the faith once given, so that we may live in the truth and not be led astray.

The Christian Life

I would now like to tell you how the Orthodox Church understands daily Christian life. Orthodoxy is not only about what happens in church on Sundays—it is about living with Christ every day, in prayer, in Scripture, and in love for others.

Prayer is our daily breath. Just as our bodies cannot live without air, our souls cannot live without prayer. Saint Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This does not mean we must always be saying words, but that we should keep our hearts turned toward God throughout the day. Even a simple prayer like, “Lord, have mercy” or “Lord Jesus Christ, help me,” can keep us close to Him.

Reading the Bible nourishes our faith. The Holy Scriptures are not just for Sundays. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). In Orthodoxy, we are encouraged to read a little from

the Gospels, Psalms, or Epistles each day, so that God's Word becomes part of our minds and hearts.

Fasting teaches us self-control and focus on God. In the Bible, fasting is often joined with prayer (Matthew 6:16–18; Acts 13:2–3). By giving up certain foods on fasting days, we remind ourselves that “man does not live by bread alone.” Fasting is not about rules but about learning to say no to ourselves so that we can say yes to God more fully.

Love for others is essential. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). This means daily life as a Christian must include kindness, forgiveness, and service. Saint James says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27). The Orthodox life is not only about prayer and worship but also about showing Christ's love in action.

Daily life is a journey of growth in Christ. Saint Paul wrote, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13). This means we take small steps every day—through prayer, Scripture, fasting, love, and repentance—trusting that God is shaping us into the likeness of His Son.

Orthodoxy is not only about what we believe, but about how we live. Each day is a chance to walk with Christ, to grow in His grace, and to reflect His love to others.

The End Times

I would like to share with you what the Orthodox Church believes about the end times and the hope that we have in Christ. Many groups speak about the last days in confusing or frightening ways, but the teaching of the Church is clear and full of hope, because it comes from the Bible.

Christ will come again. Just as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He will also return. The angels told the Apostles: “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). His return will be visible to all, not hidden or secret. “For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matthew 24:27).

No one knows the exact day or hour. Jesus Himself said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Matthew 24:36). This means we do

not try to calculate dates. Instead, we live in readiness, trusting His promise.

The dead will be raised. The Bible teaches that when Christ comes again, the dead will rise. Jesus said, “The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29). Saint Paul also writes, “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Christ will judge the living and the dead. We confess in the Creed that Christ “will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.” The Bible says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). This judgment is not meant to frighten us but to remind us to live in faith, repentance, and love, trusting in God’s mercy.

Our final hope is eternal life with God. For those who belong to Christ, the end is not destruction but joy. Saint Paul says, “So we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The book of Revelation gives us this beautiful promise: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

The Orthodox Church teaches that the end times are not something to fear, but something to hope for. Christ will return, the dead will be raised, and those who love Him will share eternal life in His Kingdom. Until that day, we are called to live faithfully, always ready to meet Him.

The Nicene Creed

I would now like to share with you the Nicene Creed. This is the statement of faith that all Orthodox Christians recite in every service. It is called “Nicene” because it was first written at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, when bishops from across the Church gathered to confirm what the Bible teaches about Christ and the Trinity. Every part of the Creed comes from the Holy Scriptures.

Here is the Creed, with simple explanations and Bible verses.

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” This comes from the very first verse of the Bible: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). God is the one true Creator of everything, seen and unseen.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.” The

Bible says Jesus is “the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14). He was not created but begotten, meaning He is eternally from the Father.

“Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Saint Paul also says of Him: “For in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth” (Colossians 1:16).

“Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.” This reflects the angel Gabriel’s words to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you ... therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

“He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.” This is exactly as written in the Gospels: “They took Jesus, and he went out ... there they crucified him” (John 19:16–18).

“And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures.” Saint Paul teaches: “Christ died for our sins... He was buried, and He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

“And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.” The book of Acts says: “As they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9).

“And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.” The Bible says: “He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead” (2 Timothy 4:1), and of His Kingdom, “there will be no end” (Luke 1:33).

“And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.” Jesus said, “The Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will bear

witness about Me” (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit is also called “the Spirit of life” (Romans 8:2).

“In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.” This means the one true Church, set apart for God, found everywhere, and built upon the Apostles. The Bible calls the Church “the household of God ... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:19–20).

“I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.” Peter preached: “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

“I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” Jesus said: “The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out” (John 5:28–29). The book of Revelation promises “a new heaven and a new earth” where God will dwell with His people forever (Revelation 21:1–3).

This Creed is the heart of our faith. Every time we say it, we are confessing together the same faith that Christians have held since the days of the Apostles.

The Orthodox Liturgical Year

I would like to tell you now about something very special in the Orthodox Church. It is the liturgical year. This is the way the Church arranges her seasons of prayer, fasting, and feasting to keep us close to Christ throughout the whole year. Just as families keep birthdays and anniversaries, the Church keeps holy days to remember the life of our Lord and His saints.

The year centres on the life of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). The Church helps us do this by remembering His birth at Christmas (Luke 2:11), His death and resurrection at Pascha (Easter) (Luke 24:6–7), His Ascension (Acts 1:9), and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). Each feast draws us back to the heart of the Gospel.

We also honour the Mother of God and the saints. The Scriptures say, “All generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48). On certain days we remember

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as well as the Apostles, martyrs, and holy men and women who lived faithfully. These feasts encourage us to follow their example (Hebrews 13:7).

Fasting seasons help us prepare our hearts. The Bible shows that God's people fasted often. Moses fasted before receiving the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:28), and Jesus Himself fasted forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). In the Orthodox Church, we have fasting seasons like Great Lent before Easter and shorter fasts before Christmas and other feasts. These times of fasting teach us humility and help us draw closer to God.

Every week also has its rhythm. Sunday is the Lord's Day, the day of the Resurrection (Mark 16:2). That is why the Church gathers every Sunday for the Divine Liturgy. Wednesday and Friday are fast days, because on Wednesday Jesus was betrayed, and on Friday He was crucified. These small weekly practices remind us constantly of His love.

The liturgical year keeps our focus on God. Saint Paul wrote, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). The liturgical calendar is the Church’s way of ordering time so that every season, every week, and even every day can be centred on Christ. Instead of time pulling us away from God, the Church teaches us to sanctify time by remembering His saving work.

The liturgical year is not a burden, but a gift. It gently leads us, step by step, to remember the works of God, to repent of our sins, and to grow in faith and love until the Kingdom of God is fully revealed.

Communion

I would now like to explain two of the most important sacraments (or holy mysteries) of the Church: baptism and Holy Communion. These are not just symbols to us, but real encounters with the grace of God, just as the Bible teaches.

Baptism makes us new in Christ. Jesus Himself said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Baptism is that new birth. Saint Paul teaches: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3–4).

In the Orthodox Church, baptism is always done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Through it, our sins are washed away, and we are joined to Christ and to His Body, the Church (Galatians 3:27).

Baptism is the beginning of a new life. When the people asked Peter what they should do to be saved, he said: “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is not the end, but the start of the Christian journey, filled with the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Holy Communion unites us with Christ. At the Last Supper, Jesus took bread and said, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:19–20). In Holy Communion, we truly receive His Body and Blood. Saint Paul explains: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Holy Communion is life-giving. Jesus Himself said: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:53–54). This shows us that Communion is not only a remembrance, but a real sharing in the life of Christ.

Baptism and Communion belong together. In the early Church, those who were baptised immediately received Holy Communion, as the new birth and the new food of eternal life go hand in hand. Baptism brings us into Christ, and Communion keeps us united to Him as we walk the Christian path.

Baptism is our birth into Christ, and Communion is our nourishment in Him. Together, they are at the heart of Orthodox life, just as they were in the time of the Apostles.

Repentance and Confession

I would like to explain how the Orthodox Church understands confession and repentance. These may seem unfamiliar, but they are part of the life of every Christian who seeks to follow Christ faithfully.

Repentance is turning back to God. The word “repent” in the Bible means a change of heart and mind. Jesus began His preaching with these words: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Repentance is not about feeling hopeless, but about turning away from sin and back toward God, who is ready to forgive.

Confession is commanded in Scripture. The Apostle John writes: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Saint James says, “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). Confession is therefore not a man-made tradition, but something rooted in the Bible.

Confession is done before Christ, in the presence of a priest. In Orthodoxy, when we confess, we are confessing to Christ Himself. The priest is only a witness, standing as the servant of the Church, to hear and to pronounce the assurance of forgiveness. Jesus gave His Apostles the authority when He said: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23). Through confession, Christ continues to work through His Church to heal our hearts. Confession was not only private prayer—it was done before the Church’s leaders. “And many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.” (Acts 19:18) “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders (presbyters, priests) of the church, and let them pray over him...” (James 5:14). While we can and should confess our sins directly to God in private prayer (1 John 1:9), confession before a priest brings the assurance of Christ’s words spoken through the Church: “Your sins are forgiven.” This is not the priest’s personal power, but the gift of Christ working through His Church.

Repentance brings renewal. King David, after his sin, prayed: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). This is the same prayer of every Christian who seeks forgiveness. Repentance does not leave us in shame, but restores us to joy and peace with God.

Confession is part of our growth in holiness. Saint Paul wrote: “Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret” (2 Corinthians 7:10). By confessing and repenting, we open ourselves to God’s grace, which strengthens us to fight against sin and to grow more like Christ.

Confession and repentance are gifts from God, not burdens. They are the way we find healing, forgiveness, and renewal in our walk with Christ.

Why Pray for the Departed?

In this letter I would like to explain why the Orthodox Church prays for those who have departed this life. For many Christians from Protestant backgrounds, this may seem unfamiliar, but it is deeply rooted in our belief in the love of Christ and the unity of His Body.

Death does not separate us from the love of Christ. Saint Paul writes, “For I am sure that neither death, nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39). Because the departed remain alive in Christ, we continue to pray for them, just as we pray for the living.

We believe the faithful who have died are still part of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, and all believers—both living and departed—remain members of that Body. “Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8).

This means we are united with our loved ones in Christ, even after death.

The Bible shows prayer for the departed. In the Old Testament, Judas Maccabeus and his men prayed for their fallen companions, asking God to forgive their sins (2 Maccabees 12:44–45). This shows that God’s people have long prayed for the departed, trusting in His mercy.

Our prayers are acts of love. Saint Paul urges us: “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:14). Prayer for the departed is simply love expressed in prayer, asking God to grant them rest and mercy. The book of Revelation shows the saints in heaven offering prayers before God like incense (Revelation 8:3–4). Our prayers join theirs.

We trust in God’s judgment and mercy. Only God knows the hearts of men, and He alone is Judge (2 Timothy 4:8). When we pray for the departed, we do not try to change His judgment, but we humbly

commend them to His mercy, asking Him to grant them peace and rest in His Kingdom.

Prayer for the departed is an act of faith, hope, and love. It shows that the Church is one family, united in Christ, whether in this life or the next.

Orthodox View of Icons

I would like to write a little more about icons, since they are one of the first things people notice when they enter an Orthodox Church. Icons are holy images of Christ, His Mother, and the saints. Some Christians from Protestant backgrounds may wonder if this is idolatry, but it is not. Let me explain why.

God commanded images in worship. In the Old Testament, God told Moses to make golden images of cherubim to stand over the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18–22). Later, the Temple built by Solomon was filled with carved images of palm trees, flowers, and angels (1 Kings 6:29–30). These images were not idols; they were reminders of God’s heavenly glory.

Jesus became visible and can be depicted. Before Christ came, God was unseen. But when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), He took on a human face that people could see and touch (1 John 1:1). Because Jesus truly became

man, it is right to show His image. An icon of Christ proclaims that He is real, not just an idea.

Honouring an icon is not worshipping it. The Bible distinguishes between worship, which belongs to God alone (Matthew 4:10), and honour or respect given to godly people. For example, God commands us to “honour your father and mother” (Exodus 20:12). When we kiss an icon or bow before it, we are not worshipping wood and paint, but showing love to the person it represents—just as someone might kiss a photo of a loved one.

Icons help us remember the cloud of witnesses. The book of Hebrews tells us we are “surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). Icons are a way of remembering that we are not alone in our faith. The saints who have gone before us surround us, encouraging us to run the race with endurance.

Icons point us to heaven. The book of Revelation describes heavenly worship filled with images—

angels, elders, incense, and the Lamb of God (Revelation 5:6–14). When we look at icons, we are reminded that our worship on earth joins the worship already happening in heaven.

Icons are not idols because they are not worshipped. They are windows into heaven, helping us remember Christ and His saints, and drawing our hearts toward the Kingdom of God.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

In this short letter, I would like to explain why the Orthodox Church gives special honour to the Virgin Mary, whom we call Theotokos, which means “God-bearer” or “Mother of God.” This title was confirmed by the Church in the early centuries to protect the truth of who Jesus is—true God and true man.

The Bible calls Mary blessed. When the angel Gabriel greeted her, he said: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). Later, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:42). Mary herself, in her song of praise, declared: “From now on all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48).

Mary is honoured because of her role in salvation. God chose Mary to bring His Son into the world. Through her “yes” to God’s will, the Word became flesh (Luke 1:38; John 1:14). She gave Christ His

humanity, which means our salvation came through her obedience and love.

At the Cross, Jesus gave her to us as our Mother. When Jesus was dying, He said to His disciple John, “Behold, your mother!” (John 19:27). The Church has always understood that Mary is a spiritual mother to all Christians, because she is the mother of Christ, the Head of the Body, which is the Church (Colossians 1:18).

Honouring Mary does not replace Christ. We worship God alone (Matthew 4:10). The honour we give to Mary is different from the worship we give to the Lord. We venerate her because she is the greatest example of a faithful disciple, the one who bore God Himself in her womb and remained faithful to the end.

Mary continues to intercede for us. At the wedding in Cana, Mary said to Jesus that the wine had run out, and then told the servants, “Do whatever He tells you” (John 2:3–5). In the same way, the

Orthodox Church believes she continues to pray for us and to point us toward her Son, always saying, “Do whatever He tells you.”

We honour Mary not as a goddess, but as the humble servant of the Lord, the mother of Jesus Christ, and the example of perfect obedience and love. Her life strengthens our own faith in Christ and encourages us to say yes to God.

Angels

I would like to share with you what the Orthodox Church believes about the angels. Sometimes people imagine angels only as symbols or stories, but the Bible shows us that they are real, spiritual beings created by God to serve Him and to help us.

Angels are created by God. The Bible says, “For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16). Angels are part of the invisible creation. They are not human, but spiritual beings who serve God.

Angels are messengers of God. The very word angel means “messenger.” In the Bible, angels often carry God’s message to people. Gabriel brought the news of Christ’s birth to Mary (Luke 1:26–28). Angels also appeared to the shepherds, praising God and announcing the birth of the Saviour (Luke 2:9–11).

Angels worship God in heaven. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of angels crying out, “Holy, holy, holy is

the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). In the book of Revelation, countless angels surround God’s throne, worshipping Him (Revelation 5:11–12). Our worship on earth joins with theirs.

Angels are protectors and helpers. The Bible says, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7). Jesus also spoke of guardian angels when He said, “Their angels always behold the face of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). This shows us that God sends His angels to watch over His people.

Angels serve Christ and His Church. After Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, “angels came and ministered to Him” (Matthew 4:11). In the book of Acts, an angel freed Peter from prison (Acts 12:7–10). Angels are active in God’s plan of salvation, helping His people and carrying out His will.

Angels will be present at the end of time. Jesus said, “The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will

gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin” (Matthew 13:41). Angels will also accompany Christ when He returns in glory (Matthew 25:31).

The Orthodox Church teaches that angels are real, holy servants of God. They worship Him constantly, carry His messages, protect His people, and serve in His plan of salvation. They remind us that we are never alone, for God’s heavenly hosts surround us.

Spiritual Warfare

I would now like to speak about something every Christian faces: spiritual warfare. This means the struggle we go through against temptation, sin, and the powers of darkness. The Bible shows us that our faith is not only about believing, but also about standing firm against the enemy with God's help.

Our battle is spiritual, not just physical. Saint Paul writes: "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). This reminds us that evil is real, but our strength comes from God.

God gives us His armour. Paul tells us to "put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). He describes this armour as truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer (Ephesians 6:13–18). These are not

physical weapons, but the spiritual gifts God gives us to remain strong.

Jesus is our example in resisting temptation. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He answered every attack of the devil with Scripture: “It is written...” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). This shows us that knowing and using God’s Word is one of the greatest defences in spiritual warfare.

Prayer is our shield. Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In moments of temptation, even a short prayer such as, “Lord, have mercy” or “Lord Jesus Christ, save me,” can bring God’s strength into our weakness.

We are not left to fight alone. God promises: “Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7–8). The Orthodox Church also teaches that we fight as part of a family. The prayers of the saints, the sacraments of the Church, and the support of other Christians all strengthen us in the battle.

Victory belongs to Christ. The good news is that the battle has already been won in Jesus. On the Cross, “He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Him” (Colossians 2:15). When we cling to Christ, we share in His victory.

Spiritual warfare is real, but we need not fear. God gives us His armour, His Word, His Spirit, and His Church to help us. Our part is to stay watchful, resist temptation, and keep our eyes fixed on Christ, who has already overcome the world (John 16:33).

The Church is a Family

I would now like to share how the Orthodox Church understands the Church itself—not only as a building or a place of worship, but as a family and community united in Christ.

The Church is the Body of Christ. Saint Paul teaches us: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). This means that when we are joined to Christ, we are also joined to one another. We are not saved alone, but together, as part of His Body.

The Church is a household. The Bible says that in Christ, “you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). This is why we call the Church our spiritual family. We share one Father in heaven, and we become brothers and sisters to each other in Christ.

The Church is a community of worship. From the beginning, Christians gathered together: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Worship is never something private or individual in Orthodoxy—it is the whole family of God coming together, both in heaven and on earth, to glorify Him.

We bear one another’s burdens. Paul tells us: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). The Church is a place where we help each other through prayer, encouragement, and love. When one suffers, we all share that burden; when one rejoices, we all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:26).

The Church is a communion of love. Jesus said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). In the Orthodox Church, this love is not just words—it is lived out in service, forgiveness, and care for each other.

The Church is our spiritual home. The Church is not only where we go on Sundays, but the place where we grow, are healed, and find strength for daily life. It is the community in which we are baptised, receive Communion, confess our sins, and live out the journey of salvation together.

The Orthodox Church is not only about faith in God, but also about belonging to a family—a family that stretches across the world and even into heaven, uniting all believers in Christ.

Children

I would like to share with you something very close to the heart of the Orthodox Church: our duty to protect children and all who are vulnerable. This is not only a moral responsibility, but a command from our Lord Himself.

Jesus welcomed children with love. When His disciples tried to turn them away, Jesus said: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). In the Orthodox Church, we believe children are precious gifts of God, and they must be nurtured in faith, love, and safety.

Harming children is a grave sin. Jesus also gave a very strong warning: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). This shows the seriousness with which God views the protection of

children.

The vulnerable must be defended. The Bible often speaks of God's care for the weak. "Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17). The Church sees this as a command to stand up for those who cannot protect themselves.

Our example is Christ the Good Shepherd. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Just as He watches over us with love, we are called to watch over the little ones and those who are at risk, guarding them from those who would cause harm.

Protecting children is part of keeping the faith. Saint Paul reminds us to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). One of those traditions is to live out the love of Christ in our daily lives. To guard the innocent is to live faithfully as Christians, for love "does no wrong to a neighbour" (Romans 13:10).

The holy Orthodox Church teaches that we must always protect children and the vulnerable from harm. To do this is to follow the command of Christ, to reflect His love, and to preserve the faith He entrusted to us.

Marriage

In this letter I would like to tell you how the Orthodox Church understands marriage and family life. Marriage is not only a social agreement but a holy union, blessed by God, meant to be a path of love and holiness.

Marriage is part of God's creation. From the beginning, God made man and woman for one another. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This union is blessed by God, not only for companionship, but also for the raising of children in faith.

Marriage is a holy mystery. Saint Paul writes: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). The love between husband and wife is meant to reflect Christ's love for His Church. This is why Orthodoxy calls marriage a sacrament—a sign of God's grace in human life.

Marriage is lifelong. Jesus taught: “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). The Church sees marriage as a covenant, not just between two people, but with God. It is meant to be faithful, enduring, and filled with mutual support.

Family is a place of faith. The Holy Scriptures call parents to raise children in God’s ways. “Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). In the Orthodox Church, the family is often called the “little church,” because it is where prayer, love, and forgiveness are first learned.

Marriage and family are paths to holiness. The purpose of marriage is not only happiness, but holiness. Through patience, forgiveness, and love, husband and wife help each other grow closer to Christ. Children, too, are part of this journey, as they learn to love God and neighbour within the family home.

The Orthodox Church teaches that marriage and

family life are blessed by God as a way to live out the Gospel each day. They are places where faith, love, and holiness are nurtured, and where Christ Himself is present.

Suffering and Trials

I would like to share with you how the Orthodox Church understands suffering and trials. Every Christian faces pain, loss, and hardship in life. These things can be difficult to accept, but the Bible teaches us that God can use even suffering to bring us closer to Him.

Jesus Himself suffered. Our Lord is not distant from our pain. The prophet Isaiah called Him “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). On the Cross, Jesus carried our sins and our sufferings (1 Peter 2:24). This means that when we suffer, we are never alone—Christ is with us.

Trials can strengthen our faith. Saint James writes: “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (James 1:2–3). In Orthodoxy, we see trials not as punishments, but as opportunities to grow in patience, endurance, and trust in God.

God brings good out of suffering. Saint Paul tells us: “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him” (Romans 8:28). Even in the hardest times, God can turn our pain into a source of strength and compassion, shaping us into Christ’s likeness.

Suffering joins us to Christ. Paul also says, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (Philippians 3:10). When we bear suffering with faith, we are sharing in Christ’s own path, which leads to resurrection and life.

Our hope is greater than suffering. Saint Paul writes, “For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17). The Orthodox Church teaches that all pain and sorrow will one day be overcome, when Christ wipes away every tear (Revelation 21:4).

The Orthodox view is not that suffering is meaningless, but that God transforms it. He allows trials to purify our faith, to teach us endurance, and to prepare us for the joy of His Kingdom.

The Books of the Bible

I wish to take a moment to share with you something very important to Orthodoxy: the Bible as it is received and used in the Apostolic Church. You may notice that our Bible has more books than the Protestant Bible you are familiar with. Let me explain why.

The Orthodox Bible contains more books in the Old Testament. In total, the Orthodox Bible has 49 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, making 76 books altogether. Protestants have 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books, for a total of 66.

The Old Testament books in the Orthodox Bible include the following:

The Pentateuch (Law): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras (Ezra-Nehemiah), Esther, Judith, Tobit, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees. Wisdom and Poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Prayer of Manasseh.

Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel (with the additions: Prayer of Azariah, Song of the Three Holy Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon), Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The New Testament is the same for all Christians, with 27 books: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

You may now be wondering why Protestants do not have the same canon. In the early Church, Christians used the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. This version included all the books I listed above. The Apostles themselves quoted from the Septuagint many times in the New Testament (for example, Hebrews 10:5 quotes Psalm 40:6 from the Septuagint).

During the Reformation in the 1500s, Protestant leaders decided to use only the books found in the Hebrew Bible, which has fewer books than the Septuagint. This is why Protestant Bibles have 66 books, while Orthodox Bibles have 76.

The Orthodox Church keeps the fuller canon. The Orthodox Church believes that the same books used by the Apostles and the early Christians should remain part of the Bible today. These additional books are often called the Deuterocanonical books. They contain important teachings about faith, wisdom, and God's care for His people.

The Orthodox Bible includes more Old Testament books because it follows the original Scriptures used by the Apostles and the early Church. We see the Bible as the complete witness of God's Word, faithfully preserved for His people.

The 10 Commandments

In this letter, I would like to share with you how the Orthodox Church understands the Ten Commandments. These were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21). They are not only laws for ancient Israel but remain the foundation of how we are called to live as Christians.

The First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:3) This teaches us to love God above all else. Jesus said, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve” (Matthew 4:10).

The Second Commandment: “You shall not make for yourself a graven image ... you shall not bow down to them or serve them.” (Exodus 20:4–5) This forbids idolatry—worshipping created things instead of God. In Orthodoxy, we venerate icons, but we never worship them; worship belongs to God alone.

The Third Commandment: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.” (Exodus 20:7) God’s name is holy. Jesus taught us to pray, “Hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). We honour His name in prayer, speech, and daily life.

The Fourth Commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” (Exodus 20:8) For most Christians, Sunday is the Lord’s Day, because Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Mark 16:2). The Orthodox Church gathers daily, but especially every Sunday for worship and Communion.

The Fifth Commandment: “Honour your father and your mother.” (Exodus 20:12) This teaches respect for parents and for all who have authority. Saint Paul repeats it: “Honour your father and mother ... that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2–3).

The Sixth Commandment: “You shall not kill.” (Exodus 20:13) This forbids murder, because life is

God's gift. Jesus also deepened it by teaching that even anger and hatred must be overcome (Matthew 5:21–22).

The Seventh Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) This protects the holiness of marriage. Jesus said, "Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Purity and faithfulness are part of Christian life.

The Eighth Commandment: "You shall not steal." (Exodus 20:15) This teaches honesty and respect for others' property. Paul says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work ... so that he may be able to give to those in need" (Ephesians 4:28).

The Ninth Commandment: "You shall not bear false witness." (Exodus 20:16) This forbids lying and slander. Jesus said, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'" (Matthew 5:37). Truthfulness is part of following Him who is the Truth (John 14:6).

The Tenth Commandment: “You shall not covet.” (Exodus 20:17) This guards our hearts against envy and greed. Paul writes, “Be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5), and Jesus warns, “Take heed, and beware of all covetousness” (Luke 12:15).

The Ten Commandments are not just rules, but a guide to loving God and loving our neighbour. Jesus summed them up with these words: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39).

The Beatitudes

I would now like to share with you the words of Jesus called the Beatitudes. These are found at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1–12). They show us the way of life that every Christian is called to follow.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This means being humble before God, knowing that we depend on Him for everything. “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This is not only about sorrow in life, but also about mourning for sin and for the brokenness of the world. God promises His comfort and healing (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Meekness is not weakness, but gentleness

and patience. Jesus said, “Learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” This means longing for God’s will and for holiness. Jesus promised, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matthew 6:33).

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Showing kindness and forgiveness to others opens our hearts to God’s mercy. “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Purity is not only about actions but about the heart. When our hearts are clean, we are able to experience God’s presence. “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalm 51:10).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Christians are called to bring

peace, not conflict. Saint Paul says, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Those who suffer for the sake of Christ share in His victory. “Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” Jesus calls us to rejoice even in trials, because “your reward is great in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). The saints of every generation show us that faithfulness brings eternal blessing.

The Beatitudes are not just beautiful words—they are the roadmap to the Christian life. They show us how to live with humility, mercy, purity, and love, so that we may inherit the Kingdom of God.

The Psalms in Orthodoxy

I would like to write about the Psalms, which are very important in the Orthodox Church. The Psalms are prayers and hymns found in the Old Testament, written mostly by King David. They express every human emotion—joy, sorrow, fear, hope—and they teach us how to pray from the heart.

The Psalms are inspired by God. The Bible says: “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Psalms are part of this inspired Scripture, and they guide us in prayer and worship.

Jesus prayed the Psalms. On the Cross, Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), which is the beginning of Psalm 22. This shows that the Psalms were the prayers on His own lips. If Jesus prayed them, then they are also prayers for us.

The Psalms are used in the Church's worship. In the Orthodox Church, the Psalms are read and sung at every service. For example, Psalm 103 ("Bless the Lord, O my soul") begins the morning prayers, and Psalm 50 ("Have mercy on me, O God") is prayed daily in repentance. The book of Psalms is sometimes called the "prayer book of the Church."

The Psalms express every part of life. Some Psalms are filled with praise: "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!" (Psalm 150:6). Others are cries for help: "Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord" (Psalm 130:1). This shows us that no matter what we are feeling, we can bring it honestly before God.

The Psalms point us to Christ. Many Psalms are prophecies of the coming Messiah. For example, Psalm 22 describes Christ's suffering on the Cross, and Psalm 16 speaks of His Resurrection: "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:31).

The Psalms strengthen our daily prayer. Saint Paul encourages us: “Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16). When we pray the Psalms, we are joining our voices with generations of believers who have prayed them before us.

For Orthodox Christians, the Psalms are not only ancient prayers but living words of the Spirit. They teach us to worship, to repent, to trust, and to hope in God.

The Lord's Prayer

I would now like to share with you the prayer that Jesus Himself taught us, known as the Lord's Prayer. It is found in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4. In the Orthodox Church, we pray it in every service, and many Christians use it daily. Here is what it means.

“Our Father, who art in heaven.” Jesus teaches us to call God “Father” because through Christ we are His children. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

“Hallowed be Thy name.” This means we honour God's holy name with reverence. “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name” (Psalm 29:2).

“Thy kingdom come.” We pray for God's reign of love and righteousness to fill the earth. Jesus said, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We ask for the strength to do God’s will, not our own. Jesus Himself prayed, “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42).

“Give us this day our daily bread.” This means both the food we need to live and the spiritual bread of Christ Himself. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).

“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” We ask for God’s mercy, but we must also forgive others. Jesus taught, “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you” (Matthew 6:14).

“And lead us not into temptation.” We pray for God’s protection from the trials that could overwhelm us. Paul assures us, “God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“But deliver us from evil.” We ask God to guard us from the evil one, the devil, and from all harm. Jesus prayed to the Father, “Keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.” This closing doxology, used in the Orthodox Church, echoes the Scripture: “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty” (1 Chronicles 29:11).

The Lord’s Prayer teaches us to trust God as our Father, to seek His will, to depend on Him daily, to forgive and be forgiven, and to live in His Kingdom. It is the perfect prayer because it comes from Christ Himself.

Sacraments of the Orthodox Church

I would now like to explain the sacraments of the Orthodox Church. These are also called the holy mysteries. They are special ways in which God shares His grace with us, through visible signs joined with His invisible power.

Sacraments are gifts from Christ. Jesus gave us these holy actions to bring us closer to Him. For example, He commanded baptism: “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” (Matthew 28:19). He also gave us Holy Communion: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Sacraments make God’s grace real in our lives. Saint Paul explains: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). This shows

that sacraments are not empty symbols, but real encounters with Christ.

The Orthodox Church recognises seven main sacraments:

- 1) Baptism — new birth in Christ (Romans 6:3–4).
- 2) Chrismation (Confirmation) — the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17).
- 3) Holy Communion — receiving the Body and Blood of Christ (John 6:53–54).
- 4) Confession — forgiveness of sins (John 20:23).
- 5) Marriage — the union of husband and wife blessed by God (Ephesians 5:31–32).
- 6) Ordination — the setting apart of clergy to serve the Church (1 Timothy 4:14).
- 7) Holy Unction (Anointing with oil) — healing of soul and body (James 5:14–15).

The sacraments are part of the Church's life. The book of Acts shows the first Christians living this way: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread

and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). This is the same life the Orthodox Church continues today.

The sacraments are the path of salvation. Through them, God nourishes us, forgives us, heals us, and makes us holy. They are not magic, but living encounters with Christ. As Saint Peter says, we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

The sacraments are the holy mysteries through which God pours His grace into our lives. They are His gifts, given through the Church, to help us live and grow in Christ.

How Christ's Church is Organised

I would now like to explain how the Orthodox Church is organised. The Church has a hierarchy, which means an order of leadership, but it is not like a worldly chain of command. It is a family of service, rooted in the example of Christ, who said, “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:26).

Christ is the Head of the Church. The most important truth is that Jesus Himself is the true head of the Church. “Christ is the head of the Church, His body, and is Himself its Saviour” (Ephesians 5:23). All leaders in the Church serve under Him.

The Apostles appointed bishops to guide the Church. In the New Testament, we see that the Apostles established overseers (*episkopoi*, meaning bishops) to care for the local churches. Paul told Titus: “Appoint elders in every town ... for a bishop

must be blameless as God’s steward” (Titus 1:5–7). Bishops continue the ministry of the Apostles by guarding the faith and leading the Church in truth.

Patriarchs are senior bishops. In Orthodox history, certain ancient cities became important centres of Christianity, such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and later Moscow. The bishops of these places are called patriarchs. Their role is to guide and care for many churches, but not as rulers—rather as fathers among fathers.

Priests serve under the bishops. Priests (also called presbyters) are appointed by the bishop to serve local parishes. In the New Testament, Paul and Barnabas “appointed elders for them in every church” (Acts 14:23). Priests lead worship, celebrate the sacraments, preach, and pastor the faithful, always in unity with their bishop.

Deacons serve the Church through ministry. The book of Acts tells how the Apostles appointed seven deacons to care for the needs of the community

(Acts 6:3–6). Deacons assist in the services, help with charity, and support the work of the bishop and priests. Their ministry is one of service, following the example of Christ the Servant.

The faithful are also part of the royal priesthood. While bishops, priests, and deacons have special roles, every believer is part of the Church's life. Saint Peter writes: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9). The hierarchy exists not to elevate some above others, but to guide and serve the whole Body of Christ.

The Orthodox Church is ordered in a way that continues the pattern of the New Testament. Bishops, priests, and deacons serve the people of God, and together with all the faithful, the Church is one family under Christ, who is our true Head.

Monastics

I would like to write to you about monastic life in the Orthodox Church. Monks and nuns are Christians who dedicate their entire lives to prayer, worship, and service. Their calling may seem unusual to some, but it is deeply rooted in the Bible and in the life of the early Church.

Monastic life is a response to Christ's call. Jesus said, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). Monks and nuns take these words very literally. They give up possessions, marriage, and worldly ambitions in order to live fully for Christ.

The Apostle Paul praised this way of life. Paul himself lived unmarried so he could serve the Lord more freely. He wrote: "The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:32). Monastic life follows this same pattern—total devotion to God.

Monastics live in prayer for the world. Monks and nuns spend hours each day in prayer, reading the Psalms, and celebrating services. Saint Paul urges us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Monastics take this command very seriously, praying not only for themselves but for the whole world.

Monasticism continues the example of the early Christians. In the book of Acts, many believers sold their possessions and lived in common: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44). Monasteries keep this same spirit, with communities living together in faith and simplicity.

Monastics remind us of our true goal. While most Christians live in the world, raising families and working, monks and nuns remind us that our ultimate home is in heaven. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Hebrews 13:14). Their way of life is a sign pointing us toward the Kingdom of God.

Monastics are not “better Christians.” The Orthodox Church teaches that monks and nuns are not holier by nature; they simply have a different calling. Marriage and family life are also holy paths. Both ways are blessed by God and lead to salvation when lived in faith and love.

Monastic life is a special calling in the Church, dedicated to prayer, simplicity, and devotion to Christ. It exists not apart from the Church, but as a living witness to the Gospel and a support for all Christians.

Tradition

I would like to explain something very important in the Orthodox Church: Holy Tradition. This word can be confusing, because many people think “tradition” only means human customs. But in the Orthodox Church, Holy Tradition means the living faith of the Apostles, passed down to us in the life of the Church.

Holy Tradition includes both written and spoken teaching. Saint Paul tells the Thessalonians: “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). This shows us that the Apostles handed down the faith not only in writing (Scripture), but also in teaching and practice (Tradition).

Tradition is rooted in Christ Himself. Jesus told His Apostles, “He who hears you hears Me” (Luke 10:16). The Apostles passed on what they received

from Christ. The Church has faithfully kept this living deposit of faith from generation to generation.

The Bible itself came from Tradition. The New Testament was written within the life of the Church, and it was the Church that preserved these writings and recognised them as Scripture. Saint Paul calls the Church “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Without the Church’s living Tradition, we would not even know which books belong in the Bible.

Tradition is guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Apostles: “The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). Tradition is the work of the Holy Spirit, keeping the Church faithful to Christ through the centuries.

Holy Tradition is not the same as human traditions. Jesus warned against traditions of men that set aside God’s commandments (Mark 7:8). The Orthodox Church agrees. Human customs may

change, but Holy Tradition is the unchanging faith of the Apostles. It safeguards the truth of the Gospel and helps us live it fully.

Tradition and Scripture belong together. In Orthodoxy, we never separate Scripture from Tradition. They are like two streams flowing from the same source: Christ. Tradition gives us the right understanding of Scripture, and Scripture confirms and strengthens Tradition. Both are gifts of the Spirit.

Holy Tradition is not something added to the Bible. It is the fullness of the Apostolic faith, the life of the Church, preserved by the Holy Spirit, and handed down from generation to generation.

The Kingdom of God

In this letter, I would like to share with you what the Orthodox Church believes about the Kingdom of God. This is one of the main themes of Jesus' teaching. The Kingdom is both something we experience now and something we wait for in the future.

The Kingdom is already here in Christ. When Jesus began His ministry, He preached: "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Wherever Christ is present, the Kingdom is already breaking into this world. In the Church—through worship, the sacraments, and the life of faith—we taste this Kingdom even now.

The Kingdom is within us. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). This means that when we live with faith, love, and obedience to Christ, His reign begins in our hearts. The Kingdom is not only a place but also a way of life under God's rule.

The Kingdom is still to come in fullness. Though we already share in it, the fullness of the Kingdom will come when Christ returns. Jesus taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10). At the end of time, He will return in glory, and “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

The Kingdom is a gift, not something we earn. Jesus says: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). God invites us into His reign as a gift of love. Our part is to respond with faith and obedience.

The Kingdom belongs to the humble and faithful. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). The Kingdom is not for the proud or powerful, but for those who are humble, merciful, and faithful in following Christ.

The Kingdom is eternal life with God. Saint Paul tells us: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). This means that our earthly life is only the beginning. The Kingdom is our final home, where God will wipe away every tear and death shall be no more (Revelation 21:4).

The Kingdom of God is both present and future. We already taste it in the life of the Church, but we also look forward to its fullness when Christ returns. It is the life of God’s love, both now and forever.

The Cross in the Orthodox Church

I would now like to share with you the meaning of the Cross in the Orthodox Church. For us, the Cross is not only a reminder of Christ's suffering, but also the sign of His victory over sin and death.

The Cross is at the centre of the Gospel. Saint Paul said: "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23–24). The Cross is not an accident—it is the very heart of God's plan of salvation.

On the Cross, Christ bore our sins. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole" (Isaiah 53:5). Saint Peter says the same: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

The Cross is also Christ's victory. By dying and rising, Jesus destroyed the power of death. "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Him" (Colossians 2:15). What looked like defeat became the greatest victory.

The Cross is the path of discipleship. Jesus said: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). This means that every Christian is called to carry his or her own cross—enduring struggles with faith, patience, and love, following Christ's example.

The Cross brings life. Jesus said: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). In Orthodoxy, we see the Cross as the tree of life, because through it, Christ has opened the way to eternal life.

The Cross is our sign of hope. Saint Paul declares: "Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). We wear the

Cross, make the sign of the Cross, and place it at the centre of our churches—not as a decoration, but as a reminder that Christ has conquered, and we share in His victory.

The Cross is both sacrifice and triumph. It shows us God's love, frees us from sin, defeats death, and calls us to follow Christ with courage and hope.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

I would now like to share with you the heart of the Christian faith: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the Orthodox Church, the Resurrection is the greatest feast of the year and the foundation of everything we believe.

Christ truly rose from the dead. On the third day after His crucifixion, the tomb was found empty. The angel told the women: “He is not here; for He has risen, as He said” (Matthew 28:6). The Apostles were witnesses to this, and they proclaimed it boldly: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32).

Without the Resurrection, our faith is empty. Saint Paul wrote: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). The Resurrection proves that Jesus is truly the Son of God, that His death defeated sin, and that His life is stronger than death.

The Resurrection gives us new life. Through baptism, we share in Christ's Resurrection. Paul teaches: "We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). This means the Resurrection is not only about the future, but already changes how we live today.

The Resurrection is the promise of our own rising. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Just as Christ rose, we too will rise at the last day. Paul tells us: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

The Resurrection is victory over death. In Christ, death is no longer the end, but the doorway to eternal life. Paul triumphantly declares: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:54–55).

The Resurrection is our hope and joy. Because of Christ's Resurrection, we do not grieve like those without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14). We know that one day we will be with Him forever in His Kingdom, where sorrow and death will be no more (Revelation 21:4).

The Resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. It is the victory of Christ, the source of our new life now, and the promise of eternal life to come.

Pentecost and the Holy Spirit

I would now like to share with you the meaning of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox Church, Pentecost is one of the greatest feasts, because it marks the moment when the Church was filled with the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. Fifty days after Christ's Resurrection, the disciples were gathered in prayer. The book of Acts tells us: "Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire ... and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2–4). From that moment, the Apostles began to preach boldly, and the Church began to grow.

The Holy Spirit gives life to the Church. The Spirit is not an idea, but the living presence of God. Jesus called Him "the Comforter" and said, "The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John

14:26). The Spirit guides the Church, helping her remain faithful to Christ.

The Spirit dwells in every believer. When we are baptised and chrismated (confirmed), we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul says: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). This means God Himself lives within us, helping us to grow in holiness.

The Spirit gives us gifts. The Bible lists many gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, faith, healing, discernment, and more (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). These gifts are not for pride but for service—to build up the Body of Christ.

The Spirit produces fruit in our lives. Paul also teaches that the Spirit’s presence is seen in the “fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). These are the signs of a life transformed by God.

The Spirit is our strength in daily life. Saint Paul says, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26). When we do not know how to pray, when we struggle, or when we face trials, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us and gives us strength.

Pentecost shows us that God has not left us alone. The Holy Spirit fills the Church and each believer, guiding, strengthening, and making us holy. He is the living breath of God in our lives.

The Last Judgement

I would like to write this letter concerning what the Orthodox Church teaches about the Last Judgment. This is the time at the end of the world when Christ will return and judge all people, both the living and the dead. It is both a warning and a great source of hope.

Christ Himself will be the Judge. Jesus said: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations” (Matthew 25:31–32). The judgment belongs to Him, for He is both God and the One who became man for our salvation.

All will rise from the dead. Jesus said: “The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29). This means that every person who has ever lived will stand before Christ.

We will be judged by our faith and our deeds. Saint Paul teaches: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus also said that at the judgment, He will separate people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, based on whether they showed love and mercy to others (Matthew 25:35–36).

The standard is love. Christ makes it clear that what we do for others, we do for Him: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Love is the true measure of a Christian life.

The righteous will enter eternal life. Jesus promised: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43). For those who belong to Christ, the judgment is not a terror, but the doorway into eternal joy with Him.

The wicked will be separated from God. At the same time, those who reject Christ and His love will face eternal separation. Jesus calls this “outer darkness” (Matthew 22:13). The Orthodox Church understands this not as God desiring anyone’s destruction, but as the natural result of rejecting Him who is Life itself.

Judgment is also a hope for justice. In a world where evil often seems to go unpunished, the Last Judgment is a promise that God will set all things right. Paul says that God “will render to every man according to his works” (Romans 2:6). For the faithful, this brings comfort and peace.

The Last Judgment is certain and universal. It calls us to live now with faith, love, and mercy, so that we may hear the blessed words of Christ: “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

Repentance

I would like to share with you more about repentance. In the Orthodox Church, repentance is not only something we do once, but a lifelong journey of turning our hearts back to God.

Repentance begins with Christ's call. When Jesus began His ministry, His first words were: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Repentance means changing our direction—turning away from sin and back toward God.

Repentance is more than feeling sorry. True repentance is not only sorrow for sin, but a desire to change. Saint Paul explains: "Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This kind of sorrow brings healing, not despair.

Repentance is daily renewal. The Orthodox Church teaches that repentance is part of every day. King David prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God,

and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Each day is a new opportunity to return to God with sincerity.

Repentance brings forgiveness. The Bible promises: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Repentance always leads to God’s mercy, because He desires not the death of the sinner, but that we turn and live (Ezekiel 18:23).

Repentance heals the soul. Sin wounds us, but repentance restores us. This is why the Church offers confession, prayer, fasting, and acts of love as ways to strengthen us in the journey of repentance. Jesus Himself compared it to a son returning to his father, who runs to embrace him (Luke 15:20).

Repentance leads us closer to Christ. As we repent, we are drawn into deeper union with Christ, who said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Repentance is the path by which we

grow in holiness and prepare for the Kingdom of God.

Repentance is not a single act, but a way of life. It means always turning back to God with trust, knowing that His mercy never fails.

Grace

I would now like to share with you what the Orthodox Church teaches about grace. Grace is one of the most important words in the Christian life, and the Bible speaks of it often.

Grace is the free gift of God. Saint Paul writes: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is not something we can earn. It is God’s love and power freely given to us.

Grace is God’s very life working in us. In Orthodoxy, grace is not only God’s favour, but His real presence transforming us. Saint Peter says that through God’s promises, we “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Grace makes us able to share in God’s holiness.

Grace strengthens us to live as Christians. When Paul faced trials, God told him: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in

weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Grace is God’s strength helping us in our weakness, giving us the power to endure and to grow.

Grace works through the sacraments. The sacraments are not just symbols—they are real channels of God’s grace. For example, in baptism we receive new life by grace (Romans 6:4). In Communion, we are nourished by Christ Himself through grace (John 6:56).

Grace calls us to cooperation. The Orthodox Church teaches that grace does not take away our free will. Instead, we must respond. Saint Paul says: “Working together with Him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1). Grace invites us to act with God, not apart from Him.

Grace leads us to salvation. Ultimately, it is grace that saves us. As Paul says, we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in

Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Grace is the beginning, the journey, and the end of our life with God.

Grace is God Himself working in us—healing, strengthening, forgiving, and making us holy. It is always His gift, but it calls us to respond in faith and love.

The Church Fathers

I would now like to tell you about the Church Fathers. In the Orthodox Church, we often speak of them with great respect, because they were the early Christian teachers and bishops who defended and explained the faith after the time of the Apostles.

The Fathers are heirs of the Apostles. The Apostles themselves appointed bishops to lead the Church. Paul told Titus: “Appoint elders in every town ... for a bishop must be blameless as God’s steward” (Titus 1:5–7). The Fathers were those bishops and teachers in the generations that followed, continuing the same faith that the Apostles handed down.

The Fathers defended the truth of the Gospel. In the early centuries, many false teachings arose. The Fathers protected the Church from error by teaching clearly about Christ, the Trinity, and salvation. Saint Paul warned: “Guard the good deposit entrusted to

you” (2 Timothy 1:14). The Fathers did exactly this—guarding the faith from corruption.

The Fathers explained the Bible. They were not inventing new ideas, but faithfully interpreting the Holy Scriptures in the light of Apostolic Tradition. The Bible itself shows this pattern: when the Ethiopian eunuch read Isaiah, he asked, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31). The Fathers served as guides, helping Christians understand the Scriptures rightly.

The Fathers gave us the Creeds and Councils. When the whole Church faced confusion about who Jesus is, the Fathers gathered in councils, prayed, and proclaimed the truth. This is how the Nicene Creed was formed, based on the Scriptures. It fulfils what the Apostles practised in Acts 15, when the leaders of the Church met to decide important matters together.

The Fathers are examples of holy living. They were not only teachers, but also saints who lived what

they taught. The book of Hebrews tells us: “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7).

The Fathers keep us anchored in the Scriptures and the Apostolic tradition. In a world where teachings change constantly, the Church Fathers remind us of the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Their writings continue to strengthen the Church and help us stay faithful to Christ.

The Church Fathers are not above Scripture, but faithful witnesses to it. They help us remain rooted in the Apostolic faith, guarding the truth and guiding us in the way of Christ.

Liturgy

In this letter, I want to tell you about the Divine Liturgy, which is the main service of worship in the Orthodox Church. It is the heart of our life in Christ, where we gather as God's people to hear His Word and to receive Holy Communion.

The Liturgy is our greatest act of worship. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). In the Liturgy, the whole Church—heaven and earth together—worships God with one voice.

The Liturgy follows the pattern of the Bible. From the beginning, Christians gathered for "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). This is exactly what happens in the Liturgy: we hear the Scriptures, we pray together, and we break the bread of Communion.

The first part of the Liturgy is the Liturgy of the

Word. We read from the Epistles and the Gospels, and the sermon explains the meaning. Saint Paul instructed Timothy to “give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13).

The second part is the Liturgy of the Eucharist (Communion). This is when we offer the bread and wine, which by the Holy Spirit become the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus Himself commanded us: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Saint Paul confirms: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The Liturgy unites us with heaven. The book of Revelation shows the saints and angels worshipping before God’s throne with hymns, incense, and prayers (Revelation 5:8–14). In the Divine Liturgy, we join in that same heavenly worship on earth.

The Liturgy nourishes us for daily life. Through Holy

Communion, Christ Himself comes to dwell in us. Jesus said: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:56). This gives us strength to live as Christians in the world.

The Divine Liturgy is the centre of Orthodox life. It is where heaven and earth meet, where the Scriptures come alive, where Christ Himself is present, and where we receive the Bread of Life.

Holiness and Theosis

I would now like to share with you what the Orthodox Church teaches about holiness and something called theosis. This may be a new word for you, but its meaning is very simple. It is our calling to become more like God by His grace.

God calls us to holiness. The Bible says: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Saint Peter repeats this: “Be holy yourselves in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15). Holiness means being set apart for God, living in His love and truth.

Holiness comes from union with Christ. Jesus said: “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). When we live in Christ, His life begins to transform us. Holiness is not our achievement—it is God’s gift working in us.

Theosis means sharing in God’s life. Saint Peter tells us that through Christ’s promises, we “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). This

does not mean we become gods by nature, but that we share in God's holiness, love, and light. Theosis is growing more like Him, step by step.

The Holy Spirit makes us holy. Saint Paul writes: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Spirit purifies us, strengthens us, and fills us with the fruit of holiness—love, joy, peace, and the other virtues (Galatians 5:22–23).

The sacraments are our path to holiness. In baptism, we are washed and made new (Romans 6:4). In Communion, Christ dwells in us (John 6:56). In confession, our sins are forgiven and our hearts are cleansed (1 John 1:9). Each sacrament is a step toward theosis, drawing us closer to God.

The goal of holiness is eternal life with God. Saint Paul says: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Holiness is preparing now for that

eternal life in the Kingdom, where we will see God face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Holiness and theosis mean living in Christ so fully that His love and light shine through us. This is the destiny of every Christian—to become by grace what Christ is by nature, a true child of God.

Love for Our Neighbour

I would now like to share with you how the Orthodox Church understands love for our neighbour. This is not something optional—it is at the very centre of our faith, because Christ Himself commanded it.

Love of neighbour is the second great commandment. When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, He said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39). Love for God and love for neighbour cannot be separated.

Our neighbour includes everyone. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus showed that our neighbour is not just our family or friends, but anyone in need—even those who are different from us. Love knows no boundaries.

Love must be shown in action. Saint John writes: “Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Love is not only feelings—it is acts of kindness, forgiveness, and service.

Loving others is loving Christ. Jesus said: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Every act of mercy toward others is an act of love for Christ Himself.

Forgiveness is part of love. Jesus taught us to forgive: “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15). Love means letting go of anger and offering mercy, just as God has forgiven us.

Love is the mark of true discipleship. Jesus said: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). The Orthodox Church teaches that the best witness we can give to the world is a life of genuine Christian love.

Love for neighbour is at the heart of the Gospel. To love God is to love others, and to love others is to show Christ to the world.

Humility

I would now like to share with you the importance of humility in the Orthodox Church. Humility means seeing ourselves truthfully—acknowledging our weaknesses, giving glory to God, and treating others with love and respect. It is the root of all other virtues.

Christ Himself showed humility. Jesus is our perfect example. Saint Paul writes: “He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). If the Son of God chose humility, then we too must follow His example.

God blesses the humble. The Bible says: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Pride closes us off from God, but humility opens our hearts to receive His grace.

Humility is greater than outward success. Jesus taught: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”

(Matthew 23:12). In God's eyes, humility is more valuable than power, riches, or fame.

Humility leads us to prayer and repentance. The tax collector in Jesus' parable prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Jesus said this man, not the proud Pharisee, went home justified. Humility brings us closer to God because it teaches us to depend on His mercy.

Humility shapes how we treat others. Saint Paul tells us: "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). True humility is not putting ourselves down, but lifting others up in love.

Humility is the path to holiness. The Orthodox Church teaches that no one can grow in virtue without humility. Saint Peter reminds us: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:6).

Humility is the key to Christian life. It makes us open to God's grace, draws us close to Christ, and fills us with love for others.

Fasting in the Orthodox Church

I would now like to share with you the Orthodox teaching about fasting. Many Christians today are not familiar with it, but fasting has been part of the Church's life since the very beginning.

Jesus taught us to fast. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites... but when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:16–18). Notice that He says when you fast, not if you fast. Fasting is expected, but it must be done with humility and sincerity.

Fasting strengthens our prayer. In the Bible, fasting is often joined with prayer. When the early Church sent out Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, it says: "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:3). Fasting helps us focus more on God and less on ourselves.

Fasting teaches us self-control. Saint Paul writes: “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25). Just as athletes train their bodies, fasting helps us train our souls, teaching us to master our desires rather than be ruled by them.

The early Church taught fasting. The Didache, a manuscript written by the Apostles around the year 50 A.D., gives us a glimpse of the earliest Church. It tells Christians to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays—Wednesdays because Christ was betrayed on that day, and Fridays because He was crucified. The Orthodox Church has kept this Apostolic practice to this very day.

The seasons of fasting prepare us for feasts. The Church sets aside special seasons of fasting—like Great Lent before Easter and the Nativity Fast before Christmas—to prepare our hearts for the great feasts. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2), and we follow His example by fasting before celebrating His Resurrection.

Fasting is not just about food. True fasting is not only giving up certain foods but also turning away from sin. God says through Isaiah: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness ... to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house” (Isaiah 58:6–7). Fasting teaches us compassion and mercy.

Fasting leads us to Christ. Jesus said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Fasting reminds us that our true nourishment is God Himself.

Fasting is not a burden but a blessing. It is an ancient Apostolic practice, given by Christ, nourished by the Scriptures, and faithfully kept in the Orthodox Church to help us grow closer to Him.

Charity

I would now like to share with you the importance of alms-giving, or giving to those in need. In the Orthodox Church, alms-giving is not just a good deed—it is part of our worship and a command from Christ.

Jesus commands us to give. He said: “Give to everyone who begs from you, and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again” (Luke 6:30). Giving to the poor is a way of obeying Christ directly.

Giving is serving Christ Himself. Jesus made this very clear in the parable of the Last Judgment: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). When we help the hungry, the thirsty, or the stranger, we are serving Christ Himself.

Alms-giving shows our faith is alive. Saint James says: “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and in

lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (James 2:15–17). True faith is shown in acts of mercy.

Giving purifies the heart. Jesus taught: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). Alms-giving helps free us from greed and selfishness, teaching us to trust God rather than riches.

Alms-giving is pleasing to God. In the book of Tobit, we read: “Alms-giving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life” (Tobit 12:9). The early Christians took this to heart, seeing charity as part of their salvation.

Giving should be joyful and humble. Saint Paul writes: “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). At the same time, Jesus tells us not to boast about giving: “When you give alms, do not let your

left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:3–4).

Alms-giving, fasting, and prayer belong together. The Orthodox Church teaches that these three always go hand in hand. Fasting teaches self-control, prayer draws us to God, and alms-giving expresses love to our neighbour. Together, they form the heart of Christian life.

Alms-giving is not optional—it is part of following Christ. It is how we show love, serve others, and keep our hearts fixed on the Kingdom of God.

Evangelism

In this letter, I want to write to you concerning how the Orthodox Church understands evangelism. This word means sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Every Christian is called to do this, though not all in the same way.

Jesus commands us to share the Gospel. Before His Ascension, He told the Apostles: “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 that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20). Evangelism is simply obeying Christ’s command to share His truth.

Evangelism begins with our example. Jesus said: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Often the strongest witness is not words but a life lived in holiness, kindness, and love.

We share the faith with humility. Saint Peter tells us: “Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). Evangelism is not about arguing or forcing, but about gently inviting others to Christ.

Evangelism is the work of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, it was the Spirit who gave the Apostles courage and words to speak. Jesus promised: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). We do not convert people by our own strength—it is the Spirit who opens hearts.

The Church grows by love. In the early Church, Christians shared everything in common and cared for one another. As Acts says: “Day by day ... the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). It was their love, unity, and worship that drew others to Christ.

Evangelism is for every Christian. Not all are called

to preach publicly, but every believer is called to bear witness. Paul writes: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Romans 10:15). Sometimes this means words, but often it means living in such a way that others see Christ in us.

Evangelism in the Orthodox Church is not about pressure or persuasion. It is about living the Gospel, sharing Christ with humility, and trusting the Holy Spirit to draw people to Him.

Watch Out for False Teachers

I would now like to speak about something very important: the danger of false teachers and false prophets. From the time of the Apostles until now, there have always been people who claim to speak in Christ's name but lead others away from the truth. The Orthodox Church takes this warning seriously.

Jesus Himself warned us. He said: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15–16). A true teacher of Christ will show humility, holiness, and love—not greed, pride, or division.

The Apostles also gave warnings. Saint Paul told the elders in Ephesus: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29–30). This

shows that false teachers may even arise from within the Church.

False teachers distort the Gospel. Paul said to the Galatians: “If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:9). The true Gospel is the one handed down by Christ to His Apostles, preserved in the Church through Scripture and Holy Tradition.

Many will come in Christ’s name. Jesus warned: “Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray” (Matthew 24:5). We must not believe everyone who claims to speak for Him but test their teaching by the Scriptures and the faith of the Church.

The test of true teaching is Apostolic faith. Saint John tells us: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The Orthodox Church keeps us

safe because it guards the Apostolic faith passed down from the beginning.

False teachers seek gain, not salvation. Peter warns: “In their greed they will exploit you with false words” (2 Peter 2:3). If someone preaches for money, power, or self-glory, they are not serving Christ but themselves.

Our safeguard is Christ and His Church. The Church is the “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). By staying rooted in the Scriptures, the sacraments, and the Apostolic faith, we remain safe from deception.

False teachers and prophets will always exist, but Christ has given us His Church to protect us. We are called to be watchful, to test everything, and to hold fast to the true faith handed down by the Apostles.

Becoming Orthodox

I would now like to share with you the steps a person takes to become a member of the Orthodox Church, which is the Church founded by Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

The first step is learning the faith. A person who wishes to become Orthodox begins by learning the teachings of the Church. This time is called catechumenate. In the early Church, those preparing for baptism were called catechumens. Even in the New Testament we see people being taught before baptism—“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Repentance and faith. Entry into the Church requires repentance—a turning away from sin—and faith in Jesus Christ. Saint Peter said: “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38).

Baptism by immersion. In the Orthodox Church, baptism is done by threefold immersion in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). This is the ancient and true form of baptism, practised by the Apostles. Paul explains its meaning: “We were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Immersion shows dying and rising with Christ.

Chrismation (Confirmation). Immediately after baptism, the new Christian is anointed with holy oil, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is based on the practice of the Apostles: “Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:17). In the Orthodox Church, this sacrament is called chrismation.

Holy Communion. From the very beginning, those baptised and chrismated receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ, just as the Apostles

did at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19–20). This unites the new Christian fully to the life of the Church.

Being Orthodox means living a life of prayer and growth. Becoming Orthodox is not just a single event but the beginning of a lifelong journey of prayer, worship, and holiness. The goal is to remain faithful to Christ, living within His Body, the Church.

To become a member of the holy Orthodox Church means to repent, believe, and be baptised in the true Apostolic way—by immersion in the Holy Trinity—then to be sealed with the Holy Spirit and united to Christ in Communion. This is the same path that the Apostles taught and the Church has kept for nearly two thousand years.

Concluding Letter

As I bring these letters to a close, I want to remind you of everything we have walked through together. We have looked at the history of the Church, its teachings, its worship, its sacraments, and its way of life. All of this is not man-made but comes from Christ and the Apostles, faithfully handed down through the generations.

The Orthodox Church is not simply one denomination among many—it is the same Church founded by Jesus Christ and built on the foundation of the Apostles (Ephesians 2:20). Its faith has remained unbroken, its worship unchanged, and its teaching preserved by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, just as Christ promised. “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13).

Everything we have spoken about—baptism, Communion, prayer, fasting, Scripture, Tradition, the saints, and the life of holiness—are not separate

parts, but one whole life in Christ. The Orthodox Church is a family, the Body of Christ, where heaven and earth are united in worship, and where salvation is lived out each day in love, repentance, and grace.

I encourage you to keep seeking, keep asking questions, and keep praying. The Lord Himself said: “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). If you continue to seek Him with all your heart, He will guide you into the fullness of His truth.

Remember, the Orthodox Church is not far away. Its doors are always open, its prayers are always being offered, and its life is the same life of Christ passed down from the Apostles. As Saint Paul said: “Now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

If you have questions about the letters on this site or other topics that were not discussed, please feel free to reach out to me through email

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