

**St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Cathedral Los Angeles,
California**

Fall 2021 Adult Study:

Orthodox Christian Faith and Practice

Instructor: Subdn. Seraphim Keshishian
(818) 300-8136 • siropkeshishian@gmail.com
CA 90057 With Fr. Andrew Andrews as In-class Resource

Wednesdays: 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.
2300 W 3rd Street, Los Angeles,
www.stnicholasla.org

TEXT: Hopko, Father Thomas. *The Orthodox Faith*. Four volumes. Revised and expanded by David C. Ford.

Available in print or online at [The Orthodox Faith - The Symbol of Faith - Orthodox Church in America \(oca.org\)](http://oca.org)

Zoom Link to Join: <https://tinyurl.com/SNC-O101-2021>

Zoom Video Recording and Outline Texts located at: www.stnicholasla.com/adulteducation.

Nov. 3 The Symbol of Faith (Vol. I, pp. 108-30 new; Vol. I, pp. 118-49 old)

Holy Spirit, Church, Sacraments, Eternal Life

NOTES:

The portions of the Creed we've studied so far came from the First Council in Nicea. The balance of the Creed (which we will study today) came from the Second Council in Constantinople. The Orthodox Church has recited this personal confession of faith without change since that time.

Holy Spirit:

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

- **The Holy Spirit:** also called Lord. It sustains our lives as Christians, illuminating us after the new birth.

- The Holy Spirit bears the title of Lord with God the Father and Christ the Son. He is the Spirit of God and Spirit of Christ.
- The Holy Spirit is eternal, uncreated, and divine; always existing with the Father and the Son; perpetually worshipped and glorified with them in the oneness of the Holy Trinity.
- **The Spirit is before creation.** Just like the Son, there was no time when there was no Holy Spirit.
- **eternal procession** “He proceeds from the Father,” in eternity in a divinely instantaneous (immediate) and perpetual(continuous) movement (Jn 15.26).
- Orthodox doctrine confesses that God the Father is the eternal origin and source of the Spirit, just as He is the source of the Son.
- **Filioque:** In the Roman and Protestant churches’ credal statements about God they have added that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “and the Son”. **Filioque** is a doctrinal addition **unacceptable to Orthodoxy** since it is both unscriptural and inconsistent with the Orthodox vision of God.
- With the affirmation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of worshipping and glorifying Him with the Father and the Son, the Orthodox Church affirms that the Divine Reality, called also the **Deity** or the **Godhead** in the Orthodox Tradition, is the Holy Trinity.
- The Holy Spirit is essentially one in eternal existence with the Father and the Son; and so, in every action of God toward the world, the Holy Spirit is necessarily acting (Gen 1.2).
- Generally speaking the Spirit in Hebrew is called the “**breath**” or the “**wind**” of Yahweh. It is He who makes everything alive, the “Giver of life” Who upholds and sustains the universe in its existence and life.
- The Holy Spirit is also he who inspires the saints to speak God’s word and to do God’s will. He anoints the prophets, priests, and kings of the Old Testament.
- in the New Testament at the first epiphany (which means literally showing forth or manifestation) of Christ as the Messiah—his baptism by John in the Jordan—the Holy Spirit is revealed as descending and resting upon him “as a dove from heaven” (Jn 1.32; Lk 3.22, see also Mt 3.16 and Mk 1.9).
- The day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples of Christ in the form of “tongues as of fire,”(Acts 2.1–4). The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost is the final fulfillment of Christ’s earthly messianic mission, the beginning of the Christian Church. It

is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that in the time of the messiah-king, the Spirit of God will be “poured out on all flesh” (Joel 2.28; Acts 1.14).

- All of God’s actions toward man and the world—in creation, salvation, and final glorification—are from the Father through the Son (Word) in the Holy Spirit.
- **The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life.**
- **The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.**
- **The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of divine sonship.**
- The Holy Spirit is the personal presence of the new and everlasting covenant between God and man, the seal and guarantee of the Kingdom of God, the power of the divine indwelling of God in man.
- In the Holy Spirit men have the possibility of receiving every gift from God, of sharing His divine nature and life, and of doing what Christ has done.

Church:

“In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church . . .”

- The Christian Church is the assembly of God’s chosen people called to keep his word and to do his will and his work in the world and in the heavenly kingdom.
- **One Church:** The Church is one because God is one, and because Christ and the Holy Spirit are one. There can only be one Church and not many. And this one Church, because its unity depends on God, Christ, and the Spirit, may never be broken. Thus, according to Orthodox doctrine, the Church cannot be divided; men may be in it or out of it, but they may not divide it.
- In non-Orthodox Christian groups, the Orthodox claim that there are certain formal obstacles, varying in different groups, which, if accepted and followed by men, will **prevent** their perfect unity with God and will thus **destroy the genuine unity of the Church** (e.g., the **papacy** in the Roman Church).
- **Holy Church:** The Church is holy because God is holy, and because Christ and the Holy Spirit are holy. The holiness of the Church comes from God. The members of the Church are holy to the extent that they live in communion with God. The faith and life of the Church on earth are expressed in its doctrines, sacraments, scriptures, services, and saints which maintain the Church’s essential unity, and which can certainly be affirmed as “holy” because of God’s presence and action in them.

- **Catholic Church:** The Church is universal and catholic. The word catholic means full, complete, whole, with nothing lacking. God alone is full and total reality; in God alone is there nothing lacking. The Church was spread over the world, it was defined as catholic. The original Jerusalem Church of the apostles, or the early city-churches of Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, or Rome, were catholic. These churches were catholic—as is each and every Orthodox church today.
- **Apostolic Church:** The word apostolic describes that which has a mission, that which has “been sent” to accomplish a task. Christ and the Holy Spirit are both “apostolic” because both have been sent by the Father to the World. As Christ was sent from God, so Christ Himself chose and sent His apostles. “As the Father has sent me, even so, I send you . . . receive ye the Holy Spirit,” the risen Christ says to His disciples. Thus, the **apostles** go out to the world, becoming the **first foundation of the Christian Church**.
- **Apostles** bear witness to His Kingdom, to keep His word, and to do His will and His works in this world.
- Orthodox Christians believe in the Church as they believe in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Church is the divine community founded by Christ against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16.18).
- The Church, and faith in the Church, is an essential element of Christian doctrine and life. Without the Church, there can be no full and perfect communion with God. The Church is God’s gift: **of salvation, of knowledge and enlightenment, of the forgiveness of sins, of the victory over darkness and death, and of communion with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit**. This gift is given totally, once and for all, with no reservations on God’s part. It remains forever, until the close of the ages: invincible and indestructible.

Sacraments:

“I confess one baptism for the remission of sins”

- Orthodox Christians believe that sacramentally, through the waters of baptism, God forgives us of our sins, and we are born again. This belief in baptism’s saving power is ancient and universally acknowledged in early Christian writings. If someone has been validly baptized in the name of the Trinity, then that baptism has definitely “taken” and re-baptism is unnecessary.

- The way of entry into the Christian Church is by baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28.19; the Baptismal Gospel reading in the Orthodox Church).
- **John the Baptist** was baptizing as the sign of new life and repentance which means literally a change of mind, and so of desires and actions in preparation of the coming of the Kingdom of God in Christ. Everything in the Church has its origin and context in baptism for everything in the Church originates and lives by the resurrection of Christ. Thus, following baptism comes “**the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit,**” the mystery (**sacrament**) of chrismation which is man’s personal experience of Pentecost.
- The completion and fulfillment of these fundamental Christian mysteries come in the mystery of Holy Communion with God in the divine liturgy of the Church.
- Only persons who are committed to Christ in the Orthodox Church through baptism and chrismation.
- When one enters into the community of **marriage**, a union of one man and one woman forever according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, this union is sanctified and made eternal and divine in the sacramental mystery of marriage in the Church.
- When one is sick and suffering, he “calls for the priests of the Church” to “pray over him, anointing him with oil” in the sacramental mystery of **holy unction** (cf. Jas 5.4).
- When one sins and falls away from the life of the Church, one returns to the “Holy Communion” of the divine community by the sacramental mystery of **confession** and **repentance**.
- The confession of “**one baptism for the remission of sins,**” therefore, is the confession of the total newness of life given to men in the Church because **Christ is risen**.
- **The whole of life is the one which begins in the new birth of baptism, the “life hid with Christ in God.” All of the mysteries of the Christian faith are contained in this new life.**

Eternal Life

“I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world [ages] to come.”

- The Orthodox Church does not only believe in the immortality of the soul but in the goodness and ultimate salvation of only spiritual reality. Believes in the goodness of the human body and of all material and physical creation.
- At the end of the ages, God will reveal His presence and will fill all creation with Himself. For those who love Him, it will be paradise. For those who hate Him, it will be hell. And all physical creation, together with the righteous, will rejoice and be glad in His coming.
- When the Kingdom of God fills all creation, all things will be made new. This world will again be that paradise for which it was originally created. This is the Orthodox doctrine of the final fate of man and his universe.
- *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away . . . and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up (2 Pet 3.10).*
- The Bible never speaks about a “second creation”. God loves the world which He has made and does everything that He can to save it, the Orthodox Tradition never interprets such scriptural texts as teaching the actual destruction of creation by God. In order to be purified, cleansed, made perfect, and saved, we will endure a catastrophe. There will be “a trial of fire”. The ungodly will go to eternal fire but we are not all doomed.