

produces effects. We must believe, therefore, with all our heart, the Orthodox Faith. It is God's desire that all men accept this faith so that they may be saved. Faith is not imposed. To those who desire it, God grants it, not because of a fatalistic predestination, but because of His Divine foreknowledge and disposition to co-operate with man's free will.

If God has graced us with faith, we must not think ourselves better than others, nor superior, nor more worthy than they. We must not think that we have received it because of our own merits, but we should attribute the gift to the unsearchable goodness of God. God is to be thanked by our bowing down before the mystery of this privilege.

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX BELIEVE ABOUT ICONS?

I venerate the Holy Icons in perfect accord with the Second Commandment of the Decalogue.

Previous to the Incarnation of God, any representation of Him would have been the fruit of man's imagination - a concept of man's reason. Since God is by nature incomprehensible, inapprehensible, incommensurable, indescribable, immaterial, inexpressible and unfathomable, any conception or imagination concerning God would have been alien to His nature. It would have been false and unreal - an idol. With the Incarnation, the Indescribable One becomes describable for man's salvation. With the Incarnation, God can be depicted in holy images, that is, icons from the Greek word for image. As the Apostle says, "we have heard Him, we have seen Him with our eyes, we have looked upon Him, and have handled Him with our hands."

When I venerate the holy icons, I am not worshiping matter, but I do confess that God, Who is immaterial by nature, has become material for our sake, so that He might dwell among us, die for us, be raised from death in His Flesh, and cause our human nature, which He assumed, to sit

at the right of the Father in the heavens. When I kiss His Holy Icon, I confess the relatively describable and absolutely historical reality of His Incarnation, His Death, His Ascension into Heaven, and His Second and Glorious Coming.

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX BELIEVE ABOUT THE VIRGIN MARY?

We believe that she is the Theotokos, the one who gave birth to Him Who is God, and that both before and after her childbirth she is a virgin. We believe that she is the most God-loving and pure woman that has ever existed and that for this cause she was chosen to receive God in her womb and give birth to our Lord. Moreover, because she is so pure and God-pleasing and because she is united so closely to our Lord by the maternal bond, we believe that her love for us and her prayerful intercessions on our behalf are the greatest of all the saints.

For more information about the Orthodox Church, her teachings, traditions and how to be a part of her, you may contact Archbishop Gregory of Denver and Colorado, at:

Dormition Skete
POBox 3177
Buena Vista, CO 81211
Phone: 719-395-6395

or through our web sites and e-mail:

www.TrueOrthodoxy.Info
www.DormitionSkete.org
DormtionSkete@starband.net



The Orthodox Faith



THE ORTHODOX FAITHON WHAT DOES THE ORTHODOX CHURCH BASE ITS BELIEFS?

We believe in accepting and obeying the whole Apostolic Tradition, both what the Apostles taught the Church in person and what they taught through their writings. Since it was the Spirit of Truth Who inspired the Apostles both when they were speaking and when they were writing, no conflict is found between what they wrote to the Church and what they taught Her in person. In as much as the Holy Spirit has not ceased to be present in the Church since Her creation by the Lord, we also follow what the self-same Spirit of Truth has taught us through those faithful and holy men among the disciples of the Apostles and the disciples of the disciples of the Apostles, on down to the present time. Because the Spirit of Truth has guided them as He guided the Apostles, it is not possible to find, nor is there anything at variance with any part of Apostolic Tradition in what they have taught. We do not believe in the so-called 'development of dogma'. The whole teaching of the God-inspired Apostles and their faithful successors we call Holy Tradition, as being the sacred commandment of the Lord given to the Church through His servants. If anything is preached contrary to the Holy and Apostolic Tradition, it is to be rejected as 'another Gospel'. "Brethren, be standing firm and holding fast the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or by our epistle." [II Thessalonians, 2:15].

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX BELIEVE ABOUT GOD?

We believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as revealed to the Prophets and Apostles. The Father Himself is fully God, the Son Himself is fully God, and the Holy Spirit Himself is fully God, and the Three Persons together are one God, one Divinity. The Holy Trinity is one in nature, will, and love, and distinct in the Persons Who are of that Nature. The Father is the causeless Cause of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Son is uniquely the Only-Begotten of the Father and the Holy Spirit uniquely proceeds from [ekporeuontai] the Father. The Holy Trinity is the Creator and Life-giver of all that has been created. We believe that the Only-Begotten Son of God, truly became incarnate and born of the Ever-Virgin Mary, becoming like unto us in all things except sin. Thus, Our Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man, being one Person in two complete natures without division or confusion. We believe that He truly was tempted and suffered all things yet without sin, so that He is able to help those that are tempted, and that most importantly of all He took upon Himself His Holy and Life-giving Passion, Death, and glorious Resurrection for the salvation of all mankind that will correctly believe in Him. It is through Him alone do we believe that one can be saved. Furthermore, we believe that He ascended into Heaven, is seated at the right of the Father, and shall come again to judge and recompense the living and the dead at the universal resurrection of mankind, and that His kingdom shall have no end.

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX BELIEVE ABOUT THE CHURCH?

We believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church in Which we may be saved and that this one Church is the Orthodox Church, founded by the Holy Apostles. We believe that it is the will of God that all mankind, divided by passions and the deception of the devil, be united in truth, holiness, and in love both to each other and to God. In order to accomplish this will of God, our Lord through His Holy Apostles established His one Church in Which is His one Faith to so unite mankind. He and gave uniquely to Her the Holy, Sanctifying, and Saving Mysteries, including the Mystery of Holy Baptism and the Mystery of the Communion of His Holy Body and Precious Blood. The Holy Spirit has and always will be present and active in the Church, guiding, teaching, governing, working together

with, sanctifying, and glorifying the various members of the Body of the Lord, according as each person lovingly cooperates with the grace of God. In the Church, the Holy Spirit also distributes various ministries and spiritual gifts uniquely to members of the Body, so that some are appointed to be bishops, some priests, some deacons, etc.

WHAT DO THE ORTHODOX BELIEVE ABOUT SALVATION?

We believe and confess that man's natural virtue, whatever its degree may be, cannot save a man and bring him to eternal life. The fulfillment of the works of the Law does not permit us to demand or to merit something from God. Our Saviour Jesus Christ points out that when a man has fulfilled all the works of the Law he should esteem himself as nothing more than an "...unprofitable servant." Without Jesus Christ, a man's personal virtue and his reputation (his personal value, his works, his aptitude, his talents and faculties in the eyes of men), matters little. Only faith in Jesus Christ constitutes a determining factor in his eternal destiny. This faith in Jesus Christ however, should not be considered simply as an ideological recognition of His Divinity, nor as an intellectual knowledge of a religious system or dogmas of the Church. Even the demons have this type of knowing, but it does not save them. Faith in Jesus Christ is not an abstraction, but a communion with Him. It is an action, or more to the point, an interaction. This communion fills us with the power of the Holy Spirit, and our faith becomes a fertile reality which engenders good works in us "...which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Thus, according to the Apostles, faith engenders true works, and true works, which are the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, bear witness and prove the existence of a true faith. Since faith is neither abstract nor sterile, it is impossible to disassociate it from good works; the first is the cause of the second - it is a cause which