

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

**LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:**

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All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.

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"The Orthodox Church.....has preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from
"Encountering the Mystery."
ISBN 978-0-385-51813-0*

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

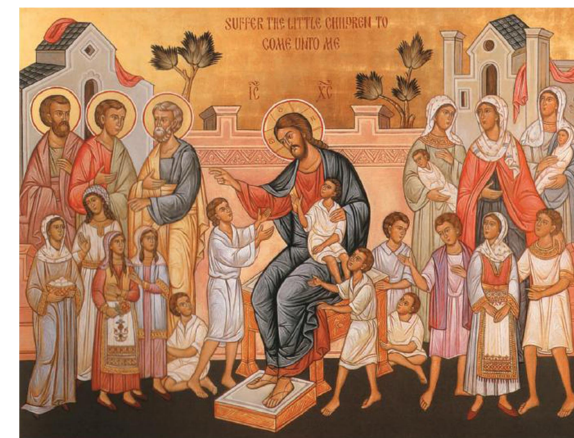
Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχείον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Fr.N.07.15

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Children and Families



Then little children were brought to him that he might put his hand of them and pray, and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and then departed from there.

Matthew 19:13-15.

When a man and woman are united in Holy Matrimony it is a time of great joy with a special lifelong commitment to each other. When they then find they are to have the gift and responsibility of being parents there is yet another occasion for joy. During pregnancy the mother to be, her husband and the unborn child find strength and encouragement within the worshipping community of Orthodox Christians just as the Mother of Jesus found the friendship of her cousin Elizabeth, also expecting a baby – to become the Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John – and each acknowledged before God the wonder of their childbearing.

The Church provides prayers to be said at the time of birth and on the 8th day after the child's birth (the "Naming"); then on the 40th day when mother and child are received into the church in a simple but beautiful service. There are special prayers also for the adoption of children.



In these prayers and services we find an "echo" of the early days in the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ – the angelic praise at his birth and the adoration of shepherds and wise men - his being taken to the Temple on the 8th day after his birth when he received the name Jesus - and taken again to the Temple on the 40th day.

See the opening chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Speak more to God about your children, rather than to your children about God.

Father Epiphanius (Theodoropoulos) – Counsels for Life.



"The servant of God..N...is brought within the church, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"

One of three acclamations during the 40th day service.

"And now do you, the same Lord who guard the infants, bless this child together with his (her) parents and make him (her) worthy, at the appropriate time, of rebirth by water and the Spirit, number him (her) among the flock of your reason-endowed sheep who are called by the name of your Christ" Extract from a prayer at the 40th day service.

So there follows as soon as possible after the 40th day the Mysteries (Sacraments) of Holy Baptism and Chrismation, leading to Holy Communion.

It often impresses visitors to Orthodox services seeing how babies and children are brought first to receive Holy Communion at every Divine Liturgy (Eucharist), adults giving way to those who are considered with such love and care, following the example given to us by Jesus when he said: "...of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Coming as a family to the services of Orthodoxy, especially the principle gathering for the Sunday Divine Liturgy, children become accustomed to and familiar with the rich and ancient traditions of the Church founded by Christ and built upon the Apostles, in its worship, teaching, fellowship and witness in everyday life.

For the correct, Christian upbringing of your children: few words, much example, and more prayer are necessary.

Father Epiphanius (Theodoropoulos) – Counsels for Life.

In Luke's Gospel chapter 2 we read of how Jesus as a child **"became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."** And again when he was 12 years old and found listening to and asking question of the teachers in the Temple at Jerusalem, we read of Jesus being subject to his parents, his mother treasuring these things in her heart. **"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."**

Parents and sponsors (godparents) have a special part to play in caring not only for the material needs of a child but also for the spiritual needs. The Holy Apostle Paul in his writings on family life encourages children to obey their parents and that children should not be provoked to anger. (Ephesians chapter 6 & Colossians chapter 3).

Parents and sponsors however are not alone in this and the church will have where possible a Sunday School or other means of teaching. Regular attendance at services will bring encouragement, example and teaching from other members. Some dioceses hold annual youth camps where young people can meet fellow Orthodox from different places, enjoying a variety of activities. (See www.goygbcamp.org.uk)



Lord and Saviour, you have taught us to honour our fathers and mothers, and to show love and obedience toward them. From the depth of my heart I fervently pray to you, Jesus, my God: hear my prayer. Bless my parents who have raised me up with the help of your grace. Protect them from evil, harm and sickness. Grant them faith, health and joy. Bless all their works that they may give you honour and glory all the days of their lives. Amen. From Orthodox Family Prayers.