

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:**

1. IN BRIEF
- ANGELS
- BUILDINGS
- CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
- CALENDAR
- CHRISMATION
- CHURCH AND STATE
- DIVINE LITURGY
- DYING, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT
- ECUMENICAL COUNCILS
- ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
- ESPERINOS
- FASTING
- GLOSSARY
- GREAT, HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA
- HOLY ANOINTING
- HOLY BAPTISM
- HOLY COMMUNION
- HOLY ICONS
- HOLY MATRIMONY
- HOLY ORDERS
- HOLY SCRIPTURES
- IN THE UK
- "IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME!"
- LITURGICAL YEAR
- MONKS AND NUNS
- MUSIC OF LITURGIES
- ORTHROS
- OTHER CHRISTIAN CONFESSIONS
- PRAYER AND WORSHIP
- RELIGIONS
- REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION
- SAINTS
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- SOME FOODS
- VESTMENTS
- WHEN WE COME TO CHURCH
- WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR SUNDAYS?
- WORLDWIDE FAMILY

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.

Fr.Nikitas - frnikitas@hotmail.com

"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."*

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 Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Fr.N.03.15

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Holy Orders



Then he appointed twelve, that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons: Simon to whom he gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Bonerges, that is, 'Sons of Thunder'; Andrew, Philip, Barthomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot who also betrayed him.

Mark 3:14-19

A Holy Mystery (sacrament) can never be fully explained yet can be entered into without that full understanding our human reason so often demands. We can experience mystery with all its blessings through the Divine grace by participating in the life of the Church. Intellect alone cannot provide what man needs but through faith and the divinely instituted practices he is aided on the path to salvation.

The source of all priesthood, all ministry in the Church is Christ. He is **"The great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..."** Hebrews chapter 4.

Jesus chose, called and sent his Holy Apostles to continue his work in the world. Before his Ascension into heaven he promised them the Holy Spirit, a promise fulfilled at Pentecost – fifty days after his resurrection from tomb and death.

By breathing upon, by the laying on of hands (*cheirotonia*) and by his spoken commission Christ Jesus 'ordained' and defined the ministry of the Church which has continued unbroken to the present day and by the same means.

Not all ministries in the Church are the same or employ the same gifts. This is clear from the New Testament record and the Holy Apostle Paul identifies a variety of gifts, for instance in his First Letter to the Corinthians chapter 14. Nor whilst looking at the ordained ministry should the Priesthood of the Laity be overlooked.

There are various *orders* in the Church but the 'Major Orders' are Bishop, Priest and Deacon. 'Minor Orders' are Sub-deacon, Reader and some others. All, major or minor, are received through laying on of hands by a bishop.

Candidates for ordination need to decide if they wish to marry. If so they must do so before being ordained. If they choose to remain celibate they may not marry after being ordained. Married clergy are preferred for parishes but it is not unknown for a celibate priest to have that responsibility.

In the Mystery (Sacrament) of **Holy Orders** the first is that of **Bishop** which is the direct, successive and unbroken **Apostolic** ministry received from Christ and given in each generation. Bishops are the chief pastors of the Church.



His All-Holiness Bartholomew 1 Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch.

A bishop may have responsibilities which make him Archbishop, Metropolitan or as above a Patriarch but he remains in the apostolic order of **Bishop**. Bishops are usually drawn from the monastic clergy.

Within a diocese – the administrative area overseen by a bishop - the next *order* is that of **Presbyter (Elder or priest)**.



Fr. Photios, Protopresbyter in Eucharistic vestments. A priest in the USA.

A priest exercises his liturgical, pastoral and other parish responsibilities on behalf of and under the authority and direction of his bishop to whom he looks for fatherly advice.

To assist the priest and to also represent the bishop, the third 'Major Order' is that of **Deacon**.



Bishop, priest and deacon serving together at the Artoklasia – blessing of five loaves, wheat, wine and oil.

Apostolic Order (succession) of the Church may be defined as a progression in time of a recognisable, recorded and validated succession in a particular ministry (order).

"Saint John Chrysostomos states: 'The Priesthood is performed on earth but it possesses the order of heavenly things.' For this reason one should not hasten to receive the dignity of the Priesthood, but should wait until God calls him either by an inner inclination – which is not always a certain and fool-proof criterion – or by His chosen individuals and by good circumstances, to this most lofty ministry." Bishop Athanasios Frangopoulos – Our Orthodox Faith.

Only **bishops** can ordain to other orders and for a man to become a bishop requires three or at least two other bishops when he is admitted to the Episcopate.

Priests by virtue of their episcopal ordination can administer all mysteries (sacraments) except ordination.

Deacons serve chiefly a liturgical ministry but may also exercise a pastoral role under the direction of the priest or bishop with whom they serve. The Orthodox Diaconate has a permanent status and is not merely a step to priesthood although it is a pre-requisite.