

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:

- 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."
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 Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophis (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople 7
Fr.N.03.15

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: The Saints.



Icon on the Forefathers

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,...

Letter to the Hebrews 12:1,2



**The Vladimir Mother of God.
12th century Byzantine icon.**

The word **saint** as found in the New Testament English translations from the Greek original refers to those men and women who were members of a Christian community. The Greek word is **agios** (ἅγιος) meaning **holy**. So the saints in this context are best thought of in those terms – those called to be holy by virtue of their becoming one with Christ and who are part of the assembly of faithful – see for instance the First Letter of Paul to the Christians at Corinth, chapter one:-

“To the church (Greek ἐκκλησία) of God which is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (Greek ἁγίοις – Latin *sanctis*), with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord....”

Although having that specific meaning of living members of the Church, in the course of time the word became used to identify those who had a special relationship with Christ: his Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary, Joseph his guardian, John the Baptist, the Apostles and others from the new Testament record. Then, those who through examples of Christian living or exhibiting a particular quality or gift, have been recognised down to the present time as having a special relationship with God which manifested itself not only in their earthly life but afterwards as well. So we think of saints as those gone before us and who form a ‘great cloud of witness’ around us.

These holy ones down the ages are remembered in the Church’s calendar and worship but there are too many to include in just one calendar and so each will include saints who have a universal and special place in the life of the Church to which will be added those who witnessed in a particular area or country of the world and these will be included in the local or national Church’s calendar. The **All Saints** date in the Orthodox calendar is the first Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Archangels and angels also have a place in the Orthodox calendar as do the saints from the Old Testament witness.



Icon of the Synaxis of saints of North America.

The word *martyr* (from the Greek μάρτυρας) means witness, and is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Over the passage of time the word came to be used exclusively for those whose witness culminated in shedding their blood and dying at the hands of others rather than agreeing to worship idols and false gods, to deny their faith or conform to unjust demands of secular powers. Martyrdom is an expression of willingness to die but not involving the death of others nor by inviting death after an act of violence. No Christian martyr male or female is recorded as having inflicted harm on others in the process of their martyrdom and the armour of the martyr is the same as that for any other Christian, described by Holy Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Christians at Ephesus, chapter 6:

“Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waste with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;....”

The saints are, after Christ, the ideal heroes and role models in Christian discipleship and the reading of their lives of word and action can be both inspiration and guide. It has often been observed of Orthodoxy that there is a deep sense of the relationship that exists in the **Communion of Saints**. With the Mother of God (Theotokos), the angels and saints, joined with the living faithful on earth, is formed one body whose unity is clearly manifest in Orthodox worship and in the presence of the Holy Icons. This unity is expressed by a reverence for the saints and the availability of their prayers which are asked by both individuals and the Church.

“Sanctity (sainthood) is the work of the Holy Spirit; all Christian holiness is a fruit of Pentecost. When we are speaking about holiness one must not think of it as an extraordinary state, nor identify it with extraordinary ascetic exploits or with rare mystical graces. There are indeed superior – heroic – degrees of holiness, but in the sense given in the New Testament, holiness is simply the state of the soul united to God through the operation of the Holy Spirit and the will of the individual. Holiness is therefore a normal state for a Christian, and the call to holiness is addressed to all.”

(Extracts from the Fathers).

Son of God, wonderful in your Saints, save us who sing to you: Alleluia!