

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
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- DYING, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT
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- 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

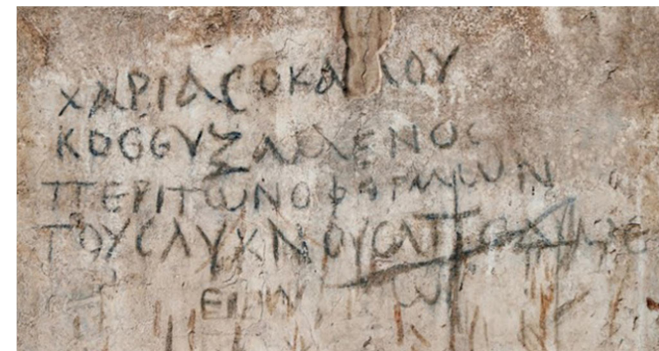
Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οικουμενικόν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Fr.N.11.17

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: Social Media



Social media.

“User-generated content, such as text, posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions, are the lifeblood of social media.” (Anon).

Social Media has become commonplace with an ever widening variety of means and potential uses.

An example of ancient graffiti may not at once convey the idea of Social Media but thinking of Facebook, Twitter, Snap chat, etc., with the often brevity in expressing the contributor’s opinion on one issue or another, there perhaps is no great difference (a form of “tweeting”?). However, on the whole graffiti is regarded as an illicit activity.

Media - newspapers, magazines, radio, television. **Mass media** - when any of these is distributed or available to a very wide audience.

If the date suggested for the first use of the term is accepted then **social media** is less than thirty years old and currently is concerned with mobile telephones, smart phones, the internet with websites, blogs, Face book, Twitter, Snap chat, WhatsApp, Tik Tok and any combinations of these and more.

Dates in this modern process, ignoring the invention of the printing press and other early and rather basic forms of distribution, are:

1923 - The invention of ink/spirit duplicators, enabling businesses, societies, clubs and individuals to produce magazines, leaflets and other material relatively cheaply and in quantity.

1973 - First portable (mobile) telephones came onto the open market.

1977 - Home computers entered the market. Computers had already been in government and commercial use but in origin were very large, taking up a great deal of floor space and room.

1989 - Invention of the World Wide Web (WWW) - the Internet - by Sir Tim Berners-lee a British computer scientist.

1992 - The now ubiquitous smart phones appeared, since when most mobile telephones have become virtually portable computers with access to the Internet with its multitude of connections and app(lication)s, with SMS.

Increased further development has occurred over a relatively short period of time. I pads, Tablets, and ever more sophisticated and ingenious technological inventions appear and become readily available additions to information technology (**IT**) catalogues.

In these decades Social Media has increased in volume and scope. One of the first to appear - Friends Reunited - lasted only a short period of time after its beginnings in 2000. The positive value of IT has been recognised and it is widely used in education as well as being a subject for study.

The internet has to some measure become the encyclopaedia for reference replacing the familiar book form, an entertainment source, and it is also possible to have immediate audio/visual contact with family, friends or businesses, in practically any country of the world through Skype, Face time, Whatsapp etc., with correspondence now largely carried out by **Electronic Mail**. To say nothing of interfering algorithms!

At the same time its potential for misuse has become clear from on line bullying, "grooming", to inciting acts of terrorism, with anonymity available to users and individual blogs and face book can be used in narcissistic and destructive ways. Propaganda has been with us a long time and a familiar tool for governments, political interest groups and media outlets, whether newspapers, television, radio or the World Wide Web in its many manifestations. "Fake news" is not new!

The press (newspapers, etc) and other mass media (television and radio), if not state owned are owned and run by unelected people with their own political bias and commercial interests. It cannot be assumed that these bodies will use any freedoms they might have with a high degree of wisdom, discretion or honesty.



All these things are of special concern for parents who wish to give their children knowledge and advice in societies where authorities more and more impinge upon the right of parents to oversee the upbringing, including general education, moral and social values of their children and this is as true if not more so for

Orthodox Christian parents. How do we test what is to be found on the internet and in social media and how do we use this "unavoidable" part of modern living? These questions may be answered in a number of ways. We could say that conscience and common sense both play a part in this.

The words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ guide the Christian through life. These words are recorded in the Gospels preserved by the Church in her teaching and traditions. Within the New Testament the writings of the Holy Apostles bear witness to a faithful following of Christ, providing clear and encouraging words to enable Christians to live full and happy lives.

From this wealth of inspired writings, not only the Scriptures but also the early Fathers of the Church, the following selected passage will provide us with clear guidance or at the very least help us with our personal use of Social Media and to identify that which we should avoid or be wary of.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.

From the Holy Apostle Paul's Letter to the Christians at Philippi - Philippians 4:4-9.

