

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.

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.11.16

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: What's happened to our Sunday?

ANASTASIS RESURRECTION



This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 117 verse 24.

SUNDAY

This leaflet is not concerned with the adoption and development of the *seventh* day of the week as the principle day for Orthodox Christian gathering and worship (nor that it is sometimes called the *first* or *eighth* day of the week). Although we might say that every day should be regarded as the Lord's Day we are aware that Sunday has a special claim on that title together with the Day of Resurrection since the hymns, readings and prayers all observe and celebrate the truth of Christ's conquering death and rising on the third day.

This is further confirmed by writings such as the following from the second century Holy Martyr Justin and the fact that over succeeding centuries and in the present age the command and actions have been fulfilled in Orthodoxy:

"On Sunday we have a common assembly of all our members, whether they live in the city or the outlying districts. Recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us; he urges us to imitate the examples of virtue we have heard in the readings. Then we all stand up together and pray."

"We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it is the *first* day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world, and because on that same day our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the dead. For he was crucified on Friday and on Sunday he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration."

From simple village churches to lofty basilicas, to isolated Christian minorities, the reduced number of persecuted Christians of Aleppo in Syria who struggle through ruins to get to their damaged churches, the witness of what has been given, accepted and further transmitted, goes on.



Sunday has also been long referred to as a *day of rest* and the weekend is still looked forward to by many as providing a break from work and school. There have always been occupations which require some measure of daily attention and even as long ago as the early 4th century laws were being enacted in this respect. For instance we find the following put into law by the Emperor Saint Constantine the Great:

"All judges and city people and craftsmen shall rest on the venerable Day of the Sun. Country-people, however, may freely attend to the cultivation on the fields, because it frequently happens that no other days are better adapted for planting the grain in furrows or the vines in trenches; so that the advantage given by heavenly providence may not, for the occasion of a short time, perish." March 7th 321.

In the western sphere of influence and particularly in puritanical times, restrictions on Sunday activities became draconian. In the passage of time these became less and less severe whilst retaining more than just a semblance of the special meaning and ways of observing the Lord's Day – Sunday.

With the 1994 Sunday Trading Act, the growth of Sunday sport and other leisure activities, a particular challenge presented itself and faces Christians. Employers and employees, events organisers and particularly parents who in a largely secular society have to make decisions which will need a sensitive and careful approach to nurturing their children in faith, all will at least from time to time be tested.

With centuries of tradition & faithful observance what then might the answer be to the question: **"What's happened to our Sunday?"**

The answer for Orthodox Christians is quite simply - **nothing** – it remains a day of the week and still the principle but not only day of worship and fellowship, whatever changes have occurred elsewhere. Shops, places of work, sports and other activities now take place on Sundays in a way until comparatively recently they never used to (and there may be nothing wrong *per se* in most of them), so Sunday presents us with **opportunity, choice** and deciding upon **priorities**. Orthodox can be example setters!

"Strive with all your being to love God who created you and redeemed you! Do not neglect hospitality. Never separate yourself from the Church. Beware of other ways of life and existence that will lead you astray."

From Fr. Stephen Maxfield's editorial in Orthodox Outlook, Issue 22, 2016, in which he writes of aspects of Orthodoxy in this Country over the past thirty years. www.orthodoxoutlook.co.uk

This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Psalm 117 verse 24 and 3rd verse of the third antiphon in the Divine Liturgy.