

The Teachings of the Orthodox Church

The Orthodox Church throughout the ages has maintained a continuity of faith and love with the apostolic community founded by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Orthodoxy believes that, from the time of the Apostles, she has preserved and taught the historic Christian Faith free from error and distortion. She also believes that there is nothing in the body of her teachings which is contrary to the truth or which inhibits the real union with God. The air of antiquity and timelessness that often characterizes Eastern Christianity is an expression of her desire to remain loyal to the authentic Christian Faith.

Orthodoxy believes that the Christian Faith and the Church are inseparable. It is impossible to know Christ, to share in the life of the Holy Trinity, or to be considered a Christian apart from the Church. It is in the Church that the Christian Faith is proclaimed and maintained. It is through the Church that an individual is nurtured in the Faith.

THE REVELATION

According to the Orthodox Church, God is the source of faith. Orthodoxy believes that God has revealed Himself to us, most especially in the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom we know as the Son of God. This Revelation of God, His love, and His purpose, are constantly made manifest and contemporary in the life of the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Orthodox Faith does not begin with man's religious speculations, or with the so-called "proofs" for the existence of God, or with a human quest for the Divine. The origin of the Orthodox Christian Faith is the Self-revelation of God. Each day the Church's Morning Prayer affirms and reminds us of this by declaring: *"God is the Lord and He has revealed Himself to us."* While the inner Being of God always remains unknown and unapproachable, God has manifested Himself to us; and the Church has experienced Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which is central to the Orthodox Faith, is not the result of pious speculation, but the overwhelming experience of God. This doctrine affirms that there is only One God in whom there are three distinct Persons. In other words, when we encounter either the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, we are truly experiencing contact with God. While the Holy Trinity is a mystery that cannot be fully comprehended, Orthodoxy believes that we can truly participate in the Trinity through the life of the Church, especially through our celebration of the Eucharist and the other Sacraments, as well as the non-sacramental services.