

## Unit 4b: Foundational Beliefs--Orthodox Eastern and Roman Catholic

### Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

### Be aware of the following

- Self-governing nature of Orthodox Eastern Churches
- Orthodox emphasis on prayer and worship rather than doctrine
- Place of icons in Orthodox Eastern practice
- Theology of suffering in Serbian Orthodox schools of thought
- Baptism and the Eucharist as the most significant Orthodox sacraments
- Roman Catholic authority is the Bishop of Rome (Pope)

### Identify

- |                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| • Ecumenical Patriarch | • Chrismation  |
| • Great Schism         | • Eucharist    |
| • Icons                | • Holy Unction |
| • Theotokos            | • Pope         |
| • Jesus Prayer         | • homily       |
| • Liturgy              | • sacrament    |

### Realize

- Importance of monastic communities with the Orthodox tradition
- Observance of the church calendar in Orthodox Eastern practice
- Place of fasting in the Orthodox Eastern tradition
- Seven sacraments of Roman Catholic practice

## Unit 4b: Orthodox/Roman Catholic Belief

### I. Orthodox Practice and Belief

**1. Introduction** Five major regions mark the territorial boundaries of the Orthodox Church. Over 150 million adherents belong to the church worldwide.



**a. Muslim borders** This church exists in ancient outposts in the Islamic world--Constantinople (Istanbul), Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

**b. Greek world** Cyprus and Greece--where the churches trace their lineage to Paul and Barnabas--have a strong Orthodox tradition. Greece is the only country where the Orthodox faith is the official state church.

**c. Romania and Georgia** In Romania, with over fifteen million members, and Georgia are non-Greek/Slavonic speaking churches.

**d. Slavs** Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia are home to the Slavonic Orthodox churches.

**e. Other areas** Finland, the Czech Republic, America and Albania round out those countries with churches affiliated with the Orthodox tradition.

## 2. Practice

**a. Self-governing Churches** "Autocephalous" describes the self-governing nature of Orthodox churches.

While each church is independent of others, they possess full agreement on matters of doctrine. Full sacramental communion is practiced throughout the loose federation. Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Moscow are the hierarchical heads.

No church has overall power, yet the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople is seen as the "first among equals."

This historic center for Orthodox practice is in ways similar to the Archbishop of Canterbury with the Anglican communion.

**b. Leadership** Priests serve as "spiritual fathers" to their congregations. At the parish level, priests may marry. Celibate bishops, drawn from monastic communities, minister at higher leadership levels.

Only males may serve at the altar as priests, deacons, or altar boys. Women participate in all other areas of church life--lead congregational singing, paint icons, teach classes, serve on parish councils and read epistle lessons.



Monastic communities enjoy healthy respect within the tradition. Monasteries remind the faithful of the depths of spirituality; keep the faith alive during difficult times; combat heresy; interrupt political influences; and provide sources for church leadership at higher levels.

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Parish priests are addressed as "Father" with accompanying first name. The terms patriarch, catholicos, metropolitan or archbishop refer to senior bishops who normally serve in the primary city of the territory of influence. An archimandrite is a title of honor for priest-monks. The Ecumenical Patriarchate (Church of Constantinople) is headed by the ecumenical patriarch, an honorific title for the symbolic "head" of the Orthodox Church.

### 3. Belief

"Orthodoxy is not just a kind of Roman Catholicism without a Pope, but something quite different..."

--Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church, p. 10

#### a. Break with Rome

Orthodoxy's break with the Roman Catholic Church stemmed as much from societal/political forces as from matters of doctrine. The great schism--where the Pope excommunicated the Orthodox--occurred in 1054.

As an outcome of the Council of Florence (1439), two central issues of disagreement--submission to papal authority in Rome and filioque (the doctrine that the Holy Spirit precedes not just from the Father but also from the Son)--galvanized the rift between the two communions.



Orthodoxy sees itself as being in continuity with the Church since apostolic times, an outlook it continues to this day. It sees no Middle Ages, Reformation, or Counter-Reformation as part of its heritage. Rather, Orthodoxy emphasizes a constancy with the church of the earliest ecumenical creeds and councils.

## b. Worship emphasis

The Orthodox Church tends to emphasize prayer and worship rather than doctrine. Theology becomes preeminently mystical and liturgical. God can only be apprehended, on a level beyond language, images and intellectual concepts, in union of love. Matters of the Spirit take primacy.

**c. Mystic bent** Entering into the spiritual tradition from "within"--appreciating and experiencing the Orthodox tradition within one's inner spirit--is an important dimension of Orthodoxy.

## d. Icons

Icons--flat pictures bearing the image of Christ, Theotokos (Mother of God) or one of the saints--become aids to assist in this atmosphere of worship. The icon bestows honor upon the person represented by it. Images of Christ also reveal the God who became visible in the Incarnation.

Worship of God and the saints takes place through or across the icon images. Icons are objects of veneration [to be shown reverence] and honor...but not of real worship. Like pictures of individuals which serve as reminders--often in realistic ways--of famous persons or those dear to us, so icons can refresh the believer, stimulating acts of faith and piety.

**e. Scripture** The aesthetic emphasis applies to the Scriptures also. The Bible becomes a verbal icon of Christ, given a place of honor on the altar, carried in procession, kissed and venerated by the faithful. The faithful study it as much for its "religious feeling" as its literary or doctrinal structure.



**f. Church year** Within many Orthodox circles, Bible reading developed as a later addition to Orthodox piety.

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The clearest expression of spirituality was in daily observance of the church calendar. Fasts, saint's lives, veneration of icons, and the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist became most important.

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## g. Scripture translations

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Controversies surrounding the Bible--its publication and distribution in former Communist territorial churches--are commonplace. Many Orthodox churches tenaciously desire to preserve culture and tradition. Which translation is used becomes critical.

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Political and theological church divisions, status of deuterocanonical books, competing Bible societies and organizations, and fears over linguistic "corruption" and degradation of religious language all influence the uneasiness with which Bibles are published and distributed. Within Orthodoxy, the Bible translation/distribution picture can become quite complex.

**h. Suffering** Orthodoxy, especially as practiced in Serbia, places a heavy emphasis upon the theology of suffering.



The official publication of the diocese of Montenegro, *Svetigora*, makes "the ever-increasing claim...that the Serbs are the 'New Israel,' the chosen people of God, a 'heavenly kingdom,' a martyr nation that has suffered more than anyone else on earth except Christ..." (Paul Mojzes, "The pro-Serb Montenegrins," Christian Century, 13 Dec 1995, p 1205). Other Orthodox communions place a similar emphasis upon suffering.

## 4. Worship

"Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second."

-- Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church, p. 282

**a. Features** Distinctive traits characterize the Orthodox worship tradition. The service itself is marked by a sense of awe and wonder, accompanied with a feeling of informality and freedom.

The worshipper becomes like a child in his Father's house, rather than being a soldier on parade. Right praise--faith in the glorious Orthodox liturgy--becomes the distinguishing trait of the Orthodox tradition.



**b. Positioning** Participants "stand up for Jesus" for most of the lengthy service. Rather than kneeling, worshipers prostrate themselves, placing their hands on the floor and touching foreheads down between hands in the style of Middle-Eastern Muslims. Kissing--of the icons, chalice, edge of the priest's vestment, cross at the end of the service--is a regular part of the worship event. Frequent makings of the sign of the cross (with right hand from right to left) occur. Lengthy prayers and rites, and a great deal of singing also identify services.

**c. The Jesus Prayer** Corporate prayer is a primary part of the liturgy. The Jesus Prayer--"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner"--receives a great deal of attention. General sins are usually omitted. Private confession before priests is the expectation for faithful adherents.

### d. Fasting

Fasting, an exercise to stretch, strengthen but not break one, is like medicine for the soul's health. A variety of fasting practices occur, most common being the abstaining from all food or drink prior to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

**e. Liturgy** The divine liturgy (public worship ritual) continues an ancient tradition. In both form and content, it embodies the earliest of Eastern worship rites.



The Easter season is the high point on the liturgical calendar.

The liturgy is both a source and expression of theology. It manifests the essential liturgical approach the Orthodox take to religion. Liturgy promotes the Orthodox tendency to be conservative practitioners of faith in an often changing world.

**f. The Holy Mysteries** (Sacraments--signs or ceremonies instilling grace) The following seven sacraments demonstrate, for Orthodox believers, the work of God's Holy Spirit in life and creation.

**(1) Baptism**--the rite of initiation into Christ and the Church

**(2) Chrismation** (KRIZ-may-shun)--occurs just after baptism, with the priest anointing with holy oil (chrism), symbolic of the seal of the Holy Spirit and welcoming the newly baptized into the Church

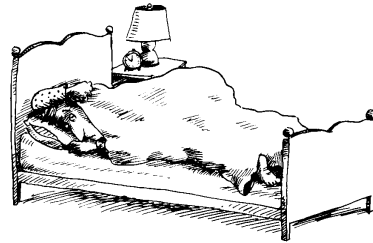
**(3) Holy Eucharist** (YOO-kah-rihst)--receiving of bread and wine, changed to the body and blood of Christ by the Holy Sprit, for spiritual and physical nourishment



**(4) Penance**--act of reconciliation where the penitent, confessing and expressing sorrow for sins, is declared right before God

**(5) Marriage**--crowns may be placed upon the bride and groom's head during this event, symbolic of blessing, martyrdom and membership in God's kingdom. Hands may also be symbolically bound to express the union of the couple.

**(6) Holy Unction**--  
anointing of sick with oil and  
prayer for spiritual and physical  
healing



**(7) Holy Orders**--ordination rites to deacon,  
priest and bishop

The Holy Spirit is dramatically present to effect these sacraments, bringing the mystery of God to the forefront. Of the seven sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist are the most significant. Infants receive baptism by triple immersion. Chrismation follows, whereby the priest anoints the baptized with oil, symbolic of reception of the Holy Spirit and entry into the Church.

**g. Eucharist (communion) custom** The Church is first and foremost a eucharistic community. Orthodox alone can take communion. Before communion, the priest takes the round communion loaf, cuts out the middle section imbedded with a seal (the "Lamb"), and sets it aside. He blesses and places the remainder (the "antidoron") in a basket. During the eucharistic prayer, the "Lamb" is consecrated to be the Body of Christ, and the chalice of wine is consecrated as His Blood. The priest places the "Lamb" in the chalice, where it falls apart. Communicants receive the elements on a golden spoon. Participants can then receive portions of the "antidoron" for themselves, visitors or non-Orthodox friends around them.

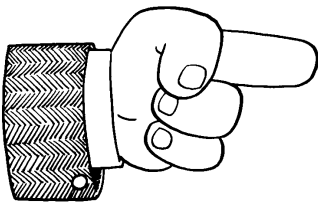
## h. Beauty

The structure of the worship setting emphasizes divine beauty. Icons, emphasizing traditional and conventional Byzantine influence, reflect the divine character. This art stresses an established Greek design with faces, drapery, and gestures, which became such perfect symbols of Holy Truth that there appeared no need to depart from them. These images embodied the grandeur and majesty of an ancient art form.

## II. Roman Catholic Practice and Belief

**Introduction** Many Americans are familiar with Roman Catholic faith and practice. It is the largest of the three major Christian subdivisions (Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic). Distinctive matters of practice and belief include:

**a. Pope** The bishop of Rome, known as the Pope, governs church polity and practice. Advisors, cardinals, committees (curia) and bishops assist.



The papacy stems from the time of Christ when he appointed St. Peter to be the head of the Church ("Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church").

## b. Doctrine

The Church develops correct thought and practice based on Scripture, the continuous church tradition, and current issues. Apostolic formulation, ecumenical councils and Papal pronouncements are major factors in theological development.

### c. Distinctive features of practice

**(1) Mass** The celebration of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper), wherein the unleavened bread and wine become Christ's body and blood, is a central element of the mass. Prayers, scripture readings, a homily (short sermon) and songs often also make up the mass.

**(2) Saints** Statues of saints serve as aids to focus prayer.

**(3) Sacraments** The seven sacraments include baptism, the Eucharist, confession, confirmation (admission of baptized persons into full communion with the church), marriage, holy orders to ministry and last anointing (prior to death).



"Use all of your brain."

## Vocabulary List: Foundational Beliefs--Orthodox and Roman Catholic

**Autocephalous** Self-governing nature of Orthodox Eastern churches. Each national church is independent of others, yet possesses full agreement on matters of doctrine and faith.

**Chrismation** (KRIZ-may-shun) When the priest anoints a newly baptized infant or adult with holy oil, symbolizing the seal of the Holy Spirit.

**Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople** The "first among equals," the figurative head of Orthodox Eastern Churches.

**Eucharist** (YOO-kah-rihst) Receiving the bread and wine, the presence of Christ, for reasons of obedience to Scripture and spiritual/physical nourishment. Communion

**Icon** Flat picture bearing the image of Christ, Mary the Mother of God, or one of the saints.

**Liturgy** Public worship ritual

**Mass** Roman Catholic celebration of the Eucharist (communion), a central part of each worship service.

**Patriarch** Senior bishop within Orthodox Eastern practice.

**Penance** Act of reconciliation, confessing sins, and sorrow for those sins, before being declared right before God.

**Pope** Roman Catholic bishop of Rome, the one who governs church polity and practice

**Sacrament** Sign or symbol which instills God's special grace. the Orthodox Eastern and Roman Catholic Churches have seven sacraments.

**Venerate** To hold in high esteem, reverence or regard.

## Review Quiz: Foundational Beliefs- Orthodox Eastern and Roman Catholic



**Part 1--Fill in the blanks** Fill in the blanks with the most correct word immediately following this section. Not all words listed will be used.

The Orthodox Eastern church is (1) \_\_\_\_\_, having no one authoritative head like the Roman Catholic practice. Within Roman Catholic practice the (2) \_\_\_\_\_ is the head of the Church. The Ecumenical (3) \_\_\_\_\_ of Constantinople, is the "first among equals" within Orthodoxy.

The Orthodox church tends to value prayer and worship rather than (4) \_\_\_\_\_. Theology is primarily (5) \_\_\_\_\_ and liturgical.

In Orthodox practice, (6) \_\_\_\_\_, while not objects of worship, are shown reverence and honor. They serve as aids to (7) \_\_\_\_\_, refreshing and stimulating the faithful.

Serbia Orthodox faithful place a distinct emphasis upon the theology of (8) \_\_\_\_\_. (9) \_\_\_\_\_, like medicine for the soul, serves to strengthen one's faith. The Holy (10) \_\_\_\_\_ offer Christ's consecrated body and blood to communicants in good standing with the church.

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Pope  
doctrine  
fasting

worship  
icons  
Eucharist

Patriarch  
suffering

mystical  
self-governing



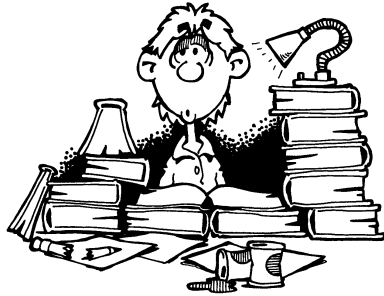
**Part 2--Multiple Choice** Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ In the Orthodox Eastern tradition, women may not serve
  - a. as icon painters or readers of epistle lessons.
  - b. teachers and song leaders.
  - c. priests, deacons or altar servers.
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ In Orthodox Eastern practice, icons
  - a. become objects of worship.
  - b. are aids to worship.
  - c. are works of art with little worship value in today's society.
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ For many Orthodox Eastern Christians, the clearest expression of spirituality is in
  - a. Bible reading and study.
  - b. daily observance of the church calendar.
  - c. fastidious painting of icons.
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Concerning Bible translations, Orthodox Eastern churches
  - a. use whatever translation is most easily understood by the faithful.
  - b. may engage in much controversy over which translation to use.
  - c. use whatever translation is available because Bibles are so few.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ During most Orthodox Eastern services, parishioners
  - a. stand and prostrate.
  - b. sit and kneel.
  - c. sit and parade around the sanctuary.

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6. \_\_\_\_\_ For Orthodox Eastern practice, Holy Unction involves
- a liturgy for the dying.
  - anointing of the sick with oil and prayer for healing.
  - the changing of the bread and wine into Christ's actual body and blood.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The Roman Catholic Church develops doctrine through
- scripture, church tradition and current issues.
  - scripture and liturgy alone.
  - the Pope alone.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ In Roman Catholic practice, the last anointing is one of the seven
- last words of Christ.
  - sacraments.
  - Eucharist mysteries.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ In Orthodox worship, the divine \_\_\_\_\_ embodies earliest Eastern worship rites and cherishes ancient tradition.
- liturgy
  - antiocephalous preaching style
  - light
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Over \_\_\_\_\_ million Orthodox Eastern Christians practice the faith worldwide.
- 15
  - 150
  - 495



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"Only by teaching can we truly prepare soldiers [sailors, airmen, Marines] to be successful and to survive in combat."  
General John A. Wickham, Jr.