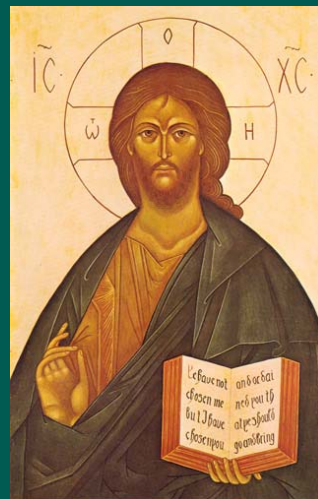


# Introduction to Orthodox Christianity

A Three Session Class  
for Inquirers



# Class Purpose

Provide a basic introduction to Orthodox  
Christianity



# Questions We Will Answer

- What is the Orthodox Church?
- Where does it come from – and why have so many never heard of it?
- How is it similar to and different from Christian Churches with which you may be more familiar?
- What do people find here?
- Your specific questions.



# Overview

- Welcome!
  - Coffee and soft drinks afterwards
  - We love questions...ask them anytime
  - The restrooms are located...

- Session Outline

Introduction to Orthodox  
Christianity

Session 1 - Who We Are

Session 2 - What We Believe

Session 3 - How We Live



# Orthodox Christianity

# Who We Are

## Session 1



# Orthodox Christian Church

- IS NOT
  - an institution or organization
- IS
  - a Living Organism –the people of God
  - As the people of God we:
    - *Gather* together in his name
    - *Share* a common faith in love of God
    - *Affirm* truth & fullness of their faith belief & experience
    - *Proclaim* the Good News of Christ in word and deed

# An Orthodox Christian...

A person who lives according to the image of Jesus Christ and affirms the fullness of truth he reveals

Ortho	dox	Christ	ian
True or correct complete doctrine	Belief teaching doctrine	Jesus Christ in whom our faith is rooted	One who strives to live as Christ did

# Jesus Christ

- DID NOT ...
  - Come to establish a religion, belief system or code of ethics.
- DID
  - Give us a model for living based on loving...
    - God with our very being
    - Others as we love ourselves
  - On this, Jesus Christ says, everything else hinges



# Orthodox Christian Church

## *Origins*

- Traces its origins to Jesus Christ and the apostles
- Born on day of Pentecost
  - 50 days after Christ's resurrection
    - when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles*
  - Apostles went throughout the world
    - proclaiming the Good News of the Risen Christ to all who would listen*
- Subsequently spread to every corner of the world
- Planted in North America by Orthodox missionaries
  - Alaska, 1794

# Orthodox Church Today

- Throughout the world
  - 300,000,000 Orthodox Christians
- In North America
  - 2,000,000 Orthodox Christians
  - 2800 parishes, missions institutions and monasteries
- The Church continues to invite people to
  - Come and see the fullness of the faith
  - Embrace it as their own

# Orthodox Christians

Attempt to serve God by:



*Worship*

*Public “liturgy” & private prayer*

# Orthodox Christians

Attempt to serve God by:



## *Fellowship*

*By interacting with others in the faith community and beyond*

# Orthodox Christians

Attempt to serve God by:



## *Discipleship*

*Fasting, almsgiving and reaching out to others, especially those in spiritual and material need*

# Orthodox Christians

Attempt to serve God by:



## *Stewardship*

*Wisely managing the gifts of time, talent and treasure with which God has blessed us.*

# Next Week

Session 2 – What We Believe

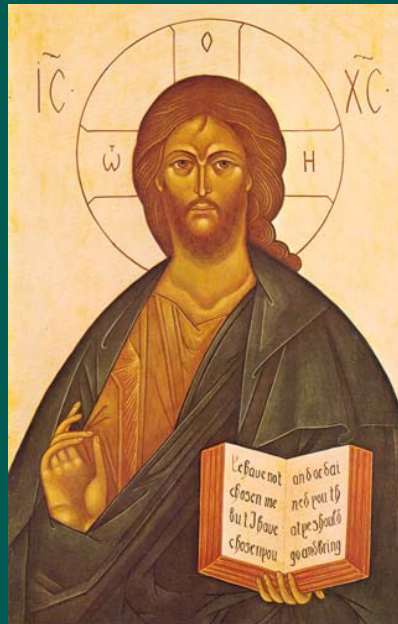
Questions?



# Orthodox Christianity

# What We Believe

## Session 2



# Topics

- Scripture
- Tradition
- Trinity
- The Church
- Salvation



# Holy Scripture



*The inspired word of God and the written record of His revelation to humanity*

# Holy Scripture

- Old Testament
  - Records the manner in which God prepared the world for the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ.
- New Testament
  - Completes and fulfills God's revelation...
  - by proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior;
  - as the very Word of God
  - Who came to live in the midst of His people;
  - and as the perfect, final and complete revelation of God to the world



# Holy Tradition

*That which is passed on or given over within the Church, from the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles until the present day*

- Is...
  - the ongoing life of God's People
  - that which God's People have believed, lived, experienced, celebrated and shared at all times and in all places.
  - the living link that unites God's people in a common faith, life & experience.
- Includes...
  - all that is essential to God's revelation and necessary for our salvation

# Holy Tradition

Consists of...

- Holy Scripture
- Prayer & liturgical worship
- Accepted creeds & acts of the early Church's councils
- Writings of the Holy Fathers
- Lives of the saints
- Artistic and musical expression of the Church

# Holy Trinity

The one God is three separate and distinct Persons

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

- Each Person of the Trinity...
  - Shares fully and equally in the divine nature and will *AND*
  - Is infinite, perfect, all knowing, ever existing and eternally the same *AND*
  - Is perfectly united to the other Persons of the Trinity in love.



# Holy Trinity *(cont'd)*

## *God the Father*

- The source of all things
- Maker of Heaven and Earth
- And of all things visible and invisible

*Summarized in Nicene Creed, professed  
unchanged since 4th century*



# Holy Trinity *(cont'd)*

## *God the Son, Jesus Christ*

- Sent by the Father into the world for our salvation
- Begotten of the Father before all ages
- Took on human nature & became man while not forsaking divine nature
- Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate
- and on the third day He arose again
- He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead

*Jesus Christ is our Savior,  
who leads humanity into God's kingdom*

# Holy Trinity *(cont'd)*

## *God the Holy Spirit*

- The Lord, the Giver of Life
- Proceeds from the Father
- Is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son

*The Holy Spirit fills us, sustains us and strengthens us in living a Christ-like life*

# The Church

The Church is...	Because...
ONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ It is one body with one Head, Jesus Christ</li><li>■ It cannot be divided or separated because Christ cannot be divided or separated</li><li>■ It does not possess numerous branches that, while similar, are not the same</li></ul>
HOLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the Holy Spirit dwells in God's people as they respond to His call to salvation and eternal life</li></ul>
CATHOLIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the Church is whole, complete, lacking in nothing &amp; universal</li></ul>
APOSTOLIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ It maintains and continues in the apostles' teaching, mission, ministry and experience</li></ul>

# Salvation

- The process by which we prepare to enjoy eternal life with God.
- Ends our separation from God, enabling us to begin a new life in accordance with His will.

# Salvation

For those who...	Spending eternity in His presence is...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Love God</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Paradise</li><li>■ Heaven</li><li>■ A “fire that purifies”</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Hate God or,</li><li>■ Are indifferent to Him or,</li><li>■ Refuse to place their faith in Him</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Torment</li><li>■ A “fire that burns”</li></ul>

# Salvation

- Is ultimately attained through an active faith
  - Free to accept or reject
- By accepting faith we commit ourselves to:
  - Living our faith
  - Putting it into action
  - Recognizing God's presence in others – even the least of the brothers

# Next Week

Session 3 – How We Live

Questions?



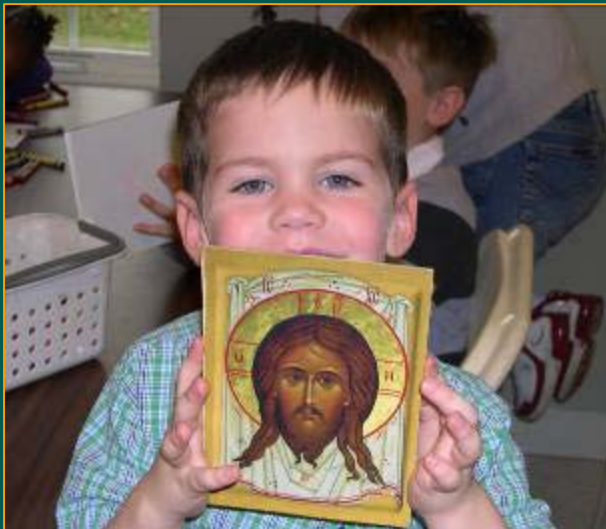
# Orthodox Christianity

# How We Live

## Session 3

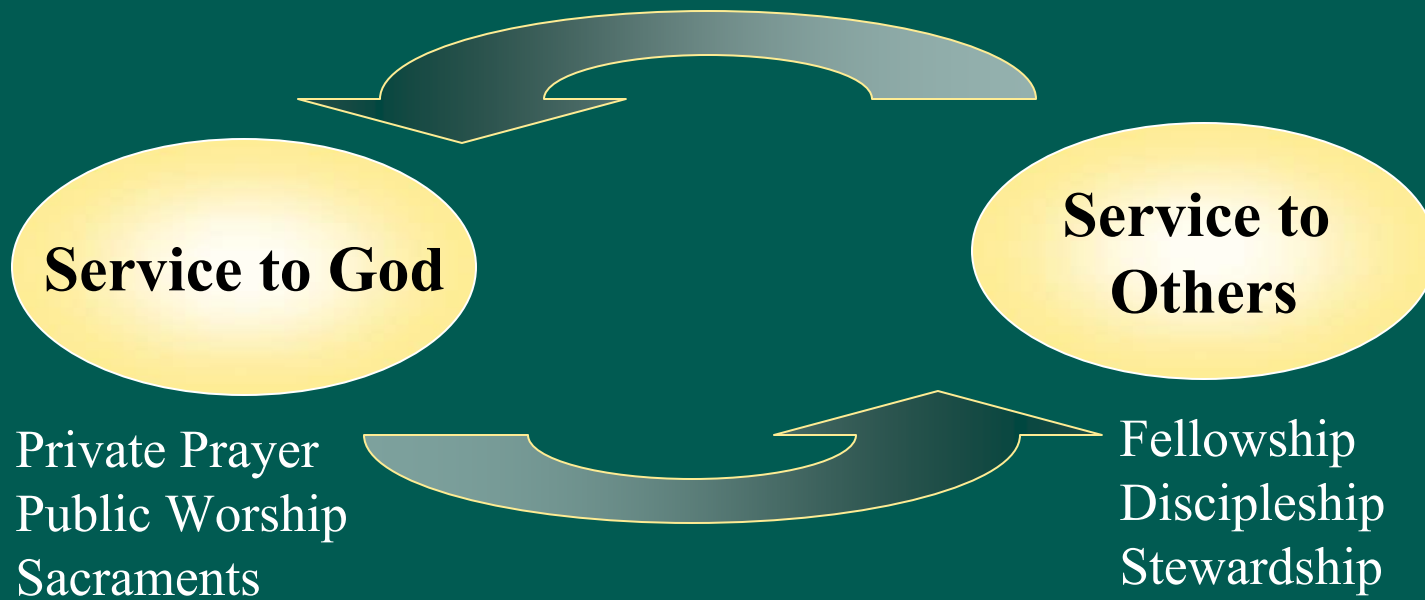
*Service to God*

*Service to Others*



# How We Live

*Offering service to others is rooted in service we offer to God in prayer and worship*



# Service to God

## *Private prayer is essential*

- We communicate and commune with God personally
  - To discern God's will for our lives
  - To obtain the means to live his will
  - To praise and thank him for the blessings He has given us
  - To bring our burdens before Him while asking for strength to live our faith even in times of adversity

# Service to God

*Above all God's people are a worshipping people*

*Liturgical Worship is...*

- the public proclamation of God as Lord
- the common action, or liturgy, of God's people



# Service to God



## *The Divine Liturgy (Eucharist) is:*

- The central act of worship
- During which we:
  - Proclaim God's word as revealed in scripture
  - And respond in Thanksgiving through the reception of Holy Communion – the body and blood of Jesus Christ

# Service to God

## *Sacraments*

Our Sacraments	<i>bring God's presence into our lives as we:</i>
Baptism & Chrismation	Become members of Christ's Body
Holy Communion	Proclaim Christ's death, Resurrection and Second Coming
Confession	Be forgiven by & reconciled with God and His People
Marriage	Share His love and the commitments it entails
Ordination	Dedicate our lives and our work to Him in specialized service
Holy Unction	Receive His healing grace

# Service to God

## *Sacraments*



Baptism & Chrismation  
Become members of Christ's Body

# Service to God

## *Sacraments*



### Holy Communion

Proclaim Christ's Death, Resurrection  
and Second Coming



# Service to God

## *Sacraments*

### Confession

Be forgiven by & reconciled with  
God and his people.



# Service to God

## *Sacraments*



## Marriage

Share His love and the commitments it entails

# Service to God

## *Sacraments*



## Ordination

Dedicate our lives  
and our work to Him  
in specialized service

# Service to God

## *Sacraments*

### Holy Unction

Receive his healing grace

*“...unto the healing of soul and body.”*



# Service to Others



*One cannot be a Christian independent of others*

Volunteer and child at Hogar Rafael Ayau Orphanage  
Guatemala City, Guatemala

# Service to Others

## *Fellowship*

- The Church is God's people who:
  - Are united in a common faith, life and journey to the kingdom of God
  - Share their common union in the Christian community
- The roots of fellowship are:
  - Mutual love & respect
  - Hospitality
  - Acknowledgement that, while we belong to Christ, we also are members of one another



# Service to Others (cont'd)

## *Discipleship*

A disciple is more than a follower...

...rather a co-worker with Christ... bringing the Good News of salvation to all who listen and receive it.

- Discipleship includes:
  - Strengthening our faith
    - Reading, studying, discussing
  - Living out our faith
    - In words and actions
  - Sharing our faith with others
    - Especially those who have yet to hear the fullness of the Good News of Jesus Christ



# Service to Others (cont'd)

## *Stewardship*

*... wisely managing the countless gifts bestowed by God.*

- Time
- Talent
- Treasure

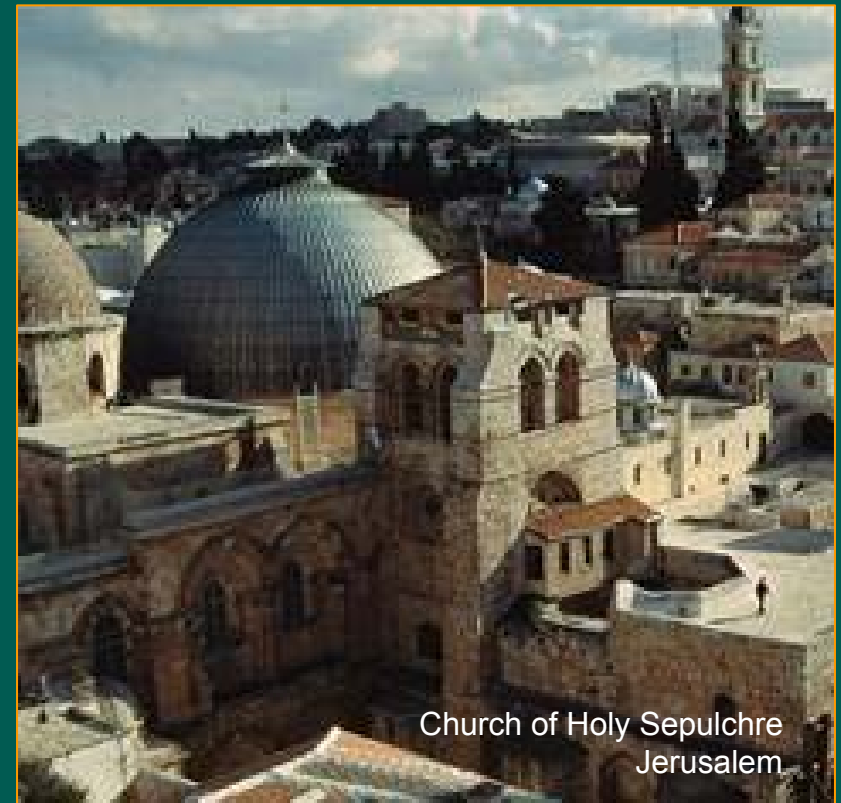




# Summary

## *What Do People Find Here?*

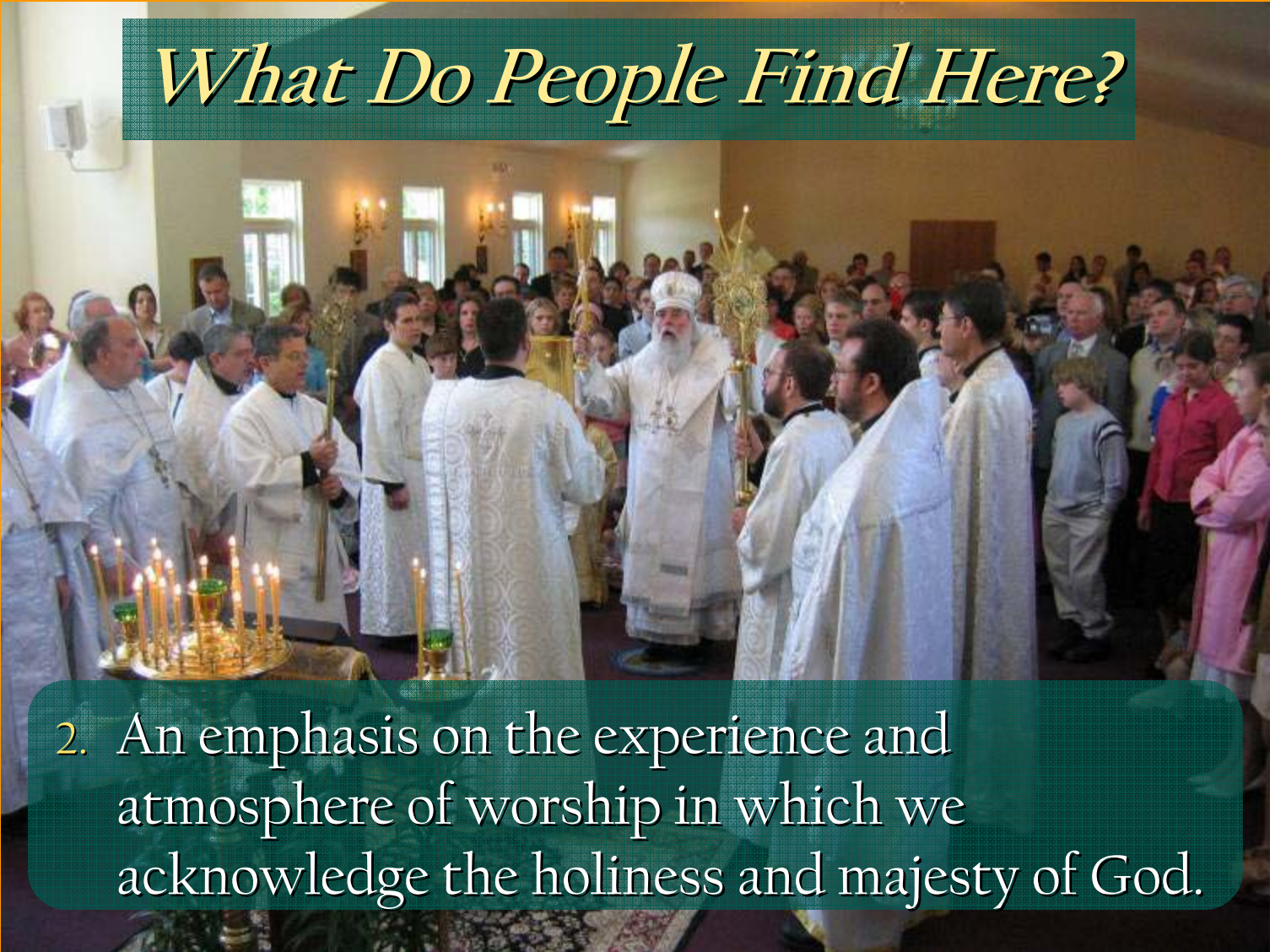
1. Doctrinal integrity and continuity with the original apostolic "deposit" that does not shift with the times or with prevailing fads.



Church of Holy Sepulchre  
Jerusalem

# Summary

## *What Do People Find Here?*



2. An emphasis on the experience and atmosphere of worship in which we acknowledge the holiness and majesty of God.

# Summary

*What Do People Find Here?*



3. An over-all Christian "world view" that is meant to be lived out as a "way of life."

Thank You For Your Time  
and Your Attention!

*Diocese of the Midwest  
Orthodox Church in America*