

# **Old Orthodox Catechism**

## **A summary of the fundamentals of the Old Orthodox Faith**

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**Introduction**

## **1. The concept of catechesis**

“Kathichisis” translated from the Greek means ‘instruction in the faith’, ‘oath-taking’. The Greek word means to make public, to instruct, to teach.

In the ancient Church, people who from paganism or Judaism came to the Christian faith before being received into the Church through Holy Baptism were subjected to more or less prolonged preparation through instruction in the truths of Christ's faith and through some religious activities. That is, people first studied the Christian dogmas in detail, went to services (and they were allowed to attend the Divine Liturgy only up to a certain point), and only then did they receive Baptism.

In our time, in most cases, this is not the case. A person receives Baptism in infancy, and it is the task of godparents and parents to teach him the truths of the faith when he reaches the age of consciousness. But in life we face the fact that the person was baptized, but he was not evangelized, and as a result he knows nothing about his faith, nor does he go to church. But in the sacrament of Baptism we deny ourselves from Satan and promise to Christ, that is, we take an oath to Christ that we will be soldiers of Christ's host. But do we follow His call?

For this very reason, catechesis, that is, instruction in the faith, is necessary not only for children, but also for adults. Now, when there are so many different heresies around and a person can easily go astray from the right path, it is especially necessary for us to study the catechism and carry this knowledge to others - to our relatives and friends. We should remember that every Christian is called to apostolic service - to spread the light of the Good News of Christ. It does not follow, of course, that Old Orthodox Christians should, like heretics and sectarians, walk the streets and ask questions of passers-by. The Fathers of the Church do not advise entering into disputes with heretics, because they do not argue to reach the truth, but to lead people into confusion. But we must always be ready to answer the questions that people will ask us about our faith. As St. Apostle Peter writes, “Be always ready to answer anyone who asks you a word about your trust, with meekness and fear, conscience of goodness” (“Be always ready to answer anyone who asks you to give an account of your trust with meekness and reverence”; 1 Pet. 3: 15).

And so we must understand what it is that we believe. As St. Luke the Evangelist writes, “That you may know the firm foundation of the doctrine in which you are instructed”; Lk. 1, 4.

Thus, the catechism is the science of the right faith. In the early history of the Christian Church, the program by which instruction in the faith took place included the provisions contained in the “rule of faith” - *regula fidei*, in the “rule of truth” in the creed. In the 3rd century this was joined by the study of the Lord's Prayer (“Our Father”).

Among the catechetical works of antiquity are the catechetical teachings of St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (4th century), the “word” of St. Gregory of Nyssa and others.

In the Russian Church the catechism first appeared in the form of a separate book under the last pious patriarch Joseph - it was the “Great Catechism” by Lavrentiy Zizania (published in 1647 in Moscow) and the “Small Catechism” (1649). For our Church, these two catechisms are still one of the main sources for the study of the Christian faith. This also includes such books as the “Book of Faith” and the “Kiril's Book,” also printed in the 17th century.

## **2. The necessity of faith for salvation**

What is necessary for a Christian to be saved? First of all, the right faith, and then the life of faith.

“Without faith,” writes St. Paul, ‘it is impossible to please God: those who come to God should believe that He exists and will reward those who seek Him’ (Hebrews 11:6).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes thus about faith: (Exhortation 5) "Faith is the eye that illuminates every conscience; it gives man knowledge. For, says the prophet: "If you do not believe, you cannot understand" (Is. 7, 9).

In another place St. Cyril explains the necessity of faith in the following way: "Not only we who bear the name of Christ are honored with great faith, but all that is done in the world, even by people who are strangers to the Church, is done by faith. Farming is founded on faith: for whoever does not believe that he will gather the fruit that grows will not labor. Faith is guided by seafarers, when, entrusting their fate to a small ship, the fickle desire of the waves prefer the firmest land, surrender themselves to unknown hopes and have only faith, which for them is more reliable than any anchor" (Ibid.).

But reasoning faith alone is not enough. Heartfelt faith and the fulfillment of God's commandments through love are necessary. St. James the Apostle writes: "Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead" (James 2:26) and again: "See that by works a man is justified, and not by faith alone" (James 2:24).

### **3. The original sources of the Christian faith**

Where can we find the science of faith and how can we learn to live the Christian life? The primary sources of the Christian faith are Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, the decrees of the Holy Fathers in councils. For a good Christian life we should follow the examples of the Holy Fathers of the Church, study the lives of the Saints, finding there examples of truly Christian virtues.

The source of our knowledge of God, the world and man is Revelation. Revelation means what God Himself has revealed to us, so that we may believe in Him correctly and honor Him worthily. It is divided into natural revelation and supernatural revelation.

### **4. Natural Revelation**

Natural Revelation is the knowledge of God through the world, through His creation. God reveals Himself in the world around us. To perceive the natural Revelation, we need to purify our minds. Thus, St. Anthony the Great spoke about the world as a book.

By cognizing the world, we cognize God. Blessed Augustine said: "Little knowledge leads away from God, great knowledge leads to Him". Therefore, we should not be afraid of knowledge (including scientific knowledge). Serious (not superficial) science also tells us about God, it points out that this incredibly complex and diverse world cannot be the result of a random collision of elementary particles (atoms).

St. John Climacus says that even through a beautiful body, beautiful music at the highest degrees of holiness we come to know God.

However, natural Revelation alone is not enough. Pagans, who came to the idea of One God, did it only on the basis of natural Revelation and therefore often fell into error (for example, such false doctrines as dualism and pantheism, etc.).

### **5. Supernatural Revelation**

God gave supernatural Revelation to man - to Adam before the Fall and after the Fall. St. Isaac the Syrian distinguished two stages in Revelation:

1) vision (Revelation in the image - the Burning Bush, the Ladder of Iyakov, etc. - mostly in the Old Testament);

2) mental revelations (without images, prayerful contemplations, above any word, image, etc. - they are felt and experienced in themselves, it is a super-intelligent knowledge of the very life of God). Thus, St. Gregory Sinaiticus said that Orthodoxy is the cognition of visible and invisible things, and distinguished 8 subjects of contemplation:

- a) about God;
- b) about Heavenly Powers;
- c) about Divine Ideas (logos);
- d) on the construction of our salvation;
- e) about the general resurrection;
- f) about the Last Judgment;
- g) about eternal torment;
- h) about the Kingdom of Heaven.

The source of supernatural Revelation is Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Divine Revelation found its material expression in two forms: in the form of oral transmission (Sacred Tradition) and later in written form (Moses was the first person to write down the sacred text). The preachers of supernatural Revelation were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and other Old Testament prophets. However, we do not find the fullness of Revelation in the Old Testament. In its fullness and perfection the Revelation of God was brought to earth and spread through His disciples and apostles by the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should not expect any new "third" covenants. The fullness of Revelation has already been proclaimed to us.

In the West, Catholics have developed the heretical theory of "dogmatic development", which says that at first Christians supposedly knew only some truth and only gradually the greater fullness was revealed to them. By this the Latins justify their new dogmas. But this is a ridiculous theory, since it appears that the apostles did not possess the fullness of truth. The same is true of the latest New Believers' theory of the "development of the fingers," which asserts, contrary to all ancient Christian monuments, that at first there was supposedly one-fingeredness, then two-fingeredness, and then three-fingeredness. In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus Christ directly says to His disciples: "I have called you friends, because I have told you all that I have heard from My Father" (John 15, 15). In history, not the dogmas themselves developed, but only certain words and expressions were clarified.

### **a) Holy Scripture**

The Holy Scripture is the inspired books (the Bible). It includes 76 books (in the synodal edition - 77, since the Epistle of the Prophet Jeremiah is singled out as a separate book, which in the Old Orthodox "Ostrog" Bible is included in the Book of the Prophet Baruch, completing it).

The Bible is divided into two parts - the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament has 49 books (in the synodal edition - 50), the New Testament - 27 books. "Testament" (in ancient Hebrew - "berit") means an agreement, a union of God with man.

The books of the Old Testament were created over the course of more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ in Hebrew, the books of the New Testament were written in Greek in the 1st century after the birth of Christ.

In the Old Testament there are canonical and non-canonical books. The main difference between them is that the canonical books are older, written in the 15th–5th centuries BC, while the non-canonical books, i.e. not included in the canon, in the collection of sacred books, were written later, in the 4th–1st centuries BC. The biblical canon (Greek – "rule", "law", "measure") is a list of books recognized by the Church as divinely inspired (canonical). In these books, she recognized the true Word of God. We received the selection of the Old Testament canon from the Old Testament Church. The Old Testament canon was created gradually. The first collector of sacred books is considered to be Ezra (5th century BC). In the 3rd century BC – 1st century In the 5th century BC, the Old Testament canon acquired the

form that exists in the modern Jewish, so-called Masoretic, Bible (it contains only the Old Testament; the Masoretes, the keepers of tradition, finished working on it in the 8th century AD). It contains 39 books, which are divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. After the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity (5th century BC), several more books were compiled and written in Hebrew and Greek. They were no longer included in the canon of Jewish sacred books, but they were included in the Septuagint, i.e. the Greek translation of the Bible. This translation was made in the 3rd-2nd centuries BC for the Alexandrian Hellenistic Jews and the Jews of the Diaspora, i.e. those living outside Palestine, who had already forgotten their native language and spoke Greek. An ancient legend speaks of 70 (or 72) interpreters (translators) who translated the sacred books from Hebrew into Greek, which is why this translation is called the "translation of the seventy" or in Greek the "Septuagint".

Non-canonical books are considered edifying and useful. In ancient times, they were intended for reading not only in homes, but also in temples, which is why they were called "church". They are contained in one codex of the Bible together with the canonical books. In the doctrinal sense, they are placed in second place. This includes such books as the Book of Tobit, the Book of Wisdom of Solomon, the Book of Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach, the Books of Maccabees, the Book of Judith, etc.

There are also apocryphal books - those that are rejected by the Church ("rejected books"), contain incorrect information and distort Revelation. These include, for example, the Gospel of the Infancy, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Philip, etc. Their list is contained in the Book of Cyril.

In ancient times (before the 4th century), the Bible included such books as the Shepherd of Hermas, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache), and the first letter of St. Clement of Rome.

The biblical canon was finally formed in the 4th century: in 318, the Council of Carthage in its 33rd rule approved the canon of the New Testament, and in 364, the Council of Laodicea accepted the Old Testament canon.

It is important for us to adhere to those translations of the Bible that are recognized by the Church, and those interpretations that the Church recognizes (St. John Chrysostom, Theophylact of Bulgaria, Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus, etc.). The translations of St. Cyril and Methodius were the inspired translations of the Scriptures into the Slavic language. But they did not translate the entire Bible. The first complete Bible in Rus' was the Gennadievskaya Bible (1499), collected by the Novgorod Archbishop Gennady.

The last translation of the Bible that our Church recognizes is the Ostrog Bible, first printed in 1581 by Ivan Fedorov in the city of Ostrog, and then republished in 1663 in Moscow.

After the Nikon reform, under the New Rite Patriarch Joasaph (1667-1672), the editing of biblical texts, as well as all church books, began according to new Greek models. In 1751, the so-called Elizabethan Bible was published, which became the standard of the Slavic language in the New Rite. As for the translation of the Bible into Russian, it was carried out by the New Believers only in 1876. This is the so-called Synodal translation. For it, the Jewish canon of sacred books was chosen as the primary source of the Old Testament texts, not the translation of the 70, therefore the Russian translation is already very different from the canonical Slavic text. For this reason, this translation can only be used as a reference, with reasoning.

1. *Books of the law (Law)*: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy ("Law of Moses")

Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

2. *Historical*: the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

Acts of the Holy Apostles.

3. *Teaching*: the book of Job, the Psalter, the books of Solomon.

Seven General Epistles: one of the Apostle James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude and fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul.

4. *Prophetic (Prophets)*: books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve "minor prophets"

Apocalypse (Revelation) of John the Theologian.

## **b) Holy Tradition**

Holy Tradition is the second of the two primary sources of the Christian faith. Holy Tradition, like Holy Scripture, is the teaching of Jesus Christ himself and the apostles, transmitted by them orally to the Church, and later written.

The following now serve as such written testimonies of Holy Tradition:

1) the symbols of faith of the most ancient local Churches, such as the symbol of the Church of Jerusalem, recorded by St. Cyril of Jerusalem in the inscriptions of his catechetical words; the symbol of the Church of Antioch, the text of which is cited in his work against Nestorius by John Cassian; the symbol of the Church of Alexandria, placed by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, in his "Encyclical" concerning the heresy of Arius; the ancient symbol of the Roman Church, preserved by Blessed Jerome, etc. All these symbols contain the "apostolic dogmas", the apostolic and immutable faith of the Church, which the Church preserves according to tradition from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself through the apostles from generation to generation.

2) "Apostolic Rules", accepted by the Old Orthodox Church as canonical in the number of 85 (according to the definition of the Council in Trullo; Catholics recognize only 50). They were not written by the apostles themselves, but they undoubtedly contain the practice of the times of the apostles; they have long been in general use throughout the Church, although they were collected into a single whole no earlier than the 4th century.

3) Definitions of Faith and Rules of the Holy Ecumenical Councils and those Local, the authority of which was recognized by the Sixth Ecumenical Council.

4) "Confessions of Faith" or "expositions of faith" made by individual Fathers of the Church on various occasions. Such are the symbols of St. Gregory of Neocaesarea, Lucian the Martyr, Basil the Great, Sophronius of Jerusalem, the so-called Athanasian Creed, the exposition of the Orthodox faith of Gregory Palamas, Patriarch Gennadius of Constantinople, Meletius the Mega, three dogmatic letters of Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople to the Lutherans (1576-1581), etc.

5) The "Acts" of the Ecumenical and Local Councils.

6) Ancient liturgies, many of which originate with the apostles.

7) The Acts of the Martyrs, especially the most ancient (St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, etc.), compiled by direct witnesses of their sufferings, during which the martyrs often expounded in detail the dogmas of Christian teaching.

8) The works of St. Fathers and Teachers of the Church who interpreted ancient symbols or expounded in detail the Church's teaching (the "Catechetical Homily" of Gregory of Nyssa, the "Catechetical and Mysterious Teachings" of Cyril of Jerusalem, the "Theology" of John of Damascus, etc.); the Holy Fathers did especially much to clarify Christian teaching in their "conversations" and "words" delivered in churches, and in separate "books" containing an explanation of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

9) Finally, the ancient practice of the Church, also partly reproduced in writing; it concerns sacred times (fasts, holidays, etc.), sacred places, sacred rites, sacraments, rites, etc.

The Church calls Holy Tradition "the oral Word of God," as important as a source of faith as the written Word of God, the Holy Scripture, and considers it a necessary guide for the correct understanding of Holy Scripture. In this, the Orthodox understanding of Christianity differs sharply from the Protestant one. Protestants say that everyone is free to interpret Scripture as they please, while rejecting Holy Tradition. Orthodox Christians believe that only by relying on the patristic tradition can one correctly understand Holy Scripture without falling into heresy.

The signs by which true sacred, or apostolic Tradition is recognized are the following:

1) Internal, or negative - the absence of internal contradiction, as well as contradiction to other undoubted Traditions, and agreement, or conformity with Holy Scripture;

2) External, or positive. The only truly apostolic Tradition is that which, according to the sources, goes back to the apostles and which existed in the Churches founded by the apostles, as well as that which the Church Fathers of the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries considered to be apostolic Tradition, all or many, especially that which the entire Apostolic Church, founded on councils, holds to. The meaning of the Church's teaching on Holy Tradition was expressed by Tertullian ("what is found to be one among many is not invented, but has been transmitted from the beginning") and Vincent of Lerins (435), who says: "that which all or many unanimously and constantly, as if by some preliminary agreement of their teachers, accept and maintain, should be considered completely reliable and indubitable... What everyone has always, everywhere, believed, is true."

The Church distinguishes from the Holy, or Apostolic Tradition, church tradition, which includes the writings of persons not authorized (i.e. not sanctioned) by it, on the history of the Church, as well as ancient and later hagiographic records of local oral legends.

## **6. Is it possible to change the tradition of the Church?**

Some supporters of innovations say that times change and that the Church supposedly has a completely legal right to change church traditions at its own discretion. To this one can answer that the Church cannot change or cancel church traditions or rites, since they have holy antiquity.

"Brethren," writes the holy Apostle Paul, "stand fast and hold fast the tradition which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). And in another place: "And I praise you, brethren, that you remember all that I have said, and hold fast the traditions as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "All who wish to see the truth can recognize in every church the tradition of the apostles, revealed throughout the whole world" (Against Heresies, book 3, ch. 3, p. 1).

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus: "We must also adhere to tradition, for it is impossible to find everything in the Scriptures alone; the most holy apostles left some things in the Scriptures, and others in the Tradition" (Epistle 60, 6).

St. John Chrysostom: "Not everything is transmitted in the Epistle, but much is also transmitted without the Scriptures. But both are equally reliable; therefore the Church accepts the Church Tradition as reliable. Tradition is, seek nothing else" (Commentary on the 2nd Epistle of Thessalonians 11, 15).

Venerable Joseph of Volotsk: "What Christ gave not only by himself, but also by the divine apostles and holy fathers, we must preserve. But he who accepts that which is rejected and accursed is the most unfaithful of all and cannot even be a Christian" (Enlightener, word 8, p. 490). Nikon of Cherny Gory: "He who destroys the statutes of the fathers and changes the rules, will inherit grief" (Book Nikon of Cherny Gory, word 18).

Ibid.: "If anyone moves anything away from the correction of the established God-bearing fathers, such a thing cannot be called a structure, but a crime and impiety towards God" (Ibid., page 574).

Book "Sobornik Bolshoi": "Cursed is he who destroys the statutes of the fathers and the immutable statutes of the Church, which your fathers laid down" (Sobornik Bolshoi, page 379).

"Kormchaya": "And he who transgresses the laws of the Church, and introduces something new from his own wickedness, let him be cursed" (Kormchaya, chapter 50, page 61).

Holy Ecumenical Council: "Whoever destroys any church tradition, whether written or unwritten, is anathema to him" (Acts of the Ecumenical Council, vol. 7, p. 612).

## **7. Composition of the Catechism**

A Christian must understand the Holy Scripture as it is explained and interpreted by the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Holy Church and avoid those false wise men who teach according to their understanding, because this damages the purity of Christian teaching and gives rise to heresies and ecclesiastical discord.

According to the words of the holy Apostle Paul: "And now abide these three: faith, hope, love" (1 Cor. 13:13). Since a Christian must know how to believe in God, how to pray to Him and hope in Him, and how to fulfill His commandments, i.e., love Him, then the Catechism from ancient times has been divided into three parts - about faith in God, about hope in Him, and about love for God and neighbor.

How we should believe - this is what the Creed teaches us, how we should pray and hope in God - for this the Lord's prayer - "Our Father" serves as a model, and about love for God and neighbor we are taught by the Ten Commandments, given by God through Moses and supplemented by two commandments of the New Testament and the teaching of our Savior Jesus Christ Himself on the path to bliss, set out in His Sermon on the Mount, called the nine commandments of bliss.

St. Ignatius the God-Bearer wrote that perfect faith and love for Jesus Christ are the beginning and end of life. "Faith is the beginning, and love is the end, and both in union are the work of God; everything else related to virtue comes from them. No one who professes faith sins, and no one who has acquired love hates. A tree is known by its fruit; "So also those who profess themselves Christians will be revealed by their deeds. Now it is not a matter of confession alone, but of the power of faith, if one abides in it to the end" (Epistle to the Ephesians, Chapter XIV).



## Section I.

### On Faith

#### 1. What is faith?

According to the holy Apostle Paul, faith is "the evidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (i.e. "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen") (Heb. 11:1).

Faith is a firm and unshakable awareness in our hearts of God, Whom we do not see with our eyes, but see with our heart, and confess with our lips.

"With the heart therefore man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" ("For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation") (Rom. 10:10).

#### What benefit does faith bring to man?

Our experience is inevitably limited. We cannot know everything, experience everything, or feel everything. Our recognition of the existence of God is based not on the arguments of reason or on the experience of the external senses, but on faith, that is, on an internal, higher conviction.

To believe in God means not just to acknowledge His existence with the mind, but to strive for Him with all the heart.

Through true faith in Christ we are freed from death and hope to receive eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven according to the word of the Lord: "He who believes in Me (the Son of God) has eternal life, but he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). And in another place: "He who has faith (in the Gospel) and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not have faith will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

St. John Chrysostom writes: "Faith makes a man created from the earth a companion of God."

"Faith elevates our soul, does not allow it to be oppressed by any of the present misfortunes, and makes labors easier with hope for the future."

"Faith is like a strong staff and a safe haven, delivering from error and calming the soul in great silence."

"Faith is the seat of the soul, the foundation of life, the immortal root; the life-giving root of faith is the Father, the unfading branch is the Son, the immortal fruit is the Holy Spirit."

"Faith opens even the gates of death, closes heaven, changes the boundaries of nature, turns flame into dew and blunts the sting of death."

#### How to recognize the true faith in Christ?

The true faith in Christ is testified by Divine Scripture and Tradition. Those who call themselves Christians, who do not have testimony from the Holy Scripture for their faith, are not true believers. The Greek word "Orthodoxy" - "Correct glorification" can be translated as "Right faith". There are many false paths, but the right, Orthodox path is one. False paths lead us to the devil, the Orthodox path - to God.

"Many think that they believe, but not as the scripture said, but as they followed them of their own free will, they are all heretics" (Book "Blagovestnik", from John, chapter 27).

St. John Chrysostom says: "Like a royal coin, if it is slightly damaged, then the whole coin becomes worthless. "So whoever perverts even the smallest part of the true faith, destroys it all, for worse things

have come from the beginning" (Apostolic Conversations on the Epistles of Galatians, Chapter 1, Verse 7).

The true faith is considered to be that which has received the testimony of many saints and saints of God. This faith is set forth in the confession of faith adopted by the First and Second Ecumenical Councils of the Church of Christ even before the Armenians and Latins fell away from it (the Symbol of Faith).

### **What is heresy?**

Heresy is an error against the Orthodox Faith. An error can be twofold: one from ignorance, and the other from conscious resistance. The first is called ignorance and error, and the second is apostasy and heresy.

St. Maximus the Greek wrote: "Whoever has been taught, and firmly clings to his false opinion, and speaks harshly against the truth without hope of correction, such a heretic is, according to the Divine Apostle and Chrysostom, who say: a heretic is one who follows his false opinion and firmly clings. But if he did it from ignorance, then he will be called an erroneous person, and not a heretic" (Word 78).

In the book "Alpha and Omega" it is written: "There is one thing called sin, and another thing called impiety (i.e. heresy), sin comes from the weakness of a faithful person, who must repent and be cleansed by the Blood of Christ. Impiety is a voluntary departure from piety, which is also called heresy: for not only do such people not repent of their impiety, but they also grow in pride, just like Satan himself" (chapter 23).

### **How to recognize heresy?**

St. Athanasius the Great: "Heresy is called - to choose something of one's own, and to follow it" (answer 38, in the interpretation of parables).

Explanatory Gospel: "Many think that they believe, but not rightly, nor as the Scripture said: and since they followed their heresy, for this reason they perished. Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. And again: many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out demons, and in Your Name done many mighty works? And I will tell them, I never knew you, depart from Me, all you who practice iniquity. Such are all heretics: For many false prophets and false teachers appear as lambs, being wolves, killing the rational lambs of Christ" (Sunday of Pentecost, p. 157).

### **How should we treat heretics?**

St. Ignatius the God-Bearer writes: "Some have the custom of insidiously bearing the name of Christ (i.e., calling themselves Christians), while doing deeds unworthy of God. You must flee from them as from wild beasts, for they are mad dogs that bite from behind. You must beware of them, for they suffer from an incurable disease. For them there is only one doctor, physical and spiritual, born and unborn, God in the flesh, true life in death, from Mary and from God, first subject and then not subject to suffering, our Lord Jesus Christ" (Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. VII).

## **2. The Symbol of Faith (Creed)**

The Symbol of Faith is a brief but precise statement of the Orthodox Faith, compiled by the Holy Fathers at two Ecumenical Councils - the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. and the Second Council of Constantinople (Tsaregrad) in 381 A.D.

The Symbol of Faith is divided into 12 articles, or parts:

"1. I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God, from true God. Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father (of the same nature with the Father), by whom all things were made;
3. For us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit, and the Virgin Mary became man;
4. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered, and was buried;
5. And rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures;
6. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;
7. And shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.
8. And in the Holy Spirit, the true Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the prophets;
9. And in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church;
10. I confess one baptism for the deliverance from sins;
11. I look for the resurrection of the dead;
12. And the life of the age to come, Amen."

#### **What does the word "symbol" mean?**

Translated from Greek, the word "symbol" means: 1) a sign, a feature; 2) a sign that served as proof of a union of hospitality concluded between two families; 3) a conventional sign, a password, a signal, a sign, a pre-substitution.

That is, a symbol is a "password", a "conventional sign" that allows us to distinguish true Christians from heretics. In this sense, of course, the sign of the cross is also a visible symbol of faith, by which we, Old Orthodox Christians, can determine whether a person belongs to our Church or not (that is, whether he crosses himself with two fingers, three fingers, or the whole palm). This is a sign of the union of true Christians, a link between God and people, connecting Divine Truths and human concepts.

#### **Why were the Ecumenical Councils convened, at which the Creed was composed?**

The practice of holding councils dates back to the times of the apostles. The first council of the apostles was in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35). The Church of Christ is based on the principle of conciliarity (catholicity), i.e. universality, universality. Pastors and teachers of the Church gathered at the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and not only bishops, but also ordinary priests and even laymen. As a rule, councils were convened in special cases, to denounce false teachers or to resolve various perplexities.

The Ecumenical Council is the highest authority on earth of the Church of Christ, carried out by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as was said for the first time in the decree of the Apostolic Council: "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (such was the will of the Holy Spirit and ours.) (Acts 15:28).

There were seven Ecumenical Councils. These are the seven pillars on which our Orthodox faith is based. After the Catholics separated from the Church of Christ (1054), they self-proclaimed the right to convene Ecumenical Councils and began to call their councils "ecumenical". But these "Jewish assemblies" are not only not Ecumenical, but are hardly councils at all in the apostolic sense, since the decisive role in the Catholic Church is played by the sole authority of the Pope, who is proclaimed "sinless" in matters of faith.

**First** (Nicene) Nicaea 325. Against the false teaching of Arius about the Son of God. Compiled 20 rules.

**Second** (Constantinople) Constantinople 381. Against the impious Spiritualist Macedonius, who taught incorrectly about the Holy Spirit. He composed 8 rules.

**Third** (Ephesian) Ephesus 431. Against the false teaching of the Constantinople Archbishop Nestorius, who taught that the Most Holy Theotokos gave birth to a simple man, Christ, with Whom God then united morally, and who called the Most Holy Virgin the Christotokos, and not the Theotokos. The Council also approved the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and strictly forbade any changes or additions to it. Set forth 9 rules.

**Fourth** (Chalcedonian) Chalcedon 451. Against the Monophysite false teaching of Eutyches, who rejected human nature in the Lord Jesus Christ. Set forth 30 rules.

**Fifth** (Constantinople second) Constantinople 553 Against the heresy of Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia and his Nestorian writings. No rules were adopted.

**Sixth** (Third Constantinople) Constantinople 680. Against the Monophysites (Patriarch Sergius and others with him). The Council approved the rules: apostolic, 6 Ecumenical Councils and 7 Local and the rules of 13 Fathers of the Church. Set forth 102 rules.

**Seventh** (Second Nicene) Nicaea 787. Against the iconoclasts. 22 rules adopted.

### **What does each article of the Creed say (in brief)?**

The first article speaks of the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, that He is the Creator of the entire visible and invisible world.

The second article speaks of the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that He alone is the Son of God the Father and was born before all else, that Jesus Christ was born, not created.

The third article speaks of the incarnation of the Son of God.

The fourth article speaks of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, His suffering and burial.

The fifth article speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day, as the Scripture says.

The sixth article speaks of the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God the Father.

The seventh article speaks of the second coming of Christ and His kingdom, which has no end.

In the eighth - about the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father.

In the ninth article - about the Church.

In the tenth article - about baptism and all the sacraments in general.

In the eleventh - about the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the twelfth - about eternal, afterlife.

### **3. On the first article of the Creed. On the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father**

“I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”

The first article of the Creed teaches us that we must believe and confess that God is one in essence, but triune in Persons, as Christ teaches in the Gospel: "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19)

### **What does it mean to believe in God?**

To believe in God means to have confidence in His existence, properties, and actions.

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:16-17).

St. John Ladder writes: "Faith is the wing of prayer; without this wing, my prayer will return again into my bosom. Faith is the unshakable strength of the soul, unshaken by any worries. A believer is not one who thinks that everything is possible for God, but one who believes that he will receive from Him everything he asks. Faith receives even that which he dares not hope for, as the example of the prudent thief on the cross showed. The mother of faith is work and a righteous heart; for the heart makes it certain, and work creates it" (The Ladder, step 27, 68).

### **How can we prove our faith?**

By confessing our faith. This means recognizing that only we hold the true Orthodox Faith, and we must believe with such firmness that neither threats, nor torture, nor even death would force us to renounce our faith in God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our time, when there is no open persecution, we must confess our faith by our behavior, be worthy of our pious ancestors, who died for Christ by the hundreds of thousands at the hands of torturers.

"A believer in Christ," writes St. Simeon the New Theologian, "cannot prove his faith in any other way than by fulfilling what He has commanded and by avoiding what He has forbidden."

St. John Climacus writes: "Whoever says that he has the right faith, but sins, is like a person without eyes. "But whoever, without true faith, does some good works, is like one who draws water and pours it into a bad vessel" (The Ladder, step 26, 235).

St. Basil the Great: "If anyone, believing in Christ, does not show works in accordance with faith, he, like one who listens to bad teachings and poorly comprehends the meaning of Scripture, hews out his own tomb in stone."

St. Simeon the New Theologian: "Faith and good works are inseparably connected. Faith is needed for good works, but good works are done not for faith, but through faith. Without faith, no one can do truly good works and please God. Because for the sake of faith, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ descends upon the one who has believed in Him. According to the measure of faith that one shows, grace is given. He who has great faith is given great grace, he who has little faith is given little grace. It must be remembered that faith alone, even true and Orthodox, will not bring any benefit to him who believes without good works. The manifestation of strength is zeal for the commandments of God and God-pleasing works. For for the quickening (expression of faith) strength is necessary, possessing which one can do this. Since it is impossible to please God without faith (but only by good works according to faith), it is obvious that faith gives the strength to do good and God-pleasing works according to the will of God. Faith is not only in believing in Christ and in all His words, but more in daring about Christ and in carrying in the heart the confidence that by the power of Christ we can both free ourselves from evil and accomplish every virtue."

### **What else does the first article of the Creed teach us?**

It teaches us that God is always one (and not many, as the pagans believe), that He has neither beginning nor end, that He is the Creator of the entire visible and invisible world, as the Scripture teaches.

“There is no other God but one. For though there be those who are called gods, either in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords. But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him. And one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him. And one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things, and we in him” (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

St. John Damascene writes: “So we believe in one God, one beginning, without beginning, uncreated, unborn, imperishable, immortal, eternal, boundless, indescribable, unlimited, infinitely powerful, simple, uncomplicated, incorporeal, imperishable, passionless, constant, unchangeable, invisible, the source of goodness and justice, the light of the mind, unapproachable; in power, unsearchable by any measure, measured only by His own will, for He can do whatever He wants; ... in a single essence, a single Deity, a single power, a single will, a single activity, a single beginning, a single authority, a single dominion, a single kingdom, in three perfect Hypostases and known and welcomed by a single worship” (“An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith”, 1.8)

Now this idea that God is one is so obvious to many people that it almost does not require proof. But it was not so in ancient times. We see that the idea of monotheism and the worship of one God was preserved only among the Old Testament people of Israel. In Old Testament times, there was only one Temple where they worshiped the One God. The rest of the peoples (“pagans”) deviated into polytheism, which is why they are called “pagans”. The holy Apostle Paul writes: “For in that they knew God, they glorified not God, nor gave thanks to him, but became futile in their thoughts, and their unwise heart was darkened, pretending to be wise; and they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up in the lusts of their own hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies might be defiled in themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie, and honored and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 1:21-25). Later, as Christianity spread, various deviations from the dogma of monotheism appeared: the heresies of dualism (the doctrine of two gods - one good and the other evil), tritheism (tritheism), etc.

The dogma of the unity of God was inherited by the New Testament Church from the Old Testament, but here it was deepened by the truth of the Triune unity: God is one in Essence and three in Persons (Hypostases). This is the fundamental dogma of Christianity. In other monotheistic religions (modern Judaism, Islam, etc.) there is no such dogma. This is the pinnacle of Divine Revelation, what the Lord revealed to us in the light of the New Testament Revelation.

In all its fullness, the dogma of the Holy Trinity cannot be understood by reason. This dogma is communicated to us by the Lord God Himself. The Holy Fathers spoke about the incomprehensibility of the trinitarian dogma, but for greater clarity they resorted to some comparisons. For example: Three candles burning one next to the other, giving one indivisible light.

The Fathers of the Church saw in the world, albeit imperfectly, a reflection of God and His trinity. But if the created world to some extent reflects the mystery of the Trinity, then even more so should man, created in the image and likeness of God, reflect it.

### **What analogies of the Trinity did the Holy Fathers find in man?**

- The soul has: mind, word and spirit;
- Mind, will and feeling;
- Man is tripartite: body, soul and spirit.

Nevertheless, we must understand that there is no equality between the earthly and the divine, and these are only comparisons.

The dogma of the Holy Trinity contains two fundamental truths:

1) God is one in Essence, but Triune in Persons, or, in other words: God is Triune, Tri-hypostasis, the Indivisible Trinity in one essence.

2) The hypostases have personal properties: The Father, the first Person, is not begotten and does not proceed from anyone. The Son, the second Person, is eternally begotten from the Father, and is not created. The Holy Spirit, the third Person, proceeds from God the Father.

### **How do we know about these properties?**

These properties are taken from Revelation (the New Testament, while in the Old Testament the mystery of the Holy Trinity was not fully revealed, although it was contained there covertly). These properties were formulated by St. Gregory the Theologian.

### **What are the personal properties of God the Father?**

In relation to the Son, He is the Father, in relation to the Spirit, He is the Originator.

The Father is absolutely without beginning (the Son and the Spirit are not absolutely without beginning).

As St. John of Damascus says in the "Precise Exposition of the Orthodox Faith", the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit occur simultaneously.

God the Father is the beginning of existence and the beginning of the Trinity. But in the Trinity, subordinationism is unacceptable, i.e. the subordination of one Person to another.

### **What does "Almighty" mean?**

God is called Almighty because He contains in His power and in His will all that exists, and controls everything.

### **What do the words "Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible" mean?**

These words indicate that everything was created by God and nothing can exist without God. He is the Creator of both the visible world and the invisible world, i.e. the spiritual world, to which the Angels belong.

### **How did the world come into being?**

According to the revealed teaching, the world was created by God.

St. Basil the Great writes: "Before anything visible existed, God conceived in His mind and was moved to bring into being the non-existent, and at the same time He thought about what the world should be like and produced matter corresponding to the form of the world. The world owes its existence entirely to its Creator."

### **When did our world appear?**

God had the idea of the world from eternity, from eternity he determined to create it, but to create it from a certain time.

Revelation speaks of six days during which the world was created. The Church Fathers understood these six days literally. Only later, under the influence of scientific criticism, attempts were made to interpret "days" as "long periods of time", since in the Bible the word "day" (Hebrew - yom) has multiple meanings: it can mean day as opposed to night, twenty-four hours, or some indefinite period of time. In this case, they refer to Scripture: "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8).

However, St. Ephraim the Syrian said that "day" should be understood in a literal sense, because for God nothing is impossible, and in our earthly six days he could have created this entire world.

Blessed Augustine writes about this: "What kind of days these are – it is either extremely difficult or even completely impossible for us to imagine, and even more impossible to talk about it." Liturgical practice confirms the idea that days should be understood literally: the weekly cycle of worship is an image of the seven days of creation.

### **What is the patristic understanding of the word "day"?**

St. John of Damascus: "From the beginning of one day to the beginning of another day is one day, for the Scripture says: "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day."

St. Basil the Great: ""And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." Why is it not called the first, but the only one?.. it defines the measure of day and night, and combines them into one day, because twenty-four hours fill the duration of one day, if by day we mean night."

### **How was time measured before the creation of the luminaries?**

Our solar system did not exist before the fourth day, so it is unknown how time was measured. St. Basil the Great and Ephraim the Syrian say that for the first three days the change of day and night occurred due to the pulsation of the primordial light.

### **What is the liturgical tradition of understanding the days of creation?**

According to this tradition, the days of creation are the ordinary days of the week, with the first falling on Sunday and the sixth on Friday.

Liturgical texts constantly emphasize the parallel between creation and redemption: in particular, the fall occurred on Friday, around midday, and also on Friday, around midday, the Savior was nailed to the Cross (Lenten troparion of the sixth hour: "You, who on the sixth day and hour nailed the daring sin of Adam in paradise to the Cross, and tear up the handwriting of our sins, O Christ our God, save us").

### **How do evolutionists understand the days of creation, and why?**

Evolutionists claim that the world has supposedly existed for billions of years. This cannot be considered reliable, since their theory is based on guesses and hypotheses. They need this to prove that evolution, which cannot be observed in observable time, actually took place over a grand period of time of billions of years.

According to the patristic teaching, God created the first people (and all animals on earth) at a perfect age, although according to the laws of nature, many years of life would be required. The entire internal and external structure of the Earth was created in exactly the same way. The world immediately received a perfect existence, and did not develop according to the laws of nature.

### **Patristic attitude to evolution**

Orthodox teaching speaks of the immutability of natures with an assumed fluidity. Nature (φύσις) is what is inherent in all creatures of one species. For example, man is a living creature, rational, mortal, social, with an immortal soul. An angel is a living creature, immortal and incorporeal. By the immutability of natures we mean that a creature that possesses one of the natures cannot spontaneously transform into a creature of another nature. For example, a dog cannot become a cat, a monkey cannot become a man, a fish cannot become a frog, a man cannot become an Angel or God. However, the immutability of a species does not imply the immutability of each individual of this species within its boundaries, for only God is completely immutable.

St. Athanasius the Great: "Every created thing, according to its kind, in its own essence, as it was created, such is and abides."



St. Basil the Great: "The shoot of a reed does not produce an olive tree, but on the contrary, from a reed comes another reed, and from the sown seeds grows something related to them. And so, what came out of the earth at the first creation is preserved to this day."

### **What is the cause of the appearance of the world?**

St. John of Damascus writes: "As soon as the good and most good God was not satisfied with the contemplation of Himself, but out of an abundance of goodness wished for something to come into being that would in the future enjoy His benefits and participate in His goodness, He brings from non-existence into being and creates everything without exception, both the invisible and the visible, including man, composed of the visible and the invisible."

### **What is the sequence of the creation of the world?**

The world did not appear in one moment, but was created in sequence from the simplest to the more complex, over the course of six days. On the first day, God created light, on the second – the firmament, or the visible sky, on the third – the receptacles of water on earth, dry land and plants, on the fourth – the sun, moon and stars, on the fifth – fish and birds, on the sixth – four-legged animals living on dry land, and, finally, man. On the seventh day God rested from all His works.

### **Was there a necessity for creation?**

God created the world not as a result of any necessity, but quite freely, according to His good will.

### **How did God the Trinity create the world?**

God created the world by His thought, desire, word or command, for He spoke and they were created; He commanded and they were created (Ps. 148:5). By "the word of God," as the Fathers of the Church note, we must understand here not some articulate sound or a word similar to ours; no, this creative word denotes only a nod or expression of the omnipotent will of God, which produced the entire universe from nothingness.

### **Is God different from the world and in what way?**

The world is of a different nature from God: the world is created, and God is an uncreated being. The world is essentially different from God, and is neither His hypostasis nor His emanation (outflow).

### **What did God create the world from?**

The world was created ("bara" - Heb.) from nothing. This means that outside of God there was no source material for the creation of the world. In the ancient Hebrew texts of the Holy Scripture, "bara", as creation from nothing, is mentioned three times when talking about the creation of: 1) heaven and earth, 2) the souls of animals, 3) the soul of man.

### **What did God create specific beings from?**

Everything that is on earth is created from the earthly elements, "brought forth" by the earth and water at the command of God.

### **Is the human soul included in the number of common creations?**

There is nothing uncreated except God, but the human soul differs from other creations: "And God formed man, taking dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The human soul bears the image and likeness of God.

### **Is the human soul created?**

The soul is created, it is not part of the Deity. The soul was different from God at creation and will be different later, in the new existence. Man does not dissolve in the Deity. The soul has the property of changing, but God is constant. God breathed a living soul into man, but this is not part of the essence of God Himself. It is a definite entity, however, an incorporeal and immaterial entity.

### **For how long is the world created? Will it be destroyed?**

Having received existence, the creation will exist forever. In God there is nothing that ceases, nothing that disappears: His word goes forth and does not pass away, “but the word of the Lord abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:25); “...establish the universe, that it cannot be moved” (Ps. 92:1).

Even the apocalyptic fire will not destroy this world, but only transform it: “and I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first things passed away, and the first earth passed away, and there is no more sea” (Rev. 21:1). The divine will that called the world into existence is immutable.

### **Is creation different from the birth of the Son, and how?**

The Holy Fathers of the 4th century emphasized the difference between creation and birth.

St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches: “To create belongs to activity (energy), and to beget belongs to nature. The Son of God is born according to the nature of the Father, therefore He is called Consubstantial with Him, and the world is not created from the Divine essence, it is of a different nature from God. Creation is preceded by the will and intention of the Creator, and at the same time the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit do not depend on the Divine will, for God cannot but be a Trinity. The Trinity is eternal. Birth and procession are not the action of the Divine nature in the proper sense (but hypostasis), are an unchanging image of the being of the Triune Deity.”

### **What does the Creed say about the creative activity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity? Did all the Persons of the Trinity participate in the creation?**

The entire Trinity participated in the Creation, but each of the Hypostases participated in its own way. The Father is called the Creator, the Son is said to be “by whom all things were made,” and the Holy Spirit is called the True and Life-giving Lord.

We read about the same thing in the Psalter: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the breath of his mouth” (Psalm 32:6).

In this regard, Euthymius Zigabens writes: “In the highest sense, David theologizes here about the Holy Trinity, where he calls the Father the Lord, the Son the Word, and the Holy Spirit the Spirit. He said “mouth,” because the Holy Spirit has one essence with the Father, who produces Him, and is not created outside of Him. The powers of heaven are the heavenly powers – the Angels” (Explanatory Psalter. Page 246).

The Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church attributed the creation of the world to God in general, and in particular to God the Father, God the Son or Word, and God the Holy Spirit, noting that not each one separately, but all together They created the universe: “Everything from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit,” however, not in the sense that the Son and the Holy Spirit performed some instrumental and slavish service in creation, but in the sense that They creatively accomplished the Father’s will.

St. Athanasius the Great says: “The Father creates by the Word in the Holy Spirit.”

And St. Irenaeus of Lyons resorts to the following comparison: “The Son and the Holy Spirit are like the hands of the Father.”

## **What should we understand by the invisible world?**

By the invisible world we should understand Angels.

## **What does "Angel" mean?**

In Greek, Angel is a messenger, a herald. According to Origen, Angel is a name of service, not of nature. It is adopted by different messengers of God. In the Old Testament, it is attributed to the Messiah Himself: "Angel of the Covenant" (Mal. 3:1), Moses (Num. 20:16), and other prophets. In the New - to the Forerunner of the Savior (Matt. 11; 10) and the heads of the Churches (Rev. 1:20; 2:1).

But in the strict and proper sense of the word, Angels in the Holy Scriptures are called beings of a special kind, different from God and from man. These are real spiritual beings, not imaginary.

"So, an Angel is a being gifted with intelligence, always moving, possessing free will, incorporeal, serving God, having received immortality for its nature by grace, the form and definition of which being is known only by the Creator. It is also called incorporeal and immaterial in comparison with us, for everything that is compared with God, Who alone is incomparable [with anything], turns out to be both gross and material, because only the Divinity is truly immaterial and incorporeal" (St. John of Damascus).

Thus, Angels are incorporeal spirits, gifted with a special mind, will and power.

## **Are Angels created?**

Even the ancient Fathers of the Church taught about the created nature of Angels. The Angelic world, invisible, was created by God before the visible world.

"All Angels were created through the Word and reached fullness with the assistance of the Holy Spirit through sanctification, according to their dignity and rank, having a part in light and grace" (St. John of Damascus).

## **What do we know about Angels?**

Angels are repeatedly mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, Cherubim with a fiery sword were appointed to guard the doors of Paradise: "And he appointed cherubim and flaming weapons that turned, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24).

Abraham, sending his servant to Nahor, gave hope that the Lord would send His Angel with him and arrange his path well.

Angels appear to Jacob in a dream: "And he saw a dream. And behold, a ladder was fixed on the earth, whose end reached to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it" (Gen. 28:12).

The Psalter says many times: "Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest. Praise Him, all His angels, praise Him, all His host" (Psalm 148:1).

"For He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways" (Psalm 90:11).

Angels are also mentioned more than once in the New Testament:

- An angel announced to Zechariah the conception and birth of John the Baptist.
- An angel announced to the Most Holy Theotokos the immaculate conception and birth of the Son.
- An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.
- A large army of angels glorified the Nativity of Christ.

- An angel kept the Magi from returning to Herod.
- Angels served Jesus Christ during the temptation in the desert and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus Christ Himself testifies about the Angels in the Gospel more than once:

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10).

“But of that day or of that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels which are in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30).

### **When were the Angels created?**

The Angels were created by God first of all, and the spiritual world in general before the material world. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

"When the stars were created, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice" (Job 38:7).

### **How were the Angels created?**

Eusebius: "When God wished to divide the treasures of His riches among many, and intended to bring into the world every rational creature, He brought forth various incorporeal, thinking and divine powers, Angels, and Archangels, spirits, uninvolved in matter and completely pure."

St. Ambrose of Milan: "We easily recognize the Creator of Angels, Dominions and Powers in Him Who, by a wave of His power, brought forth from nothing such a beautiful world, which had not existed before."

St. John of Damascus: "All Angels were created through the Word and attained fullness with the assistance of the Holy Spirit through sanctification, having a share in light and grace according to their dignity and rank."

### **What is the nature of Angels?**

The ancient Fathers and teachers of the Church believe that Angels have an unformed and ethereal nature.

### **Are Angels corporeal?**

Angels are incorporeal spirits and, since they belong to the invisible world, they cannot be seen by our corporeal eyes.

### **What does it mean that Angels are incorporeal?**

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14).

In another place it is explained that “a spirit hath not flesh and bone” (Luke 24:39) – even such flesh as the flesh of the Savior after the Resurrection, the glorified flesh in which He could enter His disciples through closed doors.

### **In what form do Angels appear?**

Angels often appeared to people in sensory, most often human forms; but God Himself, according to the Bible, sometimes appeared in sensory form. God and His Angels can at times take on some form visible to man.

### **Why do Angels appear in a sensible form?**

St. John of Damascus writes about this: "They appear to worthy people, to whom God wishes that they appear, not as they are, but in a changed form, depending on how those who look can see."

### **Why do Angels appear winged, many-eyed, and in a different form?**

Angel languages, many-eyedness, and wingedness are only symbols of the properties of angelic nature, their spiritual insight and swiftness.

### **Does human communication with God necessarily occur through Angels?**

No, since even in Old Testament times, one person, after the fall of the Forefathers, who spoke with God and saw Him in Paradise, was honored to speak directly with God: "And after that there arose not a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10). Also through other prophets and holy saints of God. Sometimes God instructs or speaks the truth even through sinners: thus, the Jewish high priest said (about Jesus Christ), that it is better for one man to perish, so that the people may be saved.

### **Are Angels mortal and why?**

Immortality belongs to Angels, as the Scripture also testifies, teaching that they "can no longer die" (i.e., they cannot die) (Luke 20:36). However, their immortality is not divine immortality, i.e., original and unconditional, but depends entirely on the will and mercy of God.

### **Do Angels enter the flow of our time?**

Angels are immortal, have no degrees of age, birth and death and, therefore, do not enter the flow of our time.

### **In what relationship do Angels exist to God?**

Angels not only sing the glory of God, but also serve Him in the affairs of His providence for the material and sensory world.

St. Gregory the Theologian writes: "Some of them stand before the great God, others support the whole world with their assistance."

### **Can Angels sin or fall away from God?**

Possessing reason and free will, Angels can succeed in good or turn toward evil. One of the free spirits, having taken the path of evil, fell away from God and brought about the fall of other Angels.

### **What is the number of Angels?**

When the prophet Daniel saw the Ancient of Days in a prophetic dream, his gaze was revealed that "a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (Dan. 7:9-10).

A numerous heavenly army praised the coming of the Son of God to earth (Luke 2:13).

Christ Himself mentioned more than twelve legions (legion – 100,000) of Angels before His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Seer saw "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand." (Rev. 5:11).

St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes: "Imagine how numerous the Roman people are; imagine how numerous are other rude peoples who now exist, and how many of them have died in a hundred years; imagine how many have been buried in a thousand years; imagine people, beginning from Adam to the present

day: their multitude is great, but it is still small in comparison with the Angels, of whom there are more. They are ninety-nine sheep; and the human race is only one sheep. The vastness of the place must be taken as a guide to the number of inhabitants. The earth inhabited by us is like a certain point located in the center of heaven: therefore the heaven surrounding it has as many inhabitants as the space is greater; the heaven of heavens contains an immense number of them. If it is written that a thousand thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him (Dan. 7:9-10), it is only because the prophet could not utter a greater number."

### **How is the Angelic world structured?**

God created different kinds of Angelic powers.

According to St. Dionysius the Areopagite, the Angelic world has 9 ranks, and these nine are divided into three hierarchical triads of three ranks each.

Not all Angelic ranks equally accept divine enlightenment. The lower ranks accept enlightenment from the higher ones.

The Angelic world is a single whole and at the same time a ladder consisting of three triads:

Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Powers, Dominions and Forces.

Angels, Archangels, Principalities.

### **What are the properties of these Angelic ranks?**

The first triad represents the highest hierarchy, i.e. those Angels who are closest to God. The second, middle, and third are closest to us. Based on the Holy Scriptures, we limit ourselves to 9 ranks.

*The highest angelic hierarchy:* The six-winged Seraphim (Hebrew "flaming", "fiery"), who are mentioned only by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:2), are ablaze with love for God and encourage others to it.

Cherubim (Hebrew "chariots") are spiritual beings whom the prophet Ezekiel saw in the images of a man, a calf, a lion and an eagle (Ezekiel 1). These symbols mean that the Cherubim combine the qualities of intelligence, obedience, strength and speed. The Cherubim stand before the throne of God. They are the spiritual chariot of the Most High (Ezek. 1:10), therefore God is called sitting on the Cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4). The many-eyed Cherubim, according to St. Dionysius the Areopagite, shine with the light of knowledge of God. They send down wisdom and enlightenment for the knowledge of God to the lower ranks. They are "rivers of wisdom" and "places of God's rest"; hence some of the Cherubim are called Thrones, since God Himself rests on them not sensually, but spiritually, with a special abundance of grace.

*The middle hierarchy consists of:* Dominions (Col. 1:16), who rule over the subsequent ranks of Angels. They instruct the earthly rulers appointed by God in wise governance. They teach how to control feelings, tame sinful desires, enslave the flesh to the spirit, and overcome temptations.

Powers (1 Pet. 3:22) perform miracles and send down the grace of miracle-working and clairvoyance to the saints of God. They help people in their labors, strengthen them in patience, and grant spiritual strength and courage.

Authorities have the power to tame the power of the devil. They repel demonic temptations from us, protect ascetics, and help them in the fight against evil thoughts. They also have power over the forces of nature, such as wind and fire.

*The lower hierarchy includes:* Principalities (Col. 1:6) rule over the lower Angels, directing their activities to fulfill Divine commands. They are entrusted with governing the Universe, protecting countries,

peoples, and tribes. They teach earthly authorities to fulfill their duties not for the sake of benefits and personal glory, but to seek the glory of God and the benefit of their neighbors in everything.

Archangels (1 Thess. 4:16) proclaim great and glorious things. They reveal the secrets of faith, prophecy and the will of God to people, i.e. they are the conductors of Revelation.

Angels (1 Pet. 3:22) are closest to people. They proclaim God's intentions, instruct in virtues and holy life. They protect the faithful, keep us from falling, and raise up the fallen.

Archangels are the chiefs of the Angels. Archangel Michael is also called the "Archistrategos of the heavenly forces." Angels who govern states and nations are called "princes of nations."

St. Gregory of Nyssa divided the entire heavenly (heavenly) world into two large classes: those who stand before and those who serve; according to their mutual relations, into Archangels and Angels. The former are of different ranks, while the latter, simple Angels, do not allow any divisions according to dignity, but are counted as a whole mass in the general list of subordinates.

### **Where are the names of the Archangels known from?**

From the Holy Scriptures and Tradition. Almost all pages of the Holy Scriptures testify to the existence of Angels and Archangels.

### **How many personal names of the Archangels do we know and which ones?**

In the Holy Scriptures, some of the highest Angels are given their own names. In the canonical books, two names are mentioned: Michael ("who is like God"), Gabriel ("man of God").

In non-canonical books, four more names are mentioned: Raphael ("help of God"), Uriel ("fire of God"), Salaphiel ("prayer to God"), Jeremiel ("height of God").

From the Holy Tradition, we also know: Jegudiel ("praise of God"), Varahiel ("blessing of God").

### **What graces come from the Archangels of God?**

Archangel Michael is the conqueror of enemies, the deliverer from all troubles and sorrows and evil spirits.

Archangel Gabriel is the strength of God and the messenger of God's mysteries.

Archangel Raphael is a doctor of diseases and a guide.

Archangel Uriel is an inciter to prayer and an enlightener of the darkened.

Archangel Jehudiel is an intercessor on the road, a helper to those in need of something for the glory of God.

Archangel Barachiel is a giver and intercessor of God's graces and a guardian of the purity of soul and body.

Archangel Salaphiel is a doctor of the swamp disease malaria and a prayer to God for people.

Archangel Gephael is a kindler of love for God.

Archangel Tachiel is a helper and protector from troubles and misfortunes. What does "Archangels" mean, and what else are they called?

### **Who is a Guardian Angel?**

Every person receives a Guardian Angel from God at Holy Baptism (Book of Chrysostom, 20th week).

“See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10).

And not only people have Guardian Angels, but also cities, countries, kingdoms, as well as monasteries and churches.

The Guardian Angel guides us to all good and protects us from all evil and bad. He rejoices when we live well, according to the Law of God, and is saddened when we sin and behave badly. We must continually pray to him for intercession before God, so that our prayers are brought by the Angel before the throne of God, and so that the Guardian Angel would be our helper against every enemy visible and invisible.

St. John Climacus writes: “If you feel a special sweetness or tenderness in any word of prayer, then stop at it; for then our Guardian Angel prays with us” (Ladder, 28, 11).

## **About the devil and demons**

### **Where did demons come from?**

The question may arise: where did demons come from, if the world was created by the All-good God? Certainly, demons were not created by God in their present form. They are fallen angels.

As St. John Damascene writes, “of these angelic powers, that Angel who stood at the head of the earthly rank and to whom God entrusted the protection of the earth, - not being born evil by nature, but being good and having come into being for a good purpose, and having received no trace of wickedness from the Creator, - not having endured either the light or the honor that the Creator bestowed upon him, by his own will changed from that which is in accordance with nature to that which is against nature, and became proud against God who created him, wanting to resist Him; and the first, having fallen from good, found himself in evil. For evil is nothing else but the deprivation of good, just as darkness is the deprivation of light; for good is spiritual light; likewise evil is spiritual darkness. And so the light, created by the Creator and coming to be good... by its own will became darkness. But together with it an infinite number of Angels who stood under its power were carried away and followed it, and together they fell. And so, being of the same nature with the Angels, they became evil, voluntarily turning the disposition of their hearts from good to evil.” Demons have neither power nor authority over anyone unless they receive permission from God. They also do not know the future, just as the Angels of God do. But if the Lord sometimes reveals the future to the Angels and commands them to predict, then demons sometimes predict because they see what is happening in the distance, and sometimes because they guess. However, they cannot be trusted, even if they tell the truth many times. They also know the Scriptures. (This is evidenced by one case from the Kiev-Pechersk Patericon.)

They have invented every vice, as St. John of Damascus writes, as well as impure passions. And although they are allowed to attack a person, they have no power to act violently with him - only by his will, if he voluntarily agrees, unable to resist temptation. And it depends on us ourselves - to resist or to fall. Therefore, the devil and his demons and followers are prepared for unquenchable fire and eternal punishment.

What death is for people, for the fallen Angels is a fall, for after the fall repentance is impossible for them, just as for people it is no longer possible after death.

## **About Man**

What place does man occupy among created beings and why?

Man is the crown of creation. In the ladder of earthly creations, man is placed on the highest step and in relation to all earthly beings, he occupies a dominant place. Being earthly, he approaches in his gifts the heavenly beings: "You have made him a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:6).



### **How did God create man?**

The prophet Moses depicts the creation of man as follows. After all earthly creatures were created, God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the beasts, and the cattle, and over all the earth..." (Gen. 1:26).

When talking about creation, the Hebrew text uses the word "bara" - "creation from nothing." The very counsel of God, which is not indicated in the creation of other earthly creatures, clearly indicates that man must be a special creation.

"And God formed man, taking dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

### **What is the composition of the human being?**

Man equally belongs to the spiritual world (by his soul) and to the material world (by his body). He unites in himself the visible and the invisible world.

This is very well said in the "Order of Burial": "For me the beginning and the composition was Thy creative command; for Thou, having willed from the invisible and the visible, to form a living nature for me; having created a corruptible body from the earth, gave me a soul, by Thy divine and life-giving inspiration" (verses for the repose, tone 6).

### **Why is man the crown of creation?**

From the book of Genesis it follows that God creates the body of man from ready-made earthly and elemental matter, and creates in a special way, not by His command or word alone, as was the case with the creation of other creatures, but by His direct action. This shows that, in his physical organization, man from the beginning of his existence is a being superior to all creatures.

God created the angelic world in silence, about the material world a command is made: let there be, and before the creation of man God seems to stop, because man is not a simple part of the world. He is a person and by virtue of this he unites everything in himself - the visible and invisible world. In the created man, the fullness of divine wisdom appears. Man is destined for life in God, for deification.

Only into man did God breathe the breath of life, which was not the case with any of the previously created creatures, even the Angels do not have this.

In the "Rite of Burial" we read: "Having taken dust from the earth, my Creator created my body with Divine thought; having infused my soul with vital inspiration, He honored me with Divine glory" ("Blessed", tone 6).

### **What makes man related to the created world?**

Man is a small world, and all spheres of the Universe are united in him. Everything created by God flows into him, as into a furnace, from different types, from different sounds merge into a single harmony.

St. John of Damascus calls man an earthly angel, but so that this earthly angel would not be exalted, he was created from the dust of the earth.

In the "Canon for the Dead" we read: "We who are earthly were created from the earth, and to the same earth we will return, as You commanded, having created me and said to me, as earth you are, and to the earth you will return again, where all earthly depart" (ikos)

### **What makes man related to God?**

Man is created in the image and likeness of God. God as Spirit has the essential properties of Spirit – mind, freedom, and by his very nature is immortal, therefore it can be assumed that the image of God consists in free will, reason, the ability for pure, selfless love and the immortality of the soul. The image of God must be seen only in the soul, and not in the body.

### **How was woman created?**

The first woman was also created in a special way (Gen. 2:18-23). She received her being from her husband. She is a helper, who completes the fullness of Adam's being. God creates a woman from Adam's rib, i.e. from a part of the body close to vital centers, primarily the heart. Thus, flesh is created from flesh, and all people are united in human essence and nature (in contrast to the Talmudic tradition, according to which only Jews descend from Adam and Eve, and the rest of people are descended from animal-like creatures).

"And God put sleep in Adam, and he slept. And God took one of his ribs, and filled its place with flesh. And from the rib which the Lord took from Adam He made a woman, and brought her to Adam" (Gen. 2:21-22).

### **What blessing did the first people receive?**

"And he blessed them, saying, Increase, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the beasts, and over the fowl of the air, and over all the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

### **How is the trinity of God reflected in people?**

The presence of the image of God in man testifies to the reflection of the very properties of God in his spiritual nature. The Holy Fathers answered this question differently.

St. Ambrose of Milan writes: "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but not three Gods, but one God, having three Hypostases: just as the soul is the mind, the soul is the will, the soul is the memory; but not three souls in one body, but one soul, having three powers, and in these three powers our inner man by nature wonderfully reflects the image of God."

Moreover, God is the Lord, King and Master over the entire created world. In this sense, together with St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom and others, the image of God should be understood in the royal power granted to man over all earthly beings. The Holy Fathers agree that the image and likeness of God is not in a separate part of man, but the whole man, more or less, reflects the image of God.

### **What will our body be like after the resurrection?**

All bodies will be transformed. Thus, the bodies of the righteous will be incorruptible and immortal, completely free from the exhaustion and infirmities of this life. They will be spiritual, heavenly, not having earthly bodily needs. The bodies of sinners, having received incorruptibility and spirituality, will reflect their spiritual state.

"Some will be like the light, others like the darkness" (St. Ephraim the Syrian).

### **What is the correct hierarchy of human structure?**

The soul is characterized by managing bodily desires, and the body is characterized by accepting control (Athenagoras). According to St. Athanasius the Great and Basil the Great, the soul is a force that brings all members of the organism into complete harmony and complete unity. According to St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the body is like a tool or instrument of the artist, and the soul is the artist.

### **What is the soul?**

St. Gregory the Theologian: "The soul is the breath of God, and, being heavenly, it suffers the mixture with the earthly. It is a light confined in a cave, yet divine and inextinguishable."

St. John Damascene: "The soul is a living essence, simple and incorporeal, by its nature invisible to the bodily eyes, immortal, gifted with both reason and intelligence, having no form, using the body supplied with organs and giving it life and growth, and feelings, and productive power, having a mind, not different in comparison with itself, but its purest part, for as the eye is in the body, so the mind is in the soul (one and the same); independent and gifted with the ability to desire, as well as the ability to act, changeable, that is, possessing an overly changeable will, because it is both created, having received all this naturally from the grace of the One who created it, from which it received both that it existed and that it was such by nature."

### **What is the nature of the soul?**

It is a special spiritual nature not from the essence of God, but created by God. The soul has a created nature.

### **How did God create the soul of man?**

When God created the soul, He took nothing from the earth, but endowed man with a soul by His creative breath alone. St. Cyril of Alexandria interprets verse 7 of chapter 2 of Genesis in a special way. According to him, God first created a living man from the dust of the earth, consisting of a soul and a body, and then breathed into him Divine grace, the breath of life. Earthly man surpassed all the animals of the earth, as the crown of creation, but did not yet have the Holy Spirit, which elevates him to godlike dignity.

### **What is the relationship of the soul to the personality?**

Having one common origin (from the soul of Adam), the soul of each personality is unique and unrepeatable, is a new form of the image of God.

### **Can the soul exist without the body?**

After separation from the body, the soul continues its existence - self-knowledge and other properties of spiritual nature. The soul is a free being.

### **By what means is the existence of the soul revealed?**

The existence of the soul cannot be revealed by material means, but is manifested through thinking, expression of will, sensation, etc.

### **What is the difference between the concepts of "soul" and "spirit"?**

In the Holy Scriptures, the spiritual principle in man, opposed to the body, is designated by two almost equivalent terms: "spirit" and "soul".

By spirit is meant not a separate and independent substance from the soul, but only the inner, most secret side of the soul. By spirit is meant that special high structure of the secret part of the soul, which is created under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit in a Christian - that spirit about which the Apostle Paul says: "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19); "... be fervent in the Spirit" (Rom. 12:11). Thus, the Apostle here does not mean all people in general, but only Christians, or believers.

Blessed Theodoret writes: "According to the teaching of the heretic Apollinaris, man has three constituent parts: the body, the animal soul, and the rational soul, which he calls the mind. But Divine Scripture recognizes only one soul, not two, which is clearly shown by the history of the creation of the

first man. God formed a body from dust and breathed a soul into it, showing by this that man has two natures, not three.”

“God breathed the breath of life into man” means that God implanted His grace into man at his creation. When man became alive, it means that God breathed the breath of life into his face. The grace of the Holy Spirit is the true beginning of our life. However, we cannot conclude that the soul is divine in essence. St. John Chrysostom wrote about this: “Some foolish people, carried away by their own ideas, not thinking about anything in a godly way, not paying attention to the appropriateness of expressions (of Scripture), dare to say that the soul originated from the essence of God. Oh, the madness! Oh, the madness! How many paths to destruction has the devil opened for those who want to serve him.”

### **Which was created first: the soul or the body?**

St. John of Damascus answers this question thus: “The body and the soul were created at the same time, and not as Origen babbled, that one was created first and the other was created after.”

Among the various heresies of the New Rite Church, contained in the newly printed book “The Staff,” officially approved at the Council of the dominant church in 1666–1667, is the following teaching: “It is necessary to know that the general composition of our flesh is thus: First, a child is conceived from seed, which gradually thickens and by the action of nature the male sex is imagined after 40 days, gradually receiving the forms of all the members and an age worthy of inspiration. The female sex, however, after 80 days both grows and is imagined little by little. Then, when what is conceived is imagined, then it is animated by God.”

In this regard, the outstanding Old Believer theologian Andrei Dionisievich noted in his “Pomor Answers” that “this is the wisdom of newly printed books, which teaches that human flesh without a soul grows and is formed in the womb. This is inconsistent with the holy great theologians and teachers, and the Old Orthodox Church” (“Pomor Answers”, art. 18). Referring to such authoritative thinkers for Orthodoxy as St. Athanasius the Great, St. John of Damascus and St. Simeon of Thessalonica, Andrei Dionisievich refutes this new teaching, seeing in it echoes of Manichaeism and Origenism. “The holy great theologians, and the whole holy church teach: soul and body are together in the conception of humanity, and not before each other, but already animated flesh grows and is formed” (ibid.). The assumption of the separate existence of soul and body inevitably entails certain moral consequences: after all, if up to a certain point the body is not animated, then artificial termination of pregnancy at an early stage (i.e. abortion) is not murder and should not entail the corresponding condemnation. However, research by modern scientists has proven how right the Church Fathers and Andrei Dionisievich, who follows their teaching, were.

### **Do the powers of the soul divide the soul into its component parts?**

The powers of the soul are rational and irrational. The rational are divided into cognitive (mind, sensory perception, reason, imagination) and vital or volitional (desire and free choice). The irrational are divided into those that do not obey reason: blood circulation, the power of growth (nutrition), the power of birth, and those that obey reason: the power of anger and the power of desire.

### **What properties distinguish man from animals?**

The internal, ineradicable difference between man and other earthly creatures is expressed in the Holy Scriptures by the testimony of man's being chosen by God, of his calling to become like God (Gen. 1:26-27), and that man can and is called to be the master and caring owner of the earth.

### **How is the soul connected to the body and where is it located?**

Speaking about the very nature of the soul, the Fathers and Teachers of the Church point to the simplicity and immateriality of the soul in contrast to the complexity and material coarseness of the body, to its formlessness and complete absence of form, and in general to the fact that it is not subject to those measurements (space, weight, etc.) to which the body is subject. St. Gregory of Nyssa taught

that the complete human nature is the union of body and soul through the real mediation of sensory force. How this union occurs cannot be determined: we only know the action of the spirit on the body through the senses and the reverse action of the body on the spirit through the same force. The human soul can unite with the body only through the mediation of a sensory semi-material force.

#### **4. On the second article of the Creed. On the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ**

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, Who was begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light, true God, of true God. Begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made.”

##### **What does the second article of the Creed teach us?**

That Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God the Father, not created, but begotten of the Father, that He was before all things. He is the true God - from the true God, the uncreated Light - from the uncreated Light.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" (John 1:10).

"Whom He appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the ages" (Heb. 1:2).

##### **What does the name Jesus mean?**

"Savior". The Jews gave the name Jesus to their babies even before the birth of the Savior. But when the eternal Word, the Only Begotten Son, took on human nature, then the Archangel Gabriel announced this name Jesus to the Most Holy Virgin, as the Evangelist Matthew says: "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). From that time on the name Jesus became special, assigned only to the Savior of the world. "For there is no other name under heaven given among men: by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).

His name was honored so much that Angels, people, and evil spirits bow down before Him. "And he gave him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of creatures in heaven, and of creatures on earth, and of creatures under the earth" (Phil. 2:9-10). Even the Old Testament spoke of the special mystical significance of the Name of God. In the Old Russian tradition, the name of the Savior was written Isus. One of the absurd "corrections" of Patriarch Nikon was the change of the name of the Savior, which began to be written in the modern Greek manner with two "i". (Iisus) The only correct spelling recognized by the New Ritualists was this one. Those who did not agree with this were cruelly persecuted. But this was not enough. The New Ritual Metropolitan Dimitry of Rostov in his anti-Old believers book "Investigation of the Schismatic Brynsk Faith" came up with his own blasphemous "interpretation", saying that the name Isus in translation from Greek supposedly means "equal-eared". At the same time, he insisted that the "schismatics" worshiped a different God under the name of Isus than the New Ritualists worshiped under the name of Iisus. Why was it necessary to change the name of the Savior, introducing this innovation with fire and sword? There are no reasonable explanations for this. Apparently, this was due to the passion of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich and his entourage for the occult sciences and all kinds of Kabbalah. Dark forces stood behind the church reform, and the replacement of the five-letter name (Исусъ) with a six-letter (Иисусъ) one was not done by chance, but for some occult purposes. (Here we can recall the symbolism of the number six hundred sixty-six.) Our ancestors felt this when they said that "Iisus" means "another Jesus", or the antichrist. This feeling was especially acute in those years when fires were burning everywhere and people were tortured and executed for confessing the name of the Savior. And this was done in the name of the new "Iisus".

### **What does the word Christ mean?**

"Anointed One". In the Old Testament, anointing with oil signified the sanctifying action of the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, there was anointing for the priesthood, for the kingdom and for prophecy. The Lord Jesus Christ is the anointed of God, as He Himself says:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for whose sake He has anointed Me, He has sent Me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the brokenhearted with refreshing" (Luke 4:18).

There were various heretical opinions regarding the anointing of Christ. There was the false teaching of the Gnostics, who claimed that Jesus became God and Christ only at Baptism, through the Aeon that descended upon Him. The same false teaching can be found in the New Rite textbooks on the Law of God (for example, in "Elementary Teaching of the Law of God" by Priest Bukharev. Synodal ed., 1898. Page 18). Then it turns out that before baptism Christ was not Christ. And this contradicts the writings of the Holy Fathers.

St. Ephraim the Syrian gives the following interpretation of the Gospel words "this day is born unto you a Savior" (Luke 2:11): "He does not say: a man was born that He might become the Savior, or that He might become Christ, but: "This day is born unto you a Savior," Who is precisely the Savior. And he did not say: Who must become the Christ of the Lord, but: Who already is the Christ of the Lord (Luke 2:11)."

### **Why is Christ called the Only Begotten Son?**

In order to show the difference between the Son and the Holy Spirit, that He alone is the one born of God the Father before all ages according to the Divinity, and according to the humanity – born of the Virgin Mary on earth.

The Scripture speaks of this in the following words: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And further: "No one has seen God anywhere; the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has confessed Him" (John 1:18).

We confess this when we sing "The Only Begotten Son and Word of God" at the service. This hymn was written by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I and introduced into the liturgy in the magnificent Church of St. Sophia built during his reign in the 6th century, during the years when the Church was troubled by the heretics Nestorians and Eutychians: some called the Son of God a simple son of Mary, while others did not leave anything human in the son of Mary.

### **What is the difference between the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit?**

St. John of Damascus writes about this: "Although we have been taught that there is a difference between birth and procession, but what the difference is and what is the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, we do not know."

### **What does "before all ages" mean?**

That is, before time appeared (and time appeared at the creation of the world, it exists only in the created world). The Son of God is born in eternity. Therefore, it is impossible to say when the Son of God was born.

These words were introduced into the Creed because there were some heretics who claimed that "there was a time when the Son was not." This was, in particular, the opinion of Tertullian, Arius and others.

### **What do the words "Light from Light, true God from true God" mean?**

God is compared here to light. We have already given a comparison of the Holy Trinity with the sun, its light and ray. According to the teaching of the Universal Church, God is light. St. John the Theologian wrote about God the Father: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Also, His Only-begotten Son is "Light from Light," that is, of the same nature as the Father.

In the newly printed book "The Tablet," published by the wicked Nikon, it was said that it is better to liken God to darkness and ignorance than to light, in order to better express His unknowability. And in the acts of the New Rite Council of 1666 it is said: "For it is better to call God darkness and ignorance than light." And this is contrary to the Symbol of Faith and the Holy Fathers, who usually called the devil "darkness."

The Son of God is called "the True God" in the Symbol because some heretics denied the divine nature of Christ, considering Him simply a prophet or some special person. Also, in the eighth article, the Holy Spirit will be called "the True Lord" (a name that the New Rite threw out of their symbol, leaving only "the Lord").

In the Epistle of St. John the Theologian says: "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us light and understanding, that we may know the true God, and that we may be in the truth in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

### **Why was "born, not created" added to this member of the Symbol?**

These words were added to denounce the wicked Arius, who taught that Christ was created. This is why the First Ecumenical Council was convened to condemn the Arian false teaching.

Patriarch Nikon removed the adversative conjunction "a" (but) from his Symbol, and thus the anti-Arian opposition was blurred.

On this subject, Archpriest Avvakum wrote: "They robbed our mother - the holy church, and yet we would remain silent! We will not remain silent about your theft even after our death. Give our mother all her property, and put the "a" that was moved to another place in the old place where it was placed by the holy fathers" (From the "Book of Conversations", 9).

And a fellow prisoner of Archpriest Avvakum, a sufferer for the Old Orthodoxy, Deacon Theodore, spoke thus on this matter: " (a) in the Old Symbol in all the holy Slavic books it has been unchanged from the beginning of the faith, and it is fitting for it to be there invariably, since it was set up here against the heretic Arius, like a sharp horn, by our holy fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. For Arius said that the Son of God was a creature, that is, created by God the Father; but the holy fathers confessed, according to the Holy Scripture, that it was begotten of God the Father, and not created. Such power is contained in this (a)." (Epistle to his son Maximus).

### **How to understand the words "Consubstantial with the Father"?**

The Son of God is of the same deity as God the Father. As the Scripture says, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

Arius, asserting that the Son of God was created, thereby rejected the Divine nature of the Second Person of the Trinity. The most prominent fighter against Arianism was St. Athanasius of Alexandria.

"God became man so that man could become God" (i.e. deified) - this, according to St. Athanasius, is the essence of the Gospel. And in order for deification to really become possible for people, the Second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, incarnate in the man Jesus Christ, had to be of the same nature as God the Father.

To better express the Divine nature of Christ, St. Athanasius the Great introduced the concept of "consubstantiality"(of one essence with the Father), which was not found in the Holy Scripture. Speaking against Arius in his letter to Bishop Adelphius, St. Athanasius writes: "As the creature was not created by the creature, so the creature could not have been saved by the creature, if the Logos (i.e. the Son of God) had not been the Creator."

The Council of Nicaea confirmed the teaching of St. Athanasius, although later most of the bishops who signed the Nicene Creed departed from it, trying to do without the concept of "consubstantial" in their confessions of faith, adopted at numerous local councils. They saw here the threat of Sabellianism. (Sabellius was a heretic who claimed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not separate persons, but only manifestations of a single Deity.)

The credit for restoring this concept goes to the Cappadocian Fathers - St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Gregory of Nyssa. They introduced a distinction between the terms "essence" and "hypostasis". According to their teaching, recognized by the Church, God is consubstantial, but Tri-hypostatic.

### **What do the words "By whom all things were made" mean?**

That God the Father created all things through the Son, as the Gospel says: "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" ( John 1:3). We have already said that all the Persons of the Trinity participated in creation, including the Son of God (Logos-Word).

## **5. On the third article of the Creed**

"For us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit, and of the Virgin Mary became man."

The third article of the Creed teaches us that the Son of God, for our salvation (that is, for all men), by the good pleasure of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, came down to earth. "Come down" not in the sense that He passed from one place to another, but in the sense that He, having humbled Himself, became man, as the Apostle Paul says about this: "Who was in the form of God, through rapture did not pretend to be equal with God; but made Himself humble; "And He took the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men; and He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6–8).

### **The Dogma of the Incarnation of God**

God became incarnate and became the True Man, like us in everything except sin. Jesus Christ did not change Divinity into humanity, but humanity into Divinity. He was the true God, but only by taking upon Himself humanity did He become the God-Man. And therefore He is the true God and the true man.

The question of the union of the two natures in Christ was considered at various Ecumenical Councils (the Third, Fourth and Sixth Councils), since all sorts of heresies arose on this matter. The definition (horos) of the Fourth Ecumenical (Chalcedonian) Council of 451 reads: "Following the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Divinity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, the same, from the rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father according to Divinity, and the same consubstantial with us according to humanity, similar in everything except sin, born before the ages of the Father according to Divinity, and in the last days for our sake and for the sake of our salvation from Mary the Virgin Mother of God - according to humanity, one and the same Christ, the Son, the Lord, the Only-begotten, in two natures unmerged, unchangeable, inseparable, inseparably known ... not cut into two persons or divided, but one and the same Son, and the Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as in ancient times the prophets (taught) about Him, and (how) the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, and (how) He gave us the Symbol of the fathers."



### **Why did the Lord Jesus Christ become incarnate?**

"For our salvation." To save us from sin, damnation, and death.

St. Athanasius the Great writes about it this way: "God became man so that man might become god." "The Son of God became the Son of Man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God." He calls this change that occurs in the nature of the redeemed deification.

According to the teachings of St. Athanasius, the consequences of deification were the following: 1) the renewal of human nature, which is expressed in the possibility of victory over sin, in the height of the moral life of Christians; 2) the overshadowing of believers with spiritual gifts, manifested in the working of miracles and power over unclean spirits; 3) liberation from the law of corruption and the acquisition of immortality. "The incorruptible Son of God, as being present in all in likeness with us, rightly clothed all in incorruption by the promise of the resurrection. That same corruption which is brought into humanity by death no longer has a place in people, because of the Word, which has entered into them through a single body."

### **How many hypostases are there in Christ?**

When two natures (essences) are united in Christ the God-man, one Person, one Hypostasis abides in Him – the Divine. In the definition of the Council of Chalcedon we read: "...not divided or divided into two persons, but one and the same (we confess) the Son and Only-begotten, God the Word..."

Therefore, we worship the Lord Jesus Christ with one indivisible worship, and do not honor His Divinity separately and His humanity separately. Both natures are united in Him inseparably, as is clearly stated in the definition of the fathers of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (point 9 against heretics): "If anyone says that in Jesus Christ each of His natures must be worshipped, so that by this he introduces two worships, a special worship of God the Word and a special worship of Man, and does not worship with one worship the Word incarnate and the human nature that has become His own and proper, as the Church has always believed and recognized this on the basis of uninterrupted tradition, then let him be anathema." We encounter a violation of one worship among Catholics, for example, who introduced the cult of the heart of Jesus. Even if the heart is understood in a broader sense - not as a bodily organ, but as the love of God, then this will still be a violation of the dogma of one worship, since neither in the Old nor in the New Testament was it customary to worship the Love of God or the Wisdom of God separately.

### **The dogma of icon veneration**

Another dogma is closely connected with the dogma of the Incarnation of God - the dogma of icon veneration. Since the Lord Jesus Christ was truly incarnate, we can depict Him in His bodily image.

St. John of Damascus: "Since God, because of His merciful heart, truly became man for the sake of our salvation - not as He appeared to Abraham in the form of a man, and not as to the prophets - but in essence truly became man and lived on earth, and entered into union with people, performed miracles, suffered, was crucified, resurrected, ascended, and all this happened in truth and was visible to people, was written down for our reminder and instruction of those who were not then, so that we, not seeing, but hearing and believing, would attain the blessedness of the Lord; But since not everyone knows how to read and not everyone has free time to read, the fathers saw to it that this, like some exploits, should be depicted on icons, for a brief reminder. Without a doubt, often not having in mind the suffering of the Lord, having seen the image of the crucifixion of Christ, having come to the remembrance of the saving suffering, having fallen - we worship, not the substance, but the One Who is depicted, just as we do not worship the substance of the Gospel, and not the substance of the cross, but that which is depicted through this. For [otherwise] how does a cross that does not have an image of the Lord differ from one that does? In the same way [one should think] about the Mother of God. For the honor given to Her is raised to the One Who was incarnate from Her. In a similar way, the valiant exploits of holy men excite us to courage and emulation, and imitation of their virtue, and glorification of God. For, as

we have said, honor in relation to the prudent of fellow-slaves is a proof of affection for the common Lord, and the honor given to the image passes to the prototype. This tradition is one of those not recorded in Holy Scripture, just as the one concerning worship in the direction of the east and the worship of the cross, and many other similar things."

The story of the creation of the first image, the Savior Not Made by Hands, has also been preserved in tradition. When Abgar, who reigned in the city of Edessa, sent an artist to paint a similar image of the Lord, and when the artist was unable to do so because of the shining brilliance of His Face, then "Christ Himself, our true God, having applied an honest kerchief (cloth) to His most pure face, depicted His wondrous image and sent Him to the king of Edessa, Abgar" (the book "The Great Council"). We also know that the icon painter was the Evangelist Luke, who painted many famous icons of the Most Holy Theotokos. The dogma of icon veneration was adopted at the last – Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 and is expressed in the following words: "... with all diligence and circumspection we determine that holy and honorable icons should be offered (for veneration) in the same way as images of the Honorable and Life-Giving Cross... The more often, with the help of icons, they (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, Angels and saints depicted on the icons) become the object of our contemplation, the more those who look at these icons are prompted to remember the very prototypes and acquire more love for them; to honor them (the icons) with kissing and reverent worship, not that true, according to our faith, worship of God, which befits the one Divine nature, but by veneration... with incense and the lighting of candles... For the honor given to the image passes to the prototype." As St. John of Damascus writes, "an icon is the visible invisible, but bodily depicted by us due to the weakness of our understanding." Therefore, believers in "the One God, worshiped in Trinity, kiss and venerate the honorable icons." According to an ancient custom, candles are lit before icons during prayer. By lighting candles, Christians indicate by this custom their spiritual fervor and ardent love for the Merciful God. At the same time, according to ancient tradition, candles lit before the image of Jesus Christ are placed opposite the chest, and before the images of the Mother of God and the saints - opposite the face. There was also a pious custom, dating back to ancient tradition, to say: not "light" and "extinguish" the candle, but "warm" and "reconcile." Candles should be made of pure wax, symbolizing the purity of the soul and the sincere ascension of our prayers to God. Since ancient times, even from the Old Testament times, the custom of burning olive oil before icons has been established. Also during prayer, icons are censured with incense or frankincense (solidified resin, which is mined in Arabia, Africa and India). Censing was done even under Moses. It serves to purify the place of prayer, to express special favor and solemnity.

An icon (image) depicts our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Lady Mother of God, Angels, saints, sacred events or the words of divine hymns. A true icon is created on different creative principles than a secular painting, even if it has a religious content. An icon must be painted by righteous people who have purified themselves through fasting and prayer. An icon does not depict our life as in ordinary painting, but a mysterious and sacred event, the forms and inner content of which are completely different from earthly existence. The process of creating an icon itself has a deep symbolic and sacred meaning, so an icon cannot be replaced by any typographic copy or other image on a religious theme. It is also forbidden to venerate heretical images or those painted by heretics. The essence of heretical icon painting is very well described by Archpriest Avvakum: "...they paint the image of the Savior Emmanuel, with a puffy face, red lips, curly hair, thick arms and muscles, and all made like a German, pot-bellied and fat, only a sabre on his hip is not painted. But everything is painted according to carnal intent, since the heretics themselves loved carnal fatness and cast down the highest."

### **Dogmas about the Most Holy Lady Theotokos**

Two dogmas about the Mother of God are most closely connected with the dogma about the Incarnation of God the Word. These are the dogma about Her ever-virginity and Her being called the Mother of God. These two dogmas directly follow from the dogma about the unity of the Hypostasis of the Lord from the moment of His incarnation - the Divine Hypostasis.

The ever-virginity of the Mother of God is testified to by Her own words, transmitted by the Gospel: "My soul magnifies the Lord... For from now on all generations will bless Me. For the Mighty One has magnified Me, and holy is His name" (Luke 4).

The birth of the Savior from the Virgin is directly testified to by two evangelists - Matthew and Luke. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah prophesied about this: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive in her womb, and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel... as a child is born unto us a son, and given unto us: to whom his government is upon his frame. And his name is called the Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Potentate, the Prince of meekness, the Father of the age to come" (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). The prophet Ezekiel also prophesied about the gates through which God will pass, and will remain shut (Ezek. 44:2). Some heretical Protestants reject the recognition of the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God on the grounds that the evangelists mention the "brothers and sisters of Jesus." And indeed, the Gospels mention four brothers of Jesus Christ (James, Joseph, Simon and Judas Jacob) and three sisters (Martha, Esther and Salome). However, these were not siblings, but cousins or half-siblings (from Joseph).

In the dogmatics of the 7th tone we read: "The Mother was known above nature as the Mother of God; and remained a Virgin beyond words and understanding; and the miracle of Your birth no tongue can tell; for Your conception was most glorious, O pure one: the manner of birth is incomprehensible: for where God wills, the order of nature is overcome; therefore, knowing You, the Mother of God, we pray to You diligently, pray for the salvation of our souls." In confirmation of the dogma of perpetual virginity, we depict three stars on the icons of the Mother of God on Her clothes, which, according to the words of St. John Chrysostom, mean: before the Birth a Virgin, and in the Birth a Virgin, and after the Birth to remain a Virgin.

As for the dogma of calling the Virgin Mary the Mother of God, St. John Damascene writes: "We proclaim the Holy Virgin the Mother of God in the proper sense and in truth. For just as the true God is He Who was born of Her, so the true Mother of God is also She Who gave birth to the true God Who was incarnate from Her; for we affirm that God was born of Her – we affirm this, not assuming that the divinity of the Word received the beginning of being from Her, but that the Divine Word Himself, Who before the ages was born of the Father without time, and was without beginning and eternally together with the Father and the Spirit, in the last days for the sake of our salvation dwelt in Her womb and without change was incarnate and born from Her. For the Holy Virgin gave birth not to a simple man, but to the true God; not naked, but clothed in flesh; "He did not bring the body from heaven and did not pass through it, as if through a channel, but received from it the flesh consubstantial with us and gave it in Himself a hypostatic existence... For if the body had been brought from heaven, and not taken from a nature identical with ours, then what need would there have been for the incarnation? For the incarnation of God the Word occurred for this reason, so that the nature itself, having sinned, fallen, and corrupted, might overcome the tyrant who had deceived it, and so that it might thus be freed from corruption."

At the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431), the Church of Christ solemnly confessed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God in connection with the heresy of Nestorius, accepting and affirming the words of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem: "Whoever does not confess that Emmanuel is the true God, and therefore the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God, for She bodily gave birth to the Word of God, who became flesh, let him be anathema." To these two dogmas about the Most Holy Lady Theotokos, Catholics added another unprecedented dogma about the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary (that is, that at the moment of conception She was pre-purified from the original sin). The idea of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin appeared in the West as early as the 12th century (that is, after the fall from Orthodoxy), but was officially proclaimed as a dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854. This Latin heretical dogma was also approved by the New Rite Church at the Council of 1666-1667, which was reflected in the book "The Rod" published by this Council. The same opinion was held by the hierarchs of the New Rite Church: Dmitry of Rostov, Lazar Baranovich, Ioanniky Galyatovsky and Anthony Radivilovsky. However, the most surprising thing is that another book published by the same Council, the book "The Tablet", contains a completely opposite opinion. As for the true Orthodox teaching, the Holy Fathers, confessing the perfect

personal purity and perfect holiness of the Mother of God, Whom the Lord Jesus Christ, by His birth from Her, made More Honorable than the Cherubim and truly More Glorious than the Seraphim, taught that the Most Holy Virgin was born a participant in Adam's sin and shared with him the need for redemption, for, as the Apostle says, in Adam "all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Only the God-man Jesus Christ begins a new humanity, freed by Him from the sin of Adam. He is the New Adam. Original sin, as is known, is washed away by holy baptism, and according to tradition, the Most Holy Theotokos was baptized by the Apostles Peter and John. Another Catholic dogma related to the Mother of God was the dogma of Her bodily ascension into heaven, announced in 1950 by Pope Pius XII. In general, this does not contradict the Orthodox tradition (which is expressed, for example, in the content of the service for the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God), but Orthodox Christians prefer not to proclaim new dogmas, creating legally strict formulas, but to prayerfully glorify the incomprehensible mystery of the Mother of God. Thus, in the Prologue (from August 15) it is said that three days after the burial of the body of the Most Holy Theotokos, one of the apostles arrived, who did not make it in time for the burial (according to tradition, this was the apostle Thomas). Then the apostles, at a general meeting, decided to open the coffin, but, having opened it, they discovered that it was empty and that there was nothing there except a shroud. Thus it was revealed to them that the body of the Mother of God was taken up to heaven. While accepting this pious tradition, the Old Orthodox Church does not consider it to be one of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

## **6. On the fourth article of the Creed. On the crucifixion of Christ, His suffering and burial**

"Who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried."

### **What does the fourth article of the Creed teach us?**

From the fourth article of the Creed we learn that Christ truly endured torment and died, that without guilt, like a lamb, for the deliverance of us from sin, He suffered and died, as the Apostle Peter writes: "Know this, that it was not with corruptible things like silver and gold that you were delivered from your useless life received from your fathers, but with the precious blood of the Lamb, without blemish and without spot, Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18).

### **Why is the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate mentioned?**

To show the truth of the historical event of the Savior's sufferings, which occurred precisely at that time. We learn about Pontius Pilate not only from the Gospels, but also from other historical sources. He was the Roman governor of Judea (from 26 AD). In 36-37 AD he was removed from power. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, he committed suicide in 39 AD. In the book "The Passion of the Christ" we find another version of his death. The Roman Emperor Tiberius, having learned about the unjust trial of Christ, ordered Pontius Pilate to be tortured and then executed, and Pilate himself asked to be subjected to various tortures, sincerely repenting of what he had done. God's voice is heard from heaven, announcing Pilate's forgiveness. After Pilate's head was beheaded, an Angel descends from heaven and ascends with it to heaven. During the hours of the Savior's suffering, as the Evangelist Luke says, "there was darkness over the whole land" (Luke 23:44). Pagan historical writers also testify to this darkness: the Roman astronomer Phlegon, Phallus, Junius Africanus. One of them even exclaimed: "One of the gods has died!" The famous Athenian philosopher Dionysius the Areopagite, who would later become a disciple of the Apostle Paul and the first Bishop of Athens, was in Egypt at that time, in the city of Heliopolis. Observing the sudden darkness, he said: "Either the Creator is suffering, or the world is being destroyed."

### **On Crucifixion**

Crucifixion was the most shameful, terrible and cruel execution in the Roman Empire. It condemned the crucified to a long and painful death under the rays of the scorching sun. It was a symbol of all human malice and the most striking revelation of the devil's power. The Romans crucified slaves and non-

Romans first. After Christ, many apostles and Christian martyrs were crucified. This execution was abolished only in 314 by Emperor Constantine the Great.

The Savior, having suffered a shameful execution on the Cross, died, but also rose again. Christ destroyed the main support of the devil and turned the Cross into an eternal victory over evil and death.

### **On the veneration of the Cross**

A question may arise: the Cross was the instrument of Christ's execution, should we venerate it? To this we can answer that the Cross was not only the instrument of execution, but that through the Cross we received salvation. "But it is not fitting for me to boast," writes the Apostle Paul, "except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the whole world has been crucified to me, and I to the whole world" (Gal. 6:14).

Thus, every Christian should boast of the Cross, making the sign of the cross on himself, wearing the image of the Cross on his chest and having it in church, at home and on the road. Approaching every good deed, a Christian should mark himself with the sign of the cross, because the devil flees from the sign of the cross and cannot look at it, and, consequently, do us harm.

Since ancient times, Orthodox Christians have venerated the image of the eight-pointed Crucifixion with the inscription "IC XC King of Glory." However, since the time of the wicked Patriarch Nikon, another inscription has become widespread in Russia: "I.H.C.I." ("Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews", the so-called Pilate title). The fact is that the "Pilate title", according to the Gospel, was indeed written on the Cross of the Lord, but it was not found on the icon of the Crucifixion anywhere in Rus' before Nikon. It was not found in Byzantium either. This is explained by the fact that in the Orthodox tradition, the icon of the Crucifixion depicted Christ, having already conquered death, Christ in His Glory (the King of Glory), and not in suffering and humiliation. The Catholic tradition preferred to emphasize the physical suffering of Christ, which found its place not only in the physiological details of the depiction of death on the cross (in Catholicism, the Savior always hangs, while in the Orthodox tradition He stands on the Cross, as if opening His arms to those praying). Therefore, Nikon's borrowing of this inscription "Pilate's inscription" was naturally perceived in Rus' as a Latin heresy.

### **On the sign of the cross**

St. Basil the Great wrote: "Of the dogmas and sermons observed in the Church, some we have from written instruction, and some we have received from the Apostolic Tradition by secret succession. Both have the same power for piety, and no one, even if little versed in the statutes of the Church, will contradict this. For if we dare to reject unwritten customs, as if they were of no great importance, then we will imperceptibly harm the Gospel in the most important thing, or rather, from the Apostolic sermon we will leave an empty name without content. For example, let us first of all mention the first and most general: that those who trust in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ should sign themselves with the image of the Cross, who taught by Scripture? What Scripture has taught us to turn to the East in prayer? Where does the triple immersion of man and the rest of what pertains to baptism come from, the denial of Satan and his angels, from what Scripture is it taken? Is it not from this unpublished and unspeakable teaching, which our fathers preserved in silence, inaccessible to curiosity and inquiries, having been thoroughly taught to guard the sanctity of the sacraments with silence? For what propriety would it be to proclaim in writing the teaching about that which the unbaptized are not allowed to even look at? " (Rule 91; about the Holy Spirit. Ch. 27).

From tradition we know how to correctly fold the fingers for the sign of the cross: connect three fingers of the right hand - the thumb and two small ones, and two fingers - the index finger should be left extended, and the middle finger - slightly bent. With this we confess the Holy Trinity, and with two outstretched fingers – two natures in Christ – Divine and human. The slightly inclined position of the middle finger relative to the index finger depicts the "bow down of heaven" – the mystery of God's descent and incarnation. The truth of the two-fingered gesture is confirmed by many testimonies. These include: 1) ancient images that have survived to this day (a 3rd-century fresco from the Tomb of St.

Priscilla in Rome, a 4th-century mosaic depicting the Miraculous Catch from the Church of St. Apollinaris in Rome, a painted image of the Annunciation from the Church of St. Mary in Rome, dating back to the 5th century, etc.); 2) numerous Russian and Greek icons of the Savior, the Mother of God and holy saints, miraculously revealed and anciently painted (listed in detail in the "Pomor Answers"); 3) the ancient rite of acceptance from the Jacobite heresy, which, according to the testimony of the Constantinople Council of 1029, the Greek Church contained as early as the 11th century: "Whoever does not make the sign of the cross with two fingers, like Christ, let him be cursed"; 4) books - Joseph, Archimandrite of the Spassky New Monastery, the cell Psalter of Cyril Novoezersky, in the Greek original the books of Nikon the Chernogorsk, etc.: "Whoever does not sign himself with two fingers, like Christ, let him be cursed"; 5) the custom of the Russian Church, adopted from the Greeks at the Baptism of Rus', which was not interrupted until Patriarch Nikon. This custom was conciliarly confirmed in the Russian Church at the Stoglav Council in 1551: "Whoever does not bless with two fingers, like Christ, or does not make the sign of the cross with two fingers; let him be cursed, as the Holy Fathers said."

In addition to the above, evidence that the two-fingered sign of the cross is a tradition of the ancient Ecumenical Church (and not just the Russian local one) is also the text of the new Greek Kormchaya, where the following is written: "Ancient Christians folded their fingers to depict the cross on themselves differently than modern ones, that is, they depicted it with two fingers - the middle and index, as Peter Damascene says. The whole hand, says Peter, signifies the one hypostasis of Christ, and two fingers - His two natures" ("Greek Kormchaya (Pedalion), research by N. Nikolsky", 1888, p. 259). As for the sign of the cross with three fingers, we do not find evidence of it in any ancient monuments, and from a dogmatic point of view, the holy martyr Bishop Pavel Kolomensky quite rightly saw it as a God-passionate heresy, since those who sign the cross with three fingers confess that the Holy Trinity was crucified on the Cross.

### **How should we make the sign of the cross on ourselves?**

Having folded our fingers in this manner, we should place two of them first on our forehead, then on our stomach, and finally on both shoulders, first on the right, then on the left.

Interpretation: placing our hand on our forehead, we confess that the head of the Church is Christ; then, lowering our hand to our stomach, we confess the coming of Christ to earth and His seedless conception in the womb of the Mother of God. Placing our hand on our right shoulder, we confess that Christ sits at the right hand (i.e., on the right side) of God the Father. Finally, when we place our hand on our left shoulder, we confess the Second Coming of Christ (the Last Judgment), when the Lord will reward those on the left side with eternal torment, and those on the right side with eternal life. By bowing, we ask to be freed from standing on the left side.

St. John Chrysostom writes in his sermon: "Many ignorant people, waving their hands across their faces, labor in vain, because they do not devoutly correct the sign of the cross on their faces, the demons rejoice at such waving, but whoever crosses himself devoutly, placing his hand on his forehead and stomach, and on the right side and then on the left, then the Angels, seeing the true Cross imaginable on their faces, rejoice, and the Angel of the Lord then writes those who enter the Church of the Lord with fear and faith, so that if anyone comes to the Church and stands with fear and tenderness, bowing down before the image of God, he will receive the remission of sins and the mercy of God. But if without fear, then such a one, having committed a greater sin, departs. Therefore, we, having entered, stand with fear, expecting from God great mercy in this age and in the future" (Prologue, April 18).

Unfortunately, in our time sometimes we can see such inappropriate waving even in Christian churches. Back in 1912, the Pomor magazine "Shield of Faith" wrote: "Recently, we have begun to notice a cut in the sign of the cross, i.e. some Christians cut off the sign of the cross on themselves from all ends, approximately by an inch, and sometimes even more, as a result of which the diameter of this all-saving seal is reduced. Alas! how painful it is. Between the folded fingers, cracks are visible, which shows complete carelessness in the folding of the Cross." On this subject, the old printed book "The Son of the Church" says: "Whoever imagines the Cross incorrectly, the demons rejoice at him, and they entice him

with every kind of charm, and also, if someone does not place his hand on his right and left shoulder, he does not confess the indivisible Trinity and does not confess the Judge of the living and the dead.”

It also says: “Remember and do not forget about the Cross, so as not to cross your clothes on yourself, but your body, apply your hand more closely, so that it is felt on your forehead.”

Some also replace waist bows with “neck bows.” However, according to the Church Charter, there are only two types of bows: prostration and waist bows, and we do not read about any neck nods either in Scripture or in the Holy Fathers.

### **Did Christ suffer as a divinity or as a human being?**

Christ suffered on the cross only as a human being, and His suffering was so great that no human being can suffer. The Savior suffered not for His own sins, which He did not have, but for the sins of the entire human race. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,” said St. John the Baptist about Christ.

The Savior’s body after His death was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and at that time, before His Resurrection, His soul descended into hell and from there He led out all who believed in Him, beginning with Adam and Eve, as is sung at the Easter Hours: “In the tomb with the flesh, in hell with the soul as God, in paradise with the thief; and on the throne He was with the Father and the Spirit, filling all things indescribable.”

The words “suffered and was buried” were added to the Creed in order to refute some heretics who falsely taught that the Lord did not suffer on the cross, and that His sufferings were only the appearance of suffering and death.

### **Why did the Savior descend into hell?**

St. John Damascene writes about this: “The deified soul descends into hell so that, just as the Sun of righteousness shone for those on earth, so too for those underground, who were in darkness and the shadow of death, light would shine; so that, just as the Lord preached peace to those on earth, release to the captives and sight to the blind, and became the Author of eternal salvation for those who believed, and a reproof of unbelief for those who did not believe, so He preached to those in hell: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth. And thus, having loosened those who had been bound from the ages, He returned back - from death to life, paving the way for us to the resurrection.”

## **7. On the fifth article of the Creed. On the resurrection of Christ on the third day**

“And rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

From the fifth article of the Creed we learn that the Son of God died voluntarily, and then by the power of His Divinity rose again on the third day.

“Therefore the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to take it again”; (John 10:17-18).

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory”; (Luke 24:26).

### **How did Christ rise?**

He rose with His body, in which He suffered and died, as evidenced by the wounds on His hands, feet, and ribs, which He showed to His disciples after the resurrection.

“Behold My hands and My feet, for I Myself am He. “Touch Me and see that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

### **Why did Christ rise on the third day?**

Because the Old Testament prophecy that foreshadowed Christ had to come true: "And Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights" (Jonah 2:1).

There are other prophecies about the resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament: in the prophets Daniel, Isaiah, Micah, David, Hosea and others. That is why it is said: "according to the scriptures", that is, according to how it is written in the Holy Scriptures, in the prophecies.

These words themselves are taken from the 1st Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "For I delivered unto you what I had received from the beginning, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

### **How did people learn that Jesus had risen?**

This is described in detail in the Gospels. In brief, it is said in the Sunday troparion of the first tone: "The stone was sealed from the Jews, and the soldiers guarding Your most pure body, but You rose on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world; for this reason the heavenly powers cried out to You, Life-Giver: glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ, glory to Your Kingdom, glory to Your providence, the only Lover of Mankind."

The soldiers who guarded the tomb of Jesus learned of the Resurrection of Christ with horror, because the Angel of the Lord rolled away the stone that had sealed His tomb, and at the same time a strong earthquake occurred. The angels announced the Resurrection of Christ to Mary Magdalene and some others. On the very day of His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the myrrh-bearing women, to the Apostle Peter, to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, and finally to all the apostles who were in the house with the doors closed. Then He appeared for another forty days – right up until His Ascension. On one of the days He appeared to more than five hundred of the faithful at once (1 Cor. 15:6).

### **What are the heresies about the Resurrection of Christ?**

All sorts of absurd theories began to arise about this miraculous event already in ancient times, and subsequently many rationalist scientists devoted their entire lives to trying to prove the falsity of the Gospel story. Here are these theories:

- 1) The first in time and malice is the theory of theft (the disciples allegedly stole the body of the Lord);
- 2) the theory of false death (lethargic sleep);
- 3) the "visionary theory" (from visio - "vision"; supposedly Christ was resurrected not in reality, but in the imagination of His disciples, that is, all His appearances to them were supposedly hallucinations generated by a strong desire);
- 4) finally, a theory that recognizes the historical grain in the Gospel, but believes that it has become overgrown with a mythological shell - it is necessary to remove these later layers and separate the "truth" from them.

All these theories, upon closer examination, do not stand up to any criticism.

### **Are there any other cases of resurrection known to us from Scripture?**

In the Old Testament, the prophets Elisha and Elijah resurrected people. The New Testament speaks of the resurrection of Lazarus, but at the Resurrection of Christ, Christ resurrected Himself, and Lazarus was resurrected by the Lord Jesus Christ.



## **8. On the sixth article of the Creed. On the ascension of Christ into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God the Father**

“And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father.”

From the sixth article of the Creed we learn of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven and His sitting at the right hand of God the Father. This is how this event is described in the Holy Scripture: “While they were looking, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and sat at the right hand of God the Father” (Acts 1:9).

"And so the Lord, after speaking with them, ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

A prophecy about this is contained in the Psalter of King David: "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand" (Psalm 109:1). In general, the entire 109th psalm refers to Christ.

Here is what is written in the commentary on this psalm by St. Euthymius Zigabens: "The Father spoke to God, His Son, after His ascension into heaven. If it is written: the Lord our God, the Lord is one, then this is not written at all for the rejection of the Only Begotten, but for the distinction and separation of Him from the insignificant gods. And the words: The Lord and the Father said to the Son, we must understand as befitting God, and not man, and God-like, and not man-like. These words block the Jews lips; for they do not know at all what to say to the fact that David has two Lords, one of whom was born from the womb before the morning star. For it is clear that this is Christ - God and man. (In the ancient Hebrew Psalter it is written directly: "Jehovah said to Jehovah." - K.K.). Sit at My right hand. As the names Lord and Lord express the equality of honor of the Father with the Son and vice versa, the Son with the Father; so also by sitting on the right side on the royal throne - the same equality of honor is shown, for those who have a common seat, they also have a common kingdom. Therefore let the mouths of Arius and Eunomius be stopped, who talk vainly that the Son is not equal to the Father. Since the incorporeal and indescribable have no right and left side, which is characteristic only of bodies, therefore sitting here signifies peace and enjoyment of the kingdom of God, and sitting on the right side shows the authenticity of the sonship of the Son and the closeness and equal honor" (Explanatory Psalter). According to the interpretation of St. Cyril, "the right side signifies equal honor of dignity."

### **Did Jesus Christ ascend to heaven as a deity or as a human being?**

Jesus Christ ascended as a human being, since as a deity He always dwelt in heaven with the Father, as having the same power and glory with Him.

“No one has ever seen God, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has confessed Him” (John 1:18).

### **Does Christ still abide in heaven and on earth with His body?**

As a deity He is everywhere, but as a human being after His Resurrection He is only in heaven, according to the words of the Apostle: “Christ is sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1).

Before the fall of the priesthood (under Patriarch Nikon), Christ also dwelt on earth in His body – but only in the Most Holy Mystery, in the sacrament of the Eucharist (Communion), where His Most Pure Body dwelt under the form of bread, and His True Blood under the form of wine. Bread and wine were transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ through the priest’s invocation of the Holy Spirit to the gifts. Now, due to our unworthiness, this sacrament has been taken up to heaven in a visible form. But we can still partake of Christ, as the Holy Fathers write, in a spiritual manner.

Blessed Jerome writes about this: “Since the Body of the Lord is true food, and His Blood is true drink: then, according to the spiritual interpretation, in the present age we have only one good, if we feed on His Flesh and drink His Blood, not only in the sacrament (the Eucharist), but also in reading the

scriptures. For the true food and drink, which is received from the Word of God, is the knowledge of the scriptures." St. Ignatius the God-bearer wrote about the same: "Let us have recourse to the Gospel as to the Flesh of Jesus, and to the apostles, as to the presbytery of the Church" (Epistle to the Philadelphians, 5). We will talk about this in more detail later, when we examine the teaching on the Church Sacraments.

## **9. On the seventh article of the Creed. On the Second Coming of Christ and His Kingdom. Eschatology, the doctrine of the last times**

"And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom have no end."

From the seventh article of the Creed we learn that Jesus Christ will come again to earth to judge the living and the dead, but not as He came the first time – humble and humiliated, but in all His glory, as He says of Himself: "And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power" (Matthew 24:30).

### **Why is the Last Judgment called "Terrible"?**

The Judgment is called the Terrible Judgment because the conscience of each person will then be revealed to everyone, and not only all the good and evil deeds that a person has done throughout his earthly life will be revealed, but also all the words spoken, all our secret desires and thoughts. After this judgment, the righteous will go to eternal life, and the sinners - to eternal torment, according to the words of the Savior: "But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:36-37).

### **Will the Second Coming of the Son of God be soon?**

No one knows about it, but we must live in such a way as to always be ready. The Scripture teaches us this: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36; the same words are quoted by the Evangelist Mark - Mark 13:32).

"Watch therefore, for you do not know the day or the hour wherein the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 25:13).

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3:9-10).

The same is said in the troparion at the midnight service: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh at midnight: and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching: but unworthy is he whom He shall find slothful. Take heed therefore, O my soul, lest thou be burdened with sleep, and lest thou be delivered over unto death, and shut out from the Kingdom: but arise, crying, Holy, holy, holy art thou, O God; for the sake of the Theotokos, have mercy on us."

### **Are there any signs of the Second Coming of Christ indicated in the Holy Scriptures?**

Such signs are indicated, for example, in the Gospel of Matthew: "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars" (Matthew 24:5-6).

"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people." (Matthew 24:7-11).

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you before. Therefore, if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out; ‘Behold, He is in the secret rooms,’ believe it not” (Matthew 24:24-26).

The holy Evangelist Mark speaks very closely to these words of the holy Evangelist Matthew about the last times. Finally, the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian mysteriously speaks of the Second Coming of Christ. The Apocalypse is a mysterious book, and it must be read with the commentary of the holy fathers, because many have fallen into delusion, having embarked on independent philosophizing. There is an interpretation by St. Andrew of Caesarea. In the printed three-explanatory Apocalypse of the Transfiguration press, two more are given: “another interpretation” and “an additional another interpretation.”

### **Who is the "false Christ"?**

This is the antichrist - the opponent of Christ. The antichrist is: 1) any opponent of Christ, rejecting or distorting Christian dogmas; 2) the extreme opponent and enemy of Christ, the persecutor and tormentor of His Church, who will appear at the end of the world. He will try to destroy Christianity, but at the same time he himself will perish. In this case, they speak of the "last antichrist".

"Then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him by the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming." (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

### **What did our Old Orthodox theologians write about the Antichrist and the signs of his coming?**

The Holy Fathers called the antichrist a "serpent", "beast", "lion", "enemy", "destroyer", "devil", "Satan", "demon of the underworld", "adversary" and "foe", "man of sin and lawlessness", "abomination of desolation", "son of destruction", "evil leader", "lamb of unrighteousness" and other names. This enemy will be a man born "of an unclean virgin, a Jewess, from the tribe of Dan" (according to other sources - from the tribe of Judah). The Antichrist will assume great power, and at first he will appear quiet, reasonable, pure and merciful, and will deceive the Jews, who will accept him as the Messiah. But in fact, he will resist Christ, trying to destroy Christianity. According to the words of the holy Apostle Paul, "That Day cannot come before the final digression occurs and the lawless one is revealed, the son of destruction. He is the adversary who sets himself in opposition to, and exalts himself above, every so-called god or object of worship, and who even seats himself in the Church of God, declaring himself to be God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

To denounce the antichrist, the Lord will send Enoch, Elijah and John the Theologian, and many will believe in the True God. Elijah and Enoch will be killed by order of the antichrist. It is predicted that some of the Jews will also be converted to the faith of Christ by Elijah and Enoch, but many of them will accept the antichrist.

According to the book of the prophet Daniel, the reign of the Antichrist will last three and a half years. His end is described by the Apostle Paul: "... whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy by the splendor of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8). And in the Apocalypse: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet... and they were both cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20). According to the interpretation of St. Andrew of Caesarea, "these two (the antichrist and the false prophet) in an incorruptible body, by the power which God has destroyed, are delivered over to the fire of Gehenna, which shall be death and killing for them by the command of Christ." A certain number is associated with the antichrist. Saint Apostle John the Theologian writes: " Here is wisdom: Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six." (Rev. 13:18).

Many Old Believers understand this number to be the time of the coming of the antichrist - the Council of 1666, which preceded the Council of 1667, which confirmed the schism of the Russian Church. Many tried to guess the name of the antichrist or to associate his number with the name of some enemy of Orthodoxy. Using the letter notation of numbers in different ways (and often doing without it), the

Antichrist was called the Pope, Emperor Nero, Patriarch Nikon, Russian emperors (especially Peter I), Napoleon I, and others.

The apostasy from Orthodoxy of the bishops of the Russian Church in the 17th century was perceived by many contemporaries as the final apostasy, marking the imminent end of the world and the coming of the Antichrist. For it is said that before the antichrist there will come an apostasy: "Let no one deceive you in any way, lest there come a falling away first, and a man of lawlessness be revealed, the son of perdition..." (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

According to the teaching of the Old Orthodox Pomor Church, which is the custodian of the apostolic and patristic tradition, the Antichrist should be understood in a "spiritual", "parable" sense. The Antichrist is an apostasy from the true faith, heresy, lawlessness, and impiety. The Antichrist came to earth during the schism of the Russian Church and has reigned throughout the earth ever since. His birth from an "unclean virgin, a Jewess" should be understood as the birth of heresies and heretics from the heretical church. The coming of Elijah, Enoch, and John the Theologian should be understood as follows: the "sensual" Elijah has already come in the person of John the Baptist, and the "spiritual" Elijah means the zealots of truth sent by God who denounce false Christians; at the same time, all true believers mean the "spiritual" Enoch. As for Saint John the Evangelist, his coming prophecy signifies the works he has already written, and his coming signifies dogmatic theology.

### **What is the "seal of the Antichrist"?**

The Apocalypse says that the antichrist will put a mark on the right hand and forehead of those who bow to him: "... he will give them a mark on their right hand, or on their foreheads" (Rev. 13:16). Many Old Believers of the early 18th century, who saw the Antichrist in Emperor Peter I, were wary of everything that came from him. In 1712, in a letter to Yakov Dolgorukov, Emperor Peter I depicted a cross-shaped sign on a drawing that should be pricked on the left hands of soldiers and rubbed with gunpowder. This measure was invented to make it easier to catch fugitive recruits. These recruitment spots on the left hand are also mentioned in the Senate decree of 1718. This sign, despite the fact that it was about the left hand, not the right, was identified by some Old Believers with the seal of the Antichrist. Later, including in Soviet times, some associated the seal of the Antichrist with a smallpox vaccination mark, a five-pointed star, a passport (especially among Old Believers - runners), etc. The three-fingered sign of the cross was also called the seal of the Antichrist. Now there is talk about the so-called chipping, about implanting microchips under the skin as the "seal of the antichrist", which will allow one to control the movement and all actions of a person.

The outstanding Pomor scholar Lev Feoktistovich Pichugin in his book "Answers to 24 Questions about the Antichrist and His Accusers, the Holy Prophets Enoch, Elijah, and John the Theologian" wrote the following in response to the question "What will be the seal of the Antichrist, and what image will be on it, and in what letters: Hebrew or Russian?" According to the instructions of Andrew of Caesarea (in the interpretation of the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse). The seal of the living God is the cross (in the Explanatory Apocalypse on page 38); so the seal of the antichrist is the seal of time 666. "Which will be received by those who do the works of the devil, and blaspheme Christ, depicting the image of the apostate beast, and inscribing this dishonorable name in their hearts, as honest" (in the interpretation of the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse, p. 65). As the Antichrist is an apostate, so his seal depicts apostasy. For the holy martyrs who suffered for Christ did not accept the seal, that is, his apostasy (in the commentary on the 20th chapter of the Apocalypse, p. 98). You see - the seal has neither Russian nor Hebrew letters, but is mentally inscribed on the apostates, imprinting their foreheads and right hands. As the seal of the living God is a sign of light - the Divine Cross, with which the faithful are sealed, so the seal of the enemy beast, the Antichrist, is recognized according to his deeds. For he seals the right hand "to cut off the effect of good deeds" and places his seal on the forehead, "to teach those deceived by deceit and darkness to be bold" (in the commentary on the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse by St. Andrew).

Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, writes of the mark of the beast: "And upon his forehead and upon his right hand shall be a mark, that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the name of the beast, and the number of his name: and his number is Six hundred and threescore and six; that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units; to restore all the apostasy that was for six thousand years. For in six days was this world made, and six thousand years shall antichrist work" (Book 5, Chapter 18, p. 659). For Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came upon the earth, because of idolatry, and antichrist will restore all the error of the idols. And the idol which Nebuchadnezzar set up was threescore cubits high, and six cubits broad; And Ananias, Azariah, and Misael, who did not worship this idol, were cast into the fiery furnace. For that idol was a premonition of the coming of the antichrist, and indicated that all men should worship him alone. (Book of Irenaeus, Chapter 5, Chapter 29). Do you see that the mark of the beast embraces the whole time of the existence of the world, and that the name of the apostate is written by deeds on the wicked and apostates, not by letters, but by apostasy and lawlessness, for slavish service, the mental idol of universal wickedness? Therefore understand that there will remain few of God's faithful who have not received the mark of the beast, like Noah in the natural law, and the three youths in the written law, and all the holy confessors in the law of grace; but the wicked apostates, who depict the mark of the beast by their deeds, will increase. And know that during the second glorious and terrible coming of Christ, all the chosen ones of God will be marked with the sign of the honest cross: which John the Evangelist calls the seal of the Living God (Book of Kirill, p. 200). Also, the antichrist will give something to seal those deceived by him.

The Large Catechism says about this: "For we already see many who do not accept the sign of the cross of Christ, that is, they do not place the lawful sign of the cross on their foreheads, and on their stomachs, and on their right shoulders, and on their left. If it is said that they do not accept this sign of the cross of Christ, then it is clear that they accept the seal of the Antichrist on their foreheads and on their right hands" (Large Catechism. L. 102). The book "On Faith" says this: "The number of the Antichrist is 666, a human number. Who knows, perhaps in 1666 his obvious forerunners or he himself will appear?" The author of this book lived shortly before the fulfillment of this number. For he saw with his own eyes that the scriptures about the Antichrist were fulfilled according to the prophecies: "After the thousandth year, when the year 595 was approaching, there was a complete apostasy of the Uniates from the holy Eastern Church to the Western heresy. And when the number 1666 years was fulfilled, then we too should fear the same thing. For the day of Christ is approaching, as the Apostle said. And should we not be ready? If anyone reaches those times (1666), then he will enter into battle with the devil himself" (Book "On Faith", Chapter 30). "A thousand years after the incarnation of the Word of God, Rome with all the Western countries fell away from the Eastern Church. In the year five hundred and ninety-fifth after the thousand, the inhabitants of Little Russia retreated to the Roman Catholic Church. This was the second separation of Christians from the Eastern Church. Then, in 1656, Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, at the request of Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, cursed the apostolic tradition - the seal of the true God - the two-fingered sign of the cross, and legalized another seal - the three-fingered sign of the cross with an oath thus: "With these, the first three great fingers, every Orthodox Christian must depict the sign of the cross on himself. And whoever does so according to the writings of Theodoret and the false tradition (with two fingers), is cursed" (Church History of Macarius).

This new tradition of the seal of the sign of the cross was confirmed by the Council of 1666, and those who remained under the old seal of the cross were all cursed. For the original of this curse and the legitimation of the new seal of the cross, see the book "Staff", part one, page 49. Also, the 22nd rule of the Council of 1666 eradicates the ancient apostolic sign of the cross and the writing about it (Historical Acts, vol. 5. Appendix on page 472). And for other innovations, see page 503, in the supplement to historical acts, in volume five. This phenomenon is evidence of the fulfillment of the number 1666, indicated in the sacred scriptures.

### **What changes did Nikon make to the seventh article of the Creed?**

The words "there is no end" were changed to "there will be no end." This introduced ambiguity, allowing people to think that the eternal Kingdom of Christ had not yet come with His incarnation, atoning sacrifice on the Cross and Resurrection, but would only come in the future. (This, in turn,

echoed the Jewish idea that Christ was not the Messiah, but the Messiah was to come in the future.) Here is what is written about this in the Old Believer book "The Shield of Faith" (1791): "In the new Creed, the present tense of Christ's kingdom is changed to the future: As the Archangel predicted in the Annunciation to the Mother of God before the birth of Christ: "His kingdom will have no end." The Archangel then spoke the truth, but it does not refer to the present time, but to that time. But now, when Christ has already been born, when He reigns and rules, then His kingdom has no end. And the all-blessed interpreters of the Gospel words, interpreting this place, no longer say: His (that is, Christ's) Kingdom will have no end, but there is no end. Both Chrysostom and Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, in their interpretation of the third chapter of the Gospel of Luke, assert so. Therefore, the Orthodox Church in the Creed says: "His Kingdom has no end." And those who now say in the future tense: "His Kingdom will have no end," are counted among the Jews awaiting the antichrist" ("Shield of Faith", question 116).

## **8. On the eighth article of the Creed. On the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit**

"And in the Holy Spirit, the true Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets."

### **What do we learn from the eighth article?**

We learn that the Holy Spirit is the true God and that the same glory and majesty befits Him with the Father and the Son.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and diversities of operations, but the same God who works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6.)

### **What is "life-giving"?**

That is, "the giver of life." This means that the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, gives life to creatures.

"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

### **From whom does the Holy Spirit proceed?**

In this regard, the eighth article clearly states: "Proceeding from the Father," which is based on the words of Scripture: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send you from the Father - the true Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, he bears witness of Me" (John 15:26).

The Catholics, however, introduced into the Symbol the heretical addition "filioque," that is, the teaching that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also "from the Son." The beginning of disagreements between the Western and Eastern Churches dates back to the 4th century. Already the Blessed Augustine gives an analogy that is not entirely fair, the possibility of distortion is outlined when he speaks of the unity of the Father and the Son, and the Spirit seems to remain on the sidelines. In the understanding of Catholics, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son as from a single cause, i.e. The hypostases of the Father and the Son are mixed into one Person.

Let me remind you that according to Orthodox teaching, essence (Divine) is a common property of the Persons, but at the same time each Person of the Trinity has its own personal properties, and these personal properties of the Hypostases cannot be mixed.

Western theologians not only do not distinguish between essence and hypostasis, but they do not distinguish between such concepts as Divine essences and Divine energies. Western theology, being in a state of heresy, cannot give true knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

Thus, "filioque" contradicts both the words of Christ Himself and the conciliar decrees (the Third Ecumenical Council, by its seventh rule, forbade adding or subtracting anything from the Creed). St. John Damascene writes: "We say of the Holy Spirit that He is from the Father, and we call Him the Spirit of the Father. But we do not say that the Spirit is from the Son" ("An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith." Book 1, Chapter 9).

We render equal worship and glorification to the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son.

### **How should we understand the words "who spoke through the prophets"?**

These words were added to denounce the false teachers who said that the Old Testament was not written by the Holy Spirit. We Christians should know that just as in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets, so in the New Testament He spoke through the apostles and evangelists. Therefore, the books of Holy Scripture are called "God-inspired."

"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke" (2 Peter 1:21).

### **Did the Holy Spirit reveal Himself to people in any other way?**

He revealed Himself: in the "vision of a dove" – in the Baptism of the Lord; in the form of a cloud – in the Transfiguration of the Lord; and finally, on the day of Pentecost, He descended upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

### **Do people have communication with the Holy Spirit even now?**

They do, as the Scripture says: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

### **How can we attain the Holy Spirit to dwell in us?**

Through prayer and the sacraments. Before the beginning of every service (and before the teaching) we read the prayer "O Heavenly King." This is a prayer to the Holy Spirit. We pray that He may come and dwell in us. In the 50th Psalm we pray with the words of the king and prophet David: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Lk. 11:13).

### **What are the main gifts of the Holy Spirit?**

As the prophet Isaiah and St. John the Evangelist say in Revelation, there are seven such gifts: the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of power, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of piety, and the spirit of the fear of God.

"A rod came forth from the root of Jesse, and the flower shall flourish: and the Spirit of God shall rest upon it, of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might; the Spirit of knowledge and piety shall fill it; and the Spirit of the fear of God" (Is. 11:1-3).

### **What changes did the heresiarch Nikon make to the eighth article of the Creed?**

Instead of calling the Holy Spirit the "True Lord," the word "true," used in the Creed for both the Father and the Son, was removed in the new text, and the Holy Spirit was simply called the Lord. The Greek text of the Creed uses one word: "«το κ̅β̅ριον», which means both concepts - the True Lord. The Old Church Slavonic translation was more complete, including both words, emphasizing the equal honor of the Holy Spirit with the other Persons of the Holy Trinity. The new translation destroyed this symmetry and confused people, suggesting that the Holy Spirit is no longer confessed as the true God.

The book "Shield of Faith" says: "In the new symbol about the Holy Spirit it is written: And in the Holy Spirit, the life-giving Lord, but the word: true is removed. In the divine scriptures, an angel or a holy man or some lord is called a lord, but not a true lord, because he is a creature, and not the Creator and True Lord. So in the new symbol, the Holy Spirit is written about as a creature, according to the evil Macedonian heresy. The holy fathers at the second council condemned the heretic Macedonius and anathematized him (Answer 116).

Likewise, in the prayer to the Holy Spirit, "Heavenly King," instead of "True Spirit," the new rites introduced "Spirit of truth." In this way, the Holy Spirit became, as it were, a "participant," i.e., part of some greater whole, an entity of a higher order – some "truth." Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the One Essence – God, above Whom there can be nothing.

## **9. On the ninth article of the Creed. The doctrine of the Church. What is the true Church?**

"And in one Holy Catholic (founded on councils) and Apostolic Church."

From the ninth article of the Creed we learn that we must recognize only the Apostolic Holy Church as true, as the Scripture teaches:

"For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. There is one faith, one baptism, one God; therefore there is one true Church" (Eph. 4:5).

From the ninth article of the Creed we also learn that: "there is one holy catholic and apostolic church of God, in one Spirit of Jesus Christ, in one faith and in one dogmas and holy mysteries. And in one head our Lord Jesus Christ and under one rank and a series of rules of the apostolic and ecumenical seven councils of the holy God-bearing fathers, pastors and teachers, that is, the holy popes, patriarchs and metropolitans, archbishops, bishops and the entire priestly rank. We learn that we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church, that is, we trust in the teachings and dogmas of the holy apostles and the holy ecumenical seven councils, and we do not believe in people" (Katich Bol., p. 118 rev.).

### **What is the Church?**

Our word "church" translates two Greek words at once: "Kiriaky" (literally "house of the Lord") and "Ecclesia" ("gathering", "union", "convocation").

In the New Testament and in the writings of the Holy Fathers, the word "Church" is used in several senses. In the most general sense, it is the union of all animated, endowed with reason and will, creations of God, i.e. Angels and people, Orthodox and unanimously believing in the One God in the Holy Trinity - the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and serving Him under the one head of the incarnate Son of God - the God-man Jesus Christ.

In a narrower sense, the Church is understood as a society of people who believe in Christ in the Orthodox way, united by the hierarchy founded by Christ through His apostles, and by fellowship in the holy sacraments and in prayer.

In an even narrower sense, the word "Church" is a local society of Orthodox Christians located in a certain country, region, city or village, an integral part of the Church of Christ (however, sometimes the Holy Fathers allow the name "church" for non-Orthodox societies).

And, finally, the church is called a house of prayer, a place of meeting of the Christian community.

However, the Holy Fathers themselves, as a rule, do not give precise definitions of the concept of "church". For them, the Church is the revelation of the Wisdom of God (Heb. 3:10), it is the mystery of God's love for people, the adoption of people by God and the brotherhood of people in God. They prefer to express the mystery of the Church not with dry definitions, but with symbolic names, images: "Body of Christ", "Bride of Christ", "New Jerusalem", "Dove of Christ", etc. In the New Testament, the



Church is compared to a vineyard or garden planted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Church is a vine and branches on it. Man is a branch grafted onto a common vine.

Another image is the image of the Shepherd Christ and the flock.

The Church is compared to a house, to a ship led by Christ through stormy waves. The Church is the pillar and confirmation of truth. Christ is the rock on which the Church stands.

In essence, the Church is the faithful simple people, as the holy Apostle Peter testifies: "As living stones built (by faith) into a spiritual temple" (1 Pet., 2:5).

St. John Chrysostom writes about the same thing in response to the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "For the Church is nothing else but a house built by our souls" (Homilies of the Apostles, p. 1681).

"What does the Church want - that God would dwell in this Church. For each of you is a Church" (Homilies of the Apostles, p. 1626).

St. Maximus the Confessor, honored on January 21, said: "Christ the Lord called the Catholic Church to be the right and saving confession of the faith" (Christian Ministries, Gen. 21).

Saint Chrysostom: "For the Church is not walls and a covering, but faith and life" (Margaret, p. 519).

He also says in his sermon on Pentecost: "Therefore, the Church is very dear to God, not the one built with walls, but the one fenced by faith"

Saint Isidore of Pylusia: "The gates of hell will not prevail against an irreproachable and true Church" (Works, part I, p. 214).

Saint Theodore the Studite: "The Church of God can consist of even three Orthodox Christians" (His Works, part I, p. 253).

In the book "On Faith" (chapter 2 on the holy Church): "For the church is the body of Christ, which was formed from the gathering of us faithful - people of every age and rank, the saints of God and the righteous and all the pious from the ages, and was called the church" (p. 22).

### **What is the foundation of the Church?**

The foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ. The Holy God Himself, through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, said: "Behold, I will lay for the foundation of Zion a precious stone, chosen, a precious cornerstone, a precious foundation, and he who believes in Him will not be ashamed" (Isaiah, ch. 28).

The Apostle Paul explains: "No one can lay another foundation than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (Rom., chapter 128).

### **What is the "Catholic and Apostolic" Church?**

"Large Catechism": "Question. What is the Catholic Church? Answer. The Catholic Church is that in which the dogmas of all the holy seven ecumenical councils are observed. It is glorified with sacred hymns and songs, and adorned with holy and divine icons. It was founded and established by the relics of the holy martyrs. In it all the faithful receive the most pure body and precious blood of Christ our God and thus become partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus it was handed down to us from the holy apostles and the holy God-bearing fathers, and therefore it is called the holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (chapter 25). The book "The Son of the Church" (1609) says: "In our Orthodox Christianity there is a holy and immaculate catholic and apostolic Church, which is sanctified by divine and sacred voices, and is all adorned and perfected and filled with all blessings according to the tradition of the holy fathers. And for this reason, pay attention to yourself, how you come to it, and enter it, and in which you stand and pray." The Western faiths "are not true and right": "their churches in the Latins, and in

the Germans, and in Poland, but not consecrated, not perfected, as the holy apostles and holy fathers commanded. But all the beauty of their churches the evil heretics robbed and stripped, and took away all its honor. "They do not consecrate it, they do not place a cross on it, they do not bring holy icons into it... they do not keep it pure, and... it is stripped of all church rules and adornments..." Thus, according to the Old Orthodox teaching, the true Church is the true image of heaven on earth, a temple where faithful Christians serve God together with the ranks of angels and saints (represented on icons), where the divinely inspired hymns of the holy fathers are sung, who transmitted, as much as possible to man, the singing of the heavenly powers. This is the likeness of the new Jerusalem, "the city of God coming down from heaven," into which, according to the Revelation of the holy Apostle John the Theologian, "nothing unclean shall enter" (Apocalypse, 21, 27). The Church of the heterodox and heretics, who have distorted the Holy Tradition, is deprived of this likeness. There is no beauty, order, rule or purity in it. This is the most obvious, the main difference between the true faith and "other faiths".

"And every Christian is the church of God" (Katich. Bol., p. 120 rev).

St. John Chrysostom calls the Church a pious family: "Let temple (of our family) be like a church, composed of men and women" (Prologue, April, day 12).

Simeon of Thessalonica indicates the catholic Church not from the ranks of the hierarchy, but from the true faith: "The catholic church is not the Roman and Jerusalem, nor the Constantinople and Antioch and Alexandria, but the catholic and one, and holy, and apostolic. "The Holy Mysteries are performed there by the Holy Spirit, keeping the words of the Apostles and truth" (Book of Simeon of Thessalonians, p. 48).

### **Can the Church exist without the priesthood?**

We find the answer to this question in the Holy Scriptures. The book of the prophet Isaiah contains a prophecy about the end of the priesthood: "The daughter of Zion will remain as a tent in a vineyard, and as a storehouse in a garden, and as a city surrounded (by the enemy)" (Isaiah, 1).

St. Hippolytus, Pope of Rome, gives the following interpretation of this passage: "Isaiah did not prophesy this about the Jews, nor about the city of Zion, but about the holy Church. Zion is the Church, that is, the bride, whom all the prophets showed to bring from the nations" (Great Council, p. 120).

The prophet Habakkuk also predicted: "For the fig tree will not yield fruit, and there will be no fruit in the vineyards, and the olive tree will not yield fruit, and the fields will not yield food, and the sheep will be poor in food, and there will be no oxen in the manger" (Hab., ch. 3).

According to the interpretation of the holy fathers, oxen here mean bishops, So Peter and Paul are called oxen: "Peter and Paul are the harnessed oxen of the church, who brought good gain to the world, taking the cross instead of a yoke" (Prologue, June, day 29, in the eulogy).

Divine Scripture calls church altars mangers, as evidenced by the instructive Gospel on the Nativity of Christ (f. 498 rev.).

From history we know that a thousand years after Christ, all the Western bishops, headed by the pope, fell into heresy and fell away from the Church of Christ. In 1595, the bishops, with the flock entrusted to them, fell into the heresy of the Latins in Little Russia. Finally, in 1666, the last Greek-Russian hierarchs also fell into heresy, becoming the last apostates from the holy traditions of the ancient Church of Christ. This is discussed in the 30th chapter of the book "On Faith". The Holy Scripture warns us, Old Orthodox Christians, not to be seduced by the external glitter of the impious heretics and not to deviate to their church to eternal perdition.

"Know well, says the Holy Scripture, the Church of God, and endure all attacks in it to the end. Beware of the assembly of demons, for the assembly of the wicked is also called the Church of God, but you flee from the Babylon of demons, that is, from the company of evil and wicked people, and God will receive you" (Large Catechism, ch. 25, p. 122 rev.). "Shield of Faith": "The Holy Church, in need and

circumstances, can exist not only without priests ..., but also without bishops, and those who are found in it can be saved. As the universal teacher Saint Athanasius the Great says about this [Book of Nikon the Black rock, word 7]: "Those who walk the sincere and life-giving path must cast out the eye, but not the sensory, but the intellectual eye, that is: if a bishop or presbyter, who are the eyes of the Church, live improperly and tempt people, it is necessary to reject them. It is better for us to gather in the house of prayer without them, than to fall with them, as with Anna and Caiaphas, into the fiery Gehenna. Likewise, the hand, which is the deacon, if it does something unworthily, let it be excommunicated from the altar. And the foot, which is the servant, if it runs wickedly into falsehood to receive property according to Gehazi (Gehazi was the servant of the prophet Elisha; having received from Naaman "by deception two talents of silver and two changes of clothing for the healing of Naaman from leprosy by the prophet Elisha, Gehazi was punished for greed with leprosy and removal from the prophet (2 Kings). - K.K.), it is fitting to remove this one from service, as an evil and senseless man, so that the church will be preserved without temptation." According to this, the divine Chrysostom, in his commentary on the sacred apostolic epistles, in the 34th homily to the Jews, says this: "For it is better to be led by none shepherd, than to be led by evil. The first may suffer, and may be saved, but the second will in every way fall into trouble, being led into a pit. How did Paul say: obey your leaders and submit? Did he really say to obey the evil ones? For the sake of faith, flee from such a shepherd and deny him. Not only if he is a man, but also an angel who came down from heaven. But if for the sake of life, do not test him."

About Saint Maximus the Confessor (Saint Maximus the Confessor lived in the 7th century. — K.K.). [Min. Chet., Gen. 21]: The heretics asked the saint: "To which church do you belong — Byzantine, or Roman, Antiochian, or Alexandrian, or Jerusalem? All these churches with their countries agree with us. If you are the Catholic Church, then be united with us." The blessed man wisely answered them, saying: Christ the Lord called the right confession of faith the Catholic Church, therefore He called Peter, who confessed it well, blessed. On this confession he promised to found the Church. They asked the saint: If the Latins begin to communicate with the patriarch, what will you do? The saint answered: Even if the whole world began to receive communion with the patriarch, I will not receive communion with the patriarch. I know the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul, who anathematizes even the angels if they preached anything different, brought in anything new."

Meletius, Patriarch of Alexandria, to the faithful Christians who were living in Little Russia and were being oppressed by evil pastors, said: It is better for you to go to church without bishops and priests, appointed by the devil, and preserve Orthodoxy, than to mock the church and trample Orthodoxy with bishops and priests, not called by God. It is not priests, or bishops, or metropolitans who save us: but the mystery of our Orthodox faith and the keeping of God's commandments can save us." According to this, it is written in the Book "On Faith": "If the priest abides by the paternal orders, it is fitting to render him the honor that the fathers commanded, but if he does not abide, he must be fled, like a wolf and a corrupter, that is, a perverter of the church." (Sheet 146.)

The Holy Gospel speaks of the priesthood as follows: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. (Matthew 5:13-14).

By "salt" we must understand the priesthood, which contains the word of teaching. If the salt is spoiled, i.e. accepts teachings alien to the Holy Church of Christ, then all that remains is to "have salt in yourself," as the Savior says: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace among yourselves" (Mark 9:50).

St. John Chrysostom speaks of this even more clearly: "If the bishop is not among his flock to guide them, let the sheep themselves take upon themselves the duties of a shepherd. The timid, who cite this pretext, avoiding meetings, betray the duty of faith." In this case, having fulfilled the commandments of God, the faithful will find the Lord Himself as their shepherd.

"I will feed My sheep and will not entrust them to bad shepherds" (Works of Blessed Jerome. Part II. P. 110).

## **Will the Holy Catholic Church remain until the end of time and will the saving sacraments be performed in it?**

In the commentary on the 12th chapter of the prophet Daniel, our commentators say: "Truly the Lord will preserve His church to the end, but the method of preservation should not be judged by the feelings of the flesh, since the church will be like a dead corpse until the resurrection itself" (Interpretation of the prophet Daniel, part 7, p. 208 rev. In part 2).

"The true church is that which endures persecution, and not that which expels others. And as at the time of the coming of Christ the flock of God's chosen was small, so also at the coming of the Antichrist the faithful will decrease, and the evil-believers will increase" (Book "On Faith", ch. 2, p. 29, 30).

So, according to all that has been stated, we, the Old Orthodox Christians, confess and maintain the true Church of Christ, being without a visible priesthood for a good reason, because after 1666 the priesthood actually fell into heresy.

According to the words of Divine Scripture: "The shepherds will be wolves and the priests will love lies" (The Great Council, p. 122). "In the holy place there will be an abomination of desolation" (Dan. 9; Matt., chapter 99).

"Understand the Holy Place as Jerusalem, as Matthew writes. Cyril of Jerusalem says, - this is the highest apostolic church. Understand that the abomination of desolation will be on every altar - the holy place of the Christian church, where the priests offer sacrifice to God, consecrate bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ" (Book of Kirill, p. 54). These prophecies came true: the abomination of desolation truly stood on the holy place, and the ancient altars were desecrated by heretics.

"The Shield of Faith": "The Ecumenical Teacher Saint Chrysostom says that [from the Life of Saint John Chrysostom, page 116] the Church is the whole people of the faithful. Likewise, in the preface to the homilies of the Acts of the Holy Apostles: the Church of Christ is defined as the people of the faithful and Orthodox. The most wise Maximus the Confessor spoke thus about the Holy Church to the heretics (monophylites) [Min. Chet., Gen. 21]: "Christ the Lord called the right and saving confession of faith the catholic church. For where Christ is called, there the catholic church meets." We confess, then, that this holy and catholic church will be until the end of the age. About it blessed Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria [Annunciation of Luke, chapter 107], on the words of the Gospel he says thus: "For this Christian generation will not pass away. Heaven and earth will change, but My words and My Gospel will not be destroyed, but remain. Even if everything moves, faith in Me will not become scarce." And here he shows that the Church is more honorable than all creatures. For even if creation changes, those who are faithful in the Church and its words and the Gospel will never change. The same is said by the Venerable Nikon of Montenegro [Tacticon. Pos. 22]: "The catholic church is not walls, but correct teachings, and the keeping of divine rules, and the rules of the holy councils and holy apostles. As the Lord said to the supreme apostle: you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Do you see what a catholic church is? For Peter himself is great. In the past, churches were destroyed many times by the pagans, but the laws and traditions of the divine fathers, and the divine rules remain indestructible forever among those who hold them." This holy church (that is, the faithful people) will remain until the end of the age, with whom Christ the Savior promised to remain until the end of the age, but only on the condition of keeping the divine laws. "I am with you (He said) always, even to the end of the age." As for the holy sacraments performed by bishops and priests, some are considered necessary for salvation, while others are not obligatory, such as the consecration of chrism and the ordination of priests. These optional sacraments cannot be performed until the end of time, since the only performers of all of them are bishops..." (Answer 9).

## **Who is the head of the Church?**

Since the Church was founded by Christ, then, according to Orthodox teaching, the only head of the Church is Jesus Christ Himself: "He put all things under His feet; and He gave Him head over all the

churches, which is His body" (Eph. 1:22). "And He is the head of the body, the church: He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

Christ guides the Church as a good helmsman on a ship, and therefore we should not be afraid of the waves of the sea of life. We are under His tireless, gracious care, which leads us to the harbor of our hope. As Apostle Paul writes: "Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

St. John Chrysostom explains these words thus: "Christ is one head, the faithful are one body. What is one body? "who are everywhere throughout the universe, faithful, and those who are, and those who have been, and those who will be."

### **Should we submit to the Church and listen to its teachings?**

We should submit to the Church, as Christ Himself commanded: "And if one disobey the Church, he will be thou as a heathen man and a publican" (Matt. 18:17). The Church of the living God, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, the Church must punish its members who do not listen to its teachings: at councils, the Church must impose a ban or excommunicate for fault.

### **What are the commandments in relation to the Church?**

There are many such commandments, but the main nine are:

- 1) Christians must listen to or perform all church services according to Christian custom: Vespers, Compline, Midnight Service, Matins, Hours. They must show special zeal on holidays and Sundays. If a Christian, being healthy and not on the road, does not perform these services, then he sins gravely.
- 2) Observe church fasts. The first is before the Nativity of Christ from November 15 to December 25 (according to the old style); the second is Great Lent (in memory of the fast of Christ Himself forty days and forty nights); the third is the Apostolic Fast ( Peter's Fast), which begins after the week of All Saints until June 29 in memory of the fast of the Apostles before the preaching of the Gospel; the fourth begins on August 1 until the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos (August 14). Fasting is also established on Wednesday and Friday of each week, according to the rule of the Holy Apostles. We must also fast: September 14 - in memory of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross of the Lord; August 29 - in memory of the beheading of the honest head of the Holy Prophet John the Baptist; the eve of the Nativity of Christ and the Epiphany. 3) Respect spiritual fathers, mentors, as pastors.
- 4) We must confess four times a year, and whoever does not go to confession even once a year (according to church rules) falls under an oath and excommunication from the Church.
- 5) The Church forbids reading heretical books, joining heretics and listening to their teachings. Those who are not sufficiently taught the Holy Scriptures should not enter into disputes with heretics, as the apostle says: "A man who is an heretic after the first and second admonition, deny" (Titus 3:10).
- 6) Pray for the civil and spiritual authorities. We must also pray to the Lord God for the conversion of pagans, heretics and apostates to our true Holy Church.
- 7) The seventh commandment teaches that we should fast with the advice and command of the spiritual fathers, and perform prayers, alms, and serve our neighbors.
- 8) Not to take for our own needs everything that belongs to and is given to the church, but to use it for the beautification of the church, for schools, for strangers, for the poor and captives, to watch over who needs what and to help the poor. This is what the ancient Christians did in the times of the Apostles.
- 9) The ninth commandment forbids marriages on unspecified days and command not to enter into forbidden family marriages, not to visit places of entertainment and not to adhere to bad customs.

## **10. On the Tenth Article of the Creed. The Sacrament of Baptism.**

### **The Teaching on the Seven Sacraments of the Church.**

"I confess one baptism for the remission of sins."

#### **What is baptism?**

Baptism is a sacrament in which the believer, through threefold immersion in water, dies to carnal life and is spiritually introduced into the Kingdom of Heaven. When a person is immersed in water in baptism, he invisibly washes away original sin.

#### **How many sacraments were there in the Church and what were they?**

Seven sacraments: 1) Baptism, 2) Chrismation, 3) Priesthood, that is, Ordination. 4) Divine Communion, that is, the Eucharist, 5) Confession or Repentance, 6) Legal marriage, that is, Wedding. 7) Unction.

#### **What are the differences in these sacraments?**

The Great Catechism divides the sacraments into those that are "essentially necessary for salvation" and those that are "necessary for salvation": "There are three sacraments that are essentially necessary for salvation: baptism, communion, and repentance. There are two that are necessary for salvation: holy myrrh and unction. Marriage is necessary for those who use it, for the sake of help and protection from fornication, and it is also necessary for the sake of childbearing and the fulfillment of the Church of God" (Great Catechism, p. 355, 356).

The division of the sacraments is self-evident: the three first and main sacraments – baptism, communion, and repentance – are absolutely necessary for the salvation of man. The Lord Himself said about baptism: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 8).

Jesus Christ also said about communion at the Last Supper: "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said: take, eat, this is my body. And taking the cup, and giving thanks, he gives it to them, saying: drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 108).

Likewise about repentance: "But unless you repent, you will likewise perish" (Luke 70).

We, Old Orthodox Christians, confess all seven sacraments of the Church, but in times of need at the present time we hold only the main ones, without which it is impossible to be saved.

The same is said in the "Shield of Faith": "What mysteries and how many can the Holy Church hold in time of need, without the presence of bishops and priests, is also stated in the "Pomorskie Answers", in the 101st, 102nd and 103rd. In the 101st it was shown that the Holy Church can exist in time of need even without the priesthood, and in the absence of bishops and priests and common Christians can baptize. In the 102nd it was testified about baptism from common people, and about confession from the unordained. But more than these two sacraments in time of need without the priesthood are impossible to perform. [Katic. small, sheet 35]: "No one who is not ordained can be a performer of the sacraments, except for the most necessary ones." The necessary sacraments for salvation are determined to be two [Book of the Seven sacraments]: baptism and repentance, as the Eastern teacher Gabriel, Archbishop of Philadelphia, testifies" (answer 10).

The Pomor Answers and the Shield of Faith cite many cases from the history of the Church when baptism was performed not only by unordained men and women, but some, out of necessity, even baptized themselves. We will mention only the most famous cases. During the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles, who were not ordained, baptized, as St. John the Evangelist testifies: "Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples" (John 11). Apostle Paul was baptized by Ananias, who did not

have the priesthood. Saint Mariamia, the sister of Saint Apostle Philip, baptized many. Saint Martyr Galaktion baptized his slave Eutolmius. Saint Martyr Sozont baptized many. Saint Athanasius the Great baptized children in childhood. The Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles First Martyr Thekla, the Martyr Drosida, the Martyr Porphyry, and the Venerable Theophanes baptized themselves.

### **What can be said about the sacrament of communion?**

The sacrament of communion has the right to be performed only by a true-believing priest ordained by a true Orthodox bishop. But since recently there are no true-believing priests and bishops left, the question arises: how can Christians now accept this great sacrament?

We find numerous testimonies to this in the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition. In the absence of priesthood, for valid reasons, believers and Christians living in purity partake of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in an undoubtedly spiritual way. In the book "The Good News of the Gospel" it is said: "However, one can eat the Flesh and drink the Blood of the Master not only in the sacrament of Communion, but also in another way. The flesh is eaten by the one who goes the way of (spiritual) labor. For the flesh is indigestible, just as the labor is very difficult. The contemplative drinks the Blood like wine, which gladdens the heart. For contemplation is not connected with labor and is even a relief from labor, similar to drinking, since drinking is lighter than food" (Blessed John, p. 106).

In the second sermon of St. Gregory the Theologian on Easter he says: "Thus each of us in the house, according to virtue, partakes of the Flesh of Jesus. For each has his own Lamb - Jesus Christ, as much as each can contain, and partakes of Him according to the measure of each one's faith and the grace given by the Spirit" (Great Council, p. 687). St. Isidore of Pylus writes: ... although the sacred rite of the bloodless sacrifice is performed by those who are allowed to offer this sacrifice, nevertheless, each Christian is appointed a priest of his own body, not so that the unordained one may assume the right of authority over his subjects, but in order that, having subjected his vices to his own power, he may prepare his body for the temple or sanctuary of purity" (Works of Isidore of Pylus, part 2, pp. 129, 130).

Saint John Chrysostom in his homilies on the epistles of the Apostle Paul says: "For we have received the kingdom, and we become priests, offering our bodies as a sacrifice (present the members of your body as a living sacrifice, pleasing to God); at the same time, we are also appointed prophets: for what eye has not seen and ear has not heard, these are revealed to us" (Apostolic Homilies, p. 1159). Saint Ephraim the Syrian in his homily on judgment, on love and on repentance writes: "Be the church of God, and the Most High God will dwell in you, for the soul, having God in itself, is called the holy and pure church, and the divine mysteries are served in it" (Homily 83, p. 196).

### **How can the Divine mysteries of sacrifice be accomplished in a true Christian?**

Saint Macarius explains this thus: "The human body is the church of God – and the heart of man is the throne of God" (Nikon of Montenegro, word 63, p. 568).

Saint Ephraim the Syrian also writes on this: "This is wondrous, my brothers, very wondrous, my beloved, incomprehensible to those on high and ineffable to those below. He who is inaccessible to any mind enters the heart and dwells in it, He who is hidden from the fiery angels is found in the heart. The earth cannot bear His steps, but a pure heart becomes His abode. He embraces the heavens with the palm of His hand, and one span of space is His dwelling. If all creation spreads out, it will not contain Him within its boundaries, but if He finds a heart, then even a small heart will contain Him. God chooses a small place in man for His dwelling, and man becomes the temple of God, in which He abides and dwells. The soul is His temple, and the heart is the holy altar on which praise, glorification and sacrifices are offered. The priest is the spirit that stands and officiates there" (Works of Ephraim the Syrian, part 4, p. 308). As is our love for Christ and desire for holy communion, so is our hope for the communion of the flesh and blood of Christ.

## **What innovations did Nikon introduce into the sacraments of the Church?**

Nikon introduced innovations into each of the seven sacraments of the Church, but baptism and confession were distorted the most.

In violation of the 50th rule of the Holy Apostles, the New Believers introduced the practice of pouring and even sprinkling, borrowing it from the Catholics. Feofan Prokopovich even wrote a justifying treatise in which he tried to prove the truth of pouring. Now from some New Believers (including from their highest authorities) one can hear that baptism should be done only by three immersions, but the question arises: how have they been baptizing for all these three hundred years? Can we even say that this very first of the Christian sacraments has been preserved among them? Of course not. It has not been preserved by those Old Believers who accepted unbaptized New Believers-priests. It has not been preserved by those Bespopovtsy who accepted into their fellowship Nikonians without true Old Orthodox baptism. The only ones who preserved the true apostolic baptism were the Old Believers-Pomors and Old Pomors.

The new rites introduced important semantic changes into the text of the baptismal rite itself. Here, the text was truly corrupted. Much has been written about this in the "Pomor Answers" and "Shield of Faith".

As for the rite of confession, Andrei Dionisievich notes: if in old printed books the rite of confession was set out on 40 sheets, then in newly printed ones - only on 4! The rite was significantly shortened, and the very essence of confession was changed, so that in the Nikonian church confession turned from a sacrament into a formal police procedure, with the help of which dissenting Old Believers were identified.

## **11. On the eleventh article of the Creed. On the resurrection of the dead.**

"I look for the resurrection of the dead."

From this article of the Creed we learn that there must necessarily be a resurrection of the dead, both good and sinners.

"Do not marvel at this: for the hour is coming, and all who are in the graves will hear his voice, and will come forth; they who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they who have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

All the dead will again be united with their bodies and will be resurrected, but their bodies will already be immortal, as the Apostle Paul says: "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

### **What will happen to those who are still alive when God's Judgment comes?**

The present gross bodies of those who remain alive will be changed in the twinkling of an eye into spiritual and immortal ones, as it is said in Scripture: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed quickly, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

At the same time, with the Second Coming of Christ, our corruptible world will also be transformed into an incorruptible one. "According to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

### **What is the state of the souls of the dead before the Last Judgment?**

The souls of the righteous await eternal bliss, and the souls of sinners - eternal torment. But man will receive a full reward and complete condemnation only after the Second Coming of Christ into the world.



In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus Christ Himself said that Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom after death.

### **How can we help the souls of our deceased relatives and friends who are awaiting torment?**

We can help them with our prayers for them, especially with conciliar prayer, as well as with alms for their souls. According to St. Basil the Great, the Lord accepts our prayers and sacrifices for those in hell in order to ease their torment and achieve their complete liberation.

## **12. On the Twelfth Article. On the Eternal Afterlife**

“And the life of the world to come, Amen.”

This article speaks of the future life, which will come after the General Judgment of God. The righteous in the future life will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven and will rejoice and be comforted beyond measure, being blessed together with God and all His saints, while sinners will be tormented eternally together with the devil in Gehenna.

“We see therefore now as in a mirror in a dim light, but then face to face. “Now we see as in a mirror, darkly, divining, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12).

### **What will be the joy and comfort of the righteous in the Kingdom of Heaven?**

It is difficult for us, carnal people, to imagine this. The concept of "pleasure" is associated with the concept of physical pleasure for many of us. This is how Muslims, for example, imagine Paradise (the righteous eat and drink there, beautiful girls serve them, etc.). But the Holy Scriptures speak of a completely different pleasure for the righteous in Paradise.

"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

"In the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30).

### **Will the bliss be the same for all the righteous and the punishment the same for all the sinners?**

No, not the same, as the Apostle Paul says: “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for the star abounds in glory to the star. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:41-42).

The Old Believer book “Mirror of the Mysteries and the End of the World” says the following about this: “Read and understand that the righteous will have a difference in glory, the Lord Himself says about this in the Gospel: In My Father’s house are many mansions (John 47). What do many mansions mean, if not a difference in the glory of the saints? Each will receive glory and honor from God according to his worth, for there are many ranks of saints. But even if the faces are different and the abodes are many, they are all adorned with the ineffable beauty of the glory of God, shining brighter than the many-luminous stars. And all the righteous with all the Heavenly Powers, united in love, will sing praises in unison to the All-Wise Creator God and their Maker. And they will see God their Creator face to face in all His being and majesty, to the extent that they can contain it.”

Likewise, sinners will be punished in accordance with the sins they have committed. This is discussed in detail in the revelation that the disciple of St. Basil the New Gregory was granted ("Gregory's vision"), as well as in the writings of other holy fathers.

## Section II.

### On Hope

#### What is hope?

St. John Climacus writes: "Hope is enrichment with invisible riches; hope is the undoubted possession of a treasure even before receiving the treasure. Hope is confidence in labors, it is the door of love; it kills despair, it is the pledge of future blessings" (Ladder, 30, 29-30).

Hope is the true peace of heart with confidence in the Lord God, that He cares for our eternal salvation and grants everything that we ask for with hope and faith in Him.

"Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense" (Heb. 10:35).

"For we were saved in hope. But hope that is seen is no longer hope; for what does one hope for if one sees?" (Rom. 8:24).

As the Holy Scripture says, our hope is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1).

#### Is it possible to acquire hope and how?

The Scripture says that hope is acquired through prayer. Jesus Christ Himself connects hope with prayer in these words: "Whatever you ask the Father in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

Also in the Gospel of Luke, in the parable of the unjust judge, the Lord says that we must always pray and not lose heart. "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God and did not regard man. And there was in that city a widow; and she came to him and said, 'Avenge me from my adversary.' But for a long time he would not. And afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, so that she will not come and bother me any more.' And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge says? Will not God avenge His own elect, who cry out to Him day and night, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Yet when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?' (Luke 18:2-8).

And in another place: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?" (Matt. 7:7-11).

#### What is prayer?

According to the words of St. Nilus the Faster, "prayer is a conversation of the mind with God," or "the ascent of the mind to God." Or, as it is said in the "Textbook of the Law of God" by I. N. Zavoloko, "prayer is a reverent appeal of our mind and heart to God and a spiritual conversation with Him." In this case, we turn to God with the hope that we will receive what we ask for. As St. Basil the Great says, "prayer is a request for blessings addressed by the pious to God. But one must not conclude prayer in words alone, but rather in a spiritual, prayerful disposition. And one must always pray, on every occasion."

And here are the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Prayer is a great weapon, a great defense, a great treasure, a great haven, a safe refuge, if only we approach the Lord with a cheerful soul and collected thoughts, not giving any access to the enemy of our salvation" (30th homily on the Book of Genesis).

### **What kinds of prayers are there?**

There are the following types of prayers: 1) praises (when we glorify God - "Glory to Thee, our God"; "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"; "Glory to God in the highest"; "Gentle light"; "Praise the Lord, my soul"; "I will exalt Thee, O my God" (Psalm 144), etc.), 2) thanksgiving (when we thank God for the blessings He sends - "Having remained the day, I thank Thee, Lord"; "Having risen from sleep"; "What shall we bring Thee, O Christ (on the Nativity of Christ), etc.), 3) petitions (when we ask God for something - "Heavenly King", "Our Father", the Jesus Prayer, etc.).

### **When should we pray?**

St. Apostle Paul writes: "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). We must always pray: in the morning, after rising from sleep, and in the evening, before going to bed, before and after eating, before the beginning and end of each task. "Daring prayer is the light of the mind and heart, an unquenchable, unceasing light" (St. Ephraim the Syrian). "What the light of the sun is for the body, so is prayer for the soul" (St. John Chrysostom).

The same St. John Chrysostom writes: "Let us always resort to God and ask Him for everything. There is nothing equal to prayer: it makes the impossible possible, the difficult easy, the inconvenient convenient. Blessed David also performed it, and therefore he said: "Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous judgments" (Psalm 118:164). But night prayer is especially beneficial, when, according to the words of St. John Chrysostom, "no one disturbs, when the mind is calm, when there is great silence and no excitement in the house, because no one hinders us from engaging in prayer and does not distract us from it, when an agitated soul can thoroughly express everything to the Physician of souls. If blessed David, the king and prophet, although burdened with many affairs and clothed in purple and diadem, nevertheless said of himself: At midnight I arose to confess the judgments of Thy righteousness (Psalm 118:62), then what shall we say, who, although we spend a private and free life from affairs, nevertheless do not do what he did? Since during the day he had many cares, affairs and worries and he did not find time convenient for prayer, therefore the time of rest, which others spend in sleep, lying on soft beds and tossing and turning, this time the king, bound by such cares, used for prayer, conversed alone with God and, offering sincere and fervent prayers, received what he desired" (30th homily on the Book of Genesis). "The marketplace is a war, daily affairs are a battle, a commotion and a storm. Therefore we need weapons, and prayer is a great weapon; we need favorable winds, we need to be knowledgeable in everything, so as to spend the time of the day without shipwrecks and wounds; many underwater rocks are encountered daily, and often our ship is wrecked and drowns; therefore we need to pray, especially in the morning and at night ... So, let every night be an all-night vigil for us; let us try lest, going out during the day, we be subjected to ridicule and - oh, if only ridicule! But before us sits at the right hand of the Father Himself, the Author of the Asceticism, listening attentively, whether we say something indecent or unnecessary; for He is the Judge not only of our deeds, but also of our words. Let us, beloved, be vigilant all night: if we want, then we too will have judges; with each of us there is an angel. Meanwhile, we sleep soundly all night, and - oh, if only this!" (14th homily on the Epistle to the Hebrews).

### **Where can we pray?**

We must pray in every place – at home, on the road, at work. This is how the enemy's temptation is overcome. If it is not possible to pray out loud, we must pray silently, mentally. In this case, as the Holy Fathers write, we must "watch our eyes," that is, not look around, but keep our eyes down, so as not to be distracted and avoid the enemy's snares.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "Whether you are at the washstand, pray; whether you are on the road or in bed, and wherever you are, pray. You are the temple of God: do not look for a place. All that is needed is a spiritual disposition... God is always near" (Part 3 of the homily on passages from the Holy Scriptures). And in another place: "Let us not say in our defense that the house of prayer is far away: the grace of the Spirit has made us ourselves temples of God, if only we are vigilant; therefore, it is very easy for us to pray in everything. Our worship is not like that of the Jews, which had much that was sensual and required many rites. There the worshipper had to go up to the temple, and buy a turtledove, and bring wood and fire, and take a knife, and stand before the altar, and perform many other ordinances; but here none of this is necessary, but wherever you are, you have with you the altar, and the knife, and the sacrifice, because you yourself are both the priest, and the altar, and the sacrifice. Wherever you are, you can set up an altar everywhere; only show a cheerful will, and the place will not hinder you, nor will time hinder you. No, even if you do not bend your knees, do not beat your breast, and do not stretch out your hands to heaven, but only show a fervent soul, then you will do everything necessary for prayer. A woman can also, sitting at her spinning wheel or weaving, gaze with her mind at heaven and ardently call upon God; a husband can also, going out into the square or going about his business, offer fervent prayers; another, sitting in a workshop and sewing leather, can lift up his soul to the Lord; a servant can also offer sincere and fervent prayer while buying, going up, going down, and working in the kitchen – God does not disdain place, He requires only one thing: a fervent heart and a chaste soul" (4th Conversation on Anna).

However, the most powerful collective prayer is in the church. The church is a holy place dedicated to God – it is the house of God. "They will make me a sanctuary," said the Lord God, "and I will dwell in it" (Ex. 25:8). Both the external appearance of the church and its internal structure dispose to prayer, strengthen our feeling of faith. "What is colder than stone?" asks St. Joseph Volotsky, - but if we strike stone against stone, sparks will fly. All the more so when our souls unite in prayer, it will be strong and fiery." This is what St. John Chrysostom says about conciliar prayer: "At home, of course, we can pray, but not pray as in church, where a unanimous voice rises to God."

### **Does prayer necessarily involve the pronunciation of words?**

Not necessarily. There is prayer without words, mental prayer, heartfelt prayer, that is, internal. Prayer pronounced with words is called oral - external.

Oral prayer can also be without internal prayer, when a person praying pronounces words without zeal. However, such prayer only angers God.

"This people draws near to Me, and with their lips and lips they honor Me, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me" (Matthew 15:8-9).

St. John Chrysostom writes about this: "We all pray, but not all before God. Whose lips senselessly pronounce words, and whose soul wanders everywhere: at home and in the square, can such a person say about himself that he prays before God? "He who has completely collected his soul and has nothing in common with the earth, but has moved to heaven itself and has banished every human thought from his soul..." (2nd Conversation about Anna) prays before the Lord.

But even internal prayer alone without external prayer is not enough; we must glorify God in our souls and our bodies, "which belong to God." According to King David, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise" (Psalm 50). And therefore the Lord Himself depicted His prayer with words and bodily movements – bowing His knees and face to the ground and raising His eyes to heaven.

From the "Ancient Patericon": "Question 13. How can we always pray, since the body is weak for service? Answer. Not only standing during prayer is called prayer, but always – whether you eat, drink, or work – not to lag behind in prayer. Therefore the Apostle said: Pray with all prayer and supplication (Eph. 6:18). For when you are not distracted by talking with someone, pray to yourself with prayer. Question 14. What prayer should a monk pray? Answer. Our Father, Who art in heaven" (Ancient Patericon, Ch. 23).

## **How should we pray and what prayer can serve as a model?**

We must approach prayer with humility and reverence, we must pray without any hypocrisy. During prayer, we must not think about anything extraneous, much less talk.

The Savior Himself speaks about how we should pray: "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, do not babble vainly, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not like them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. Pray then thus: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen"; (Matthew 6:5-13). The prayer "Our Father", which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught His apostles to pray, is also called the Lord's Prayer.

## **How is the Lord's Prayer divided?**

According to the ancient books (Large and Small Catechism), the Lord's Prayer is divided into the preface (invocation), seven petitions and doxology.

"Our Father, who art in heaven.

1. Hallowed be thy name.
2. Thy kingdom come.
3. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
4. Give us this day our daily bread.
5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
6. And lead us not into temptation.
7. But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

## **Calling**

With these words we address the Heavenly Father. The Scripture says: "But as many as received Him, to them He will give power to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name;" (John 1:12).

"Do not call for yourselves a father on earth: for one is your Father, Who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9).

God is the Father of all Christians, and we are all His children and brothers among ourselves. Therefore, we must all love each other, care for each other, and pray for each other, according to the words of the Apostle James: "Pray for one another, that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

Why, when addressing the omnipresent God, do we say "Who art in heaven"? Because, although God is omnipresent, His main presence is in heaven and His throne is there.

As the psalmist David says, "The Lord has prepared His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 102).

## **First Petition**

In the first petition we ask God that His holy name be hallowed in us forever. And in order for it to be always hallowed in us, we must live piously, according to God's commandments, spend our lives in good deeds and prayers.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

If we live impiously and lawlessly, then the name of God is not glorified, but blasphemed in us.

"For because of you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles" (Rom. 2:24).

Blessed Augustine, examining this petition in a teaching addressed to the catechumens, writes: "So, what did the Lord Jesus Christ teach us to ask of the Father who is in Heaven? "Hallowed be thy name." What benefit do we ask of God when we say, "Hallowed be thy name"? For it cannot happen that His name is not holy. The name of God is always holy; therefore we pray that what is always holy may be sanctified in us. The name of God will be sanctified in you when you receive Baptism, but even after Baptism you will pray for this, so that what you have received may abide in you" (On the Lord's Prayer, 3).

## **Second Petition**

In this petition we ask that God not allow sin and the devil to reign in the world and in our body, but that the Lord Himself would reign. We also ask God to help us become Christians not only in name but also in our lives.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Rom. 6:12-13).

At the same time, the Kingdom of God comes, as the Scripture says, internally, secretly:

"The kingdom of God does not come with observation, for behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

Saint Augustine writes: "Whether we ask or not, the Kingdom of God will come, therefore we ask that (the Kingdom) which will come for all the saints, may come for us also, that God may number us among the saints for whom His Kingdom will come?" (On the Lord's Prayer, 4).

## **Third Petition**

In the third petition we ask God that everything that happens to us happens according to His holy will. And God's will is known through God's teaching and His commandments.

"Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me; and whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

The angels who are in heaven do the will of God and continually glorify Him. We ask God that Christians on earth, like the heavenly angels, lovingly fulfill His holy will.

Blessed Augustine writes: "As the angels serve You in heaven, so we will serve You on earth. The holy angels who love God obey Him, do not sin before Him, and fulfill His commands. Therefore, we pray that we too fulfill the commandments of God in love. The words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" can be understood in another way. Heaven in us is the soul, the earth in us is the body. As we have fulfilled Thy commandments, so may our flesh be obedient to us, so that because of the discord between the flesh and the spirit we do not turn out to be less zealous in fulfilling the commandments of God... The words, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" - are also understood in this way: Heaven

is the believers who have clothed themselves in the image of the heavenly man, that is, Christ. Unbelievers, who bear the image of the earthly man, are called the earth. Therefore, when we say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we pray to our Good Father: that unbelievers may believe as believers. Thus we learn to pray for our enemies" (On the Lord's Prayer, 5).

#### **Fourth petition**

In the fourth petition we ask God for food for both the body and the soul. We ask for daily bread for the body (i.e., necessary for our existence), meaning food and drink, clothing and shelter, without which a person cannot live, for this day, as much as we need now, and we do not remember the future.

"Do not worry about the morrow, for the morrow will worry about the things of itself. Sufficient for the day is the trouble of its own" (Matt. 6:34).

We ask for spiritual bread for the soul, secret bread, by which the soul lives. What kind of bread is this? Christ Himself says about this bread:

"I am the bread of life, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I have given for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

Therefore, spiritual bread is hearing the word of God. We ask for this bread for our soul, the word of God, without which the soul cannot live.

Blessed Augustine writes: "Do we ask the Father for the necessary sustenance for the body, designating by bread all that is necessary, or do we understand by daily bread that which you receive from the altar (i.e. Holy Communion. - K.K.)

Bread is necessary in this age, when we are prone to hunger. When another life comes and hunger subsides, will we need to ask for bread? And if we mean the bread which, as I said, we receive from the altar, then again it is good to pray that God will give it to us. For what should we pray for, if not to keep from ourselves all that evil which separates us from this (Holy) Bread? The word of God, which is daily proclaimed, is also bread. For, if it is not bread for the stomach, is it not bread for the soul? When this life is past, we will not seek the bread which hunger seeks; there will be no need to receive the Sacrament of the altar, for we will become one with Christ, whose Body we now receive; there will be no need for the words which we now speak to you to be spoken, nor for the codex (of Holy Scripture) to be read, for we will see Him Who is the Word of God, by Whom "all things... began to be" (John 1:3), by Whom the angels are nourished, enlightened, made wise, not seeking words of evasive speech, but drinking in the One Word, crying out praises from the abundance and not failing in doxologies. "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house: they will continually praise You" (Ps. 83:5), says the psalmist" ("On the Lord's Prayer," 6).

#### **The Fifth Petition**

In the fifth petition we ask God to forgive us our sins, just as we forgive those who have sinned against us, according to the words of Christ:

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

Sins are called "debts" because, not fulfilling the law of the Lord and all that He has commanded, we remain debtors before His justice.

The words "as we forgive our debtors" require of us that when we approach prayer, we have only love for our neighbors, as the Gospel requires.

"If then you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

But what should I do if the one who is offended by me refuses to be reconciled with me? Scripture answers that we must be reconciled with him in our hearts:

"If it be possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

In his commentary, Saint Augustine writes: "The following petition also applies to the present life: "And forgive us our debts." In Baptism, all our debts, that is, sins, are forgiven you, absolutely all of them. But since no one can live here without sin – for no one can live on this earth, if not without a great sin, because of which we are cut off from the (Holy) Bread, then without any sins at all, and we can receive Baptism only once – then this prayer is given to us as a source of daily purification, so that our sins are forgiven daily, but only if we forgive our debtors." So, my brothers, I warn you: you will be children of God, and not of some great man. Will the head of the province deign to adopt any of you? But God's grace makes all His children" (On the Lord's Prayer, 7).

### **The Sixth Petition**

In the sixth petition we ask God that when the devil tempts us, He would drive him away and not give us the opportunity to fall into sin, since we can do nothing without God's help.

"For without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Temptations are those temptations in our lives from which, without God's help, we can easily fall into sin. God inspires us with good, and the devil with evil. Temptations come from our physical weakness, from the bad example of people, from the devil's temptation. Therefore, it is necessary to pray to the Lord to remove these temptations from us. The Scriptures say that the Lord is pleased to send us temptations for good, that is, to strengthen us in a good life, but at the same time temptations are sent to each according to his strength.

"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Blessed Augustine writes about the sixth petition: "He who falls into temptation is one who sympathizes with the tempter. And indeed, in this life it is useful to be tempted, but not useful to fall into temptation. When they tempt you, trying to tempt you with money to do some bad deed, you are tempted, but (precisely as a person) honest. And if you do not give consent, you will be innocent. I advise you: condemn (in your soul) the love of money - and money will not tempt you. Shut the door before temptation and slide the bolt - the love of God. And this can be done only with the help of the One Whom we call upon in prayer. People are tempted in different ways: some are tempted by promises, others - by threats; so that he who could not be seduced by temptation would be seduced by intimidation. But the man who is strengthened in God and on whose lips God hears the words: "Lead us not into temptation," overcomes evil passions, overcomes empty fears. Again, to ask: "Lead us not into temptation" is necessary in this life, for here are the essence of temptations; equally: "Deliver us from the evil one," for here is the evil one" ("On the Lord's Prayer," 8).

### **The Seventh Petition**

In the seventh petition we ask the Lord God to forbid Satan from coming to us with suggestions to do evil, since evil entered the world through him. We ask the Lord to give us the strength to correct our lives and stop sinning. We ask that He deliver us from both temporary and eternal torment.

As Blessed Augustine writes, "There are seven petitions in all: three relate to Eternal Life, four to this life.

Hallowed be thy name – it shall always be.



Thy kingdom come – it shall always be.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven – it shall always be.

Give us this day our daily bread – it shall not always be.

Forgive us our debts – it shall not always be.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one – it shall not always be; but where there is temptation and where there is the evil one, there this petition is necessary.

The Lord's Prayer urges you not only to learn to ask God the Father in Heaven for what you want, but also to learn to desire what you ought. Amen" (On the Lord's Prayer, 9).

### **By the Doxology**

By the Doxology ("for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen") we express our reverence to the Lord God, so that we, thinking of His eternal kingdom, and power, and glory, may be even more confirmed in the hope that He, the All-Merciful, will never refuse our petition. And we add the word "amen", which means "truly", or "so be it". "Amen" is added to depict our firm faith with which the prayer is said. In a service without a priest, which is the only possible one in our last times, this doxology is replaced by the Jesus Prayer, which has great power.

The practice of the Jesus Prayer became widespread among our pious ancestors. Often unable to participate in cathedral services, the Old Believers prayed at home using the Psalter or the Lestovka - the Jesus Prayer. On the other hand, they were well aware of the mystical power and special grace of the Jesus Prayer. This is evidenced by numerous Collections and "Flower" Books compiled by the Old Believers based on the works of the Holy Fathers and ancient Patericons. Here is what is said about the Jesus Prayer in one of these Old Believer Collections (18th century):

"If you want to see God, you, man, say this most holy prayer with your mind and reason, pray with your spirit, pray with your mind, and God will give you the gift of tenderness to your heart and enlighten your soul and wash your body, and cleanse your sins, say this prayer without ceasing, for there is no greater thing, neither in heaven above, nor on earth below, than to say this: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The Jesus Prayer was highly valued - on a par with "church singing", that is, worship from books, and sometimes even higher. The same Collection says: "For some ignorant people foolishly say that the Jesus Prayer is nothing compared to singing: but I say that the Jesus Prayer, vocal and mental, is a strong wall and a confirmation for man, and singing is an invincible weapon. For some holy fathers abandoned singing and held only to the Jesus Prayer.

The teaching about the continuous performance of the Jesus Prayer ("mental doing") was also widespread among the Old Believers.

### **Beatitudes**

In order to finally establish oneself in the hope of salvation and bliss, that is, to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, it is not enough to just pray to God. It is necessary to fulfill the commandments of God and lead a worthy life; it is necessary to add one's own feat to prayer.

"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Together with prayer, the surest means of acquiring saving hope is the teaching on bliss that the Savior Himself set forth for us in the Sermon on the Mount. Being humble and meek in heart, the Savior offered his teaching not in a commanding form, but by blessing those who would freely accept and fulfill

it. In each beatitude (and there are nine in total), we can distinguish: 1) the actual teaching or commandment and 2) the blessing, or promise of reward.

This is how these commandments sound as presented by the Evangelist Matthew (in Luke they are presented somewhat differently):

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for your reward is great in heaven” (Matthew 5:1-12).

### **The First Beatitude**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This commandment teaches us to be poor (i.e., poor) in spirit. What does this mean? To be "poor in spirit" means to have spiritual conviction, that everything we have is not ours, but from God, and that we will do nothing good without the help and grace of God.

According to the interpretation of St. John Chrysostom, "spiritual poverty is humility" (On Matthew, Homily 15), and "the poor in spirit" are "humble and contrite in heart", those "who humble themselves and abase themselves of their own free will."

We find examples of such humility in the Old Testament: Abraham, who called himself dust and ashes when speaking to the Lord (Gen. 18:27), the king and prophet David, who said: “But I am poor and needy; help me, O God: You are my helper and my deliverer, O Lord, do not delay!” (Psalm 69:6) and in another place: “Look upon me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and needy” (Psalm 24:16).

There are many such examples in the New Testament: the centurion, the owner of a sick servant, who sent his friends to tell Christ, who was coming to him: “Do not trouble yourself, Lord; for I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. Therefore I did not consider myself worthy to come to You: but say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Luke 29). The holy Apostle Paul, who labored much in spreading the faith of Christ, considered himself unworthy of the apostolic calling. But first of all, it is Christ Himself, of Whom the Apostle Paul says: “Who, being in the form of God, did not count it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men: and was found in fashion as a man; and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

The poor in spirit can also be rich if they consider that visible wealth is perishable and fleeting, and that it cannot replace the lack of spiritual blessings. In the Gospel, the Lord says: “For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 69). Speaking of wealth, the Lord does not condemn wealth itself, but the passion for it, the inability to use it, when wealth is used only for pleasure and the comforts of life. For example, the Old Testament Abraham and Job were rich, but their wealth did not prevent them from being righteous,

since with the help of their wealth they received and comforted the strange, the wretched and the infirm. The poor in spirit are promised the Kingdom of Heaven. In this life it already belongs to them - internally (through faith and hope), for it is said: "For behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 86). In the future life, the Kingdom of Heaven will belong to them completely, through participation in eternal bliss.

### **The Second Beatitude**

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

The second commandment tells us that those who desire blessedness must be mourners.

What is mourning? Here we should understand sorrow and contrition of heart, as well as real tears for the fact that, being burdened with sins, we serve God imperfectly and unworthily and deserve His wrath with our sins. According to St. John Chrysostom, in this commandment the Savior blesses "not simply those who mourn, but those who indulge in great sorrow; therefore it does not say: the sorrowful, but those who mourn" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 151).

Sorrow for the sake of the Lord produces repentance, and repentance leads to salvation. Worldly sorrow – sorrow due to the loss of glory, honor, property, health, etc. – produces death, killing a person with grief and striking with joylessness.

This is what St. John Chrysostom writes: "It is not so much the rain falling on the seeds that helps them to vegetate and grow, as the tearful rain grows and brings to maturity the seed of piety; it cleanses the soul, irrigates the mind and helps the seed of teaching to grow quickly ... As a farmer deeply breaks the earth with a plow, preparing a reliable repository for the seeds, so that when they are sown, they do not remain on the surface, but are hidden in the depths of the earth and safely put down roots: so we must do, and with sorrow, as with a plow, dig up the depths of the heart" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. II. P. 59).

The Holy Scriptures contain many examples of weeping over sins. The king and prophet David sinned gravely before the Lord, and sighing over his sin, he washed his bed with tears every night (Ps. 6:7), rose at midnight, in his sorrow ate bread together with ashes, which fell on the bread from his head (the Jews had an ancient custom in days of sorrow to sprinkle their heads with earthly dust and ashes as a sign of humility and humiliation before God), and mixed his drink with weeping (Ps. 101:10).

The holy apostle Peter also wept bitterly, having denied his Teacher three times (Matt. Chapter 109). As his disciple, St. Clement, Bishop of Rome, related, St. Every night Peter, hearing the crowing of a rooster, immediately remembered his renunciation of Christ, rose from his bed and threw himself on the ground, shedding tears in bitter weeping. He did this throughout his entire life. Tradition says that his eyes were always red from tears.

The sinful harlot received forgiveness of her sins from the Lord through tears of repentance (Luke 38). Likewise, many of the holy ascetics incessantly shed tears of repentance (St. Ephraim the Syrian, St. John Climacus, and others).

But we must not only weep for our own sins. As St. John Chrysostom writes, the Savior "commands us to weep not only for our own sins, but also for the sins of others. This is what the saints did, such as Moses, Paul, David; they all often wept over the sins of others" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 152).

And in another place: "All of this present life is truly a time of weeping and tears; such misfortune has befallen the entire universe, such calamities have embraced all people, that if anyone wants to recognize them exactly, if such accuracy is even possible, he will not cease to grieve and weep: everything has become so distorted and upset, and there is not a trace of virtue anywhere" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. I. P. 132). King Solomon says: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Eccl. 7:5).

According to St. John Chrysostom, "tears can quench the fire of sins" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. II. P. 605).

What is the bliss of those who mourn? The Lord promises consolation to those who mourn - a gracious consolation consisting in the forgiveness of sins. Even greater consolation awaits those who mourn in the life of the next age, where there will be no mourning, no sickness, no sighing.

### **The Third Beatitude**

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

This commandment says that those who desire blessedness must be meek.

Meekness is a quiet disposition of spirit, combined with caution, so as not to irritate anyone and not to be irritated by anything. The special actions of meekness consist in not grumbling not only at God, but also at people, not giving in to anger and not becoming arrogant. Christian meekness is expressed in patiently enduring the insults caused by others. It is the opposite of anger, malice, arrogance and vindictiveness.

According to St. John Chrysostom, "Christ commands us to be sheep among wolves, so that you do not say: I suffered this and that, and therefore became hardened. Even if you suffered countless insults, continue to be a sheep, and you will defeat the wolves. Such and such a person is evil and wicked; but you have the power with which you can overcome even the evil ones..., because there is nothing more powerful than meekness, nothing stronger than patience... Then especially must we show meekness, when we deal with evil and hostile people; then its power is revealed, then its effectiveness, dignity and benefit shine" (St. John Chrysostom. T. V. P. 370).

An example of meekness can be King David, who even before his accession to the throne patiently endured insults, oppression and persecution from Saul. Fleeing and wandering to save his life, he twice spared him when he was betrayed into his hands. David also endured his son Absalom, who illegally sought royal power, forgave and mourned him when he died. The greatest example of meekness is our Savior Jesus Christ, who said of Himself: "For I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 43). He meekly and humbly endured insults and blasphemy from the Jews. Being reviled, He did not revile in return. Suffering even on the cross, He prayed for His enemies, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 111). Likewise, the apostles, following the example of their Teacher, were distinguished by meekness. What is promised to the meek? Jesus Christ promises them that they will inherit the earth. On the earthly plane, this promise for all followers of Christ in general came true literally, since Christians were not exterminated by the fury of the pagans and inherited the universe that the pagans had previously possessed. As for the highest meaning of this promise, Christians will receive an inheritance "in the land of the living," as the psalmist David says, that is, they will receive eternal bliss there, where they live and do not die (Ps. 26:23).

### **The Fourth Beatitude**

"Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

This commandment tells us that those who desire blessedness must hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The Greek word "righteousness" in the original means "justice," "righteousness," "fairness," "honesty," "truth," "obedience to the laws." St. John Chrysostom understands "righteousness" here in general as any virtue, the fulfillment of the commandments. On the other hand, "righteousness" can be understood as pardon, the justification of a person guilty before God, through grace and faith in Jesus Christ.

"Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness" are people who, while loving goodness, do not consider themselves righteous, do not rely on their good deeds, but recognize themselves as sinners and

guilty before God. These are those who, through the desire and prayer of faith, zealously fulfilling the commandments of God, hunger and thirst for justification before God, as spiritual food and drink. These are all those who, having believed in Christ, followed Him, greedily listened to His word, walked after Him whole days and nights. These are also those who followed His teaching and preferred the observance of God's commandments to the fleeting blessings of this world. In the Old Testament, the Law reigned, but, as St. John Chrysostom writes, "it is impossible to become righteous according to the law otherwise than by fulfilling all the commandments, but this was not possible for anyone" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. IX. P. 711). As a result of their entire history, the Israeli people understood their powerlessness to fulfill the Law.

What were the features of the Old Testament moral Law? In itself, it did not give man the power of grace; it could not be reduced to one commandment; Deuteronomy gives both religious-moral and religious-ritual commandments (despite all the importance of rituals, their performance alone is still not enough, as the parable of the publican and the Pharisee shows us). That is, not only the ten commandments inscribed on the tablets of Moses were related to the commandments, but also others mentioned in Deuteronomy (several hundred). Finally, the Old Testament law did not take into account motives, that is, the internal state of man. The Lord Jesus Christ gave people grace. This is what distinguishes the Old Testament from the New. If the Old Testament is the religion of the Law, then the New Testament is the religion of Grace. The New Testament law looks not only at the appearance of the action, but (most importantly) at the internal state, at the motive of the action. Secondly, it gives strength and help from God when it is fulfilled. Thirdly, it can be reduced to one single commandment: "love" (God and your neighbor as yourself). What does the Lord promise to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness? He promises that they will be satisfied. Physical saturation brings the cessation of the feeling of hunger and thirst. Spiritual saturation is partly similar to it. It means the inner peace of a pardoned sinner. In our present life, the satisfaction promised by the Lord is given only partially. The full and perfect satisfaction of the soul thirsting for God's righteousness will follow in the life of the age to come.

### **The Fifth Beatitude**

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

This commandment means that those who desire blessedness must be merciful.

"The merciful" and "compassionate" are those people who, being touched by the misfortunes, disasters and sufferings of their neighbors in general, help them as much as they can - both with their property (i.e. materially), and with their advice, condescension to their weaknesses (i.e. spiritually). The Lord Jesus Christ commanded all his followers: "Be ye therefore merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 26).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself shows us the greatest example of mercy and compassion. During His earthly life He fed the hungry, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and was merciful to sinners. Finally, He laid down His life for the salvation of people and to this day He has mercy on us, not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance and be saved. The holy saints of God also show us great examples of Christian mercy – St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, John and Philaret the Merciful, and others. As St. John Chrysostom writes, "there are many kinds of mercy, and this commandment is extensive" (vol. VII. P. 154). "Do not say that you have no money; and that means a great deal, if you were so disposed as to give money... Can you (help) with a favor? Do that too!.. Can you give advice? This is the most important thing, the advice is better and higher than anything, the more benefit it brings: with it you deliver not from hunger, but from a cruel death... Or do you think that it will not be a great charity if you can free a soul that has given itself over to despondency, that is in extreme danger, that is possessed by the flame (of passion), from this illness?" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. IX. Pp. 240-241).

To fulfill this commandment, we must be merciful physically and spiritually. Here are the works of physical mercy:

- 1) to feed the hungry;
- 2) to give drink to the thirsty;
- 3) to clothe the naked or the one who lacks necessary and decent clothing;
- 4) to visit one who is in prison;
- 5) to visit the sick, to serve him and help him recover, and if he is mortally ill, then to help him in his Christian preparation for death;
- 6) to receive a stranger into the house and give him rest;
- 7) to bury those who died in poverty, to ask and pray to the Lord God for the forgiveness of their sins.

And here are the works of spiritual mercy:

1) To exhort a sinner to turn from the error of his way, since it is not commendable for a Christian to remain completely indifferent when some sin is committed before his eyes; correcting the lost, he, according to the words of the Apostle James, will save the soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

"Brethren, if any of you stray from the way of truth, and someone convert him, let him know that he who has converted the sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19). To teach the ignorant the truth and goodness, for example, to teach the one who does not know how to pray to God to pray, to teach the one who does not know the commandments of God the commandments and how to fulfill them, acting not only by word but also by personal example. The Lord says: "Whoever does and teaches, he will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. Zach. 11).

- 2) Give your neighbor good and timely advice in difficulty or in danger that he does not notice.
- 3) Pray for your neighbor to God.
- 4) Comfort the sad.
- 5) Do not repay or avenge the evil that others have done to us, condescending to each other with love.
- 6) Forgive offenses from the heart, conquering evil with good.

As a reward for the merciful, Jesus Christ promises that they themselves will be pardoned - pardoned at His Last Judgment from eternal condemnation for sins. "Almsgiving cleanses even sins," writes St. John Chrysostom (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. Page 523). "Almsgiving does not make shoes for us, does not provide clothing, does not build perishable houses, but it prepares eternal life, it rescues us from the hands of death, and in both lives glorifies us, and creates for us a dwelling and eternal chambers in heaven" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. Page 540). As blessed by the Heavenly Father, the merciful will come to the Lord and inherit eternal bliss.

### **The Sixth Beatitude**

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

This commandment tells us that those who wish to attain bliss must be pure in heart.

According to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the heart is the center and focus of all the spiritual and mental life of a person, not only his feelings and desires, but also his thoughts and aspirations. Not only evil and good thoughts come from the heart, but all crimes and vices that defile the whole person are born from the human heart, as the evangelist writes about it:

"For out of the human heart come evil thoughts, adultery, fornication, murder, theft, extortion, insult, wickedness, flattery, fornication, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come forth from the inside, and defile a man" (Mark 7:21-23).

In the Old Testament, the word "heart" occurs many times. It can have a variety of meanings:

- 1) The heart means the seat (i.e. the throne) and the basis of all human life force and, above all, his physical strength.
- 2) The heart is the center of human spiritual and mental life in general, the source of various heart experiences (love, trust, contempt, joy, sorrow, despair, grief, fear, courage, triumph, torment - we find almost all of these feelings in the Psalter of King David), the source of the movements of a person's will and his decisions, the basis of knowledge, human cognitive activity in general, thinking. The heart can be reasonable and stupid.
- 3) The heart as the center and source of human moral life activity. In this sense, they speak of a pure, sincere, faithful and immaculate heart, on the other hand – of a corrupt, treacherous, prodigal heart.

Saint John Chrysostom calls the heart "the charioteer" and "helmsman" of a person's life. Much evil and many great disasters occur when the heart "taking the place of the charioteer in a person, not only does not hold the horse with the reins, but itself is carried away and thrown down... When the charioteer or helmsman is like this, where is the hope of salvation?" (Saint John Chrysostom. T. V. P. 20).

What is "purity of heart"? What kind of people can be called "pure in heart"? These are those people whose actions, thoughts, intentions and moral rules of life and activity are pure, selfless, truthful, these are those who are not aware of any deception in themselves and spend their lives in chastity. "Pure in heart" are people who are not stained by anything dirty, alien in their hearts, that is, in their feelings, desires and thoughts.

At the same time, purity of heart should be distinguished from sincerity. A sincere person does not hypocritically display a good disposition of the heart in good deeds. Sincerity, constituting a high moral quality of a person, is nevertheless only the lowest degree of purity of the heart. Purity of the heart can be achieved only by constant and unremitting feat of vigilance over oneself, when a person rejects from the heart every impure, unlawful desire and thought, every passion for earthly things and constantly keeps in the heart the memory of God with faith and love.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "One can be evil without doing any evil, such as: having hatred, unbelief, being treacherous, rejoicing in misfortunes, being unfriendly, holding to a false teaching: all this is a matter of the heart... In general, every sin is impurity, and every virtue is purity" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. XI. P. 511).

And in another place he writes: "Nothing makes the heart so cruel as... attachment to worldly things, attachment to the earth. Such a heart could rightly be called dirty"; a pure heart "must give wings to the flesh, strive upward and ascend to heaven" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. V. P. 20).

In the Gospel of Matthew it is said: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. If thine eye be evil, thy whole body will be darkened. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how much more darkness! No man can serve two masters. He will love one, and hate the other. Or he will hold to one, and begin to neglect the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore say I unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; neither for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life greater than food, and the body than clothing? (Matt. 18).

That is, the heart is pure when it resolutely, without any division, without any hesitation, strives with pure love for God. We can say that a pure heart is in pure love. In love for people, which is expressed in sincerity, truthfulness, the absence of hypocrisy and so on; in love for oneself, which is expressed in the desire and achievement of inner moral impeccability and purity, and, finally, in love for God - through

resolute love for God and the desire for the Divine. And St. John Chrysostom writes: "Love purifies everything", "where love is, all evil is destroyed" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. XI. P. 807). "Love makes immaculate, and moreover, it makes truly immaculate... And no, there is absolutely not a single sin that, like fire, the power of love has not destroyed. "It is easier for a weak stick to withstand a strong fire, than for the nature of sin to withstand the power of love" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. XI. Page 511).

The perfect example of purity of heart, unattainable for man, is shown to us by the Savior Jesus Christ. And of others born on earth - the Most Pure Mother of God. Also St. John the Baptist and many holy saints and ascetics of piety (Abraham, Joseph the Beautiful, Moses, etc.).

All those with a pure heart are promised the greatest reward - they are promised that they will see God. Of course, this does not mean that they will see God with their physical eyes, but that they will see Him with their heart, which is thus likened to the eye. In the Epistle to Ephesians, St. Apostle Paul uses the following expression: "the eyes of the heart are enlightened" (Eph. Zach. 218). Just as a pure eye can see the light, so a pure heart can contemplate God. And since the contemplation of God is the source of eternal bliss, the promise of seeing God means the promise of eternal bliss.

Hieromonk Dorotheus has a remarkable comparison: "Imagine a circle, its middle – the center, and radii – rays – emanating from the center. These radii, the further they go from the center, the more they diverge and move away from each other; on the contrary, the closer they come to the center, the more they come together. Now suppose that this circle is the world, the very middle of the circle is God, and the straight lines (radii) going from the center to the circumference, or from the circumference to the center, are the paths of people's lives. And here it is the same. To the extent that the saints enter inside the circle to the middle thereof, wishing to come closer to God, to that extent they become closer to God and to each other; and moreover, so that the closer they come to God, the closer they come to each other, and the closer they come to each other, the closer they come to God. – Understand this also about The Seventh Beatitude

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God."

In the seventh beatitude, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us that those who wish to attain bliss must be peacemakers.

Who are peacemakers? They are not quiet, peaceful, meek, or even peace-loving, peacekeepers, but the founders, creators of peace. These are people who direct their actions toward the creation, restoration, and preservation of peace. In a society where there is little love and peace does not reign, peacemakers strive to spread and preserve love and peace. By "peace" we must understand not only external peace (the end of wars, discord, quarrels), but also internal peace - a change in the very moods, spiritual relationships of people. The external world, no matter how strong the laws on which it is built, will be unstable if there is hatred, enmity, and passions rage in the hearts of people. "What use is the external world to a man," writes St. John Chrysostom, "when he himself rages and raves, like the common enemy of the human race, and goes everywhere, carrying within himself such a war, an innumerable multitude of spears and swords?" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. V. p. 33). Just as struggle and enmity, wars and discord bring destruction, disasters, misfortune, so peace leads to creation, well-being and happiness. "Peace," according to St. John Chrysostom, "is the mother of all blessings and the source of joy" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. XII. p. 1328).distance (from God)."

Peace is what a person naturally strives for. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes well about this: "Of all that people strive to enjoy, is there anything sweeter than a peaceful life? Everything that you would call pleasant in life is pleasant only when it is combined with peace. Let there be everything that is valued in life: wealth, health, wife, children, home, relatives, friends; let you have beautiful gardens, places for merry feasts and all the inventions of pleasures - let all this be, but if there is no peace, what good is it? - So, peace is not only pleasant in itself for those who enjoy peace, but it also sweetens all the blessings of life. Even if some misfortune happens to us, as usually happens to people, during peace, it is more bearable, because in this case evil is tempered by good ... Judge for yourself - what kind of life is that of those who are at odds with each other and suspect each other? They meet sullenly and despise



everything in each other; their lips are silent, their eyes are averted, and the hearing of one is closed to the words of the other. Everything that is pleasant for one of them is hateful to the other, and, on the contrary, what is hateful and hostile to one, pleases the other ... You must extinguish hatred, stop enmity and revenge, destroy quarrels, drive out hypocrisy, extinguish the smoldering rancor in the heart and in its place introduce everything opposite - love, joy, peace, goodness, generosity, in a word - the whole collection of blessings. So, is not he blessed who distributes divine gifts, who imitates God in his gifts, whose good deeds are like the great gifts of God? " (Journal "Christian Reading" for 1842, pp. 164-165). To fulfill the seventh commandment of bliss, one must act amicably with everyone and not give reasons for disagreement, and stop disagreement that has occurred by all means, even by giving up one's rights, if only this does not contradict duty and does not harm anyone. One must also try to reconcile those who are at odds with each other when such an opportunity presents itself.

The greatest example of a peacemaker is shown to us by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who in the prophecy of Isaiah is called "the prince of humility (meaning peace)" (Is. 9:6), and by the Apostle Paul - "our peace" (Eph. Chapter 221). Thus, when at the Last Supper a dispute arose between the apostles about which of them should be considered greater, the Lord, in order to pacify them, Himself took the position of a servant and washed their feet, wiping them with a towel (John Chapter 44). The lives of the holy saints also present many examples of peacemaking and peacemaking. Peacemakers are promised that they will be called sons of God. This high reward is promised to them, because with their exploits they imitate the Only Begotten Son of God, Who came down to earth to reconcile sinful man with the justice of God. If peacemakers share on earth the lot of the Son of God in service, life and spirit, then they will be true co-heirs with Christ in the Kingdom of Heaven.

### **The Eighth Beatitude**

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Those who desire blessedness must be prepared to endure persecution for righteousness' sake. "To persecute" means to deprive of communication with oneself, to persecute, to oppress.

"Those persecuted for righteousness' sake" are people who are removed from their midst by violence by a society hostile to them, persecuted for their service to righteousness, who suffer in one way or another precisely for their righteousness and love of righteousness - virtue and justice.

St. John Chrysostom writes that those persecuted for righteousness' sake are "those persecuted for virtue, for patronage of others, for piety, since the Savior usually always calls complete love of wisdom (piety) of the soul righteousness" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 154). Truth is also "the fulfillment of all the commandments" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 123, 100).

Persecution for the truth is a common phenomenon in human life, and enduring persecution is a common companion in the life of truth-loving people. As long as the whole world lies in evil (according to the word of the Apostle John), this is inevitable. On the contrary, the benevolent attitude of people towards the servants of truth makes this truth itself questionable. The Savior warns us about this:

"Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers do to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

St. John Chrysostom: "It is impossible for the virtuous to be praised by all" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. Page 156). The Holy Scriptures provide many examples of persecution for the truth. The first righteous man to suffer for the truth was Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain. Further, we read that the Jews hated the prophets of God who exposed their lawless life and killed them. King Herod Antipas hated St. John the Baptist who exposed his lawless life and, in the end, ordered him to be killed. Finally, the Jews hated the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles suffered for the truth, the first Christians suffered persecution - the Church of Christ grew on the blood of the martyrs. But even in the times after the triumph of the Church, persecutions occurred from time to time. Here we can also recall the iconoclastic heresy that

was victorious in Byzantium for a time. We can also recall St. Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow, who suffered abuse and imprisonment in the Tver Monastery for the truth, where he died a martyr.

The "Book of Faith" says: "The true Church is that which endures persecution, and not that which expels others. And as at the time of the coming of Christ the flock of God's chosen was small, so at the coming of the Antichrist the faithful will decrease, and the evil-believers will increase." (Book of Faith, ch. 2, p. 29, 30). Persecution for the truth, crowning virtue, makes the persecuted true citizens of the Kingdom of God, and therefore not unhappy, but blessed. We see from history that the stronger the persecution, the stronger and more numerous the Church of Christ became. "Like gold," says St. John Chrysostom, - melted in fire becomes purer, so the soul, tempted by sorrows and dangers, becomes purer and brighter and casts off all sinful impurity" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. III. P. 303). Expulsion for the truth continued further: the most striking example of this is the fate of our pious ancestors, beginning in the middle of the 17th century. The Old Believers, as has already been proven by modern scholars, were historically right and steadfastly stood for the truth of the old faith, for the customs of their fathers - despite the lies and slander of their persecutors, the new believers. We see how zealously the Old Believers observed the eighth commandment of bliss - truly this commandment was written in their hearts! Despite the deprivations, tortures and executions, they defended the holy truth, because there is nothing higher than truth, and it is not for nothing that the Holy Spirit is called the True Spirit, and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (that is, lying) is the most terrible, unforgivable sin.

St. John Chrysostom speaks of this commandment as follows: "Those who are not prepared and confirmed in advance by all those commandments (of beatitude) cannot enter into these feats. That is why Christ has woven a golden chain for us from these commandments, always paving the way from the previous commandment to the next. Indeed, a humble man will also weep for his sins; one who weeps for his sins will be meek, and righteous, and merciful; one who is merciful, righteous, and contrite will certainly be pure in heart, and such a one will also be a peacemaker; and one who has achieved all this will be ready for dangers, will not be afraid of slander and countless disasters" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 523).

But for temporary hardships and sorrows, the Lord also promises a great reward to all those persecuted for righteousness' sake - the Kingdom of Heaven, as if in exchange for what they are deprived of on earth because of persecution, just as it is promised to the poor in spirit in fulfillment of the feeling of lack and poverty. Here bewilderment and the question may arise: why does the Lord not promise the Kingdom of Heaven to everyone? St. John Chrysostom answers this: "If you hear that He does not grant the Kingdom of Heaven to every kind of bliss, do not be discouraged. Although Christ describes the rewards differently, He brings everyone into the Kingdom. And when He says that those who mourn will be comforted, and the merciful will be shown mercy, and the pure in heart will see God, and the peacemakers will be called the sons of God - by all this He means nothing other than the Kingdom of Heaven. So, do not think that only the poor in spirit will be worthy of this reward; "Those who thirst for truth, and the meek, and all the rest will receive it. He mentioned blessedness in every commandment so that you would not expect anything sensual" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 155).

### **The Ninth Beatitude**

"Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you, falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

The last commandment tells us that those who desire blessedness must be ready to joyfully accept reproach, persecution, calamity, and even death for the name of Christ and for the true Old Orthodox faith.

"To revile" means to scold, mock, and mock. "To revile for My sake" means to revile for the faith and faithfulness to Christ. The meaning of this entire commandment is this: blessed are those who accept and endure reproach, persecution, every calamity, and even death for the name of Christ and for the true Old Orthodox faith not only with patience and courage, but also with joy. And indeed, in the lives of many Christian martyrs of the first three centuries we read that torment turned into joy for them when

they were suffering for Christ. We see a repetition of these persecutions and new exploits in the name of Christ in the lives of the martyrs for the old faith in Russia ("Russian Grapes" and "The History of the Fathers and Sufferers of Solovki" by Simeon Dionisyevich, the lives of Archpriest Avvakum, Boyarina Morozova, and Monk Epiphanius).

According to St. John Chrysostom, "here He speaks definitely and directly addresses the disciples, showing that this (persecution) applies primarily to them and is characteristic of them before all other teachers" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. P. 156). Just as the world does not love truth and persecutes the servants of truth, so it will hate Christ even more, will persecute those who will live in Christ, believe in Christ and do the work of Christ on earth. St. John Chrysostom says that suffering and persecution are a necessary sign of the apostleship of the disciples, their true service to Christ (and thus a sign of the true apostolic Church). We know how the disciples of Christ ended their lives: Peter was crucified upside down in Rome, Andrew was crucified on a diagonal cross in Achaia, James was beheaded by Herod in Jerusalem, John was exiled to the island of Patmos and thrown into boiling oil, although he died peacefully in Ephesus, Philip was crucified in Thrace, Bartholomew was beheaded in Armenia, Matthew was burned in Ethiopia, Thomas was pierced with spears in India, James the son of Alphaeus was crucified in Egypt, Simon the Zealot was crucified in Britain, Judas the son of James was crucified and sh But this is not enough. The Savior warns that a terrible weapon of hypocrisy, lies and untruth – slander – will rise up against His servants. The disciples of Christ will not even be allowed to die as martyrs for the truth in the eyes of people, which always brings joy and comfort to sufferers, but they will first be slandered, disgraced, as disturbers of public order, as enemies of law and truth, dishonest people. "Truly," says St. John Chrysostom, "slander hurts much more than the deeds themselves. There is much in dangers that alleviates grief, for example, when everyone encourages, many approve, praise and glorify. But here, in slander, even the consolation itself is taken away. To endure slander is not considered a great feat, although slander hurts the ascetic more than the danger itself. Many lay hands on themselves, unable to bear the bad talk about them" (St. John Chrysostom. Vol. VII. Pp. 156-157).

The Savior promises a great reward in heaven to all who suffer for His name: "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven!" Since the martyrdom of Christians is the highest sacrifice they can make, it is natural that this feat, this sacrifice and the bliss for those who made it will be the highest reward and bliss for them. In Armenia, Matthew (the second, chosen to replace Judas Iscariot) was stoned in Jerusalem.

## Section III.

### On Love

#### What is love?

Every Christian must (in addition to faith in God and hope in Him) also have love, which must be accompanied by good deeds.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave us two commandments of love, saying to His disciples:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greater commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 92).

How is our love expressed? Our love for God is expressed in the fulfillment of His holy commandments.

Love for one's neighbors is called the heartfelt disposition of a person towards his neighbors, which does not allow him to do evil to them.

So, the Lord clearly tells us that faith alone without love and good deeds is not enough - faith without love and good deeds is dead. But can a person be saved by love and good deeds without faith? The answer to this is given in the Scripture. It says there that without faith a person cannot love God. A person corrupted by sin cannot do truly good deeds unless he receives spiritual strength – the grace of God – through faith in Jesus Christ.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God. And they must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb. 11:6)

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. For it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

Can there be love without good deeds? Love without good deeds is not true love, since true love is always accompanied by good deeds. The Savior speaks of this in the following words:

"Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me... and whoever loves Me will keep My word" (John 14:21-23).

To distinguish good deeds from evil, we have received two laws from God: the internal law – conscience, and the external law – the commandments of God. This is what St. Apostle Paul:

"They (the pagans) show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing, sometimes excusing one another"; Rom. 2:15)

But if there is an internal law in people, then why is an external one needed? People, although they had an internal law, did not obey it, but led a sinful, carnal life. That is why an external law was needed. If people acted according to their conscience, then no external law would be needed. The external law was given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, when the Jewish people, after being freed by God from Egyptian slavery, wandered in the desert on the way to the Promised Land and led a very impious life. The Lord appeared in fire and cloud to Moses and through him gave commandments to the Israelites.

These commandments are divided into two tablets: on the first tablet are written four commandments about love for God, and on the second – six commandments about love for one's neighbor.

Where are these commandments? They are written in the Old Testament – in the books of Exodus (20:1–17) and Deuteronomy (5:6–21).

This is how these commandments are read:

- “1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters or under the earth; you shall not bow down to them, nor serve them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: six days you shall labor, and do your work in them; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you; and that your days may be long upon the earth.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor all his cattle, nor anything that is your neighbor's.”

Briefly, the content of the commandments can be expressed as follows: the first commandment prescribes to know and honor the True God, the second - to avoid false worship, the third - not to violate worship of God even by word, the fourth - to maintain order in time and in deeds of worship. These are our duties in relation to God. Next come our duties in relation to our neighbor: the fifth commandment prescribes to love and honor our neighbors, especially our close ones, starting with our parents, the sixth - not to harm the lives of our neighbors, the seventh - not to harm the purity of their morals, the eighth - not to harm their property, the ninth - not to harm them by word, the tenth - not even to wish to harm them.

### **The First Commandment**

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from a house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

In the first commandment the Lord clearly commanded to know Him as the One God, Eternal and Incomprehensible, the Creator of heaven and earth and all creation, and not to acknowledge or honor anyone or anything else as God. We, Christians, must acknowledge and glorify only one God and fulfill His commandments. At the same time, we must also call upon the holy angels and saints of God to intercede before God, but to honor them not as God, but as “friends of God” and His saints.

The sins against the first commandment are the following:

1. Atheism – when people in their blindness say that there is no God. “The fool has said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 52:1).
2. Polytheism, or idolatry – when instead of the one true God, many others are worshiped and worshiped as God.
3. Unbelief – when people do not recognize the Providence of God, the Savior of the World, the grace of the Holy Spirit and in general everything that the Holy Church teaches us to believe in.

4. Little faith – a very common sin in our time, when people do not firmly hope in God, but somewhat doubt His Providence for us.
5. Heresy – when people falsely reason about the truths of faith, contrary to the teachings of the holy apostles, holy fathers and teachers of the Church.
6. Schism – when Christians change the patristic traditions and introduce new rites and regulations into church life. This sin often stems from excessive pride, when people begin to think that they are smarter and more “educated” than the holy apostles and holy fathers, as well as the entire conciliar opinion of the Church.
7. Apostasy – when a Christian, for the sake of worldly gain and pleasing people, renounces the true faith in God and joins either paganism or another non-Orthodox confession.
8. Despair – when a Christian loses hope in God and despairs of His holy help.
9. Magic – when Christians, not hoping for God's help, entrust themselves to the secret powers of creation and especially the power of evil spirits and try to involve others in this. This includes faith in all kinds of healers and psychics.
10. Superstition - when people believe without any common sense in the power of some ordinary thing and rely on it more than on God. This also includes faith in all kinds of false miracles and false prophets.
11. Laziness in prayer, when through negligence they do not offer up to the Lord the prayers that the holy fathers laid down for every Christian during the day - both at home and in church.
12. Love for creatures more than God - when they are carried away by affection for animals so much that, forgetting themselves, they even pronounce the word " deification".
13. Pleasing people - when Christians do not fulfill the commandments of God out of pleasing people.
14. Reliance on people - when they express hope for human help, or take measures to obtain help from the powers that be, but do not rely on God and do not ask for His help. "If I would still please men, I would not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from God" (Jer. 17:5).

### **The Second Commandment**

You shall not make for yourself any graven image, or any likeness of it, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters or under the earth; you shall not bow down to them, nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and to the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

With this commandment, the Lord forbids the worship of pagan idols and images of false gods, and also forbids giving divine honors to the moon, stars, sun, animals, plants, fish, all small insects and animals that live in the bowels of the earth. In addition, the second commandment forbids us from all earthly passions and hobbies. Therefore, the sins against the second commandment also include:

1. Covetousness - when a Christian sets the goal of his life exclusively to acquire wealth and earthly goods, for a covetous person works more for wealth than for God. Apostle Paul directly says that covetousness (greediness) is idolatry.
2. Gluttony - delicacies, gluttony, drunkenness. Having forgotten God, a glutton considers his belly to be God, which becomes an idol for him. The same can be said about a drunkard.
3. Pride and vanity - when a person values his abilities and advantages above all else and is proud of this.

The second commandment forbids the worship of "idols", but do not those who worship holy icons sin against this commandment, as the iconoclast heretics often imagine?

No, they do not sin, since holy icons should be venerated by Christians as God's mercy, granted to us sinners for the consolation and adornment of holy temples and our homes. The image of veneration of this shrine is given to us, by the way, in the Old Testament, when, by God's command, Moses decorated the "tabernacle of the witness" with a holy ark and golden cherubs embroidered on the walls of the tabernacle. Subsequently, after the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, icon veneration became one of the most important Christian dogmas (see above). An icon is the image of God, the image of angels, saints.

As stated in the definition of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, to which 367 fathers came, "walking the royal way and following the divine teaching of our holy Fathers and the Tradition of the Catholic Church - for we know that Church is the Holy Spirit living in it. So - we determine with all diligence and circumspection: like the image of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross, to place in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and garments, on walls and boards, in houses and on roads, honorable and holy icons, painted with paints and made of small stones or from any other substance appropriate to the purpose, whether they be icons of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, or our Immaculate Lady, the Most Holy Theotokos, or honorable Angels and all holy and venerable men. For the more often they are visible to us through the image on the icon, the more often, contemplating them, we strive to remember and love the prototype, to honor them with kisses and reverent adoration, not with the true service of worship, which according to our faith befits only the Divine nature alone, but with the same veneration that we give to the image of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross, the Holy Gospel and other holy things through the offering of incense and the placing of candles according to the pious custom of the ancients. For the honor given to the image passes to the prototype, and he who worships the icon worships the hypostasis of what is depicted on it. Such a teaching is contained in the Holy Fathers of ours, that is, in the Tradition of the Catholic Church, preaching the Gospel from end to end of the Universe." The same can be said about holy relics. Holy relics are the remains of holy people who spent their earthly lives piously. Therefore, the Lord is glorified through them and works miracles, as the psalmist David says: "Wonderful is God in His saints, the God of Israel!" (Psalm 67). The relics of the saints

The Third Commandment

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not cleanse those who use His name in vain.

The third commandment forbids pronouncing the name of God in prayers and conversations without due reverence and absentmindedly, out of frivolity, forbids swearing, swearing under oath, etc.

The following sins belong here:

1. Blasphemy - that is, insolent words against God.
2. Murmuring against God - complaints and lamentations about God's Providence.
3. Blasphemy - mockery of holy objects (icons, relics) or desecration of them.
4. Inattention to prayer - when the words of prayer are absentmindedly pronounced, without delving into their meaning.
5. False oath - when with an oath they affirm something that did not happen.
6. Perjury - when one does not fulfill an oath given to God.
7. Violation of vows - given voluntarily to God.
8. Swearing - the habitual and frivolous use of an oath in conversations. must be given the same honor as their images on icons.

## **The Fourth Commandment**

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do in them all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt not do any work in it, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, thy ox, nor thy donkey, nor all thy cattle, nor thy stranger that sojourneth with thee: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is. And thou shalt rest on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

By this commandment the Lord God commands that the Sabbath day, the seventh (in Hebrew "Saturday" means "rest"), be dedicated to the service of God. Therefore, every seventh day (in the New Testament - Sunday) and on all the great holidays established by the Holy Church, Christians must leave the worldly work that God commands to do for six days, and spend every seventh day spiritually - not in gluttony and drunkenness, or sitting in front of the TV, or in other entertainment, but in prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures, studying the commandments of God and in doing good deeds - in helping others and in giving alms. On this day, you must visit the Temple, and if this is not possible, then pray at home.

This commandment applies to both the most important Christian holidays and to the fasts established by the Church. The great holidays include:

1. The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos - September 8/21.
2. The Universal Exaltation of the Honorable and Life-Giving Cross of the Lord - September 14/28.
3. Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Church – November 21 / December 4.
4. Nativity of Christ – December 25 / January 7.
5. Epiphany (Baptism) of the Lord – January 6/19.
6. Meeting of the Lord – February 2/15.
7. Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos – March 25 / April 7.
8. Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem – a movable feast, on the last Sunday before Easter.
9. Easter of Christ – a movable feast, celebrated on the first Sunday after the spring full moon, in the period from March 22 (April 4) to April 25 (May 8).
10. Ascension of the Lord – a movable feast, on the fortieth day after Easter.
11. Pentecost, or the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles – a movable feast, on the fiftieth day after Easter.
12. Transfiguration of the Lord – August 6/19.
13. Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos – August 15/28.

As for fasts, we have already spoken about them above, when we considered the Creed and the basic duties of a Christian in relation to the Church.

Holidays established by non-Christians, such as the holiday of May 1, March 8, the secular New Year, holidays established by heretics, etc., as forbidden by the Holy Fathers, are in no way suitable for Christians to celebrate.

Those who celebrate and do not work on six weekdays violate the fourth commandment, as do those who work on a holiday. Those who, although they cease worldly affairs and work on holidays, but spend them only in entertainment, also sin against this commandment. We must not forget that for us,



Orthodox Christians, a holiday begins in the evening, when the all-night vigil is served, and therefore it is especially sinful to devote this time to any kind of entertainment.

### **The Fifth Commandment**

Honor your father and your mother, that it may be good to you; and you may live long upon the good land which the Lord God will give you.

In the fifth commandment, the Lord commanded us to honor our parents: father and mother, and as a reward for this He promised a long and happy life. In addition to our parents in the flesh, we must also honor our spiritual fathers. As the Apostle Paul writes, "obey your leaders and submit yourselves, for they watch (i.e. care) for your souls." Observance of this commandment also relates to careful observance and preservation of all the teachings of our spiritual fathers, the faith of our ancestors, passed down from Christ, the Holy Apostles and the Holy and God-bearing Fathers, the Ecumenical Councils and all ranks and church regulations. We must also honor our elders, as St. Apostle Paul: "Do not harm an elder, but comfort him as a father, young men as brothers, older women as mothers" (1 Tim. 5:1-2), and those in authority, unless they demand obedience from us contrary to the Law of God and the faith.

#### **Sins against the fifth commandment:**

1. Disrespect for parents.
2. Contempt for parents during old age or poverty.
3. Mocking or contradicting parents.
4. Lack of concern for the physical health of parents.
5. Reviling and condemning both physical parents and spiritual fathers.
6. Slander against both.
7. Failure to fulfill the penance of one's spiritual fathers.
8. Willful squandering of one's father's property.
9. Refusal to give alms (for the sake of stinginess) for one's parents and spiritual fathers, failure to make an offering to the church for their health or for their repose (if deceased).
10. Mocking the old and the poor.
11. Disobedience to the good advice of parents.
12. Illegal cohabitation (marriage), contrary to the conviction of one's spiritual fathers.
13. Entering into marriage without the will of one's parents.
14. Anger at parents when they irritate children and despond.

### **The Sixth Commandment**

Thou shalt not kill.

With the sixth commandment, God forbids killing and maiming both oneself and other people, being embittered against one's neighbor, commands not to have rage, anger, envy, or malice. One must always remember that a person can be killed not only by deed, but also by word. "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15).

### **Sins against the sixth commandment:**

1. Murder.
2. Wounding, or hitting, to the point of illness.
3. Witchcraft, i.e. poisoning with some poisonous potion or deprivation of health.
4. Forcibly presenting someone for murder.
5. Giving harmful medicine to a neighbor without understanding the matter of treatment.
6. Causing death to a neighbor through negligence or carelessness.
7. A quarrel and fight for self-interest, which resulted in the death of a person.
8. Someone taking a potion to prevent the fertility of children, which resulted in the death of a neighbor.
9. Forcibly inducing a neighbor to sin.
10. An evil and unjust trial, when a person is handed over to death without investigation and detailed analysis.
11. Infanticide (abortion) - by good will, neglect or drugs.
12. Wishing death to oneself or a neighbor for the sake of bitterness.
13. Depriving oneself of health through gluttony and drunkenness, smoking and drugs.
14. In irritation or irascibility, to beat someone excessively and thereby cause death - for guilt or without guilt.
15. Revenge or vengeful anger, leading to the murder of a person.
16. To take revenge on one's neighbor without notifying the authorities and judges and to kill him (lynching).
17. To irritate a sick neighbor, which results in death.
18. To subject oneself to obvious mental and physical suffering through stubbornness and without thinking.
19. To incite people to bloodshed.
20. To rejoice at the death or grief of another, and thereby cause suffering to one's neighbors.
21. To be the cause of another's death in any way.
22. To bring death upon someone through slander and curses.
23. To separate love between neighbors through various insults, ridicule, and similar methods, and to cause them grief even to death.

### **The Seventh Commandment**

Do not commit adultery.

In the seventh commandment, the Lord forbids husband and wife to violate mutual fidelity and the vow given before God in the marriage, and commands the unmarried to maintain purity of thoughts and desires, to preserve innocence and modesty. This commandment also forbids immodest and shameless

conversations, words and body movements, foul language, swearing, drunkenness and generally seductive spectacles and games. "Whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

#### **Sins against the seventh commandment:**

1. Unclean thoughts about an impure deed.
2. Kissing with lust.
3. Songs and dancing.
4. Incest, when people marry in an unlawful degree of kinship.
5. Unlawful cohabitation (without legal marriage).
6. Without spiritual judgment and without divorce of husband or wife, unlawful cohabitation.
7. Keeping a harlot in one's house.
8. Through drunkenness or overeating in a dream or in reality, carnal temptation.
9. To commit adornment and conversation for the sake of fornication.
10. To look at someone with fornication.

This commandment prescribes marital love and fidelity, and for those who can bear it, perfect purity and chastity. About the duties of spouses, the Scripture says: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:22–25).

#### **The Eighth Commandment**

Thou shalt not steal.

With the eighth commandment God forbids any unjust gain from other people's property, forbids appropriating other people's property by word, deed, or any other means.

Sins against the eighth commandment:

1. Robbery, or the obvious taking of another's property.
2. Theft, or the secret theft of another's thing.
3. Fraud, i.e. the appropriation of another's property or thing by means of cunning.
4. Sacrilege, or theft of anything that is dedicated to God or belongs to the Church (for example, the theft or appropriation of icons, church books, etc.).
5. Bribery, when authorities take bribes and, out of self-interest, justify the guilty or elevate unworthy subordinates.
6. Extortion, when they take extra interest; when bosses exhaust their employees with unnecessary and hard work; when, during a famine or other national disaster, bread is sold at too high a price for the sake of profit; speculation.

The virtues opposite to these sins are as follows: mercy and compassion for one's neighbor, complete non-acquisitiveness and renunciation of all property, as the Lord says: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21).

## **The Ninth Commandment**

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

With this commandment, God forbids bearing false witness against anyone in court, slandering, condemning, commands us to guard against all lies, to fulfill our promises, conditions and agreements sacredly and inviolably, and in general to bridle our tongues.

Sins against the ninth commandment:

1. Lying.
2. Unjust judgment.
3. Announcing confessed secrets.
4. Announcing to everyone the secret deeds of our neighbor.
5. Cursing ourselves and others because of lying.
6. Listening to slander against our neighbors and praising the slanderer.
7. Hasty condemnation.
8. Reviling and mocking out of envy at the good deeds of our neighbor and his zeal for prayer.
9. Immeasurable self-praise.
10. A promise without the ability to fulfill it.
11. Condemnation of the spiritual mentor and clergy of the Old Orthodox Church.
12. Praise of one's own and others' sins.
13. Derogation of someone's dignity and merits in print, out of envy or other dishonest motives.

In the Holy Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ says: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). We must in every way avoid condemnation, since by condemning we take for ourselves the right of final judgment, which belongs to God alone. In order to avoid sins against the ninth commandment, one must refrain from unnecessary words, as St. Apostle Peter: "For if anyone loves life and wants to see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and not speak deceitful words with his lips" (1 Pet. 3:10).

## **The Tenth Commandment**

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor covet your neighbor's house, nor his field, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his foal, nor any of his cattle, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

In the tenth commandment, the Lord forbids envying someone else's good and wishing evil to your neighbor, commands that everyone be content with their own property, since grave sins come from the desire for someone else's property: envy, theft, murder, and others.

**Sins against the tenth commandment:**

1. The desire to harm your neighbor.
2. Enticing employees and workers from your neighbors to yourself.
3. Envying the beauty of others.
4. The desire to deliberately harm one's neighbor in any way.

5. The desire for any national disasters (war, disease, famine, etc.) for the sake of one's own profits.
6. The desire for any sin in general.

This commandment prescribes preserving the purity of the heart and being content with one's situation. To do this, one must constantly call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and thank Him for everything, as St. John Chrysostom did, saying before his death: "Glory to God for everything!"

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The Ten Commandments were given by God through Moses to the people of Israel. When our Savior Jesus Christ came into the world, these Ten Commandments were supplemented and improved by His teachings, set forth in the Holy Gospel.

The main Christian commandment is love, and in accordance with this commandment, the Lord Jesus Christ supplemented and corrected the Old Testament commandments in six cases.

1. "You have heard that it was said to them of old, 'You shall not kill: for whoever kills will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause will be in danger of the judgment; and whoever calls his neighbor a fool will be in danger of hell fire" (Matthew 12). Here the Lord teaches us that even verbal insult to one's neighbor will be subject to severe punishment, since it contradicts the fundamental Gospel commandment about love for one's neighbor.
2. "You have heard that it was said to them of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a wife to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 13). The Lord forbids Christians even sinful thoughts.
3. "It was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a book of divorcement.' But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for adultery, commits adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 13). Because of the hard-heartedness of the Jews, Moses allowed marriages to be dissolved, but the Lord commanded, "What God has joined together, let no man separate."
4. "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely.' And your oaths you shall pay to the Lord. But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; For you cannot make one hair white or black; but let your speech be, Yes, Yes, No, except for enmity" (Matthew 14). Therefore, every Christian is obliged, if someone says, "Swear," to answer, "Christ commanded me not to swear at all, and therefore I will not swear."
5. "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, 'Do not resist an evil person.' But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give him your tunic too. And if he asks you to go with him one mile, go with him two. Give to anyone who asks you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you" (Matthew 14). The Lord taught us not to resist evil, but to turn everyone who offends us onto the true path with our love, humility, and readiness to help him in his need.
6. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven, as His sun shines on the evil and on the good, and waters the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love only those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the pagans the same? And if you greet only your friends, what do you do more than others? Do not even the pagans the same? Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 15). The Lord, both by word and example, commanded us to love not only our neighbors, but also our enemies. Crucified on the cross, He Himself prayed for those who crucified Him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Fulfilling the Gospel commandments brings great benefit to every Christian, for these commandments teach us

the truth, turn us away from false heretical teachings, promote the abandonment of sins, liberation from torment and ascent to God.

### **Two Commandments of the New Testament**

1. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
2. "Love your neighbor as yourself."

These two commandments contain all the duties of man that are prescribed to him by the Law and the Prophets, i.e. by all the Holy Scriptures.

The essence of these commandments consists of three types of love: love for God, for neighbors and for oneself. If the Lord did not give us a separate commandment about love for oneself, it is because even without a commandment, by nature, as St. Apostle Paul, "no one ever hated his own flesh, but feeds and cherishes it" (Eph. 231)

In love, the following order must be observed:

1. One must love oneself only for God and partly for one's neighbors, one must take care of one's health and care for the correct development of one's spiritual powers and abilities, in order to better manifest one's love for God and for one's neighbors, and in order to live for the glory of God and serve for the benefit of one's neighbors.
2. One must love one's neighbors for God's sake, for what is our relationship with other people, such is our relationship with God. St. Apostle John the Theologian teaches: "Whoever says, I love God, and hates his brother, is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (John 74).
3. One must love God as our Creator, Provider and Savior. Love for oneself must be sacrificed to love for one's neighbors, and love for oneself and for one's neighbors must be sacrificed to love for God.