

**Our Faith: Orthodox Christianity at St. Michael's
Woonsocket, Rhode Island
Winter, 2008 (Fr. Anthony Perkins)**

Session Five: A Brief Catechism of the Orthodox Church

Opening Prayer: O Heavenly King the Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Who art ev'rywhere, Treasure of good and Giver of life. Dwell within us, Lord hear our prayer. Cleanse us from ev'ry impurity. Save our souls, God of mercy.

Opening Scripture:

Summary of Scripture: Christ is among us, teaching us. Will we listen?

Questions for consideration:

- **Why do these things matter? Why should we know them?**

Today's Lesson: "What every Orthodox Christian should know"

God's Ten Commandments: (Given to us through Moses as recorded in Exodus 20: 1-17)

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 a likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. There are six days for labor, for doing all the work you have to do. When the seventh day comes, it is a day consecrated to 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 murder.
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 that which belongs to your neighbor.

The Two Great Commandments of God (Given to us by God through Moses, then summarized by Christ, as in Matthew 22: 34-40)

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. You shall love the neighbor as yourself.

The Beatitudes (God tells us how to live, aka "The Nine Commandments of Blessedness", found in Matthew 5: 3-12)

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
3. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
5. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
6. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
7. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
9. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for(S) so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Church Commandments

The life of an Orthodox Christian is based on Holy Tradition and may be summarized in the following precepts:

1. Observe the ecclesiastical Holy Days
2. Attend Church services on Sundays and Holy Days.
3. Keep the Fasts prescribed by the Church.
4. Confess our sins and receive the Holy Eucharist (*Communion*) at the very least once a year, during the Great Fast, but preferably a minimum of four times a year, during each of the Church's fasting periods.
5. Abstain from holding marriage feasts or parties during days of fasting.

Truths of the Faith

- There is but one God, who created and governs all things.
- In God there are three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: the All-Holy Trinity.
- The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born of the Ever-Blessed and Most Pure Virgin Mary and from Her received human flesh, becoming Man. He suffered and died on the cross for us and for our sins, was buried and resurrected on the third day and after forty days ascended into heaven to sit at the Right Hand of the Father.
- The Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father, descended on the Apostles and abides continually in the body of Christ, His Holy Church.
- The grace of God and faith, in harmony with good works, are necessary to attain salvation.
- After death, human souls are either in a state of bliss with the saints, prepared before all ages by our Heavenly Father, or in a place of suffering prepared for the devil and his angels.
- The Church, which Jesus Christ established while He was on earth and of which He is the Head is governed through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, through the Bishops and is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.
- The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

The Holy Mysteries (*Sacraments*) instituted by Jesus Christ

Holy Baptism, Holy Chrismation, Holy Repentance, Holy Eucharist, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders (*many other sacramental acts of the Church are also considered to be Mysteries/Sacraments – the blessing of water, Christian Burial, etc.*)

Seven Christian Virtues

Faith, Hope, Love, Wisdom, Justice, Patience, Temperance,

Seven Bodily (*corporal*) Acts of Mercy

To feed the hungry; to give drink to those who thirst; to clothe the naked; to give shelter to the traveler; to visit the sick; to visit the imprisoned; to bury the dead.

The Seven Spiritual Acts of Mercy

To convert sinners to the path of righteousness; to instruct the ignorant; to advise the doubtful; to comfort the sorrowful; to bear personal wrongs patiently; to forgive offenses; to pray for the living and the dead.

Major Sins and their Opposite Virtues

Pride	Humility
Greed	Generosity
Adultery	Purity
Envy	Benevolence
Impulsiveness	Moderation
Anger	Kindness
Laziness	Diligence

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Being unrepentant of one's sins even to death. A conscious adversity to God. Denouncing or renouncing the grace received in the Holy Mysteries.

Other Useful Instruction

- About the sign of the cross and the veneration of icons
- About local practices (dues, envelopes, prayers of intercession, kneeling, candle procedures, etc.)
- How to Grow in Love: Pray. Participate in the Mysteries. Read the Scriptures. Select edifying media. Surround yourselves with good role-models. Practice Charity (both thoughts and deeds). Practice Forgiveness. Ask questions and submit to the teachings of Christ.
- We are saved in Community in Christ. Grow in and with your local parish.

God is Great. He loves us. He wants all good things for us. He has given us The Way. Will we follow Him?