

Some Orthodox Terminology*

Adoration (Gk. *latría*). Worship reserved for God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit alone. *Veneration* (Gk. *proskynesis*, honor) is given to the Saints, Angels, as well as holy objects through which God communicates His grace.

Altar Table. (Gr. *Hagia Trapeza*; Sl. *Prestol*). The square table in the middle of the altar, made of wood or marble, on which the Eucharist is offered. It is dressed with the "Altar Cloth," and contains the relics deposited there by the consecrating bishop. The center of the table is occupied by the folded *Antiminsion*, on which the ceremonial gospel book is placed, and behind it is the tabernacle with the "reserved gifts."

Antidoron. (Gr. "instead of the gift"). A small piece of the altar bread (*prosphoron*) distributed to the faithful after the celebration of the Eucharist. Originally it was given to those who could not take communion, but it became a practice for it to be offered to all the faithful.

Apostolic Succession. The direct, continuous, and unbroken line of succession transmitted to the bishops of the Church by the Apostles. The bishops, who form a collective body (that is the leadership of the Church), are considered to be successors of the Apostles; and, consequently, the duties and powers given to the Apostles by Christ are transmitted through "the laying-on-of-hands" to the bishops and priests who succeeded them by ordination (*cheirotonia*) to priesthood.

Byzantine. Referring or attributed to Byzantium, the ancient Greek city on the Bosphorus, which later (331 A.D.) became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, and then of the Medieval Greek Empire of Constantinople. Its people are known as Byzantines and its cultural heritage as Byzantine (i.e., Byzantine art, the Empire, church, architecture, music, etc.).

Canon. (Gr. "rule, measure, standard").

1. The Canon of the scriptures or the official list of books recognized by the church as genuine and inspired by God.
2. The Canon of Matins (a collection of hymns consisting of nine odes, the Heirmos, and sung at the Matins Service, the Orthros).
3. The Liturgical Canon which refers to all liturgical material, including the Creed, used for the Liturgy and the consecration of the Eucharist. (see also *kanon* and *Typikon*).

Catechumen. (Gr. "those who learn the faith"). A convert to Christianity in the early church, who received instructions in Christianity, but was not yet baptized. Catechumens were permitted to attend the first part of the Eucharist (Liturgy of the Catechumens), but were dismissed before the Consecration of the Gifts.

Catholic. (Gr. "universal, concerning the whole;" Sl. *Sobomaya*). A term describing the universality of the Christian message, claimed to be exclusively theirs by the Orthodox Church. However, in the West, it has come to mean the Roman Catholic Church (vs. Orthodox Church).

Celibacy. The unmarried state of life. Unlike the Roman Church, Orthodoxy permits a clergyman to be married; however, his marriage must occur before the ordination to a deacon or presbyter. Orthodox bishops are only chosen from the celibate clergy, but widowers, who have accepted monastic vows, may also be chosen.

* Adapted from the website of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, 2002.

Chant. (Gr. *echos*; Sl. *glas*). The music proper to the Orthodox services. There are eight tones or modes in the Orthodox Byzantine chant, chanted by the chanters or cantors.

Cherubic Hymn. (Gr. "the song of the angels"). Liturgical hymn sung after the Gospel-reading and during the Great Entrance. Its text in English is as follows: "*We, who mystically represent the Cherubim, And chant the thrice-holy hymn to the Life-giving Trinity, let us lay aside all earthly cares that we may receive the King of all, Who comes invisibly upborn by the Angelic Hosts.*"

Chrism. (Gr. *Myrron*). Sanctified oil composed of several ingredients and fragrances, used in the sacrament of Chrismation (after Baptism).

Communion . (Gr. *koinonia*). The receiving of the sacrament of the **Eucharist** after proper preparation, fasting, and confession. Orthodox Christians are encouraged to receive communion as often as possible, even daily.

Council, Ecumenical. (Gr. *Synodos*; Sl. *Sobor*). Assembly of representatives from all church jurisdictions convoked for the settlement of ecclesiastical or doctrinal problems and disputes. The Orthodox Church recognizes the following seven Ecumenical Councils:

1. **Nicaea**, in 325. Fathers present, 318. Condemned Arianism, defined divinity of Christ, and composed first part of Creed.
2. **Constantinople**, 381. Fathers, 180. Condemned Apollinarianism, defined divinity of Holy Spirit, and completed the Creed.
3. **Ephesus**, 431. Fathers, 200. Condemned Nestorianism and defined the term *Theotokos*.
4. **Chalcedon**, 451. Fathers, 630. Condemned Monophysitism.
5. **Constantinople**, 553. Fathers, 165. Condemned heretics and pagans.
6. **Constantinople**, 680. Fathers, 281. Condemned Monothelitism.
7. **Nicaea**, 787 (again in 843). Fathers, 350. Condemned Iconoclasm.

Fathers of the Church. (Gr. *Pateres*). Pious and educated individuals, most of them bishops, who lived during the first eight centuries of Christianity. They wrote extensively, taught, explained, and defended the faith of the Church. The most important Orthodox Fathers are: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and St. John of Damascus.

Filioque. (Lat. "and from the Son"). Theological term referring to the procession of the Holy Spirit. Its insertion in the Creed by the Roman Church (1009 A.D.) became one of the main causes for the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches.

Hesychasm. spiritual movement in the Byzantine Empire (fourteenth century) developed on Mount Athos, Greece. The term means "to be quiet" and signifies the system of spiritual development through meditation, contemplation and perfection to the degree of absolute union with God (*theosis*). It is one of the forms of Orthodox Mysticism and is still practiced in the Orthodox world.

Iconostasis. (Gr. "an icon-stand"). In the Orthodox Church the term signifies:

1. The stand on which the main icon of the Patron Saint of the church is placed for veneration.
2. The screen separating the sanctuary or altar from the church proper and adorned with various icons. There may be two or three tiers of icons in an iconostasis, but the main tier must follow a certain iconographic form as following (from north or left side, to south): the icon of the Patron Saint of the church; the Virgin Mary, Christ, and St. John the Baptist.

Jesus Prayer. A short prayer that the Orthodox constantly repeat to practice devotion to God; the tradition of repeating this distinctive prayer was developed in Orthodox monasteries. The text of Jesus Prayer is: "*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.*"

Logos. (Gr. "word"). A symbol for Christ, the word incarnate, or "word made Flesh:" which is also called "the Word of God" (cf. John, 1:1-4).

Narthex. The vestibule area of the church, leading to the nave. In the early Church this area was as signed for penitents and those who were not yet baptized (catechumens).

Nave. The center, the church proper of an Orthodox Church, where the faithful remain to observe the liturgy and other services.

Orthodox . (Gr. "correct or true belief"). The common and official name used by the Greek Christians and Eastern Christian Church. The Orthodox Church maintains her belief that she alone has kept the true Christian faith, complete and unaltered.

Pantocrator. (Gr. "He who reigns over all; almighty"). One of the appellations of God. In Orthodox art, Pantocrator is the name of the fresco decorating the center of the dome, depicting Christ as the almighty God and Lord of the Universe.

Relics. (Gr. *Leipsana Agia*). The remains from the body of Saint or even a Saint's possessions, such as clothes or vestments. The relics are honored and venerated by all Orthodox. Upon the consecration of a new church, the consecrating bishop embeds holy relics in the Altar Table, following the ancient traditions of the church in performing the Eucharist on the tombs of Martyrs.

Sign of the Cross. The Orthodox make the Sign of the Cross to signify their belief in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for man's salvation. It is made by the right hand in a cruciform gesture touching the forehead, chest, right and left shoulders with the tips of fingers (the thumb, index and middle finger joined together as a symbol of the Holy Trinity, the ring and little finger touching the palm as a symbol of the two Natures of Christ).

Tabernacle. (Gr. *Artophorion*; Sl. *Darochranitel'nitsa*). An elaborate ark or receptacle kept on the Altar Table, in which the Holy Gifts of the Eucharist are preserved for the communion of the sick, or for the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts during Lent.

Theotokos. Term given to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ, who is God. It became the means to affirm the divinity of Christ against the Nestorians, who were condemned at the 3rd Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431.

Tradition, Orthodox. (Gr. *Paradosis*). The transmission of the doctrine or the customs of the Orthodox Church through the centuries, basically by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Trisagion. (Gr. thrice-holy).

1. One of the most ancient hymns of the church used by the Orthodox in every prayer or service: "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy upon us."
2. Memorial Service performed by the graveside or in church for the repose of the soul.

Vespers. (Gr. *Esperinos*; Sl. *Litiya*). An important service of the Orthodox Church, held in the evening, which is mainly a Thanksgiving prayer for the closing day and a welcome of the new one to come the following morning.