

There are many books by leading Orthodox theologians and scholars on all aspects of the Orthodox Church and this leaflet series provides some basic information in the hope that it might prompt further enquiry.

**LEAFLETS IN THIS INTRODUCTION TO
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY SERIES:**

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All text in these leaflets is mine except where indicated, therefore any errors of fact or in grammar are mine. I should be grateful to have those errors pointed out so that corrections can be made.
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"The Orthodox Churchhas preserved unadulterated the first and most ancient ecclesiastical tradition and teaching, has avoided innovations and personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and dogmas of the faith, and is administered according to the ancient synodical system under local bishops in collaboration with the faithful and successive groups of both local and broader episcopal synods, of which the highest is the Ecumenical Synod, that of the Orthodox worldwide. The basic administrative canons, the details of which are regulated according to local needs, have been determined by the seven ecumenical synods. The Church is not managed by regional states in which it resides, although it collaborates in good works when asked to do so.

Within the entire Orthodox Church there is absolute cooperation in goodwill and mutual respect. Perchance minor human problems are addressed successfully through the application of the evangelical spirit."

*Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, from
"Encountering the Mystery."
ISBN 978-0-385-51813-0*

Orthodox Community of Archangel Michael
and Holy Piran, Cornwall.
www.orthodoxincornwall.org.uk

In the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.
Exarchate of Western Europe and Ireland.
www.thyateira.org.uk

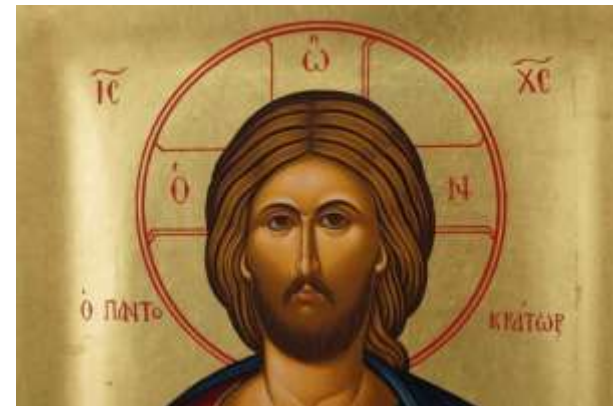
Ecumenical Patriarchate.
Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριαρχεῖον.
www.ec-patr.org



Agia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) Constantinople.

Fr.N.11..25

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity: The Laity.



But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
1st Letter of Peter Ch2 v9.

The Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of Holy Baptism, Chrismation, and Holy Communion, bring us into the family of God and whilst within the Church there are different ministries and tasks performed, all are within this great and royal priesthood of believers.

"I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that the clergy and laity are inseparable, and so the relationship between them has never stopped evolving since the foundation of the Church. Christ is the Head of the Church. We are members of his Body and sharers in his diverse gifts which he always richly bestows upon his servants for the renewal, purification and sanctification of his Church."

+Gregorios, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain. Twenty Years as Archbishop 1988-2008. Volume 2, page 396.

Looking at the many images of Orthodoxy on the internet, one might be mistaken for thinking that the Church is those in Holy Orders, since photographs so frequently show clergy – bishops, priests and deacons – perhaps presiding at the Liturgies of the Church. But it is perfectly clear that the laity (Greek λαός = people, nation, make up the vast majority of participating Church membership).

From the New Testament Scriptures we are able to see how this developed in the early Apostolic Church and how it continued and is evident to this day in Holy Orthodoxy.

For example, the Holy Apostle Paul in the 12th chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthian Christians lists the gifts of service in the Church as being of the grace of the Holy Spirit and that these gifts differ from one person to another working together for the unity, peace, and mission of the Church.



"Again we pray for those who bring offerings and do good works in this holy and venerable temple, for those who serve and sing and for the people who are present who wait for your great and rich mercy." A litany petition.

In the small picture above, we can see singers, servers, readers, clergy, all together in worship. Worship which unites a community, made up of all ages and personal situations. There will be administrators and others with practical and leadership abilities, all additional to secular skills and employments, where each will bear witness to faith in Christ.

A final word (for this leaflet!) from Saint Nikolai Velimirovic. On Ephesians 4:4.

The Holy Apostle exhorts the faithful to be one body and one spirit. By 'one body' is understood one faith, without division, heresy or self-will, the whole Church being one Body, whose Head is Christ. By 'one spirit' is understood love, the ardent love of all the faithful for Christ, from which flows love for one another. May the many be one; may many become as one. This is the wonder of Christian faith and Christian love. There is no power in the world that can make a stronger bond; neither common blood, nor a common language, nor a common hearth, common parents or any sort of common material interest – none of these can come near to being as strong a bond of Christian faith and Christian love. By this power and irresistible bond are all the members of the Church united among themselves. The Church of God stands as one, in time and in eternity – one body and one spirit. To this wonderful unity nothing can so oppose itself as pride. Pride warps faith, cools love, creates heresy, divides the Church and sacrifices the general good for individual convenience.