

The Symbol of Faith

The Creed, sung during the Divine Liturgy, is one of the most ancient prayers of the Orthodox Church. It was composed, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by the Fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils (Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381), respectively), at a time when various heretical doctrines attempted to overthrow the true faith in the Trinity.

The main reason for the convening of the First Ecumenical Council was the appearance and growing strength of the false teaching of the Alexandrian priest, Arius. The basic theory of the Arians' false teaching was that the Son of God was created that His existence had a beginning.

The Second Ecumenical Council condemned the false teaching of the Pneumatomachi (Adversaries of the Spirit), whose chief representative was Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople. The Pneumatomachi called the Holy Spirit the servant and fulfiller of God's wishes as well as other names that were fitting only for the angels, and they did not recognize Him as a Hypostasis (Person) of the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Orthodox Church made a decisive stand to protect the purity of the Orthodox teaching of the faith, setting out the basic saving truths of Christian teaching in the Creed, which is a constant guide for all Orthodox Christians in their spiritual life.

The Creed itself is divided into twelve parts, seven of which were formulated at the First Ecumenical Council, the other five at the Second.

(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 of True God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made;

(3) Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

(4) And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried.

(5) And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

(6) And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;

(7) And He 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 Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spoke by the prophets.

(9) In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

(10) I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.

(11) I look for the resurrection of the dead;

(12) And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Concerning God's Essence and the Creation of the World.

The Fathers of the Church included in the Creed the most important truths of the faith taught in the Gospels. Here, in the first and second verses of the Creed, they stated the dogmatic truths about God's Essence and the Creation of the world. Through Divine Revelation, the Holy Church teaches us to believe in the One God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Tim. 1:17) in Three Persons, Who in the Holy Scriptures are called God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). God the Father is ungenerated and does not proceed from another Person. God the Son is pre-eternally generated by the Father. God the Holy Spirit pre-eternally proceeds from the Father. Nonetheless, all Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are equal in Divinity. The Triune God is The One Who IS (Ex. 3:14). He is Pre-eternal (Is. 41:4; Ps. 89:2), Infinite (Luke 1:33; Ps. 102:27), Everywhere-present (Omnipresent) (Jer. 23:24), All-Wise (Rom. 11:33), All-Knowing (Omniscient) (1 John 3:20), All-Good (Ps. 145:9), All-Righteous (Ps. 145:17), All-Holy (1 Sam. 2:2), and Almighty (Ps. 115:3).

By His Omnipotent Word He brought into being from non-being both the invisible and the visible world (Gen. 1:1). In the first place He created the Kingdom of His eternal glory, giving life to the most pure spirits, the angels (Job 38:6,7). At first all the angels were holy. Some of them, firmly established in holiness, love and striving after goodness, glorify God continuously (Ps. 103:20; Is. 6:3), and carry out God's commandments. Each Christian believer is given a Guardian Angel at Baptism. Other angels, who did not stand firm in goodness, sinned before God (Jude 1:6) and, remaining in evil, strive to subjugate men, too, to sin (2 Thess. 2:9), in order to drag them down to the same fate which they themselves suffer (Matt. 25:41). The leader of the fallen angels is called the Devil or Satan (The Adversary; John 8:44).

After He had created the incorporeal beings, the Triune God with His Words Let there be... created the whole visible world out of nothing (ex-nihilo) in six days that is, all the

host of heaven, the earth on which we live and all that surrounds the earth and finished His work of creation by creating man (Gen. 1:3-28), from whom proceeded the whole human race (Acts 17:26). The first man, created sinless by God's grace (Eccles. 7:29), was not only like unto the angels of God, but he was also made in the Image and Likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) from the moment of his creation that is to say, he possessed pure wisdom (Gen. 2:20,23), his will was directed towards doing good (Eph. 4:24) and his heart in the righteousness and holiness of truth burned with pure love for the One God, while his conscience was untroubled and at peace. When our first parents were like this, all the creatures which surrounded them were submissive and served them (Gen. 1:26), and the very place of their habitation was called Paradise (Gen. 2:8). The first man kept God's commandment and lived in constant joy and blessedness.

Concerning the Son of God the Savior of the World.

The teaching of faith in the Son of God the Savior of the World is to be found in the third to seventh articles of the Creed.

For the salvation of mankind was accomplished the great mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16), the mystery of His [God's] will (Eph. 1:9). The Only-begotten Son (John 1:18) of God, descended from Heaven, was made incarnate, was born of the Virgin Mary in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), and was made flesh (John 1:14). He took a human body without its sin, and a human soul, and became true Man without ceasing to be True God (Rom. 9:5).

Two Natures the Divine and the Human are united without confusion, unchangeably, indivisibly, and inseparably in the Person of Jesus Christ. Therefore He is called the God-Man (definition of the Fourth Ecumenical Council), and His Most-pure Mother is called the Theotokos (Mother of God) (Luke 1:43), who is more honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious, beyond compare, than the Seraphim.

Our Lord Jesus Christ manifested His divinity in His Gospel teachings and in His many miracles which no other man did (John 15:24), in which He revealed Himself as the Lord of the visible world (John 2:1-2, Luke 8:24; Matt. 14:26; Matt. 14:15-21); the Lord of human nature (Matt. 9:20-22; 14:35-36; Luke 4:40; Matt. 20:29-34; Matt. 9:32-35; 12:22; Luke 11:14; Matt. 8:1-3); the Lord of the invisible world (Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-40); and the Lord of Life and Death (Luke 7:11-16; Matt. 9:18-19; Luke 8:49; John 11:1-45). He also manifested His divinity through other signs and miracles that occurred at various moments of His life (Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22).

Yet, as Man, the Savior was exposed to various dangers (Matt. 2:13; Luke 4:29), deprivations and tribulations (Luke 9:58), to malice, humiliation, and persecution (Matt. 12:24; John 5:18) during His earthly life.

Having illumined men with the light of the true knowledge of God (John 1:18) and having disclosed the will of the Heavenly Father (John 6:40), Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, accomplishing the Divine Truth which had condemned sin (1 Tim. 2:6; John 1:29), endured mocking, abuse, the Passion of the Cross and death under Pontius Pilate (Matt. 26:47-75; 27:1-66). While His Body was in the Sepulcher, Christ descended into Hell, where He freed the souls of the righteous who had awaited His coming (1 Pet. 3:18-19; Eph. 4:8-9), and on the third day after His entombment was resurrected by the power of His divinity. During the forty days after His Resurrection, the Savior appeared many times to His disciples and continued to instruct them in the mysteries of His divine Kingdom (Acts 1:3).

Having accomplished our Redemption, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of His disciples, ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9) and sits at the right hand of God the Father (Mark 16:19) with honor and glory in the same Body in which He had been resurrected from the dead. The Lord ascended into Heaven as the God-Man, for as God He was always in Heaven and in every place of God's dominion (Ps. 103:22). After His Ascension the Savior was given all power in Heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), and through His Divine Providence He preserves His Church, in which He is present through Grace (Matt. 28:20), instructing and giving wisdom to her shepherds, through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), to administer rightly the word of Truth. Therefore Christ's Church cannot sin in Truth, for she is the pillar and bulwark of the Truth (1 Tim. 3:15) and the Kingdom of God on earth (Mark 1:15). This grace-bestowing Kingdom shall endure (1 Cor. 15:25) until the Lord Jesus Christ comes in His glory with His angels (Matt. 25:31) to judge the living and the dead (John 5:29), after which the Kingdom of Glory and Blessedness shall come, and of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:33).

Concerning the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Orthodox Church confesses the Holy Spirit as the True God, the Third Person (Hypostasis) of the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-Giving and Indivisible Trinity. The Church confirmed her hope and faith in the Holy Spirit as God in the definition of the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople, 381), which was convened to condemn, among other things, the heresy of Macedonius who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This definition entered into the Creed as the eighth article.

Holy Scripture testifies to the Holy Spirit while speaking of the very beginning of Creation: The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2). Further in Holy Scripture the Holy Spirit is mentioned frequently, disclosing His divine attributes. The Holy Spirit is the True God (Acts 5:3-4). He is glorified equally with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19), He is All-Knowing (John 14:26; 1 Cor. 2:10-11), Everywhere-Present (Rom. 8:9), Eternal (John 14:6), and Omnipotent (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

Creative activity is inherent in Him (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 32:6; Job 33:4), He regenerates souls, cleanses men of their sins and sanctifies them (John 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:11), and is the world's Providence (Ps. 104:30). The Creed calls the Holy Spirit the Giver of Life, because through His activity man becomes a partaker in life eternal in God.

The distinctive property of the Third Person of the Trinity the Holy Spirit is that He proceeds from God the Father, Who, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, confers His one nature upon the Son and upon the Holy Spirit alike, in Whom it remains one and undivided, not distributed, while being differently conferred; for the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is not identical with the generation of the Son by the same Father. The procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is eternal and comprises the Spirit's personal property, belonging to Him alone as the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Orthodox Church has always preserved and will continue to preserve unaltered the Undivided Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit's personal property the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father the definition of the Second Ecumenical Council and the teaching of the Church Fathers in the spirit and power of Holy Scripture. She preserves untouched the formulation of the Creed as set out by the first two Ecumenical Councils. The Fathers of the following Ecumenical Councils forbade any alterations in the Creed through addition or deduction of any new words.

As Holy Scripture teaches, the Father creates everything by the Son in the Holy Spirit. According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, it is the Father Who acts, but by the Son in the Spirit; the Son also acts, but as the power of the Father, inasmuch as He is from Him and in Him according to His own Person. The Spirit also acts, for He is the All-Powerful Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

The Holy Spirit participated with the Father and the Son in the creation of the world, for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth (Ps. 33:6), and of man (Gen. 1:26-27). The Holy Spirit bore witness of Himself through the Prophets and the chosen men of God, proclaimed the Lord's Truth and Will to God's people, and disclosed the coming Messiah in the prototypes: No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God (2 Pet. 1:21).

The action of the Holy Spirit never ceased in the world, but it was only with the coming of Christ the Savior into the world that the fullness of God's saving grace was made accessible to men. And from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace (John 1:16).

The Holy Spirit was revealed to the world in a special way on the day of the founding of Christ's Church Pentecost when He descended upon the Holy Apostles in the form

of tongues of fire (Acts 2). From that charismatic moment to the present the Holy Spirit abides in the Church as Christ Himself bears witness: And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16).

Everything in the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit. The action of His grace abides in every sacrament of the Church and extends to all forms of divine service. In the Holy Eucharist, the supreme sanctifying moment in the Church's daily liturgical service, the prayers and rites are linked, above all, with the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The Church prays that through Holy Communion we may commune with the Holy Spirit; that we, having partaken of the Holy Gifts, may bear the living Christ in our hearts and be temples of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

The Holy Church was founded by our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28). The purpose of Christ's Church is the salvation of man. It is only in the Church that full union of man and God takes place, and this union is the basic condition for salvation.

By His suffering on the Cross the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for human sin (John 1:29; Heb. 7:27) and by His Holy Blood He founded the Church (Acts 20:28), so that in her we might live by Him and for Him (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Therefore there is no guarantee of salvation outside of the Church.

We are brought to the Church by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; for the Lord said that He would found the Church on the confession of faith (Matt. 16:18). Members of the Church are justified by God's grace (Rom. 3:24-30) and saved by God's power (Rom. 1:16) through faith in Christ and His Resurrection (Rom. 10:9) and by works of faith (James 2:17-26).

The Church is One as the Lord Who founded her is One (John 10:18). The Church is Holy, for she lives, acts, and thinks by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 8:15; 9:17). The Church is Catholic, for her flock has one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32) and her catholicity is dominant. The Church is Apostolic, for she keeps the Apostolic Succession by the laying-on of hands upon the hierarchs (Acts 6:6; 14:23; 20:28), and sacredly holds the Apostolic Tradition (2 Thess. 2:15).

St. Paul calls the Church the mystical Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), and this definition of the Church as Christ's Body is not a symbol or abstraction, but an expression of the Church's real mystical life, indicating the real union of God and man in Christ.

On one hand, as founded by God, the Church received her being and exists outside the usual order of human life and cannot be compared with it because she is a phenomenon full of profound mystery. On the other hand, however, the Church is a

community of people united by their Orthodox faith, its doctrine, the hierarchy, and the Sacraments. The human side is changeable and imperfect, but the Church is Holy and Divine because she is sanctified by the Blood of Jesus Christ and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Who gives mankind true life in God.

The Church serves to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, for she was preordained by Christ to serve as a means of transfiguring the world in the Light of the Gospel Truth and to become the leaven for the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:33). The Church is the pillar and bulwark of the truth, for she is the Church of the living God, Who is Truth itself. Therefore everything in her is true the confession of faith, sanctification by the Sacraments, the bestowal of grace, life according to God life upheld by God in her, God's help and His promises. The words the pillar and bulwark express the truth's firmness, immutability, and changelessness.

The Apostles, like Christ Himself, teach only one Church; they teach the unity of all in God: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:4-6).

The unity of the Church is founded on the mutual love of all the members of the Church: If we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us (1 John 4:12). For it is precisely in that we share the bonds of love that we constitute the Church, the true Body of Christ, and for this reason the Lord commands us to love one another (John 15:17). It is by prayer offered in unity of spirit that the unity of the Church is achieved.

The unity of the Church exists by the power of the Divine Grace in the Holy Spirit. The unity of all the members of the Church with Christ and between one another exists in its highest form in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The unity of the Church is protected by the Canons of the Ecumenical Councils, the rules of the Holy Fathers of the Church, and Holy Tradition. The existence of Local Orthodox Churches does not contradict the unity of the Church. The fact that they are separate in their visible organization does not prevent them from being spiritually larger members of the one body of the Universal Church, or from sharing the One Head, Christ, and the one spirit of faith and grace. This unity is given visible expression by a single confession of faith and by communion in prayer and the Sacraments. The Local Orthodox Churches continually maintain Eucharistic

Communion, honor and respect the traditions of every Church, and always show one another their concern in mutual love.

If the Church is a unity, she is also divine and holy by her nature and essence. She was founded by our Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by His Passion and His Holy Blood. The Church is sanctified by the power of Christ the Savior's prayers (John 17:11-19). The Church is also holy by virtue of Christ's teaching. Through the glad tidings of the Gospel the Lord reveals His will to men, calls them to salvation and indicates the way to salvation and sanctity (Heb. 4:12).

The Holy Spirit, dwelling permanently in the Church, fills her with His sanctifying grace (1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit sanctifies man and awakens him to deeds of selflessness and sanctity (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Rom. 8:1-15). Divine service, the Sacraments, sermon, ritual, singing, fasting, prayer, icon, and architecture everything bears the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit and is directed towards the salvation of man.

The great assembly of Saints in the Orthodox Church is a living testimony to the sanctity of the Church. This is a proof of the reality of the life and action of Divine Grace in the souls of men. The Church is also holy through the lives of those of her children who, striving for Christian perfection, have devoted themselves entirely to the fulfillment of the will of God, of His Holy Commandments.

The extent to which a person preserves his sanctity is the extent to which he remains a member of the Church. Our sinfulness is outside the Church. Some individuals remain members of Christ's Church by virtue of the rudiments of the sanctity that is in them. That is why the process of the grace of salvation consists in our full sanctification, in the complete elimination of sin from the community of believers and from separate individuals.

Faith in the Church is not a substitute for faith in God. To believe in the Church is to believe that she is the mystical Body of Christ (Eph. 1 -22-23), that she is the concentration of grace on earth where man receives sanctification, and the abode of the grace of God throughout all ages, world without end (Matt. 16:18; 28:20; Eph. 3:21).

To have faith in the Church means to venerate in piety the true Church of Christ and to obey her teaching and commandments in the conviction that she is filled with the saving grace which guides and teaches us, and which pours forth from her One, Eternal Head our Lord Jesus Christ.

Because she is the Body of Christ the Church is fully in possession of all that is required for man's sanctification and salvation through grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Founder of the Church, Who taught men to have faith, love and charity, bade men above all to have faith in Him as their Lord. And as no man can say that

Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3), we must commune in the shrine in which the Holy Spirit permanently abides, and which we call the Church.

Faith in Christ leads us to the Church, and life in Christ is life in the Church. Thus, he who does not believe in the Church does not believe in God either. The Christian's life is impossible without faith in the Church, without abiding in the Church. It is impossible to understand Christ's teaching and to commune with Christ without the Church, for our salvation is not just the reward for a righteous life, but also consists in the gradual merging of our life with the life of the Church, that is, the Body of Christ. The Church regenerates and renews all those who enter her and she vitalizes and elevates man, making him fit for a new holy life in Christ.

There is nothing accidental or arbitrary in the Church. Everything in her takes place through God's ordination. All that has been prescribed by the Church is and must be law for each and every one of us. The Christian also believes in the Church because obedience to the Church is obedience to God, and by serving the Church he serves God and earns His approval.

The Lord inspires man with faith in the Church through His grace by drawing him into the life of the Church. The Christian feels the power of Divine Grace acting upon him through the Holy Sacraments, the rites and the whole order of Orthodox Church life; and as he lives this life man attains an unshakeable conviction of the truth of his faith in the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Concerning one Baptism for the Remission of Sins.

Man becomes a child of the Church through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Baptism is the door to Christianity, the beginning of life in God. Baptism restores the image of God in man and bestows the saving power of Christ's redemptive feat on him. Through Baptism the Christian receives access to all the Holy Sacraments and acts of grace of the Church, which lead him to deification.

Baptism is called the second birth because in it a man dies to his sinful life and is reborn into a new, spiritual, holy life, in which he puts on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). Through Baptism men are reconciled to God, cleansed from the impurities of sinful acts by the Divine Spirit, and become fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), and children of God (John 1:12).

Just as the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon the Lord Jesus Christ during His Baptism in the River Jordan, so is every Christian endowed with Divine Grace in a mystic way during his Baptism. St. Peter says: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Through the action of God's

sanctifying grace in the Sacrament of Baptism all the sins of the person being baptized are forgiven. Man's sinful state is totally eradicated by Baptism, and his sins are washed away as if they had never existed. The newly-baptized leaves the font as a new creature.

Our Savior says: Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Baptism, therefore, is necessary for every man who enters the Church. Only through Baptism can infants be cleansed of Original Sin and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. They are baptized according to the Lord's words: Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:14); on the basis of Apostolic Tradition, and according to the faith of their parents and godparents.

All the saving actions of Divine Grace are indivisible in the Sacrament of Baptism. Grace, by regenerating man, cleanses him from all sin, justifies and sanctifies him. And, by justifying and sanctifying him before God, Divine Grace makes him a son of God, a member of the Body of Christ the Church and an heir to Eternal Life.

Water is the substance used in the Sacrament of Baptism. Man has long associated water with the concept of a life-giving, regenerating power that cleanses and revives nature, a power vitally necessary for human life. Therefore water in the Sacrament of Baptism is the best symbol of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which cleanses man of sin and regenerates him.

Baptism is administered by triple immersion of the one being baptized, with the intoning of the Holy Name of the Triune God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit Who bestows the power of grace to the Sacrament. The Church always administers Baptism, as Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20), through the invocation of the Threefold Name. The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles, one of the oldest Christian writings (1st-2nd Centuries), says in Chapter 7: Baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And, as St. Athanasius the Great says, He who takes anything from the Son, or the Father and the Son, without the Spirit receives nothing...for attainment is only in the Trinity.

The Creed, just as St. Paul (Eph. 4:6), calls us to confess one Baptism. This is because regeneration through grace (is born again John 3:3), that man experiences in Baptism, is unique and unrepeatable, just as his natural birth is unique and unrepeatable, and just as Christ's Death and Resurrection are unique.

A Christian should confess his baptism through a life pleasing to God, for Christ our Savior says: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Therefore a man's visible, external life is a reflection of his inner, spiritual life. The Sacrament of Baptism lays the

foundation for a new life of grace, and the perfection of this life with the help of Divine Grace is the task of every member of the Church. For a Christian the path to the confession of the grace-bestowing gifts of Baptism lies through living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:15-16), a life according to faith (James 2:20), membership in Christ's Church, and a constant sense of prayerful repentance (Heb. 13:15; Acts 17:30).

St. Paul tells us: without faith it is impossible to please [God] (Heb. 11:6). The basis of the Christian's spiritual life is faith in Jesus Christ, in the Triune God, in the Divine Economy of our salvation, and in the Holy Orthodox Church. Living faith in Christ perfects the Christian, makes him wise and firm, and gives him joy and the life eternal (James 1:4-8, 12).

In addition to his heartfelt faith in Christ, the Christian should confess his Baptism through his life in faith. A Christian life is a constant struggle against sinful temptations, a feat assisted by divine grace. In translating the Savior's Gospel into life, a Christian is serving the commandments of goodness and justice on the basis of the pure teaching of the Gospel.

A Christian can attain perfection in his spiritual life through constant prayer in church and at home. Prayer is a means of constant communion and union with God. It preserves a man from spiritual fall and maintains him on the path of spiritual ascension. Prayerful communion with God rewards the person praying with great spiritual consolations: an ineffable joy, peace and an inexplicable feeling of blessedness, which serves as a guarantee of our future total union with God in His Kingdom.

Prayer must be accomplished by a sense of repentance, which is the basis of a spiritual feat. Repentance is necessary to achieve a living faith in Christ and to maintain this faith. Without true repentance a Christian cannot attain a single virtue. A repentant feeling saves a man from many pitfalls on the path to salvation. Penitence is a second Baptism and renews the grace of our first Baptism; for he who truly repents and promises to turn away from sin is not only forgiven, but his sin is erased by God, as well, and he attains the purity and sanctity given him at Baptism.

The confession of Baptism through a deep, truly Christian spiritual life is only possible if a man is a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. In the Church he is made one with Christ. Christ our Savior not only revealed God to man and drew us closer to Him, but also showed us a perfect model of sanctity, what a man's inner, spiritual essence should be.

Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead.

Man is created by the Lord for life, and human thought cannot reconcile itself to the thought of death. Death was a consequence of the first man's sin, for as St. Paul says: sin came into the world through one man and death through sin (Rom. 5:12). As a consequence of his sinful disobedience to God, man deprived himself of paradise and knew death. The Fall deformed man's inner, spiritual nature, as well as the entire visible world. The accord between human freedom and Divine Grace was destroyed, an accord through which man was directly called to deification. This break was so forceful that man could no longer return to this previous condition by his own power.

By His Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ conquered Death by death, and revealed to man the path leading from death and corruption to eternal life (Acts 2:24, 27-28; 2 Tim. 1:10). Although man remains mortal as before, death has no power over him; for it was defeated by the Risen Christ the First-fruits from the dead and the Author and Finisher of our own resurrection. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep... [so that] all be made alive... at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20-23). For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53).

By the words of the 11th Article of the Creed, I look for the Resurrection of the dead, the Holy Church confesses that through the action of God's omnipotence all the bodies of the dead shall reunite with their souls, come to life, and be both spiritual and immortal. The universal resurrection of the dead, as the Bible tells us, is linked with Christ's second, glorious coming (1 Thess. 4:16).

Resurrection of the dead was known in Old Testament times, too. The Prophet Job said: For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another (Job 19:25-27). The holy Prophet Ezekiel also prophesied the universal resurrection of the dead (Ez. 37:12,14).

By His Resurrection, Christ the Savior affirmed the truth of the universal resurrection of the dead. All of Christianity is founded on Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:14). Brought into communion with Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism, man becomes one whole with Him in the body of the Church, which is at once human and divine. As a result of this union of grace, the Christian partakes in both Christ's Resurrection and in eternal life. While man's spiritual link with Christ is established through Baptism, his physical unity with Him is accomplished through the Holy Eucharist (John 6:54-57). The Eucharist Christ's Body and Blood is a guarantee of resurrection. Christ's Resurrection is the beginning and guarantee not only of our resurrection, but of a universal renewal and transfiguration of all creation (Rom. 8:20-21).

The Orthodox Church's prayers for the dead are based on faith in universal resurrection and on the unity of the Churches Militant and Triumphant. By His Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ showed that death is not annihilation and non-existence, but the gate to life and immortality. The Christian looks on death as the transition to an eternal life.

Concerning the Life of the World to Come.

The Creed ends with this confident hope on the part of the Christian: I look for...the life of the world to come. By the life of the world to come the Holy Church means the life that shall be after the resurrection of the dead and Christ's last judgment.

A man is responsible to God for the life that he has been given. It is here on earth that, of his own free will, a man lays the beginning of that life which shall begin when his body dies. His fate after death depends on how he has lived his life on earth. If he has always been with Christ, joined closely to Him through the Holy Sacraments in His God-Man organism of the Church, then after his death he shall also be with God, ceaselessly experiencing the blessed and eternal joy of living communion with God which we who live on earth call in the words of Holy Scripture Paradise (Luke 23:43), the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God (Matt. 5:3-10,8,11; Luke 13:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:50), the house or the mansions of our Heavenly Father (John 14:2).

This ineffable joy of life in Paradise cannot be expressed in human language (2 Cor. 12:2,4); it derives from the fullness of knowing God and from the nearness of God. That is why Christ our Savior says: And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent (John 17,:3).

This joy is immutable, but it affects the human soul in different ways. The depth of perception of this joy by man's soul also differs. In My Father's house are many mansions (John 14:2), says Christ the Savior. There are many mansions, and all of these mansions, prepared for the souls of those saved and redeemed by the Son of God's death, are illumined by a light coming from God, the Source of Light, Life and Blessedness; and in each of these mansions the presence of our Savior the Lord can be felt, giving life and joy to those who dwell in it.

Only those who consciously and stubbornly disdain the call to repentance, the call to a life worthy of repentance, shall remain outside communion with God at death, deprived of Light and Grace (Luke 16:23; Matt. 5:22,29; 8:12; 22:13; Phil. 2:10).

We should not suppose that the attaining of eternal blessedness and the Kingdom of Heaven are goals in themselves for the Christian, the purpose for which he lives and towards which he strives. The blessed state in the life to come is a result of moral perfection, the deification of man, which he attains here on earth. The Savior says:

Seek first [the kingdom of God] and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well (Matt. 6:33).

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