

*I believe in Jesus Christ,
so why do I need the Church ?*

What is believing?

The word “believe” means to have faith, but *faith* is not a matter of mere understanding and believing in God in rational knowledge.

There is more to *faith* than just saying:
‘I believe’

After all, anyone can say ... I believe,
St James in his Letter (part of the Bible) says,
“even the demons believe and shudder” (2:19).

Nothing wrong with asking questions ...

- Several times in the Gospels, Christ tells us to strive! He assures us,
“for everyone who asks ... *receives*, and everyone who searches *finds*, and for everyone who knocks, *the door will be opened*”.
- If we are really sincere in our belief and really want to follow Jesus, then our *search* will ultimately lead us to *the Church*.

Faith is a personal experience of divine reality.

It is much more than just *belief in the Bible*.

- God’ s word is not *held captive in a book!*
- John's gospel concludes that "the world could not contain the books that would be written".
- And there are many things, like our knowledge of the nature of Christ, eg. the word, *ομοουσιος* is not found in the Bible.
- Lot of *misunderstanding* about Orthodoxy and the Bible.

In fact

The Bible *belongs to* the Church!

The Church *does not* belong to the Bible.

The Bible is a written testimony and a product of Holy Tradition.

- It took almost *340 years* after Christ to universally accept the canon of the Bible as we have it today.
- It was *the Church Fathers* who determined the *canonical books* of the New Testament.
- It is *the Church Fathers* who have explained the meaning of the various writings for all generations to come - *exegesis*.

*To accept the Bible without accepting the Church Fathers
& Holy Tradition is incomprehensible!*

So in believing ...

- To truly believe, we must have a personal *relationship* with Jesus Christ and we do this by becoming *followers!*
- It was for this reason that Christ *established the Church*.
- Church is the foretaste of the Kingdom of God
- it is heaven on earth
- Her mission is to sanctify the world and to *lead all people to salvation*.

The Church is the fulfilment of our Lord's words:

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mt 24:35), "... and on this rock I will build **My Church**, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16.18).

*We need the Church, because,
as we will see, the Church is the
'Ark of Salvation'*

So if we believe in Jesus, let's start with what He says:

- "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, ***and they died.***
I am the ***living bread*** that came down from heaven.
Whoever eats of this bread, ***will live forever;***" (Jn 6:48-50)

will live forever and added (when preaching in the ***Synagogue***):

- "Truly truly, I say to you, ***unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood***, you have ***no life in you***, he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood ***has eternal life***, and I will raise him up on the last day..." (Jn 6:53-5)

But, where do you get it?
Where do you get this ***Body and Blood of the Son of Man?***

This is not a TV commercial,

but the fact is,
you can only get it,
"exclusively"
in His Holy Church!!!

***And this gift of the Bread of Life is available
to each and everyone one us,
every time we celebrate the
Holy Eucharist!***

**After all,
who do you think started the Church?**

The formal Church was established with the ***blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and was consecrated by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.***

As, Jesus told His Apostles,

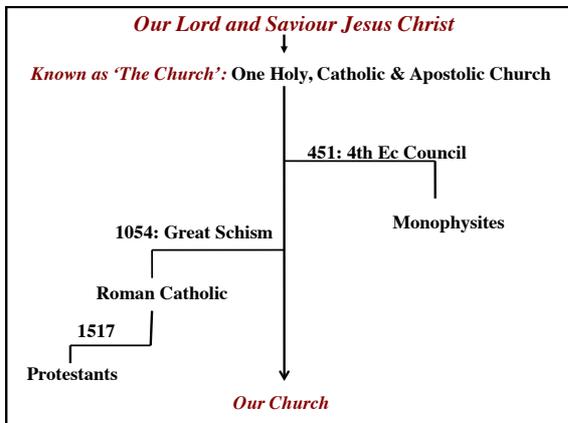
"The Holy Spirit ... will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I said to you" (Jn 14:26), and He added, "the Holy Spirit will guide you to all truth". (Jn16:13)

"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Lk 10:16)

But which Church?

We usually talk of Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Protestants, but the fact is, there are many many different churches that claim to believe in Jesus.

***There can only be
ONE TRUTH!***



St Leo:
*“that which was visible in
 the Redeemer, has now
 passed into the **Sacraments.**”*

- ### Holy Sacraments
1. Baptism
 2. Chrismation
 3. Confession
 4. Holy Unction
 5. Holy Communion (Eucharist)
 6. Marriage
 7. Ordination

- ### What do these words mean?
- **Sacrament** is a Latin word. In Greek the word used is **Μυστηριον**, meaning *“mystery”*.
 - **Eucharist** comes from the Greek word **ευχαριστια** meaning *“thanksgiving”*.
 - **Liturgy** comes from the Greek word **λειτος** which means *“λαος”* (people) - the Liturgy is the work of the people (**εργο του λαου**).
 - **Easter & Sunday** have *spiritual* meaning in Greek:
Πασχα - Passover
Κυριακη - the day of the Lord.

***Without the Church, we cannot have the Eucharist!
 And without the Eucharist, we cannot have the Liturgy!***

The Liturgy is the Mystery of Mysteries

The very essence of the Liturgy is Christ’s command:
“Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19)

***So if we believe,
 if we truly believe
 why aren’t we
 going to Church?***

Is it because:

- Services are too long (chanters take *hours*)
- “It’s all Greek to me” ..αβγδ ... ω,
- Other things to do, etc etc.

Or is because:

- *We do not understand* ✓✓✓

If we knew and understood that the Divine Liturgy embraces the Kingdom of Heaven and is:

- *Christ’s ministry, life, sacrifice and Resurrection*
- Full of *theology*
- Full of *symbolism*
- Where we can *receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ...*

then we should realise that we need *The Church!*

The Physical Church

- The early Christians gathered and worshiped in a liturgical manner similar to the synagogue order.
- Practice moved to the graves (the catacombs) of the Martyrs for celebration of the Eucharist.
- And we continue to do this, to this day

Today ...

- We celebrate the Liturgy on the Altar Table, which has the bones of the Saints ‘wax’ cemented into it.
- We have the *Αντιμηνσιο* (antimension) - a rectangular “cloth”, which represents the entombment of Christ and sits on the altar and can be used in the *absence of a consecrated altar* - it has sewn into it, portions of relics of saints.

Historical setting - Liturgy

- Last Supper (Gospels - Jesus Himself!)
- Book of Acts - *breaking bread*
- Clements of Rome (1st Century)
 - *Eucharistic prayer*
- Polycarp of Antioch (1st Century)
 - *Role of the Bishop*
- Tertullian (2nd Century)
 - 2 parts of Liturgy - *Catechumens and Faithful*
- Justin Martyr (2nd Century)
 - Early Order → *Typikon*
- Irenaeus of Lyon (2nd Century)
 - *Apostolic Succession*

So what we have today is the Liturgy as it became developed by the Fathers

- We can see from the very beginning, *the Liturgy is the Eucharist!*
- Developed by the *same Fathers* who put the *Bible* together.

So, to believe in the Bible and to believe in Jesus and not the Church and the Church Fathers is

absolutely incomprehensible!

The Sacrament of Confession also shows why we need the Church.

Christ Himself inaugurated the Sacrament of Confession

- Jesus told His Apostles:
 - “Whosoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whosoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt16:19 & 18:18)
- And again, after His Resurrection:
 - “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.” (Jn21:22-3)

This He passed on to His Apostles ...

But, who is the forgiveness for?

- Was it *only* for those living at the time of Jesus?
- Or was it for all people of *all times*?
- Christ came for all people of all generations and this continues to this day with the people who followed the Apostles - the Church elders, the *Bishops*.
- And so *once again*, we can see that:
this can only happen in His Church!

So, what can we say about our faith, our Church, today?

In essence, our Church is one and the same as the early Church - because we are linked with the past (Tradition), through Apostolic Succession

As St Paul says:

“Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.” (2Th. 2:15)

“remember ... and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.” (1Cor. 11:2)

And this Tradition continues to the present day the same spirit, the same faith, the same ethos, the very same being.

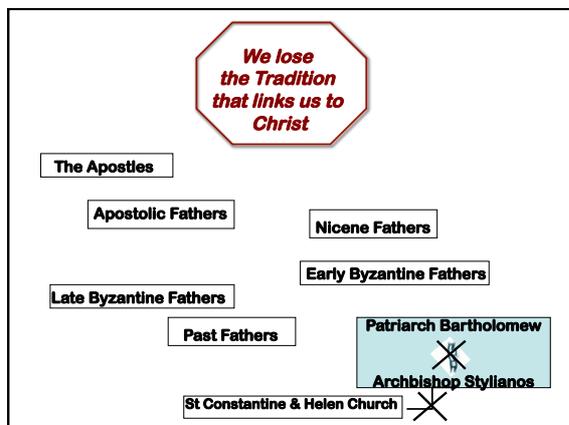
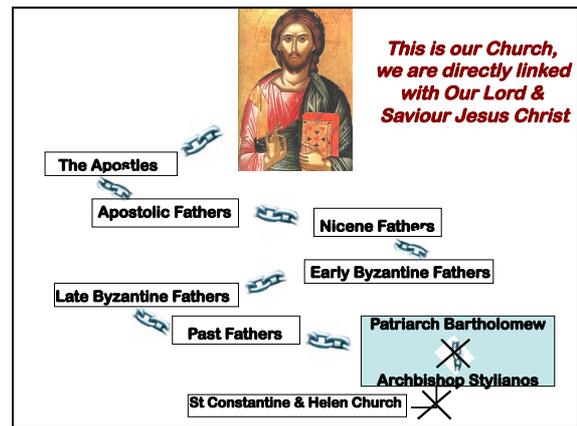
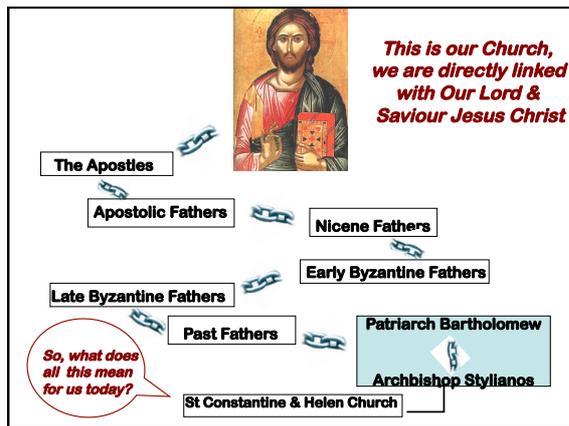
Apostolic Succession

- Known as *“Apostolic Succession”*, Tradition is passed down through the *Bishops*, who have succeeded from the Apostles,
- The word tradition comes from the Latin: *Tra-di-to*, which means *“handing down”*.
- In Greek, *παράδοση* - receiving and passing on.
- Apostolic succession - *Viva vox apostolorum* (vivid voice of the Apostles) and it is this that:
“guarantees the True Church & allows the Church to be infallible! It is the backbone of the Church”.
Archbishop Stylianos (Systematic Theology)

The Bishop

- Bishop is the *“Living image of Christ”*
Επι-σκοπος - literary means over & seeing (overseer)
- Where the Bishop is, there is the church
 - Without the Bishop there is no Mystery of the Church!
 - And only through the Bishop can a Priest celebrate the Mystery (⇒ ordination)
- Ordination of Bishop - 3 Bishops - “laying of hands”
- Patriarch, Archbishop, Metropolitan are titles - not higher ordinations - all these are *ordained Bishops*

Ordination – Bishop Iakovos



So, what can we say to conclude?

Orthodoxy is a way of life, living our life in the *Church* through the sacraments.

And, if we really believe

... then we need the Church because in every Divine Liturgy, *Christ Himself is truly present!*
Only in the Liturgy can we receive the
"Body and Blood of Christ!"

St Nicholas Cabasilas "if we are properly prepared (prayer, humility, fasting and confession), *nothing prevents us from being perfectly united with Christ*".

And this *perfection in Christ* can only be attained in the liturgy - *in His Holy CHURCH!*

We should enjoy the Liturgy & get involved!

- Start by bringing the *prosforo* and the *wine*,
- Also bring an Greek/English Liturgy book,
- When entering the Church, *light a candle* - this is like a small prayer - *Christ Is the Light!*
- Use our body - Sign of the cross, bow our heads etc
- Respond: *Αμην, Κυριε ελεησον*, etc.
- Sing the hymns, Recite Creed (*I believe*), Lord's Prayer

But do not upset the chanters!

And we thought we did not need the Church!

Abbot Vasileios, Mt Athos:

- *Those who think they know Christ outside the Church, know very little about Him; those who belong to the Church live "in Him"*.

St Cyprian of Carthage

- *"He who does not have the Church as his mother, does not have God as his Father"*.

"As the *prophets* beheld, as the *Apostles* have taught, as the *Church* has received, as the *Teachers* have dogmatised ...

This is the faith of the *Apostles*, this is the faith of the *Fathers*, this is the *Faith of the Orthodox* ...this is the faith that has *established the universe!*"

This is *our faith*. Having this wonderful *treasure*, let us preserve it, let us keep it, and let us follow it, so that this treasure becomes the *victory of Christ in us*. *Amen*.

Questions & Discussion