

**Saint Vladimir Russian Orthodox Church**  
**Learning Orthodoxy<sup>1</sup>**  
**Instructor(s): Reader Colin Bower, Father Dimitri Kaschenko**  
**Fall 2019**

Resources:

- The Law of God- Fr. Seraphim Slobodskoy
- Orthodox Dogmatic Theology- Fr. Michael Pomazansky
- Ccel.org (excellent Patristic resource)
- Fatheralexander.org (excellent missionary pamphlets)
- On Acquisition of the Holy Spirit- St. Seraphim of Sarov
- The First-Created Man- St. Symeon the New Theologian
- The Mind of the Orthodox Church- Met. Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

Introduction

It is the goal of this course to provide Orthodox Christians and inquirers with an explanation of the Orthodox faith. There exists a great need for adult catechism in the Russian Church Abroad, and this class will hopefully create an environment in which Orthodox adults foster a desire to learn about their faith in order to strengthen it and be witnesses to the world around them. Many outside of the Church desire to learn about the Orthodox faith, but it is often difficult to leave one's religious obligations on a Sunday to experience the Church's worship. This class will hopefully provide inquirers with a working knowledge of the Orthodox faith in an environment that provides answers to questions and resources for further study

Lesson Structure

The lessons will occur after the Akathist for the Ill on Wednesday evenings. Each lesson will consist of a lecture followed by questions and answers. We will begin the lesson by singing "O Heavenly King" and close with "It is Truly Meet" The entire lesson should be around 30 minutes long. Light refreshments will be served.

Syllabus

- **Week 1:** 9/18- What is the Orthodox Church?
  - "The Pillar and Ground of Truth"- The Church as the source of Truth.
  - What is Truth? Is truth subjective?
  - What is Dogma? Why does it matter?
  - THE Church vs. "churches"- Orthodoxy and other sects- one among many or the one and only?
- **Week 2:** 9/25- Who is God and why should I care?
  - God is unknowable in His Essence, we know Him through His Energies (activity in Creation)
  - God is One in Essence, Three Persons- Holy Trinity

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<sup>1</sup> "Learning Orthodoxy" is a pending title.

- Manifestations in OT
- Manifestations in NT
- The Persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- **Week 3:** 10/2- Who is Jesus Christ and why does this matter to my salvation?
  - “In the beginning was the Word”- The Divinity of Christ
  - The Incarnation- The humanity of Christ, fully God and fully Man
  - Why become man? The redemption of man and our deification (use St. Athanasius here)
  - The childhood of Christ
  - The earthly ministry of Christ, from baptism to Palm Sunday
  - Holy Week and Pascha narrative
- **Week 4:** 10/9- Who is the Holy Spirit and why does this matter to my salvation?
  - The third member of the Trinity.
  - “Who proceeds from the Father,” Divine Procession of the Spirit
  - “Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified,” on the equality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son
  - “Who spoke through the Prophets.” The Scriptures as revelation from the Spirit to man (i.e. the activity of the Spirit)
  - Pentecost- the action of the Spirit on the Church
    - The fullness of truth given to the Apostles (see Met. Hierotheos “The mind of the Orthodox Church” ch. 2.3c)
    - The acquisition of the Holy Spirit- the true aim of the Christian life (See St. Seraphim of Sarov’s “On Acquisition of the Holy Spirit)
- **Week 5:** 10/16- God and Creation.
  - “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
    - “God is the sole extra-temporal, eternal, self existing Being, the Source of all being”-Fr Michael
      - “I am the One who Is” -God is the One who Exists, He is above Creation and Exists before, during and after it. Creation exists in the sense that it was created by the One who Exists.
  - Creation as an act of the Trinity: The Father spoke, the Son fashioned, the Spirit gave life.
  - The inherent goodness of Creation
  - Why Create?
  - Of Angels
  - Of Man: the crown of creation
- **Week 6:** 10/23- Evil and the Fall.
  - Evil as non-being, a departure from goodness
  - The Fall: man is given free will, tempted by the devil and fell into sin (see St. Symeon, “The First-Created Man)
    - Suffering: chastisement for the fall and the means of preventing greater sin
    - Death: the consequence of departure from the source of Good- God

- The punishments of sin as natural consequences, not arbitrary punishment
      - Original Sin
    - The promise of redemption in the Fall
  - **Week 7:** 10/30- The Economy of our Salvation.
    - Jesus Christ: the Redeemer of Mankind
    - Salvation history before Christ
      - Israel, God's chosen people
      - Preparation of Man for the Savior
    - Jesus: God and Man
      - Why become man?
      - The saving work of Christ
      - The establishing of the Church
    - The work of the Holy Spirit in man's salvation: The life of the Church
  - **Week 8:** 11/6- The Virgin Mary in the role of our Salvation.
    - What does "Theotokos" mean
    - The ever-virginity of Mary
    - The life of the Theotokos
    - Joseph as guardian of Mary
    - The Theotokos and the Church
  - **Week 9:** 11/13- The Saints
    - Who are the Saints?
    - What makes someone a Saint?
    - The role of the Saints in the Church.
    - Our relationship with the Saints.
  - **Week 10:** 11/20- The attributes of the Church.
    - One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic
  - **Week 11:** 11/27- Thanksgiving break
  - **Week 12:** 12/4- The Sacraments.
    - What is a Sacrament?
    - Baptism, Chrismation and the Eucharist- the main sacraments
    - Confession- it's relationship with the other sacraments. The form of Confession.
    - Marriage and Monasticism- paths to holiness.
    - Holy Orders
    - Holy Unction
  - **Week 13:** 12/11- Prayer.
    - The breath of the Church
    - Corporate prayer (worship)
    - Private prayer
    - Unceasing prayer
    - Prayer for the dead
    - The intercession of the Saints