

Being Orthodox: Relationships

Servant Meeting 5/26/2024



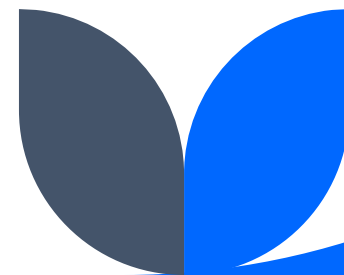
Orthodoxy and the Resurrection

“There is a famous story told about an important communist official from 1930s Soviet Russia. Nikolai Bukharin had helped to lead the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and became not only the editor of the famous Soviet newspaper Pravda but also a member the governing Politburo. Around Easter one year, he travelled to Kiev in Ukraine, where he addressed a huge assembly on the subject of atheism. Addressing the crowd, he derided Christianity, hurling insults, arguments and proof against this “opium of the people”. An hour later he was finished. He looked out at what seemed to be the pitiful remnants of his audience’s faith. “Are there any questions?” Bukharin demanded. Deafening silence filled the auditorium but then one man, an Orthodox priest, stood up and mounted the platform, standing near the communist leader. He surveyed the crowd, first to the left then to the right. Finally, he shouted the ancient greeting known well in the Russian Orthodox Church: **“CHRIST IS RISEN!”**. En masse the crowd arose as one and the response came crashing like the sound of thunder: **“HE IS RISEN INDEED!”**.”



“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “You shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You **shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
- Matthew 22:36-40**

“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”- Ephesians 5:19



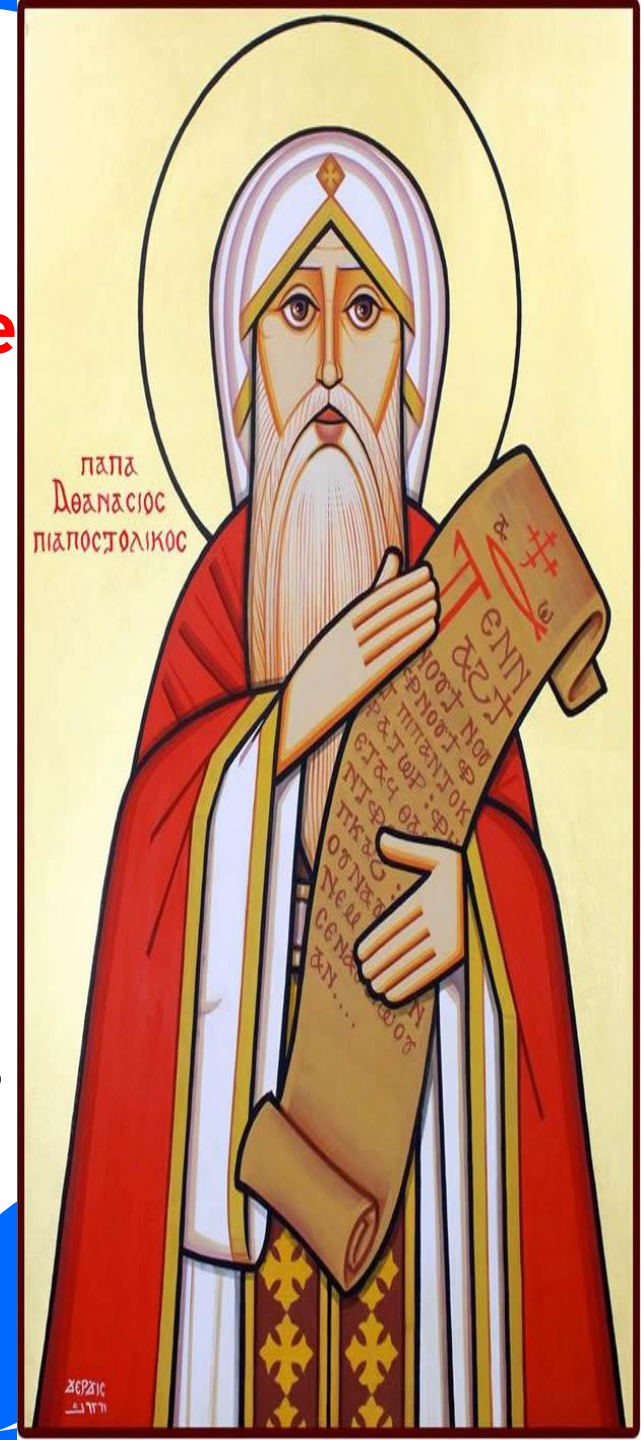
As St Athanasius the Great has said, **“Orthodoxy is what Christ taught, the disciples preached, and the fathers kept”**

The Fathers taught Orthodoxy, the Monastics lived Orthodoxy, the Martyrs perfected Orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy: Correct Faith and Worship

Orthopraxy: Right Glory ; Right Worship; Right Acts

Lex Orandi Lex Credendi

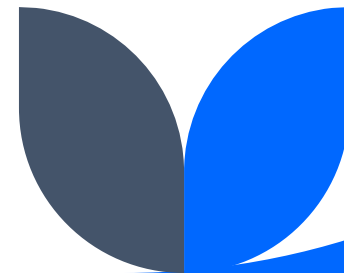


Common Complaints Against Orthodoxy

“The Orthodox are way too strict, and they need to be more open minded!”

“The Orthodox are way too mournful and sad all the time!”

“We are all one, and we worship the same God, what’s the big deal and the difference?!”



Orthodoxy and the Self

- Our relationship with the Self
- Self Emptying Kenosis; Humility; Repentance
- Humility vs Self-Esteem ; The World Focuses on the Ego without Christ (Self-Help Books etc.)
- Emotional Neutrality; The Self is not to be a slave to Emotions
- “but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” – Philippians 2:7
- “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”- Luke 15:7
- “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”- Philippians 4:13
- In his Third Letter, Saint Antony tells us, “He who knows himself knows God”
- Kenosis ->Theosis



Orthodoxy and Our Friends

- How did the early church relationships with one another look like?
- Aghapy Meal, Asking about One Another Spiritual Life
- No separation or compartmentalization
- Your life IS your Spiritual Life and Vice Versa
- St. Paul and his writings
- "Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ." -St. Anthony the Great
- "A friend is more to be longed for than the light; I speak of a genuine one. And wonder not: for it were better for us that the sun should be extinguished, than that we should be deprived of friends; better to live in darkness, than to be without friends"— St. John Chrysostom
- "One Christian is No Christian"
- Relationship between St. Athanasius and St. Anthony



Orthodoxy and the Service

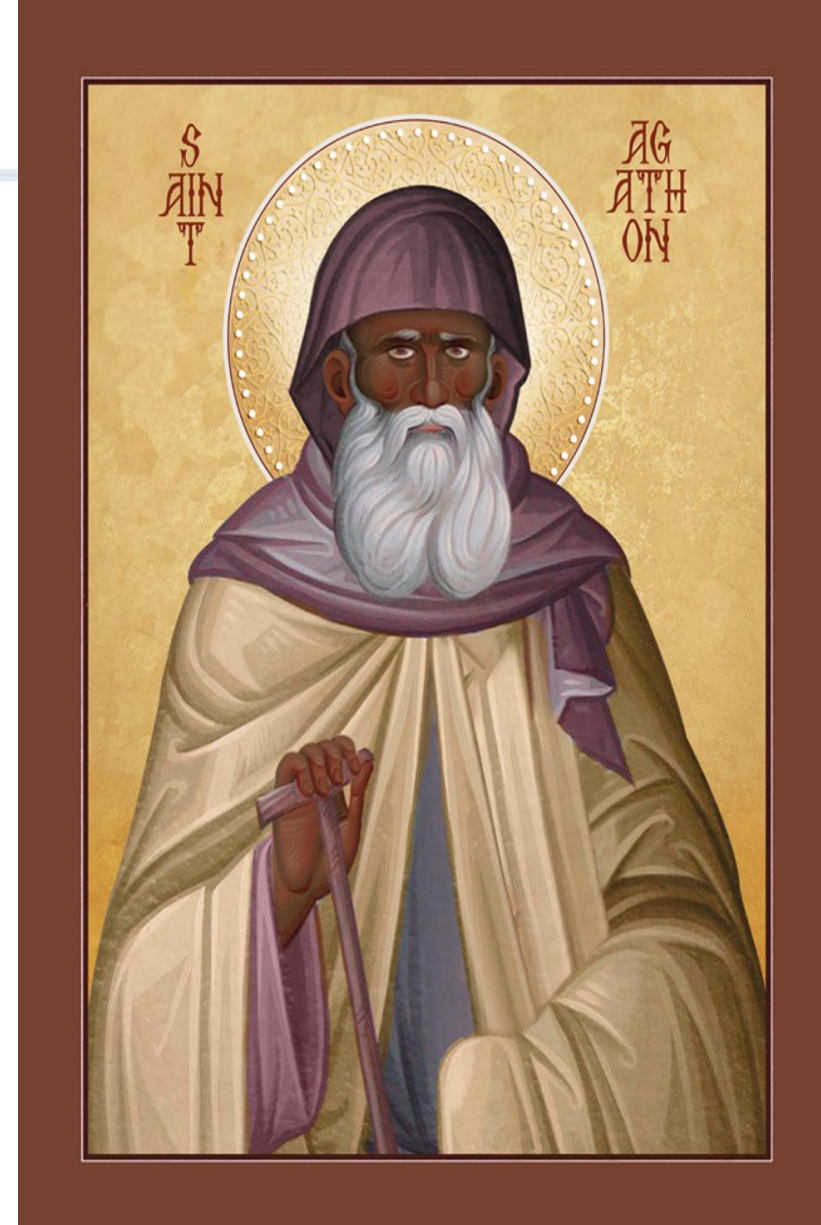
- Three Pillars
- Scriptures
- Patristics/Tradition
- Liturgy
- Every servant should be able to give an answer to those who ask from these three pillars
- All three are inseparable and a Trinity



Orthodoxy and our Enemies

- Who is our enemy?
- “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”- Matthew 5:43-44

- “Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?”- John 18:23
- “But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!” Jesus said to him, “It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” –Matthew 26: 63-64
- It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper they said to him, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and a proud man?' 'Yes, it is very true,' he answered. They resumed, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?' 'I am.' Again they said, 'Aren't you Agathon the heretic?' But at that he replied, 'I am not a heretic.' So they asked him, 'Tell us why you accepted everything we cast you, but repudiated this last insult.' He replied 'The first accusations I take to myself, for that is good for my soul. But heresy is separation from God. Now I have no wish to be separated from God.' At this saying they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified.



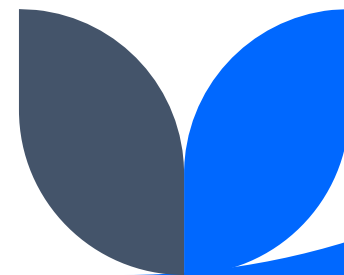
Ecumenism: The Heresy of our Time?

- What is Ecumenism? Are we all one? What does it mean to be united?
- “Ecumenical relations, also known as ecumenism, are the effort to seek Christian unity by cultivating meaningful relationships and understanding by and between the many different Christian churches and Christian Communities.”
- “..that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” – John 17: 20-23
- “There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” – Ephesians 4:4-6
- “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”- Galatians 1:8
- As Orthodox Christians we have to walk the line of being loving, dialoguing, but continuing to safeguard the truth
- Love should never compromise the Truth; Union for the sake of “love” without committing to the truth and faith is not true love (Marriage Example)
- **The Right Thing Done the Wrong Way is the Wrong Thing**



Final Thoughts

- “Orthodoxy is Orthodoxy” – HH Pope Shenouda III
- The interrelation between relationship with God, the self, and others and how they are inseparable
- Knowledge of Scriptures, Patristics, and Worship in the Liturgy
- Loving All but being committed to the Faith and the Truth
- Applying the Fathers, Living like the Monastics, and witnessing like the Martyrs
- Pray for all who we encounter, especially the Non-Orthodox and the Non-Christian be a witness to Orthodoxy in your relationships with them



Questions? Comments?

