

COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part I

*Classes meet Saturday afternoons from 3:30 until Vespers
Attendance at classes is required (if absent, listen to a recording of the class)*

1. The True God **October 29, 2016**
2. The Human Being **November 5, 2016**
3. On Sin **November 12, 2016**
4. Jesus Christ the Son of God **November 19, 2016**
5. Jesus Christ the Savior of the World **November 26, 2016**
6. Repentance and Faith **December 3, 2016**
7. The Holy Spirit **December 10, 2016**
8. The Church and the Virgin Mary **December 17, 2016**

Reading during this period:

- *The Orthodox Church*, by Kallistos Ware
- *The Faith We Hold*, by Archbishop Paul
- *Path to Sanity*, Dee Pennock
- *The Way of a Pilgrim* (many editions)

COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part 2

Classes meet Saturday afternoons from 3:30 until Vespers

1. The Mystery of Holy Baptism **January 28, 2017**
2. The Mystery of Holy Chrismation **February 4, 2017**
3. The Mystery of the Holy Eucharist **February 25, 2017**
4. The Mystery of Holy Confession **March 4, 2017**
5. The Mystery of the Holy Priesthood **March 11, 2017**
6. The Mystery of Marriage **March 18, 2017**
7. The Mystery of Holy Unction **March 25, 2017**
8. The Mystery of death and the funeral **April 1, 2017**
9. Overview of Holy Baptism—after Lazarus Saturday Matins **April 7, 2017**

Texts To Read (required):

- *Beginning a Life of Prayer*, Father Irenei Steenburg
- *Great Lent*, Father Alexander Schmemmann
- *For the Life of the World*, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Suggested Text:

- A. Makrides, *Mountain of Silence*

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Additional Comments

Once a person becomes a Catechumen, he or she can typically expect to spend nine to twelve months preparing to be received. Baptisms/Chrismations may also take place any other time of the year; usually they will occur on the following days: *Lazarus Saturday, Holy Saturday, Theophany, Pentecost.*

Prior to Baptism, a Catechumen will prepare a “Lifetime Confession of Sins” and make the confession in the months, weeks and days prior to joining the Church. I recommend the book *The Path to Confession, a book for family reading presented to children* and **Return** as the best tools for preparing for the Holy Mystery of Confession.

Following Baptism, the newly-illuminated will make a confession once a week for a period of a month.

I am requiring that all Catechumens participate in all the classes and the Saturday evening Vespers and well. During Great Lent, catechumens are also expected to attend the Wednesday evening Liturgy of the Presanctified, as well as many of the Holy Week services.

If you cannot come to a class, please get the recording for that class. It is our policy to receive into the Church only those who have completed the course in its entirety.

Hopefully, the catechetical course and worship will not be a burden to anyone.

Involvement in the Church Life

1. WORSHIP

The best “course of studies” for anyone in the Church begins and continues with the corporate prayer of the Church. **The following Services may be considered “obligatory” for the Orthodox Christian and the Catechumen preparing to be Orthodox:**

- the “base-line” minimum service of Saturday evening Vespers (the hymns focus on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and serve as a preparation for Communion)
- Sunday morning Divine Liturgies. Sunday is the Lord’s Day, and we are to keep it holy.
- The Orthodox Christian strives to sanctify time and the calendar by celebrating the glorious Festal Vigils and Liturgies of the Church year—consult the monthly calendar.

The worship of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is the greatest gift of God to mankind, and we learn how to worship in the Liturgical practice of the Church.

Corporate prayer is not complete without ***personal & and daily prayer***. We use the prayers in the Orthodox Prayer Book, the Jesus Prayer and our own personal prayers.

Part of the life of an Orthodox Christian, Catechumen or already received, are four further essential components: almsgiving, stewardship, fasting and forgiveness.

2. ALMSGIVING

Works of mercy is the giving of time, money or help—often in secret—to the poor, needy, hungry, destitute, or lonely. We are to be judged in this matter (See Matthew Chapt 25).

3. STEWARDSHIP and PARISH SERVICE

Stewardship is the giving of thanks to God, as directed by the Old Testament and Lord Jesus Christ and St Paul in the New Testament, by making a regular financial offering what God has prospered you. Scriptural passages in support of stewardship are too many to mention here. We are to give proportionally from what we earn.

4. FASTING

The Orthodox Christian fasts from meat and dairy products (animal products) on Wednesday and Friday. This is a “midnight to midnight” fast.

One also fasts prior to the Sunday Divine Liturgy, or the Divine Liturgy on any day, from all liquids, foods, cigarettes, etc. Medication and food with medication is of course allowed as needed. Speak to the priest in these situations.

Married couples abstain from conjugal relations on Saturday as well as every day during the Fasting seasons of Great Lent, the Nativity Fast, and the others. See the article *The True Nature of Fasting*, by Bishop Kallistos Ware for more information.

5. FORGIVENESS & LOVE

Essential to the life of a parish, with all of the interaction and common work, is the active pursuit of loving and forgiving others. “Forgive us our debts (or trespasses) as we forgive our debtors.” What more needs to be said?

These things listed above are just a small part of the change (the Greek word is *metania*) in the way of living and thinking that one attempts when becomes an Orthodox Christian. The Beatitudes (*Sermon on the Mount, St Matthew*) are guides to this change.

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Forms Completed:

- Biography/Personal Informational Sheet
- Patron Saint Form
- Renunciations & Affirmations
- Prayer Rule Form

Activities:

- Parish Service Commitment

- Confirm Godparent(s), and confirm that Godparents have proper materials for Great Saturday (cross, candle). **Godparents should not be married to each other.**

- Visit at least two other Orthodox Churches during catechumenate.

- Prepare and make life confession *at least two weeks* prior to the baptism/chrisamation.

- Establish regular confession practice (start with every week for a month, then no less than once a month, or more often if needed)

- Attend Liturgical Services: required attendance at:
 - **Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesday evenings during Great Lent**
 - **Saturday evening Vespers**
 - **Sunday morning Divine Liturgy**

- Obtain a baptismal robe (see Fr. Lawrence)

- Review the Baptism/Chrismation Service 1x per week in Lent – see link below
http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/baptism_e.htm

MY PERSONAL PRAYER RULE

Prayer

"But as regards prayer, it is certainly our bounden duty to use it every day, morning and evening, before and after both dinner and supper, as far as possible, at the beginning and ending of every work" (Q&A #551 The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox Church - by Metropolitan Philaret, 1830).

- When will you privately pray during each day?
- What will you pray?
- Where will you pray?
- What non-obligatory services will you attend at Church? (Sat., Sun., Great Feasts & Holy Week may be considered obligatory)

Scripture

- When will you read Holy Scripture?
- What will you read when you read it?

Fasting

- Do you know and are you keeping the Church standards for fasting?
- Do you need to fast from anything particular other than that expected of every Orthodox Christian?

Almsgiving

- The giving of Alms/Works of mercy to the poor & needy is taught by the Scriptures. Do you give?

Stewardship/Tithing

- Your "thank-offering" to God is NOT charity or alms, but is *Stewardship* or *Tithing*. Besides your tithe are there areas of service you wish to make an offering to God on a regular basis?

Confession

- When will you begin to make your *life confession*?
- How will you prepare?
- How often should one confess?

Renunciations and Affirmations Form

Exercise: Use the chart with two columns. In the column on the left write down beliefs that you have always had, that you now know to also be Orthodox. In the column on the right write down the beliefs that you now understand to be in error. Be thorough.

At the same time it is of the utmost importance for converts to realize that wherever truth is found, it is authored by God Himself. In virtually all religious traditions there are true beliefs and practices, and in some there are many. In the procession of conversion the catechumen should also be able to identify and appreciate the Orthodox elements of his previous confession and be genuinely thankful for them. It is very important to avoid a critical and negative spirit.

Write the Name of Your Former Confession Here _____

Orthodox teachings that you have always believed

Heresies / Errors that you now recognize

1 _____

1 _____

2 _____

2 _____

3 _____

3 _____

4 _____

4 _____

5 _____

5 _____

6 _____

6 _____

7 _____

7 _____

8 _____

8 _____

9 _____

9 _____

10 _____

10 _____

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Catechumen Personal Information Sheet

Name _____
First Middle Last

Address _____

Phone Numbers _____, _____, _____
Home Work Cell

Email Address(es) _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Marital Status: *Married Unmarried Divorced*

Dates of Divorce(s) _____

Reasons for Divorce(s) _____

Father's Name: _____ Mother's **Maiden** Name: _____

Children: Please provide their full names, ages, and birth dates.

Employer: _____ How many years? _____

Education: High School _____ Graduation Year? _____
College _____
Major(s) _____ Post-Graduate _____

Describe your Religious Background:

Church/ Denominational Affiliation prior to Orthodoxy:

Most Recently _____ How long? _____
Past (in reverse order) _____

If Christian, were you baptized in your previous confession? _____

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Have you notified your previous confession to remove you from their membership rolls?

Do you have a criminal record? If yes, please explain.

Hobbies/ Interests:

Any other important information you would like the priest to know?

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Catechumen Patron Saint Form

All Orthodox Christians are given Christian names by Christ through his priests. The Christian name is the name of the person's patron saint.

The catechumen is encouraged to propose to the priest a patron saint as soon as possible. It is recommended that if the catechumen already has a Christian name that that name be retained and devotion to that saint begin, if not already in existence. The issue of naming is the prerogative of the priest so catechumens are required to make a proposal, and the priest will confirm the name.

What will be your Christian name with which you are received into Orthodoxy? _____

Who is this Saint? *Obtain a life of this saint and study it. Summarize it here.*

What is the date of your nameday? _____

What is the Troparion of your patron saint? Write it here.

What is the Kontakion to your patron saint? Write it here.

How does an Orthodox Christian celebrate his nameday?

STEWARDSHIP – Caring for what God has given

- OUR LIFE:

Let us commend ourselves, each other, and all our life unto Christ our God (from the Divine Services of the Church). Each day we make choices - some good and some bad. These choices are a measure of our stewardship of the life we have been given. The question we must ask ourselves is “How do I involve Jesus Christ in the choices I make each day?”

- OUR TIME:

Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming (Matthew 25:13). How much time we spend on things shows what we think is important. Good stewards offer the first and best part of their time to remember God and do His work. Some people might think “Most of my time each day is spent at school (or work). Does that make me a bad steward?” A good steward will transform even the most routine daily activities into small offerings to God.

- OUR BODIES & THE CREATION:

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have from God, and you are not your own (1 Corinthians 6:19). When we consider that our bodies and all of creation are a gift from God, living an unhealthy life and misusing His property is bad stewardship! By caring for our bodies and the creation around us responsibly, we give glory to God and can more effectively care for others.

- OUR TALENTS AND ABILITIES:

And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned but have not love it profits me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). God gives each of us talents and abilities. Regardless of how talented we are or how proficient we are at something, if these abilities are not used to fulfill Christ’s commandments to love God and our neighbor, they are worthless.

- RESOURCES:

Assuredly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance but she out of her poverty put in all that she had (Mark 12:41-44). God also gives us resources such as money to serve Him and to help others. Are we mindful of the Biblical standard of proportional giving? Each day we make choices—some good and some bad. These choices are a measure of our stewardship of the life we have been given. The question we must ask ourselves is “How do I involve Jesus Christ in the financial choices I make each day?”

STEWARDSHIP AND PROPORTIONAL GIVING are not once a year events; nor are they about money, or dues, or fund-raising or even meeting our annual parish budget.

Stewardship is about making choices, as individuals and as a community and about being grateful for the blessings we have been given by God. If we practice good Christian stewardship of money we will escape the trap of anxiety (and often selfishness). Poor stewardship of money will find us anxious and distracted when it comes to our faith.

I would like to participate & contribute to Parish Life

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

DATE: _____

Church Services & Support

- Sacristan Assistant
- Altar server
- Prospora baker
- Candle Desk attendant
- Church Reader
- Choir singer
- Church Cleaning
- Greeter or Usher
- Flower decoration for feast days
- Flower decoration for Sundays
- Sewing, Repairing vestments, Ironing

Youth Activities

- Elementary School age
- Middle School
- High School

Building & Grounds

- Buildings: Repairs & maintenance
- Grounds: Repair & maintenance
- Grass cutting/leaf raking
- Gardening
- Master Planning team

Communication

- Audio Recorder (sermons, retreats, etc.)
- Video Taping services or events
- Outside community advertising
- Phone tree
- Pamphlets, Flyers and signage (design/distribute)
- Archivist/photographer (events & Glendi)
- Bookstore attendant

Stewardship (time, talent & treasure)

- Parish Council
- Sisterhood
- Working at Rummage Sale/Special Events
- Charity Committee

Education

- Church school teacher or assistant
- Librarian/Library Assistant
- Retreat Organization

Hospitality, Fellowship & Outreach

- Kitchen Team (various tasks)
- Meal prep Sunday and/or Feast Days
- Sunday meal set-up
- Laundry
- Funeral Team (care for the dead)
- Mercy meals for the sick
- Visiting Shut-ins
- Pick-up/Drop off
- Food Bank
- Literature & Pamphlet rack
- Hosting Home Prayer and/or Bible Study
- Men's Fellowship Group
- Mother's Group
- Singles Group

Glendi

- Advertising
- Food booth team member (specify which booth you're interested in) _____
- Set-up assistant (electrical, parking lot, booths, etc)
- Take down assistant
- Signage – creating, set-up, take down
- Finances
- Supplies - manager or assistant
- Kids' area
- Church attendant
- Kitchen staff
- Parking

This is only a partial list. Feel free to include additional areas of involvement
