

Revised August 7, 2024

2024-25 COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part I

DATE	TOPIC
1. Saturday, Oct. 5	What is a catechumen
2. Saturday, Oct. 12	The True God
a. Sunday, Oct. 13	On St. Seraphim
3. Saturday, Oct. 19	The Human Being
a. Sunday, Oct. 20	Setting up a prayer corner
4. Sunday, Oct. 26	On Sin
a. Sunday, Oct. 27	Icons: Prayer and Theology
5. Saturday, Nov. 2	Jesus Christ the Son of God
a. Sunday, Nov. 3	Participation in the Liturgy
6. Saturday, Nov. 9	Jesus Christ the Savior
a. Sunday, Nov. 10	On Great Vespers
7. Saturday, Nov. 16	Repentance and Faith
a. Sunday, Nov. 17	On Proportional Giving
8. Saturday, Nov. 23	The Holy Spirit
a. Sunday, Nov. 24	Feast Days of the Church
9. Saturday, Dec. 7	The Church
a. Sunday, Dec. 8	Icons: Prayer and Theology. Pt. 2
10. Saturday, Dec. 14	The Virgin Mary
a. Sunday, Dec. 15	Monasticism
A.	Classes meet Saturday afternoons from 3:30 until Vespers. Attendance at the Saturday classes is required for Baptism (if absent, listen to a recording of the class)
B.	During Liturgy on Sunday, Catechumens are dismissed to attend a class in the library
C.	Reading during the first period of catechesis: <i>Know the Faith</i> —Fr. Michael Shanbour; <i>Come, Let us Worship</i> —Fr. Patrick O’Grady; <i>Gospel of St. Matthew</i>

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COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part 2

DATE	TOPIC
11. Saturday, Feb. 15 a. Sunday, Feb. 16	The Mystery of Holy Baptism First Week of Great Lent
12. Saturday, Feb. 22 a. Sunday, Feb. 23	The Mystery of Chrismation Lenten Services
13. Saturday, March 1 a. Sunday, March 2	The Holy Eucharist Preparing for Communion
14. Saturday, March 8 a. Sunday, March 9	The Mystery of Confession Preparing for Confession
15. Saturday, March 15 a. Sunday, March 16	The Mystery of the Priesthood Baptismal Sermon of St. John
16. Saturday, March 22 a. Sunday, March 23	The Mystery of Marriage Baptismal Sermon of St. John
17. Saturday, March 29 a. Sunday, March 30	No Class About Holy Week
18. Saturday, April 5 a. Sunday, April 6	Death and the Funeral On the Paschal celebration
19. Fri., April 11, 6 PM a. Sat. April 12, 9 AM	Matins and Baptismal run-thru <i>Baptisms/Chrismations</i> <i>Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion</i>

Texts To Read (required):

The Beginnings of a Life of Prayer, Father Irenei (Steenburg)

Great Lent, Father Alexander Schmemmann

Gospel of St. Mark

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Catechumens are to participate in all the classes and Saturday evening Vespers. **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.**
2. During Great Lent, catechumens are expected to attend the 6 PM Wednesday evening Liturgy of the Presanctified.
3. Catechumens tend the candle sand and candle stubs; at the beginning and end of each service, they should be sure that the candle areas are neat and tidy, and that the sand is clean and tidy. Catechumens manage the oil lamps in the Nave and Narthex.
4. Catechumens, if they have not already, meet with the priest to establish a rule of prayer, fasting, and the doing of acts of mercy.
5. Catechumens are to be listeners and not talkers. They should listen to instruction; they should ask their teachers (priest, deacon, lay catechists, sponsor) questions, but not opine with others or get into theological dialogues or disputes with others.
6. Catechumens may invite others to church with “Come and see,” but should not instruct heterodox or non-Christians in dogmatic or spiritual matters.
7. Catechumens may not post theological opinions or enter into theological discussions or debates on social media, discussion groups, chat-sites, etc.
8. Catechumens may and ought to bear witness to “all the good that God is doing” in their lives, and when asked “tell me about the differences...” they should say: “others are more qualified for that. Come and see!” Or “Come and ask the priest.”
9. Catechumens should develop a ministry of love with the older members of the congregation. They should make a regular point of greeting the elders/elderly, and conversing with them.
10. When a person is serious and wishes finally to be received into the Church, he or she commits to tithing, if he or she has not already: offering his/her first and best 10% to God, for “*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”

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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 and thereafter once per month.

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.

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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.

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

- Reading Assignments done

- All Classes attended or listened to recordings

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

- 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) _____

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

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?
