

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The *Saints* responded to God's presence in their lives in an exemplary way. The Church has experienced the personal holiness of the saints at all times and in all places. Their lives bear witness to God and inspire us to respond to His presence in our own lives.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Are essential for every Orthodox Christian. Through prayer we:

- *communicate* with God;
- *praise and thank* Him for His gifts and blessings;
- *ask* Him to help and guide us; and
- *commit ourselves* to Him.

Christians are challenged to maintain a personal rule of prayer which is intimately linked to the Church's corporate worship, or *liturgy*. Liturgy is the *common work* of God's People and an encounter with God Himself.

THE LITURGICAL ARTS

God's People have always employed their talents to express and share their Faith and experience. Through *liturgical music, art, and hymnography*, the Faith is shared and expressed creatively.

Scripture without Holy Tradition is like a stereo with only one speaker. Turn the volume control too far in either direction and essential musical elements become inaudible.

Unplug a speaker and precious sound is lost. Maintaining balance ensures the best possible sound quality, we are told.

Orthodox Christianity is like a stereo: our faith is found, not in *Scripture* alone, but in *Holy Tradition* as well. The two fit together and explain and complement each other. Separate one from the other, ignore one or the other, and some essential elements are lost. Balance must be maintained.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- 2Timothy 3:14-17

Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand

2 Bampton Avenue
Illawong NSW 2234
ph: 02 9534 6939
www.antiochian.org.au

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION



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THE PRODUCT OF THE CHURCH

The Church produced the New Testament, and it alone determined what constitutes its contents.

“How can this be,” you may ask, “when we continually hear that the Christians of the first century faithfully lived every word and passage of the New Testament?”

The fact is that they *didn't*. The New Testament was written during the first century, but so were countless other so-called *gospels* and *epistles* and *mystical writings* of rather questionable origin. It wasn't until the fourth century that the New Testament was “edited” into its present form. Many dubious writings, such as the *Gospel of St Thomas*, were rejected because they were not felt to be fully inspired. Living in an era during which the New Testament was still to be fully recorded, the early Christians maintained their link with the apostolic experience through Holy Tradition - those things which are essential for Christian life.

MORE THAN WORDS

The New Testament, as we know it, is the foremost product of the Church's unbroken Tradition. Still, there are many today who would try to offer Jesus Christ without His Church and its Holy Tradition, who accept “the Bible, the whole Bible, and *nothing* but the Bible.”

They forget that Jesus did not write a book and promise to put everything into it. Rather, He proclaimed the establishment of a living, loving community of believers who are guided through space and time by the Holy Spirit. The Church recorded *some* of Jesus' words and teachings, but only *some*. As St John writes, “There are also many other things which Jesus did; were everyone of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books itself that would be written.” (John 21:25)

Further, there are even some people who attempt to separate and isolate Scripture from Tradition, claiming that the Church and its Tradition actually *contradict* the New Testament. That in itself, is a contradiction.

A LIVING EXPERIENCE

The Bible cannot *prove* or *interpret* itself. It relies on the living experience of God's People. Reject the community of believers and you reject the Scriptures' “sponsor.”

To say the Bible doesn't need interpreting because “is simply means what it says” is to interpret and misinterpret it at the same time. It is an attempt to reduce absolutely everything in the Scriptures to factual historical prose. But the Scriptures contain *more* than prose, and the biblical notion of history is radically different than that of ours today. These accepted facts alone stress the need from discriminate scriptural interpretation.

While Scripture is an essential source of our faith, it is not *the only* source, and it cannot be isolated from the ongoing life of God's People - Holy Tradition. Faith, after all, is not blind. Only *faith in stereo* - faith that maintains the essential balance between Scripture and Holy Tradition - offers us a balanced vision and experience of Jesus Christ and the life He continues to share with us.

THE COUNCILS AND CANONS

Throughout the Church's history, many difficult issues have had to be faced. In order to distinguish what was necessary for the salvation of God's People from what was secondary, *Councils* were held during which the Holy Spirit inspired the Christian community to discern God's will and to reach a consensus on doctrinal and practical matters. The *definitions*, *creeds*, and *canon laws* produced by these Councils are accepted as genuine expressions of the Faith.

THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS

In addition to the Holy Scriptures, certain other writings are regarded as inspired. Foremost among them are the writings of the *Church Fathers* who defined and defended the Faith in the face of false teachings. Many of their writings explain and amplify the truths found in Scripture.