

What on Earth is the Church? Isn't God Enough?

Supplementing the talk by Father Michael Harper

‘All who believed were together and had all things in common ... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.’

Acts 2:44-47

Why must we have the Church?
Isn't God enough?

- A** Christ came both to save mankind and to build his Church
- B** The process of salvation takes place in the fellowship of the Church
- C** The Church is the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, and the new Jerusalem.

The Nicene Creed declares:

- 1** *The Church is one*
 - a** She has one head, Jesus Christ
 - b** Her unity issues from the unity of the Trinity
 - c** She is one Body.
- 2** *The Church is holy*
 - A** Like Christ the Church has two natures
 - B** But only the divine nature of the Church is perfect
 - C** The human nature of the Church is imperfect
 - D** The Church is called to holiness – to be transformed into the likeness of Christ.



Icon of the Council of Nicaea
National History Museum, Sofia, Bulgaria

3 *The Church is catholic*

- A She holds to the Catholic faith, i.e. to the wholeness of the truth
- B The Church extends over the whole earth
- C 'Eastern' Orthodox is now a misnomer: the Church is on all six continents.

4 *The Church is apostolic*

- A It follows the teaching of the apostles
- B It is called to reach out to the whole world.

In addition to the statements of the Nicene Creed we may add these points:

5 *The Church is a loving and caring community*

- A Love is central to the work of the Trinity
- B Love is central to the life of the Church
- C Love is greater than faith and hope.

6 *The Church is 'Orthodox' - but this is only a temporary title*

7 *The Head of the Church is Christ*

8 *The Church is the gathered people of God*

9 *The unifying factors in the Church are:*

- A The bishop as authoritative teacher of the faith
- B Our entry to the Church through 'one Baptism'
- C Our participation in the Divine Liturgy.

10 *The Church is the 'soul of the world'*

11 *The Holy Spirit leads and inspires the Church:*

- A by giving the blessing of Pentecost to all believers
- B by abiding for ever in the Church
- C by bestowing the gifts ('the charisms') of the Holy Spirit on the whole Church
- D by inspiring us to receive the blessings of God so as to work actively for Christ in the Church and in the world.



The Gathered Church
Metropolitan Teofan presiding, Parascheva Church, Piatra Neamt, Romania

'As for us who are partakers of the one Bread and Cup, unite us all to one another, in the communion of the one Holy Spirit.'

The Liturgy of St Basil

Recommended Reading

- i. Chapter 7 of Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Mystery of Faith* (Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 2002) ISBN 0-232-52472-6.
- ii Chapter 4 of Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Holy Cross Orthodox Press: Brookline, Massachusetts, 1998) ISBN 0-917651-70-7

Your notes:
