

### Important Terms to Understand



**Independent Catholic Orthodox Church** – The Independent Catholicism Orthodox Church is part of the larger Independent Sacramental Movement (ISM), in which clergy and laity from various faith traditions, including the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion, the various Catholic and Christian churches, assemble to form fully functioning sacramental churches. To understand this let's first define the four words of this title:

**Independent** – This word is used in three major ways: **First**, being autocephalous, meaning self-governing when dealing with church organization and functions; **Second**, separate from the state control, noting that church and state have their own functions and should not be confused; **Third**, "not a part" of a larger church like we lack any fullness as an assembly, in fact, having validly ordained priest and deacons(s) with a bishop (overseer) and the people (two or more) to celebrate the Eucharistic feast constitutes a fully catholic (universal) and orthodox (sound truths) church regardless of how many people assemble!

**Catholic** - The word *catholic* (with lowercase c; derived via Late Latin catholicus, from the Greek adjective καθολικός (*katholikos*), meaning "universal") comes from the Greek phrase καθόλου (*katholou*), meaning "on the whole", "according to the whole" or "in general", and is a combination of the Greek words κατά meaning "about" and ὅλος meaning "whole". The term *Catholic* (usually written with uppercase C in English) was first used to describe the Christian Church in the early 2nd century to emphasize its universal scope.

**Orthodox** - The word *orthodox* is Greek for *orthos* "right," and *doxa*, "belief". That which is considered correct and proper belief, particularly the teachings of early ecumenical church councils from Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451); Put in a non-dogmatic way it simply means **sound truths**.

**Church** - The Greek word "*ecclesia*" is correctly defined as: "The called-out (ones)" [ECC = out; KALEO = call]. This Greek word appears in the New Testament approximately 115 times. That's just in this one grammatical form. It appears also in other forms. And in every instance, except three, it is wrongly translated as "*church*" in the King James Version. Those three exceptions are found in Acts 19:32, 39, 41. In these instances the translators rendered it "**assembly**" instead of "*church*." But, the Greek word is exactly the same as the other 112 entries where it was changed to "*church*" wrongly. "*Church*" comes from the Old English and German word pronounced "kirche." In Scotland, it was "kirk." In the earlier Greek it was pronounced "*ku-ri-a-kos*" or "*ku-ri-a-kon*." As you can see, this word doesn't even resemble the Greek word "*ecclesia*" whose place it has usurped. The meaning of "*Ku-ri-a-kos*" is understood by its root: "*Ku-ri-os*," which means "**lord**." Thus, "*kuriakos*" (i.e., "*church*") means "pertaining to the lord." It refers to something that pertains to, or belongs to, a lord. The Greek "*kuriakos*" eventually came to be used in Old English form as "*cirice*" (Kee-ree-ke), then "*church*" (kerke), and eventually "*church*" in its traditional pronunciation. A church, then, is correctly something that "pertains to, or belongs to, a lord." New Testament writers adopted the term **ecclesia** from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) and used it many times. The Lord himself uses the word twice in St Matthew's Gospel 16:18, where He speaks of His "*ecclesia*" (**Assembly**) to be founded on the rock of faith, and 18:17 where He appoints His Apostles shepherds of his "*ecclesia*".

So the general use of the term in the New Testament appears to signify the collective of those believing in Christ gathered together in assembly. This '**ecclesia**' could be as small as that functioning in someone's home, or as large as those '**ecclesiae**' functioning in cities such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and others, or even in entire providences such as Galatia, Asia, Galilee, Samaria, and others. But the first city-assembly of believers to which the name '**ecclesia**' was ascribed was the church in Jerusalem, the Mother church, from which all others took the same name. Specifically, though, believers felt and still feel that they constitute the *ecclesia* of Christ whenever they assemble together to celebrate the divine Eucharist. The early martyr St. Ignatius called the assembly "*a multitude in God*". In an all-inclusive meaning the term *ecclesia* came to mean the one universal Church spread all over the world made up of all local "churches of God", not because it is called together (assembled) by herself, but by another One, the Holy Trinity-God! Most often these smaller churches self-identify as Independent Catholic and/or Orthodox communities as we do here at **St. Xenia of Rome mission**. Put it simply, the word church should be understood as an '**assembly**', rather than an institutional building.

Independent Catholics, along with our mission, continues to follow the example of the early Christians of the first thousand years of Church history. Although Independent Catholicism has its roots in the Roman Catholic Church, most try and should follow the faith held by those in the early church as expressed in the creeds and the ecumenical councils. It is a modern approach in ecclesiastical governance to help solve the initial divisions between the eastern and western churches that maintain the sacramental apostolic faith. To that point it is different than just an ecumenical unity, it is in fact maintaining the valid canonical understanding of apostolic succession going back to all the original twelve apostles.

Some independent catholic churches, like St Xenia of Rome mission, have apostolic succession<sup>1</sup> through both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox historical lines of consecrated bishops, and in keeping with the canon law on ordination of a bishop: "**Let a bishop be ordained by two or three bishops.**" (Apostolic Canon 1). This approach allows us to worship in both the western and eastern liturgical traditions handed down to us today, while keeping our faith catholic and orthodox. While there are divisions among us and although many on both sides of the fence are holding grudges, we realize that we are all human and have made mistakes. We continue to pray for unity among all Catholic and Orthodox brethren, as well as all Christians. We strive to develop relations with all jurisdictions who profess the true faith given to us by the Apostles. That is why we like to say we are Catholic Orthodox Christians.

<sup>1</sup> (See Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3; and 1 Timothy 4:14. Also possibly Acts 14:23, where "ordained"—Greek: χειροτονήσαντες—may be translated "extended the hand".)

# ST. XENIA OF ROME

Independent Catholic Orthodox Church

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**Orthopraxis / Orthopraxy** - Greek word *orthos*, "right," and *praxis*, "practice." In the study of religion, orthopraxy is correct conduct, both ethical and liturgical, as opposed to faith or grace etc. This contrasts with orthodoxy, which emphasizes correct belief, and ritualism, the use of rituals. The word is a neoclassical compound—*ὀρθοπραξία* (orthopraxia) meaning 'correct practice'; Put in a non-dogmatic way it simply means **sound practices**.

**Liturgy** - The word liturgy, derived from the technical term in ancient Greek (Greek: *λειτουργία*), *leitourgia*, which literally means "*work of the people*" is a literal translation of the two words "*litos ergos*" or "*public service*". Liturgy is the customary public worship performed by a religious group, according to its beliefs, customs and traditions contrary to private devotion and prayers. Technically speaking, liturgy is a subset of ritual. When ritual is undertaken to participate in a divine act or assist a divine action, it is liturgy. If the ritual does not have this purpose it is not liturgy but only ritual. Thus, the word, sometimes rendered by its English translation "Service or Divine Service", refers to a formal ritual, which may or may not be elaborate, enacted by those who understand themselves to be participating in a divine action, such as the Eastern Orthodox Divine Liturgy (Greek: *Θεία Λειτουργία*), Catholic Mass, the Eucharist or Mass (Anglican Communion).

**Eucharist** - Eucharist (from the Greek *εὐχαριστία*, or "*eucharistia*", meaning thanksgiving or giving thanks) is a holy mystery (or sacrament) that is celebrated during the Divine Liturgy within the Orthodox Church where the consecrated bread and wine, through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the Precious Blood and Body of Jesus Christ, that is consumed by prepared Orthodox Christians. Other names for the Eucharist include: the Holy Gifts (*Mysteries*), Communion, and the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus. Christ Orthodox Christians believe that the Real Presence of God (not merely a sign) is present after the consecration of the Gifts. Roman Catholics and some Protestants also hold this view.

**Theotokos** - The title **Theotokos** (in Greek, *Θεοτοκος*) is a Greek word that means "God-bearer" or "Birth-giver to God." The title was used in the ancient church at the council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) to affirm the deity of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus had two natures, it was permissible to speak of Mary as "God-bearer," since the human Jesus was also divine. This is a statement of faith in the divinity of Jesus and the incarnation and is still in use with the Eastern Orthodox Churches today.

**Immaculate** - Not a reference to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, but as Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that Mary was without sin for her entire life, but they object to the dogmatic declaration of her immaculate conception from original sin. It is more of a statement of Mary's Virgin purity when she gave birth to Christ without human intervention.

**Trinity** - The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely an "article of faith" which men are called to "believe." It is not simply a dogma which the Church requires its good members to "accept on faith." Neither is the doctrine of the Holy Trinity the invention of scholars and academicians, the result of intellectual speculation and philosophical thinking. It is the "**Mystery**" of Mysteries, of **who God is** and not necessarily **what God is!** Greek Orthodox theologians in the 4<sup>th</sup> century suspected that their fellow Christians in Western Europe had a more limited conception of God--namely, that their images of the divine reflected a reality that could be defined like any other philosophical identity. This was anathema to the Greeks, who retained a conviction that all God-talk could only be symbolic, inadequate and provisional. The sacred, the Greeks argued, could never be contained within a human system of thought. So the doctrine of the trinity (never spelled out in full detail in the New Testament) was formulated, in part, to remind Christians that they must not think about God as a simple personality, male or otherwise. Yet the Trinity is revealed at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16), and spoken about by Jesus Christ himself in the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Since man is made in the image of God, man also has three natures. Both man and woman have three parts: body, soul, and spirit. God the Son is comparable to the body since the Son is God incarnate. God the Father is comparable to the soul, or mind, since he was the mind that created everything. The Holy Spirit is comparable to man's Spirit. As the body of man is the temple of our spirit, the body of Jesus Christ is the temple to the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father through (*dia*) the Son.

To grasp the words and concepts of the doctrine of the Trinity is one thing; to know the Living Reality of God behind these words and concepts is something else. We must work and pray so that we might pass beyond every word and concept about God and to come to know Him for ourselves in our own living union with Him: "**The Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit**" (Eph 2: 18–22). Our theology at St. Xenia of Rome mission is **Trinitarian** focused, and without that mystery we cannot fully grasp the spirituality of the **self** (me) and the **ecclesia** (we or body of Christ)..!

**Holy Spirit** - In Hebrew (**Ruah**) and Aramaic (**Rukha**) the word for Spirit is feminine. "Holy" is not an actual word in either Hebrew or Aramaic. It is a Greek word and therefore, would not have been used by the Jews of the time. "*Qudsha*" is a derivative of the word "*Qadyish*" which means "Set-Apart". "**Rukha**" means "Breath", "Wind" or "Spirit". Even though Jerome states "**For in Deity there is no gender**" (commentary **Isaiah II.40.9**), in early Syriac Christianity up to the about the fifth century, the Holy Spirit was almost always treated grammatically as feminine due to its affinity with the Hebrew (**Ruah**) and Aramaic (**Rukha**).

If the experiences of the Holy Spirit are grasped as being a 'rebirth' or a 'being born anew', this suggests an image for the Holy Spirit which was quite familiar in the early years of Christianity, especially in Syria, but got lost in the patriarchal empire of Rome: the image of the mother. If believers are 'born' of the Holy Spirit, then we have to think of the Spirit as the 'mother' of believers, and in this sense as a feminine Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, as the Gospel of John understands the **Paraclete** to be, then she comforts 'as a mother comforts' [cf.. **John 14.26** with **Isa 66.13**]. In this case the Spirit is the motherly comforter of her children. Linguistically this brings out the feminine form of Yahweh's **ruach** in Hebrew. It is interesting and most important to remember that the word for "**Spirit**" is feminine in Hebrew and Aramaic, neuter in Greek, and masculine in Latin and German."