

Who We Are

We are a church community under the diocese of the American Independent Catholic Church which is a sacramental church that is not under the Roman Catholic Church's administration and ecclesiastical control. Like the eastern orthodox churches we are independently self-ruled in our organization, yet we reject any form of religious nationalism in our ecclesiastical identity.

We are **catholic** (*universal and full*) in our faith, **orthodox** (*sound truths*) in our theology and **liturgical** (*public worship*) in our worship. These three aspects of our church community should lead us to an **orthopraxis** (*right actions*) way of life. It is vital to have the balance between right belief and right action. Orthodoxy without orthopraxis is dull theology. Orthopraxis without orthodoxy is a religion of sentimentality, subjectivism and good works.

We are believers in the ancient One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, following the **Apostolic Faith** through both western and eastern traditions. Therefore all of our bishops have the priesthood through Apostolic Succession and are ministers of the **Holy Mysteries** (sacraments). We are committed to the person of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the unity of the faith. Our mission is to be a community sharing the love of Christ by living life patterned after the story of the Good Samaritan: (*Luke 10:25-37*).

What We Believe

Our statement of belief is presented here as a starting point for spiritual dialog, keeping in mind that Christianity is not just a system of belief as much as it is a living faith. Through this faith Christianity is to be lived and experienced, knowing that the greatest of all mysteries, God, has revealed himself to us through his Son in the mystery we call the **Incarnation** (*John 1:14*). Because of the incarnation, we are able to **live the faith** through the power of the Holy Spirit

that is given to us when we join this family of love: the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church!

Core Beliefs

- We believe Jesus is the Christ, **Son of the Living God**, and we accept him as our personal and universal savior, and is the head of the church on earth and in the heavens.
- We believe Jesus is God, the second person of the **Holy Trinity**.
- We believe in the **unconditional love** of Jesus in the New Testament. We want to learn to love one another as Jesus commanded.
- We accept the truths of the first seven Ecumenical Councils which includes the **Nicene Creed**, the western **Apostle's Creed**, and the **Athanasian Creed**.
- We believe in Jesus' ethics as stated in the **Sermon on the Mount**.
- We believe both **Scripture** and **Sacred Tradition** are sources of revelation.
- We believe that the **bible is the inspired word of God** and that the church should be built on the bible, specifically the New Testament. (We speak where the bible speaks, and we are silent where the bible is silent)
- We recognize and adhere to ordination and consecration through the gift of **Apostolic Succession**.
- We respect the Pope as the **Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter**, but we do not believe that the Pope is himself infallible, and we honor the **Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs** as successors to the other apostles.
- We believe in the **seven Sacraments (sacred mysteries)**: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Communion, Holy Orders, Anointing the Sick, and Confession and Reconciliation.

- We believe in the **Real Presence of Christ** in the bread and wine of the Eucharist after consecration.
- **Holy Communion** is open to all baptized Christians who confess the Nicene Creed and believe the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ, having received the sacrament of Holy Communion in a sacramental church with apostolic succession.
- The church remembers the words of Jesus, ***Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them: for to such belongs the kingdom of God*** (*Matthew 19:14*). These words remind us that children have an equal role with adults in worshipping God. To this end, children are encouraged to stay with the congregation during services.
- We believe the two most important commandments are to **love God and your neighbor** as yourself! Our Lord Jesus Christ "broke down the dividing wall of hostility that had separated God from humans and humans from each other" [*Ephesians 2:14*]. In Christ Jesus, the Church proclaims, there can be "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but all are one" [*Galatians 3:28*]. There is no room for ***Xenophobia*¹, *misogyny*² or *racism*** in God's kingdom!

Our Spirituality

The word spirituality has taken many meanings in our modern world. We do not distinguish spirituality outside of faith and belief. **Orthodox spirituality** is mainly expressed through prayer, daily Christian living, and worship, which ultimately leads to union with the divine uncreated Light (*John 1:3-5*). The term "spiritual life", within the Catholic Orthodox contexts, refers to a specific reality, a tangible, comprehensible and specific way of life.

¹ fear or hatred of foreigners, people from different cultures, countries or strangers:

² dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women.

It is neither a cloudy utopia nor just idealism, trapped inside the limits of meditation and fantasy. It involves materiality and realism, as well as mundane elements. A fundamental teaching of the Holy Fathers and Mothers is that the Church is a "**Hospital**" which cures the wounded man. Thus true spirituality will address both the outer and inner aspects of our personhood. The Holy Fathers teach that natural and metaphysical categories do not exist but speak rather of the created and uncreated. The union of the created with the uncreated (God) manifested itself in history and became an earthly ordinary reality through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **God-Logos** (*John 1:14*). Therefore, the Christian spiritual life is inconceivable, if not based on the fact of God's incarnation.

Mission Statement

We at the community mission strive to live the life of Christ in our present world following the ancient faith handed down by the apostles and the early church. We see our mission to be active members in living and spreading the love and mercy of God. Jesus taught us that mankind not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but we are also called 'to practice mercy' towards others; "**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy**" (*Matthew 5:7*). Our community sees these words as a call to action, to be merciful in various ways regardless of the person in need. We are called not only to proclaim the Good News, but to "**LIVE**" the Good News of Christ's redeeming love for the world. Our works fall in two areas of service:

Corporal works of mercy which are:

- Give drink to the thirsty
- Feed the hungry
- Clothed the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Comfort the imprisoned
- Visit the sick
- Bury the dead

Spiritual works of mercy which are:

- Admonish the lost (Help bring reconciliation and hope for the hopeless)
- Instruct the uninformed
- Counsel the doubtful
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Be patient and love our enemies
- Forgive offenses
- Pray for the living and the dead

In performing these acts of mercy we fulfill the two commands Christ taught us, to love God with all of our hearts, mind, and soul; and to love our neighbor as ourselves; but it is not just a matter of 'fulfilling the law', it must also become an act of love and revelation. It is a revelation that Jesus' presence is recognized in the poor (*Matthew 25:40*).

In understanding this mystery of love and revelation, we can start to see the full meaning of His words, "**The poor you will always have with you, but you do not always have me.**" (*John 12:8*) He is challenging us to recognize his suffering in all of humanity, even in the most needy of our world. We welcome all who would like to join us in this mission.

How do I join?

If you are a baptized or dedicated Christian, all you need to do is come to Church and introduce yourself to the priest or deacon, and tell him or her that you wish to join. If you have not been baptized the priest or deacon will start you on instruction and meet with you regularly until your Baptism. Adults and children old enough to understand fully what they are doing, will be catechized (taught the faith), baptized and receive Eucharist and Confirmation as is the practiced in the Orthodox Churches, all in the same ceremony. Infants can also be baptized, confirmed and receive Eucharist if requested by the parents and godparents.

St Xenia of Rome Church

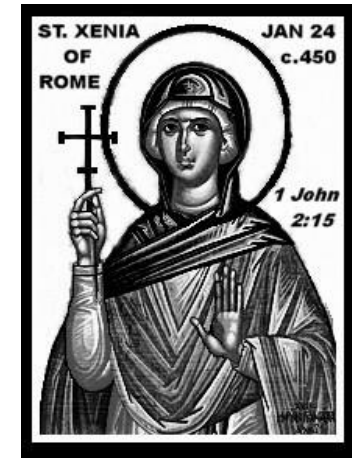
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Beliefs and Practices!



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