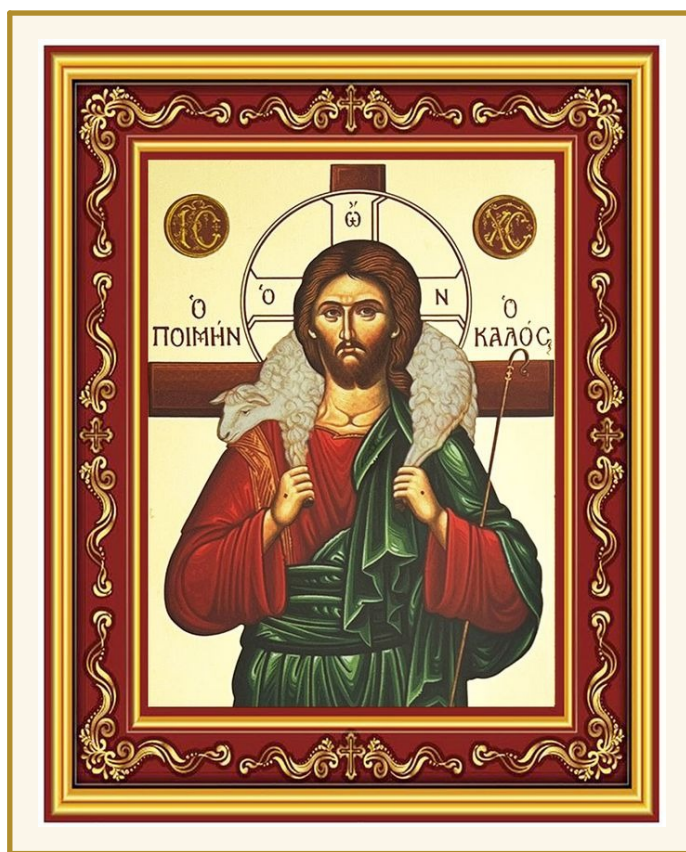


AN ORTHODOX BIBLE STUDY

Go Forth from Your Country

Leaving the Old Life, Entering the Fullness of the Church



“The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your kindred, and from your father’s house, to the land that I will show you.’”

— GENESIS 12:1

Six sessions with the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the Saints

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Study

A word to the reader

This study was made for a particular season: the season of leaving one spiritual home and entering another. It is written to be prayed through slowly — whether you are already a catechumen or still standing at the threshold. It does not pretend the road is painless: leaving a church home is a real grief, and telling the people who raised you in the faith that you are becoming Orthodox is a real trial. This study will not talk you out of that pain; it will help you carry it the way the saints carried theirs — honestly, gratefully, with your eyes on Christ.

Each session has the same shape: an opening prayer, an icon to stand before, the Scriptures, the Fathers, a reflection, questions to talk through, and one small practice for the week. Take one session per week, or slower; light a candle if you can, and read the passages aloud from the Orthodox Study Bible. Psalm references use Septuagint numbering with the English numbering in brackets.

A note on quotations: passages in quotation marks come from standard English translations of the Fathers; where a Father's teaching is *summarized* rather than quoted, the text says so plainly — the difference matters.

THE SESSIONS

- 1 · Go Forth from Your Country — *the God who calls us out*
- 2 · Your People Shall Be My People — *gratitude for the seedbed*
- 3 · A Sword Will Pierce — *when following Christ strains a household*
- 4 · No Longer Strangers — *the household of God*
- 5 · Let the Little Children Come — *ministry that comes with you*
- 6 · Straining Forward — *the catechumen's road*
- † · A Small Iconostasis — *a guide to every icon in this study*

A PRAYER BEFORE EACH SESSION

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One. Amen.

SESSION ONE

Go Forth from Your Country

The God who calls people out of the familiar

THE WORD

Now the Lord said to Abram: “Go forth from your country, from your kindred and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” ... So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him.

— Genesis 12:1–2, 4

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going... for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

— Hebrews 11:8, 10

Listen, O daughter, behold and incline your ear; forget your own people and your father’s house; and the King shall greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord.

— Psalm 44:11–12 [45:10–11]

Scripture's story of salvation begins not with a doctrine but with a departure. Abraham is the father of all the faithful precisely because he left — country, kindred, father's house — on nothing more than the word of a God he was only beginning to know. Hebrews is careful to say he went out *not knowing where he was going*. The Church has always read this as the pattern of every soul's journey to God: the call comes first, the map comes later, and the destination turns out to be not a place but a Person.

The Church sings Psalm 44 [45] of the Theotokos and of every soul espoused to Christ, and its words are startlingly close to home in this season: *forget your own people and your father's house*. This is not contempt for family — Abraham carried Sarah with him, and God's promise was precisely that his father's house would be blessed through his going. It is a statement about order. When God calls, even the deepest and holiest loyalties must take second place to Him — and it is only from second place that they are finally kept safe. Abraham's leaving did not end his family's story; it is the reason his family's story blesses all nations to this day.



THE THEOTOKOS HODEGETRIA — “SHE WHO SHOWS THE WAY”

The Mother of God does not gesture toward herself. Her whole hand points to the Child, as if to say: He is the Way — go to Him. This one gesture is the meaning of everything Orthodoxy does with Mary and the saints: every honor paid to them is an arrow aimed at Christ. For anyone taking a first step into the Church, this is the icon to begin with — the whole Church, like the Mother, exists to show you the Way.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

— St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* I.1

“Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace.”

— St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* III.24.1

Augustine wrote those opening words of the *Confessions* as a man who had spent years in a religion that was almost right — close enough to feel like home, far enough to leave the heart restless. The restlessness itself was grace. When a sincere Christian raised on Scripture begins to feel that ache — the sense that there is *more*, that the early Church described in Acts had a shape and a fullness they have not yet found — that ache is not disloyalty. It is the same voice that spoke to Abram, doing what it has always done.

FOR REFLECTION 1. Abraham left before he knew the destination. Where are you on that road — still packing, already walking, or somewhere in between?

2. Psalm 44 [45] says “forget your father’s house” — yet Abraham’s obedience became his family’s greatest blessing. What would it look like for this conversion to eventually *bless* your families rather than wound them?

3. What first made your own heart “restless” toward Orthodoxy? Tell that story again, out loud, even if you think you know it.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE Each evening this week, pray one line, aloud or in silence: “Lord, You called Abraham out and he obeyed; give us his faith for our own going forth.” Keep it that short. Let the repetition do the work.

SESSION TWO

Your People Shall Be My People

Ruth, Timothy, and gratitude for the seedbed

THE WORD

But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.”

— Ruth 1:16

I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

— 2 Timothy 1:5

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures.

— 2 Timothy 3:14–15

Becoming Orthodox is not a repudiation of everything that came before. It is closer to what happened to Ruth. She was a Moabitess; nothing in her upbringing was aimed at the God of Israel — and yet everything in her upbringing that taught her loyalty, love, and courage was gathered up the day she said *your God shall be my God*. She did not become less herself by joining Israel. She became the great-grandmother of David and stands in the genealogy of Christ.

How much more, then, for someone raised not in Moab but in a home saturated with Scripture. Those who become Orthodox from such a home are not throwing away the family Bible; they are following it further than they knew it went. Paul tells Timothy to hold fast what he learned *from childhood* — faith that came to him through his mother and grandmother before it was completed in the apostolic Church. The love of the Scriptures, the instinct for prayer, the seriousness about Christ — these were planted by Protestant hands, and Orthodoxy does not uproot them. It is the soil where they were always meant to grow to full height. Gratitude, spoken out loud and often, is both the truth and the best apologetic your families will ever hear.



STS. SOPHIA AND HER DAUGHTERS FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

A second-century Roman mother who so formed her three young daughters in Christ that they held to Him through martyrdom itself; she stands behind them, having handed on everything. The Church names them for the three great virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). This is the icon of faith transmitted through a family — a reminder that whatever is now hard, the faith your parents planted in you is honored, not erased, by where it is leading.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“The genuine faith “dwelt first” in mother and grandmother: St. John Chrysostom, preaching on this verse, marvels that Timothy’s household faith preceded and prepared his apostolic calling — the home, he teaches, is a little church, and parents are the first catechists. (summary of his homilies on 2 Timothy and Ephesians)”

— St. John Chrysostom

“Make peace with yourself, and heaven and earth will make peace with you.”

— St. Isaac the Syrian, Ascetical Homilies

FOR REFLECTION 1. Name, specifically and out loud, three things your Protestant upbringing gave you that you are carrying *into* Orthodoxy. Write them down; you may want them for a hard conversation later.

2. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi came before her theology caught up. What role has love for particular people played in your own journey toward the Church?

3. St. Isaac says peace begins inside. What un-peace about this transition still lives in you — grief, guilt, fear of being misunderstood? Name it honestly, out loud.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Once this week, thank a parent (in person, by call, or in a note) for something true they taught you about God — with no mention of Orthodoxy, no agenda, no footnotes. Just honor. Exodus 20:12 does not have an asterisk.

SESSION THREE

A Sword Will Pierce

When following Christ strains a household — with St. Elizabeth the New Martyr

THE WORD

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword... He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me... And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”

— Matthew 10:34, 37–39

“Honor your father and your mother,” which is the first commandment with promise.

— Ephesians 6:2

Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother... “yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also.”

— Luke 2:34–35

The Lord did not hide this cost, and neither should we: sometimes obedience to Christ passes straight through the middle of a family. But notice what Scripture holds together. The same apostolic faith that says *he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me* also says *honor your father and your mother* — and the Church refuses to drop either. Conversion is not rebellion. You are not asked to win an argument with a father, to diminish his life's work, or to stop being his child. You are asked to obey God first and honor him fully — and to accept that, for a season, he may not be able to receive both at once. The sword Simeon prophesied pierced the Theotokos *because* she loved; the pain some families feel at a conversion is, at bottom, love that has not yet found where to rest.



**ST. ELIZABETH THE NEW MARTYR
(GRAND DUCHESS ELIZABETH
FEODOROVNA)**

A German princess raised devoutly Protestant, granddaughter of Queen Victoria. After marrying into Russia she studied Orthodoxy for seven years — under no compulsion, her husband refusing to pressure her — and entered the Church by pure conviction in 1891, writing to her Protestant father to beg his blessing. He never gave it. She went on to become a monastic, mother to Moscow's poor, and finally a martyr in 1918, singing hymns as she died. She is the patron saint of exactly this session.

Before her chrismation, Elizabeth wrote her father a letter that converts from Protestant families have treasured ever since. She told him the step was taken “*of pure conviction*,” that she felt she was “*turning to God with a pure heart*,” and she pleaded — as translations of the letter render it — for “*the few words*” of his forgiveness and blessing before the step was taken. The blessing never came; the conviction never wavered; and her love for her father never turned bitter. She did not need his approval to remain his devoted daughter. Half a lifetime later, the Church discovered that the girl who grieved her Lutheran father had become one of the great saints of the twentieth century.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“On honoring parents while obeying God, St. John Chrysostom teaches: parents are to be obeyed in everything that does not injure godliness — in matters of faith itself, obedience belongs to God, yet honor toward parents is never suspended. (summary of his homilies on Ephesians 6 and Matthew 10)”

— St. John Chrysostom

FOR REFLECTION 1. What, concretely, do you owe your family in this season — and what do you not owe them? Try to draw that line, in writing.

2. St. Elizabeth waited seven unhurried years, and no one pressured her. What pace feels honest for you — and how can those further down the road protect, rather than rush, the ones behind?

3. When the conversation with family comes (or comes again), what is the one sentence you most want them to hear? Practice saying it out loud.

4. How do you keep this from becoming a debate to win? What does honoring a parent’s life of faith look like *while* leaving their tradition?

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Ask St. Elizabeth's prayers every day this week: “Holy New Martyr Elizabeth, who entered the Church by conviction and loved a grieving father to the end, pray to God for us.” If a family conversation happens this week, pray it before, not just after.

SESSION FOUR

No Longer Strangers

Leaving a church home for the household of God

THE WORD

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.

— Ephesians 2:19–20

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people... who once were not a people but are now the people of God.

— 1 Peter 2:9–10

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven... and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

— Hebrews 12:22–23

Leaving a church home hurts because a church home is real: the children you have taught, the people who prayed for you, the rooms where your faith grew up. That love is not a mistake to repent of. But Hebrews insists that when we come to worship we come to something unimaginably larger than any congregation — the actual assembly of heaven, angels and perfected saints, one living Church across all centuries. Orthodoxy is not asking you to trade a warm community for a strange one. It is unveiling how vast your community actually is. Every Liturgy is attended by more of your family than any church you have ever walked out of.

And the West belongs to that family. Before the Great Schism, the English-speaking world was Orthodox for centuries — its missionaries, kings, and scholars are on our calendar. Coming to Orthodoxy from an American Protestant home is not emigrating to something foreign; it is an English-speaking Christian coming home to the Church their own ancestors knew.



SYNAXIS OF ALL SAINTS OF SCOTLAND

Columba, Ninian, Kentigern, Margaret and dozens more, gathered beneath a Celtic cross with Christ blessing above — the pre-schism Orthodox West in one image. Proof in paint that Orthodoxy is not “Eastern” by nature: it is simply the Church, and it once filled the lands our families came from.



ST. ALFRED THE GREAT, KING OF WESSEX (†899)

A pre-schism Western saint: king, scholar, defender of Christian England, who translated the Psalms and had the Scriptures rendered into his people's own tongue. The love of an English Bible in the hands of ordinary people — the very instinct your own tradition prizes — has deep roots in Orthodox England.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church.”

— St. Ignatius of Antioch, To the Smyrnaeans 8 (c. A.D. 107)

“He cannot have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his mother.”

— St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Unity of the Church 6

St. Ignatius wrote on the road to martyrdom, one generation after the apostles, and already the Church he describes has bishops, Eucharist, and visible unity. This is the household Ephesians describes — built on the apostles, still standing, with the door open. And concerning those outside her visible bounds, Orthodoxy speaks with both confidence and humility, in the old saying Metropolitan Kallistos Ware loved to repeat: we know where the Church is; we cannot say where she is not. The old congregation is in God's hands, and generous ones.

FOR REFLECTION 1. What will you genuinely grieve about the community you are leaving? Name it without softening it — grief that is named can be offered to God.

2. Hebrews 12 says worship joins “an innumerable company.” How does the communion of saints change what “church family” means?

3. Which Western pre-schism saint could you adopt as a companion — a way of telling your families that your heritage is coming *with* you?

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

At one service this week, arrive early, stand before an icon of any saint, and ask that saint by name to pray for the congregation you are leaving — that God would bless every person in it. Leaving with blessing, not verdicts, heals both directions.

SESSION FIVE

Let the Little Children Come

The ministry that comes with you

THE WORD

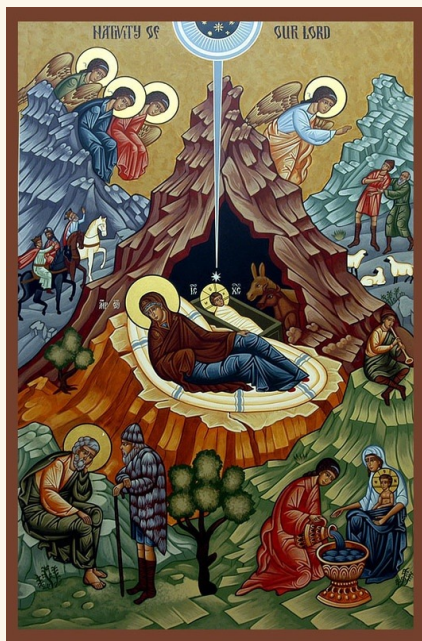
Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God." ... And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

— Mark 10:13–14, 16

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

— Proverbs 22:6

One of the heaviest parts of leaving a church is leaving the children you minister to — and that weight is itself the proof of a real calling. Here is the truth to hold: a vocation to children is not a possession of any congregation. It is a gift of the Spirit, and it travels. The Orthodox Church does not sideline that gift; if anything, she hands it richer tools than it has ever had — the Church year, the icons (which were teaching children the Gospel for a thousand years before anyone printed a children's Bible), the lives of child-saints, the festal cycle that turns theology into candles, processions, bread, and song a five-year-old can taste and smell. Church school directors in every Orthodox parish will tell you the same thing: workers for this harvest are precious and few. You are not ending a ministry. You are bringing it somewhere it can put down deeper roots — and no one is asking you to stop loving the children you leave; love is not a resource that runs out when it is shared with new ones.



THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

God enters the world as a child entrusted to a family. The cave and the swaddling-wrapped manger deliberately foreshadow the tomb and grave-clothes — the whole Gospel in one image. In the corner sits Joseph, tempted by doubt (the bent figure before him), while midwives below wash the newborn God: the icon is honest that even the Holy Family's story held struggle, doubt, and ordinary work — and that grace carried all of it. Children read this icon instantly; it was made to be read.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“St. John Chrysostom teaches that forming a child's soul is a greater art than any painter's or sculptor's: parents and teachers, he says, are entrusted with living images of God, and in shaping them they are raising athletes for Christ. (summary of “On Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children”)”

— St. John Chrysostom

FOR REFLECTION 1. What have the children you've served taught you about God?

Share one story.

2. Walk through an Orthodox liturgy in your mind through a child's eyes — incense, candles, icons, processions. What would you have made of it at seven years old?
3. What would a faithful goodbye to your current kids' ministry look like — one that blesses the children rather than confusing them?
4. Dream a little: if God opened a door into Orthodox children's ministry a year from now, what might it look like?

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE This week, look up the life of one child-saint or young saint this week (St. Panteleimon the young physician, the youths of the fiery furnace, St. Marcella, the child-martyrs of the early Church) and ask: how would we tell this story to a room of eight-year-olds?

SESSION SIX

Straining Forward

Epektasis, the catechumen's road, and the Guardian at your side

THE WORD

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection... Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 3:7, 10, 13–14

The Lord is my light and my savior; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

— Psalm 26:1 [27:1]

Paul's words *reaching forward* translate the Greek behind the Fathers' beloved word *epektasis* — the soul's unending stretch into God. St. Gregory of Nyssa built a whole vision of the Christian life on this verse: because God is infinite, the journey into Him never exhausts itself; perfection is the perpetual moving-forward. This matters practically for a catechumen. Conversion is not a finish line where the questions stop; baptism is not a diploma. It is a doorway — the beginning of the life of grace, salvation as past, present, and future at once: *I have been saved, I am being saved, I shall be saved*. Forgetting what lies behind does not mean despising it. It means refusing to walk backward. The old life was the road here; it was never the destination.



THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGEL

The angel bears a cross — his standard — and cradles a redeemed soul, shown small and at peace within the sphere in his hand; the hanging censer speaks of his unceasing intercession. At baptism the Church prays for “an angel of light” to be joined to the newly-illuminated. You do not walk this road, or into any hard family conversation, alone.

VOICES OF THE FATHERS

“Great is the Baptism that lies before you: a ransom to captives; a remission of offenses; a death of sin; a new birth of the soul; a garment of light; a holy indissoluble seal; a chariot to heaven; the delight of Paradise; a welcome into the kingdom; the gift of adoption.”

— St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Procatechesis 16 — addressed to catechumens preparing for baptism

St. Cyril spoke those words in the fourth century to people standing exactly where you stand — catechumens in the last stretch before the font. Read his sentence slowly, phrase by phrase, and let it name what you are actually walking toward. Not a change of denomination. A death and a birth; a garment; a seal; an adoption. Everything this study has touched — the leaving, the gratitude, the sword, the household, the children, the road — converges there, at the water.

FOR REFLECTION 1. “Forgetting what lies behind” — what, honestly, do you still keep looking back at? What would it mean to release it without dishonoring it?

2. Read St. Cyril’s ten phrases aloud, slowly. Which one lands hardest on you right now, and why?

3. One year from today, what do you hope you will be able to say about your family, your old parish, and your new one?

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE Begin closing each day with the Church's oldest short prayer, the one the publican prayed and the one on St. John the Forerunner's scroll: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Ten slow repetitions, aloud when you can. This prayer will still be with you fifty years from now.

THE SENDING

Peace I Leave with You

Stand before this icon and pray the closing prayer aloud



CHRIST THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Christ vested as a bishop, His Gospel open to John 14:27 — “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you... let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Every sacrament you are moving toward is His own act; the priesthood you are entering under is Christ's own (Hebrews 4:14). His is the last word of this study: peace.

A CLOSING PRAYER O Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd, Who called Abraham out of his father's house and carried the lost sheep home on Your own shoulders: look upon Your servants who are leaving what is familiar for the fullness of Your holy Church. Give them Abraham's faith, Ruth's loyalty, Timothy's gratitude, and the courage and gentleness of Your holy New Martyr Elizabeth. Soften the hearts of their fathers and mothers; guard the love between parent and child; bless the congregations they leave behind and the parish that receives them; and bring them, in Your good time, to the great and holy font. Through the prayers of Your most pure Mother and of all the saints, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

A SMALL ICONOSTASIS

The Icons of This Study

Every icon in these pages, with its name and meaning — keep this page as a key

Icons are theology in line and color — the Seventh Ecumenical Council's answer, in paint, to the Incarnation: because God became visible, He may be depicted, and honor shown to an image passes to its prototype. Here is every icon used in this study (and a few companions), each with the meaning it carries.

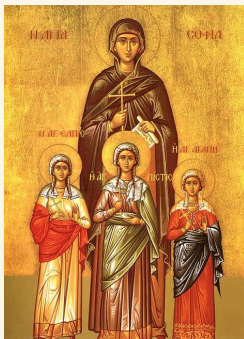


Christ the Good Shepherd (O Poimen o Kalos) Christ carries the lost sheep on His shoulders before the cross that names the cost of the search (John 10; Luke 15). The sheep does not find its own way home — it is carried. The cover icon of this study: whoever is leaving one fold for the true one is not wandering; they are being carried.



The Theotokos Hodegetria — “She Who Shows the Way”

Mary's hand points wholly to her Son: the grammar of all Orthodox veneration. Honor flows through the Mother straight to Christ, the Way (John 14:6).



Sts. Sophia, Faith, Hope, and Love

A mother who catechized her daughters unto martyrdom (c. A.D. 137); named for the virtues of 1 Corinthians 13:13. The icon of faith handed down through a family — and of every children's ministry.



St. Elizabeth the New Martyr

Protestant-raised princess who entered Orthodoxy by seven years of free conviction (1891), wrote to her Lutheran father for a blessing he never gave, founded a house of mercy for Moscow's poor, and died a martyr in 1918. Patroness of converts whose families grieve.



The Theotokos "Champion Leader" (Ypermachos Strategos)

A rare warrior-type of the Mother of God, from the Akathist's opening kontakion sung when Constantinople was delivered in 626: "To thee, the Champion Leader..." She bears a sword between Hagia Sophia and Blachernae — and the sword remembers Simeon's prophecy too: "a sword will pierce your own soul" (Luke 2:35). Spiritual warfare and a mother's pierced, persevering love in one image.



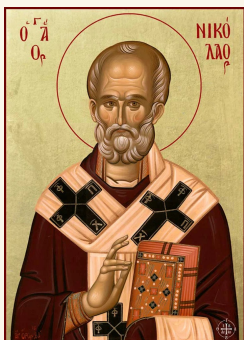
Synaxis of All Saints of Scotland

The pre-schism Orthodox West gathered under the Celtic cross — Columba, Ninian, Kentigern, Margaret and their companions. Orthodoxy is not foreign to the English-speaking world; it is its forgotten root.



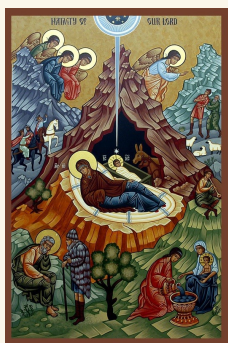
St. Alfred the Great (†899)

Orthodox king of pre-schism England: scholar, psalm-translator, defender of Christian civilization, who put the Scriptures into his people's own tongue. The instinct for an English Bible is older than the Reformation — it is Orthodox England's.



St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra

Bishop of the undivided Church, father of the Council of Nicaea (325), secret gift-giver to the poor. The saint every Protestant family already loves without knowing it — a natural bridge across the dinner table. He blesses with his right hand and holds the Gospel: doctrine and mercy in one man.



The Nativity of Our Lord

The cave foreshadows the tomb, the swaddling clothes the grave-linens; angels, magi, and shepherds converge while Joseph wrestles doubt in the corner and midwives do ordinary work below. God entrusts Himself to a family — struggle included.



The Holy Guardian Angel (with a soul in his care)

Cross in one hand, a small soul at peace in the other, censer of intercession hanging near: the companion given at baptism, guarding the whole road from font to Kingdom.



The Holy Guardian Angel (standing on the clouds)

The same guardian shown full-length, cross and drawn sword in hand: guardianship is tenderness and warfare at once (Psalm 90 [91]:11; Matthew 18:10).



St. John the Forerunner, “Angel of the Desert”

Winged, because he is the promised messenger (Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:2); he holds his own severed head — the full price of telling the truth to power — and his scroll cries “Repent (metanoieite)...” The patron of costly witness and of metanoia, the deep turning of the mind that every conversion is.



Christ the Great High Priest

Christ vested as a bishop, His Gospel open to John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you... let not your heart be troubled.” Every sacrament in the Church is His own act — the priesthood you are entering under is Christ's (Hebrews 4:14).



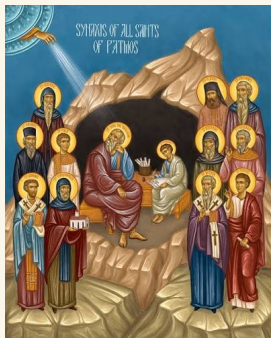
Christ the Ancient of Days

A rare type from Daniel 7: Christ white-haired and eternal, enthroned amid the star-field of heaven with the four creatures of the evangelists at the corners. The One you are following into Orthodoxy is not a new discovery — He is the eternal Word, “the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).



The Last Judgment

Christ enthroned in glory; apostles and saints gathered as the court; the river of fire flowing from the throne — in Orthodox reading, the same divine love, experienced as light by the purified and as fire by the unrepentant. Not an icon of terror but of sobriety: we run the race with the end in view (Matthew 25).



Synaxis of All Saints of Patmos

The saints of one small island across many centuries, gathered around St. John the Theologian dictating in the cave of Revelation. The Church is one congregation across time — the “great cloud of witnesses” of Hebrews 12:1 localized to a single shore.



Synaxis of Monastic Fathers (the Elders of Glinsk)

Generations of elders of one hermitage standing together beneath their monastery: spiritual fatherhood handed from soul to soul, unbroken — apostolic continuity you can see. What is true of this one monastery is true of the whole Church.

“We know where the Church is; we cannot be sure where she is not.”

— a saying beloved of Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS