Questions and Answers about the Orthodox Christian Faith

Those questions in boldface below have been answered in the parish Newsletter for the Month and Year given at the section’s title. Those not so marked are in preparation, or are still being written! When there’s a question number missing, it means that it and its answer were shifted so that the answers will all fit in this 10 page Newsletter, or to conform to a particular topic. Otherwise, the Questions and Answers are given in the order in which they were received.

APRIL 2011
[82.] About Gossip

2. Why don't women wear hats in church anymore?
3. Can we receive Holy Communion twice in one day?
4. Can we work on Sundays now, or not?
5. What does it mean when it says: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"?
6. After Jesus healed some people, he told them not to tell anyone. Why?
7. Why aren't women permitted behind the altar?
8. Why do we permit three marriages even though the previous marriage ended in divorce, and was performed in an Orthodox Church?
9. Why do we tell the Catechumens to depart all the time? Who are these poor Catechumens anyway?
10. Are deacons permitted to marry?
11. Why aren't priests permitted to marry after ordination?
12. Please explain "Holy things are for the Holy."

JULY 2011

"Father, I have a question about Absolution. How many times can I receive Holy Communion before I have to go to Confession again?"
A) What is Confession?
B) Was there Confession in the Old Testament?
C) Did Jesus start the Sacrament of Confession? Was there Confession in the time of Jesus and the Apostles?
D) What was Confession like in the early Church?
E) When all the people came into the Church at the time the Roman Empire became Christian, did that change Confession?
F) Monasticism started to be a big movement in the Church. What effect did it have on Confession?
G) Did Confession develop differently in the Roman Church?
H) With all those millions of people in the Russian Empire, how could the priests hear all the Confessions?
I) What is the current situation in the Church, especially here in the New World, concerning Confession?
J) What's the difference between Confession, General or 'Common' Confession, and Absolution? Now that we've learned that we ought to take Communion more regularly, does that change Confession?
1) What is the relationship between the penitent and his or her spiritual father?
2) What should I confess and what should I omit? I mean, how much of the story should I tell?
3) What about penances?
4) I heard that in some parishes they offer the priest a donation after confessing them. Is that right?
5) What gestures accompany Confession?
6) Should I make a list (of sins)?
7) Is it true the priest isn't allowed to tell anyone what I confess?
8) What if I can't think of anything?
9) What if I think of something later?
10) What if I confess Saturday night, and before Sunday morning Liturgy, I commit some sin?
11) I saw a video tape about Church life in the USSR and in it I saw a priest giving confession and there were two ladies under his stole, confessing at the same time. What was that all about?
12) Is there any sin that cannot be forgiven?
13) Why can't I just confess to God? Why must I confess to a priest?
14) What are some useful books I can read about confession?
15) When should I confess: while I'm sinning or after I've 'worked it through' and have started to repent?

SEPTEMBER 2011

13. Why do we bless wheat, wine, oil, and the five loaves on the eves of certain Holy Days?
14. Why is there no bread (antidoron) after the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy?
15. How should we enter the Church? Are there any special prayers to say when we enter? And what if we have to enter the Altar?
16. Why do we turn the lights on and off during the services?
17. The priest said we can't we use artificial flowers in Church. Why?
18. Please tell us something about the Plaschanitsa and the customs that surround it. Also, please tell us something about the Golgotha.
19. Can a priest serve Liturgy and not receive Communion?
20. Are we allowed to burn incense at home while we pray? I saw some Orthodox people doing that and wondered about it.
22. Why weren't women allowed to wear lipstick in Church?
23. What do you do when the priest comes to visit you, whether at home or in the hospital? What are the preparations?
24. Please tell me about purgatory.
25. What do you do when someone is dying?
26. How do I go about getting something blessed?
27. Holding the cloth for Communion seems a little more complicated than I thought. Would you please say a little about it?

OCTOBER 2011

21. Why would a person take out his dentures before going to Communion?
33. What is an ektenia?
28. Just a quick question Father: I drive the company car all day, making deliveries. Should I cross myself every time I start the engine, or is it enough to cross myself at the beginning and at
the end of the day?
31. What is The Rudder?
32. Father, we hear a lot of people say that this is a godless age. What do you say about that?
34. What is the Typikon?
35. Who decided and when was it decided which books make up the Bible?
36. Some people say that we shouldn't use wine, but rather that we should use grape juice for communion. Why?
37. What is Holy Unction and what does it mean?
38. Father, why do you sign your name "Priest", while other priests just sign their names with "Father"?
39. Why did God reject Cain's sacrifice and accept Abel's?
41. What does Psalm 137 mean, "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock"?
42. Explain about how Communion is saved for Presanctified Liturgy.

NOVEMBER 2011
40. Why is the week before Lent marked in red on the calendar?
43. Please say something about processions in Holy Week and at Pascha.
44. Why don't we celebrate Pascha the same day as western Christians?
45. What should we do with the table scraps from the Easter Basket: eggshells, candy wrappers, ham bones, etc.? Are they blessed too?
46. What does the Prayer before Communion mean when it says, "I will not reveal Thy mysteries to Thine enemies..."?
47. We turn the cross around from Pascha to Ascension so that Jesus isn't seen hanging on the cross after his Resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead at Pascha, then why do we put him back on the cross any more at all?
48. In your Confession article, you said some un-orthodox Christian sects reject some of the Sacraments, including Confession. Would you explain?
49. You didn't mention anything about First Confession in the Quarterly about Confession. Would you say something about it?
50. Is it possible to confess by letter or over the telephone?
51. If we confess all the time, and our sins are forgiven, then what do we do at the Last Judgement?
52. If the priest knows you committed a serious sin but you don't confess it, and the priest isn't supposed to ask questions, what happens?
53. How often is it necessary to confess? You said in the Quarterly that it's normal now to confess once every four to six weeks, with the General Confession at other times.
54. Would you please include a list of questions for self-examination in preparation for Confession?
55. Why aren't we allowed to receive Communion in non-Orthodox Churches? They offered it, and when I said "no thanks", I felt I was being rude.
62. Why do we have to wait forty days to get the baby baptized?

DECEMBER 2011
64. Why do we have Christmas trees in Church, but not the manger scene? We tell children that Christmas is Jesus' birthday and they ask questions like, 'If Christmas is Jesus' birthday, where is He?' Why can't we have a crèche in Church so children can see Him in the cave with the animals?
65. What does the Christmas tree symbolize?

69. Is it Orthodox to say 'grace' before meals?

56. It says at Liturgy that the Blood of Christ washes away our sins, so why do we need Confession? If Holy Unction forgives sins, why do we have Confession and Communion with it?

57. What names can I name my children?

58. In your articles on Confession, you mention penances. I thought that was Catholic! Do we have penances in the Orthodox Church? What are some of them like? Why didn't I ever get a penance?

59. In the Bible, is the Mary, whose brother and sister are Lazarus and Martha, the same one who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, or is that Mary Magdalene?

60. Somebody came to our church and said, about our icon of the Virgin, 'the Virgin Mary is always dressed in blue, yet your icon has her with a red robe.' Why is she dressed in red? or blue, for that matter?

61. When Jesus gave Simon a nickname, the Greek Bible called him Cephas, and later the Latin Bible called him Peter. Both names mean Rock, so why don't English translations of the Bible call him Rock?

66. In our parish, at the Blessing of Water on Epiphany, three men stand with three triple candles. During the blessing, these candles are dipped into the water. Where does this custom come from and what does it mean?

JANUARY 2012

258. What is the correct time to start putting up and taking down Christmas decorations?

63. Father, sometimes we see Orthodox priests wear crosses with only one bar. Why don't they all wear three-barred crosses if they're Orthodox?

67. What is it that happens to water when it's blessed? What happens to a house that's blessed with that holy water?

68. Why is it forbidden to bless homes during Lent?

70. Some people suffer terribly and are in great pain when they near the end of their lives. Is it wrong to pray for someone to die?

71. Why do Roman Catholics cross themselves backwards? What's the difference?

72. Noah was on the Ark 40 days, Israel spent 40 years in the desert and Jesus was in the wilderness 40 days. Why 40? I heard that 40 represents judgment. And what does 'seventy times seven' mean?

73. I always thought the Altar covers and the whole Church were prepared for Pascha at midnight while we are outside in the procession. Now I hear the Altar covers are changed from black to white at the Liturgy on Holy Saturday! When exactly does Lent end? Please say something about that.

74. Who is the Angel of the Lord?

76. According to the State, if you live together, you can be considered married by 'common law'. What does it mean, and what does the Church say about it?

77. Can Deacons give Communion, or is it only Priests and Bishops?

FEBRUARY 2012

75. "Dear Father, We must strenuously refute... one of the answers given in your Quarterly. You wrote 'Tradition tells us that Mary of Magdala was a prostitute.' According to our research, through Greek sources, Saint Mary lived and died a pure virgin."

78. 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' was explained to me as not from the Old Testament, but from the Mediterranean way of thinking about money. It means, for example, that if I break
something of yours you can only get the equivalent value for what I broke. It didn't have
anything to do with revenge, and is not a Jewish custom. Is that true?
79. Father, in some Churches we see them exchange the "Kiss of Peace". What is that? Do we
have that in our Church? Why don't we do that?
80. What do the different colors of the priests' robes mean? What are the proper colors of
vestments for each season?
81. Why do our priests wear vestments? Didn't Jesus warn us about people who like to go about
in long garments?
83. What does it mean when it says in the Bible that Zechariah's division was on duty? What is
the hour of incense?

MARCH 2012
92. If God created it, why is it a sin to eat it?!
93. Is it true we don’t eat fish during Lent? Why is that?
94. Why do we give something up for Lent?
95. Father, I understand why we don’t eat meat and dairy products during Lent, and why we
don’t eat fish. But why is oil, especially olive oil, forbidden during Lent?
96. Father, you said the day begins and ends at Vespers, so do we fast from sunset to sunset, or
from midnight to midnight?
97. Father, I’m an old person, and we never used to fast the way you say we should. Our old
priest taught us that we don’t eat meat on Fridays, and in Lent - on Wednesdays and Fridays.
But you tell us we can’t eat this or that - why don’t you priests all get together and make up your
minds? Didn’t they teach you all the same thing in school? Do you mean to tell me that my
parents and grandparents were wrong about all this? Who are you to tell us what we can eat, and
what we can’t?! Why should I start this now? I’m too old to change.
98. Please give us some instruction about kneeling and prostrating during the Liturgy of
Presanctified Gifts.
99. Why are pauses during the Liturgy so much longer than usual during Lent? And someone else
asked: Why is Liturgy so much longer during Lent?

APRIL 2012
84. What would happen if, because of sudden illness or an emergency, you couldn't make it for a
service, Father? What should we do? Does the Reader just take over?
85. I have a question from the Book of Genesis, chapter 6, verse 2. Who are these 'sons of God'
and where did they come from? And in verse 4, who are the 'giants' and where did they come
from? Are there really giants?
86. Why do you have to fast before Communion? Why from 12 o'clock?
87. What's it like living in a seminary?
88. Father, I once confessed something only because I knew I should: I knew the Church said
what I’d done was wrong, but I didn’t repent much of it then because I didn't think it was wrong.
Now I look back and understand how bad a sin it was. Should I confess that sin again?
89. How should we enter the church? Are there any special prayers to say when we enter? And
what if we have to enter the Altar?
90. How do we know which Liturgy will be served?
91. You have written about the Liturgy of Saint James more than once now. I've never seen a
copy of it or been to one. Tell us something about it.

MAY 2012
100. Please give a chronology of Holy Week.
101. Could you please explain the connections between the Passover Meal, the Last Supper, and the Holy Eucharist?
102. When does Lent end?
103. When do we stop using the special Lenten melody? Is it at the end of Lent? Or at the end of Holy Week?
104. Why do we have Matins in the evening and Vespers in the morning in Great Lent and in Holy Week? Isn’t that backwards?
105. A Jewish friend asked how I can stand to attend Holy Week services, knowing how my Church slanders Jews in them. Is this true? Has our Church taken a position against Jews?
106. Why do we read “Acts” (the Book of the Acts of the Apostles) at the tomb of Jesus? (Another person asked, ‘What do they read at Jesus’ tomb?)
107. If we change altar covers and vestments to white on Holy Saturday at Vespers, why don’t we sing ‘Christ is Risen’ then? This is very confusing to me. (See also question/answer #73 in January, 2011 Newsletter.)
108. How should we take Communion? I’ve seen some people stick out their tongues, others open their mouths a tiny bit, others open their mouths as if they were at the dentist. What’s the right way?

JUNE 2012

109. Father P said I can’t write my own wedding ceremony. Why not?
110. I plan to marry a Roman Catholic girl. I’m not giving up my religion and neither is she. She wants to get married in her church. I hear I have to get married in our Church, too. But one of our parishioners told me I don’t have to get married in both Churches. Years ago, our Pastor never made my parents get married in both churches, and my father’s Roman Catholic. Do I really have to get married in our Church, and if so, why?
111. When can we (when can’t we) get married?
112. Can we have parastas (memorial service) for non-Orthodox Christians? Can we have parastas for non-Christians? For example, when President Kennedy was assassinated, and on Memorial Day, and when the hostages were in Iran and when the Pope was shot, could we pray for them in Church? Can we pray for our relatives who aren’t Orthodox during Liturgy?
113. Why is Proskomedia done with the doors closed and the curtain drawn? When the Priest raises the Lamb and says, “Holy things are for the Holy!” why do it behind closed doors and curtain?

JULY 2012

115. Some people say that the things Jesus did were once and for all. Yet we repeat things Jesus did. Why?
116. My girlfriend says her church says that they know what everything in the Book of Revelation means. We say we don’t. Why don’t we?
117. Father G told us why we have the requiem services (panikhidi) on the third, ninth, and fortieth days, but I don’t remember. Could you tell us again and explain what it means?
118. Why doesn’t the Church modernize, and get rid of all the “ancient” baggage?
119. In a sermon you spoke about the Beatitudes as being New Testament Ten Commandments. Is this related to Jesus’ saying “I come not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it”? And just what does it mean that Jesus fulfills the Law? How did He fulfill the Law? Are the Beatitudes the fulfillment of the Ten Commandments?
120. Was the first time Jesus was revealed as the Christ, the Anointed One of God, the Messiah, the time Saint Peter says, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God”?
121. Why can’t we have evening Liturgies, especially on Holy Days, so that those who work can attend services and receive Communion? We have Presanctified Liturgy in the evenings during Lent, so why not on the eves of Holy Days?
122. Why are priests forbidden to dance?
123. Why is the face of the priest covered at his funeral?

AUGUST 2012
124. What is the Orthodox teaching about the “Rapture”?
125. You mentioned that we can read the Psalter for the Dead. How exactly do you do that?
126. Jesus tells us to love our enemies, but in the Old Testament God was really hard on His enemies, even violent. How can we reconcile that?
127. I thought we were supposed to bow down only to God. Why do we bow at the Virgin Mary’s tomb at Assumption Feast?

SEPTEMBER 2012
128. When I was a member of another Church, they taught us that the Virgin Mary married Joseph, but remained a Virgin and gave birth to Jesus. Now someone told me that she was an unwed mother. Could you please explain?
129. What’s the difference between private or personal prayer, and liturgical prayer? Should private prayers be chanted?
130. Is it a sin to look at pictures of naked ladies?
131. Why does the Bishop have more authority than other priests?
132. Why is the bottom bar of our cross on a slant and what does it mean?
133. Why aren’t priests allowed to have opinions?
134. Why do we need a curtain for the Royal Doors, and why is it closed at certain times during the Liturgy? During Bright Week, why is not only the curtain kept open, but also the doors? In some places, they serve Liturgy with the doors open from start to finish all the time. Why don’t we?
135. Why didn’t they teach us these things thirty or forty years ago? Why are we hearing all these things now for the first time?
136. Why do we call you ‘Father’, Father?
137. How should we pray for someone who commits suicide? Why can’t they be buried in a cemetery or have a funeral?
138. Please say something about different customs for ringing bells.

(Questions below are from our Church School Children and are about Pascha. We’ll answer them as we get nearer to Pascha.)
139. On Good Friday, why do we walk around the church?
140. At midnight service, why did the altar boys wear a white robe before midnight?
141. On Easter midnight service, why didn’t the other people walk around?
142. Why is Easter called Pascha?
143. Why do we have to eat special Easter food?
144. Why don’t we kneel after Easter?

OCTOBER, 2011
145. Father, what’s your opinion of Hebrews 6.4? The reason I ask is that a friend gave up being Christian when she married, and took her husband’s (non-Christian) religion. Why would anyone do that?
146. Please say something about different customs at Baptisms. Please say something about different customs at Funerals.
147. There was a series on television about the black church and how it’s the center of political life in the community. Why isn’t ours like that?
148. Can murder be forgiven?
149. Why did God single out Elijah and Enoch not to die, but to be taken up to heaven bodily? Of all the people in the Old Testament, God singled out only two not to die - Enoch and Elijah. There’s a story that these two will be the righteous ones who witness the last judgment, and then they will return to die a natural death. Others say the righteous ones will be Elijah and Moses. Is there a connection? Why were only these two chosen?
150. I heard somebody talking about the Orthodox Holocaust. Would you say something about that, please?
151. Father, in some places they say the Lord’s Prayer all together, and in other places, only the reader reads it. What difference does it make?
152. Why don’t Christians celebrate the Sabbath?

NOVEMBER, 2011
154. In “The Akathist for Those Who Have Fallen Asleep”, the second line says, “O God ... who appointed the time, the season and the manner of our death.” Isn’t that predestination? We Orthodox don’t believe that, do we?
155. We get a lot of Jehovah’s Witnesses on a very regular basis. What do I say to them? I told them that we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died on the Cross to save sinners, and that I believe in the Holy Trinity. Then I say ‘thank you’ and close the door. Is that enough?
156. As Christians, are we supposed to put out flags on patriotic (civic) holidays? I support our country, but don’t want to show approval for the killing and murder that is war and which affected both sides.
157. What was the role of women, especially the deaconesses, in the early Church? Why can’t women be priests? How can women take an active role in the Church of today?

412. Could you comment on the possible roles of sisterhoods in your parish—including strengths and pitfalls of such groups?
158. Why aren’t women taken into the altar at Baptism?
159. In Exodus 3, why does Moses’ age change so quickly? He was 40, then all of a sudden, he’s seeing Pharaoh and he’s 80.
160. In Exodus were the ten plagues all at once or was there time between them? Did Pharaoh choose not to believe in the plagues because they were similar? Since God permitted Pharaoh to be stubborn, was the purpose of the plagues to show God’s power over the world?
161. In Exodus, why wouldn’t Moses circumcise his son? Moses made God so angry at him that Moses’ wife finally had to do it.
162. What does Matthew 5.38 mean where it says to offer no resistance to injury? Does it mean don’t defend yourself? If so, is it meant absolutely? Or is it the ‘eye for an eye’ rule again?
163. Why are Orthodox priests and other ministers allowed to marry, while Roman Catholic priests must remain celibate?

DECEMBER 2012
164. What’s the difference between going to the priest for confession and going to a shrink for therapy?
165. The icon on our processional cross was being repainted, and Father wouldn’t let us leave the cross (without the icon) up in Church. Why did he do that? The people who donated it said it looked fine.
166. Why don’t we have patron saints like the Roman Catholics do?
167. What is the difference between Orthodox and Roman Catholic rosaries? Are we allowed to use Catholic rosaries?
168. Why do we sing in Church?
169. Father, is there some good way to read the Bible?
170. Do we have nuns? If we do, why have I never seen any?
171. What is the difference between Greek and Russian Orthodoxy?
172. Why can’t lay people touch the altar? the sacrament?
173. In Icons, Altars are shown covered with cloths down to the floor. Why isn’t our Altar covered the same way? Can we do that too?
175. What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple?

JANUARY 2013
174. Who were the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees?

Upcoming and Future editions
Questions and Answers
We would like to ‘update’ two answers printed in the Quarterly concerning Holy Unction. They were answers to Questions 37: What is Holy Unction and what does it mean? (Winter 88), and 56: It says at Liturgy that the Blood of Christ washes away our sins, so why do we need Confession? And if Holy Unction forgives sins, why do we have Confession and Communion with it? (Summer, ‘88)
82. What is the meaning of the triple-branched candles that people hold in the back of the church during Liturgy or in front of the center table? In fact, what is the meaning of the table in the center of the church?

WORK.J
176. First I heard that priestly vestments were the street clothes of the Romans of the age. Now someone tells me they’re a development of the garments of the Hebrew priesthood. What’s the story?
177. In the Jerusalem translation of the Bible, they print the name of God, but not in other versions of the Bible. I was in an Orthodox Church where they used the Jerusalem version, and when the reader read the name of God, my priest said he was shocked. Why don’t we Christians read the name of God, but instead say God, or The Lord, as the Jews do?

WORK.K
178. In the “Orthodox Church” newspaper, I read that the Holy Synod of Bishops “decided to continue the established practice of the OCA with regard to clergy awards, and approved ... medals for the ‘Order of Saint Innocent’. What does that mean?
179. A table or shelf with icons, statues, crosses and candles and so on; is it proper to call that an altar? What is an altar?
180. Why are there certain passages omitted from daily readings? Often, these are the more meaningful, important, or interesting segments!
181. Are frogs legs fish or flesh?
182. Why do we do things three times: circle the altar (or table) three times, ask questions three times, cross yourself three times, and so on?

WORK.L
183. When the Lord’s Prayer says, ‘give us this day our daily bread’ are we asking that He provide us with our daily basic needs, like bread, or are we asking Him for His Word?
184. In the Lord’s Prayer, when it says ‘lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,’ are we asking God not to lead us into temptation, or are we saying ‘help me not to lead myself into temptation?’ Does God tempt us?
185. In John 14.9, it says ‘whoever has seen me has seen the Father’. Is Jesus telling us He is perfect in love and mercy and when we see that in Him, that’s the reflection of God? Or does it mean something else?
186. At Presanctified Liturgy, why is the curtain only drawn half-way?
187. In church, where should we put the national flag?
188. Why does each priest do something different from the next one? Don’t you all learn the same things in seminary?

WORK.M
189. I hear that there’s going to be another Ecumenical Council held. I’m confused. Why do we need another Ecumenical Council? Will our parish send a representative? Why didn’t Orthodox go to the last one?
190. Why is Joseph (the Virgin Mary’s husband) left out in the Orthodox Church?
191. Why did Elizabeth (John the Baptist’s mother) hide herself for five months?
192. Is there a relation between John, Jesus, and Mary Magdalene in reference to the washing of the feet?
193. Please tell something about the star at the time of Christ’s birth.

WORK.N
QUESTIONS FROM SUNDAY SCHOOL CHILDREN (of different ages)
194. Does God really help us? Because why did He let so many people die in the holocaust?
195. Explain the Roman Catholic definitions of divorce and annulment. Under what conditions can you get annulments? Why do they give annulments to couples who have children - isn’t that divorce?
196. If the Roman and Orthodox Churches recognize the sacraments of each other as valid, why can’t we take Communion in the Roman Church?
197. Why do Romans Catholics say we broke away from them? What happened in 1054 and why?
198. Who does the priest go to for Confession?
199. When will our Church just have general Confession and not have private Confession?

WORK.O
195. I know there are books I could read, but would you briefly explain about autocephaly? Do Greek parishes and the others have autocephaly too? And what is SCOBA? (another person on the Internet asks:) I was speaking with a Greek (under Archbishop Iakovos) priest this past weekend, and we were talking about autocephaly in North America. He told me that the OCA was not “officially” autocephalous since the Moscow Patriarchate was the only Patriarchate to recognize the OCA--this process requires the recognition of two patriarchates. My question is twofold. Is this actually accurate.
If so, would not the Bulgarian and Romanian presence in the OCA imply recognition from these two patriarchates?

196. Who was Nostradamus? What do you think about his prophecies about the end of the (Roman) Papacy?

197. If the Jews were God’s chosen people, then why didn’t they all become Christian when Jesus came?

198. In the Presanctified Liturgy, why isn’t there a litany for the dead?

199. What’s the difference between the Dormition of the Mother of God and Assumption of the Mother of God?

200. What is the Orthodox Church’s position on the Dead Sea Scrolls?

201. Father, in the Bulletin you wrote, “...about candle lists and other donations: Lighting candles is a prayer and we should keep our prayers private, as Jesus said.” Does that mean I shouldn’t tell people I’ll pray for them?

202. Father, if I confessed something once, only because I knew I should, I knew the Church said it was wrong, but not repenting much of it at the time, and now I look back and understand how bad a thing it really was, should I confess that sin again?

203. If Judas had taken the opportunity to repent at the last minute, and had not gone ahead and betrayed Jesus, what would have happened?

204. Are ‘sheol’ ‘gehenna’ and ‘hades’ the same as hell? Are they all the same? If not, what are the differences?

205. Could you please give us a time-line of the Old Testament, a history of Israel?

206. Who can be a god-parent and who can’t?

207. Is a telling a white lie a sin? If you have to do something wrong to accomplish something good, isn’t a sin, is it?

208. Why wouldn’t Father bless my ring when I asked him? Father A did.

209. Father E told us that Christians shouldn’t read the Old Testament, only the New Testament. Is that true? Do we have to do what the Old Testament said, now that we have the New Testament?

210. Father, we don’t believe in the Immaculate Conception, do we?

211. What’s the difference between betrothal and engagement?

212. In other churches, we saw icons of God the Father as an old man, Jesus sitting on a throne at His right hand, and the Holy Spirit as a dove. Now I heard that isn’t correct. What is the right way of showing the Holy Trinity in an icon, then?

213. When John the Baptist was baptizing, did he baptize in the Name of Jesus, or in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

214. When and who and how and why was the Apocrypha set apart and removed from the Bible?

215. Someone told me that it’s wrong for Christians to celebrate Halloween. What possible harm could there be in that!? Another question was: What is the Church’s position about Halloween?

216. How do I find out who my patron saint is? How do I find out when my patron saint’s day is?

217. Now we tell people it’s good to go to Communion weekly, but in the Bible it says, ‘Go into your closet and pray’. Isn’t it better if people don’t show off how much they love God?

218. What can you tell us about the Western Rite of Orthodoxy?
220. Someone told me that when King David danced in front of the Ark, he danced without clothing. If that’s true, why did he dance naked?

WORK.S
221. What is the history and theology of Parish Councils?

WORK.T
222. What is the significance of receiving the blessing of a priest or a bishop, or anyone? And when should you seek such a blessing?
223. At what age do children have to start fasting before Communion?
224. Can I change godparents?
225. You wrote that deacons used to, and in some places still do, distribute Holy Communion. Why was/is it the deacon?
226. I heard about a couple whose baby was stillborn and their priest refused to do the funeral service. That’s terrible! Why wouldn’t he do it?
227. When Saint John the Evangelist wrote his Gospel, he only identified himself as a disciple or as ‘that disciple who Jesus loved.’ Wasn’t it a bit prideful of him to identify himself like that? Why didn’t he just say his name?
228. When I was a child I remember the men all sitting on the side of the Church with the icon of Christ, and the women all sitting on the side of the Church with the icon of the Virgin. We don’t do that anymore. But I saw that again in a Church I went to when I was on vacation. Why don’t we do that anymore? Is it necessary?
229. What did you mean by ‘Little Russia’ in one of the answers here? I’d never heard that before!

WORK.U
230. I heard one Orthodox priest chiding another Orthodox priest for always wearing a cassock. Aren’t our priests supposed to wear cassocks?
231. Father, in my relative’s parish, when they take Communion the people open their mouths and tilt their heads back and the priest just drops the Communion in. And they have individual cups for the wine after Communion. Will we ever have that in our parish?
232. What do those bells on the censer mean?
233. In the Liturgy book it says “and all Orthodox Christians”. Why can’t we just pray for everyone? It isn’t very loving to be so exclusive.
234. The Orthodox Church insists that the coffin must be open at the funeral. This barbaric ancient custom has no place in our modern day. It is unnecessarily cruel to the family of the deceased. We want to remember our loved ones the way they were, not the lifeless remains. Why does the Orthodox Church do this?

WORK.V
235. They said in one Church that it isn’t necessary to tell your sins to the priest, that all you have to do is to tell them to God, and He forgives you. Is that true?
236. Can you tell me what the Church thinks of “twelve steps” programs?
237. If the Holy Spirit baptizes us then why do we need baptism in water?
238. Father, the prayers for a woman on the day after giving birth refer to uncleanness. That’s upsetting to new mothers. Isn’t that an attitude from the Stone Age? Do we still believe that?
234. I know that the Canons say that menstruating women should not come to Church or be communed. Is this Canon still in force in our modern world?
229. What is the Church’s teaching on cremation?
240. Did you see the news story about the tattooed peoples’ convention? What did you think about that?

241. We read about Jesus’ brothers, and even sisters, in the Bible. How can that be, if the Virgin Mary was Ever-Virgin, as we call her? What is the theological reason for insisting that the mother of God remained a virgin all her life and bore no child other than Jesus? Or, to put it another way, why do some Protestants insist that Mary had more children after Jesus was born?

242. What’s the meaning of cutting a baby’s hair at Baptism?

243. What’s the purpose of the repetition in our services?

244. What is the difference between the antidoron and the bread used for the Litiya? And a similar question: 373. What’s the difference between ‘zapivka’ and ‘prescoura’ bread?

246. Please give instructions about kneeling and prostrations during the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.

247. Father, I keep hearing about ‘Roman Catholic influence’ and ‘Byzantine Catholic influence’ and ‘Uniat influence’ and I don’t know what that means. Could you please give examples of this?

251. Father, are all weddings now celebrated outside the Liturgy, or are they now done together with Communion, like Baptisms are?

252. In your church services, you mention ‘Theodoka’ frequently. Is that a feminine form of the name Theodosius?

253. I heard that one Bishop is receiving former Byzantine Catholic priests into the Church, and allowing them to get married. Isn’t that against their ordinations? Isn’t this against the canons?

254. Why don’t we have open communion? I saw our priest turn someone away from the chalice and I don’t think that was very nice.

255. I saw girls serving at the altar in one Roman Catholic Church. Can my daughter serve at the altar now?

256. The priest at the Roman Catholic Church faces the people during their service. They changed that long ago. When will our church change?

257. Since Jesus was Jewish, shouldn’t we all be Jewish too?

258. Why can’t we use things we’ve seen in other Christian (but non-Orthodox) Churches in our Church? Why can’t we put flowers on the altar?

260. Who are the Fathers of the Church, and who selected them? What makes them Fathers? Why are they so important?

261. What are the Ecumenical Councils? What makes them so important? Are there other Councils which aren’t ecumenical? What importance do they have?

262. Lately I notice more and more Orthodox people wearing prayer beads (chotki). Is that right?

263. Right now, deacons just serve in the Liturgy, don’t they? Why don’t they have a greater function in the Church?

264. Father made negative comments about the altar boys’ haircuts. He shouldn’t have done that because it made them not feel good about themselves.

265. Our priest says we can’t gamble, even if it’s ‘for the Church’. How can he say that when Church organizations regularly send us raffle tickets? Gambling is just good clean fun. Why would anyone object to that?
WORK ZA
266. What’s the difference between the devil, devils, demons, spirits, and so on?
267. If God knows everything we’re going to do, how can we choose between good and evil?
268. Do Christians have to have our sons circumcised?
269. Since Jesus is the Son of God, and knows everything, what did it mean when He said, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”
270. Father, what do priests do from day to day?
271. Father, I prayed to God about what I should do in my life, but didn’t get an answer. Why?
272. Father, what is ‘the abuse of Confession?’ I heard someone say that. What does it mean?
273. Father, I heard that before a priest is ordained, he makes his last confession. Is that right? - priests don’t have to go to confession anymore after ordination?
274. What does it mean in the Bible when it says ‘seventh heaven’?
275. When I was a child, I was told that if I cut my finger and was bleeding before Holy Communion, I shouldn’t approach the chalice. And I was told that we fast so that our stomachs will be empty and the Holy Communion will be absorbed... Now someone tells me this is false. What’s the truth, Father?

WORK ZB
276. (from a Matushka, who is a registered nurse) If my husband collapsed during services, should I go into the altar to see what happened? If my husband collapsed during services, what would we do in regards the rest of the service?
277. Father, why do you wash your hands at certain times during the services?
278. Why does the Church Calendar begin on September 1st? Doesn’t the prefix ‘sept’ mean ‘seven’. Does this mean that March used to be the first month?
279. I have seen quite a few Orthodox sources that mention Orthodox faithful having both a confessor and spiritual father. Is the spiritual father one who guides rather than actually hears a confession?
280. How do I go about selecting a spiritual father? And another person asked: I have to change my confessor. How do I go about doing that?
281. Someone told me that there are more than 150 Psalms in the Psalter. Is that just a different way of numbering, or are there really more than 150 Psalms?
282. A friend and I were discussing funerals the other day and I remembered a long time ago an Orthodox funeral I attended. It was the first time I saw it and I was aghast -- the priest absolved the body. At the end of the service, the priest approached the casket, took his stole in usual fashion as in confession and pronounced the words of absolution: “I absolve you from your sins...” I was told later that this was a Russian custom and that the older Russians expect it....... how can you absolve a dead person?
283. Several times recently I have seen the terms ‘reader’ and ‘tonsured reader.’ I don’t know what they mean in Orthodox use.
284. I am a Reader. It was always my impression that I was made a Reader for a particular place (“tonsured a Reader of the parish of Saint So-and-so” or something like that were the words). I was also under the impression that Readers should have their cassocks on only in church---so I wouldn’t drive to church in one, for instance. So my questions are: 1) when is it appropriate to wear one’s cassock? 2) Where is it appropriate (if I visit another parish, should I wear it: always, never, with advance permission from the priest there, ...? How about at pro-life marches...?)?
285. I heard that the Methodists recently decided to stop using the name ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ because they think it’s sexist and incorrect in today’s world. So they use ‘Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier’ instead. My friend and I got into an argument - the Orthodox Church will not recognize baptisms not made in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will it?
286. Do we have to come to Confession to our own parish priest or can we go to any priest? I’m still confused.

293. Is it appropriate to tell one’s confessor in confession that one has sinned against him personally? Is it better to say: 1.) I have held others in contempt, or 2.) I have held members of the clergy in contempt, or 3.) I have held you, Father X, in contempt for your pastoral blunders? Or is it better to find another confessor for the occasion?

WORK Z. Confession

+ Questions and Answers

139. What’s the difference between going to the priest for confession and going to a shrink for therapy?

183. Who does the priest go to for Confession?

184. When will our Church just have general Confession and not have private Confession?

192. Father, if I confessed something once, only because I knew I should, I knew the Church said it was wrong, but not repenting much of it at the time because then I didn’t think it was wrong, and now I look back and understand how bad a sin it really was, should I confess that again?

272. Father, what is ‘the abuse of Confession?’ I heard someone say that. What does it mean?

293. Is it appropriate to tell one’s confessor in confession that one has sinned against him personally? Is it better to say: 1.) I have held others in contempt, or 2.) I have held members of the clergy in contempt, or 3.) I have held you, Father X, in contempt for your pastoral blunders? Or is it better to find another confessor for the occasion? (from the Internet)

273. Father, I heard that before a priest is ordained, he makes his last confession. Is that right? - priests don’t go to confession anymore after ordination?

279. (from the Internet) I have seen quite a few Orthodox sources that mention Orthodox faithful having both a confessor and spiritual father. Is the spiritual father one who guides rather than actually hears a confession?

280. I have to change my confessor. How do I go about doing that? And someone else asked: How do I go about selecting a spiritual father?

286. Do we have to come to Confession to our own parish priest or can we go to any priest? I’m still confused.

292. Are the penances in the Canon Laws punishments?

293. Is it appropriate to tell one’s confessor in confession that one has sinned against him personally? Is it better to say: 1.) I have held others in contempt, or 2.) I have held members of the clergy in
contempt, or 3.) I have held you, Father X, in contempt for your pastoral blunders? Or is it better to find another confessor for the occasion? (from the Internet)

Work ZD
287. (from the Internet) My church recently did a survey to ask what parishioners liked, disliked, would like to see changed, etc. Upon reviewing these, our priest found several requests that an organ be allowed to accompany the choir during services. We would like to prepare a response to this request that is based on the teachings of the Church and the canons. Could anyone post specific information/canons regarding the use of instrumental music in church or direct me where to find it?
288. (from the Internet) I understand the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile (Synod) has canonized the former Czar Nicholas II and his family, but not the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. What does the Orthodox Church in America say on this subject? Response 1: The OCA, being the local church in America, can not canonize saints outside of her territory and thus waits for the Church of Russia to make a decision. Response 2: ...But does not prohibit local and individual remembrance of the Royal Martyrs (or any of the New Martyrs of Russia, for that matter). (Another person asked) What is meant by local canonization of a saint? (Another person asked) How do they make a saint in our Church?
289. (from the Internet) How common would it be to see a baptism at which the child has two godfathers and four godmothers? Are multiple (more than two, that is) godparents usual or unusual?
290. (from the Internet) Based on 1 Cor 11:14, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” why do Orthodox clergy vow to never cut their hair, either on top of the head, or on the face? Men letting their hair on top of the head grow long seems to go against Saint Paul’s teaching.
291. (from the Internet) A three year-old boy asked me why I lit a candle! I answered as simply as I could; “Because I’m telling God that I’m here.” Obviously, I need help. Any suggestions? On both a 3 year-old’s level, and a more sophisticated level (suitable for my pea-brain).
292. Are the penances in the Canon Laws punishments? see Work ZConfession
293. Is it appropriate to tell one’s confessor in confession that one has sinned against him personally? Is it better to say: 1.) I have held others in contempt, or 2.) I have held members of the clergy in contempt, or 3.) I have held you, Father X, in contempt for your pastoral blunders? Or is it better to find another confessor for the occasion? (from the Internet) see Work ZConfession
294. I know that the Canons say that menstruating women should not come to Church or be communed. Is this Canon still in force in our modern world? see Work V
295. To what extent can a presbyter excommunicate someone for non-canonical (disciplinary) offenses without the approval of his bishop? Must such an excommunication be then ratified by the bishop?
296. Why do we bless water twice at Epiphany?

Work ZE
297. Why do some people put ashes on their foreheads at the beginning of Lent? Doesn’t it say in the Bible, “ But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:17-18)
298. What should an individual do when, after confessing a particular sin or sins, they realize the awfulness of their sin and begin to feel deep remorse, regret, guilt and fear? What if those ill feelings are experienced months or years after the offense and confession?
299. What should an individual do upon recollection of a past sin if they are unsure that they have confessed that sin? Is the stain of the sin removed by the absolution prayer?
300. We are told to ask forgiveness of those we offended before approaching the Eucharist. What if our offense corrupts ourselves and the icon of God each of us bears? (i.e. drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, etc.)

301. What would be considered a good rule of prayer for someone just beginning a spiritual life? Or just renewing their spiritual life?

302. What should a person do if they have been attending Church, receiving the sacraments, praying daily, only to find themselves getting worse as a Christian?

303. What’s the difference between a Hierarchical and Pontifical Divine Liturgy?

304. (from the Internet) When Saint Mary Magdalene saw Christ, He told her, “Do not cleave to me for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (paraphrase). Yet, when Saint Thomas doubted Christ’s resurrection, He allowed Saint Thomas to touch the holes in His hands, in His side, etc. Why would Christ allow one person to touch Him and another not? Was it to prove to Saint Thomas that “Truly He is Risen”?

305. Why can’t men be ordained before they’re 30 years old according to Canon Law? Why are some men ordained before 30?

306. Do animals have souls? Is there a difference between animal souls and human souls? If animals have souls, does that mean they can go to heaven?

Work ZF

307. A question from someone who, at a funeral, introduced himself to the priest as being a member of a non-Orthodox Church. ‘What do you mean, I can’t take communion in this (Orthodox) church?! I was baptized in this church! My grandfather built this church! You can’t take away my heritage from me! Just because I belong to the N Church now, you’re discriminating against me!’

308. Has an Orthodox Christian father who circumcises his child or an adolescent who has himself circumcised (in order to avoid “locker room” ridicule) committed a sin?

309. What are the main differences between the OCA and the Synod (ROCOR or ROCA)?

310. (from the Internet) Are there any prohibitions or restrictions regarding dogs in Orthodox homes? I ask because a dear older friend of ours recently said that they could never have a dog because they keep to the old rules, and they could never have their house blessed if there were dogs in the same home with icons. Cats, it seems, would be ok.

311. (from the Internet) If we don’t consider Catholics and other schismatics to have true Sacraments, such as Communion, why would we recognize the sacramentality of Baptism from other schismatics? If we truly claim that exclusive link to the River Jordan we should guard the purity of Baptism. How come this is not so?

312. Shouldn’t we be using whole wheat flour to make prosphora?

313. (from the Internet) Does anyone know of any reference(s) in the writings of the fathers and ecclesiastical authors that discuss(es) this tri-partite character of the Holy Cross as also mentioned in the following: “Let us venerate the Cross of the Lord, offering our tender affection as the cypress, the sweet fragrance of our faith as the cedar, and our sincere love as the pine; and let us glorify our deliverer Who was nailed upon it.’ (from Canticle Seven of Wednesday of the fourth week Triodion Supplement p 175).

314. (from the Internet) Someone told me that we are not allowed to use vinegar during Great Lent, because drinking wine is forbidden, and vinegar used to be wine.

315. When N got married, you didn’t announce wedding banns. Why not? We had them when I got married.

316. (from the Internet) A friend of mine is dating a Muslim, apparently, and she is keen on the Qu’ran. Lately she told me that Muslims know that the Qu’ran is divine-inspired because no one on
earth could write as such. Her question is: How do we know that the Bible is God’s word? To be frank, I sometimes wonder about this myself (what a heretic I must be!). I appreciate your feedback.

Work ZG
317. I went to Ocean City with my friend. Well my friend really wanted to get his palm read, so we all went in and took a seat. We all ended up getting our palms read. It was really strange. The lady knew everything about me. …I don’t see how it can be against our religion if she just says the future as she sees it, and she doesn’t decide it. So I’m asking you what you think on the subject.
318. My next door neighbor saw me limping around the back yard, and called me over to their house. They don’t speak English very well, they’re from Asia. The father took me over to their statue of Buddha and said some prayers for me, and as he did it, his son explained what was happening. I didn’t want to offend them by refusing, but it all happened so quickly – is it a sin that I let them do this?
319. (from the Internet) We got into a lively discussion of these issues in our adult class this week. I would like very much to see what you have to say on the relationships between the theatrical world and the Orthodox world. Ponder these questions: Is acting acceptable or not to Orthodoxy? Is it acceptable for Orthodox Christians to attend the theater? Where do our positions on these topics come from?
320. (from the Internet) When I was a Protestant I always thought fasting was total abstinence from all food and drink except water. I was aware of abstinence from animal substances from the book of Daniel. Could some one please clarify this for me- when an Orthodox says “fasting” does he always mean the latter? Which do the Scriptures mean, for example, Moses’, Elijah’s, and Christ’s fasts?
321. (from the Internet) Can someone help me understand this? I believe in the Gospel reading on Palm Sunday, it was stated that it was six days before the Passover when Christ entered Jerusalem. But four days later we remember the Last Supper, His celebration of the Passover with His disciples. He is tried and crucified during Passover. His body is removed from the Cross and quickly buried; then the women come to anoint His body on Sunday when the Passover is over. But doesn’t Passover last eight days? We tie in our date for Easter with Passover, but I think I am missing something with these numbers. Can someone please explain.
322. This question has an answer already given, but it’s worth reprinting: Here is something I read early this morning, some words on Great Thursday from the Life of the Holy Elder Nektary of Optina: “.....Returning home from the Skete we found a whole company of people, among whom were our dear spiritual friend, Father Nektary.... Mrs K was saying... ‘that by the mercy and love of God, everyone, even unrepentant evildoers and apostates, will be saved through His sorrows and earthly sufferings. This seems correct to me. What do you think, Father Nektary?’ ‘Two thieves,’ he replied briefly, ‘hung on crosses alongside the Savior, but only one entered into Paradise.’”
323. Father, you reprinted an article in the Bulletin which said: “In ongoing meetings to refine aspects of the proposed International Criminal Court, the Canadian government has proposed that the new International Criminal Court revoke the centuries-old legal tradition that a Catholic priest may not be compelled to reveal what he hears in the confessional. This revocation would also apply to the private religious counseling of other faiths.” Would you please explain this?
324. I see there are a lot of boxes of Jewish wine in storage. Why are we using Jewish wine? Father X said we shouldn’t be using Jewish wine in our Church!
325. Why don’t we bury people on Sunday?
326. Father, how did the three barred cross come to be in the Russian Church? I notice that the Greeks use a different cross. What is the history of the cross we use? SJB

Work ZH
327. Father, where does the clergy collar come from? Is it Orthodox? My priest says that Orthodox Clergy should never wear clergy shirts, because they are Latin. SJB
328. Father, what does the Church teach us about contraception? My friend says that a married couple should only engage in sexual activity if they are trying to have children. What about vasectomies and tubal ligations or hysterectomies? SJB
329. Father, one priest told me that celibacy is not normal for clergy because they’re not ‘attached’ – not to a wife and family, not to a monastic community. What do you say?
330. In Saint Paul’s (first) letter to the Corinthians 11: 4 & 7, the Apostle to the Gentiles states that a man should not cover his head. Tell me why then we have so many clergy wearing ‘beanies’ as if they were in synagogue? It is even more noticeable in the Roman Catholic tradition where Bishops wear a yarmulke! We have clergy in our own diocese who wear their’ beanies’ all the time - I suspect even in the shower! Some wear bright red so they cannot be missed, even in thick fog!
331. Father, what do the marks on food labels ‘Pareve’ or ‘Parve’ and the little K and the U in a circle mean, relative to Jewish kosher laws? What does this mean for us, for fasting? SJB
332. Father, are the words Sabbath (the day of rest) and Sabaoth (Lord of Sabaoth) the same?
333. Father, since the Jewish people do not believe that Jesus is the son of God, does that mean that they will not go to heaven? I mean, Judaism is pretty much the foundation of Christianity right? MW
334. Father, when I was a boy, if a piece of bread fell on the floor, we had to pick it up and kiss it and eat it. It was later explained to me that we do this out of respect for bread which becomes the Body of Christ. And recently I was told never to sit on a table because some day that table might have to be used as an altar. Can we say then, that all wood should be respected because of the Cross of the Lord? And all water, which baptized Him? And all grape wine, which becomes His Blood? And all clay because He used it to heal the blind? Where does it end?
335. Hi Father, Can you tell me where I might be able to read what the Holy Fathers teach concerning giving? We had a discussion last night at council meeting and one said that we are to give and not be concerned what the recipient will use it for, be it drugs, alcohol or food. If you know that the person is a chronic alcoholic and is coming to you every week, do you give or not and is your answer in print or scripture? Thanks for being there.
336. In relation to the problem of alcoholism among Orthodox priests, can anyone tell me how a priest can possibly remain “dry” given the requirement to commune himself during the liturgy and consume the Holy Elements afterwards? Can a priest commune himself by taking the Body only and foregoing the Blood? Is there any prescribed way of dispensing the Holy Elements after the liturgy other than by consumption? If there is no deacon or assistant rector available, could an understanding bishop appoint a worthy layman to consume the Elements? (from the Internet)

Work ZI
337. Father, I know you wrote about why we don’t have Christmas scenes, or the crèche, or the manger scene in our church, but would it be wrong to have a live Christmas scene, if the children wanted to perform and make such a display?
338. Father: What are the traditional rules/ways of preparing for communion? I read in the prayer book that I must read 3 canons and an akathist, and I read in the introduction to the Divine Liturgy in Hapgood that there is a whole rule of Canons and Akathists which must be kept during the week prior to communion. How did these practices develop and what do we follow in the modern Church. Also, how did the fasting rule for communion develop?
339. Father, I enjoy very much blood-sausage and eat my stakes rare, but my friend told me that I cannot do this as it is a violation of canon law. He said that if I eat blood, I can’t go to communion. Is this true? I thought Jesus abolished these kinds of Old Testament laws. We eat pork, so why not blood?
340. In reading the Bible, Matthew 17, verse 11 and 12, it says that Elias shall come first and Jesus says that he has already come and the disciples understood that he was John the Baptist. Am I reading correctly that Elias was John the Baptist?
341. When a person dies, I know that you are supposed to pray for them on the third day, ninth day and the fortieth day. I understand what you told me before about visiting earth and hell and then the judgment. Why then are you supposed to pray for the dead on their birthdays, anniversary of their death
and namesakes day? If a person has already been judged and their fate determined, then what will later prayers do for them except for the living to remember them? That’s an ok thing just to remember them, but I was just wondering.
342. Why aren’t men allowed to wear a hat in church?
343. Is it right to give alms to someone you suspect will put the money to evil use? See Q 335.
344. After His Resurrection, Christ sees Saint Mary Magdalene outside the tomb and says to her do not cling to me (or touch me) for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Yet later, before His Ascension, He invites Thomas to plunge his hand into the wound of his side and touch the nail prints of His hand. How do we view the two seemingly contradicting statements?
345. I had a discussion with a friend recently and we were weighing whether or not Jesus ever ate meat. His position was NO, while I said that He would have at least had to eat lamb at the Passover. Are there or were there any Jewish sects which abstain from eating meat? Is meat “required eating” in Judaism or is there room for vegetarianism?
346. Is there a service for de-sanctification of a Church building?

Work ZK
347. Our parishioner is upset that, on the new panikhida table we have (featuring a metal top with candle holders), there is a “statue” of what is essentially a “Golgotha” on top of the table, towards the back. His contention is that our church does not permit “statues,” which is what he is interpreting this as. I tried to say that, as far as my memory serves me, the Seventh Ecumenical Council did not have any problems with statues, but he’s not buying into this. He is an older gentlemen, quite set in his ways, but willing to take instruction if I can show him something about this. Father, could you help, please?
348. Can a man be ordained to any Holy Order if he has committed adultery? Can a man be ordained to any Holy Order if he has fathered a child out of wedlock? Can a man be ordained to any Holy Order if he has engaged in premarital sex? Since all of the above are in violation of one or another, can a man be ordained to any Holy Order having broken one or more of the Ten Commandments?
349. On the Sunday after All Saints, we celebrate All the Saints of North America and before that, we used to celebrate All the Saints of Russia. Do others celebrate their ethnic saints on the Sunday after All Saints?
350. I understand that as an Orthodox Christian I can’t be cremated, and can’t even be a post-mortem organ donor, because our bodies are to be respected as sacred even after our repose, and returned to the ground intact, as a sign of our faith in the general resurrection, when *these very bodies* will be returned to us, albeit transmuted into some form we are incapable of understanding right now. I’m assuming that “general” *means* “general”, and that the saints will be raised along with the rest of us. So why is it sacrilegious to dismember plain vanilla Susanna, but reverent to dismember Saint Susanna the Myrrh-Bearer? (from the Internet)
351. Where does the Orthodox Church get the information about Joseph being an old man when he married Mary, and that she was raised in the Temple? (from the Internet)
352. I wonder if you would answer a question for me. A parishioner asked me if the rector is required to get his bishops permission to allow an outside priest to conduct a wedding in his church?
353. When our Lord thirsted on the Cross, why was He given vinegar? (from the Internet)
354. We are having a discussion on another Orthodox site regarding Adam and Eve. Weren’t they originally created by God to be immortal and have dominion over all the animals and live in the garden of Eden forever? But lost their immortality when the were banished because of what we now know as ‘original sin’? Would appreciate your thoughts on this. This is the reply I received that I disagree with. What say you? [They were not created immortal. They were biological beings. If so, then they were mortal. Being mortal is perfectly natural. Their death would have been an easy transition to the life after death.] (from the Internet)
A priest asked: One of my parishioners gave birth to her sixth child yesterday, and of course, as is the custom of Orthodox priests, I went to the hospital last evening to do the service for the first day after childbirth. One thing which I have taken to doing during the reading of the second prayer of this service, at the point which says: “...surround her with bright and radiant angels; yea, O Lord, from sickness and infirmity, from jealousy and envy, and from the evil eye....”, I have been dropping “and from the evil eye.” My understanding is that this particular phrase was inserted to combat the Greek culture’s mindset regarding superstition and the “casting of the evil eye.” I realize that the Russians had their own superstitions, but the “evil eye” was not necessarily one of them. Therefore, it makes little sense in our “OCA culture” to retain this [obvious] pagan concern. What do you say, Father? (from the Internet)

I was given an icon print of Saint Peter and his wife. Is she in the canon of Saints? Under what name? Is there anything in Holy Tradition about her? I have the following references: Matthew 8:14. When Jesus entered Peter’s house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; I Corinthians 9:5. Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? (from the Internet)

Can an adult baptism be done in the ocean, i.e., in salt water? (from the Internet)

Is it true that we are forbidden to use sugar during Lent?

A middle-aged parishioner asked for my guidance. He had been having trouble being intimate with his wife and went to see his doctor. His doctor prescribed Viagra and he asked me whether it was moral and/or appropriate to use a medication “for that.” .... [from a priest, on the Internet]

If someone is married outside the Church (i.e., before they are Orthodox) must they have their marriage blessed? Would this be the same “service” as a “normal” marriage? Are the couple “living in sin” until they have an Orthodox marriage? (from the Internet)

I recently learned that Orthodox priests cannot hear confessions unless blessed by their bishop to do so. I was always under the assumption that when ordained, priests could “conduct” or “perform” all seven sacraments. Is this really true? What does ordination allow a priest to do sacramentally? Is there any other sacrament that takes an extra blessing to perform? What’s the purpose of this confessional restriction? It implies that a priest is not wholly a priest. Is there such a thing as a conditional ordination and a full ordination, the latter of which does not require an extra something to hear confessions? (from the Internet)

Is it true that the Bible forbids men to shave their heads bald?

Dear Father: Yesterday afternoon I mailed you something. I am pretty sure that I didn't address you correctly and I apologize. It's probably not one of the more essential points of Orthodoxy, but it would be helpful if I knew how I am supposed to address the clergy in writing. I have no idea, I'm afraid. Please can you let me know when you have a minute.

If we as Christians don’t keep the Old Testament Law any longer, and if the scriptures clearly state that ‘if you follow part of the Law, you are responsible for all of the Law’ then why do we continue to enforce so many Old Testament rules? For example: circumcision, prohibition of women coming to church when they are menstruating, prohibitions against contact with blood and so on.

Sometimes we see the cross on the top of the church with a crescent moon underneath it. Does that mean that the Cross is triumphing over Islam?

A question from an individual who is not an Orthodox Christian, but who has attended Divine Liturgy. Based on words he has heard during the service, he asks what is the difference between sins committed voluntarily and involuntarily. ‘I assume that voluntary sins are those committed knowingly, such as deliberately lying, stealing, involvement in abortion, etc., and that involuntary sins are those...
committed unknowingly. Can anyone give examples of both kinds of sins, but most especially involuntary sins?’

Work ZM
367. Father, I was told by a priest that right before the Russian Revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church voted to use the New Calendar, but they never got to because the Communists forced them to stay Old Calendar. Have you ever heard about this?
368. Why does it say in the Bible that only 144,000 people will go to Heaven?
369. Why does it say in the Bible that when we die we are in a sleep state and we don't have a soul that lives on.
370. Why if it says these things are we taught that we go to Heaven or Hell? (Purgatory)
371. It says in the Bible that people who can tell the future and mediums are evil. How can this be? I often have dreams of things and they happen, I sometimes actually predict future events through my dreams. I am not evil. I know I am not.
372. If the Bible says all these things, than why are there so many people who have near death experiences and they have all seen the same things. Sometimes a good place (Heaven) and sometimes a bad place (Hell).
373. What’s the difference between ‘zapivka’ and ‘prescurara’?
374. I have a question. Is it true that you should never ‘bless’ a priest, like say ‘God bless you’ to a priest? [Immediately after I asked the question, the priest sneezed and everyone said ‘God bless you!’ and we all laughed.]
375. If an Orthodox priest has a list of non-Orthodox names, his own loved ones as well as those of his parish, I've always assumed that these are prayed for privately by the priest. Taking the liturgy, for example, what if it is known that a priest, at proskimidi, having taken out particles already for the Orthodox, then proceeds to take out particles for non-Orthodox and places them on a separate tray. This second "diskus" is not brought to the altar. Then after the liturgy is done, the priest consumes the larger pieces of the elements and when there's a little bit of liquid left in the chalice, the particles of the non-Orthodox are then added to it and the priest consumes those. (from the internet)
376. In some Orthodox Churches, as the priest is saying the prayers to make communion, the people answer, “Amen!” and “Amen!” and “Amen! Amen! Amen!” Why do they do that? Why don’t they do it in all churches? (from the internet)

WORK ZN
377. Is it a common practice for Orthodox chaplains to recite non-Christian prayers for persons of other faiths? Is this perhaps a mandate of the Armed Forces which somehow supersedes the tenants of our own Faith - forcing chaplains, in a sense, to kowtow towards equality of all faiths (let alone Christian denominations)? Are there repercussions if chaplains refuse to adhere to these policies? (from the internet)
378. What is the origin of using bells in Christianity? Where were the first bells and who introduced them? In particular, if can you tell me about bells in Orthodox tradition it would help me. Thank you. (from the internet)
379. Are toll houses in any way the universal teaching of the Church? I have read (Fr. Seraphim Rose, etc.) of this subject and have read others who contradict this as a teaching. There is often debate on some sites I visit and I was wondering if persons can correct me if I am wrong. I for one did not think that was an accepted universal teaching. (from the internet)
380. I recently got an ikonographic Resurrection card depicting beautifully the Lord coming out of a tomb with two angels on either side. This, as opposed to the descent into hell - the more usual depiction of the Resurrection. It is also apparently the Western depiction of the Resurrection. I understood that
this wasn't a good representation inasmuch as it depicts something not ever seen. There are representations of the Myrrbearing women and the angel at the empty tomb as this is a Scriptural passage. The descent into Hell is, I believe, taken from Ephesians and a few other writings of Saint Paul. On the other hand, this is something that was not seen but at least is Scriptural and referred. Any more info? (from the internet)

381. I am a Roman Catholic who is seriously considering becoming Orthodox. I have been on this journey for some time and am getting closer to conversion with each and every passing day. So, please just keep this in mind as you read my stupid question.

We recently lost our dog. He took off in the middle of the night during a thunder and lightening storm. He had never done this before. I went out and searched for him and it was just like he had disappeared. He basically ran away and I thought we'd never see him again. I placed ads in the local newspapers and did not hear a thing. …

Last week, while on vacation, my son started praying to Saint Anthony (patron saint of lost things). Well, things fell through for our vacation at the end of the week …and we had to return home a day early - Friday. On Saturday morning we received a phone call that someone had seen our dog. We went to the location that he said and there was Sam - our dog! Mind you, he had been gone for almost two weeks.

This happened after my son prayed to Saint Anthony and I lit a votive candle in historic Saint Anne's Church on Mackinac Island. Any explanations? My wife asks how I could even consider becoming Orthodox when we received these graces as Catholics. Any answers? (from the internet)

382. Do you believe Icons are holy due to what they represent or holy in themselves and due worship?

383. I'm a little confused about what was the situation with immortality for Adam and Eve. Were they created physically immortal from the start or were they created with some kind of implied future immortality? I always thought the first but recently I read in Saint Athanasius: "He [God] set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition. If they guarded the grace and retained the loveliness of their original innocence, then the life of paradise should be theirs, without sorrow, pain or care, and after it the assurance of immortality in heaven. But if they went astray and became vile, throwing away their birthright of beauty, then they would come under the natural law of death and live no longer in paradise, but, dying outside of it, continue in death and in corruption."

384. Is this true? “Although the Typikon prescribes for the Prayer of Saint Ephraim to be read not only during Great Lent, but also for the Nativity fast, most parish churches do not follow this because they would not have services during the week.”

385. What does it mean when we say, “Exalt the horn of Orthodox Christians”? Some say we should change this to read, “exalt the estate of Orthodox Christians…”

386. I have an enquirer much concerned by the apparent commendation of dishonesty in Luke 16. Any thoughts/suggestions? / Fr D

WORK ZQ

387. I ran across an article dealing with the process of canonization followed in the Roman Catholic church. A few points are:

- at least 5 years to have passed since the death of the candidate
- evidence of Godly conduct
- for beatification - a confirmed miracle attributed to the candidate after his/her death.
- For canonization another miracle is needed, attributed to the intercession of the candidate and having occurred after his/her beatification.

What is the criteria for the canonization of Saints in the Orthodox Churches?

388. Where in the Canons or the Bible does it restrict women from wearing pants? It was the fashion designers that first decreed pants as masculine attire, not God.
389. Does wheat play a role in our Orthodox communion bread? Do we have to worry about children with wheat allergies? I have never heard of this issue coming up in the church, although it certainly has affected the schools. (from the internet)

390. In the pre-Nativity services, the importance of the prophet Daniel (commemorated three times!) is obvious. The hymns consistently refer to Daniel as the "Man of Desires" or some such thing. I have read - somewhere...by someone - that this was due to a variant reading in one of the versions of the LXX. Can someone confirm or deny this, or otherwise shed some light on this in these darkest days of the year?

391. Who created death?

392. Palms 22, known as the Crucifixion Psalm. In 22:6 it says "But I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.” Why did Jesus call Himself a worm?

393. Are Mark the Evangelist and John Mark the same person?

394. What is a hairshirt?

395. In the Psalms, it says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” and “Bless the Lord at all times” and many other similar texts. But how can I, a mere mortal, possibly bless the Lord God Author of Creation? How could I dare to do such a thing? Isn’t this the supreme example of “hubris” [which means excessive pride or self-confidence; arrogance; insolence]?

396. How can I tell if I am worthy to receive Holy Communion? Isn’t my personal relationship with Jesus Christ more important than any rules?

WORK ZP

397. What is the Scriptural source for the idea that we are all given an angelic guardian at birth? Is this the same as a patron saint?

398. “Today’s paper features a picture of the young men diving for the cross at Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church up in Tarpon Springs, Florida.” Why do the Greeks do this? Just like they run with their candle at Resurrection services to receive the "first light" when the priest comes out with the candle lit.

399. Is it true that the priest cannot serve the Divine Liturgy if nobody else shows up?

400. Why is the Gospel read facing the people sometimes, and other times facing the altar?

401. My wife and I are considering visiting [your parish sometime in the near future. We are not Orthodox Christians and have never been to a Sunday service in the Orthodox Church. Are there some things that we should be aware of prior to our visit? Any helpful comments would be appreciated.

402. What are the 'orbs' in the hands of the angels with "IC" in one and "XC" in the other?

403. A priest on the internet asks: “The folks of my parish want to have a Holy Supper on the Eve of Nativity this year. Can any of you share the order you have for the supper? I know it is not a liturgical service, but I also seem to recall that there is a prayer or two, some scripture readings, breaking bread (literally), etc.

404. ‘Someone told me that you should never call angels ‘saint.’ Is that true?’

405. We learned P… is pregnant and due in a few months. She has not been going up for communion for a number of months now... I was just wondering if there are rules about pregnant women and receiving [Communion].

406. Why does the date of Easter often differ between the Catholic and Protestant churches of the West, on the one hand, and the Eastern Orthodox Church on the other?

407. Father, I've noticed you are singing English while we sing Slavonic… I am of the opinion that there are those in the parish who want to hear Slavonic and the little bit we do keeps them happy.

WORK ZQ

408. What’s the difference between Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, Patriarch and Pope?
409. Is the Orthodox religion allowed to pray for people to be organ donors? I mean I didn’t know if Russian Orthodox people were allowed to be organ donors when they are alive and have two functioning kidneys.

410. Can you include an answer for the biblical phrase, "she did not know him until the birth of Christ"?

(1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.)

411. I received a phone call from a man … regarding our cemetery. He and his wife would like to be cremated and buried in our cemetery. His parents are buried in our cemetery, He was baptized Orthodox, he is a practicing Roman Catholic. The cemetery committee has rules in place for burial of a spouse in an inter-faith marriage, I don't know how that ruling works when they are baptized but not practicing. So: a. Can you be cremated and buried in our cemetery? b. If he was baptized Orthodox, but not practicing?

412. Could you comment on the possible roles of sisterhoods in your parishes--including strengths and pitfalls of such groups? See Newsletter, November 2011.
WORK IAAASC

I.A.A.S.C. (Inquire Again After the Second Coming)

01. Father, I belong to the Masons. Why does that mean I can’t be buried from the Church?

02. What does it mean to be a member of the priesthood of all believers?

03. What is the difference between suspension from communion, excommunication, being anathematized, and interdiction? (and another person on the Internet asked) To what extent can a presbyter excommunicate someone for non-canonical offenses without the approval of his bishop? Must such an excommunication be then ratified by the bishop?

04. Father, we hear a lot about ‘out of body’ experiences after death. Is there any truth in that?