

INTRODUCTION TO ORTHODOXY SERIES: FALL 2016

HANDOUT FOR PART 2: INTRODUCING AN ORTHODOX WORLDVIEW

Recapping Orthodox Worldview (taken from Fr. Stephen Freeman's blog, Glory to God for All Things)

I prefer to use the term "fullness" when describing the Orthodox faith because it is far more explanatory than simply saying that we are the "true Church," etc. "Fullness," of course does not deny this, but it moves us onto more fruitful ground. In this post I offer a short list of what seem to me important consequences of giving one's life to the "fullness of the faith."

--Fr. Stephen Freeman

The Fullness of the Faith inspires us to accept as our conviction these things:

- It is to accept the corporate nature of our salvation. The model of what it means to be a Christian is to be found in the life of the Holy Trinity. Thus we live no longer for ourselves but for everything and everyone.
- It is to embrace the Christian faith "without onesidedness" (to quote Professor Serge Verhovskoy of blessed memory). Thus we do not reduce Christianity to a tension between grace and law, or to an expression merely of the sovereignty of God or any such other reductionist models that have come to be in the past half-millennium.
- It is to embrace the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, as the full and complete revelation to us of God. His words, His life, His actions, are the complete salvation of all mankind. As He said on the cross: "It is complete."
- It is to accept that the faith is larger than we are and that we cannot reduce it to anything less than its fullness and be faithful.
- The consequence of this last point is that we attend Church always with an attitude of humility for we are standing within the larger life which is itself revealing God to us.
- We renounce our selves as "autonomous individuals" and recognize instead that we are children of the One God who directs our lives in His commandments and He alone is the definition and meaning of our life.
- We accept that the Holy Mysteries of the Church (such as Baptism, Chrismation, Penance and Eucharist, Unction, Marriage, and Ordination, are sure means by which God gives His very Life to us, though He may give His life to us in many other ways as well.) Thus we view this Life of Mystery as our true life and not simply an organizational expression of the Church.
- We accept that we are only the current representatives of this faith on the earth, but that we are joined by a great "cloud of witnesses," the Saints, by whose prayers we are aided and by whose Holy relics we are encouraged to

- run the race faithfully to its end. Thus we honor them as Holy friends, and our companions on the road of salvation.
- Among the saints we recognize the unique place of the Mother of God, whose obedience to the word of God undid the disobedience of Eve, and through whose cooperation with the working of God, salvation became incarnate in the God-Man, Christ Jesus.
 - We recognize and accept that our salvation is nothing other than true and living communion with God the Father, through His Son, in the Holy Spirit. This salvation is a whole life and not a single decision. It is lived in a community (the Church, the Body of Christ) and lacks nothing for God has provided it with all that is necessary for our salvation.
 - We recognize the authority of the Scriptures within the life of the Church and accept with the Apostles that all of Scripture is understood only as it reveals Christ, for “these are they which testify of Me.” We recognize as well that Scripture is a gift to the Church and read them in and through the living Tradition of the Church as expressed in the Fathers, the worship life of the Church, and the decisions of the Holy Councils of the Faith.
 - We see in the world an icon of the world to come – the Scriptures as icon – the Saints as icons – the Church as icon and we live for the age when all things will be made known.
 - We believe that the fullness of the faith can only be known through the revelation of God as we follow the way of the Cross, tracing the steps of Christ’s humility, taking upon ourselves, as He took upon Himself, the sins of the world, and from within that humility praying for all to the gracious God Who alone can save.

I could, of course, continue writing until my last breath for no lifetime can exhaust or express completely the fullness. This modest list, however, seems a reasonable place to begin. In particular they are points which have been written about in some detail in the posts I have placed on this blogsite. God, forgive me, for I fail so completely in all of them. --Fr. Stephen Freeman