

MY ORTHODOX CHURCH



“My Orthodox Church” challenges middle-school students to learn about their faith by answering frequently-asked-questions. Teacher Notes are available in a separate document.

“My Orthodox Church” was prepared by Carole Buleza, Director of the Antiochian Orthodox Department of Christian Education and Elaine Atherholt.



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When you say to a teacher or a friend

“I’m an Orthodox Christian,”

what do they say in response?

Typically, “What’s that?”

Have you ever tried to describe your church?

Today there are many ideas about God and faith. The internet is a source of information about beliefs from every culture in the world. Some people have decided that **all** churches are old-fashioned, and they pick beliefs from two or three cultures and make up their own set of spiritual principles—their own religion.

In contrast, there are people who hold that everything you need to believe can be found in the Bible, understood literally. In other words, there is no need to understand the culture of Jesus’ day and how His words would have been received 2,000 years ago. For the fundamentalist Christians, the words of the Bible do not require explanation.

If you visit some Christian churches, you will find that Bibles are available in the pews like service books are in most Orthodox Churches. Visitors to our churches, not seeing Bibles, sometimes ask, “Do you believe in the Bible?” (We do.)

When visitors come to our parishes they can ask a lot of questions. While knowing about your faith is not the same as *knowing Christ*—which is our priority—it is still important. As a way of getting to know your Church and faith, questions that are often asked by visitors were used as the bouncing-off point for “My Orthodox Church.” Do *you* have questions about your Church?

“My Orthodox Church” presents the opportunity to learn and to challenge yourself. There are four parts to the program.

- 1st Using the Preview Page, answer the questions either individually or in a group.
- 2nd Using the Response Sheets, look for more information either written, online, or from people in the parish.
- 3rd Compare your Preview Page answers with what you’ve learned and write your final answers.
- 4th Then challenge yourself to remember your answers in one month’s time.
- 5th Review your answers each week, so you can meet the challenge.

You have been baptized into the Orthodox Church the oldest of all the Christian Churches. While the other Christian churches hold many of the same beliefs as we do, the Orthodox Church holds the fullness of the faith. And while our faith may seem “old-fashioned,” the saints of the Church witness to the truth: our services and our lives prayer and icons, of fasting and repentance are the way to salvation, theosis, as surely today as in the first centuries.

Meet the challenge of your faith: know Christ AND know the Church that baptized you into Him.

[Preview Page]

Give your best answer to these questions.

1. Why are there pictures on the walls?
2. Why do you worship Mary?
3. Why do you pray to saints?
4. Why do you call your pastor, “Father”?
5. Why do you make the sign of the cross?
6. How can you tell your sins to another person/your priest?
7. Why is your service so different?

[The Challenge]

1

Collect information or "notes."
Discuss your findings with your teacher.

2

Form a clear and intelligent answer in one or two complete sentences; write anything else interesting on the topic.

3

Recall your answer after 1 month.



Question 1: Why are there pictures on the walls?

<https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-building/icons>,

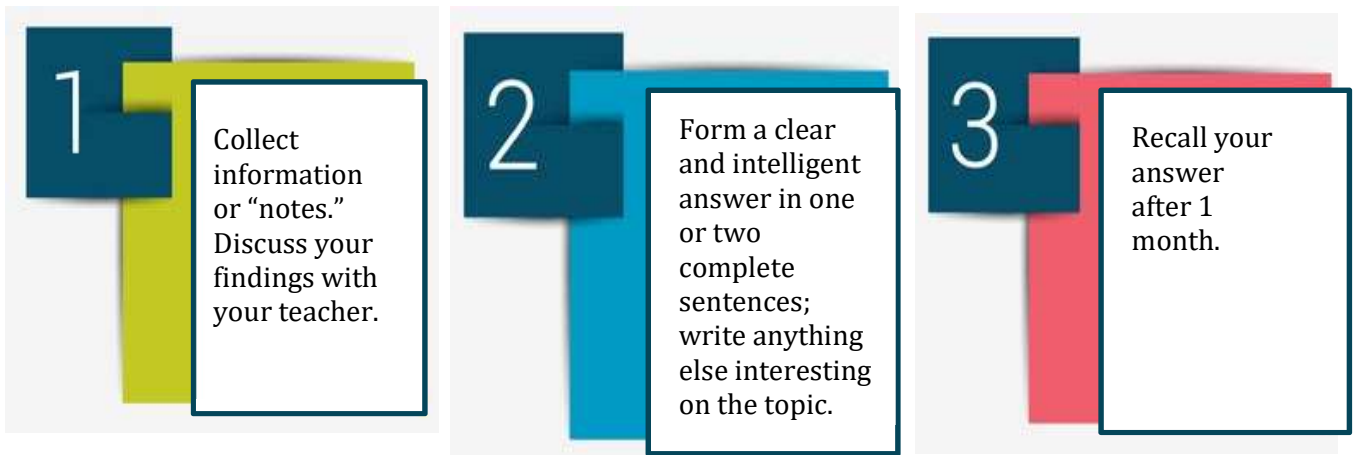
<https://saintpaulemmaus.org/for-visitors/for-evangelical-protestants/>,

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 2: Why do you worship Mary?

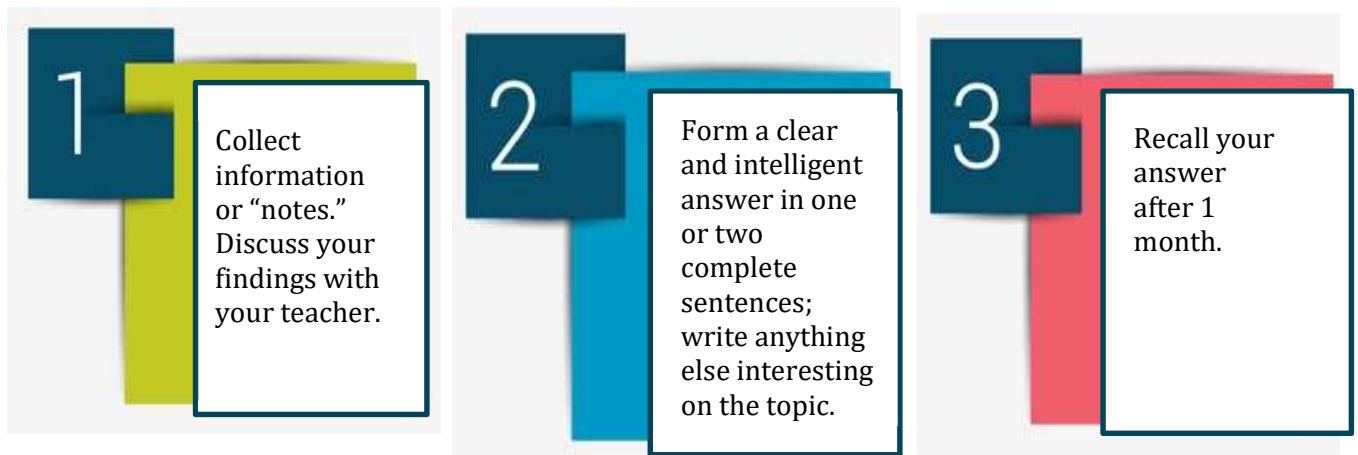
<https://oca.org/questions/teaching/mary-prayer-death>, <http://theorthodoxfaith.com/article/worship-of-mary>/<https://saintpaulemmaus.org/for-visitors/for-evangelical-protestants/>

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 3: Why do you pray to saints?

http://www.saintbarbara.org/growing_in_christ/praying_to_the_saints,
<https://www.orthodoxprayer.org/Saints%20in%20Prayer.html>, <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-church-building/icons>, <https://saintpaulemmaus.org/for-visitors/for-evangelical-protestants/>, <https://www.greekboston.com/religion/icons-2/>

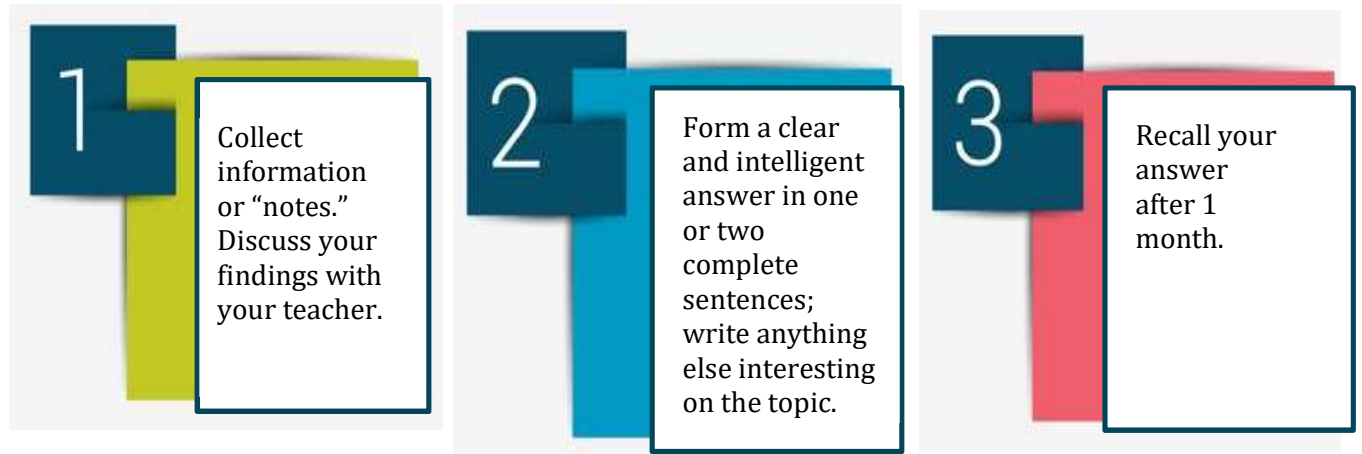


Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 4: Why do you call your pastor, "Father?"

<https://theorthodoxlife.wordpress.com/2014/03/24/call-no-man-father/>

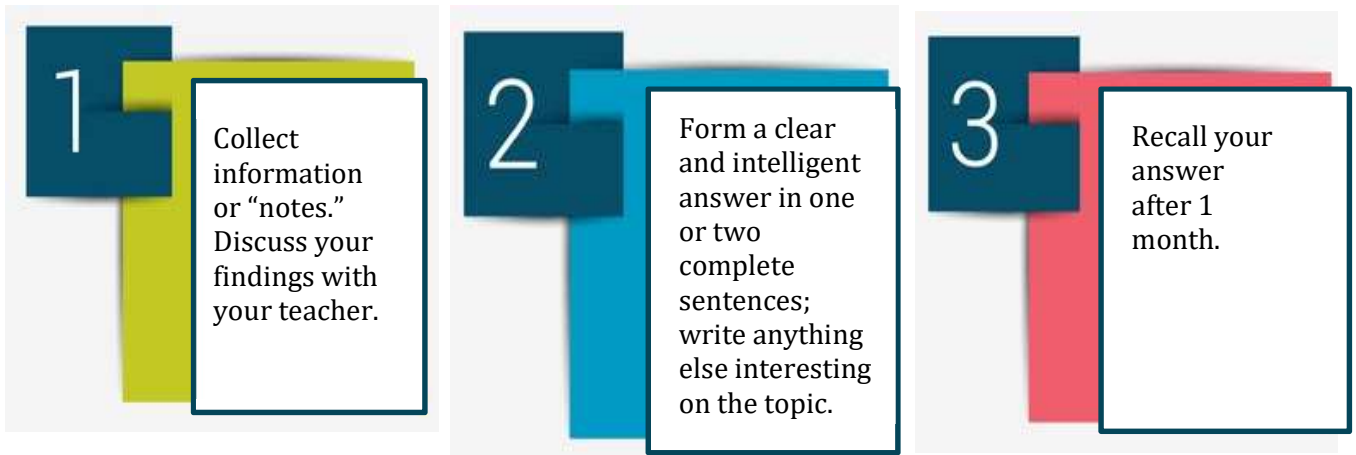
<https://www.holyascension.net/for-protestants>

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 5: Why do you make the sign of the cross?

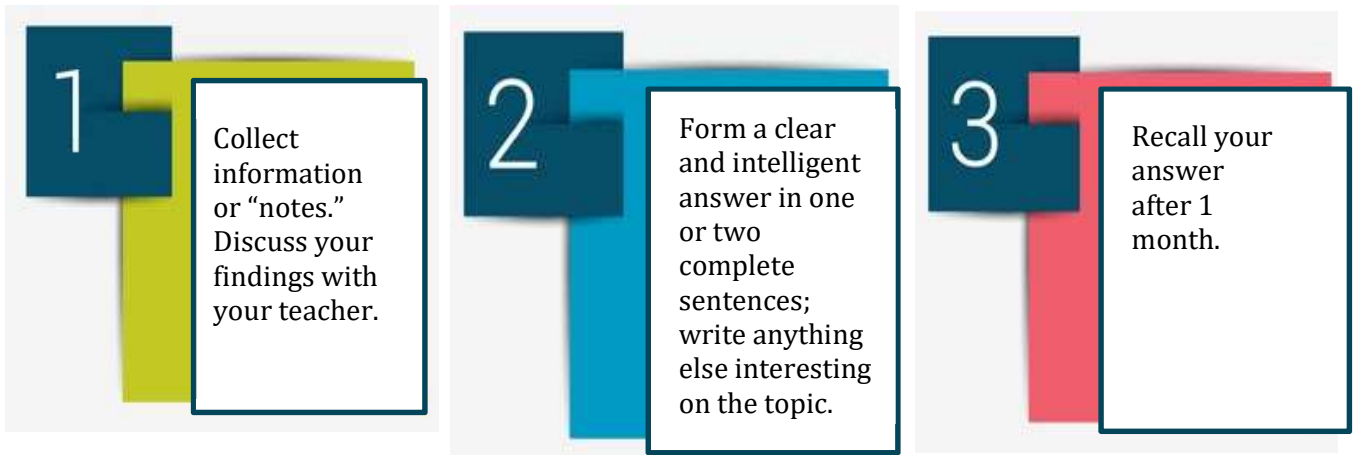
https://orthodoxwiki.org/Sign_of_the_Cross, <https://saintpaulemmaus.org/for-visitors/for-evangelical-protestants/>, <https://www.orthodoxprayer.org/Sign%20of%20Cross.html>

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 6: How can you tell your sins to another person/priest?

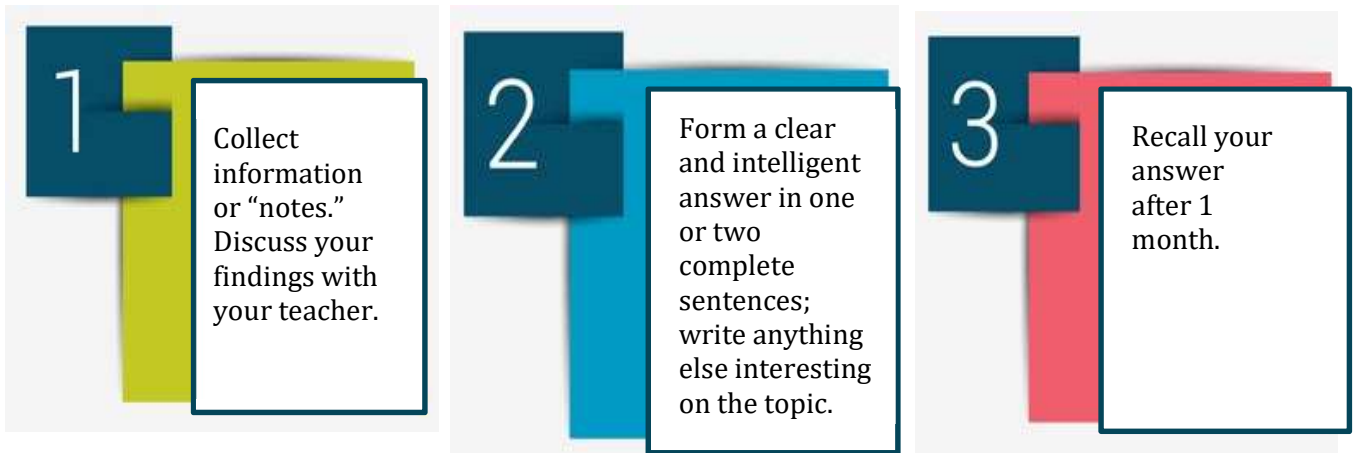
<https://oca.org/questions/sacramentconfession/confessing-in-the-presence-of-a-priest>,
<https://www.ocanwa.org/single-post/2016/02/13/Why-Do-I-Have-to-Confess-to-a-Priest>
<http://www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage/reading/questions.html>

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point



Question 7: Why is your service so different?

<https://oca.org/questions/divineliturgy/the-divine-liturgy>

<http://www.catholicdigest.com/from-the-magazine/outside-perspectives/the-divine-liturgy-and-the-mass/>

<https://www.goarch.org/-/introduction-to-the-divine-liturgy>

<https://saintpaulemmaus.org/what-is-orthodoxy/worship/>

Notes/Second Answer



Final answer:

Interesting Point

Scripture Readings for Prayers

Introduction through Q2

From the Epistle of Peter
"Behold, I lay in Zion

A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no
means be put to shame." (Isaiah 28:16)

Coming to Him as to a living stone,
rejected indeed by men, but chosen by
God and precious,

You also, as living stones, are being built
up a spiritual house

A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual
sacrifices acceptable to God through
Jesus Christ ...

1 Peter 2:6, 4-5

Q3 through Q4

From the Epistle of Peter

But you are a chosen generation,
a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
His own special people,

that you may proclaim the praises of
Him who called you out of darkness
into His marvelous light;

who once were not a people, but are
now the people of God;

who had not obtained mercy, but now
have obtained mercy ...

1 Peter 2:9-10

Q4 and Q6

From the Epistle of Paul to the
Ephesians

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,

In whom the whole building, being
fitted together, grows into a holy
temple in the Lord,

In whom *you also* are being built
together for a dwelling place of God in
the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

Q7 through Summary

From the Epistles of Paul to the
Romans, and to the Ephesians

For just as we have many members in
one body

And all the members do not have the
same function,

So we, who are many, are one body in
Christ,

And individually members one of
another.

Therefore, putting away lying,

"Let each one of you speak truth with
his neighbor,"

For we are members of one another.

Romans 12:4-5 and Ephesians 4:25