

## RAISING CHILDREN IN ORTHODOX FAITH

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*St. Sophia with her daughters Sts. Elpis (Hope), Pistis (Faith) and Agape (Love). Icon from Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston.*

In the same way, any child who grows up surrounded in an atmosphere of prayer in the home will, almost certainly, find himself drawn into that pattern of regular and effortless prayer.

By Fr. John-Mark

Source: St. Aidan's Orthodox Church Manchester

You may think it odd of Fr Gregory (Fr. Gregory Hallam is the priest-in-charge of St. Aidan's Church and the Web Editor of The Orthodox Web Site – Ed.) to ask someone

with no direct knowledge of the subject to speak about the Raising of Children, but he is really being, as usual, very astute. Not only does the outsider often see more of the game, but this particular aspect of the Eastern religion was the main cause, many years ago now, of my initial interest in Orthodoxy. I say this, because it didn't take me long, as an Anglican parish priest, to see that in the introduction to, and raising of, children in the Christian faith, the Eastern Churches were approaching the subject in a much more intelligent manner than the Western Churches.

On paper, the differences do not appear to be great, but in practice there is all the difference in the world. As you probably know, the Western Church has generally speaking, a three-step approach to Christian initiation. A baby is baptised and then waits a good number of years before being confirmed and in my early days, then had another wait of perhaps days or even weeks, before receiving Holy Communion. The results of this in practice were :- (1) Most parents expected "someone else" to inform their child about the Christian faith—day or Sunday school teachers, the parish priest,—any one, but them. (2) If a baptised child was brought to Church, he/she could not receive Holy Communion and so came to regard themselves as second-class Christians. (3) A lot of children, baptised as infants, were never brought back for Confirmation and Holy Communion. This meant that in any parish there was a significant number of half-baked Christians.

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