

The Patristic Tradition:

It could be said that Tradition, as an historical event, begins with the Apostolic preaching and is found in Scriptures, but it is kept, treasured, interpreted, and explained to the Church by the Holy Fathers, the successors of the Apostles. Using the Greek term *Pateres tes Ecclesias*, the Fathers of the Church, this "interpretive" part of the Apostolic preaching is called "Patristic Tradition." The Fathers, men of extraordinary holiness and trusted orthodoxy in doctrine, enjoyed the acceptance and respect of the universal Church by witnessing the message of the Gospel, living and explaining it to posterity. Thus, Apostolic Preaching or Tradition is organically associated with the Patristic Tradition and vice versa. This point must be stressed since many theologians in the Western churches either distinguish between Apostolic Tradition and Patristic Tradition, or completely reject Patristic Tradition.

St. Irenaeus wrote: "For the Orthodox Christian, there is one Tradition, the Tradition of the Church, incorporating the Scriptures and the teaching of the Fathers. This is the preaching of the truth handed down by the Church in the whole world to Her children" St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the Great "Pillar of Orthodoxy," gave the most appropriate definition of the Church's Tradition: *"Let us look at the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the catholic Church from the very beginning, which the Logos gave, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers preserved. Upon this the Church is founded"*

In retrospect, Tradition is founded upon the Holy Trinity, it constantly proclaims the Gospel of Christ, it is found within the boundaries of the Christian Church, and it is expounded by the Fathers.