

Church and Gender

Second Annual Patristics Symposium

July 17-19, 2015

Who is God?

- Who vs. What
- “It is difficult to conceive God but to define Him in words is an impossibility”

- St Gregory Nazianzus

- Persons of Communion, Trinity
- Genderless



The Creation

Then God said, “Let **Us** make man in Our **image**, according to Our **likeness**; let them have dominion...” ²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.... (Gen 1:26-27)

⁷ And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, “*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”.. ²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

²³ And Adam said:

“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

- “His nature has built into it a longing and desire for every good thing whatsoever and the will to cultivate goodness and righteousness. It is with this meaning that we say humanity (*anthropos*) was created in his image and likeness, according as the living being was born to be good and righteous. But seeing that he ought not to be only rational with an ability for doing good and right, but also a **participator in the Holy Spirit**, he breathed into him, so that he might have brighter marks of the divine nature within him”

- St Cyril of Alexandria, *Doctrinal Questions and Answers*, Question 2

Society's Views

- Many labels for gender
- Social construct vs. divine construct
- WHO I AM VS.
WHO AM CALLED TO BE

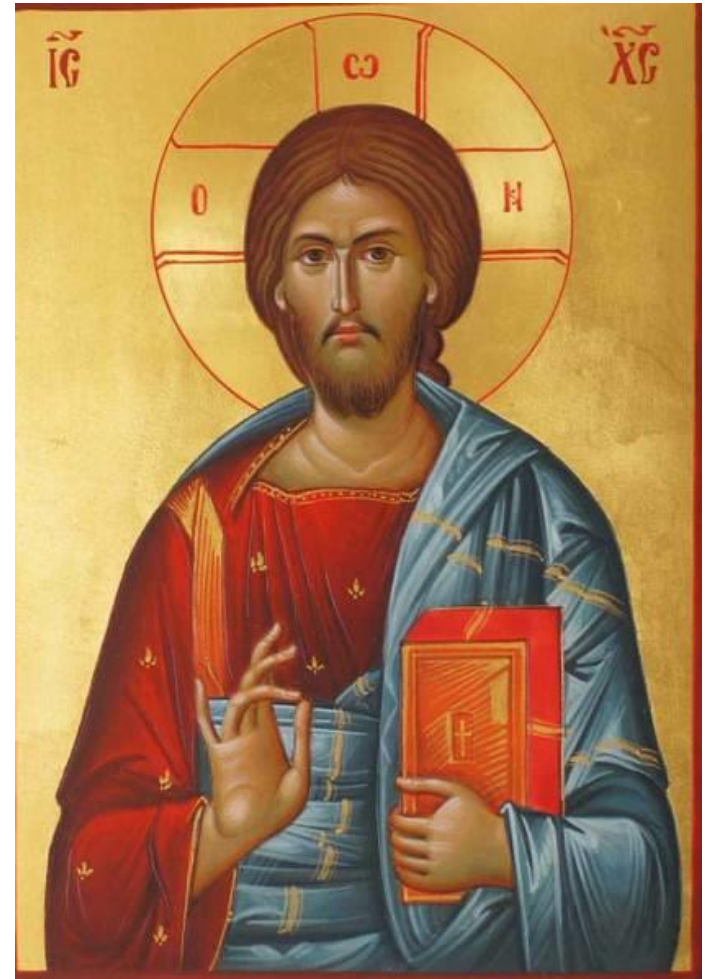
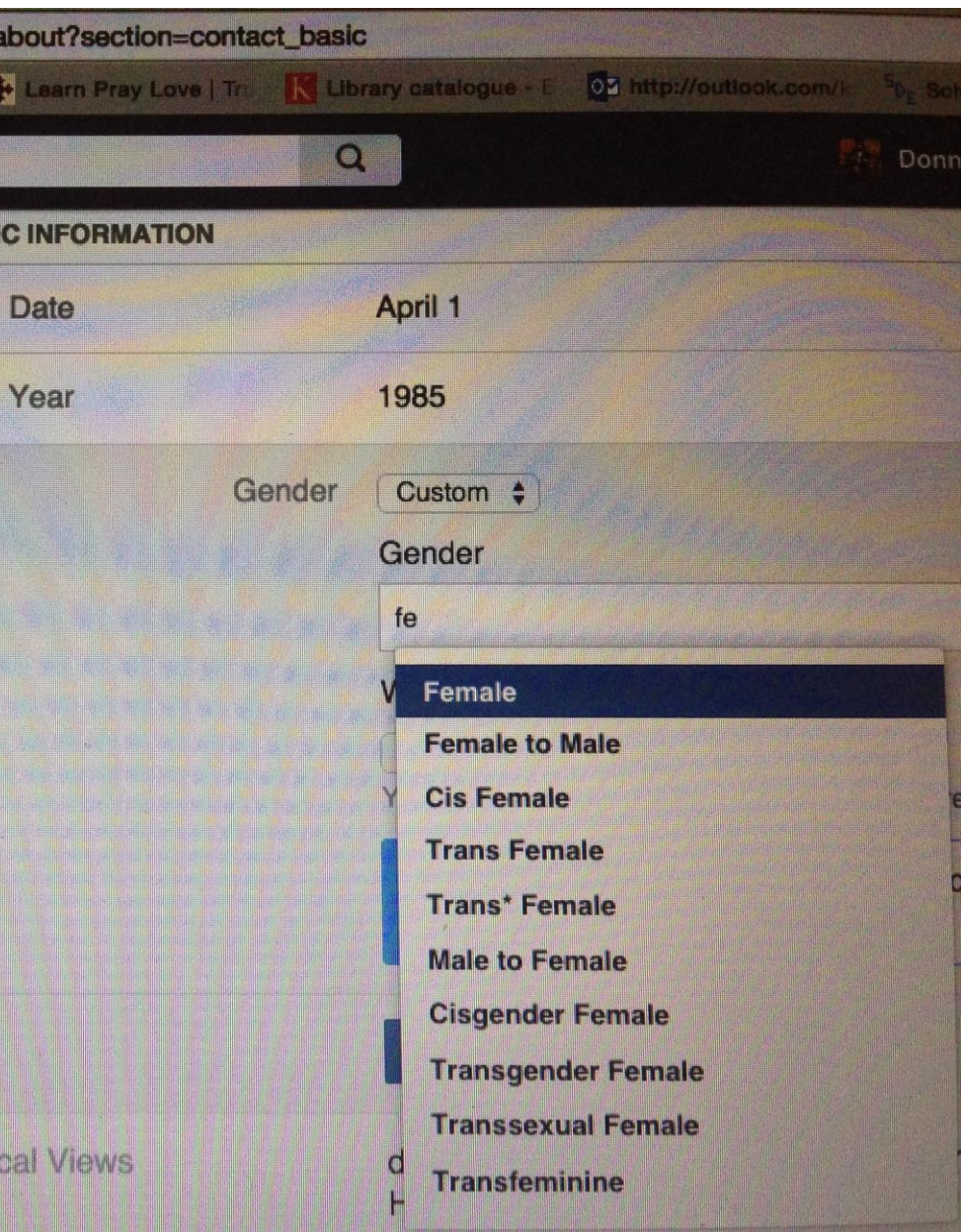


Gender identity

Female

Male

Other



Church and Gender

The Church: male and female

- **But the Church is not a social construct – but a divine-construct**
- **Not built on the image of the Trinity, failed to become the real Body of Christ we are called to be**



- “Christ saves both by his passion. Was he made flesh for the man? So he was also for the woman. Did he die for the man? The woman is also saved by his death. He is called of the seed of David; and so perhaps you think the man is honored. But he is born of a virgin, and this is on the woman's side. Thus the two, he says, shall be one flesh, so let the one flesh have equal honor” (St Gregory Nyssa, Oration 37:7)

Gender roles *in* the Church

- Unity and diversity
- Male and female: each have a purpose

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (1 Cor 12)

- The Church **needs more lay people to take action of their role**
 - **ESSENTIAL UNITY, ESSENTIAL DIVERSITY**

“For our theology to be real.. It has to give life”
(Fr Romanides)



