

Rich in mercy was God the Father: He sent the creative Word, who, coming to save us, was in the same place and situation as we were when we lost life, breaking the bonds of the prison; and His light appeared and dispelled the darkness of the prison, and sanctified our birth and abolished death, loosening the same bonds by which we were trapped. And He demonstrated the resurrection, becoming Himself “the firstborn from the dead,” and raising in Himself fallen man, raising [him] above to the highest heaven, to the right hand of the glory of the Father, as God had promised, by the prophets, saying, “I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David,” that is, the flesh [descended] from David: and our Lord Jesus Christ truly accomplished this, gloriously achieving our salvation, that He might truly raise us up, saving us for the Father.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyon



Sunday 13 July 2014 is the Sunday of the Holy Fathers

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Titus 3:8-15

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When the women Disciples of the Lord had learnt from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection, casting away the ancestral condemnation triumphantly they said to the Apostles: ‘Death has been despoiled, Christ God has been raised, granting the world His great mercy.

Apolytikion for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers:

You are greatly glorified, O Christ our God, who established our Fathers as luminaries upon the earth, and through them led us all to the true Faith. O Most compassionate, glory to You.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Romans 16:1-16; Matthew 13:10-23,43
Aquila of the 70; Joseph the Confessor

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 13:11-14; 14:1-5; Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4
Martyr Julitta & Cyricus; Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 3:1-8; Matthew 13:31-36
Hieromartyr Athenogenes; Virgin Martyr Julia

Thursday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34
Great Martyr Marina; Veronika & Speratos the Martyrs

Friday: Corinthians 4:5-8; Matthew 13:44-54
Emilian; Martyrs Paul, Thea & Oualentine

Saturday: Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 9:18-26
Righteous Macrina; Dius, Abbot of Antioch



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

13 July 2014

You are the Light of the World

Today, on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, we listen to Jesus’ words telling us how we are to be the light of the world. He tells us that we are to let our light shine before other people so that, seeing it, they may give glory to God.

We are used to thinking of Jesus Christ as the Light of the world, but here He tells us that we are the ones whose light must shine and that, in this, we give witness to our faith. We might find this a little daunting and perhaps wonder if we really should draw attention to ourselves.

The truth is that there is only one light, and that is the Light of Christ Himself. We are not called to draw attention to ourselves, but rather, to allow His Light to shine through us. We are called to become transparent to His Light. Just as the cleaner a plane of glass is, the more light it allows through, so the more we become purified from our passions, the more we are able to reflect Christ’s Light. It is not so much a matter of trying to be something that we are not, but rather of allowing ourselves to be purified of all that keeps His Light from shining through.

The closer we come to Christ, the more we become enveloped in His Light. Indeed, we see this in the lives of the saints who themselves became bearers of light. The light that they radiate – and which we are called to be purified by and to radiate – is the Light of Christ Himself.



The unspeakable and prodigious fire hidden in the essence of things,
as in the bush, is the fire of divine love and the dazzling brilliance
of God’s beauty inside everything.

St Maximus the Confessor

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

We have seen in the reception of Holy Communion, we are called by name and fed with Christ's true Body and Blood. His life becomes mingled with our own life, as He unites us to Himself in a union of love. After the reception of Holy Communion, the mood of the Liturgy changes and there is a sense of fulfillment and joy. It becomes lighter and more triumphant and the choir sings:

We have seen the true light; we have received the heavenly Spirit; we have found the true faith, as we worship the undivided Trinity; for the Trinity has saved us.



We Have Seen the True Light

By participating in Holy Communion, we participate in Christ's own Light and open ourselves up to being transformed by it. Saint Symeon the New Theologian tells us that those who have partaken of Christ become themselves:

Light and peace and joy, life, food and drink, clothing and cloak, a tabernacle and divine dwelling ... a sun that truly never sets, a star that ever shines, a lamp shining forth within the house of the soul.

Not only has Jesus Christ united Himself to our human nature in His Incarnation, but in Communion, He unites Himself to our bodies in order to illumine us with His own Light. In the words of Saint Nikitas Stithatos:

Simple and unified, the presence of the divine light gathers within itself the souls that participate in it and converts them to itself ... It leads their intellect's faculty of sight towards the depths of God, so that they contemplate the great mysteries and become initiates and mystagogues.

Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, dispels the darkness of our present age. In the Divine Liturgy, heaven is opened and we encounter the true Light of the age to come. This Light illumines us and will purify us if we allow it to do so, enabling us to share the Light of Christ in our world.



Let us ask what the goal of education is, if it is not the enlightening of man, the illumining of all his abysses and pits, the banishing of all darkness from him. How can man disperse the cosmic darkness that assails him from all sides, and how can he banish the darkness from his being without that one light, without God, without Christ? Even with all the light that is his, man without God is but a firefly in the endless darkness of this universe.

Saint Justin Popovich

The Sunday of the Holy Fathers

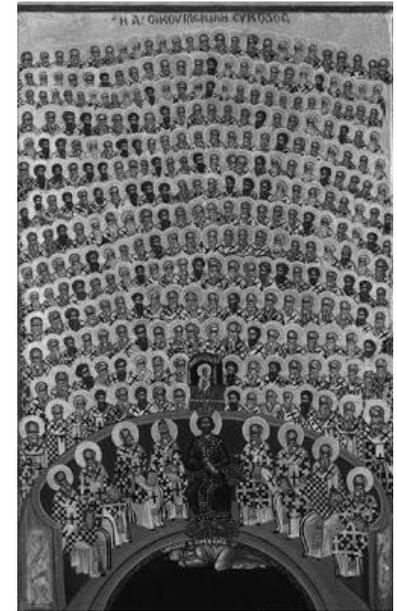
Today, on the Sunday between the 13th and the 19th of July, we commemorate the Holy Fathers who participated in the first seven ecumenical councils.

There are several commemorations of the Fathers during the course of the Church's year, not only individually, but also as commemorations of the victories of particular councils over heresy. Indeed, one might wonder why we attach such great significance to them.

Yet the contribution of these Fathers is of fundamental importance to the faith of the Church. They were the ones who were given the task of setting the limits of the Church's faith, often in response to dangerous heresies. Most fundamentally, they were responsible for fleshing out and defining what we believe about the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, and about the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

We live in an era in which many people, including some Christians, downplay the importance of right belief. For some, truth has become something relative and the details of what we believe are viewed as unimportant. Instead they focus on tolerance and on doing good in the world and struggle to understand how right belief about the Person of Christ can make a difference in the world.

For Orthodox Christians, what we believe about God, and about His revelation in Jesus Christ, is of vital importance. We are created in God's Image, and it is only by being truly human and truly divine that Christ is able to save us and to enable us to share in and reflect the life of the Holy Trinity.



A summary of the Holy Councils

In 325 the First Council of Nicaea rejected Arianism and defined the divinity of the Son of God.

In 381 the First Council of Constantinople reaffirmed the faith of Nicaea and defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

In 431 the Council of Ephesus defined Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and the Virgin Mary as the Theotokos, or Mother of God.

In 451 the Council of Chalcedon defined Jesus Christ as Perfect God and Perfect man in One Person.

In 553 the Second Council of Constantinople reconfirmed the doctrines of the Trinity and of Jesus Christ.

In 680 the Council of Constantinople III affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus Christ by insisting on the reality of His human will.

In 787 the Second Council of Nicaea affirmed the appropriateness of the veneration of icons as a witness to the reality of the Incarnation of Christ.