



On Wednesday we commemorate the **Holy and Glorious Prophet Elias, or Elijah**, the Thesbite. Of priestly lineage, he was a solitary and ascetical man whose zeal for God was compared to fire. This zeal led him to rebuke the lawlessness of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel and forced him to take refuge in the desert where he was fed by ravens. He challenged the worship of the false prophets and performed many miracles by God's power. When the end of his life came, he was snatched up to heaven in a fiery chariot.



17 July is the Sunday of the Holy Fathers

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Titus 3:8-15

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let the Heavens rejoice; let earthly things be glad; for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm, He hath trampled upon death by death. The first-born of the dead hath He become. From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us, and hath granted great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion:

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honour thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 18 July: Romans 12:4-5, 15-21; Matthew 12:9-13
Emilian; Martyrs Paul, Thea & Oualentine

Tuesday, 19 July: Romans 14:9-18; Matthew 12:14-16; 22-30
Righteous Macrina; Dius, Abbot of Antioch

Wednesday, 20 July: James 5:10-20; Luke 4:22-30
Prophet Elias

Thursday, 21 July: Romans 15:17-29; Matthew 12:46-50; 13:1-3
John & Simeon; Parthenius, Bishop of Rabobysidius

Friday, 22 July: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12; Luke 8:1-3
Mary Magdalen; Virgin Martyr Markella

Saturday, 23 July: Romans 8:14-21; Matthew 9:9-13
Hieromartyr Phocas; Prophet Ezekiel



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

17 July 2016

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 pane 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 person characterised by humility, gentleness, mercy and righteousness does not build a fence around good deeds. Rather, that one ensures that these good foundations overflow for the benefit of others. One who is pure in heart and a peacemaker, even when persecuted for the sake of truth, orders his way of life for the common good.

Saint John Chrysostom



Called to Holiness in Christ

The Message of the Holy and Great Council

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church was recently held from 19 to 26 June at the Orthodox Academy of Crete. We have seen in previous weeks how the Council Fathers insisted that the Church has a message of hope for the world. However, this hope cannot be separated from the gift of Christ's Body, the Church. In this extract, the Council's Encyclical explains how Jesus Christ has opened the way to holiness for all of us:

The holiness of man (*anthropos*) cannot be conceived apart from the Body of Christ, "which is the Church" (cf. Eph 1.23). *Holiness proceeds from the One who alone is Holy*. It is participation of mankind in the holiness of God, in "the communion of the Saints," as is proclaimed by the words of the priest during the Divine Liturgy: "The Holy Gifts for the holy," and through the response of the faithful: "One is Holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen." In this spirit, Saint Cyril of Alexandria underscores that Christ, "Being holy by nature as God (...) is sanctified on our behalf in the Holy Spirit (...) and (Christ) performed this on our behalf, not on his own behalf, so that from him and in him,

who first received this sanctification, the grace of being sanctified may thus pass to all humanity ..." (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 11, PG 74, 548).

According to St. Cyril, Christ is our "common person" through the recapitulation in his own humanity of the entire human race, "for we were all in Christ, and the common person of humanity comes to life again in him" (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, XI, PG 73. 157-161), and hence also he is the sole source of man's sanctification in the Holy Spirit. In this spirit, holiness is man's participation both in the sacrament of the Church and also in her sacred mysteries, with the holy Eucharist at the center, which is "a living sacrifice, holy, and pleasing to God" (cf. Rom 12.1). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But rather, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8.35-37). The saints embody the eschatological identity of the Church as an eternal doxology before the earthly and heavenly Throne of the King of Glory (Ps 23.7), providing an image of the Kingdom of God.

(See www.holycouncil.org for more).



When the Evil One sees a person commence on some virtuous action with great fervour of faith, he has the habit of placing grievous temptations in that person's path, in order to frighten him away from this course of action.

Saint Isaac of Syria

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.

The answer is that these Fathers' contributions were 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 Councils of the Church

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 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.