

The Arena



Volume 1, Issue 12
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"All who love the martyrs, raise up a divine and worthy hymn, honoring the most wise Katherine, for she preached Christ in the arena"

Kontakion to Saint Katherine

The Newsletter of
SAINT KATHERINE THE GREAT
MARTYR MISSION
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
AMERICA

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This issue marks

THE ARENA'S ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Thank you to everyone for the contributions,
suggestions and encouragement.

PASTOR'S COLUMN

by Father John Strickland

As we prepare to launch out into the Great Fast, we would do well to remember that the purpose of fasting is repentance, and nothing more. There is really no other reason to undertake the rigorous ascetical regime which Christians have practiced since the second century and which the Orthodox Church today, nearly alone in the west, maintains during the Forty Days prior to the celebration of our Lord's Passion and Resurrection. No degree of abstinence from the pleasures of this world will save us, nor will God bless a fast that is focused upon the successful observance of dietary restrictions alone. That was made clear by our Lord himself when he condemned the Pharisee for his regular, twice-a-week fasting while at the same time harboring pride and judgment toward his brother the Publican (Luke 18:9-14). Fasting is an instrument of repentance. That is all.

[Pastor's Corner continued on page 3]

1 PARISH AND LOCAL EVENTS

CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS:

- March 1:** Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 am
Coffee Hour: Beaty, Collins, Kirmeyer, Lorelli, Gribble
Forgiveness Sunday Vespers @ 6pm
- March 2:** Pure Monday: First day of Great Lent
Confessions 4-6pm
- March 2 – 5:** Compline w/ Great Canon of St. Andrew @ 7pm
- March 4:** Confessions 4-6pm
- March 6:** Confessions 4-5pm
Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
- March 7:** Catechesis @ 4pm
- March 8:** Sunday of Orthodoxy -- Divine Liturgy @ 9:30 am
Coffee Hour: Ahrens, Copan, Grambush, Hayman, Simmons
Pan-Orthodox Vespers @ St. Nicholas (Seattle) – 5pm
- March 11:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
- March 12:** Studies in Orthodox Tradition @ 7pm – New Martyrdom in Russia
- March 14:** Catechesis @4pm
- March 15:** St. Gregory Palamas -- Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Potluck
Pan-Orthodox Vespers @ Holy Apostles (Shoreline) – 5pm
- March 16:** Parish Council Mtg. @ 7pm
- March 18:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm
- March 19:** Bible Study @ 7pm
- March 21:** Catechesis @4pm
- March 22:** Sunday of the Cross -- Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Potluck
Pan-Orthodox Vespers @ St. Katherine – 5pm (Parish hosted fellowship)
- March 24:** Festal Vigil for the Annunciation @ 7pm
- March 25:** Annunciation: Vespers & Divine Liturgy @ 9am
- March 26:** Studies in Orthodox Tradition @ 7pm – American Mission
- March 28:** Catechesis @4pm
- March 29:** St. John of the Ladder -- Divine Liturgy @ 9:30am
Coffee Hour: Adam, Homiak, Marttila, Pylpczuk
Pan-Orthodox Vespers @ St. Paul (Brier) – 5pm
- April 1:** Matins w/ Canon of St. Andrew @ 7pm
- April 3:** Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts @ 6pm

CATECHETICAL CHALLENGES (Our Catechumens can answer them. Can you?)

- 1) What are the themes of each of the six Sundays of the Great Fast?
- 2) Why do we make a full prostration during the "Great Entrance" of the Presanctified Liturgy?
- 3) At what point during Forgiveness Sunday Vespers does Lenten worship (with the use of dark vestments and penitential melodies) begin?

Answers for February on back page.

[Pastor's Corner continued from page 1]

And so, we should undertake fasting during the month ahead with the intention of using it to bring ourselves back into a true relationship with God through repentance. The Greek word for repentance (*metania*) used in the Scriptures has the meaning of a "change of heart." It is captured particularly well in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) given by our Lord and proclaimed in his Church two Sundays prior to the beginning of the Fast. It is this action that our Lord furthermore requires for those who are to enter his eternal kingdom (cf. Matt. 4:17). It has always been the essential precondition for Baptism and Chrismation (cf. Acts 2:37-38).

How then ought we Orthodox Christians, as baptized and chrismated members of the body of Christ, to approach the goal of repentance at the beginning of the Great Fast? Perhaps through three specific ways.

First, we must acquire contrition. Psalm 50 speaks of contrition being a condition of our heart that God will bless. It is what the Prodigal Son experienced "when he came to himself" in the pigsty. The Desert Fathers many centuries ago spoke of the need for this contrition, which they called *penthos*. And they realized that if it was caused by the soul's mourning at being separated from God, rather than self-hatred (which is not holy and is not blessed by God), it brought one back into union with God and true joy. Saint John of the Ladder called this "joy-creating mourning." We know, of course, that we often if not usually fall short of the deep sense of grief for our sins that the saints possess. Often we have a hard time doing more than merely desiring to repent. But this, too, is authentic repentance. It is the desire of our heart to return, like that of the Prodigal Son, for which God waits.

The second important action in our repentance is confession. We must confess our sins, and not merely be sorry for them. And confession is an act of disclosure. It is not nor has within the Church ever been a secret prayer to God alone. For we as Orthodox Christians understand that God, the Holy Trinity, does not abide "alone," but within his Church. We do not baptize, chrismate, commune, marry, or bury ourselves alone, nor are our sins forgiven alone. As Fr. Thomas Hopko put it,

Christian confession, and even confession in the Old Testament, was always public confession. Indeed there was no idea that confession could be anything but public. A "secret" confession done in the privacy of one's soul "to God alone"—an idea not unheard of in very recent times—is completely unknown both in biblical and churchly history. A confession which is not a totally open and public confession before God, man and all creation is no confession at all. This is the Orthodox Faith (*If We Confess Our Sins*, 13-14).

But, due to our weakness exposing our sins before others (something members of the parishes of the early Church were in fact able to do), out of love for us the Church has come to bless the practice of confession to one's pastor or another father confessor. In our present practice, then, the priest represents the entire Church of Christ to the penitent. And the penitent confesses to him "as if confessing to all" (Hopko).

Third, our repentance must be completed by absolution of our sins. This too reveals the sacramental character of confession, as it is the priest who is ordained by the Holy Spirit operating within the Church to grant absolution of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. This sacramental act was instituted by our Lord prior to his Ascension into heaven (John 20:21-23). Through absolution we are totally forgiven for the sins we have confessed—*totally*. And, what is more, we are assured that we are forgiven. As the prayer of absolution states, we are to arise to a renewed relationship with God, "having no further care" for the sins we have confessed.

And thus our repentance renews the grace of our Baptism. In fact, an act of authentic repentance that manifests contrition, confession, and absolution can become the beginning of an entirely new life, one that leads us into the eternal kingdom of Christ. This is cause of much rejoicing, like that of the Prodigal Son arriving in his father's house, feasting and dancing. May God grant us the same joyful fruit of repentance during the long Fast ahead.

✝ THE LITTLE CHURCH

by Patty Rebne

"The Little Church" means to give our parish practical encouragement in bringing the Church home. I don't have the answers—I have a lot of questions! If you have topics you would like to read about, or suggestions for the "answers", send them along. I will include them in the next column. My email address is patty.r@comcast.net.

A parishioner asked the question, "What are some good ways to celebrate a child's name day?" Here are some suggestions gleaned from our own parish and cyberspace.

You can do many things that we associate with birthdays—celebrate with a special dessert, or dinner, or on special dishes reserved for those celebrating important days. Or serve the child's favorite meal. Sing "Many Years" to the child in the morning or any other time of the day. Go on a special outing. Wrap up a little gift to commemorate the day. A gift might be of a spiritual nature, such as a small icon, or medal of the saint. You might have the troparia written in calligraphy and framed for hanging in the child's room. Older children might like to have a new journal to write in; inscribe it with the date and the saint's troparia. If you know about the saint's life, you can make a special effort on some of these activities. Eat a dinner that includes a food the saint would have eaten. Listen to music the saint would have heard. If the saint lived in a cave, go spelunking! Or if he lived in the desert, read about desert life, or watch a short video about the desert. If the saint came into contact with lions or bears, go to the zoo and tell the

story of the saint by the bears or lions. Or maybe give the younger child a toy bear or lion.

While you read aloud or tell (again) the saint's life, the child can draw the story in a cartoon series, or paint a portrait of the saint. Or color a map of the saint's homeland. Read a short history of the time in which the saint lived. Some families might like to act out the saint's life, or a particular scene from it. Young children in particular might like to dress up as their saint for the whole day.

Take the time to make sure that a child understands the troparia—what all the words mean and what it describes about his or her saint. And of course, remember in your prayers to say or sing the saint's troparia, and to venerate the saint's icon.

If you have other suggestions, send them along, and I will include them in a future column.

READINGS AND RAMBLINGS

****This is a new column designed to present your contributions. As the title suggests, this column will contain everything from suggested reading and book reviews to topics of personal and communal interest, such as this month's article about how and why we ask for the Bishop's blessing. In short, this column is what we, the parishioners of St. Katherine Mission, want it to be. Please email submissions to Emily Lorelli – ekstorelli@gmail.com.****

THE BISHOP'S BLESSING by JoAnn Grambush

What is the protocol for receiving a blessing from the Bishop or from a priest in the Orthodox Church? For those of us new to the ancient faith, it seems like an unnatural sort of activity, and especially if you have to interrupt a bishop or priest who is in conversation or otherwise engaged...But if I leave without receiving a blessing, then have I missed an opportunity? And what do I miss...? And why am I making such a big deal about it by talking about it at all?...especially when you see how seamlessly the cradle Orthodox receive a blessing from the Bishop or their priest ...well, I am glad I asked these questions regarding the blessing, because there is much to be experienced in receiving a blessing.

When a Bishop is ordained at the altar, something changes. The community of the Church believes that when a bishop receives this office, he receives the grace of the Spirit of God to enable him to do the work of a bishop. Special prayers are prayed for the Holy Spirit to come down enabling him to bring an image of Christ to the church. Without that grace, no man could be in the position of representing Christ to the Church such as the Bishop does. So he represents Christ to us and we ask for a blessing.

In this manner, the blessing is part of that larger picture of being part of a community, where Christ is the head... We believe that the clergy represent Christ, men who have been ordained, received grace for this ordination to bring the sacramental life of the Church to the people. The larger life of the Church comes forth from the altar.

(Similarly, something changes in us as well when we receive holy chrismation. Prayers are prayed for the Holy Spirit to enable us to live in the grace that enables us to be Christ like in our lives. This, along with the sacraments and the life of the Church enable us to walk in the grace and love of our Lord.)

So what if I decide not to bother the Bishop for a blessing? Is it okay to pass on the opportunity? Of course it is. But as is typical of the Orthodox life, we are seeking maximum living in Christ, not the minimum...the Church provides opportunities to enter into the life of the Church and the life of Christ whenever possible. The blessing is part of the grace that we participate in as members of the community that is the Orthodox Church.

COMING NEXT MONTH: Fr. Anthony Karbo's book review of *The Path to Confession* by Artemy Vladimirov



RECOMMENDED READING

THE SAYINGS OF THE DESERT FATHERS
Translator and Foreword by Benedicta Ward
Preface by Metropolitan Anthony

'A delightful insight into the lives of ascetics who left all to follow Christ...a very readable translation of an important collection of sayings' -- *Sisters Today*

'The only English translation of the most complete version of the Apophthegmata Patrum, a compilation of sayings from the desert monks of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine in the fourth to sixth century...likely to be widely read and enjoyed for their own sake' -- *Choice*

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

March 15: Second Sunday of Great Lent – St. Gregory Palamas

This Sunday was originally dedicated to St Polycarp of Smyrna (February 23). After his glorification in 1368, a second commemoration of St Gregory Palamas (November 14) was appointed for the Second Sunday of Great Lent as a second "Triumph of Orthodoxy."

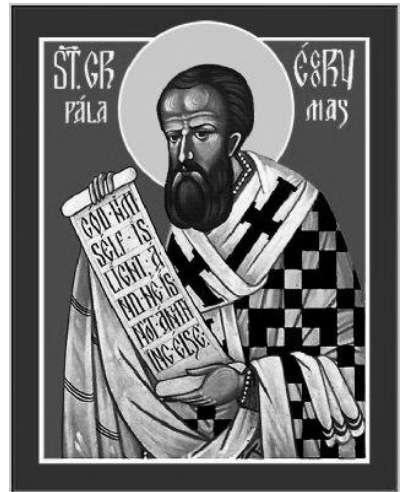
Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, was born in the year 1296 in Constantinople. St Gregory's father became a prominent dignitary at the court of Andronicus II Paleologos (1282-1328), but he soon died, and Andronicus himself took part in the raising and education of the fatherless boy. Endowed with fine abilities and great diligence, Gregory mastered all the subjects which then comprised the full course of medieval higher education. The emperor hoped that the youth would devote himself to government work. But Gregory, barely twenty

years old, withdrew to Mount Athos in the year 1316 (other sources say 1318) and became a novice in the Vatopedi monastery under the guidance of the monastic Elder St Nicodemus of Vatopedi (July 11). There he was tonsured and began on the path of asceticism. A year later, the holy Evangelist John the Theologian appeared to him in a vision and promised him his spiritual protection. Gregory's mother and sisters also became monastics.

After the demise of the Elder Nicodemus, St Gregory spent eight years of spiritual struggle under the guidance of the Elder Nicephorus, and after the latter's death, Gregory transferred to the Lavra of St Athanasius (July 5). Here he served in the trapeza, and then became a church singer. But after three years, he resettled in the small skete of Glossia, striving for a greater degree of spiritual perfection. The head of this monastery began to teach the young man the method of unceasing prayer and mental activity, which had been cultivated by monastics, beginning with the great desert ascetics of the fourth century: Evagrius Pontikos and St Macarius of Egypt (January 19).

Later on, in the eleventh century St Simeon the New Theologian (March 12) provided detailed instruction in mental activity for those praying in an outward manner, and the ascetics of Athos put it into practice. The experienced use of mental prayer (or prayer of the heart), requiring solitude and quiet, is called "Hesychasm" (from the Greek "hesychia" meaning calm, silence), and those practicing it were called "hesychasts."

During his stay at Glossia the future hierarch Gregory became fully imbued with the spirit of hesychasm and adopted it as an essential part of his life. In the year 1326, because of the threat of Turkish invasions, he and the brethren retreated to Thessalonica, where he was then ordained to the holy priesthood.



St Gregory combined his priestly duties with the life of a hermit. Five days of the week he spent in silence and prayer, and only on Saturday and Sunday did he come out to his people. He celebrated divine services and preached sermons. For those present in church, his teaching often evoked both tenderness and tears. Sometimes he visited theological gatherings of the city's educated youth, headed by the future patriarch, Isidore. After he returned from a visit to Constantinople, he found a place suitable for solitary life near Thessalonica the region of Bereia. Soon he gathered here a small community of solitary monks and guided it for five years.

In the 1330s events took place in the life of the Eastern Church which put St Gregory among the most significant universal apologists of Orthodoxy, and brought him great renown as a teacher of hesychasm.

About the year 1330 the learned monk Barlaam had arrived in Constantinople from Calabria, in Italy. He was the author of treatises on logic and astronomy, a skilled and sharp-witted orator, and he received a university chair in the capital city and began to expound on the works of St Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), whose "apophatic" ("negative", in contrast to "kataphatic" or "positive")

theology was acclaimed in equal measure in both the Eastern and the Western Churches. Soon Barlaam journeyed to Mt. Athos, where he became acquainted with the spiritual life of the hesychasts'. Saying that it was impossible to know the essence of God, he declared mental prayer a heretical error. Journeying from Mount Athos to Thessalonica, and from there to Constantinople, and later again to Thessalonica, Barlaam entered into disputes with the monks and attempted to demonstrate the created, material nature of the light of Tabor (i.e. at the Transfiguration). He ridiculed the teachings of the monks about the methods of prayer and about the uncreated light seen by the hesychasts.

St Gregory, at the request of the Athonite monks, replied with verbal admonitions at first. But seeing the futility of such efforts, he put his theological arguments in writing. Thus appeared the "Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts" (1338). Towards the year 1340 the Athonite ascetics, with the assistance of the saint, compiled a general response to the attacks of Barlaam, the so-called "Hagiorite Tome." At the Constantinople Council of 1341 in the church of Hagia Sophia St Gregory Palamas debated with Barlaam, focusing upon the nature of the light of Mount Tabor. On May 27, 1341 the Council accepted the position of St Gregory Palamas, that God, unapproachable in His Essence, reveals Himself through His energies, which are directed towards the world and are able to be perceived, like the light of Tabor, but which are neither material nor created. The teachings of Barlaam were condemned as heresy, and he himself was anathemized and fled to Calabria.

But the dispute between the Palamites and the Barlaamites was far from over. To these latter belonged Barlaam's disciple, the Bulgarian monk Akyndinos, and also Patriarch John XIV Kalekos (1341-1347); the emperor Andronicus III Paleologos (1328-1341) was also inclined toward their opinion. Akyndinos, whose name means "one who inflicts no harm," actually caused great harm by his heretical teaching. Akyndinos wrote a series of tracts in which he declared St Gregory and the Athonite monks guilty of causing church disorders. The saint, in turn, wrote a detailed refutation of Akyndinos' errors. The patriarch supported Akyndinos and called St Gregory the cause of all disorders and disturbances in the Church (1344) and had him locked up in prison for four years. In 1347, when John the XIV was replaced on the patriarchal throne by Isidore (1347-1349), St Gregory Palamas was set free and was made Archbishop of Thessalonica.

In 1351 the Council of Blachernae solemnly upheld the Orthodoxy of his teachings. But the people of Thessalonica did not immediately accept St Gregory, and he was compelled to live in various places. On one of his travels to Constantinople the Byzantine ship fell into the hands of the Turks. Even in captivity, St Gregory preached to Christian prisoners and even to his Moslem captors. The Hagarenes were astonished by the wisdom of his words. Some of the Moslems were unable to endure this, so they beat him and would have killed him if they had not expected to obtain a large ransom for him. A year later, St Gregory was ransomed and returned to Thessalonica.

St Gregory performed many miracles in the three years before his death, healing those afflicted with illness. On the eve of his repose, St John Chrysostom appeared to him in a vision. With the words "To the heights! To the heights!" St Gregory Palamas fell asleep in the Lord on November 14, 1359. In 1368 he was canonized at a Constantinople Council under Patriarch Philotheus (1354-1355, 1364-1376), who compiled the Life and Services to the saint.



WISDOM OF THE FATHERS

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rejoicing today in the triumph of Orthodoxy on this first Sunday of Lent, we joyfully commemorate three events: one event belonging to the past; one event to the present; and one event which still belongs to the future.

Whenever we have any feast or joy in the Church, we Orthodox first of all look back — for in our present life we depend on what happened in the past. We depend first of all, of course, on the first and the ultimate triumph -- that of Christ Himself. Our faith is rooted in that strange defeat which became the most glorious victory — the defeat of a man nailed to the cross, who rose again from the dead, who is the Lord and the Master of the world. This is the first triumph of Orthodoxy. This is the content of all our commemorations and of all our joy. This man selected and chose twelve men, gave them power to preach about that defeat and that victory, and sent them to the whole world saying preach and baptize, build up the Church, announce the Kingdom of God. And you know, my brothers and sisters, how those twelve men — very simple men indeed, simple fishermen — went out and preached. The world hated them, the Roman Empire persecuted them, and they were covered with blood. But that blood was another victory. The Church grew, the Church covered the universe with the true faith. After 300 years of the most unequal conflict between the powerful Roman Empire and the powerless Christian Church, the Roman Empire accepted Christ as Lord and Master. That was the second triumph of Orthodoxy. The Roman Empire recognized the one whom it crucified and those whom it persecuted as the bearers of truth, and their teaching as the teaching of life eternal. The Church triumphed. But then the second period of troubles began.

The following centuries saw many attempts to distort the faith, to adjust it to human needs, to fill it with human content. In each generation there were those who could not accept that message of the cross and resurrection and life eternal. They tried to change it, and those changes we call heresies. Again there were persecutions. Again, Orthodox bishops, monks and laymen defended their faith and were condemned and went into exile and were covered with blood. And after five centuries of those conflicts and persecutions and discussions, the day came which we commemorate today, the day of the final victory of Orthodoxy as the true faith over all the heresies. It happened on the first Sunday of Lent in the year 843 in Constantinople. After almost 100 years of persecution directed against the worship of the holy icons, the Church finally proclaimed that the truth had been defined, that the truth was fully in the possession of the Church. And since then all Orthodox people, wherever they live, have gathered on this Sunday to proclaim before the world their faith in that truth, their belief that their Church is truly apostolic, truly Orthodox, truly universal. This is the event of the past that we commemorate today.

But let us ask ourselves one question: Do all the triumphs of Orthodoxy, all the victories, belong to the past? Looking at the present today, we sometimes feel that our only consolation is to remember the past. *Then* Orthodoxy was glorious, *then* the Orthodox Church was powerful, *then* it dominated. But what about the

present? My dear friends, if the triumph of Orthodoxy belongs to the past only, if there is nothing else for us to do but commemorate, to repeat to ourselves how glorious was the past, then Orthodoxy is dead. But we are here tonight to witness to the fact that Orthodoxy not only is not dead but also that it is once more and forever celebrating its own triumph — the triumph of Orthodoxy. We don't have to fight heresies among ourselves, but we have other things that once more challenge our Orthodox faith.

Today, gathered here together, Orthodox of various national backgrounds, we proclaim and we glorify first of all our unity in Orthodoxy. This is the triumph of Orthodoxy in the present. This is a most wonderful event: that all of us, with all our differences, with all our limitations, with all our weaknesses, can come together and say we belong to that Orthodox faith, that we are one in Christ and in Orthodoxy. We are living very far from the traditional centers of Orthodoxy. We call ourselves Eastern Orthodox, and yet we are here in the West, so far from those glorious cities which were centers of the Orthodox faith for centuries — Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow. How far are those cities. And yet, don't we have the feeling that something of a miracle has happened, that God has sent us here, far into the West, not just in order to settle here, to increase our income, to build up a community. He also has sent us as apostles of Orthodoxy, so that this faith, which historically was limited to the East, now is becoming a faith which is truly and completely universal.

This is a thrilling moment in the history of Orthodoxy. That is why it is so important for us to be here tonight and to understand, to realize, to have that vision of what is going on. People were crossing the ocean, coming here, not thinking so much about their faith as about themselves, about their lives, about their future. They were usually poor people, they had a difficult life, and they built those little Orthodox churches everywhere in America not for other people but for themselves, just to remember their homes, to perpetuate their tradition. They didn't think of the future. And yet this is what happened: the Orthodox Church was sent here through and with those poor men. The truth itself, the fullness of the apostolic faith -- all this came here, and here we are now, filling this hall and proclaiming this apostolic faith — the faith that has strengthened the universe. And this leads us to the event which still belongs to the future.

If today we can only proclaim, if we can only pray for that coming triumph of Orthodoxy in this country and in the world, our Orthodox faith forces us to believe that it is not by accident but by divine providence that the Orthodox faith today has reached all countries, all cities, all continents of the universe. After that historic weakness of our religion, after the persecutions by the Roman Empire, by the Turks, by the godless atheists, after all the troubles that we had to go through, today a new day begins. Something new is going to happen. And it is this future of Orthodoxy that we have to rejoice about today.

We can already have a vision of that future when, in the West, a strong American Orthodox Church comes into existence. We can see how this faith, which for such a long time was an alien faith here, will become truly and completely universal in the sense that we will answer the questions of all men, and also all their questions. For if we believe in that word: "Orthodoxy," "the true faith"; if for one moment we try to understand what it means: the true, the full Christianity, as it has been proclaimed by Christ and His disciples; if our Church has preserved for all ages the message of the apostles and of the fathers and of the saints in its purest form,

then, my dear friends, here is the answer to the questions and to the problems and to the sufferings of our world. You know that our world today is so complex. It is changing all the time. And the more it changes, the more people fear, the more they are frightened by the future, the more they are preoccupied by what will happen to them. And this is where Orthodoxy must answer their problem; this is where Orthodoxy must accept the challenge of modern civilization and reveal to men of all nations, to all men in the whole world, that it has remained the force of God left in history for the transformation, for the deification, for the transfiguration of human life.

The past, the present, the future: At the beginning, one lonely man on the cross — the complete defeat. And if at that time we had been there with all our human calculations, we probably would have said: "That's the end. Nothing else will happen." The twelve left Him. There was no one, no one to hope. The world was in darkness. Everything seemed finished. And you know what happened three days later. Three days later He appeared. He appeared to His disciples, and their hearts were burning within them because they knew that He was the risen Lord. And since then, in every generation, there have been people with burning hearts, people who have felt that this victory of Christ had to be carried again and again into this world, to be proclaimed in order to win new human souls and to be the transforming force in history.

Today this responsibility belongs to us. We feel that we are weak. We feel that we are limited, we are divided, we are still separated in so many groups, we have so many obstacles to overcome. But today, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we close our eyes for a second and we rejoice in that unity which is already here: priests of various national churches praying together, people of all backgrounds uniting in prayer for the triumph of Orthodoxy. We are already in a triumph, and may God help us keep that triumph in our hearts, so that we never give up hope in that future event in the history of orthodoxy when Orthodoxy will become the victory which eternally overcomes all the obstacles, because that victory is the victory of Christ Himself.

As we approach the most important moment of the Eucharist, the priest says, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess...." What is the condition of the real triumph of Orthodoxy? What is the way leading to the real, the final, the ultimate victory of our faith? The answer comes from the Gospel. The answer comes from Christ Himself and from the whole tradition of Orthodoxy. It is love. Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess . . . confess our faith, our Orthodoxy. Let us, from now on, feel responsible for each other. Let us understand that even if we are divided in small parishes, in small dioceses, we first of all belong to one another. We belong together, to Christ, to His Body, to the Church. Let us feel responsible for each other, and let us love one another. Let us put above everything else the interests of Orthodoxy in this country. Let us understand that each one of us today has to be the apostle of Orthodoxy in a country which is not yet Orthodox, in a society which is asking us: "What do you believe?" "What is your faith?" And let us, above everything else, keep the memory, keep the experience, keep the taste of that unity which we are anticipating tonight.

At the end of the first century — when the Church was still a very small group, a very small minority, in a society which was definitely anti-Christian when the persecution was beginning — St. John the Divine, the beloved disciple of Christ, wrote these words: "And this is the victory, our faith, this is the victory." There was no

victory at that time, and yet he knew that in his faith he had the victory that can be applied to us today. We have the promise of Christ, that the gates of hell will never prevail against the Church. We have the promise of Christ that if we have faith, all things are possible. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit, that He will fill all that which is weak, that He will help us at the moment when we need help. In other words, we have all the possibilities, we have everything that we need, and therefore the victory is ours. It is not a human victory which can be defined in terms of money, of human success, of human achievements. What we are preaching tonight, what we are proclaiming tonight, what we are praying for tonight, is the victory of Christ in me, in us, in all of you in the Orthodox Church in America. And that victory of Christ in us, of the one who for us was crucified and rose again from the dead, that victory will be the victory of His Church.

Today is the triumph of Orthodoxy, and a hymn sung today states solemnly and simply: "This is the Apostolic faith, this is the Orthodox faith, this is the faith of the Fathers, this is the faith that is the foundation of the world." My dear brothers and sisters, this is also our own faith. We are chosen. We are elected. We are the happy few that can say of our faith, "apostolic," "universal," "the faith of our fathers," "Orthodoxy," "the truth." Having this wonderful treasure, let us preserve it, let us keep it, and let us also use it in such a way that this treasure becomes the victory of Christ in us and in His Church. Amen.



THE ORTHODOX FAITH

An excerpt from Fr. Hopko's *The Orthodox Faith: Doctrine, Volume II*
The Symbol of Faith: Nicene Creed

The **Nicene Creed** should be called the **Nicene-Constantinopolitan** Creed since it was formally drawn up at the first ecumenical council in Nicea (325) and at the second ecumenical council in Constantinople (381).

The word **creed** comes from the Latin **credo** which means "I believe." In the Orthodox Church the creed is usually called **The Symbol of Faith** which means literally the "bringing together" and the "expression" or "confession" of the faith.

In the early Church there were many different forms of the Christian confession of faith; many different "creeds." These creeds were always used originally in relation to baptism. Before being baptized a person had to state what he believed. The earliest Christian creed was probably the simple confession of faith that Jesus is the Christ, i.e., the Messiah; and that the Christ is Lord. By publicly confessing this belief, the person could be baptized into Christ, dying and rising with Him into the New Life of the Kingdom of God in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As time passed different places had different credal statements, all professing the identical faith, yet using different forms and expressions, with different degrees of detail and emphasis. These credal forms usually became more detailed and elaborate in those areas where questions about the faith had arisen and heresies had developed.

In the fourth century a great controversy developed in Christendom about the nature of the **Son of God** (also called in the Scripture the Word or *Logos*). Some

said that the Son of God is a creature like everything else made by God. Others contended that the Son of God is eternal, divine, and uncreated. Many councils met and made many statements of faith about the nature of the Son of God. The controversy raged throughout the entire Christian world.

It was the definition of the council which the Emperor Constantine called in the city of Nicea in the year 325 which was ultimately accepted by the Orthodox Church as the proper Symbol of Faith. This council is now called the first ecumenical council, and this is what it said:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

Following the controversy about the Son of God, the Divine Word, and essentially connected with it, was the dispute about the Holy Spirit. The following definition of the Council in Constantinople in 381, which has come to be known as the second ecumenical council was added to the Nicene statement:

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

This whole Symbol of Faith was ultimately adopted throughout the entire Church. It was put into the first person form "I believe" and used for the formal and official confession of faith made by a person (or his sponsor-godparent) at his baptism. It is also used as the formal statement of faith by a non-Orthodox Christian entering the communion of the Orthodox Church. In the same way the creed became part of the life of Orthodox Christians and an essential element of the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church at which each person formally and officially accepts and renews his baptism and membership in the Church. Thus, the Symbol of Faith is the only part of the liturgy (repeated in another form just before Holy Communion) which is in the first person. All other songs and prayers of the liturgy are plural, beginning with "we". Only the credal statement begins with "I." This, as we shall see, is because faith is first personal, and only then corporate and communal.

To be an Orthodox Christian is to affirm the Orthodox Christian faith -- not merely the words, but the essential meaning of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol of faith. It means as well to affirm all that this statement implies, and all that has been expressly developed from it and built upon it in the history of the Orthodox Church over the centuries down to the present day.

HYMNOGRAPHY: MARCH

March 1: Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise; Forgiveness Sunday

Kontakion - Tone 6

O Master, Teacher of wisdom,

Bestower of virtue,

Who teaches the thoughtless and protects the poor,
strengthen and enlighten my heart!

O Word of the Father,

let me not restrain my mouth from crying to You:

"Have mercy on me, a transgressor, //

O merciful Lord!"

March 8: Sunday of Orthodoxy

Troparion - Tone 2

We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One,

and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God.

Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh
to deliver Your creatures from bondage to the enemy.

Therefore with thanksgiving we cry aloud to You:

You have filled all with joy, O our Savior,

by coming to save the world.

Kontakion - Tone 8

No one could describe the Word of the Father;

but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described,
and restored the fallen image to its former beauty.

We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images.

March 15: Second Sunday of Great Lent: St. Gregory of Palamas

Troparion - Tone 8

O light of Orthodoxy, teacher of the Church, its confirmation,

O ideal of monks and invincible champion of theologians,

O wonder-working Gregory, glory of Thessalonica and preacher of grace,
al-ways intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion - Tone 4

Now is the time for action!

Judgment Judgment is at the doors!

So let us rise and fast,

offering alms with tears of compunction and crying:

"Our sins are more in number than the sands of the sea;

but forgive us, O Master of All,

so that we may receive the incorruptible crowns."

Kontakion - Tone 8

Holy and divine instrument of wisdom,

joyful trumpet of theology,

together we sing your praises, O God-inspired Gregory.

Since you now stand before the Original Mind, guide our minds to Him, O Father,
so that we may sing to you: "Rejoice, preacher of grace."

March 22: Third Sunday of Great Lent: Veneration of the Cross

Troparion - Tone 4

O Lord, save Your people,
and bless Your inheritance.
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians,
over their adversaries.
And by virtue of Your Cross
preserve Your habitation!

Kontakion - Tone 7

Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden;
it has mysteriously been quenched by the wood of the Cross!
The sting of death and the victory of hell have been vanquished;
for You, O my Savior, have come and cried to those in hell:
"Enter again into paradise."

March 25: Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

Troparion - Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation,
The revelation of the eternal mystery!
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin
As Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O Full of Grace,
The Lord is with You!

Kontakion - Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of Triumphant Hosts!
We, your servants, delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos!
As you possess invincible might, set us free from every calamity
So that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

March 29: Fourth Sunday of Great Lent: St. John Climacus of the Ladder

Troparion - Tone 1

Dweller of the desert and angel in the body,
you were shown to be a wonder-worker, our God-bearing Father John.
You received heavenly gifts through fasting, vigil, and prayer:
healing the sick and the souls of those drawn to you by faith.
Glory to Him who gave you strength!
Glory to Him who granted you a crown!
Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

Kontakion - Tone 4

The Lord truly set you on the heights of abstinence,
to be a guiding star, showing the way to the universe,
O our Father and Teacher John.

PARISHIONERS' NAME DAYS – MARCH

March 17: Pat Nauditt (St. Patrick)

March 18: Nikolai Knowlton (St. Nicholas of Zhicha)

March 19: Daria Hezel (Martyr Daria)

PRAYER REQUESTS

Note: If you wish to have someone included on our parish prayer list for remembrance during the divine services, please notify Fr. John before the end of the month. This list will in most cases be cleared at the beginning of each month.

Please include the following people, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, in whatever prayers you can offer. Each of them is in special need this month for our common intercessions before God.

Living

Robert

Mark

Sarah

Patricia

Flore

Allan Simeon

Olga and the child to be born of her

Yelena and the child to be born of her

Sarah Maria and the child to be born of her

Cat. Deborah

Dereon Anthony

Patricia

Motoy

Bistra

Brian

Gary

Sonya

Departed

ND Howard

Catechetical Challenge Answers: 1) a. Triumph of Orthodoxy b. Gregory Palamas c. Life-Creating Cross d. John of the Ladder e. Mary of Egypt f. Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem. 2) The priest is bearing in his hands the consecrated Body and Blood of Christ. 3) At the completion of "Vouchsafe O Lord"