

*First Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of Orthodoxy
March 24, 2024*

Forefeast of the Annunciation.

On Sunday, March 24th, we commemorate:

Artemon, Bishop of Seleucia in Pisidia; Venerable Zachariah the recluse.



Icon of Restoration of the Holy Icons

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

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Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am

Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Presanctified Divine Liturgy, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm

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*Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission
is a parish in the Diocese of the West
of the Orthodox Church in America
under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of
Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West*



SUNDAY EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

2

Epistle for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, Hebrews 11:24-26; 32-12:2

BRETHREN, By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Gospel for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, John 1:43-51

AT THAT TIME: Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

3 REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY
Sunday of Orthodoxy

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

For over one thousand years Orthodox Christians have been observing the Sunday of Orthodoxy in recognition of the fact that the holy icons which had been removed from the churches by government edict during the eighth century were once again reinstated in the churches.

Even though the Seventh Ecumenical Council in AD 787 had supported the legitimacy of the holy icons and defined their proper use in Orthodox worship, various Byzantine emperors, having been influenced by heretical concepts, did not allow their public use and veneration.

It was not until March 11, 843 in Constantinople that Empress Theodora and Patriarch Methodios in a great procession returned the holy icons to their rightful places.

Icons have been used in the Christian faith from the very beginning and have always enjoyed a place of honor in the churches and in the homes of the faithful. The Church teaches that icons are the windows of heaven from where the saints of God look down upon us to protect us and to intercede with Christ for us and our salvation.

Since Orthodox Christians believe that when they enter a church, they leave the world behind and find themselves on a higher and more spiritual plane, the icons which surround them are vivid reminders of man's divine purpose in Creation and of his ultimate destiny in God's Kingdom.

Today we celebrate this event not only for the icons, but for the fact that the Orthodox Church is the only Christian church which has preserved the teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and of undivided Christianity without addition or subtraction (*cf. Revelation 22:18-19*), but intact down through the centuries; for intact we must present her to the Lord when He returns.

Amen.

FOR CONSIDERATION...

1. In the Gospel reading this morning, we hear of the Apostles who left everything to follow Christ; in the Epistle we learn of the terrible struggles that the saints and martyrs underwent to follow Christ.
2. What have I given up to follow Christ?
3. Am I willing to leave everything behind to be true to our precious Orthodox faith; or will I leave the faith behind to follow the world?
4. Could the fasting discipline of Lent help me gain the stamina to do so?

SUNDAY HOMILY
Sunday of Orthodoxy

4

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in AD 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops.

Almost a century before, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine empire. Excessive religious respect approached the point of worship (due only to God, never to anything else!) and idolatry. On the one hand, this instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts ("destroyers of icons"). On the other hand, the Iconophiles ("lovers of icons"), believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty.

The Council decided on a doctrine (teaching) by which icons should be venerated but not worshipped. The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day:

"We define that the holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people.

"Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor, but not of real worship, which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerates in it the reality for which it stands."

A Regional Synod was called in Constantinople in AD 843, under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the Great Church of *Agia Sofia* (*Holy Wisdom*).

The Empress, her son Michael III, and Patriarch Methodios, along with monastics and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful places. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, the event is commemorated with a special service on the "Sunday of Orthodoxy."

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Continued from page 4 ☩ The name of this Sunday reflects the great significance which icons have in the Orthodox Church. They are not optional devotional extras, but an integral part of Orthodox faith and devotion. They are held to be a necessary consequence of Christian faith in the incarnation of the Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, in Jesus Christ. They have a sacramental character, making present to the believer the person or event depicted on them. So the interior of Orthodox churches is often covered with icons painted on walls and domed roofs, and there is always an icon screen, or iconostasis, separating the sanctuary from the nave, often with several rows of icons. No Orthodox home is complete without an icon corner (iconostasion), where the family prays.

Icons are *venerated* by burning lamps and candles in front of them, by the use of incense and by kissing. But there is a clear doctrinal distinction between the *veneration* of icons and the *worship* of God. The former is only relative, given to the person represented. This distinction safeguards the veneration of icons from any charge of idolatry.

The theme of the victory of the icons, by its emphasis on the incarnation, points us to the basic Christian truth that the One Whose death and resurrection we celebrate at Easter was none other than the Word of God who became human in Jesus Christ.

Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of the Epistle reading at the Liturgy and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name."

Amen.

REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

The Calling of the Apostles Philip and Nathanael

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Andrew, by listening to John the Forerunner, and Peter, by listening to Andrew, both followed Christ. But it appears that Philip obeyed Jesus at once when He said to him, "Follow me."

Philip was convinced immediately because the voice of the Lord stung his soul with love. The sound of the Lord's voice was not like that of any other; for those who were prepared, it immediately kindled within them a burning love for Him. As Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus said, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" (Luke 24:32).

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Continued from page 5 ☩ Philip had pondered earnestly within his heart, and continuously studied the books of Moses, and was always waiting and seeking for the coming of the Christ. Therefore, as soon as he saw Him, he was convinced. This is why he said, "We have found Him!"

Perhaps Philip was prepared by having first learned something about Christ from Andrew and Peter. Because all three were of the same city, it is likely that they had talked together and discussed Jesus.

Philip does not keep this good thing to himself, but shares it with Nathanael. Because Nathanael was a diligent student of the Law and knew it thoroughly, Philip refers him to both the Law and Prophets.

Philip calls the Lord the "Son of Joseph," because they thought He was his child. And he names Him "of Nazareth," although He was, properly speaking, born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth. Because the manner of His birth was hidden from most, while His upbringing was apparent, they called Him "Jesus of Nazareth."

Philip had said that Christ was from Nazareth. But Nathanael, astute in the law, knew from the Scriptures that the Messiah should come from Bethlehem. This is why he said, "Can there anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see," knowing that once he tasted Christ's words, he would never leave Him.

Christ commends Nathanael for being a true Israelite, who said nothing either to curry favor or to cause enmity. Nathanael's words stemmed not from disbelief, but from a discerning mind well-versed in the law, which knew that the Christ would come from Bethlehem and not from Nazareth.

Nathanael is a good and truthful man, thus he is not conceited from Jesus' words of praise. Rather, persisting in his desire to establish clearly and certainly the identity of this Man, he asks, "How do You know me?"

Then the Lord reveals His very divinity by speaking of things which no one could have known except Nathanael and Philip, because they had spoken and acted alone. Although He was not present, Christ knew all that had taken place when Philip spoke with Nathanael. This is why He says, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Before Philip had drawn near, the Lord spoke and showed that He knew these things as God and not by man. At once Nathanael thus understood Who the Lord was, and confessed Him to be the Son of God.

Prophecy has great power, even greater than miracles, to move a man to believe. Therefore the Lord drew Nathanael to Himself by telling him the place where he had been standing, and that Philip had called to him, and that he was a true Israelite. When he heard these things Nathanael sensed the

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7 REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (CONTINUED)

Continued from page 6 greatness of the Lord, as much as he was able to at that time, and confessed Him to be the Son of God.

Yet Nathanael's confession was not the same as Peter's (*cf. Matthew 16:16-18*). Peter confessed Him to be the Son of God and, thus, the Lord blessed Peter, and entrusted the Church to him. Nathanael confesses Him only as a man Who by grace and His own virtue has been adopted as a son of God. This is made clear by what he says next, "*You are the King of Israel.*"

Nathanael had not yet attained to the perfect knowledge of the true divinity of the Only-begotten. He believes in Jesus as a man beloved by God, and as the King of Israel. If he had confessed Him to be truly God, he would not have called Him the King of Israel, but the King of All.

Therefore the Lord does not bless him, as He did Peter, but corrects him, and leads his thoughts upwards to comprehend something of His divinity saying, "*You will see greater things than these. Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.*"

Jesus is saying, "*Do not understand Me to be merely a man, but indeed the Master of the angels.*" He Whom the angels serve cannot be merely a man, but only true God. All these things did, in fact, take place at His Crucifixion and Ascension. As the time of His Passion approached, an angel from heaven strengthened Him; at His Tomb there was an angel, and again at His Ascension, as Luke relates (*cf. Acts 1:10-11*).

Allegorically, we may understand the fig tree to represent the Law. Like the fig, the Law contains sweetness, but it is hard to get at, covered over, as with leaves, by the harshness of the legal observations and the difficulty of the commandments. While Nathanael was under the fig tree, he was still a man under the Law searching out its depths. Thus the Lord was pleased, and looked graciously upon him.

Likewise, we are under a fig tree, under the sway of sweet sin, which is mixed with much bitterness from regret and fearing punishments which follow. The Lord sees us there and is pleased when we are repentant. He then calls those who confess Him to be the Son of God and becomes the King of each one who sees God (for Israel means "seeing God").

Indeed, if we persevere with zeal, He will count us worthy to see greater things than these. We shall behold angels ascending to the height of divine knowledge of Him, and descending again, because they cannot know His ineffable (unknowable) essence.

And, we too shall ascend when we immerse ourselves in the study of the divinity of the Only-begotten, and we will descend when we delight in the contemplation of His Incarnation and descent into Hades.

HYMNS AT THE DIVINE LITURGY

8

Tone 1, Troparion, Resurrection

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, • while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, • Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, • granting life to the world. • The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: • "Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ. • Glory to Thy Kingdom. • Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou Who lovest mankind."

Tone 2, Troparion, Sunday of Orthodoxy

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One; • and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. • Of Thine own will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh • and deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the Enemy. • Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee: • "Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior, • by coming to save the world."

Tone 8, Troparion of the Temple, of the Midfeast of Pentecost

O Savior at the Middle of the Feast, • fill my thirsting soul with the waters of piety, as Thou didst cry to all: • "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink." • O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee.

Tone 4, Troparion, Forefeast

Today is the prelude of joy for the universe. • Let us anticipate the feast and celebrate with exultation: • Gabriel is on his way to announce the glad tidings to the Virgin; • he is ready to cry out in fear and wonder: • "Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee."

Tone 8, Kontakion, Sunday of Orthodoxy

No one could describe the Word of the Father; • but when He took flesh from thee, O Theotokos, He accepted to be described, • and restored the fallen image to its former state by uniting it to divine beauty. • We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images.

Tone 4, Kontakion of the Temple, of the Midfeast of Pentecost

Glory... Christ God, the Creator and Master of all, • cried to all in the midst of the feast of the law: "Come and draw the water of immortality." • We fall before Thee and faithfully cry: • "Grant us Thy mercies for Thou art the Fountain of our life."

Tone 8, Kontakion, Forefeast

Both now... Thou art the beginning of salvation for all of us on earth, Virgin Mother of God. • For the great Archangel Gabriel, God's minister, was sent from heaven to stand before thee to bring thee joy: • Therefore, we all cry to thee: "Rejoice, O unwedded Bride."

Tone 4, Prokeimenon Verse

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever.



Евангелие

На другой день Иисус восхотел ити в Галилею, и находит Филиппа и говорит ему: иди за Мною. Филипп же был из Вифсаиды, из одного города с Андреем и Петром. Филипп находит Нафанаила и говорит ему: мы нашли Того, о Котором писали Моисей в законе и пророки, Иисуса, сына Иосифова, из Назарета. Но Нафанаил сказал ему: из Назарета может ли быть что доброе? Филипп говорит ему: пойд и посмотри. Иисус, увидев идущего к Нему Нафанаила, говорит о нём: вот подлинно Израильтянин, в котором нет лукавства. Нафанаил говорит Ему: почему Ты знаешь меня? Иисус сказал ему в ответ: прежде нежели позвал тебя Филипп, когда ты был под смоковницею, Я видел тебя. Нафанаил отвечал Ему: Равви! Ты Сын Божий, Ты Царь Израилев. Иисус сказал ему в ответ: ты веришь, потому что Я тебе сказал: Я видел тебя под смоковницею; увидишь больше сего. И говорит ему: истинно, истинно говорю вам: отныне будете видеть небо отверстым и Ангелов Божиих восходящих и нисходящих к Сыну Человеческому (Ин. 1, 43-51).



Блаженный Феофилакт Болгарский

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

На другой день Иисус восхотел ити в Галилею, и находит Филиппа и говорит ему: иди за Мною. Филипп же был из Вифсаиды, из одного города с Андреем и Петром. Филипп находит Нафанаила и говорит ему: мы нашли Того, о котором писали Моисей в законе и пророки, Иисуса, сына Иосифова, из Назарета. Андрей, услышав от Предтечи, и Петр, услышав от Андрея, последовали за Иисусом; а Филипп, кажется, ничего не слышал и однакож последовал за Господом тотчас, как Он сказал ему: «иди за Мною». Чем же Филипп так скоро убедился? Думается, во-первых, что голос Господа произвел в душе его некоторое уязвление любви. Ибо речь Господа не

1 ☞ просто говорила, а сердца достойных тотчас воспламеняла любовью к Нему, как и Клеопа со спутником говорят: *не горело ли в нас сердце наше, когда Он говорил с нами на дороге (Лук. 24, 32)?* Во-вторых, так как Филипп имел озабоченное сердце, постоянно занимался писаниями Моисеевыми и всегда ожидал Христа, то как увидел Его, тотчас убедился, и говорит: мы «нашли» Иисуса, а это показывает, что он искал Его. Потом, Филипп не узнал ли чего-нибудь о Христе от Андрея и Петра? Вероятно, беседуя с ним, как соотчичем, они рассказывали ему и о Господе. Кажется, на это намекает евангелист, когда говорит, что Филипп был из города Андреева и Петрова. Сей город был небольшой и приличнее мог быть назван деревнею. **Посему и нужно удивляться силе Христовой, что Он лучших учеников избирал из среды не приносящих никакого плода.** — Филипп также не удерживает добра за самим собою, но передает Нафанаилу, и как Нафанаил был сведущ в законе, то Филипп отсылает его к закону и пророкам, потому что он прилежно упражнялся в законе. Называет Господа Сыном «Иосифовым», потому что в то время считали Его еще сыном Иосифа. — Называет Его «Назарянином», хотя Он собственно был вифлеемлянин, потому что Он родился в Вифлееме, а воспитался в Назарете. Но как рождение Его было многим неизвестно, а воспитание известно, то и называют Его Назарянином, как воспитавшегося в Назарете.

Но Нафанаил сказал ему: из Назарета может ли быть что доброе? Филипп говорит ему: пойд и посмотри. Иисус, увидев идущего к Нему Нафанаила, говорит о нём: вот, подлинно израильтянин, в котором нет лукавства. Нафанаил говорит Ему: почему Ты знаешь меня? Иисус сказал ему в ответ: прежде нежели позвал тебя Филипп, когда ты был под смоковницею, Я видел тебя. Филипп сказал, что Христос из Назарета, а Нафанаил, как более сведущий в законе, знал из Писаний, что Христос должен придти из Вифлеема, и потому говорит: из Назарета может ли быть что доброе? Филипп говорит: пойд и посмотри, — зная, что Нафанаил не отстанет от Христа, если послушает Его речей. — Христос хвалит Нафанаила, как истинного израильтянина, потому что он не сказал ничего ни в пользу, ни против Его; ибо слова его происходили не от неверия, а от осмотрительности и от ума, знавшего из закона, что Христос придет не из Назарета, а из Вифлеема. — Что же Нафанаил? Не увлекся ли похвалою? Нет, он желает узнать нечто яснее и точнее, и потому спрашивает: почему Ты меня знаешь? Господь сказывает ему то, чего не знал никто, кроме его самого и Филиппа, то, что было говорено и делано наедине, и таким образом открывает Свое божество. Филипп беседовал с Нафанаилом наедине, когда никого не было под смоковницею, однакож

Христос, и не быв там, знал все, почему и говорит: Я видел тебя, как ты был под смоковницею. — Господь заговорил о Нафанаиле прежде, чем приблизился Филипп, для того, чтобы кто не подумал, что Филипп пересказал Ему о смоковнице и о прочем, о чем Он говорил с Нафанаилом. — Из сего Нафанаил узнал Господа и исповедал Его Сыном Божиим. Ибо слушай, что он говорит далее.

Нафанаил отвечает Ему: Равви! Ты Сын Божий, Ты Царь Израилев. Иисус сказал ему в ответ: ты веришь, потому что Я тебе сказал: Я видел тебя под смоковницею; увидишь больше сего. И говорит ему: истинно, истинно говорю вам: отныне будете видеть небо отверстым и ангелов Божиих, восходящих и нисходящих к Сыну Человеческому. Пророчество имеет величайшую силу привлекать некоторых к вере, и его сила более, чем сила чудес. Ибо чудеса могут быть представлены призрачно и бесами, а точного предузнания и предсказания будущего никто не имеет, ни ангелы, ни тем более бесы. Почему и Господь привлек Нафанаила, сказав ему и место, и то, что Филипп звал его, и что он поистине израильтянин. Нафанаил, услышав сие, почувствовал величие Господа, насколько было возможно, и исповедал Его Сыном Божиим. Впрочем, хотя и Сыном Божиим исповедует, но не в том смысле, в каком Петр. Петр исповедал Его Сыном Божиим как истинного Бога, и за то Господь ублажает его и вверяет ему церковь (*Матф. 16, 16-19*). Нафанаил же исповедал Его как простого человека, по благодати усыновленного Богу за добродетель. И это видно из прибавления: Ты — Царь Израилев. Видишь ли, он не достиг еще до совершенного познания истинного божества Единородного. Он верует только, что Иисус есть человек боголюбезный и Царь Израилев. Если бы он исповедал Его истинным Богом, то не называл бы Его Царем Израиля, но Царем всего мира. За сие он и не ублажается, как Петр. Посему и Господь, исправляя его и возводя к уразумению, достойному Его божества, говорит: будете видеть ангелов Божиих, восходящих и нисходящих над Сына Человеческого. Принимай, говорит, Меня не за простого человека, но за Владыку ангелов. Ибо кому служат ангелы, тот не может быть простым человеком, но истинный Бог. Сие сбылось при распятии и при вознесении. Ибо, как повествует Лука, и пред страданиями ангел с неба укреплял Его, и при гробе явился ангел, и при вознесении (*Лук. 22, 43; 24, 4. 23; Деян. 1, 10*). — Некоторые под «смоковницею» разумели закон, так как он имел плод, на время сладкий, а строгостию законных предписаний и неудобоисполнимостию заповедей был покрыт как бы листьями. Господь «видел» Нафанаила. На сие говорят, что Он милостиво призрел и уразумел понимание его, хотя он был еще и под

☞ законом. Прошу тебя, если ты услаждаешься подобными вещами, обратись внимание и на то, что Господь увидел Нафанаила под смоковницею, или под законом, то есть внутри закона, исследующим глубины оногo. Если бы он не исследовал глубину закона, Господь не увидел бы его. Знай и то, что «Галилея» значит низверженная. Итак, Господь пришел в низверженную страну всего мира или в естество человеческое и, как Человеколюбец, воззрел на нас, находящиеся под смоковницею, то есть под грехом, усладительным на время, но с которым соединена и не малая острота по причине раскаяния и тамошних будущих казней, и — тех, которые признают Его Сыном Божиим и Царем Израиля, видящего Бога, избрал Себя. — Если же мы продолжим старание, то Он удостоит нас и больших созерцаний, и мы будем видеть ангелов, «восходящих» на высоту божественного знания Его и опять «нисходящих», потому что не достигают полного познания Существа непостижимого. И иначе: «восходит» некто, когда занимается размышлением о божестве Единородного; «нисходит», когда охотно занимается размышлениями о воплощении и нисшествии во ад.

Аминь.

Святитель Феофан Затворник

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.



Православие. Не забудь правого слова, которое сказал ты Богу, возобновляя с Ним завет, нарушенный с твоей стороны не добросовестно. Припомни, как и почему нарушил и старайся избежать новой неверности. **Не слово красное славно, - славна верность.** Не славно ли быть в завете с царем? Сколько же славнее быть в завете с Царем царей! Но слава эта обратится в посрамление тебе, если не будешь верен завету. **От начала мира сколько прославлено великих людей! И все они прославлены за верность, в которой устояли, несмотря на великие беды и скорби из-за такой верности:** испытали поругания и побои, а также узы и темницу. Были побиваемы камнями, перепиливаемы, подвергаемы пытке, умирали от меча, скитались в милотях и козых кожах, терпя недостатки, скорби, озлобления; те, которых весь мир не был достоин, скитались по пустыням и горам, по пещерам и ущельям земли . . . «посему и мы, имея вокруг себя такое облако свидетелей, с терпением будем проходить предлежащее нам поприще, взирая на начальника и совершителя веры Иисуса» (*Евр. 11, 36-38; 12, 1-2*).

Аминь.