

Sunday of the Holy Fathers
Of the First Ecumenical Council
June 16, 2024

On June 9th we Commemorate:
Tikhon the Wonder Worker, Bishop of Amathus.
Venerable Tikhon of Kaluga.



Icon of the Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

1355 North 4th Street • Grand Junction, CO 81501

<https://www.holywisdomorthodox.com>
holywisdomorthodox@gmail.com

Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm
Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am (Hours at 9:05 am)
Paraklesis to the Theotokos, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Very Reverend Archpriest Luke Uhl, Retired, Interim Rector
303-995-5450 • vrevlukeuhl@gmail.com

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



EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS

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Epistle for the Sunday of the Holy, God-Bearing Fathers, Acts 20:16-18, 28-36

IN THOSE DAYS: Paul decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you. Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

Gospel for the Sunday of the Holy, God-Bearing Fathers, John 17:1-13

AT THAT TIME: Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

The Sunday before Pentecost celebrates and commemorates the Holy Fathers who gathered in the city of Nicaea for the first Ecumenical Council in AD 325.

There have been a total of seven Councils at which all the bishops of the Church from throughout the world were invited to participate.

Under the Emperor Constantine the Great who legalized Christianity after its first three centuries of persecution, 318 hierarchs assembled in Nicaea of Bithynia. The council lasted three and a half years and was called principally to address the heresy of a priest named Arius who wrongly taught that our Lord Jesus Christ was not co-equal to the Father, and not of one essence with Him, but was only a creature. The Fathers soundly refuted this heresy and provided us with the first half of the Creed.

The Council also issued twenty Canons (administrative rules) which govern the Church – even to this day – and established the formula for celebrating the common date of Pascha.

In our daily prayers, in the Mystery of Baptism, and at the Divine Liturgy, we recite the “Symbol of the Faith,” which is also known as the “Nicene Creed” or the “Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.”

The first eight of the twelve articles of the Symbol of the faith were indeed set down by the Holy Fathers of the First Council in Nicaea as follows:

I believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of His Father, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down (from the heavens) and was incarnate and became man.

He suffered, and rose on the third day, and ascended into the heavens.

And He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit.

The remaining four articles, as well as the other additions which form the Creed as we recite it today, were set down about sixty years later, in AD 381, by the 150 Holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council which met in Constantinople.

Descending the Mount of Olives: Sunday of the First Ecumenical Council

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

Today, we Orthodox Christians are still on the Mount of Olives. The after-feast of the Ascension continues; but the last days are here. In another two or three days we will have to descend the Mount of Olives. And today, this Sunday, a question arises for us Orthodox Christians: “*Arise to where?*”

As if in answer to this question, the Holy Church opens the doors for us and says: “*Arise to the Tree of Life of Paradise which is already restored — the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. For each of us the doors are open: come and see, take and receive.*”

Here is the great dogma which was revealed by the Lord in the restoration of all the good and holy things lost by Adam: the Tree of Life. For He says, “*Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day*” (John 6:54). He who eats the Flesh and drinks the Blood of Christ has life eternal, but...

The Holy Church also gives answer to “*What is this ‘but’?*” The doors are open. The Eucharist is prepared. The Holy Church is prepared to receive each of us in the Divine Liturgy. But for this, it is necessary for us to be prepared.

This raises a further question, “*What does this preparation consist of?*” On this day, the day we call the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, the Church again provides the answer. Guidelines are established which a Christian must follow in order to receive the New Testament Tree of Life — the Body and Blood of Christ — which give life to man.

And how does one receive this great Sacrament? The Holy Church gives yet another reply on this day. She presents the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325, at which the Holy Fathers gathered in order to destroy the heresy which was created by Arius.

What kind of heresy was it? Why does heresy prevent us from receiving the tree of life, the Body and Blood of Christ? Does this concern us? Not only does it concern us, brothers, but if we do not fulfill the testaments of the Church, and if we do not understand the disturbance made by Arius, we will not be Orthodox Christians.

What is this Arianism? The Apostle Paul, while walking around Athens, found a sacrificial altar to “The Unknown God.” And while preaching in the Areópagos, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, he announced that this Unknown God is Christ. And the Athenians willingly accepted it; they began worshipping the true God in the same way the Apostle Paul preached to them.

To *worship* God and to *recognize* His greatness, this they could do. But to *live* according to God, they did not want to do. They did not want to live the

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Continued from page 4 way the Gospel required. First of all, there was a disturbance in their family life – they practiced polygamy. Second, there was terrible political battle in public life – they practiced – slavery.

A man was not respected as a man in relation to his Creator. Relations between people were terrible, based on slavery. And here this desire to live in a pagan way became so strong among the Athenians, that it started to speak up even in the Church of Christ. And Arius became the ideologist for it.

What did he say? When the Council gathered and began to expose Arius, he said: *“You Fathers say, Christ is God-Man. His Divinity and His Manhood are unchangeable and indivisible; one is in the other, so that it is impossible to tell what is in what. There is no separation between God and Man. Therefore, you make the conclusion that a Christian must always and everywhere be a Christian — in his family life and in his social life — always and everywhere be a Christian.”*

“But I say,” said Arius, *“that Christ is separated into God and Man. His Divinity and His Manhood are divisible in Him. And this gives us the right also to separate our life: in regard to religion to be Christians, to worship Christ; but in our private and civic life to live the way we want, as we lived before, in a pagan way.”*

To this the Holy Fathers said to Arius: *“Then you, Arius, and your followers cannot be Christians. You do not understand the meaning of Christ’s coming down to earth. Christ was incarnate, not only to reveal to us the true teaching about God, but also to live according to God. He came on earth to fulfill the commandment of love for God and neighbor. And He requires fulfillment of this commandment from us. Those who do not fulfill this commandment will remain pagans and will receive the same thing that pagans receive.”*

This is how the Holy Fathers answered Arius. And this is what the Holy Church says to us even now. Look around us and you will see in action all those horrors and sights about which the Holy Fathers spoke: continuous wars, forgotten old age, and the madness among the young. Horrors!

In order to avoid these horrible things, we have to be Orthodox Christians. And a Christian cannot be a Christian and a citizen. Rather, in citizenship he must be a Christian, which means always to be love justice, show mercy and walk humbly with God. Only then will we be able to partake of Eternal Life with divine joy in Christ.

There cannot be duality in our lives – a man of the world and a Christian of the age to come; this is where the preaching of Arius leads. For there is no duality in Christ, but rather the union of the human and the Divine.

Amen.

Archbishop Andrei (Rymarenko, 1893-1978)

REFLECTION ON THE COUNCIL OF NICAËA

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The Fathers of Nicaea: Why Should I Care?

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

Those for whom ancient history is irrelevant, and who equate “old” with “out-dated” may not appreciate the Fathers of the First Council of Nicaea, since they met and produced their work in AD 325.

How could a creed so old be remotely relevant today? Because our Creed speaks of eternal, never-changing, and absolute truths. Thus, it has been very, very carefully, exactly, and precisely composed. And its statements cannot be changed: they are unalterable, absolute, eternal truths.

The Nicene Fathers declared the full divinity of Jesus of Nazareth by saying that He was *hom α ousios* – “*of one essence*” – with the Father. When disputes arose about the incarnation and the relationship of man to God in the One Person Jesus Christ, some suggested that maybe the Creed could be changed to say that Jesus was *hom ι ousios* with the Father – “*of like essence.*”

After all, the innovators said, it only involves the difference of one letter, and a tiny one at that. Why fight over a single *iota*, a single “i”? Who would care? Why should any sensible person get worked up over whether the pre-incarnate Word was *hom α ousios* with the Father or *hom ι ousios*? The Councils of Nicaea and afterward prove how wrong this argument is.

A moment’s thought however will reveal the nonsense of saying that Jesus was *hom ι ousios* with the Father. What would it mean to be of “*like essence*”? Was He divine-ish? God in an honorary kind of way? Sort of God? Almost God? The distance between God and His creation is infinite, so that one is either absolutely God or absolutely not God at all.

Either Jesus was God and *hom α ousios* with the Father, or He was created and of a completely different essence than the Father. But still one may ask: why should we care? Sure, we confess His divinity, but what does it really matter?

This is why it matters: salvation consists in giving all of one’s life, heart, and soul to God, living and dying for Him down to one’s last breath and one’s last drop of blood. *“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength”* (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27).

The Fathers of Nicaea taught exactly that Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh: *Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, hom α ousios with the Father*. It is through Him that all things were made, and to Him that all things shall return with bowed knee. It is our salvation that we bow the knee in worship and love to now before that final end.

Amen.

The Message of the Gospel for the Seventh Sunday of Pascha

“Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are” (John 17:11).

Christ’s prayer is not only for the apostles – although it is firstly for them – but is also for all those who have and will come to faith in Christ through their word.

This prayer, then, was also for the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod, that we commemorate today.

“Keep them!” – the Lord prayed to His Father. And the Father kept them from the errors of Arius, and inspired, illumined and strengthened them by the Holy Spirit to defend and confirm the Orthodox faith.

This prayer is for all of us who are baptized in the apostolic Church and who have from the apostles and their successors, come to know the saving name of Christ the Savior.

Saint Nikolai (Velimirovich)

Reflection for the Sunday of the Holy Fathers
of the First Ecumenical Synod

Arius began to deny the divinity of the Son of God and His oneness in essence with God the Father.

The entire Church rose up against him; all believers, from all ends of the earth, unanimously confessed that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God, true God of true God; begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father.

One would think that this unanimity was purely coincidental, but this faith was then tried by fire when the authorities and powerful of this world began to side with the Arians.

Neither fire, nor sword, nor persecution could extinguish this faith, and it was immediately found everywhere among everyone, as soon as the pressure from external powers ceased.

This means that it makes up the heart of the Church and the essence of her confession.

Glory be to the Lord, Who preserves this faith within us!

For, as long as it exists, we are still Christians, though we may not live as such. If it ceases to exist, Christianity will end.

Saint Theophan the Recluse

After the Entrance

Tone 6, Troparion, Resurrection

The Angelic Powers were at Thy tomb; • the guards became as dead men. • Mary stood by Thy grave, • seeking Thy most pure body. • Thou didst capture hades not being tempted by it. • Thou didst come to the Virgin, granting life. • O Lord, Who didst rise from the dead, • glory to Thee.

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, Ascension

Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, • granting joy to Thy Disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. • Through the blessing, they were assured • that Thou art the Son of God, • the Redeemer of the world.

Tone 8, Troparion, Fathers

Thou art most glorious, O Christ our God, • Who hast established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth. • Through them Thou hast guided us to the True Faith. • O greatly compassionate One, glory to Thee.

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

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, Fathers

Glory... The Apostles’ preaching and the Fathers’ doctrines have established one Faith for the Church. • Adorned with the robe of truth, woven from heavenly theology, • It defines and glorifies the great mystery of piety.

Tone 6, Kontakion

Both now... When Thou hadst fulfilled the dispensation for our sake, • and united earth to heaven, • Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, • not being parted from those who love Thee, • but remaining with them and crying: • “I am with you, and there is no one against you.”

Instead of “It is truly meet...,” we sing:

Magnify, O my soul, Christ the Giver of Life, Who hath ascended from earth to heaven.

We the faithful, with one accord, magnify thee, the Mother of God, who, beyond reason and understanding, ineffably gave birth in time to the Timeless One.

Instead of “We have seen the true light...”

Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God... (*once*).



Евангелие

После сих слов Иисус возвёл очи Свои на небо и сказал: Отче! пришёл час, прославь Сына Твоего, да и Сын Твой прославит Тебя, так как Ты дал Ему власть над всякою плотью, да всему, что Ты дал Ему, даст Он жизнь вечную. Сия же есть жизнь вечная, да знают Тебя, единого истинного Бога, и посланного Тобою Иисуса Христа. Я прославил Тебя на земле, совершил дело, которое Ты поручил Мне исполнить. И ныне прославь Меня Ты, Отче, у Тебя Самого славою, которую Я имел у Тебя прежде бытия мира. Я открыл имя Твоё человекам, которых Ты дал Мне от мира; они были Твои, и Ты дал их Мне, и они сохранили слово Твоё. Ныне уразумели они, что всё, что Ты дал Мне, от Тебя есть, ибо слова, которые Ты дал Мне, Я передал им, и они приняли, и уразумели истинно, что Я исшёл от Тебя, и уверовали, что Ты послал Меня. Я о них молю: не о всём мире молю, но о тех, которых Ты дал Мне, потому что они Твои. И всё Моё Твоё, и Твоё Моё; и Я прославился в них. Я уже не в мире, но они в мире, а Я к Тебе иду. Отче Святой! соблюди их во имя Твоё, тех, которых Ты Мне дал, чтобы они были едино, как и Мы. Когда Я был с ними в мире, Я соблюдал их во имя Твоё; тех, которых Ты дал Мне, Я сохранил, и никто из них не погиб, кроме сына погибели, да сбудется Писание. Ныне же к Тебе иду, и сие говорю в мире, чтобы они имели в себе радость Мою совершенную (Ин. 17, 1-13).



Святитель Феофан Затворник

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

Арий стал отвергать божество Сына Божия и Его единосущие Богу Отцу. На него поднялась вся Церковь; все верующие, во всех концах мира, едиными устами исповедали, что **Господь Иисус Христос есть Сын Божий Единородный, Бог от Бога, рожден, не сотворен, единосущен Отцу.** Иной подумал бы, что это случайное какое-либо воодушевление на единомыслие; но эта вера прошла потом огненное испытание, когда на сторону ариан склонилась власть и знать. Ни огонь, ни меч, ни гонения не

1 ☞ могли истребить ее и она тотчас обнаружилась повсюду всеми, коль скоро прекращалось давление внешней силы. Это значит, что **она составляет сердце Церкви и сущность ее исповедания. Слава Господу, хранящему в нас эту веру!** Ибо пока она есть, мы еще христиане, хоть и худо живем; не станет ее - и христианству конец.

Аминь.



Первосвященническая молитва Иисуса Христа.

Совершая с учениками последнюю Пасху, Господь Иисус Христос так молился в конце Пасхальной вечери: Отче! пришел час, прославь Сына Твоего, да и Сын Твой прославит Тебя (Ин. 17, 1-13). Это Евангелие, в котором так ясно изложено собственными словами Иисуса Христа учение о единосущии Его, как Сына Божия, с Богом Отцом и, таким образом, о Его Божестве, положено читать в Неделю святых отцов Первого Вселенского Собора, утвердивших соборно восстановление истинного учения о единосущии Сына Божия с Богом Отцом против еретика Ария.

О Вселенских Соборах.

В Неделю седьмую по Пасхе Православная Церковь ежегодно вспоминает и прославляет святых и богоносных отец, бывших на Первом Вселенском Соборе, иже в Никее.

Вселенским Собором называется собрание пастырей и учителей Церкви Христовой, по возможности со всей вселенной, для утверждения истинного учения и благочиния между христианами. Великая сила и важность соборных совещаний и решений основывается на словах Самого Иисуса Христа, Который сказал: где двое или трое собраны во имя Мое, там Я посреди их (Мф. 18, 20). Что же касается всей Вселенской Церкви, то Основатель ее и Глава придал ей значение непогрешимости в вопросах о вере. Скажи Церкви, а если и Церкви не послушает, то пусть будет для тебя наравне с язычником и мытарем (ср.: Мф. 18, 17). Церкви же (обществу верующих) Спаситель дал великое обетование быть с нею во вся дни до скончания века (Мф. 28, 20).

Начало Церковных Соборов положили еще святые апостолы; для общего решения вопроса о принятии в Церковь язычников они сами однажды собрались в Иерусалиме с разных концов вселенной. С того времени Святая Церковь всегда в соборных молитвах испрашивала себе силы противостоять нарушителям истинного учения. Коль ☞ 3

2 ☞ скоро ей нужно было узнать непреложную волю Божию о челибо, она созывала представителей поместных Церквей, и единогласное решение Соборов принимала за голос Самого Бога. Изволися Духу Святому и нам (ср.: Деян. 15, 28) – так выразились апостолы, так затем выражались и отцы всех Соборов о своих постановлениях. Соборы созывались по причине появления среди христиан лжеучителей (еретиков), которые своим иногда хитроумным и всегда превратным учением о вере извращали истинно христианское учение о нашем спасении, смущали нетвердых в вере и чрез то вносили раздор и несогласие в общество христиан.

Вселенских Соборов было семь. Первый из них называется Никейским, и был созван по воле императора Константина в городе Никее в 325 году для опровержения ложного учения об Иисусе Христе нечестивого еретика Ария.

Арий был сначала пресвитером в Александрийской Церкви; будучи человеком ученым, он сильно гордился своим умом и скоро впал в пагубное лжеумствование. Церковь христианская искони исповедовала, что Спаситель наш Иисус Христос есть второе лицо Пресвятой Троицы, Единородный Сын Бога Отца, а Арий лжеумствовал, что Иисус Христос не Бог, но только одаренный от Бога высшею благодатью человек. Такого неправомыслия, конечно, нельзя было терпеть, и Ария отлучили от Церкви, но он продолжал распространять свою ересь и увлекать в свои сети малосведущих.

Скоро в обществе христианском явилось небывалое смущение; нужно было положить конец этому злу. Тогда, по распоряжению императора Константина Великого, созван был в Никее в 325 году по Рождестве Христовом Вселенский Собор, на который явились более трехсот отцов Церкви. Явился на Собор и еретик Арий. Сколько ни старались православные вразумить заблудшего, он остался при своем. Ария осудили и, как ослушника Церкви, лишили общения с нею, а в образец и руководство верующих в исповедании веры составлен был Символ веры, в котором кратко изложено все, во что и как должны веровать христиане.

Этот Символ исповедует и доселе вся Православная Церковь Христова. Вот провозглашенная им формула:

Веруем во единого Бога Отца, Вседержителя, Творца небу и земли, видимым же всем и невидимым (т. е. сотворившего небо и землю, всё видимое и невидимое). И во единого Господа Иисуса Христа, Сына Божия, Единородного, Иже от Отца рожденного прежде всех век (т. е. рожденного от Отца прежде всякого времени): Света от Света, Бога истинна от Бога истинна, рожденна, несотворенна, единосушна ☞ 4

3 ☞ Отцу, Имже вся быша (т. е. через Которого всё произошло). Нас ради человек и нашего ради спасения спешдшаго с небес и воплотившагося от Духа Свята и Марии Девы, и вочеловечшася. Распятого же за ны (т. е. за нас) при Понтийстем Пилате, и страдавша, и погребенна. И воскресшаго в третий день, по Писанием (т. е. как было предсказано в Писании). И возшедшаго на небеса, и сидяща одесную Отца. И паки грядущаго со славою судити живым и мертвым (т. е. Который опять придёт во славе, чтобы судить живых и мёртвых), Егоже Царствию не будет конца.

Вскоре после споров о Сыне и Слове Божьем, возникла полемика о Святом Духе. Константинопольский собор в 381 г., впоследствии известный как Второй Вселенский Собор, добавил следующее определение к никейской формуле:

И в Духа Святаго, Господа, животворящаго, Иже от Отца Исходящаго, Иже со Отцем и Сыном спокланяема и сславима (т. е. Которому поклоняемся и которого славим вместе с Отцом и Сыном), глаголавшаго пророки (т. е. Который говорил через пророков). Во едину святую соборную и Апостольскую Церковь. Исповедую едино крещение во оставление грехов. Чаю (т. е. жду) воскресения мертвых. И жизни будущаго века. Аминь.

Теперь полный текст этого Символа Веры был принят всей Церковью. Он стал произноситься от первого лица единственного числа («Верую...») и использоваться в качестве официального исповедания веры во время крещения и при принятии инославных христиан в Православную Церковь. Кроме того, он стал необходимой частью Божественной Литургии, и, повторяя Символ Веры, каждый христианин принимает и обновляет своё крещение и членство в Церкви.

Быть православным христианином – значит утверждать православную веру, то есть исповедывать не просто слова, а сам смысл Никео-Константинопольского Символа Веры. Это также означает утверждение всего того, что исходит из Символа Веры, что развилось и основано на нём за всю долгую историю Православной Церкви.

Аминь.

