

First Sunday of the Great Fast *Sunday of Orthodoxy*

March 9, 2025

*On March 9th we Celebrate:
The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.*



Icon of Restoration of the Holy Icons

Holy Wisdom Orthodox Mission

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Great Vespers, Saturday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Divine Liturgy, Sunday Mornings at 9:30 am (Hours at 9:05 am)

Presanctified Divine Liturgy, Wednesday Evenings at 6:00 pm

Very Reverend Archpriest Luke Uhl, Retired, Interim Rector

*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*



Orthodox Church in America



Diocese of the West

SUNDAY EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS 2

Epistle for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, (329-ctr) 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.

Epistle for the Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, (331) Hebrews 12:1-10

BRETHREN, 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. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have

3 SUNDAY EPISTLE AND GOSPEL READINGS (CONTINUED)

Continued from page 2 ☩ had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Gospel for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, (5) 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."

Gospel for the Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, (80) Matthew 20:1-16

THE LORD SAID: "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' "So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

4

The 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 Theodóra 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?

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 5 ☞ 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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7 REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (CONTINUED)

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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REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (CONTINUED) 8

Continued from page 7 ☞ 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.

On the same day, the First Sunday of the Fast, we commemorate the restoration of the Holy and Precious Icons, which was brought about by the ever-memorable Emperors of Constantinople, Michael and his mother Theodóra, during the Patriarchate of the Holy Confessor Methodios.

*I rejoice, on seeing the Icons that were unworthily
Banished being accorded fitting veneration.*

When Leo the Isaurian, from being a donkey-driver and a peasant, gained the scepters of the Empire, by God's permission, our Father among the Saints Germanos, who governed the Church at that time, was immediately summoned by him and was told: *"In my opinion, Master, the holy Icons do not differ in any way from idols; command, therefore, that they be removed from our midst; if they are true images of the Saints, let them be hung higher up, lest we who ever wallow in sins defile them by kissing them."* The Patriarch tried to dissuade the Emperor from such hatred, saying: *"Do not do such a thing, O Emperor; for I hear that someone by the name of Conon is going to rage against the holy Icons."* *"When I was still a child,"* the Emperor replied, *"that was my name."*

Since the Patriarch could not be persuaded to agree to the Emperor's policy, he was sent into exile and replaced by Anastásios, who shared Leo's views. Thus was the latter emboldened to make war at that time against the holy Icons. After Leo died an evil death, Constantine Coprónymos, succeeded him as ruler, and was even more savage and maniacal in opposition to the holy Icons. When Constantine died a still more horrible death, his son, Leo the Khazar, became his successor as Emperor.

When he, too, died an evil death, his consort Irene and their son, Constantine inherited the Empire. Guided by the most-holy Patriarch Tarásios, they convened the Seventh Œcumenical Synod, and the Church of Christ received back the holy Icons. When they ceased to rule, Niképhoros ascended to the throne followed by his son Stavrákios. After him reigned Michael Rangábe and they both venerated the Divine Icons.

Michael was succeeded by another Leo, the Armenian, who, corrupted through trickery by a certain impious recluse, stirred up the second wave of Iconoclasm. Leo was succeeded by Michael the Amórian, and he in turn by his son Theóphilos, who left the other devotees of Iconoclastic madness in second place.

This Theóphilos gave many of the Holy Fathers over to outrageous torments and chastisements on account of the precious Icons. After an autocratic reign of twelve years, he succumbed to dysentery, and, when he was about to die, his mouth opened up to such an extent that his entrails were visible deep inside.

His wife, the Empress Theodóra was greatly distressed over this incident. Once in a dream she beheld the immaculate Theotokos, holding the pre-eternal Infant in her arms, surrounded by shining Angels, and Theóphilos, her husband, being scourged and rebuked by the Angels. When she awoke, Theóphilos, recovering slightly, cried out: *"Woe is me, the wretched one! I am being scourged on*

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Continued from page 9 ☞ account of the holy Icons!" The Empress immediately placed the Icon of the Theotokos on him, beseeching her with tears. As for Theóphilos, although he was in such a condition, when he saw one of those standing around wearing a pectoral icon, he grabbed it and kissed it, and at once, the mouth which had insolently raged against the Icons and the throat which was lying so wantonly open returned to their natural state.

Theóphilos, gaining respite from the violent pain, fell asleep, confessing that it is a good thing to honor and venerate the holy Icons. The Empress brought out the precious and holy Icons from her coffers and made Theóphilos kiss and honor them wholeheartedly. After a short while, Theóphilos reposed.

Recalling all who were in exile or in prisons, Theodóra bade them live in freedom, and John Grammátikos, who was more a demoniarch than a Patriarch, was deposed from the Patriarchal throne. Then Saint Methodios, the Confessor of Christ, who had previously suffered much and been confined alive in a tomb, ascended the throne.

This being the situation, a Divine visitation was made to Saint Ioanníkios the Great, who dwelt on Mount Olympos; for the great ascetic Arsákios came to him, saying: *"God sent me to you, so that we may go together to the most holy recluse Isaiah in Nicomedia and learn from him what is pleasing to God and fitting for His Church."*

And indeed, they went to the most holy Isaiah and heard from him the following: *"Thus says the Lord: Lo, the end has come for the enemies of My Icon; go, therefore, to the Empress Theodóra and also to Patriarch Methodios and tell them this: 'Curb all of the ungodly, and may you thus offer Me a sacrifice, together with the Angels, venerating the Icon of My countenance and that of the Cross.'"*

On hearing this, they went straight to Constantinople and reported what they had been told to Patriarch Methodios and to all the elect of God. After gathering together, they went to the Empress, and found her amenable in every way, for from her childhood she had been pious and God-loving. At once the Empress took out the Icon of the Theotokos that was hanging round her neck and kissed it in the sight of all, saying: *"If anyone does not venerate and kiss these Icons out of love, according to them a relative honor, but not worshipping them, and honoring them not as gods, but as Icons of their archetypes, let him be anathema."* They all rejoiced greatly.

She in turn asked them to make supplication for her husband Theóphilos. On seeing her faith, although they disowned Theóphilos, they were nonetheless convinced. Saint Methodios assembled all the clergy and people in the Great Church and went there himself. Together with many holy men and women monastics, they made supplication to God for Theóphilos, all praying with tears and fervent entreaty throughout the first week of the Fast. Empress Theodóra did the same together with the women of the court and rest of the people.

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Continued from page 10 ☞ This being so, Empress Theodóra fell asleep at dawn on Friday, and it seemed to her that she was standing beside a large Cross and that certain men were creating a tumult, carrying various instruments of torture; in their midst, the Emperor Theóphilos was being led in fetters. On recognizing him, she followed after those who were leading him. When they reached the Bronze Gate, she saw there a Man of magnificent appearance, seated in front of the Icon of Christ, before Whom they placed Theóphilos. Grasping His feet, the Empress entreated Him on behalf of the Emperor. Opening His mouth with reluctance, He said: “Great is your faith, O Lady; know, therefore, that on account of your tears and your faith, and also on account of the supplication and entreaty of My servants and My Priests, I am granting forgiveness to your husband, Theóphilos.” He then said to those who were leading him away: “Release him and hand him over to his wife.” After receiving him, she departed, rejoicing; and at once she awoke. Such was the vision of Empress Theodóra.

After the prayers and supplications for her husband had finished, Patriarch Methodios took a clean piece of parchment, and wrote on it the names of the heretical emperors, inserting that of Theóphilos also, and placed them all beneath the Holy Table. On Friday, he, too, saw an awesome Angel entering the Great Church, who said to him: “*Your entreaty has been heard, O Bishop, and Emperor Theóphilos has obtained forgiveness. Henceforth, therefore, cease to trouble God about him.*” Wishing to find out whether what he had seen in the vision was true, he descended from his throne. Taking the scroll, he unrolled it and – O the judgments of God! – found that the name of Theóphilos had been completely erased by God.

On learning of this, the Empress rejoiced exceedingly and sent a message to the Patriarch that he should assemble all the people, with Relics of the Precious Cross and holy Icons, in the Great Church, so that the adornment of the holy Icons might be restored to the Church and that the wondrous miracle might be made known to all. And indeed, almost everyone assembled in the Church with candles, and the Empress arrived with her son. Starting from there, they all processed with the holy Icons, the Relics of the Precious Cross, and the Holy Gospel, until they reached a place called Milion, crying out: “Lord, have mercy.” Thereafter, they returned to the Church and celebrated the Divine Liturgy, the holy and venerable Icons having been put back in place by the aforementioned holy men.

Those who were pious and right-believing were acclaimed, while the impious enemies of the Faith, who did not accept the veneration of the holy Icons, were denounced and consigned to anathema. These holy Confessors appointed that this sacred solemnity thenceforth be celebrated annually, lest we should ever fall again into such impiety.

*O Thou Who art the exact Image of the Father,
by the intercessions of Thy holy Confessors, have mercy on us. Amen.*

Tone 4, Troparion (*Resurrection*)

When the women disciples of the Lord • learned from the angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection, • they cast away the ancestral curse • and elatedly told the Apostles: • “Death is overthrown. • Christ God is risen, • granting the world great mercy.”

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 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 1, Troparion (*Holy 40 Martyrs*)

Through the sufferings which Thy holy Forty Martyrs endured for • Thy sake, O Lord, • we beseech Thee, O Lover of ^mankind: • “Heal all of our infirmities.”

Tone 4, Kontakion (*Resurrection*)

My Savior and Redeemer • as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. • He has shattered the gates of Hades, • and as Master, • He has risen on the third day.

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 6, Kontakion (*Holy 40 Martyrs*)

Glory... You have abandoned all earthly armies, • cleaving to the heavenly Master, O Forty Martyrs of the Lord. • Having passed through fire and water, O blessed ones, • you have fittingly received heavenly glory and many crowns.

Tone 8, Kontakion (*Sunday of Orthodoxy*)

Both... 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.

Prokeimena

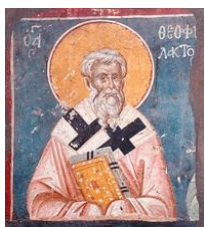
Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever.

Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this generation forever.



Евангелие

На другой день Иисус восхотел идти 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 идти 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

☞ 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)? Вот 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

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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

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☞ законом. Прошу тебя, если ты услаждаешься подобными вещами, обратить 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, возрел на нас, находящихся 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.

The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Volume 13, Issue 10

Return of the icons



Here is a picture of an icon that has been destroyed by iconoclasts. Do you see how they banged holes in the saint's eyes and body?

What would you do if somebody came into your house and destroyed all your pictures? What if somebody poked holes in the photos of your family? Or cut through some of the pictures of your friends? Or burned the precious pictures of your grandparents or great-grandparents?

That's exactly what *iconoclasts* did, 1,300 years ago. Iconoclasts were people who destroyed icons. That's right—they destroyed pictures of our family—Jesus Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints. They made it against the law to have icons, and even destroyed these holy images whenever they could.

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. Today we celebrate the return of icons into our churches and into our homes. We celebrate how we still use icons in our Orthodox faith. We pray with icons, because we know that God became a real person, Who lived here on earth. The Theotokos and the saints are real people too, and we remember them when we see pictures of them!

In 843, St. Theodora and the Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council finally brought icons back, making icons legal once again. Today, let's all hold our icons up high, thanking God for our freedom, and thanking St. Theodora and the Church Fathers for their courage!

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Brothers
Caesarius
Celebration
Doctor
Faith
Great Lent
Gregory
Icons
Orthodoxy
Restore
Theodora

B	D	A	R	M	Y	G	E	D	L	U	W	K	L	T
W	X	F	Z	G	R	R	R	S	Z	E	O	D	T	N
X	K	D	L	E	O	I	U	B	E	V	D	R	H	E
S	U	T	G	T	P	I	C	E	Q	Z	Z	J	E	L
S	I	O	S	O	R	T	H	O	D	O	X	Y	O	T
Q	R	E	F	A	A	B	B	T	N	R	K	M	D	A
Y	R	E	S	R	O	T	C	O	D	S	B	E	O	E
Z	F	E	H	J	P	Q	N	S	J	H	J	V	R	R
V	A	A	D	T	H	T	X	Z	F	D	B	S	A	G
C	V	H	I	Q	O	Z	R	R	I	M	A	G	G	C
W	S	J	H	T	T	R	R	P	E	X	V	Z	G	G
I	G	O	E	K	H	J	B	T	C	U	O	X	A	F
E	Z	E	T	P	D	Q	G	D	R	R	F	S	U	X
W	I	G	N	L	B	G	M	V	L	C	G	H	X	C
C	E	L	E	B	R	A	T	I	O	N	M	K	I	T

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Along with St. Caesarius, we have lots of other doctor saints in our church!

Here are Saints Cosmas and Damian. Do you see their special boxes with medicine? Can you find the medicine in the icon of St. Caesarius?



SAINT CAESARIUS ST GREGORY'S BROTHER

Do you have brothers or sisters?

Do you like to do everything that your sibling likes to do? Do you have the same hobbies? Do you like the exact same subjects in school? Do you like to eat the same foods? Of course, you might have lots of things in common, but you probably aren't *exactly* alike.



Today, we celebrate a saint who had a very famous brother, Saint Gregory the Theologian. St. Gregory was a bishop, and he studied and read and worked hard for the Church. His brother (the saint we celebrate today) was St. Caesarius, and he was different. He liked the sciences—math, astronomy, and medicine. In fact, he became a great doctor. Caesarius even worked as a doctor for the emperors!

St. Gregory and St. Caesarius were brothers, and they were different from each other. However, they helped each other throughout their lives. St. Caesarius encouraged his brother to write things for the Church. We still have many of these writings! Also, St. Gregory advised his brother Caesarius to be close to the Church even though he wasn't working for the Church. They supported each other.

After St. Caesarius died, St. Gregory, the bishop, wrote a beautiful sermon about his brother. We can still read this piece and learn about their special and close relationship. They both had strong faith in the Lord!

We celebrate St. Caesarius today, March 9th (OC: March 22nd).

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This is the faith of the Orthodox!



The Children's Word is a weekly bulletin for Orthodox Christian young people. Copyright 2025 Alexandra Houck. Email is orthodoxchildrensword (at) gmail.com. Find it each week at orthodoxchildrensword.org.