

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wed: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM | Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM | Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

July 16, 2017 – 6th Sunday After Pentecost

Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

As the Church progressed through history it was faced with many difficult decisions. The Church always settled difficulties and made decisions by reaching a consensus of opinion among all the believers inspired by God who were led by their appointed leaders, first the apostles and then the bishops.

The first church council in history was held in the apostolic church to decide the conditions under which the gentiles, that is, the non-Jews, could enter the Christian Church (see Acts 15). From that time on, all through history councils were held on every level of church life to make important decisions. Bishops met regularly with their priests, also called presbyters or elders, and people. It became the practice, and even the law, very early in church history that bishops in given regions should meet in councils held on a regular basis.

At times in church history, councils of all of the bishops in the church were called. All the bishops were not able to attend these councils, of course, and not all such councils were automatically approved and accepted by the Church in its Holy Tradition. In the Orthodox Church only seven such councils, some of which were actually quite small in terms of the number of bishops attending, have received the universal approval of the entire Church in all times and places. These councils have been termed the Seven Ecumenical Councils. The dogmatic definitions



(dogma means official teaching) and the canon laws of the ecumenical councils are understood to be inspired by God and to be expressive of His will for men. Thus, they are essential sources of Orthodox Christian doctrine.

Besides the seven ecumenical councils, there are other local church councils whose decisions have also received the approval of all Orthodox Churches in the world, and so are considered to be genuine expressions of the Orthodox faith and life. The decisions of these councils are mostly of a moral or structural character. Nevertheless, they too reveal the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

The antiquity of today's commemoration is attested by the fact that only the first six ecumenical councils are called to remembrance (the Seventh Ecumenical Council is commemorated separately on the Sunday nearest October 11).

The first Six Ecumenical Councils are summarized below:

Nicea I (325): Formulated the First Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Son of God

Constantinople I (381): Formulated the Second Part of the Creed, defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit

Ephesus (431): Defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary as Theotokos

Chalcedon (451): Defined Christ as Perfect God and Perfect Man in One Person

Constantinople II (553): Reconfirmed the Doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ

Constantinople III (680): Affirmed the True Humanity of Jesus by insisting upon the reality of His human will and action (*adapted from oca.org*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's Letter to Titus 3:8-15

My son Titus, this is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All who *are* with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 5:14-19

The Lord said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For amen, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

A Word From the Holy Fathers

When someone is empty of Christ then a thousand and one other things come to fill his soul: jealousies, hatreds, boredom, melancholy, negativity, a worldly frame of mind and worldly pleasures. Try to fill your soul with Christ so as not to have it empty. Your soul is like a cistern full of water. If you channel the water to the flowers, that is, to the virtues, you will experience true joy and all the thorns of evil will wither away. But if you channel water to the weeds, these will grow and choke you and all the flowers will wither.

Raise everything up to Christ. That's how you will experience joy with the grace of God. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phil. 4:13. Don't say that you will achieve something. Never imagine such a thing. The Lord said, "Without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5. There is no other way. Never should a person trust in his own powers, but rather in the mercy and compassion of God. He will make a little effort, but Christ will crown that effort. It is a delusion to believe that you achieved something on your own. The more someone progresses and approaches towards Christ, the more he feels that he is imperfect. The Pharisee, on the contrary, who says, "Look at me! I am good, I do this and I do that..." is deluded.

– St. Porphyrius of Kafsokalivia, *Wounded by Love* p. 177-78

Also Commemorated Today: Hieromartyr Athenogenes the Bishop of Heracleopolis

Hieromartyr Athenogenes and his Ten Disciples suffered for Christ during the persecution of Christians in the city of Sebastea in Cappadocia. The governor Philomachos arranged a large festival in honor of the pagan gods and called upon the citizens of Sebastea to offer sacrifice to the idols. Most of the inhabitants of



Sebastea were Christians, and refused to participate in the impious celebration. Soldiers were ordered to kill those who resisted, and so many Christians received a martyr's crown. It came to the governor's attention that Christianity was spreading because of the grace-filled preaching of Bishop Athenogenes. Soldiers were ordered to find the Elder and arrest him. Bishop Athenogenes and ten of his disciples lived in a small monastery not far from the city. The soldiers did not find the bishop there, so they arrested his disciples. The governor ordered that they be bound with chains and thrown into prison.

Saint Athenogenes was arrested when he came to Sebastea to inform the judge that those who had been jailed were innocent. While in prison, Saint Athenogenes encouraged his spiritual children for their impending struggle. Led forth to trial, all the holy martyrs confessed themselves Christians and refused to offer sacrifice to idols. After undergoing fierce tortures, the disciples of the holy bishop were beheaded. After the execution of the disciples, the executioners were ordered to torture the bishop. Strengthened by the Lord, Saint Athenogenes underwent the tortures with dignity. His only request was that he be executed in the monastery.

Taken to his own monastery, the saint gave thanks to God, and he rejoiced in the sufferings that he had undergone for Him. Saint Athenogenes asked that the Lord would forgive the sins of all those who would remember both him and his disciples. The Lord granted the saint to hear His Voice before death, announcing the promise given to the penitent thief: "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise." The hieromartyr willingly bent his neck beneath the sword. (*from oca.org*)

Hieromartyr Athenogenes in Pontus

According to tradition, the Holy Martyr Athenogenes was an aged priest, who in the year 196 A.D. was burned alive for his faith in Christ in Pontus of Asia Minor. It is said that as he approached the fire to be burned, he sang the joyful evening hymn Phos Ilaron (Φως Ιλαρόν; Gladsome Light) as his disciples stood by. Many attribute to him authorship of this hymn and it is still said today during the Evening Vespers service. Though Mark of Ephesus and Symeon of Thessaloniki confirm St. Athenogenes to be the author of Phos Ilaron, some attribute its authorship to Sophronios of Jerusalem. Nikodemos the Hagiorite in his Synaxarion argues that this attribution is without foundation, since Sophronios lived in the seventh century, while Basil confirms the hymn was written before his time in the fourth century. He further writes that the hymn was found written on an ancient Alexandrian Codex of the

Septuagint from before the time of Sophronios. Nikodemos also notes that Sophronios likely perfected the hymn to its present form, which is why it is often attributed to him. (*adapted from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – 143: An Inviting Church



“Come and See.” (John 1:39 RSV)

As Orthodox, we have one of the greatest gifts that God can bestow upon us, our Orthodox faith. As members of the body of Christ, we are commanded to use our gifts to further our journey to Theosis as well as using those gifts to help and support other members of the body of Christ on their journey. This includes reaching out to those who have yet to begin their journey or have become “stuck in a rut.”

Are you an inviting parish? Do you set an environment that will make visitors feel welcome and desire to return? Do you have an invitational culture in your parishes? If not, why not? In a recent Gallup poll, the question was asked, “In the last month, I invited someone to participate in a parish service or function.” The results showed that 23% responded that they strongly agree with that statement, and 15 % agreed with it. So, 38% have invited somebody to the parish in the last month. If we asked that same question in our parishes, what would the result be?

In the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19) Christ commands us to spread the good news to the world. He gives us the power to do this, so the first thing we must understand in developing an inviting culture is that it is God who gives growth to our parishes. We are responsible for using our gifts and inviting people, but we are not responsible for the responses we receive. Gallup poll also shows that it takes asking a person five times before getting a positive response to the invitation. So yes, you will hear “no” much more often than “yes.” That is okay; our job is to plant the seed and let the Holy Spirit do its work. With that knowledge, we should not fear rejection! The person who receives the most “no” answers ultimately is also the one who receives the most “yes” responses.

The truth is, in my humble opinion, that many parishioners would love to share the gift of Orthodoxy with friends, relatives, and neighbors but do not know how to invite them. They fear being considered odd, creating discomfort in the relationship or being considered “one of those people.” We need to bring this fear to our prayers and hear God telling us, “Do not be afraid.” We are doing His work, He sent us so why should we have fear? The key is to be natural. Look to the Gospel, Andrew in a natural conversation brings Peter to Jesus, and Philip says to

Nathaniel, “come and see.” If you are thankful for the gift of Orthodoxy, don’t be fearful of asking others to “come and see.”

Can you only imagine that if 38% of our parishioners used their God-given talents and love for Orthodoxy to invite one person, once a month, that would mean, each month we would see 1540 visitors to our Diocesan parishes. The numbers are astonishing. If even one-quarter of those are touched and continue their journey in Orthodoxy that is potentially 385 catechumens each month in the Diocese. Use the gifts God has gifted you to be Stewards of the Church and to help bring others to the greatest gift God gave us, ORTHODOXY! *(from acrod.org)*

YOUR ASSISTANCE REQUESTED



Glory to Jesus Christ! A donor has recently offered to pay for a gazebo to be erected over the concrete patio beside the house. It is approximately 12’x12’ and is made out of cedar with an aluminum roof. The intent is to provide a covered, outdoor space for fellowship and child play. Please let Father Joseph know as soon as possible if you’re willing to help erect it (on a Saturday this month).

“Wonder - Explore – Discover”

**Come and Explore different fields of Science and Nature:
Astronomy, Earth Science, Biology, Geology and Meteorology**

Resident Camp for ages 8-18

On the Universal Priesthood

from The Eucharist by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

The royal or universal priesthood in the Church does not consist in her being a society of priests - for there are both priests and laymen in her - but in the fact that she as a whole, as the body of Christ, has a priestly ministry in relation to the world, she fulfills the priesthood and intercession of the Lord himself. Again, the very distinction between clergy and laity inside the Church is necessary in order that the Church may be in her fullness a sacred organism - for, if the priests are ministers of the sacraments, then through the sacraments the entire Church is sanctified and consecrated for the ministry of Christ, and herself becomes the mystery of the theandric reality of Christ. The priesthood of the laity does not consist in their being some sort of priests of a second order in the Church - for the ministries are distinct and must never be confused - but in that being the *faithful*, i.e., the members of the Church, they are *ordained* into the ministry of Christ to the world, and they realize this, above all, through participation in the offering of Christ's sacrifice on behalf of the world.

Such, in the end, is the meaning of the exclamation "let us, the faithful..." Through it the Church separates herself from the world, because, being the body of Christ, she is already not of this world. But this separation is accomplished *for the sake of* the world, for the offering of Christ's sacrifice on behalf of all and for all. If the Church did not have in herself the fullness of salvation, she would have nothing to witness to the world about. And if she were not to witness, if her calling and service were not the offering of Christ's sacrifice, then Christ would not be the savior of the world, but the savior *from the world*. And, finally, with this exclamation we are reminded that the meaning of the liturgy is not that in it the priest serves for the laity, or that the laity participates in the service each for himself, but that the entire assembly, in the mutual submission of all ministries one to another, constitutes a single body for the realization of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

And thus, when we hear these words, let us ask ourselves: are we confessing ourselves to be the *faithful*? Are we agreeing to fulfill the ministry to which each of us was ordained on the day of our baptism? Here there is no place for false humility or for separating ourselves from the gathering on the pretext of our sins. No one has ever been worthy of this participation, and no amount of righteousness can make a man able to offer the sacrifice of Christ for the world. But he himself has ordained, sanctified and placed us in this ministry, and he himself accomplishes it in us. We must remember, finally, that we do not go to church *for ourselves* and for our own desires, but for the service of Christ's work in the world. For there is no other way of *our* salvation than to give our lives over to Christ -



who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father (Rev. 1:5-6). We are gathered in the Eucharist for the fulfillment of this service.

From the Mouths of Babes

...or the hands of children. One of our parish children drew this and gave it to Father Joseph last week after liturgy. The Lord said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3) May God grant us child-like faith, that as His sons and daughters, we too may cry out, "Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6)

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, Josh Moore, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the newly departed servant of God Gordon Dewey, the newly departed handmaiden of God Caroline Schmuck, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)