

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Fridays: Moleben to the Theotokos 6:00 AM

**Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,
Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



June 12, 2016 – Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council

In a certain sense the Ecumenical Councils as inaugurated at Nicaea may be described as "Imperial Councils," and this was probably the first and original meaning of the term "ecumenical" as applied to the Councils. The term "Ecumenical Council" occurs first in the sixth canon of the Second Ecumenical Council, the Council of Constantinople in 381. This very name refers to the οικουμένη, the Empire. As a result the Emperor will have a special significance in connection with the Ecumenical Councils. Emperor Constantine convened the First Ecumenical Council but the idea was probably suggested to him by friends among the bishops.

The role of the Byzantine emperors in relationship to the Ecumenical Councils cannot be overlooked. The emperors convened or called the councils into being. They fixed the place and time of the council. They summoned the metropolitans and bishops of the empire by an edict. They provided the means of transit and they paid the cost of travel and other expenses from the public treasury. But, as becomes clear from any analysis of the Ecumenical Councils, the calling of an Ecumenical Council did not ensure its being "ecumenical."

Moreover, the role of the emperors in the actual proceedings and in the theological results of the Ecumenical Councils was greatly restricted, as is clear in the controversies over Nestorianism, Monophysitism, and Monothelitism.

The emperors not only *convened* the Ecumenical Councils but also, directly or indirectly, attempted to take an active part. Even if they were not physically present, the emperors were represented by imperial delegates or commissioners who were given full authority. These commissioners opened the sessions by reading the imperial edict in both Latin and Greek, they presided to some extent in conjunction with the bishops, they in general conducted the transactions, preserved order and security, and closed the council by signing the *Acts* either at the head or at the foot of the signatures of the bishops. They attempted to exercise, especially if they had a theological interest in the topics on the agenda, their influence on the discussions and decisions. But, and this is the significance, *they had no vote*. And often they could not control the bishops, as is the case with St. Cyril and the Comes Candidian at the Third Ecumenical Council. Pope Stephen V, writing in 817, claims that Constantine *presided* at the First Ecumenical Council. But it must always be remembered that this presidency, when applied to the emperors, was always *limited*, always *restricted*, always subject to the ultimate decision of the bishops and moreover always subject to the ultimate reception of any intended Ecumenical Council by the entire episcopate, by the entire Church. It was not unusual for an *intended* and proclaimed Ecumenical Council to be rejected at some later time by the Church, hence completely invalidating its claim of being "ecumenical"....

The reference or even a direct appeal "to the Fathers" was a distinctive and salient note of the theological research and discussion in the period of the Ecumenical Councils, beginning with the Council of Nicaea. The term has never been formally defined. It was used occasionally and sporadically already by early ecclesiastical writers. Often it simply denoted Christian teachers and leaders of previous generations. It was gradually becoming a title for the bishops, in so far as they were appointed teachers and witnesses of faith. Later the title was applied specifically to bishops who attended councils. The common element in all these cases is the teaching office or task. "Fathers" were those who transmitted and propagated the right doctrine, the teaching of the Apostles, who were guides and masters in Christian instruction and catechesis. In this sense it was emphatically applied to great Christian writers. It must be kept in mind that the main if not also the only, written manual of faith and doctrine was, in the Ancient Church, *precisely Holy Scripture*. And for that reason the renowned interpreters of Scripture were regarded as "Fathers" in an eminent sense. "Fathers" were teachers, first of all. And they were teachers in so far as they were witnesses. These two

functions must be distinguished and yet they are most intimately intertwined. "Teaching" was an Apostolic task — "teach all nations." And it was in this commission that their "authority" was rooted — it was, in fact, the authority to bear witness.

Two major points must be made in this connection. First, the phrase "the Fathers of the Church" has actually an obvious restrictive accent. They were acting not just as individuals, but rather on behalf and in the name of the Church. They were spokesmen for the Church, expositors of her faith, keepers of her Tradition, witnesses of truth and faith. And in that was their "authority" grounded. It leads us back to the concept of "representation." The late G. L. Prestige in his book entitled *Fathers and Heretics* has rightly observed that "the creeds of the Church grew out of the teaching of the Church: the general effect of heresy was rather to force old creeds to be tightened up than to cause fresh creeds to be constructed. Thus, the most famous and most crucial of all creeds, that of Nicaea, was only a new edition of an existing Palestinian confession. And a further important fact always ought to be remembered. The real intellectual work, the vital interpretative thought, was not contributed by the Councils that promulgated the creeds, but by the theological teachers who supplied and explained the formulae, which the Councils adopted. The teaching of Nicaea, which finally commended itself, represented the views of intellectual giants working for a hundred years before and for fifty years after the actual meeting of the Council." The Fathers were true inspirers of the Councils, while being present and *in absentia*. For that reason, and in this sense, the Councils used to emphasize that they were "following the Holy Fathers" as the Council of Chalcedon puts it. It was precisely the consensus of the Fathers, which was authoritative and binding, and not their private opinions or views, although even they should not be hastily dismissed.

Again, this consensus was much more than just an empirical agreement of individuals. The true and authentic consensus was that which reflected the mind of the Catholic and Universal Church. It was that kind of consensus to which St. Irenaeus was referring when he contended that neither a special "ability" nor a "deficiency" in speech of individual leaders in the Churches could affect the identity of their witnesses, since the "power of tradition" was always and everywhere the same. The preaching of the Church is always identical, according to St. Irenaeus. The true consensus is that which manifests and discloses this perennial identity of the Church's faith. The teaching authority of the Ecumenical Councils is grounded in the *infallibility of the Church*. The ultimate "authority" is vested in the Church, which is forever the Pillar and the Foundation of Truth. It is not primarily a canonical authority, in the formal and specific sense of the term, although canonical strictures or sanctions may be appended to conciliar decisions

on matters of faith. It is a charismatic authority, grounded in the assistance of the Holy Spirit — *for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.* (adapted from *The Byzantine Fathers of the Fifth Century* by Fr. Georges Florovsky)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36

In those days, Paul had 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 the Lord and 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. 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.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 17:1-13

At that time, Jesus 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 shall 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 them through Your name which 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.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

We do not change the boundaries marked out by our Fathers. We keep the Tradition we have received. If we begin to lay down the Law of the Church even in the smallest things, the whole edifice will fall to the ground in no short time.

– St. John of Damascus

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 74: The Love of Money



“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.” (James 5:1 RSV)

In our American culture, December 31 is the end of the calendar year. Most everyone these days must order their lives according to that calendar. Despite the fact that the Orthodox “New Year” began last September 1, most all of us celebrate New Year’s Day on January 1. The schools, banks, post offices, and other workplaces are all closed. The streets and

highways are empty at least early in the day for all who celebrated the eve of the new year late into the night before.

There are many ways that the world has deceived us into thinking that its ways are the “right and proper” ways to order our lives. Perhaps the most deceitful way is that because of the super-rich, the rest of us are considered “only” middle class or below. If we don’t have a huge income, bank account, or the means or ability to gain such, we are considered something less than Americans who have taken advantage of the great American dream. We are lulled into the falsehood that we are not rich – that in fact we are poor. The federal poverty level for a family of four today is \$24,250 income annually (for the purposes of eligibility for Medicaid). For the majority of the world (according to the U.N.) the poverty level is an annual income of \$1,825 – that is \$1.25 per family member (of four) per day for one year. The conclusion: we have been duped into believing that we in the United States of America are poor, when richness abounds everywhere. The first Bishop of Jerusalem, St. James the Apostle, was truly scornful of the rich. But

since we don't consider ourselves rich, we often skip right over what he has to say in his Epistle:

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. ...You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter” (James 1:1-6 RSV)

St. James is saying that people with money (all of us) should consider what it is we have: a wasted resource that we cannot take with us when we die and that even now is in a constant state of decay. Hear our Father in the Faith, St. John Chrysostom: *“...Wealth, possessions and property: will they not all disappear? What reward have (the rich) got? Death. And what will their end be? Dust and ashes, urns and worms.”* We have been warned! (*adapted from acrod.org*)

COUNCILS AND ECUMENICAL COUNCILS: THE DIFFERENCES **by Rev. Dr. Patrick Viscuso**

On March 20, 2016, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sent an encyclical or official letter to the entire Orthodox Church, including the primates or heads of the autocephalous or self-governing Orthodox churches announcing that there would be a “Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church” held from June 18–27 on the island of Crete. The fourteen recognized autocephalous churches include the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

This meeting of bishops has been long in preparation. The first plans for such a council may be traced to the early part of the last century and include discussions that took place in Constantinople and Mount Athos during the 1920s and 1930s. The agenda for the council was first discussed in 1961. Preparations were made through various Pan-Orthodox bodies including an Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission, Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conferences, and *Synaxeis* (gatherings of the heads of the self-governing churches). The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church will involve the direct participation of the primates and their representatives from each of the fourteen churches that together constitute the Orthodox Church worldwide. Such a council of bishops of the self-governing churches has not taken place since the late eighth century, when the last of the seven ecumenical councils that the Orthodox Church recognizes took place in the city of Nicaea, now located in modern Turkey.

Many are asking whether the Holy and Great Council of 2016 will be numbered among the ecumenical councils and, like them, provide the Church with universal teachings as well as general standards or canons that will have lasting significance for the life of the entire Church. Although many ecumenical councils involved large numbers of bishops, as will the present council planned for 2016, what actually made such assemblies ecumenical is related to the nature of the Church. Certainly the present planned 2016 council follows the pattern of all decision-making in the Church. An important Orthodox theologian, Georges Florovsky, once characterized the Church as the assembly of the faithful and considered that councils, as meetings or assemblies of bishops, mirrored the nature of the Church. The pattern of meeting in councils to make the Church's decisions was first established by the Apostles in Jerusalem and recorded by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. At that time, a controversy arose whether new members of the Church had to become Jews first by undergoing circumcision and by obeying Jewish dietary laws. Sts. Paul and Barnabas travelled to Jerusalem, where they met in a special gathering to make a decision. The decision was made "in council," i.e., in a gathering of Apostles and elders, after considerable debate. The Church's hierarchy made the decision. This became the "conciliar" or "synodal" pattern for future decision-making in the Church.

Those who made the decision were conscious of being in agreement with the whole of the Church and the Holy Spirit of God. As St. Luke records, the letter announcing the Council of Jerusalem's decision stated, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us..." (Acts 15:28). This would also be a model for other councils, whose members believed themselves guided by the Holy Spirit; and who the Church itself believed were guided by the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox Church continues to follow this conciliar pattern of decision-making. Meetings of holy synods, which are led by primates, make decisions, administer and guide each of the self-governing churches. Historically, there were also circumstances under which primates from several churches met in councils to address specific problems. In distinction to the regular meetings of holy synods in administering churches and councils addressing particular issues, ecumenical councils are understood as charismatic events. Such councils are inspired by the Holy Spirit to teach and guide the whole Church for all times. The assembly of all believers under that same inspiration receives them as universally teaching and guiding.

Modern scholars often identify these councils by the location of their meeting. The Orthodox Church recognizes them as the following: Nicaea 1 (325); Constantinople 1 (381); Ephesos (431); Chalcedon (451); Constantinople 2 (553); Constantinople 3 (680–681), and the meeting of bishops called the "Council in Trullo" (691–692), because its assembly took place under the dome (τροῦλλος) of

the imperial palace, is viewed as an extension of the Sixth Ecumenical Council); and Nicaea 2 (787). Although the Church recognizes these seven as ecumenical, there were subsequent councils that also affected the entire Church, where hierarchs met to address specific problems, but which are not called “ecumenical” (except by some). Such councils include: the First and Second Council (861), Holy Wisdom (879–880), the councils associated with the Hesychast controversy (1341–1351), Iasi (1642), the Great Council at Constantinople (1872), and others. The Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923 that met in Constantinople had a great effect on the Church, especially regarding the adoption by certain Orthodox churches of a reformed calendar, but this meeting of hierarchs did not consider itself a council and is not generally recognized as such. Although certain characteristics are sometimes associated with ecumenical councils—such as representative character, large numbers of bishops attending, and recognition by an emperor or state authority as “ecumenical”—such criteria are not regarded as determining their ecumenicity or universal expression of the Truth. In this manner, no ecumenical council can be planned in advance, but rather becomes accepted or received as such by the whole Church, which includes all the baptized and chrismated, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In modern history, especially beginning in the nineteenth century with the development of nation states in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church has given the appearance of being a federation or collection of national churches rather than the one universal Church. The problem is certainly not the use of different languages to proclaim the Gospel, but the division of church administration according to ethnic association and substitution of national or cultural identity for the Gospel. The problem may be succinctly summarized as the “infiltration of nationalism into the bosom of the Orthodox Church.” The theological problem is a form of secularization, the precedence of secular values as a substitute for religion. Historically, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has consistently safeguarded the Church’s universal nature in the face of such secular values. The patriarchate fulfills its longstanding role as a center of Orthodox unity on the basis of its historic primacy in the Orthodox Church—leading and coordinating to bring together, but not acting in a unilateral manner—a primacy of honor (πρεσβεία τιμῆς) within the context of making decisions in council.

In his March letter that convoked the meeting of the Holy and Great Council, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew affirms a truth proclaimed in the Creed: “The foremost and most important goal of this Pan-Orthodox Council shall be to teach that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church...” The intention expressed in the patriarch’s letter is for the primates of

the Orthodox churches to manifest this teaching about the Church's nature by working together in a general council to make decisions on a global level.

With the council's agenda focused on subjects such as marriage, fasting, administration, relations with other Christians and the life of Orthodox outside of traditionally Orthodox countries in the so-called diaspora, its decisions will concentrate on the Church's internal life. His All-Holiness states, "It was deemed necessary that the Orthodox Church should first settle internal matters before speaking to or addressing the world, which is still considered her obligation." For each one of these areas, the Pan-Orthodox preparatory bodies drafted agreed statements in advance to express a unified approach and resolution of issues "conveyed in one voice and one heart."

In turning to the future, His All-Holiness's letter ends with expressing the hope that the Holy and Great Council will in fact be the first of closer and regular common meetings of the self-governing churches; and that decision-making on a global scale during the planned council and those that follow will manifest to the world that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Parish Life in Pictures

In May, Karoly and Mary Diane David celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary. May God grant them many more blessed years together!



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Holy & Great Council: <http://www.orthodoxcouncil.org>

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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, 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, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Rdr. Nectaros and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, for the newly departed servants of God Timothy Loya and Peter Tatsis, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)