

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2021
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY FATHERS
OF THE 7TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

Commemoration of the Seventh Ecumenical Council.

This Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Thrasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops. Almost a century before this, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine empire. Excessive religious respect and the ascribed miracles to icons by some members of society, approached the point of worship (due only to God) and idolatry. This instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts. The Iconophiles, on the other-hand, 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 by which icons should be venerated but not worshipped. In answering the Empress' invitation to the Council, Pope Hadrian replied with a letter in which he also held the position of extending veneration to icons but not worship, the last befitting only God.

The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day: "We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, 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 Saviour 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 honour (timitiki proskynisis),

but not of real worship (latreia), 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, venerated in it the reality for which it stands". The Council issued also 22 canons relating to administrative and disciplinary matters, condemning Simony (ordination for payment), the election of bishops by secular authority, and the erecting of mixed monasteries. However, and in spite of the recognition of this Council by the Pope, Charlemagne refused to recognise it not only as Ecumenical but altogether. He disapproved of its decision for venerating the icons, and as a result of his hostility, a synod at Frankfurt in 794 condemned the veneration of icons and rejected the entire Council. And it was only by the end of the 9th century that the Council was recognised in the West but without its rules that were contrary to the established practices of the Roman Church. An Endemousa (Regional) Synod was called in Constantinople in 843. Under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the St. Sophia's Cathedral. Monks and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy".

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: Four stikhera of the resurrection in tone 7 (spiral bound vespers book), followed by five stikhera for the Fathers

Fathers, tone 6:

The seven honorable councils of the Fathers, held at various times, were brought together under one canon in good order by Patriarch Germanus the New. He established and recorded their teachings; he also presented these Fathers to the Lord as watchful intercessors for our salvation// and as fellow-shepherds of the fold.

The book of the Law instructed the sons of Israel
that the seventh day was to be honored,
and they devoted themselves to a shadow and reverenced it.
But, O Fathers, who came together in the Seventh Council,
at the behest of God,
Who fashioned the universe in six days and blessed the seventh
day, //
you have made the seventh more honorable by laying down a
definition of the Faith.

You have enabled all men, O thrice-blessed Fathers,
to come to the knowledge of the Trinity
as the Cause of the world's generation;
for by your mystical reasoning
you established three and four Councils,
and you appeared as champions of Orthodoxy,
for you showed that, while there are four elements, //
it is the Trinity Who created them and made the world.

It would have been enough for Elijah the Prophet
to have bent down only once to give life to the dead son of the
woman;
but he knelt and bent seven times.
And in his foresight he prophesied your gathering,
by which you breathed life into the slaying of God the Word, //
by putting to death Arius and his profane companions.

In your wisdom, O venerable Fathers,
you mended the garment of Christ rent by howling dogs;
for you could not bear looking upon the nakedness of his body,
but as Shem and Japheth of old who hid their father's nakedness,
you put to shame that slayer of his father, the wretched Arius, //
and those who foolishly follow his teachings.

Glory..., Fathers, tone 6:

Today let us praise the mystical trumpets of the Spirit,
the God-bearing Fathers,

who stand in the midst of the Church, singing true theology,
praising the changeless Trinity.
They laid low the errors of Arius and upheld the Orthodox Faith. //
They always entreat the Lord to have mercy on our souls.

***NOW AND EVER... the Dogmatikon in tone 7 (spiral
bound vespers book)***

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

The reading from the book of Genesis.

And Abram, having heard that Lot his nephew had been taken
captive, numbered his own home-born servants three hundred and
eighteen, and pursued after them to Dan. And he fell upon them at
night, he and his servants who were with him, and he smote them
and pursued them as far as Chobal, which is on the left of
Damascus. And he recovered Lot his nephew, and all his
possessions, and the women and the people. And the king of
Sodom went out to meet him after he returned from the slaughter of
Chodollogomor, and the kings with him, to the valley of Saby; this
was the king's dale. And Melchisedek, king of Salem, brought
forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the Most High God.
And he blessed Abram, and said: Blessed be Abram of the Most
High God, Who made heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most
High God, Who delivered your enemies into your power.

Genesis, (14:14-20)

The reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Thus said Moses to the sons of Israel: Behold, God has delivered
the land before you; go in and inherit the land which I swore to
your fathers Abraham and Issac and Jacob, to give it to them and to
their seed after them. And I spoke to you at that time, saying: I
shall not be able by myself to bear you. The Lord your God has
multiplied you, and behold, you are today as the stars of heaven in
multitude. The Lord God of your fathers add to you a thousandfold
more than you are, and bless you as He has spoken to you. So I
took of you wise and understanding and prudent men, and I set
them to rule over you as rulers of thousands, and rulers of
hundreds, and rulers of tens, and instructors for your judges. And I
commanded your judges at that time, saying: Hear causes between

your brethren, and judge justly between a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. You shall not have respect to persons in judgment, you shall judge small and great equally; you shall not shrink from before the person of a man, for the judgment is God's. **Deuteronomy, (1:8-11, 15-17)**

The Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Thus said Moses to the sons of Israel: Behold, the heaven, and the Heaven of heaven, belong to the Lord your God, the earth and all things that are therein. Yet the Lord chose your fathers to love them, and above all nations, as at this day He chose you out of their seed after them. Therefore you shall circumcise the hardness of your heart, and you shall not harden your neck. For the Lord our God, He is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great, and strong, and terrible God, Who does not respect persons, nor will He by any means accept a bribe; executing judgment for the stranger and orphan and widow, and He loves the stranger to give him food and raiment. You shall fear the Lord your God, and serve Him, and shall swear by His Name. He is your boast, and He is your God, Who has wrought for you these great and glorious things, which your eyes have seen. **Deuteronomy, (10:14-21)**

APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the resurrection in tone 7 (spiral bound vespers book)

GLORY...for the Fathers, tone 4:

Today we, the Orthodox, celebrate the annual memory of the God-bearing Fathers who assembled in Nicea. They laid low the godless doctrines of Arius, driving him from the unity of the Catholic Church, and teaching us how to confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God.

They expressed this clearly in the Symbol of Faith, and we follow their divine doctrines, believing in and serving the Son with the Father and the all-Holy Spirit,// the consubstantial Trinity and one Divinity.

NOW AND EVER...the Theotokion of the resurrection in tone 4 (spiral bound vespers book)

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 7

By Your Cross You destroyed death.
To the thief You opened Paradise.
For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy.
And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God,
to proclaim that You are risen,//
granting the world great mercy.

Fathers, tone 8

You are most glorious, O Christ our God!
You have established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth.
Through them You have guided us to the true Faith.//
O greatly compassionate One, glory to You!

Resurrection Dismissal Theotokion, tone 8

For our sake You were born of the Virgin
and endured crucifixion, O Good One, destroying death by death.
Revealing the Resurrection as God, do not despise the work of
Your hand!
Reveal Your love for man, O Merciful One, and accept the
Theotokos praying for us,//
and save the despairing people, O our Savior!

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