

SUNDAY, JUNE 5, 2022
SEVENTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA
COMMEMORATING THE HOLY FATHERS OF
THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
AFTERFEAST OF THE ASCENSION

On the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the holy God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council has been celebrated by the Church of Christ from ancient times. The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, “I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ on earth will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior’s words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor’s sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.

Persecution of Christians ceased during the fourth century, but heresies arose within the Church itself. One of the most pernicious of these heresies was Arianism. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was a man of immense pride and ambition. In denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father, Arius falsely taught that the Savior is not consubstantial with the Father, but is only a created being.

A local Council, convened with Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria presiding, condemned the false teachings of Arius. However, Arius would not submit to the authority of the Church. He wrote to many bishops, denouncing the decrees of the local Council. He spread his false teaching throughout the East, receiving support from certain Eastern bishops.

Investigating these dissensions, the holy emperor Constantine (May 21) consulted Bishop Hosius of Cordova (Aug. 27), who assured him that the heresy of Arius was directed against the most fundamental dogma of Christ’s Church, and so he decided to convene an Ecumenical Council. In the year 325, 318 bishops

representing Christian Churches from various lands gathered together at Nicea.

Among the assembled bishops were many confessors who had suffered during the persecutions, and who bore the marks of torture upon their bodies. Also participating in the Council were several great luminaries of the Church: Saint Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (December 6 and May 9), Saint Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithos (December 12), and others venerated by the Church as holy Fathers.

With Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria came his deacon, Athanasius [who later became Patriarch of Alexandria (May 2 and January 18)]. He is called “the Great,” for he was a zealous champion for the purity of Orthodoxy. In the Sixth Ode of the Canon for today’s Feast, he is referred to as “the thirteenth Apostle.”

The emperor Constantine presided over the sessions of the Council. In his speech, responding to the welcome by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he said, “God has helped me cast down the impious might of the persecutors, but more distressful for me than any blood spilled in battle is for a soldier, is the internal strife in the Church of God, for it is more ruinous.”

Arius, with seventeen bishops among his supporters, remained arrogant, but his teaching was repudiated and he was excommunicated from the Church. In his speech, the holy deacon Athanasius conclusively refuted the blasphemous opinions of Arius. The heresiarch Arius is depicted in iconography sitting on Satan’s knees, or in the mouth of the Beast of the Deep (Rev. 13).

The Fathers of the Council declined to accept a Symbol of Faith (Creed) proposed by the Arians. Instead, they affirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith. Saint Constantine asked the Council to insert into the text of the Symbol of Faith the word “consubstantial,” which he had heard in the speeches of the bishops. The Fathers of the Council unanimously accepted this suggestion.

In the Nicean Creed, the holy Fathers set forth and confirmed the Apostolic teachings about Christ's divine nature. The heresy of Arius was exposed and repudiated as an error of haughty reason. After resolving this chief dogmatic question, the Council also issued Twelve Canons on questions of churchly administration and discipline. Also decided was the date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. By decision of the Council, Holy Pascha should not be celebrated by Christians on the same day with the Jewish Passover, but on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (which occurred on March 22 in 325).

The First Ecumenical Council is also commemorated on May 29.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL *Three stikhera of the resurrection in tone 6 (spiral bound vespers book), followed by three stikhera of the Ascension, and four stikhera for the Holy Fathers.*

ASCENSION, tone 6:

The Lord has ascended into heaven,
that He might send the Comforter to the world.
The heavens prepared His throne, and clouds -- His means of
ascent.

Angels marvel to see a Man high above them.
The Father receives Him Whom He holds, co-eternal, in His
bosom.

The Holy Spirit commands all His Angels:
"Lift up your gates, you princes!"
All you nations, clap your hands://
for Christ has gone up to where He was before!"

The Cherubim were amazed at Your Ascension, O Lord,
beholding You, the God Who sits enthroned upon them,
ascending upon the clouds;
and we glorify You, for Your mercy is good.//
Glory to You!

Beholding Your ascension on the holy mountain,
O Christ, the brightness of the Father's glory,
we hymn the radiant appearance of Your countenance;
we worship Your sufferings,
we honor Your Resurrection,
as we glorify Your glorious Ascension.//
Have mercy on us!

HOLY FATHERS, tone 6:

You were begotten from the Father before the Morning Star,
but Arius taught wrongfully that You were created:
in his ignorance he designated You as a creature,
yet the Fathers of the Council proclaimed You as Son of God, //
co-enthroned with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

O Savior, who has torn Your garment?
Who has challenged the unity of the triune Godhead?
It is Arius, for he denied that You are equal to the Father.
Those who follow him do not believe that God took flesh for our
sake,
but the Fathers of the Council proclaimed You as Son of God, //
co-enthroned with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Arius fell into the abyss of sin,
pretending blindness that he might not see the Light.
By his purpose he became the image of Judas.
But the Council at Nicea proclaimed You as Son of God, //
co-enthroned with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The foolish Arius blasphemed the All-holy Trinity,
dividing the Persons into three different unequal substances,
but the God-bearing Fathers denounced his confusion:
they assembled with the zeal of Elijah,
destroying error with the sword of the Spirit, //
as they were directed by the inspiration of God!

GLORY... tone 6, Holy Fathers:

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 6:

Who will not bless you, O most holy Virgin?
Who will not sing of your most pure childbearing?
The only-begotten Son shone timelessly from the Father,
but from you He was ineffably incarnate.
God by nature, He became Man for our sake,
not divided into two persons but manifest as One in two natures.
Entreat Him, O pure and all-blessed Lady, //
to have mercy on our souls!

THREE 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)

APOSTICHA All stikhera from the Resurrection in tone 6 (spiral bound vespers book)

GLORY... tone 4, Holy Fathers:

Come, all Orthodox Churches,
let us celebrate today in faith and true worship
the yearly commemoration of the divinely-arrayed Fathers
who gathered at Nicea from throughout the world!
There they refuted the godless teaching of Arius,

banishing him from the catholic Church by a decree of the council.
They taught all to confess openly the Son of God,
consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father,
proclaiming this with precision and true worship in the Symbol of
Faith.

Therefore, as we faithfully follow their divine doctrines,
let us worship the Father, the Son, and the most Holy Spirit,//
the consubstantial Trinity in one Godhead!

NOW AND EVER... tone 4, Ascension:

Fulfilling, O Lord, in Your goodness,
the mystery hidden from ages and generations,
You came with Your Disciples to the Mount of Olives,
together with the Mother who bore You, the Maker and Creator of
all;
for it was fitting that she who as a mother had been grieved beyond
all at Your Passion,
should also be filled with exceeding joy at the glory of Your flesh.
In this joy we also partake at Your ascent into heaven, O Master,//
and we glorify Your great mercy that has come upon us.

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 6:

The Angelic Powers were at Your tomb;
the guards became as dead men.
Mary stood by Your grave,
seeking Your most pure body.
You captured hell, not being tempted by it.
You came to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord, Who rose from the dead,//
glory to You.

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!

Ascension, tone 4:

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,
granting joy to Your Disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit.
Through the blessing, they were assured
that You are the Son of God,//
the Redeemer of the world!

Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Church

Rector: Father Michael Anderson

16903 Espola Rd

Poway, CA 92064

Email: powaypadre@stjohnofdamascus.org

Office: 858-674-1931