

**SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT**  
**SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy because it commemorates the restoration of the Holy Icons and the triumph of the Orthodox Faith against the heresy of the Iconoclasts, i.e. those heretics who refused to honor the Holy Icons. For more than a hundred years the Church was disturbed by the evil doctrine of iconoclasm.

The first Emperor to persecute the Church was Leo the Isaurian, and the last was Theophilus, the spouse of Saint Theodora (February 11), who reigned after her husband's death and re-established Orthodoxy in the time of Patriarch Methodios (June 14). Empress Theodora proclaimed publicly that we do not kiss the Icons as a sign of worship, nor do we honor them as "gods," but as images of their prototypes.

In the year 843, on the first Sunday of the Fast, Saint Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael, venerated the Holy Icons together with the clergy and the people. Since that time this event has been commemorated every year because it was definitively determined that we do not worship the Icons, but we honor and glorify all the Saints who are depicted on them. We worship only the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no one else, neither a Saint, nor an Angel.

Originally, the Holy Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today's Liturgy reflect this older usage.

**GREAT VESPERS**

***LORD I CALL** Six stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5 (spiral bound Vespers book), followed by four stikhera of the Triodion*

***Triodion, tone 6:***

O Lord, Whom nothing can contain or grasp,  
from all eternity You shone forth from the Father  
before the morning star.  
The prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit,  
foretold that You would take flesh and assume the form of a  
child,  
from her who is ever-virgin.  
You lived among men;  
You were seen by material creation.  
Through the prayers of the prophets, O compassionate One,  
make us worthy to receive Your light, //  
for we sing praises to Your glorious Resurrection!

The Prophets bore the fruit of eternal life;  
they prepared the way of the Lord.  
By their words they proclaimed to You; by their deeds they  
honored You.  
They would not worship creation instead of You, the Creator.  
As Your Gospel commands, they renounced the world.  
They foretold Your passion by suffering themselves.  
Through their prayers, O Lord, //  
enable us to pass over the battlefield of Lent without sin!

You are infinite in Your divine nature, O Master;  
in these latter days You accepted the limitations of the flesh.  
By assuming our body, You accepted all its weaknesses.

Therefore we make images of Your form;  
we venerate them, having You in mind.  
We fall down before You in love;  
by so doing we follow the tradition of the Apostles,//  
and are given the grace of healing.

Today the Church of Christ receives honorable adornment:  
the holy icons of Christ our Savior, the Theotokos,  
and all the Saints.

The Church exults in their grace.  
We lift them up with joy and gladness.  
We glorify God, the Lover of man,//  
Him Who patiently suffered for our sake.

***GLORY... Triodion in tone 2:***

Grace and truth have shone forth.  
The predictions of old have been clearly fulfilled.  
Behold, the Church adorns herself with the form of  
Christ incarnate.  
The icons of the new creation transcend the adornments  
of the old.  
As the Ark of the Covenant held the presence of God,  
so now the icons reveal the presence of the One we adore.  
By honoring them we will never go astray.  
It is our glory to fall down and worship Christ in the flesh.  
Come, O faithful, venerate His image and cry out://  
“O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance!”

***NOW AND EVER... Dogmatikon in tone 5 (spiral bound Vespers book)***

***APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5 (spiral bound Vespers book)***

***GLORY... Triodion, tone 2:***

Advancing from false doctrine to true faith,

illumined with the light of knowledge,  
let us clap our hands and offer grateful praise to God in song!  
With due honor let us venerate the holy icons of Christ,  
of the all-pure Virgin, and of all the saints,  
depicted on walls or panels or sacred vessels,  
rejecting the godless teaching of the heretics!  
For as Saint Basil says:  
“The honor shown to the image passes to its prototype.”  
By the prayers of Your pure Mother and of all the saints,//  
we beseech You, O Christ our God, to grant us great mercy!  
that He may be bountiful and save our souls!

***NOW AND EVER... Resurrection, tone 2:***

A new miracle surpasses all ancient miracles!  
Who knows of a Mother who gave birth without a man,  
who carried in her arms her Creator?  
This birth is the will of God!  
Since you carried Him as an infant in your arms,  
O most pure one,  
and since you possess motherly boldness before Him,  
do not cease praying for us who honor you,//  
that He may be bountiful and save our souls!

***TROPARIA***

***Resurrection, tone 5***

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,  
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,  
born for our salvation from the Virgin;  
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,  
to endure death,  
and to raise the dead//  
by His glorious Resurrection.

***Sunday of Orthodoxy, tone 2***

We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One;

and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God.  
Of Your own will You were pleased to ascend the Cross in the  
flesh  
and deliver Your creatures from bondage to the Enemy.  
Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to You:  
“You have filled all with joy, O our Savior,//  
by coming to save the world.”

***Resurrection Dismissal Theotokion, tone 2***

All beyond thought, all most glorious,  
are your mysteries, O Theotokos.  
Sealed in purity, preserved in virginity,  
you were revealed to be the true Mother who gave birth to the  
True God.//  
Entreat Him to save our souls.

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