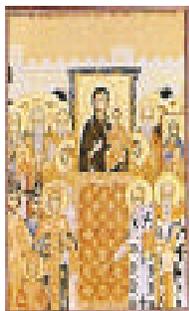


The First Sunday of Great Lent or the Sunday of Orthodoxy



This day the Holy Church commemorates the victory of Orthodoxy over heresies and is why this day is also called the "Sunday of Orthodoxy". The Synaxarion explains that the day celebrates "the restoration of the holy and venerable icons", which happened in first half of the 9th century (in 842) "by the Emperor Michael (the Byzantine Emperor), the holy and blessed Empress Theodora (see page 80) and the Holy Methodius (see page 206), Patriarch of Constantinople". This commemoration was established to celebrate the final victory of the Holy Church over the iconoclastic heresy. In the hymns for this day the Holy Church, glorifying the holy icons, and also its iconodule adherents and inspiring in us the obligation of venerating icons, sings: "A feast of joy and gladness is revealed to us today. For the teachings of the true Faith shines in all their glory, and the Church of Christ is bright with splendor, adorned with the holy icons which now have been restored; and God has granted to the faithful unity of mind." "Now a pious brightness stretches over all, dispersing the flattery of the impious like a cloud, enlightening the hearts of the pious: come let us fall down with pious wisdom before the honorable icons of Christ worshipping in the Orthodox way", "and with due honor let us venerate the holy icons of Christ, of the all pure Virgin and the saints, whether depicted on walls, on wooden panels or on holy vessels, rejecting the impious teaching of the heretics" _). But in this way the Holy Church at the time of victory over the iconoclasts in the struggle against various heresies finally explained and defined in the canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council the Orthodox Christian teaching that is now a celebrated event and is not called the celebration of idolatry but the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It does not mean that after the 10th Century heresies would or could not appear any more; but it means that all following heresies, even though they were numerous and various, find their accusation and refutation in the definitions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

The victory of Orthodoxy in the Greek Church itself was first celebrated on the first Sunday of Great Lent, and thus the basis of the present Triumph of Orthodoxy is historical. Together with these things the Holy Church through the celebration of the present day means to grant great comfort to those who attend. This intention agrees with the rules of faith and piety and the ascetic effort of the fast. It sees in this action the proof of their living communion according to their faith and life, and finds in this the foundation for prayerful petition to God for them. After the end of the liturgy on this day it is necessary to serve the special Rite of Orthodoxy (see below), composed by St. Methodius.

Again the restoration of honoring and venerating the holy and venerable icons was annually prescribed "from that time these holy confessors appointed the annual commemoration of this solemnity, so that we might never again fall

into a similar ignominy" (see the Synaxarion). Christianity and together with it, The Rite of Orthodoxy, passed from Greece to the Russian Church _).

Troparion, tone 2

**We venerate Your immaculate image, gracious Lord,
As we beg You to forgive our transgressions.
For, in the flesh, Christ our God,
You voluntarily ascended the cross
In order to release Your creatures from enslavement by their Enemy.
Gratefully, then, we cry out to You, our Savior:
'You filled all things with joy when You came to save the world!'**

(tr.: Monk James Silver)

Kontakion, tone 8

**The indefinable Word of the Father was defined
when He became incarnate of you, O Theotokos.
And he reformed the image which had been stained at the beginning
when He joined it to His divine beauty.
And we profess this means of our salvation
As we portray it in our words and deeds.**

(tr.: Monk James Silver)

Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. **Epistle:** Heb. 11:24-26; 12:2; sel. 329.
Gospel: Jn. 1:43-51; sel. 5.

In agreement with the definition of the Most Holy Synod of December 18, 1887 - January, 8, 1888, No. 2717: 1) in all churches and monasteries during the first week of the Holy Forty Day Fast special collection plates with the proclamation for offerings for missions are placed in the vestibule; 2) on the Sunday of Orthodoxy in all churches and monasteries a **plate collection** will be taken for the spreading of Christianity in the Empire, for this reason the plates should have the inscriptions that were sent out applied to them, which later can also be applied to the already existing collection and enclosed in the churches under the decree (ukase) of the Most Holy Synod of August 28, 1865 to the circles for gathering offerings on this subject; 3) on the Sunday of Orthodoxy the priests in their dismissal announcements should include the **teaching about missions**, printed in the "Church News" (Tserkovniya Vedomosti), issued by the Most Holy Synod, in 1888 (see _ 4, 5 and 6) and 1889 (see encl. for _ 5) or included in their sample sermons; 4) the collected offerings by the clergy and the wardens of churches should be counted and sent during Great Lent to the local dean, and these to the local Committee of the Missions Society who, having added the collected money to the sums of the reserve capital, reports that data to the Council of the Orthodox Mission Society.

At the present time **the Triumph of Orthodoxy** is done in cathedral churches, after the reading of the Hours or before the end of the liturgy, in the

middle of the temple before the icons of the Savior and the Mother of God, laying on the analogion. After the usual beginning read Ps. 74: "We shall confess You, O God" in which the psalmsinger glorifies the Lord for wonders and convinces enemies not to be proud, because the power and the might are not in the people, but in God, and He will destroy the impious. Then is intoned the Great Litany in which petitions to God Who oversees the Holy Church to keep her safe and invincible from heresies and superstitions, to reunite to her those who have fallen away, and to protect and keep the faithful in Orthodoxy. After "God is the Lord" the Epistle is read (Rom. 16:17-20), in which Apostle Paul convinces Christians to guard against creating divisions and offenses and to avoid them, and the Gospel (Mt. 18:10-18) in which is recalled the divine authority of the Church to bind and decide. In the Augmented Litany, after these readings, the Holy Church asks the Lord to convert all apostates to the truth, to convert those adverse to Thy Word with all those faithful to the true faith and piety, for the termination of hatred, enmity and other iniquities and the accession of true love in all our hearts. Then in the following prayer the Holy Church again prays for the strengthening of the faithful in the right belief, for the enlightenment of the apostate, for granting zealotness to the shepherds of the Church, for the conversion of unbelievers and the opening of the Gospel by the spirit in care for their conversion. After the prayer the Protodeacon exclaims: "Who is so great a God" (3 times), and invites all the faithful to glorify God as the originator of all blessings, while yet in paradise who laid the foundation of the Church and granted us the saving revelation, following which we believe "in one God, the Father almighty, and so forth, and all continue to read the Symbol of Faith. After this he proclaims: "This is the Apostolic Faith! This is the Faith of our Fathers! This is the Orthodox Faith! This Faith has confirmed the universe! ...". Further the Protodeacon indicates what guides the Orthodox during the detailed revelation of the faith: "Furthermore, we receive and confirm the Councils of the Holy Fathers, and their traditions and writings, which are agreeable to Divine Revelation.... As therefore we bless and praise those who have submitted their reason to the obedience of Divine Revelation and have contended for it; so following the Sacred Scriptures, and holding the traditions of the primitive Church, we reject and anathematize all those who oppose His truth, if while awaiting their conversion and repentance, they refuse to repent to the Lord." Then the anathema is proclaimed: to those who deny the existence of God and His Providence, the theology of the essence of God and His properties, equal in essence and equal in honor of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit to God the Father; to those who reject the necessity of the coming to earth, suffering and death of the Son God for the salvation of man; to those who do not accept the grace of redemption; to those who reject the ever virginity of the Most Holy Theotokos; to those who do not believe that the Holy Spirit acted through prophets and apostles and now abides in the hearts of true Christians and leads them to every truth; to those who deny the immortality of souls, the end of the ages, the judgment and eternal decision according to one's deeds; to those who sweep away the sacraments; to those who reject the councils and their traditions; to state criminals

and traitors and, finally, to those who sweep aside and abuse the holy icons _). In all there are 12 anathemas. After each exclamation of the Protodeacon, the cathedral persons who have the right to bind and decide cry out: "anathema" three times 4). After the cutting off of the false thinkers from communion, the Holy Church commemorates on a broader scale everyone in Orthodoxy who practiced asceticism by word, writing and life, and proclaims Eternal Memory for them, not naming all of them by name. In particular the Eternal Memory is exclaimed: to the Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine and Helen, Theodosius the Great and Theodosius the Younger, Justinian and to all other Greek Emperors and Empresses; to the Equal-to-the-Apostles Vladimir and Olga and to all rightly believing Russian tsars and princes; to the most pious Sovereign Emperors and Empresses, who all are commemorated by name; to the patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops and bishops; and finally, to those who have fallen in various battles in defense of the faith and fatherland and for all Orthodox Christians deceased in the true faith and piety. Together with these the Holy Church praises those who contend ascetically, who through faith and good works are preparing themselves for eternal blessedness, who establish Orthodoxy on earth. Therefore she proclaims long life and prosperity first of all to the zealous adherents of Christian piety, to the defender and the protector of the Church of Christ, the Sovereign Emperor, then to the Sovereign Empress, to the Heir to the Throne and to all the Reigning House; to the Most holy Synod; to the eastern patriarchs and local bishops; to the metropolitans, archbishops, bishops and all consecrated clergy; to the government senate, to the military leaders, civil leaders, to the Christ-loving military and all Orthodox Christians, who the rightly hold on to the holy faith and obey the Christian Church. The choir, after each exclamation of the deacon, repeats three times: "Many Years". After this the Protodeacon intones the petition: "Glorify all these, O Holy Trinity, and confirm them" which constitutes the reiteration and conclusion of the Rite of Orthodoxy. The prayer on behalf of the Church petitions the Lord for the faithful, " that He glorify them and confirm them in the Right Faith even to the end: and convert the corrupters and blasphemers of the Orthodox Faith and the Church of Christ, who are disobedient to her, that they may come to the knowledge of Thine eternal truth". After the petition of the Protodeacon, the Bishop exclaims: "Glory to Thee, O God our Benefactor, unto ages of ages." And the singers sing: "we praise Thee, O God". During this singing the bishop and all the clergy kiss the holy icons on the analogions, and then is the dismissal.

Being majestic and festive in its external appearance, the Rite of Orthodoxy is great and important even in its internal meaning. This religious rite is a solemn manifestation of that Divine authority which was bestowed to the Church by our Lord Jesus Christ. The solemn appearance of that dread all-world judgment seat which He never will do alone is together with all the glorious judgment seats of the universe. The solemn punishment is for those foreknown disturbers of piety, who by their persistence in error and false faith, have drawn upon themselves the righteous judgment of the church. The solemn award to those good and obedient children of the Holy Church who not only abide in Orthodoxy and obedience to the

voice of their mother, but by word and deed contribute to the success of the spread and establishment of the holy faith and piety. Such a religious rite for all and for everyone clearly shows that our faith, not looking at multifarious works of the devil and enemies of the heavenly truth supervised by him, has not hesitated, but, having overcome all heresies, having exposed and struck down all errors that threatened her, is kept by her in all her heavenly purity and inviolability, and abides in the unchanged apostolic and stricter Orthodox faith. Together with this, the religious rite done on the present day inspires us all as to the terrible and dangerous wound of heresies and schisms. As it is through the terribly thoughtless enthusiasm for every wind of teaching and cunning of falsifying traps that this lie would creep into our mind and heart. As this is dangerous, one should observe the unity of faith and love with the Holy Orthodox Church which is the "pillar and foundation of truth" and which includes an inexhaustible treasury of the gifts of God necessary for our cleansing, sanctification and salvation. Doing such a multi-significant religious rite every year, the Holy Church thus is vigilantly solicitous about our salvation; her motherly love protects us from heretical temptations and traps; gently cares about the defense of our holy faith as the first and only means of our salvation granted to us by Jesus Christ; in her is the primal purity and uprightness. All this, raising in us deep feelings of gratitude to the Holy Church as our true mother, at the same time inspires us to firmly uphold our Holy Orthodox Church, to confess her teaching without change and to carry out, with all our power, all her saving canons and rules for us, to carefully guard against hearing flattering words from those liars, who are burned by their advice, who create conflicts and contentions that "they are not afraid to speak evil of glories" and, "for when they speak vanities of emptiness", "while they promise them freedom, they themselves are slaves of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:10, 18, 19).

"At the meal let us eat cooking with olive oil, except fish; if it is amenable, let us drink two cups of wine established in glory to God; also in the evening let us drink two cups".

After the **Little Compline** on weeks of the Holy Forty Day Fast **the dismissal** is the usual "little" one, as the prayer "O Greatly Merciful Master" is read only in Great Compline with great prostrations, but the Typicon (Ustav) prescribes for the Great Compline without prostrations: "on all Fridays in the fast the priest does the little dismissal in Compline". (Order for Friday of the First Week of Great Lent).

_) In the Trinity - St. Sergius Laura from of old on the Saturday before the Sunday of Orthodoxy, before the All-night Vigil, all ancient icons, crosses, Gospels, wooden arks with particles of the holy relics and the vessels of the Ven. Sergius and Nikon, which they used while serving the divine liturgy, found in it, will be carried from Laura vestries to the Trinity Cathedral. All the above named relics are placed before the local icons on the special places built for this purpose,

on both sides of the Royal Doors, for all the length of the iconostasis where it remains until the end of the liturgy on the following day. During the All-night Vigil which is done with a festal Litya in the narthex of the cathedral, after the "Praise the name of the Lord" three Magnifications are sung before these holy things: to "the Image of the Lord", to the Theotokos and to all the Saints. After the reading of the Gospel the people approach for the veneration and kissing of the relics.

_) Although this rite, in compliance with the circumstances of time, in the space of several centuries also underwent changes, but this rite always specified: 1) to carry the icons for veneration and kissing to the middle of the temple or outside of it if the rite was not done in the temple; 2) to raise up thanksgiving to God for the victory of the Church over heresies; 3) to express obedience to the Church and to confess the true faith; 4) to pronounce anathemas to the heretics; 5) to proclaim the Many Years to the living defenders and promoters of Church, and to exclaim the Eternal Memory to those who have died. Therefore the Rite of Orthodoxy, always consisted, and now consists of the prayerful singing and the exclamation of the Synodikon, concluding with the pronouncing of anathemas to the heretics, the singing of Eternal Memory for the faithful dead children of the Church and intoning of the Many Years to the true believers.

_) In the 17th Century Russian dissenters living in the reign of Alexis Michaelovich and those living in the days of Peter the Great were anathematized. These were the rebels and traitors: Gregory Otrepiev, Timothy Akundinov (the son of a strelets (musketeer), who was posing as the son of Tsar Basil Shuisky), Stenka Razin, and Ivan Mazepa, who accepted the learning, which penetrated from Western countries and were opposed to the Orthodox faith. Today these anathematizations are not proclaimed.

4) The terrible word anathema, by which the Holy Church punishes those who betray the right belief, means excommunication and exile from the society of believers, cutting off from the spiritual and mystical body of Christ, deprivation of all spiritual rights which the faithful children of the Church are used to. To be cut off from the Church means to lose everything that the Heavenly Father through the incarnation of His Only-begotten Son and that were granted to us through faith in Him, to lose the grace of baptism and adoption by God the Father, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which we were signed in the sacrament of Chrismation; to lose the most heavenly meal of the body and blood of the Son of God, without which there is not nor can there be eternal life for us; to lose the favor of the Father of Heaven, even the very right to pray to Him and to ask Him for anything; to lose hope itself for eternal life, to lose the hope of eternal salvation itself, beforehand to be confident in its everlasting destruction (Full Collection of the Sermons of Demetrius, Archbishop of Chersonese, vol. 4, page 250 ff.). Such a terrible penalty for apostates from the right belief is based on the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"if he refuses even to hear the Church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Mt. 18:15-17). The Apostles, following the sayings of the Lord, put away unworthy people from the society of the faithful (see 1 Cor. 5:13; 1 Tim. 1:20), using excommunication, as the last measure of severity for the explanation of the guilty, when all means for their correction were unsuccessful and when the advantage of an excommunication both for the excommunicated and for the Church was expected (1 Cor. 6:5). The Holy Church, having established to annually do the Rite of Orthodoxy in which the anathema to the heretics is proclaimed, has in view to show them the depth of the evil to which their sophism has thrown them. To be tolerated in the bosom of the Church, they could ease their conscience that their errors do not in themselves exclude the inevitable destruction for their souls, that the image of their ideas can be still combined with spirit of the Gospel, that they, at least, have not so far avoided the general way in order that they honor already those who have completely strayed. And here the Holy Church, using the shame of those who strayed, takes away from them the attraction of the special wisdom from the errors, by which they are deceived. Struck by the name of God, she takes away their hope for security. Opposing the established confession of the true faith through the sophism of individuals exposes the insignificance of the latter. In such a way the anathema proclaimed by the Holy Church is its last warning voice for those who have strayed. Together with these the Holy Church by its proclamation of the anathema to the heretics has in view a warning to its faithful children from the fall. Its thousand-year experience witnesses that no wound is spread so quickly, is so opposed to all efforts of healing such as free thought, self-will and depravity. That no kind of afflictions, no kind of persecution have torn away so many souls from the faith in Christ and have ruined it for ages as heresies and schisms. Therefore even its motherly love motivates the Holy Church against such danger, to raise its voice of judgment and foreboding in order to warn all about threatening perdition. By such action of highest love the church judgment now made, it is possible to see also from this, that before, rather than to start from the decision of its court, the Holy Church not one-sidedly and fervently prays that the Lord, according to His mercy without end, showed His love even to those who strayed from the true faith. In order that the love without end of God does not allow the devil and His fierce enemies to blind to the end and to destroy forever. In order that the grace of the All Holy Spirit abound where hardness and persistence abound, their reason became enlightened in the knowledge of truth, their heart burned with the warmth of love, their hardened hearts were broken by the fear of the judgment of God, and turned him from his error and he entered into the saving rampart of the Church of God. Already after this act of mercy the Holy Church with bitter sorrow proclaims not a curse like some people wrongly understand, but a cutting off the unfortunate from the society of the faithful, who by their false belief and stubbornness, by their words cut themselves off from this sacred society. In such a way the Holy Church now does not show excessive strictness, but the necessary judgment of truth, made together with love and mercy for her enemies who caused her countless grief. She did not seek their destruction,

but their conversion and salvation. Eternal damnation does not betray them, but excommunication offers them forgiveness and mercy if they will understand and repent.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 511-515.
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