

6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—Tone 5

Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils. Hieromartyr Athenogenes, Bishop of Heracleopolis

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Resurrectional Troparion, 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.

Troparion, Tone 8 (Holy Fathers)

Most glorious art Thou, O Christ our God! Thou hast established the Holy Fathers as lights on the earth! Through them Thou hast guided us to the true faith! O greatly Compassionate One, glory to Thee!

Resurrectional Kontakion, Tone 5

Thou didst descend into hell, O my Savior, shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator, and destroying the sting of death. Thou hast delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man,// and we cry to Thee: “O Lord, save us!”

Kontakion, Tone 8 (Fathers)

The Apostles’ preaching and the Fathers’ doctrines have established one Faith for the Church. Adorned with the robe of truth, woven from heavenly theology, it defines and glorifies the great mystery of Orthodoxy.

Kontakion, Tone 6 (Theotokos)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians, Constant Advocate before the Creator; despise not the entreating cries of us sinners, but in your goodness come speedily to help us who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us, O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you.

THE EPISTLE READING

Deacon: Let us attend!

Priest: Peace be unto all!

Reader: And to your spirit!

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Prokeimenon in the 5th Tone. Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this generation forever.

Choir: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this generation forever.

Reader: Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly!

Choir: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us and preserve us from this generation forever.

Reader: And in the 4th Tone. Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever.

Choir: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans.

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Brothers and sisters in Christ, ⁶having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷if service, in proportion to our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Never flag in zeal; be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in your hope, be patient in

tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [(110) Romans 12:6-14 (RSV)]

⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.

⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents. ¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood.

¹³Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp and bear the abuse He endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come. ¹⁵Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His Name. ¹⁶Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. [(334) Hebrews 13:7-16 (RSV)]

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Priest: Peace be unto you, reader.

Reader: And to your spirit. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, in the 5th Tone. I will sing of Thy mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim Thy truth from generation to generation.

Choir: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Reader: Thou hast said: “Mercy will be established forever, and My truth will be prepared in the heavens!”

Choir: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Reader: And in the 1st Tone. The Lord, the God of gods, speaks and summons the earth from rising of the sun to its setting.

Choir: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

THE GOSPEL READING

¹And getting into a boat Jesus [He] crossed over and came to His own city. ²And behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, ***“Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.”*** ³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” ⁴But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ***“Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins”***—He then said to the paralytic—***“Rise, take up your bed and go home.”*** ⁷And he rose and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men. [(29) Matthew 9:1-8 (RSV)]

^{17:1}When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, ***“Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son that the Son may glorify Thee, ²since Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. ³And this is eternal life, that they know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. ⁴I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; ⁵and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. ⁶I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. ⁷Now they know that everything that Thou hast given Me is from Thee; ⁸for I have given them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from Thee; and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. ⁹I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine; ¹⁰all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name, which Thou hast given Me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture***

might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” [(56) John 17:1-13 (RSV)]

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the highest. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the just! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!



Today we commemorate: The Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils. In the Ninth Article of the Nicea-Constantinople Symbol of Faith proclaimed by the holy Fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, we confess our faith in “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.” By virtue of the catholic nature of the Church, an Ecumenical Council is the Church’s supreme authority, and possesses the competence to resolve major questions of church life. An Ecumenical Council is comprised of archpastors and pastors of the Church, and representatives of all the local Churches, from every land of the “oikumene” (i.e. from all the whole inhabited world).

The Sixth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople III) (January 23) met during the years 680-681, to fight the Monothelite heresy, under the emperor Constantine Pogonatos.

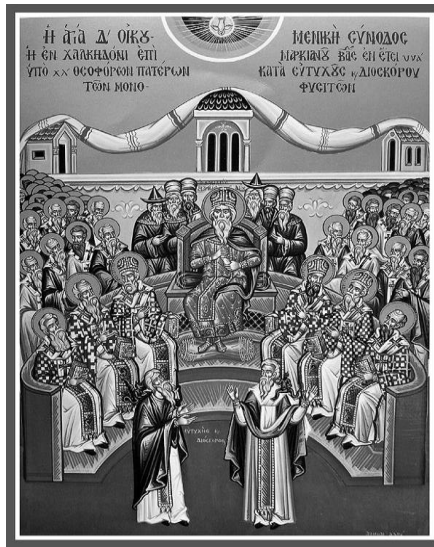
The Church venerates the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils because Christ has established them as “lights upon the earth,” guiding us to the true Faith. “Adorned with the robe of truth,” the doctrine of the Fathers, based upon the preaching of the Apostles, has established one faith for the Church. The Ecumenical Councils, are the highest authority in the Church. Such Councils, guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and accepted by the Church, are infallible.

The Orthodox Church’s conciliar definitions of dogma have the highest authority, and such definitions always begin with the Apostolic formula: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” (Acts 15: 28).

The Ecumenical Councils were always convened for a specific reason: to combat false opinions and heresies, and to clarify the Orthodox Church's teaching. But the Holy Spirit has thus seen fit, that the dogmas, the truths of faith, immutable in their content and scope, constantly and consequently are revealed by the conciliar mind of the Church, and are given precision by the holy Fathers within theological concepts and terms in exactly such measure as is needed by the Church itself for its economy of salvation. The Church, in expounding its dogmas, is dealing with the concerns of a given historical moment, "not revealing everything in haste and thoughtlessly, nor indeed, ultimately hiding something" (St Gregory the Theologian).

A brief summary of the dogmatic theology of the First Six Ecumenical Councils is formulated and contained in the First Canon of the Council of Trullo (also known as Quinisext), held in the year 692. The 318 Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council are spoken of in this Canon I of Trullo as having: "with unanimity of faith revealed and declared to us the consubstantiality of the three Persons of the Divine nature and, ... instructing the faithful to adore the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with one worship, they cast down and dispelled the false teaching about different degrees of Divinity."

The 170 Holy Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council "taught that we ought to confess two natural volitions, or two wills [trans. note: one divine, and the other human], and two natural operations (energies) in Him Who was incarnate for our salvation, Jesus Christ, our true God."



The saint we commemorate today: Hieromartyr Athenogenes and his Ten Disciples suffered for Christ during the persecution of Christians in the city of Sebastea in Cappadocia. The governor Philomachos arranged a large festival in honor of the pagan gods and called upon the citizens of Sebastea to offer sacrifice to the idols. Most of the inhabitants of Sebastea were Christians, and refused to participate in the impious celebration. Soldiers were ordered to kill those who resisted, and so many Christians received a martyr's crown.

It came to the governor's attention that Christianity was spreading because of the grace-filled preaching of Bishop Athenogenes. Soldiers were ordered to find the Elder and arrest him. Bishop Athenogenes and ten of his disciples lived in a small monastery not far from the city. The soldiers did not find the bishop there, so they arrested his disciples. The governor ordered that they be bound with chains and thrown into prison.

Saint Athenogenes was arrested when he came to Sebastea to inform the judge that those who had been jailed were innocent. While in prison, Saint Athenogenes encouraged his spiritual children for their impending struggle. Led forth to trial, all the holy martyrs confessed themselves Christians and refused to offer sacrifice to idols.

After undergoing fierce tortures, the disciples of the holy bishop were beheaded. After the execution of the disciples, the executioners were ordered to torture the bishop. Strengthened by the Lord, Saint Athenogenes underwent the tortures with dignity. His only request was that he be executed in the monastery.

Taken to his own monastery, the saint gave thanks to God, and he rejoiced in the sufferings that he had undergone for Him. Saint Athenogenes asked that the Lord would forgive the sins of all those who would remember both him and his disciples.

The Lord granted the saint to hear His Voice before death, announcing the promise given to the penitent thief: “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” The hieromartyr willingly bent his neck beneath the sword.

