

## 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—Tone 5

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

#### Vespers

At "Lord, I Call", sing the stichera (4) of the Resurrection in Tone 5.

Then the following stichera (3) in Tone 6 for the Ecumenical Fathers:

You were begotten from the Father before the Morning Star, but Arius taught wrongly that You were created. In his ignorance he designated You as a creature, yet the Fathers of the Council in Nicea, O Lord, proclaimed that You are the Son of God, coenthroned with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

O honored Fathers, you skillfully stitched together the garment of Christ, which had been divided and torn apart by barking dogs. You found it unbearable to see His nakedness, as, of old, Shem and Japheth could not bear to see the nakedness of their father. You put to shame the wretchedness of Arius and those who agreed with him, and who professed the madness that bears his name.

The Macedónians and Nestórians, the Eutýchians and Dióscorenes, the Appolinárians, Sabéllians, and Séverans, who were revealed as oppressive wolves in sheep's skins, you, as true shepherds, drove far away from the Savior's flock, having stripped the thrice-wretched ones of their sheep's skins. Therefore, we call you blessed, O holy Fathers.

After "Glory..." in Tone 6 (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.

**After “Now and ever...” sing the Dogmatic in Tone 5.**

In the Red Sea of old, a type of Virgin Bride was prefigured. There Moses divided the waters; here Gabriel assisted in the miracle. There Israel crossed the sea without getting wet; here a Virgin gave birth to Christ without seed. After Israel's passage, the sea remained impassable; after Emmanuel's birth, the Virgin remained a Virgin. O ever-existing God, Who appeared as Man, // O Lord, have mercy on us!

**At the Aposticha, sing the verses of the Resurrection in Tone 5.**

**After "Glory..." in Tone 4 (Fathers)**

Today we celebrate the annual memorial 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.

**After “Now and ever...” the Resurrectional Theotokion in Tone 4**

Look on the entreaties of your servants, O Blameless One! Stop all of the terrible attacks against us, freeing us from ev'ry affliction, for we have only you as our sure and firm anchor! Do not let us be put to shame, O Lady, for we call on you for our intercession! Hasten to pray for those who call in faith: “Rejoice, O Lady, Help of all:// the Joy, Shelter and Salvation of our souls!”

**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!

## Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos



**Today we commemorate: The Commemoration of 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 Orthodox Church acknowledges Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils: The First Ecumenical Council (Nicea I) (May 29, and also on seventh Sunday after Pascha) was convened in the year 325 against the heresy of Arius, in the city of Nicea in Bithynia under St. Constantine the Great, Equal of the Apostles.

The Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople I) (May 22) was convened in the year 381 against the heresy of Macedonias, by the emperor Theodosius the Great.

The Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus) (September 9) was convened in the year 431 against the heresy of Nestorius, in the city of Ephesus by the emperor Theodosius the Younger.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council (Chalcedon) (July 16) was convened in the year 451, against the Monophysite heresy, in the city of Chalcedon under the emperor Marcian.

The Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II) (July 25) "Concerning the Three Chapters," was convened in the year 553, under the emperor Justinian the Great.

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 fact that the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea II) is not commemorated today testifies to the antiquity of today's celebration. The Seventh Council, commemorated on the Sunday nearest to October 11, was convened at Nicaea in the year 787 against the Iconoclast heresy, under the emperor Constantine and his mother Irene.

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).