

Prayers for the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Today let us celebrate the God-bearing Fathers, the mystical spokesmen of the Spirit, who sang a hymn of unity in the midst of the Church. They proclaimed the one Essence of the divine Trinity. They defended Orthodoxy before Arius, and they ceaselessly intercede before God that He take pity on our souls!" (Vespers)

O blessed Fathers, you have become torches shining with the light of truth for the whole world, consuming the blasphemies of heretical babbling, extinguishing the inflamed turbulence of impious doctrine. O Shepherds of Christ, intercede for our salvation. (Orthros)



Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council



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Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM
May 24, 2020

Antiphon (Feast)

- 1: Great is the Lord and wholly to be praised in the city of our God, on His holy mountain
O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.
- 2: Mount Zion, the recesses of the North, is the City of the Great King.
O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.
- 3: God is with her castles: renowned is He as a stronghold.
O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: God ascended amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid trumpet blasts.
People: **O Son of God Who gloriously ascended into heaven, save us who sing to You: Alleluia.**

Resurrectional Troparion (Tone 6)

The angelic powers were around Your tomb, and the guards became as dead, and Mary stood at the tomb, seeking Your spotless body; Then You despoiled Hades without being tried by it, and You met the Virgin O Bestower of life. O Lord, who rose from the dead, glory to You!

Troparion of the Ascension (Tone 4)

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through Your blessing they were confirmed in their belief that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Troparion of the Fathers (Tone 8)

O Christ our God, You are infinitely glorified, for You established our Fathers as radiant stars on earth: You led us to the true faith through them. O Most Merciful One, glory to You!

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1, Pg. 15)

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity, and in falling asleep, you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life, being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion (Tone 4)

After fulfilling for us Your plan of redemption and joining the things of earth with those of heaven, O Christ our God, You gloriously ascended without abandoning us, but remained with us forever and reassured all who love You by telling them: “Behold, I am with you: no one has power against you.”

Some scholars believe that this verse is the Evangelist’s commentary on Christ’s prayer, an aside in the text, since it refers to the Lord in the third person. There were no quotation marks, punctuation or even paragraphs in first-century Greek manuscripts, so it is possible that this is so.

This verse does make an excellent commentary, a kind of liturgical refrain, not only to this prayer but to our entire life in Christ. All of the Church’s life – our liturgies, icons, practices – draws its power from the relationship which we have with God. When we are in a living communion with Him, all that we do as Christians shows forth that life. Our interior eyes gain the power to see what is present in the Scriptures, the Eucharist or the saints. They become means for us to deepen the life which comes from our relationship with God in Christ. If we are not living in that relationship, then these practices are simply outward forms which will increasingly bore us.

Prayer that His Disciples Be One – The prayer continues: “*I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me out of the world ... and they have believed that You sent me*” (vv. 6, 8). The Apostles had been called forth by Christ to leave their families and their livelihoods to follow Him. They were about to see Him arrested, humiliated and killed. They in their turn would face similar ends. Yet He prays, not that they remain steadfast, but that they remain one. “*Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given me, that they may be one as we are*” (v. 11). The unity of the Apostles in Christ would be more significant than the physical lives of any one of them, because from that communion would come the ongoing life of the entire Church.

Prayer for the Church and the World – A few verses later, we find a similar prayer for the whole Church and the world as well: “*I do not pray for those alone, but also for those who will believe through their word that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You – that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me*” (vv. 20, 21).

This mutual interaction of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity is extended to humanity in the Church. The bond we have with God is no longer simply that of creature to Creator; but is the filial relationship of the Son to the Father “*as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.*” The Church, then, is not simply a human association of Jesus’ followers, but an organic union of those who are “*one in us.*”

Finally, the world’s conversion to Christ is tied to the communion of the Church with God. This passage is often explained to mean that, when Christians are united to one another, the rest of the world will believe. It is perhaps more accurate to say that, when the Church is “*one in us*” – finding the source of its unity in the life of the Trinity rather than in authority, political power or other external factors – people will be drawn to it.

The Icon of Our Communion with God

The icon which most perfectly expresses this vision for the communion of the Church as being “*one in us*” is the adaptation by St Andrei Rublev of the traditional image, “The Hospitality of Abraham.” The patriarch himself and other details from the Genesis story are deleted and all we see are the three guests whom he entertained, seated around a table. In Gen 18:2 these visitors are described as “*three men,*” but Rublev depicts them as angels. In fact, Gen 18:13 and verses following refer to Abraham’s company as “*the LORD,*” causing the Fathers to see this visitation as an early indication of the Trinity. Their eternal relationship is expressed by the fluid motion of their gestures.

The fourth place at the table, included in these gestures, is set for us. Through baptism we have been brought into the eternal relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The single vessel on the table suggests the means of our ongoing communion with God: the Eucharist.

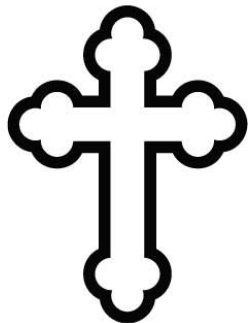
Divine Liturgy Intentions

Today +**Aileen Abraham**. Requested by Joe & Lorraine Lian
+**Mitchell Bollus**. Requested by Antoinette Arraj & Lisa Jagielski
+**Rt. Rev. Archimandrite Charles Aboody**. Requested by Francis & Carol Boyda

May 31 +**Naphie Samara**. Requested by Joe and Lorraine Lian
+**Richard Francis**. Requested by Michael & Virginia Mischitelli and Antonio & Karen Solitro

Today's flowers were donated by Joe and Lorraine Lian in memory of **Naphie Samara, Mitch Bollus, & Richard Francis**.

I always place a particle on the discos for the living of the parish as well as those who have passed away. If you would like me to remember someone during the Divine Liturgy, Please call the rectory or email me at olphmelkite@gmail.com. I also plan to do the full Memorial Service after the pandemic is over for our brothers and sisters who passed away during the pandemic. Hopefully, the family members will all be present and we can offer our condolences in person and share a meal of mercy.



Please continue to pray for all those who are infected with the coronavirus and all those who care for them. Let us also remember those who have lost their lives to the virus as well as their families, who in many cases, were not allowed to say goodbye properly. May they rest in a place where there is no pain, no grief, no sighing, but everlasting life!

Weddings— One year notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Baptisms— One month notice. Contact Fr. Bryan for Sacramental Preparation.

Please let Fr. Bryan know about anyone who is sick, in the hospital, or homebound so that he can visit and bring them the Eucharist on a regular basis once the social distancing guidelines are eased.

Dear Parish Family:

Welcome Home! Thanks be to God that we are able to publicly celebrate the divine services again. I have missed you all! Per the Bishop and Governor, we do have a number of restrictions we have to follow for the time being. As a reminder, please see the list below.

Who May Attend? People who feel well and were not recently exposed to the virus may attend services. Any sick person should stay home. People who are in greater danger of infection should stay home. Caretakers of people in danger should take precautions. We will continue to livestream the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

Seating: The limit on seating in the church is 80 people (40% of 200) including the clergy. People who live together may sit together, otherwise they should be 6 feet apart. Every other pew will be closed so that one row of people will not be too close to the other. Please call the rectory (508) 752-4174 or email olphmelkite@gmail.com during the week if you wish to attend the Divine Liturgy for that Sunday.

Sanitizing: There will be hand sanitizing lotion in the rear of the church.

Social Distancing: People should wear face masks unless they have a medical reason not to. Gloves are also encouraged, but not required. Everyone should practice social distancing. Do not touch or kiss icons, the Gospel Book or the cross. Simply bow to them. Currently, there is no lighting of candles.

Ventilation: Some windows will be open during the Liturgy. This will prevent the buildup of virus laden air in the church.

Singing: Everyone should sing with their masks on.

Collection: A basket will be left just inside the sanctuary for envelopes and donations. The collection baskets will not be passed in order to reduce exposure to people and things.

Gospel Reading: Do not come up front for the Gospel Reading.

Kiss of Peace: Do not kiss each other or shake hands, simply say: *Christ is with us. He is and always will be.*

Holy Communion: Please come up to Communion one pew at a time and keep the proper social distancing (6'). Remove your face mask immediately before receiving Communion, and replace it as you walk back to your seat. Tilt your head back to receive Communion so that the priest will not touch your face. Return by the side aisle to your seat.

Being “One in Us”

IN MONASTIC OR RELIGIOUS CIRCLES it is common for spiritual leaders to leave their followers a “spiritual testament,” an outline of the teachings and instructions which they want uppermost in their disciples’ minds. Christ’s prayer in John 17 is a kind of spiritual testament. In it the Lord expresses His holy will for Himself, for His apostles, for the Church, and for all mankind on the eve of His crucifixion.

The Time of His Glorification – The prayer begins with Christ praying for Himself: “*Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You*” (v. 1) What the Scriptures call Christ’s “hour” refers to the time of His redeeming sacrifice. Christ prays that He would be glorified by the completeness of this self-emptying. He totally enters into our experience of suffering and death in order to be one with us in all things except sin. His glory would not be the earthly idea of glory – power and might – but the glory of absolute and unconditional love.

Jesus as the Eternal Word Made Flesh – The prayer continues: “*Glorify me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began*” (v. 5). The heavenly glory, known to the angels, was to be manifested to us on earth through the cross.

This reference brings us back to the proclamation of who Jesus is, which is found in the very first verse of John’s Gospel: “*In the beginning was the Word...*” The Gospel proclaims Jesus as the pre-eternal Word of God who is glorified with the Father before all ages. Jesus is not simply a prophet or inspired teacher – He is the One whom the Gospel says “*...was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (Jn 1:2, 3)

This portrait of the eternal Word as one with the Father shows us a God who is in an eternal relationship and who is, therefore, love by His very nature (see 1 Jn 4:8). God’s relationship is, first of all, with the true and eternally appropriate object of His love: His divine Word, who is glorified with Him from all eternity. Based on the words of this prayer, the Church would go on to speak of Christ as “equal in glory with the Father.” Combining this with Christ’s teaching on the Holy Spirit, later believers would express this relationship as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Our Recreation is in Christ – Between verses 1 and 5 we find a third concept recorded in the Gospel: “*... You have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him*” (v. 2). The Word of God, through whom all things were made, is now incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth as the agent of a new creation. Mankind is given a new life, which is, in fact a second chance at the life intended for him from the beginning, as described in the book of Genesis.

This life is then described: “*And this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*” (v. 3). Eternal life – authentic life – is communion: that knowledge that flows from a relationship with God. It was a relationship of communion which Genesis describes as God “walking with Adam” in the Garden. That fellowship, once lost, is restored through Christ.

Prokimenon

Reader: Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

People: Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Reader: For You are just in all You have done to us, and all Your works are true and Your ways right.

People: Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, and Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Reader: Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers,

People: And Your name is worthy of praise and glorious forever.

Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 27-36

Alleluia Verses

The God of gods, the Lord has spoken and summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

Verse: Gather His faithful ones around Him, those who have made a covenant with Him through sacrifices.

Gospel: John 17:1-13

Hirmos of the Ascension. (Tone 5)

O you who have given birth in time to the One whom no limit of time can hold, and who thus have become the Mother of God in a manner beyond understanding and beyond words: we the faithful magnify you in unison.

After Communion:

Troparion of the Ascension