

# *First Sunday of the Great Fast*

## *Sunday of Orthodoxy*

### *HISTORY OF THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY*

Icons were venerated in the Eastern Church until the reign of Leo III (717-741 A.D.). Under the influence of two bishops from Asia Minor (Turkey), he decreed that since the



reign of Leo III (717-741 A.D.). Under the influence of two bishops from Asia Minor (Turkey), he decreed that since the veneration of icons was idol worship all veneration of them should cease and all icons should be destroyed. This decree marked the beginning of a long bloody battle against sacred images in the Eastern Church. Icons were destroyed or burned and their defenders cast into prison, exiled and even tortured. It lasted, with short intervals of peace, for about 100 years.

In 842 A.D. Empress Theodora restored the use and veneration of icons. A synod at Constantinople was convened which restored the veneration of holy images.

On the first Sunday of the Great Lent the icons were brought back to the churches in solemn procession. That day was made into a perpetual memory of the triumph of Orthodoxy at the end of the Iconoclast persecution.

### *THEMES OF THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY*

1. The expectation of the Old Testament prophets and holy people for the coming of Christ.
2. The incarnation of Christ, the presence of Christ on earth, in the Church, and in our personal lives.
3. The joy of the Church in proclaiming and glorifying Christ and His lordship over all.

### *THE READINGS*

The **EPISTLE** reading: Hebrews 11:24-26; 32-12:2

- . Why did Moses refuse to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter?
- . What sufferings did the prophets, kings, judges, and people of the Old Testament endure for the promises of God?

- . Who are we to keep our eyes fixed upon?

The **GOSPEL** reading: John 1:43-51

- . What did Philip tell Nathanael?
- . What did Nathanael reply?
- . What did Jesus say when he saw Nathanael?
- . How did Nathanael respond?
- . How are we to respond to Jesus' call during this Great Fast?

### **THE HEART OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY**

The icons, hymns, prayers, worship and liturgy of the Eastern Church unceasingly focus our attention on Jesus Christ: His person, saving work, and Lordship.

The heart of Eastern Christianity, the inner mystery of its radiant beauty, the source of its worship and teaching is the glorification of Christ, the living God, through whom we know the Father and from whom we receive the Holy Spirit.

### **PRAYER**

In the name of the Father and the Son  
and the Holy Spirit.  
We venerate your holy icon, O loving Lord,  
and we ask that You forgive our sins,  
O Christ our God. For of your own will  
You ascended the cross, in the flesh,  
to deliver us whom You have fashioned from  
the bondage of the enemy. Therefore,  
We cry out to You in thanksgiving: O Saviour,  
You filled all things with joy when  
You came to save the world.

Dismissal Hymn

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