

Russian Orthodox Church of the Resurrection of Christ

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Schedule for the Week of May 31 – June 6, 2009

Sunday May 31	Fathers of 1 st Ecumen. Council Свв Отец 1-го Вселенского Собора
Saturday Jun 6	5:30 PM Vigil
Sunday Jun 7	PENTECOST / Нед. св. Пятидесятницы 8:30 AM Confessions, Nocturns 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy / Литургия <i>Вечерня после Литургии</i> <i>Kneeling Vespers following Liturgy</i>

Из Слова на Вознесение Господа Нашего Иисуса Христа

За Воскресением Спасителя надлежало последовать Его Вознесению, и Победителю ада подобало быть восприяту небом. Но дабы скорость событий не лишила их впечатления, то Христос восхотел, чтобы чудеса, в продолжение известного времени, посредством созерцания утвердились в уме Апостолов и чтобы через постоянное видение внедрилась в души их вера. По сей причине Он благоизволил в течение некоторого времени по Воскресении являться Апостолом...

Когда же после долговременного общения с ними удалена была чрез это всякая тень сомнения относительно того, что якобы они видели один призрак, и когда преподано было им все, что нужно, по причине предстоящей разлуки, тогда перед глазами их Господь вознесся на небо, и они были свидетелями этого...

Поэтому, взирая теперь на владычное Вознесение Господа Бога и Спаса нашего Иисуса Христа, как на залог нашего вознесения, мы воззовем к Нему с умилением и благодарностью: *яко возвеличишася дела Твоя Господи! Вся премудростию сотворил еси* (пс. 103,24) (Свт. Афанасий Александрийский)

Умоляю вас усердно прилежать к чтению Божественного Писания. Не только приходя сюда (в храм), но и в домах своих берите в руки священную книгу и с великим тщанием принимайте пользу от ее содержания... Пусть каждый из вас возьмет, сидя дома, в руки свои прочитанное вам зачало и

многократно читает его и тщательно исследует его... Я всегда увещевал, и увещевать не перестану, дабы вы не только здесь, но и дома тщательно упражнялись в чтении Божественных Писаний. Я не переставал упоминать о сем и тем, которые имели со мной частные беседы. (Святитель Иоанн Златоуст).

На пути к Пятидесятнице

В Деяниях апостольских мы слышали, что, когда приближался праздник Пятидесятницы, апостол Павел отправился в Иерусалим, чтобы быть вместе со всеми, кто в этот самый день принял Святого Духа.

...Мы тоже находимся сейчас на пути к дню Пятидесятницы: на следующей неделе мы будем праздновать это событие. Павел на пути размышлял о том, что с ним приключилось во время его утешения из Иерусалима в Дамаск, а потом – в даре Святого Духа по молитве Анании. Нам тоже, каждому в отдельности и всем сообща, надо задуматься обо всем, что Бог нам дал. Он дал нам бытие и вдохнул в нас жизнь, не только жизнь тела, но жизнь, которая нас делает сродни Ему - Его собственную жизнь. Он дал нам познать Себя Самого. Живого Бога, и дал нам встретить в Евангелии и на путях жизни Своего Единородного Сына, Господа Иисуса Христа. И в крещении, в миропомазании, в причащении Телу и Крови Христовым, в тайне безмолвного молитвенного общения, в минуты, когда Сам Бог близко-близко подходил к нам, хотя в то мгновение мы о Нем и не думали, Он давал нам так много! (Мит. Антоний Сурожский)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

At the beginning of the fourth century, to be precise, in the Year 325, when persecution of Orthodox Christianity had largely ceased, was held the first Universal Council of the Church. 318 Bishops gathered together from all over the Orthodox Christian world. Together they drew up a written summary of the Orthodox Faith, which was

confirmed later in the same century at the Second Universal Council of the Church

We still sing and read that written summary of our Faith, drawn up all those years ago. It is known in English as the 'Creed'. The Creed is that text which we read every morning at morning prayers and which we sing at every Divine Liturgy, beginning: 'I believe in One God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. ...'. All over the world the Orthodox Church upholds this same Creed and has done so ever since the First Universal Council of the Church. Even Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism still retain most of that Creed, though with one significant alteration.

On account of pride and delusion, certain individuals and societies in each succeeding age of human history have rejected in turn one or more of the parts of the Creed

Thus, for the first three centuries, the Church was viciously persecuted by the forces of the world which rejected the Faith in One God the Father. They maintained that there were many gods, that the sun was a god, that the moon was a god, that there was a wind god or a rain god, that the Roman Emperor was a god and so on. These forces were defeated by the sacrificial blood of hundreds of thousands of Orthodox martyrs

Then, during the following centuries, the Church was persecuted by those who maintained that Christ was not the Son of God, or that he was the Son of God, but had never become a real man. These groups gave themselves various names: Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites, Iconoclasts and so on. The Church was victorious too against these groups and maintained the Faith through the sacrifices of the faithful upheld by the grace of God

Then, again for hundreds of years, the Church was persecuted by those who rejected the Fathers' teaching on the Holy Spirit: They all reject the confession of the Holy Spirit of the Creed of the First Universal Council of the Orthodox Church

Finally, and more recently, evil forces have rejected the Orthodox teaching on the Church, they have denied that there is only one baptism and that after the separation of the soul from the body there is resurrection and an age to come. Thus in our own times, there are many such people who deny that there is life after death

The Fathers of the First Universal Council were then also Prophets, for they forestalled much later errors and neatly defined the Faith for all time, confirming it at the Second Universal Council. This is why, after the fourth century, no other Council of the Church ever redefined the Faith or changed or modified anything. The Creed remains ever the same. That is why for centuries no Universal Council has been called: the work was all done early on

The Fathers of the First Council were, however, most directly concerned with the question of the Divinity of Christ. They firmly maintained that Christ is the Son of God. They were opposed by a particularly arrogant intellectual, a priest who was called Arius. Arius in his overweening pride asserted that Christ was not the Son of God. At one session of the Council St Nicholas, who like many other famous saints was present, stood up and slapped Arius across the face in order to stop him from

blaspheming, So wicked were Arius' words that St Nicholas, a man of great love, wanted to protect him from his own foolishness so that he would not be struck down and might come by shock to see reason.

At the First Universal Council the Fathers were triumphant in the expression of the Truth, the great Mystery of Orthodoxy, that Christ is the Son of God, True God. Arius and his devotees were defeated

Why do we commemorate the Fathers of the First Council today?

We are now three days after the Feast of the Ascension and seven days before Pentecost. These Feasts prove the Divinity of Christ. That is why today we have read from St John's Gospel where Our Lord speaks of His Father, He speaks as His Son, Whom the Father has sent, saying that He came out from the Father and that all things that are the Father's are also the Son's.

These Gospel words prove the Divinity of the Son. It is these very words of Our Lord faithfully recorded in the Gospel that inspired the Fathers of the First Universal Council.

For if Christ is not Divine, if He is not the Son of God, then the whole Faith is worthless. All stands or falls by this. He who denies the Divinity of Christ is but one step from atheism and all its horrors which so marred the last century. Yet it is this error, to say that Christ is not the Son of God, which is as widespread today as it was in the fourth century. Go into the streets and ask who Christ is. People will tell you at best: 'Oh, a great man'. 'A wise man'. But few will tell you that He is the Son of God. Indeed there are whole groups who call themselves Christians where the majority do not believe that Christ is the Son of God.

But we believe, as all the Holy Fathers believe, that Christ is True God and also a real man. Only a sinless, perfect man, living and walking on earth among men, could show humanity that it is possible to avoid the sin and death which distract us from becoming what we were intended to be - holy unto all eternity. Only the True God become incarnate as man could save humanity by showing him the measure of his potential - to become godlike through humility. Only the Son of God could say to us: 'Be ye perfect as is my Father in Heaven'.

This is the meaning of today's Feast: Christ is God and through his Body, the Church, He opens up to us the path to God, the path to holiness, the path to perfection.

It is for us to make use of this through leading an Orthodox Christian way of life and thus save our souls.

(excerpted from Orthodox England)