

A Commemoration of Gratitude and Steadfastness

*Venerable Hierarchs, beloved in Christ,
Priests, Monks, and Nuns,
Brothers and Sisters, Dearest Children in the Lord:*



Today, the Grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together once again on the radiant day of the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

This is a commemoration of gratitude and steadfastness.

• **Our** Holy Orthodox Church, the One and Only Church of Christ, celebrates her Confession, confess-

es her identity, and proclaims her authenticity and uniqueness, which “we declare in word and deed,” that is, by means of sacred Icons and homilies.

• **Today** we read in the *Synaxarion* from the *Triodion*:

On the same day, the First Sunday of the Fast, we commemorate the restoration of the Holy and Precious Icons, which was brought about by the ever-memorable Emperors of Constantinople, Michael and his mother Theodora, during the Patriarchate of the Holy Confessor Methodios.

Verses

I rejoice, on seeing the Icons that were unworthily
Banished being accorded fitting veneration.

• **After** the Seventh Holy Œcumenical Synod in Nicæa in 787, in 813 a second wave of Iconoclasm broke out, which was brought to an end, by the Grace of God, on February 19, 842 (according to others, on March 11, 845), following a resolution by the Permanent Synod in Constantinople, which “upheld the Seventh Œcumenical Synod (after sixty-five years), restored the veneration of Icons, and instituted the Feast of Orthodoxy.”¹

¹ Archimandrite Basileios K. Stephanides, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία* [Church history], 5th ed. (Athens: Ekdotikos Oikos “Aster,” 1990), p. 263.

• **Hence**, the Feast of Orthodoxy constitutes a commemoration of gratitude: just as with all of the Feasts of our Holy Church, so also this Feast renews our memory and rekindles our gratitude to our Lord and to those who sacrificed everything to preserve the authenticity of the Message and Truth of the Gospel, which is intrinsically bound up with our salvation.

• **An immediate** corollary of gratitude, however, is steadfastness; that is, we must emulate the self-sacrificial struggles of our Holy Fathers, such that we show ourselves *in practice* to be their genuine children, who preserve their sacred legacy for the salvation of the world.

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Today, our Orthodox Church is confronted by her most insidious enemy, the panheresy of ecumenism, which has rightly and aptly been characterized as “the most hideous syncretism” and “worse than every [other] heresy.”²

• **After** eighty-five years of vigorous struggle against ecumenism—since 1924, that is, when the calendar innovation was introduced here in the East, for the sake of the heterodox in the West—it was finally stated by an authoritative writer in 2009 that “we unhesitatingly call the ecumenists unorthodox,”³ and that “the ecumenists are jointly responsible for the violation of the Gospel and the perdition of the heterodox.”⁴

• **From** the official commencement of Iconoclasm (726) until its definitive end (842), one hundred and sixteen years went by; it seems that our own steadfastness will be tried yet more in the years to come.

• **We have allies**, however, not just in the Saints of old, but also in more recent Saints, one of whom, St. Glicherie the Confessor, was mentioned by this evening’s speaker, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone.

• **We ought**, with an attitude of self-sacrifice, to remain faithful to the sacred legacy of all of the new Confessors and Martyrs who struggled against the heresy of ecumenism.

• **Likewise**, with an attitude of self-sacrifice, we ought steadfastly to continue the path of the Orthodox, in confession and martyrdom and in humility and love, with the firm conviction that the Lord of the Church, while seemingly “asleep,” will ultimately rebuke the winds of the cacodoxy of syncretistic ecumenism and will safely guide the Divine Ship to the fair haven of Orthodox Truth.

² Archimandrite Epiphanius Theodoropoulos, *Ἄρθρα-Μελέται-Ἐπιστολαί* [Articles, studies, and letters] (Athens: 1981), Vol. I, pp. 163-164.

³ *Θεοδρομία* (April-June 2009), p. 166.

⁴ *Ibid.* (July-September 2009), p. 325.

• **Let us** intensify our prayer and repentance, such that the “Spirit of Truth,” the Divine Paraclete, might not abandon us, lest we be led astray by the spirit of error and compromise, or by the spirit of confusion and misguided zealotry, which is widespread in these critical days.

• **It is certain** that wherever there exists an attitude of compassion, the ethos of the repentant Publican, peace of heart, obedience to the legacy of the Fathers, and existential unity with the True Vine—that is, with our Savior, through the Holy Mysteries—one will find security in Christ, martyrdom and witness, and gratitude and steadfastness in practice.

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May the Most Blessed Theotokos, together with the ancient and modern Confessors of our Holy Faith, such as St. Glicherie of Romania, preserve us in the spirit of genuine Confession, that we might be vouchsafed a new Sunday of Orthodoxy and be counted worthy to proclaim with one mouth and one heart, that

 this is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is
 the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which hath established the
 whole world,⁵

continues to establish it, and will establish it unto the ages, until the Son of Man shall come to judge the world, and be glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Sunday of Orthodoxy, February 28, 2011

† *Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi*,

Acting President of the Holy Synod



⁵ *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy.