



■ † **First Sunday of Great Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy**

Renew Your Covenant With God*

Epistle (Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40)

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a

good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Gospel

(St. John 1:43-51)

In those days, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathaniel saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the “Sunday of Orthodoxy” because we celebrate the victory of Orthodoxy over the Iconoclast heresy and the restoration of the veneration of Icons.

Do not forget the right word [a reference to the meaning of the word “Orthodox,” which is literally “right belief”] which you spoke to God, renewing your covenant with Him, but which you broke by your negligence. Remember how and why you broke it and try to avoid being unfaithful again. Fine-sounding words are not glorious; faithfulness is glorious.

Is it not glorious to have a covenant with a king? How much more glorious is it to have a covenant with the King



of kings! But this glory becomes your disgrace if you are not faithful to this covenant.

How many great people have been glorified since the beginning of the world! And all of them have been glorified for their faithfulness, in which they stood firm, notwithstanding great misfortunes and sorrows arising therefrom.

They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.... Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses ... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 11:36–38; 12:1–2).



(*) St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God*.