

# The Sunday of Orthodoxy / The First Sunday of Great Lent

8/21 February

**Resurrection Tropar, Tone 4:** When the women disciples of the Lord / learned from the Angel the joyous message of Thy Resurrection / they cast away the ancestral curse / and elatedly told the Apostles / death is overcome / Christ God is risen / granting the world great mercy.

**Resurrection Kondak, Tone 4:** My Saviour and Redeemer / as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains / He has shattered the gates of hell, / and as Master, / He has risen on the third day.

**Kondak First Sunday of Great Lent, Tone 8:** The Uncircumscribable Word of the Father was circumscribed when he took flesh of thee, O Theotokos; and when He had restored the defiled image to its ancient state, He suffused it with divine beauty. As for us, confessing our salvation, we record it in deed and word.

**Epistle: St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews 11: 24-26, 32 - 12:2**

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. ... 32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## WE ARE SURROUNDED BY SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

At all times, indeed, but specially then, when I reflect upon the achievements of the saints, it comes over me to feel despondency concerning my own condition, because we have not even in dreams experienced the things among which those men spent their whole lives, not paying the penalty of sins, but always doing rightly and yet always afflicted .. And having spoken of what befell the apostles (Cf. I Cor. 4:11, II Cor. 11:23-28, 12:7, Phil. 1:12, II Tim. 3:11) ...Elijah suffered the same thing with them (II Kings 1:8) and the Son of Man (Matt. 8:20) ...For God 'has provided some better thing for us.' In order that they might not seem to have the advantage of us from being crowned before us, He appointed one time for crowning for all ...Do you see His tender carefulness?

*St. John Chrysostom. Homily XXVIII on Hebrews XI, 1, 2. B#58, pp. 491, 492.*

## The Gospel According To St. John 1: 43-51

43 At that time, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, 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. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48 Nathanael 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. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. 50 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. 51 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 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

“The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me” (Jn. 1:43). So the Holy Gospel begins this Sunday, recounting the calling of the Holy Apostles. Centuries have passed, and the same call is audible today, but now refers directly to us, “Follow Me.” And we ask the Lord, “Where?” And the Church answers us by the very name of this Sunday, “into Orthodoxy!”

Just be attentive. Tonight, when this week comes to a close and a new week of Great Lent begins, the Holy Church will say for our edification: “Lord, Thou hast given abundant gifts to those who fear Thee!” And we cannot say that we did not receive these gifts. We received the Sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of the Eucharist—the Body and Blood of Christ, the Tree of Life. Yes, we undoubtedly received them. But do we have the state of mind which is expressed in the second part of the prayer: “Lord, Thou hast given abundant gifts to those who fear Thee.” The gifts have been given, but are we those who fear God? Yet the fear of God is not an ordinary fear as before someone or something. No. This is the fear of losing what the Lord has given to our heart.

And at the same time, the Holy Church, while telling us that we have received the Grace and Gifts of God, reveals to us through the Apostle reading the states of mind we should possess. These are the states which should be possessed by those who have achieved everything which Christ gives. We know what these achievers have gone through: sufferings, beatings, bonds, prison; they were stoned, sawn asunder, exiled, died by the sword, wandered in the mountains. Those of whom the whole world was not worthy hid in ravines, in caves—they all bore witness to their faith, but they did not receive what had been promised. And this is because God provided for them something better, something worthy of them (Heb. 11:37-40).

Yes, as we see, God calls: “Follow Me! I will give you everything.” But at the same time, such sufferings, such experiences, such horrible things! Look around you, at our walls which are painted with the pictures of saints. All of them are now in the heavenly dwellings, and yet all of them experienced, as every one of us experiences, the way of our earthly existence. Look, among them were archbishops, bishops, priests, monks; there were farmers, nobles and princes, workers of all kinds; there were labourers, people of simple background; there were great scholars, there were illiterate people. And all of them experienced on earth every kind of suffering, grief, and horror. But they kept that which the Church requires. When the Church says through the words of Christ, “Follow Me,” she is showing us where to go: into Orthodoxy. In the Russian language, Orthodoxy means the Right Word, that word which is true, which we should not betray; the word which we too have given and are again giving every year.

After the Nativity of Christ (on the day of Circumcision), when the circumcision of our heart is accomplished, then we say, “We belong to Christ, we are Christian. Our will is His Will. Christ is our Life; Christ is our Goal; Christ is our Way.” And this way leads us into the Church. Bishop Theophan the Recluse shows us what to do in order to go the way of the Church. He addressed his flock (this was in the 1870’s) with the following words: “We know what technology teaches us, what mechanics teaches us, law, economics. But the Church teaches us about the movement of our heart. Learn and keep in your heart everything the Holy Church teaches, and receiving Godly forces through the sacraments, and quickening them through the holy services and prayers of the Church, go unswervingly the Way of Christ’s commandments under the guidance of lawful shepherds, and you will undoubtedly reach the Kingdom of Heaven and will be saved.”

And so, being zealous for salvation, all our attention should be directed to our heart, to inscribe on it Christian feelings and dispositions. Bishop Theophan reveals to us that the most important thing is in our heart, dispositions, those feelings which appear in the heart. External things are needed, but only in so far as they bear the spirit which spiritualises them. And social life will become true life only if into social relationships you bring spirit, which means heart, the heart of a true Christian. And family life will be true family life only if into all traditions of the external temporal family life we bring those relationships of the heart which God gives us in His Beatitudes: poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, peaceableness—out of this will come real family life. And this way, and only this way, into all phases of our life will come the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

*The One Thing Needful - Archbishop Andrei*

On this day the Church commemorates the final ending of the Iconoclast controversy and the definitive restoration of the holy icons to the churches by the Empress Theodora, acting as Regent for her young son Michael III. This took place on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 March 843. There is, however, not only an historical link between the first Sunday and the restoration of the icons but also a spiritual affinity. If Orthodoxy triumphed in the epoch of the Iconoclast controversy, this was because so many of the faithful were prepared to undergo exile, torture, and even death, for the sake of the truth. The Feast of Orthodoxy is above all a celebration in honour of the martyrs and confessors who struggled and suffered for the faith: hence its appropriateness for the season of Lent, when we are striving to imitate the martyrs by means of our ascetic self-denial. The fixing of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday is therefore much more than the result of some chance historical conjunction.

The Triodion gives the text of a special ‘Office of the Triumph of Orthodoxy’, which is held at the end of Matins or, more commonly, at the end of the Divine Liturgy on this Sunday. The Office celebrates not only the restoration of the holy icons but, more generally, the victory of the true faith over all heresies and errors. A procession is made with the holy icons, and after this extracts are read from the synodical decree of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787). Then sixty anathemas are pronounced against various heretics dating from the third to the fourteenth century; ‘Eternal Memory’ is sung in honour of the emperors, patriarchs and fathers who defended the Orthodox faith; and ‘Many Years’ is proclaimed in honour of our present

rulers and bishops. Unfortunately in many parts of the Orthodox Church today this impressive service has fallen into disuse; elsewhere it is performed in a greatly abbreviated form. Before the Triumph of Orthodoxy came to be celebrated on the first Sunday, there was on this day a commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and the prophets. Traces of this more ancient observance can still be seen in the choice of Epistle reading at the Liturgy (Hebrews 11: 24-6, 32-40), and in the Alleluia verse appointed before the Gospel: 'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His Name'.

### Saints of the Week

**8 / 21 February — Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy and Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates** - There are martyrdoms that are more than costly. The costliness of a martyrdom depends on the greatness of the good things of this world that a Christian gives up, receiving suffering in its place; and it depends also on the greatness of the suffering which he endures for the sake of Christ. St Theodore, a Roman commander in the army of the Emperor Licinius and governor of the city of Heraclea, scorned his youth, his good looks, his military status and the goodwill of the Emperor, and in place of all this received terrible tortures for the sake of Christ. Firstly Theodore was flogged, receiving 600 lashes on the back and 500 on the stomach; then he was crucified and pierced through with arrows. Finally he was slain with the sword. Why all this? Because St Theodore loved Christ more than anything else in the world. He scorned the foolish idol-worship of the superstitious Emperor, shattered the silver and gold idols, giving the pieces to the poor, brought many to the Christian faith and urged the Emperor himself to reject idolatry and believe in the one God. During the whole of his torture, Theodore repeated unceasingly: 'Glory to Thee, my God, glory to Thee!' He suffered on February 8th, 319, at three o'clock in the afternoon, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ. He is regarded as the protector of soldiers, who turn to him for help. His wonderworking relics were taken from Euchaita to Constantinople and buried in the Church at Blachernae; The Holy Prophet Zechariah; St Sava the Second, Archbishop of Serbia; in Sussex, at Steyning, St. Cuthman, hermit; in Monmouthshire, St. Kigwe, virgin; at Clonmore Monastery, St. Oncho, pilgrim; St. Elflada, abbess of Whitby after St. Hilda.

**9 / 22 February — Apodosis of the Meeting of Our Lord — The Holy Martyr Nicephorus:** The Hieromartyr Peter Damascene; in Wales, St. Teilo of Llandaff, bishop, (6th c) and St. Eingan of Llanengan, hermit; at Iona, St. Cuaran the Wise, bishop; ; in Ireland, St. Taraghta, virgin and St. Cronan the Wise, canonist.

**10 / 23 February — The Hieromartyr Charalampus** - This great saint was bishop in Magnesia, and suffered for Christ at the age of 113. When a violent persecution broke out under the Emperor Septimus Severus, the aged Charalampus did not hide from his persecutors, but freely and openly preached the Christian faith. He endured all tortures as though not in the body, and when they flayed the living flesh from him, the godly saint said to the Emperor's soldiers: 'Thank you, my brethren, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for new and eternal life.' He performed many wonders and brought many to the Faith. Even the Emperor's daughter, Gallina, repudiated the paganism of her father and became a Christian. Condemned to death and led to the place of execution, St Charalampus raised his arms to heaven and prayed for all men, that God would give them bodily health and salvation of soul, and that He would grant them the fruits of the earth in abundance: 'Lord, Thou knowest that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Thy blessing on all.' After praying thus, the saintly elder gave his soul to God before the executioner had laid his sword to his neck. He suffered in 202. Gallina took his body and buried it; Our Holy Father Prochorus the Orach-eater (1107);

**Russian New Martyr Anatole, metropolitan of Odessa (1938)** should be especially glorified for his spiritual courage in the grievous years of 1928-1937. He lived in the South of Russia and was respected for his spiritual deeds and his fearless professing of the true Russian Faith. Metropolitan Anatole suffered a slow martyrdom from the hands of the communists, who cruelly persecuted and humiliated him. Even before entering high school he dedicated his life to the service of God. After high school he was accepted by the Academy of Kiev, and while studying there, took the vows of monkhood. Soon after graduating from the Academy, the Rev. Anatole was ordained bishop. Bishop Anatole, young and inspired, won the hearts of his spiritual children. His ever increasing popularity was noted, of course, by the usurpers of power of the Russian government. Bishop Anatole was one of the first to be arrested by the communists. For a long time he languished in the prisons of the GPU (pre-KGB). During the hours of questioning the mild prelate was outrageously beaten by magistrates, to the point that his jaw was permanently injured, so that his speech at times was not quite distinct. Two of his ribs were also injured. Bishop Anatole spent a long time in the prison hospital. His wounds had hardly healed when he was exiled to Solovky to the harsh conditions of a labour camp for the most dangerous political "criminals", especially for the clergy. Severe frosts, lack of satisfactory nourishment, and very heavy labour broke the health of the already not too robust bishop. He suffered this oppressive life for seven years. He owed his survival there only to the most unselfish care of his younger sister, whom he had raised as a daughter. She had left everything to follow her brother into exile. Upon release from exile, Bishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Archbishop of Saratov and Samara. Shortly after this, he was taken ill with an ulcer of the stomach—the result of hardships suffered while at the labour camp. Upon recovery, he was appointed head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese in the South. He arrived in Odessa in the darkest hour of its existence. All religious affairs were in the hands of the NKVD inspector-of-the-cults, Vishnegorodsky at first, and later Baranovich. Both of them fully enjoyed using their power to inconvenience and humiliate the head of the local churches. The Archbishop was frequently ordered to get out of bed in the middle of the night and report to the NKVD headquarters. Sometimes the inspectors would appear in church during solemn services on an important holiday, and issue the same order. In such instances, the otherwise meek and humble Archbishop Anatole would curtly tell them that under no circumstances would he stop the church ritual; that he would come only after officiating in the church. His refusals were so positive that even the NKVD messengers gave up, inwardly furious. At the end of four or five hours of Church service, the Archbishop would hurry to the NKVD, without time to rest or eat. There he was kept waiting for one or two hours more, just to repay him for the delay. When he was finally received, Baranovich would stamp his feet and shout at the Archbishop, just as if he were a disobedient slave. Such were the conditions under which this highly respected

priest carried on his spiritual work. The hardest trial for him was the arrest of almost all the clergy and the best preachers of Odessa in 1931. All of them (more than 20), were exiled during the same year, when the sacrilegious closing and destroying of the churches started. The majestic Cathedral of the Transfiguration was blown up before the eyes of the Archbishop, as was the beautiful Church of the Archangel Michael in the Devichy Monastery; the military Cathedral of St. Serge, and the churches of the port and many others. The repressions and persecutions of the clergy increased, leaving clergymen without food and lodgings. They found refuge in the Archbishop's home, while he himself went about to different government organisations pleading humbly for assistance and mercy for his unfortunate colleagues. But he was met only with mockery and insults. In 1932, Archbishop Anatole was promoted to the rank of Metropolitan. He remained head of the Odessa-Kherson diocese until his arrest in August, 1936. Before his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole had to suffer the humiliation of being dismissed by Baranovich and forbidden to perform church services. Upon his arrest, Metropolitan Anatole was removed to Kiev where he was kept under severe conditions for about six months. He again suffered from ulcer of the stomach with complications which affected his legs. Metropolitan Constantine, Exarch of the Ukraine, succeeded in obtaining permission for him to see his sister before he left for exile. The poor woman later told, with sobs, how Metropolitan Anatole was led into the room of their meeting supported on both sides—having nearly lost the complete use of his legs. In spite of his condition, Metropolitan Anatole was taken into exile by "etape". He was purposely placed among the gangs of the worst criminals, who systematically robbed him on the way. The sick prelate was actually forced by gun-butts to walk from one stop to another, farther and farther to the North, with no time to rest. When he collapsed in a dead faint, he was lifted onto a truck; but as soon as he regained consciousness he was forced again to walk. Men who witnessed the tortures of the saintly man, later declared with tears, that it would have been more merciful to have shot him on the spot. On the way, Metropolitan Anatole caught croupous pneumonia, but even this did not stop his tragic march. By winter he had reached his place of exile and, in the Far North, dying he pleaded for permission to see his sister, who had managed to reach his place of exile. The sister had received only postcards from him on which he had written: "I beg you to do everything you can. Plead, pray, implore, but obtain the permission for our meeting. I yearn before my death to see your dear face and bless you." But the meeting was not to be; the permission was refused. When Metropolitan Anatole was on the point of dying, the communists came to him and demanded his Gospel and his priest's cross. The Gospel was snatched from out of his weakened hands, but he clung to his cross. Protecting it on his chest with numbed hands, he fell back and died (1938). His body was thrown into a common grave in the frozen earth of the far North.

**11 / 24 February — The Hieromartyr Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste** - born in Cappadocia, Blaise was meek and God-fearing from early childhood. He was chosen for his virtues as bishop of Sebaste, and was a great spiritual and moral light in that pagan town. During a period of violent persecution of Christians, Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs in prison, among whom was the famous Eustratius. When the city of Sebaste was left entirely denuded of Christians—some killed and others fled—Blaise, by then an old man, retired to the mountain of Argeos and lived there in a cave. Ferocious wild beasts, recognising a holy man, came to him and he gently tamed them. But the persecutors found the saint in that hidden spot and took him for trial. On the way there, Blaise healed a boy who had a bone stuck in his throat and, at the petition of a poor widow, made the wolf that had taken her pig return it to her. The benighted judges tortured him, flogging him terribly. By his steadfastness in the Christian faith, Blaise brought many unbelievers to the Faith. Seven women and two children were thrown into prison with him; the women were slain first, then Blaise and the two children. He suffered and was glorified in 316. Blaise's prayers are sought for the health and well-being of domestic animals and for protection from wild beasts. In the West, he is also invoked against sore throats. The Holy Martyr George of Kratov; St Theodora; St. Gobnait, abbess of Ballyrouney, Cork, Ireland (5th c); St. Caedmon of Whitby, monk (c.680)

**12 / 25 February — St Meletius, Archbishop of Antioch** - this great and holy man was an outstanding interpreter and defender of Orthodoxy. The whole of his life was devoted to the fight against the Arian heresy, which did not recognise the Son of God and blasphemed against the Holy Trinity. He was three times removed from his archiepiscopal throne by the heretics, and driven off into Armenia. The struggle between the Orthodox and the heretics became so bitter that once, while St Meletius was preaching to the people in church on the divine Trinity in unity, his own deacon, a heretic, ran up to the bishop and shut his mouth with his hand. Being unable to preach with words, Meletius preached by signs. Thus, he raised his arms on high, opened three fingers to their fullest extent and showed them to the people, then closed his hand and raised the one fist. He took part in the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, where the Emperor Theodosius showed him specially great honour. At that Council, God showed a mystery through His archbishop. When Meletius was propounding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to the Arians, he first raised three fingers, separated one by one, then brought them together; and at that moment lightning flashed from his hand before the gaze of all present. At that Council, Meletius established Gregory the Theologian in the seat of Constantinople. While the Council was still in session, St Meletius finished his earthly course in Constantinople. His relics were taken to Antioch.

**St Alexis, Metropolitan of Moscow** - a great hierarch of the Russian Church in a difficult period of Tartar oppression of the Russian people. Once in childhood he went bird-hunting, then went to sleep and in a dream heard a voice that said: 'Alexis, why rush around so fruitlessly? I will teach you to catch men!' He became a monk at the age of twenty, and in time became Metropolitan of Moscow. He twice went among the 'Golden Horde' of the Tartars, once to sooth the wrath of Verdevir Khan against the Russian people, and the second time at the invitation of Amurat Khan, to cure his wife's blindness. This woman had been blind for three years, but was healed and her vision restored when Alexis prayed and anointed her with holy water. After a life of great endeavour and fruitfulness, Alexis entered into rest in 1378 at the age of 85, and went to the court of the Lord. **New Martyr Alexis (Bui)** - in 1926, he took over administration of Voronezh diocese. He was tall and thin, an inspired preacher, a great father and true monk. He did not have a theological education, and had been superior of a monastery in Kozlov. He celebrated the Divine services with heedful concentration. In mid 1927 the Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius was published, and Voronezh was divided like all of Russia. All eyes were on Bishop Alexis, and he responded with a bold

rejection of the Declaration and his announcement that he had chosen to be a follower of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd. For his epistle Bishop Alexis was suspended, and then on February 21, 1930 he was arrested by the GPU, dying in prison. Soviet researchers have made Bishop Alexis out to be the founder of a 'sect' called the "Buevtsy" (Bui-ites). It is clear from the material, however, that this movement was simply the local part of a larger catacomb movement amongst Orthodox Christians in Russia. Thus we can see the considerable influence of Bishop Alexis on the future development of the True Orthodox or Catacomb Church in Russia. Holy New Martyr Alexis, pray for us! Our Holy Mother Mary (Marius); St Antony, Patriarch of Constantinople. St Callia; St. Ethilwald of Lindisfarne (740).

**13 / 26 February — Our Holy Father Martinian** - The life of this saint is wonderful beyond measure and is worth reading in full. What did he not endure to fulfil the Law of God? At the age of eighteen, he went off into a mountain in Cappadocia called the Ark and there spent 25 years in fasting, vigils and prayer, and struggling with manifold temptations. When a woman came to tempt him and he saw that he would fall into sin with her, he leapt barefoot into the fire and stood in it until the pain brought forth tears from his eyes and he had killed all lust within himself. When other temptations arose, he fled to a lonely rock in the sea and lived there. When, though, in a shipwreck, a woman swam to the rock, he leapt into the sea intending to drown himself. But a dolphin took him upon its back and brought him, by God's providence, to the shore. He then decided to make nowhere his permanent home but to travel incessantly. Thus he passed through 164 towns in two years, exhorting and advising the people. He finally arrived in Athens, where he died in 422. Ss Zoa and Photinia; Our; Our Holy Father Simeon, the Outpurer of Myrrh; St. Modomnoc, bishop of Ossory (6th c.)

**14 / 27 February — St. Cyril, Equal-to-the-Apostles, Teacher of the Slavs** - brother of Methodius, originally from Salonica of eminent and wealthy parents, Leo and Maria. When the Khazarite king, Kagan, sought preachers of the Christian faith from the Emperor Michael, the Emperor commanded that these two brothers be found and sent to the Khazars. They converted Kagan and baptised him together with a great number of nobles and an even greater number of the people. After some time they compiled a Slavic alphabet of 38 letters and began to translate the service books from Greek to Slavonic. At the invitation of Prince Rattislav they went to Moravia, where, with great devotion, they spread and confirmed the Faith. They went to Rome at the invitation of the Pope and Cyril fell ill and died there in 869. Our Holy Father Auxentius; Our Holy Father Isaac the Recluse of the Kiev Caves.

## The Sunday of Orthodoxy

St John Maximovich

**Great Lent** — all of its services are united by the idea of preparing for Holy Pascha, to meet the risen Christ with a clean heart. Why do we prepare in this manner? What is Pascha? Pascha is a taste of the joy of paradise! What is this joy? It is that we see God and His glory! The Church loves the glory of the Lord! When she celebrates the Feast of Orthodoxy, she keeps the festival of the day of the reestablishment of the veneration of icons. An icon is simply a reminder of Christ the God-Man on earth. Icons of the saints are reminders of all those who followed Christ, who were faithful and devoted to Him, and burned with love for Him. The veneration of the holy icons is the veneration of the glory of the Lord. He Who rejoices in the glory of God and in everything that reminds him of it in this life will also rejoice in the age to come. He who in this life strove toward God will rush to Him joyfully when he hears the words, "Come unto Me, ye blessed..." at the dread judgment. All those who do not know how to rejoice in the glory of God, in whom the divine realm and its laws call forth a state of unhappiness, who love gloom or semi-gloom, who do not love the light, will not answer to the call of "Come unto Me." They will shrink back in indignation, unhappiness, in jealousy and anger, from the humble and the meek who will go toward the light, from God Himself, Whom they will begin to blame for being in their state. They will even shrink from themselves, though they will not want to admit their guilt. Such a state is true suffering. Hades is not a place, no, but a state of the soul. It begins here on earth. Just so, paradise begins in the soul of a man here in the earthly life. Here we already have contact with the divine, on the day of the Bright Resurrection and when we worthily receive Holy Communion. It is necessary to prepare for confession: All of a splinter must be removed, for if there is any left, infection will begin. It is necessary to pray for repentance and for the joy of purification, so that a ray of light will touch our soul and it will come to love the light... It is necessary to pray to meet the Risen Christ with a clean heart, to taste of the joy of the kingdom of heaven at least in the smallest degree.