

## ICONS

The **Sunday of Orthodoxy** is the first Sunday of Great Lent. This Sunday is also known as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.”

In the year 726, a group of people decided that icons should be removed from Orthodox churches. They mistakenly thought that icons were the same as “graven images” which are not to be made according to the Second Commandment given to Moses.

The leaders of the Church looked into the problem and decided that the Commandment about “graven images” does not refer to Holy images of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints.

So, in the year 843, the Empress Theodora asked them to hold a meeting, called an Ecumenical Council, that was attended by 367 bishops in Constantinople.

The bishops agreed that icons help to preserve the teachings of the Church and that venerating an icon is not the same as worshiping it. They proclaimed, **“he who venerates the icon, venerates in it the reality for which it stands.”** That is, for example if the icon is an image of a saint, it is the saint that we are honoring, not the picture.

Then the Empress, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodios, and many monks and clergy came in procession to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) and put all the icons again in the church where they should be.

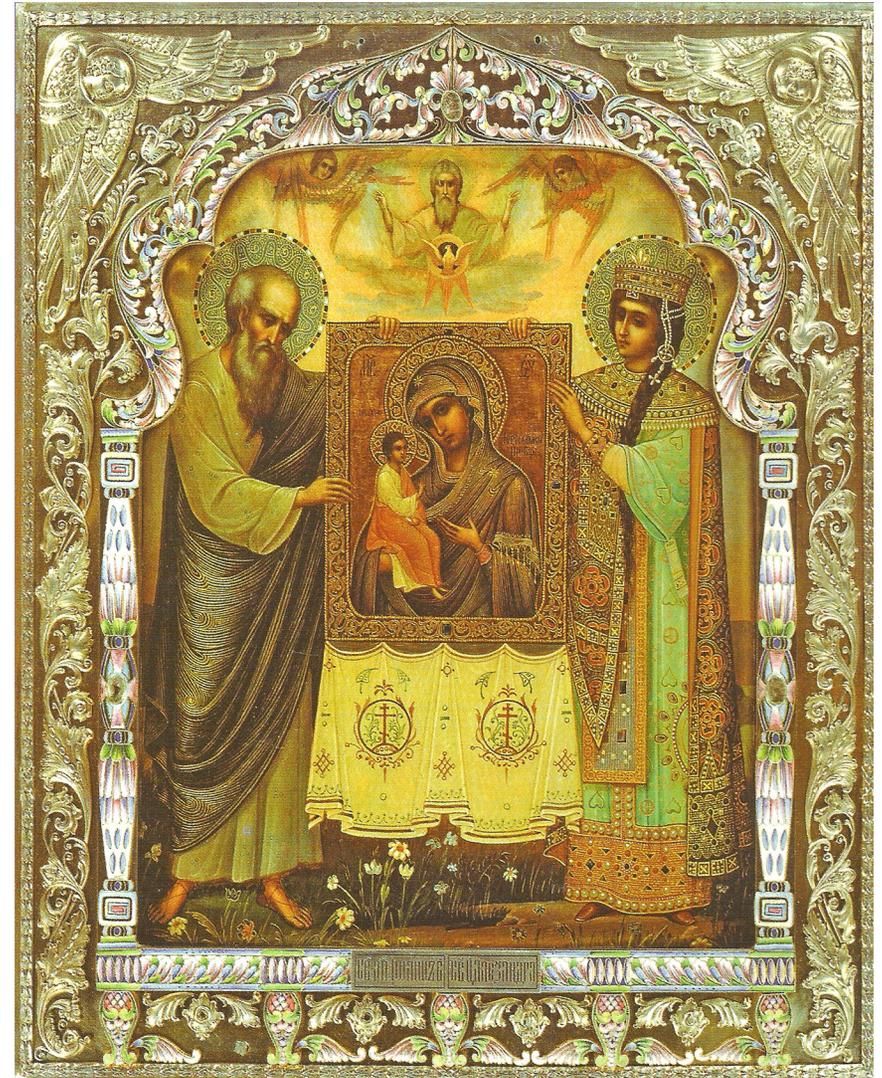
The day was called the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.” Since that time, the event is commemorated yearly with a special service.

### What Is an Icon?

An icon is a flat panel, usually made of wood, on which we see a Holy image, such as Jesus, Mary, saints, angels, or the cross. In Orthodox culture, we say that an icon has been “written” rather than painted, because an icon is much more than a religious painting. Almost everything within an icon has a symbolic meaning.

The Orthodox Church teaches that icons are **“windows to heaven.”** That means that veneration of an icon is one of the ways that we communicate in prayer. When we stand before an icon of a saint and pray, our words are heard in heaven by the saint, who in turn prays to God for us.

## Sunday of Orthodoxy



### Kontakion — Tone 8

*No one could describe the Word of the Father;  
but when He took flesh from you, O Theotokos,  
He accepted to be described,  
and restored the fallen image to its former beauty.  
We confess and proclaim our salvation in word and images.*

## THE JOURNEY TOWARD PASCHKA

from John 1:43-51

### Jesus Chooses Two Disciples

Jesus would go from town to town, teaching about forgiveness of sins and love of God to the people He met. He wanted some helpers. So He looked for some good persons who would believe His teachings. The followers of Christ are called His “disciples.” A **disciple** is someone who listens, believes, learns, and then in turn teaches others.

Jesus went to Galilee (a region in Israel). There He met a man named Philip, who was from the town of Bethsaida, the place where the Apostles Andrew and Peter were from. He asked Philip to follow Him. **To follow Christ means to become His disciple.**

### The Disciples Recognize Who Jesus Is

Philip understood that **Christ is the Messiah (Savior) that the Old Testament prophets foretold would come.** So he went to find another man, Nathaniel, to tell him. He said, “We have found him, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. He is Jesus of Nazareth.”

The town of Nazareth was a town where poor people, beggars, and criminals lived, and it did not have a good reputation. So at first Nathaniel did not believe what Philip told him. He asked, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip answered, “Come and see.” So Nathaniel went with Philip to meet Jesus.

When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming, He knew immediately that Nathaniel was a good person and He said, “I see an Israelite who can be trusted!” Nathaniel had never met Jesus, so he asked Him, “From where do you know me?” Jesus answered that He had seen him standing under a fig tree before Philip went to visit him. Since no human being could see that far, Nathaniel understood Who Jesus is and said to Him, “You are the **Son of God**; You are the **King of Israel.**” (Note: a fig tree was the symbol of Israel in Biblical times.)

Jesus said to Nathaniel, “Because I said that I saw you under a fig tree, you believe? You will see even greater things than that.”

And Jesus continued talking and said, “Truly, truly, I tell you, **soon you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.**” (Note: the “Son of Man” was one of the ways that Jesus referred to Himself.)

Jesus was talking about **His death, Resurrection, and Ascension**, but the disciples did not yet understand what would soon happen.

## THINK ABOUT IT ...

### THE GOSPEL LESSON

1. Followers of Christ are call His  
S D C P I I S E D \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Galilee is in the country of \_\_\_\_\_.  
R L I A S E
3. Two other disciples from Bethsaida, where Philip was from, are Peter and \_\_\_\_\_.  
W A D N R E
4. The coming of the Messiah (Savior) was foretold by the Old Testament \_\_\_\_\_.  
R P O H P S T E
5. In Biblical times, a symbol for Israel was a \_\_\_\_\_ tree.  
I G F
6. Jesus told Nathaniel that he would see \_\_\_\_\_.  
S A E N L G
7. When Jesus speaks about the “Son of Man,” He is talking about \_\_\_\_\_.  
F H E I M L S

### THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

7. Another name for the Sunday of Orthodoxy is the  
\_\_\_\_\_ H T P R I M U of Orthodoxy.
8. The special service held on the evening of the Sunday of Orthodoxy commemorates the restoration of  
\_\_\_\_\_ S C I O N into the Orthodox churches.
9. When we \_\_\_\_\_ E V T E R N A E  
an icon, we are honoring the saint that the image represents.
10. The Orthodox Church teaches that icons are  
\_\_\_\_\_ S W W I O N D to heaven.
11. The name of the famous church Hagia Sophia means “Holy  
\_\_\_\_\_ M W O I D S