08/03/2020

The Sunday of Orthodoxy: Short History – Photo Journal



The Sunday of Orthodoxy is the first Sunday of Great Lent. The dominant theme of this Sunday since 843 has been that of the victory of the icons. In that year the iconoclastic controversy, which had raged on and off since 726, was finally laid to rest, and icons and their veneration were restored on the first Sunday in Lent. Ever since, this Sunday has been commemorated as the “Triumph of Orthodoxy.”

The Seventh Ecumenical Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops.

The iconoclast period

Almost a century before this, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken

the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine Empire. Excessive religious respect and the ascribed miracles to icons by some members of society, approached the point of worship (due only to God) and idolatry. This instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts.

The Iconophiles, on the other-hand, believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty.

The Council decided on a doctrine by which icons should be venerated but not worshiped.

The Sunday of Orthodoxy History

A final Regional Synod was called in Constantinople in 843 under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the Hagia Sophia Cathedral. The Empress, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodios, and monks and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy" and shows the importance of icon and art in our life.

Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy".

The photos are from the Sunday of Orthodoxy at Vatopedi monastery, Mount Athos.

Lieutenant general Demokritos Zervakis, the commander of Cyprus' military forces was present at the feast.

— Source: asceticexperience.com