



Sunday of Orthodoxy

1st Sunday
of Lent

For Children

It will soon be the first Sunday of Lent. We will go to Church and have a special service.

That's because the first Sunday of Lent is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Long ago, the rulers of some countries did not allow Orthodox Christians to have icons in their Churches or homes. After many years, Orthodox Christians were given back their icons. This was a very happy time for Orthodox Christians!

We remember this special occasion on the first Sunday of Lent. Many times all the Orthodox Churches in the city or nearby towns celebrate this service together. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we thank God for giving us icons which teach us about our Faith. We thank God for giving us the True Faith. We are glad we are Orthodox. We are thankful we can receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ every Sunday. We thank God for His special gifts on this first Sunday of Lent.

For Adults

The first Sunday of Great Lent is called the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy because it commemorates the restoration of the Holy Icons and the triumph of the Orthodox Faith against the terrible heresy of the Iconoclasts, i.e. those heretics who refused to honor the Holy Icons. For more than a hundred years the Church was disturbed by the evil doctrine of iconoclasm.

The first Emperor to persecute the Church was Leo the Isaurian, and the last was Theophilos, the spouse of Saint Theodora (February 11), who reigned after her husband's death and re-established Orthodoxy in the time of Patriarch Methodios (June 14). Empress Theodora proclaimed publicly that we do not kiss the Icons as a sign of worship, nor do we honor them as "gods," but as images of their prototypes.

In the year 843, on the first Sunday of the Fast, Saint Theodora and her son, Emperor Michael, venerated the Holy Icons together with the clergy and the people. Since that time this event has been commemorated every year, because it was definitively determined that we do not worship the Icons, but we honor and glorify all the Saints who are depicted on them. We worship only the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and no one else, neither a Saint, nor an Angel.

Originally, the Holy Prophets Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were commemorated on this Sunday. The Alleluia verses appointed for today's Liturgy reflect this older usage.