

7th Sunday of Easter

The Holy Fathers of the First Nicene Council

I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world (John 17: 6)

Between the Feasts of the Ascension of Jesus Christ and the Descent of the Holy Spirit comes the 7th Sunday of Easter, which is a commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Evangelist John tells us about the prayer of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. In it, the Savior reminds the Apostles that the purpose of His coming to earth was to reveal the true God to men, and our Lord asks His Heavenly Father to keep them in unity. When such unity exists among the Apostles, they become a living image, a reflection of the true God.

This image of God was accepted and preached by the successors and followers of the Apostles, the Holy Fathers. In 325, the Church Fathers gathered at the Council of Nicaea to condemn Arius' false teachings about Jesus, that Christ was not the Son of God united to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Imagine the impact in the ancient world, which had only just begun to convert to Christ, of the words of Arius' sermons in Alexandria almost one thousand seven hundred years ago! A prominent priest in Alexandria, Arius was popular. He was able to impress, he could look pious, and his teachings were convincing to many people of the time. But at the same time, there was a venom in his words that was intended to poison the source of true faith. And his words were accepted by thousands of people. Thousands of people followed him! At first sight, the heresy of Arius did not seem to deny the teachings of Christ, nor to reject the Gospel. It made only a small, seemingly corrective, clarification: Christ is not the Son of God, but only an enlightened Man.

The example of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council shows us that the Apostles were the spiritual bridge of faith between Jesus Christ and the Fathers of the Church. In the same way, the Holy Fathers became a bridge of faith in the one true God between the apostles and the next generations of Christians.

Today, when hundreds of years separate us from the time of the Holy Fathers, we benefit from the fruits of their holiness, having a true Church and faith. In the same way, we

must lead a pious Christian life, so that the example of our life may bring to others a ray of God's love, the grace of sanctification, and the salvation of their souls.

During World War II, an American ship was damaged by Japanese planes near a Pacific island. With no way out, they left the sinking ship and lived on a nearby island. Hearing about the cruelty and cannibalism of the locals, they prepared for an unfriendly meeting. However, to their great surprise, the natives greeted them very kindly, showing friendliness at every opportunity. They brought them food and their most precious gifts.

The explanation for this behavior was simple. A few years earlier, the island had been visited by missionaries who preached the Gospel to the people so that they would know the Savior. All the inhabitants of this island had been baptized and had become Christians. Out of gratitude that the Lord had so changed them and made their lives tranquil and peaceful, they did their best to be of service to the brethren in the Faith. The Americans found a happy refuge on the island, until they were found by compatriots.

True servants of God are able to radically change the world, to make it peaceful and merciful. The world without God becomes cruel and ruthless.

Next Sunday we will celebrate the Descent of the Holy Spirit. We ask the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and awaken them to the burning fire of Christian righteousness and love. We also ask the Lord to continue protecting our holy faith from the stormy waves and winds that blow on it from different parts of this sinful world. And may the Holy Fathers be the guides who, by the example of their lives, teach us how we should relate to faith in Jesus Christ and His Holy Church!

Only the living God can overcome death. Only love heals the wounds inflicted by sin. Christ brought a new extraordinary reality. It consists in the fact that the Son of God became man so that all men "may become partakers of the nature of God" (2 Peter 1: 4). It is this fundamental conviction of the apostles that was proclaimed by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (AD 325): Christ is the Son of God, and He has the same divine nature as the Father.

Dear believers! Uniting in prayer with Jesus, we urge the Father to send his Spirit, "the Giver of Life," on us and on all people. Jesus says, "Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24).