



# PARISH BULLETIN

HOLY ARCHANGHEL MICHAEL'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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**Sunday of Orthodoxy**

## **Troparion, tone 2**

*O Christ our God, begging forgiveness of our sins, we venerate your pure image O Good One.*

*Of Your own will You condescended to ascend upon the Cross in the flesh and delivered those you created from the bondage of the enemy.*

*Wherefore, thankfully we cry out: When You came to save the world You filled all things with joy, O our Savior. Listen*

## **Kontakion, tone 4**

*The undepictable Word of the Father became depictable when He took flesh of you, 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.*

**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.

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 worshipped. In answering the Empress' invitation to the Council, Pope Hadrian replied with a letter in which he also held the position of extending veneration to icons but not worship, the last befitting only God.

The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day: "We define that the holy icons, whether in colour, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly

people. Whenever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honour, but not of real worship, which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerated in it the reality for which it stands".

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

### **The icon of the feast**

The icon of the Sunday of Orthodoxy commemorates the "restoration" of icons in the churches and to their use in Orthodox worship. The focal point of the icon is an icon itself, the Virgin Hodegetria, a popular depiction of the Theotokos as "Directress," or literally "She who shows the way to God." The icon is carried by two angels.

To the left of the icon is the Empress Theodora and her son Michael III. To the right of the icon are the Patriarchs Methodios and Tarasios. The icon is

surrounded by numerous saints who struggled against the Iconoclastic heresy.

The icon also represents the triumphant procession that was made on Sunday, March 11, 843, from the Church of the Theotokos in Blachernai to Hagia Sophia, where a Liturgy was celebrated to mark the restoration of icons.

Source:

[http://lent.goarch.org/sunday\\_of\\_orthodoxy](http://lent.goarch.org/sunday_of_orthodoxy)



### Thirty steps to Heaven

*The Ladder of Divine Ascent* is undoubtedly one of the most influential Christian texts ever written. Its author, St. John, is named after it – *St. John Climacus* (of the Ladder). *The Ladder* describes in thirty steps the monk's desired progress on the path of spiritual perfection.

The influence of *the Ladder* soon extended beyond the monastic communities, and it has been read and loved by laypeople for centuries. ...many Orthodox Christians read the *Ladder* during Lent. Notwithstanding the book's popularity, it is not always easy for normal laypeople to apply its teachings to their own lives. Therefore, simple comentaries such as this book ***Thirty steps to Heaven, The Ladder of Divine Ascent for All Walks of Life*** written by Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassilious made the Ladder accesible to the average layman and it can be helpful for us, laypeople.

Another aspect of the Ladder of Divine Acent worth considering is the very image of a ladder, of a climb and upward

journey. Our spirituyal journey required patience and digged persistence – taking one step at a time. **Many have been speedily forgiven their sins. But no one has rapidly acquired dispassion, for this requires much time and longing, and God. No one can climb the entire ladder in a single stride.** Nor do the steps of the ladder necessarily come in the same order for all people. One person struggles with a certain passion that another easily masters; yet the latter struggles far more with a different passion that the former easily overcomes. In other words, what is step ten for one person could be step twenty for another, and any given step may take many years to master.

**There is always a danger in seeking what is beyond our immediate reach.** The famous icon of the Ladder od Divine Ascent clearly illustrate this – depicting monks falling from the heights into the abyss. Complacency and self-certainty are the most dangerous delusions we encounter in the spiritual life, and they are particularly acute for the most devout Christians. We would also do well to remember that spiritual perfection cannot be attained even by the saints. For dispassion is an uncompleted perfection of the perfect, while the last step of the Ladder, which is love, is an ternal step that we will never reach the end of, neither in this life nor in the world to come:

**Love has no boundary, and both in the present and in the future age we will never cease to progress in it, as we add light to light.**

If the spiritual battle seems hopeless and the struggle too much for you, do not be disheartened and do not

give up. Our progress in virtue can often seem less like a ladder of ascent and more like a game of chutes and ladders....Not everyone can achieve dispassion. But all can be saved and can be reconciled to God. Falling and getting up again, starting over – this is what repentance and Christian devotion are all about.

One final word of warning: Very few people indeed will have climbed all thirty steps of the Ladder of Divine Ascent. If you think you have, you probably need to go back to the beginning.

This Sunday it will be distributed copy of two steps to Heaven, namely **Obedience** and **Repentance**, because Lent is very much related to obedience and repentance.

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**Source: *Thirty steps to Heaven, The Ladder of Divine Ascent for All Walks of Life* written by Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassilious**



### Liturgical Schedule

<b>Wednesday</b> <i>March, 8</i>	<b>6:00pm</b>	Presanctified Liturgy - St. Michael
<b>Thursday</b> <i>March, 9</i>	<b>6:30 pm</b>	Bible Study
<b>Saturday</b> <i>March, 11</i>	<b>8.30am</b> <b>5:00pm</b>	Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service Vespers
<b>Sunday</b> <i>March, 12</i>	<b>9:00am</b> <b>10:00am</b>	Matins Divine Liturgy

### Announcements:

- House blessing and **confession** upon request
- Friday, March 10, **Movie night, 18.30pm**
- Altar candles were donated in the memory of Thanas Boilard



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