



Statue of St. Michael the Archangel that stands above Kyiv's Independence Square. St. Michael is patron saint of the Ukrainian capital.



ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

Defend people of Ukraine in battle; be their defence against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and to you, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and the other evil spirits who are trying to invade Ukraine.
Amen.

~ 21 May 2023 ~
~СВЯТИ ОТЦІ ПЕРШОГО ВСЕЛЕНСЬКОГО СОБОРУ~
~HOLY FATHERS OF THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL~
~ 452ND DAY OF WAR IN UKRAINE ~



Arius was a priest of the Church of Alexandria, and in 315, he began to blaspheme against the Son of God saying that He was not the true God, consubstantial with the Father, but rather a work or creation of God and different from the essence and glory of the Father. He also taught that the Son of God had a beginning. These teachings shook the faithful at Alexandria. The Bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, attempted to correct Arius through admonitions, cut him off from communion, and finally deposed him in 321 through a local council. Arius continued with his heretical teachings, creating controversy and division in the churches of other cities, which led to a theological and ecclesiastical crisis throughout the Christian Church. Moved with divine zeal and concern for unity, the Emperor Constantine the Great, equal to the Apostles, summoned the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, a city of Bithynia. It was in this place that the bishops of the Church gathered in 325. All of them, with one mouth and one voice, declared that the *Son and Word of God is one in essence with the Father, true God of true God.*



SUNDAY HYMNS

OPENING HYMN	На Гору Днесь Єлеонську // Today on Mount Tabor (pg. 208-209)
COMMUNION HYMN	Пливи Світами // Let All Creation Sing Out in Triumph (pg. 256-257)
CLOSING HYMN	О Спомагай Нас // Always Protect Us (pg. 364-366)

SUNDAY & DAILY SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, May 21	Divine Liturgy // Божественна Літургія	10 AM
MONDAY, May 22	NO SERVICES	
TUESDAY, May 23	Divine Liturgy // Божественна Літургія	9 AM
	Moleben to the Mother of God // Молебень до Богородиці	7 PM
WEDNESDAY, May 24	Divine Liturgy // Божественна Літургія	9 AM
THURSDAY, May 25	Divine Liturgy // Божественна Літургія	9:30 AM
FRIDAY, May 26	Божественна Літургія українською мовою	9 AM
SUNDAY, May 28	Divine Liturgy // Божественна Літургія	10 AM

NOTE: to request a Divine Liturgy, please speak with Fr. Yuriy

E-TRANSFER - st.nicholas.victoria@gmail.com

SUNDAY EPISTLE

MAY 7 DONATIONS

DATE	READING	
SUNDAY, May 21	Act 20:16-18, 28-36	Coffee: \$90.25; Vigil lights: \$9.25; Loose collection: \$114.00; Envelope collection: \$185.00; Pre-authorized donations May 1 to May 7: \$460.00; Canada Helps online donations May 1 to May 7: \$2,026.21; Easter Food Fair net total: \$11,089.81 TOTAL: \$2,884.71 <i>May God bless and reward you abundantly for your generosity!</i>
SUNDAY, May 28	Acts 2:1-11	
SUNDAY, Jun 4	Heb 11:33-12:2	
SUNDAY, Jun 11	Rm 2:10-16	

DONATE ONLINE - www.stnicholasparish.org/donate

PASTORAL MINISTRY & HOLY MYSTERIES

CONFESSIONS.....	time before or after services
BAPTISMS.....	by appointment
MARRIAGES.....	six months notice should be given to the parish priest, and he should be contacted before any other arrangements are made
FUNERALS.....	by appointment
ANOINTING.....	by appointment
HOSPITAL VISITS.....	any time; call emergency number 250.891.4507

Apostolic Administrator ~ Bishop David Motiuk ~ www.nweparchy.ca



ST. NICHOLAS
THE WONDERWORKER

†
СВ. МИКОЛАЯ ЧУДОТВОРЦЯ



Church: 250.384.2255
Rectory: 250.384.2292
Emergency: 250.891.4507

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~ Priest ~
Fr. Yuriy Vyshnevskyy

HELP THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE TO
SURVIVE THE WAR

DONATE FOR UKRAINE

ПОЖЕРТВУЙ НА УКРАЇНУ

www.stnicholasparish.org
Victoria, BC Canada

DONATE TO HELP UKRAINIANS ARRIVING ON SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND - Make cheques payable to 'St. Nicholas church' with memo 'Help arriving Ukrainians'. You can also donate cash or via e-transfer to st.nicholas.victoria@gmail.com. Click **DONATE** button on the parish website www.stnicholasparish.org to donate via CanadaHelps. Tax receipts will be issued.

WWW.UKRAINEHELPVI.CA - the website is designed to connect people and organizations on Vancouver Island to help the people of Ukraine.

ACCEPT PEOPLE FLEEING UKRAINE ON VANCOUVER ISLAND - please complete **this form** if you can accept people fleeing Ukraine. Please share this with your friends and neighbours!

JOB POSTING - employers who wish to support Ukrainians with offers of employment to register these offers on **Jobs for Ukraine**.

DO YOU NEED FOOD? - Help Ukraine Vancouver Island Society has created Food Share programs to ensure that all Ukrainians have access to good quality food across Vancouver Island every week. Please visit the HUVI website for details and how to register in your area **HERE**.

PRAYER FOR THE AFFLICTED PEOPLE OF UKRAINE IN TIME OF WAR



O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, we entreat You to hear the earnest prayer of Your beloved Church of Kyivan Rus' for her deeply afflicted children abiding in the land of Ukraine. Behold their grave sorrow and grievous plight, and speedily come to their aid. Deliver Your vulnerable people from unjust aggressors, foreign invasion and the terror of war. Strengthen

courageous defenders of the nation to fight virtuously, inspired more by love of those they protect than hatred of the enemy. O compassionate Lord, shelter the displaced, heal the wounded, console the orphan, protect the widow, comfort those who mourn, and mercifully receive into Your Kingdom those who have nobly died guarding their homeland against every aggression. Quickly make cease the spilling of blood of friend and foe alike, yet stir many to bravely struggle for that true justice which alone can bring lasting peace. O kind-hearted Lord, as You are our peace, soften the hearts of the unmerciful and convert those who promote hostilities toward reconciliation, so that Your beloved children of the land of Ukraine, may abide in that tranquility, justice and freedom which reflects your Kingdom, where You reign with Your eternal Father, and Your most holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now, and forever and ever. Amen.

МОЛИТВА ЗА МНОГОСТРАЖДАЛЬНИЙ УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ НАРОД У ЧАС ВІЙНИ

Господи Ісусе Христе Боже наш, благаємо Тебе, вислухай ширу молитву Твоєї улюбленої Церкви Київської Русі за важко страждаючих дітей українського краю. Споглянь милостивим оком на їх лихоліття та ласкаво поспіши на допомогу. Звільни свій беззахисний народ від несправедливих загарбників, нашествия агресорів та терору війни. Зміцни силою Твоєю усіх доблесних і відважних захисників для добросердечної боротьби, щоб вони радше керувалися любов'ю до беззахисних, аніж ненавистю до ворогів. О Премилосердний Господи, захорони переселенців, зціли поранених, борони сиріт, підтримай вдів, потіш скорботних та ласкаво прийми до Твого Царства всіх, хто благородно віддав своє життя в обороні Батьківщини від нападів ворогів. Поспіши зупинити кровопролиття як друга, так і недруга та запали серця багатьох до мужньої боротьби за істинну справедливість, що є джерелом тривалого миру. О добросердий Господи, Ти – наш мир, пом'якши зачерствілі серця, наверни тих, хто сприяє воєнним діям, до примирення, щоб Твій улюблений українській народ втішався миром, справедливістю та свободою – ознаками Твого Царства, в якому Ти царюєш з Предвічним Твоїм Отцем, і Всесвятим, Благим і Животворним Твоїм Духом, нині, і повсякчас, і на віки віків. Амінь.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

✓ **HAPPY BIRTHDAY** to CHRISTINA VYSHNEVSKA and all those who celebrated their birthdays this past week. May the Lord Our God continue to bless you abundantly and the Holy Mother of God protects you at all times. Многая Літа!

✓ **VYSHYVANKA DAY // ДЕНЬ ВИШИВАНКИ** - Picnic in Beckwith Park (857 Beckwith Ave). Sunday, May 21; 4 PM - 6 PM.

✓ **BLESSING OF THE GRAVES:** next **Sunday, May 28** right after coffee & fellowship we will be going to the Royal Oak Cemetery (4673 Falaise Dr) where Fr. Yuriy will be blessing the graves.

✓ **CAMP ST. VOLODYMYR - Sunday, Aug 20 – Saturday, Aug 26, 2023.** We invite you to save the date and join us this August to celebrate our 40th anniversary of Camp St. Volodymyr! The camp is for children in our Eparchy aged 7 to 15 as of December 2023. Camp St. Volodymyr is a great place to be physically active, build self-confidence and self-esteem, and develop outdoor skills. While reconnecting with nature, the children will grow spiritually and build life-long friendships. Registration will open in mid-spring, so start planning your summer holidays now! The camp is run on a volunteer basis. If you are interested in volunteering as a counsellor, chef, nurse/doctor, or lifeguard please forward your name. Camp St. Volodymyr is also seeking input to design our 40th anniversary T-shirt. Please share your logo and design ideas! The chosen design will receive a complimentary t-shirt. For more information, contact Jennifer Caldwell at jennsawka@hotmail.com or 604.220.0584

✓ **SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION // СПОВІДЬ** - before and after daily (9AM) & Sunday (10AM) Liturgies / **СПОВІДЬ** - перед і після щоденної Літургії о 9 год і недільної о 10 год.

✓ **PRAYER REQUEST** - Please keep in your prayers ED, WAYNE, TERESA and other members of our parish, our family and friends who are ailing, in hospitals, nursing homes and those who are not able to join actively in their community.

✓ **BEQUESTS & WILLS** - Leaving a bequeath is a process of giving a donation through your will. It is simply a distribution from your estate to a charitable organization through your last will and testament. It can be as small or as large a donation as you wish. It is important that you talk to your lawyer about the process. In your kindness please remember St Nicholas the Wonderworker Ukrainian Catholic Church in your bequeath and will. If anyone wishes to make such a bequeath in their will, the following clause may be included or added to a will: "I give, devise, and bequeath to **St Nicholas the Wonderworker Ukrainian Catholic Parish - 1112 Caledonia Avenue, Victoria BC, V8T 1G1**, the sum of \$ _____ (or _____% of my estate), to be used for the benefit of the parish and it's pastoral activities."

DIVINE LITURGY PROPERS

*The Divine Liturgy of our Father among the Saints John Chrysostom.
Scripture readings from the New Testament are taken from the
New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition.
Українською - у перекладі Івана Хоменка.*

First Antiphon

Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations;* shout to God with the voice of joy.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour, save, us.

Verse: For the Lord most high is awesome,* a great king over all the earth.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour, save, us.

Verse: He has subdued peoples to us,* and nations under our feet.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour, save, us.

Verse: God ascended amid shouts of joy,* the Lord at the sound of the trumpet.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Saviour, save, us.

Glory... Now... Only-Begotten Son...

Third Antiphon

Verse: Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord,* let us acclaim God, our Saviour.

Refrain: Son of God, who ascended in glory,* save us who sing to You: Alleluia.

Verse: Let us come before His face with praise,* and acclaim Him in psalms.

Refrain: Son of God, who ascended in glory,* save us who sing to You: Alleluia.

Verse: For God is the great Lord,* the great king over all the earth.

Refrain: Son of God, who ascended in glory,* save us who sing to You: Alleluia.

Entrance Verse: Come, let us worship* and fall down before Christ.

Refrain: Son of God, who ascended in glory,* save us who sing to You: Alleluia.

Troparion, Tone 6: Angelic powers were upon Your tomb* and the guards became like dead men;* Mary stood before Your tomb* seeking Your most pure body.* You captured Hades without being overcome by it.* You met the Virgin and granted life.* O Lord, risen from the dead,* glory be to You!

Troparion, Tone 4: You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,* giving joy to Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit,* and assuring them through your blessing* that You are the Son of God,* the Redeemer of the world.

Troparion, Tone 8: Christ our God, You are glorified above all,* You established our fathers as beacons on earth* and through them guided all of us to the true faith.* Glory to You, most compassionate Lord.

Troparion, Tone 8: After seeing the image of Your cross in the heavens, O Lord,* and receiving like Paul the summons that was not from men,* Your apostle among kings entrusted into Your hands the imperial city.* Always save it in peace by the prayers of the Mother of God,* only Lover of mankind.

Kontakion, Tone 8: The apostles' preaching and the Fathers' doctrine* confirmed the Church's one faith,* and wearing the garment of truth* woven from theology that descends from on high,* she rightly imparts* the mystery of godliness* and sings its glory.

Glory: Kontakion, Tone 3: Today Constantine and Helen his mother reveal the cross,* the all-precious wood which shames those who refuse to believe.* Rulers with faith possess it as a weapon against foes;* a glorious standard frightful in battle revealed for the sake of all.

Now: Kontakion, Tone 6: When you had fulfilled Your plan for us* and united things on earth with those in heaven,* You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,* in no way distant, but remaining in separable,* You cried to those who love You:* I am with You and there is none against you.

Prokeimenon, Tone 4: Blessed are You, Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your Name forever. *Verse:* For You are righteous in everything that You have done to us. (*Daniel 3:26,27*)

Prokeimenon, Tone 8: Their utterance has gone forth into all the earth, and their word unto the ends of the world.

Epistle - Acts 20:16-18, 28-36 - A reading from the Acts of the Apostles - In those days, Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia; he was eager to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia. "Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn

everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed.

Alleluia, Tone 1: *Verse:* The God of gods, the Lord, spoke and summoned the earth from the rising of sun to its setting. *Verse:* Gather to Him His devout ones, who with sacrifice make covenant with Him. (*Psalm 49:1,5*) *Verse:* I have exalted one chosen from among My people. (*Psalm 88:20*)

Gospel - John 17:1-13 - At that time, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves."

Instead of "It is truly ..." we sing: O my soul, magnify the Lord who in glory ascended bodily into the heavens. **Irmos, Tone 5:** O Mother of God,* you transcended both mind and word,* and in time, ineffably bore the Timeless One:* it is you who, with one accord,* we, the faithful, magnify.

Communion Hymn: Praise the Lord from the heavens;* praise Him in the highest (*Psalm 148:1*).* Rejoice in the Lord, O you just;* praise befits the righteous (*Psalm 32:1*).* Their utterance has gone forth into all the earth,* and their word unto the ends of the world (*Psalm 18:5*)* Alleluia, alleluia,* alleluia.

Instead of “We have seen the true light”, “Let our mouths be filled” *and* “Blessed be the name”
we sing: Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, above all the earth be Your glory.



Перший Антифон

Стих: Всі народи, заплещіте руками, воскликніть Богові голосом радості.

Приспів: Молитвами Богородиці, Спасе, спаси нас.

Стих: Бо Господь Всевишній – страшний, цар великий по всій землі.

Приспів: Молитвами Богородиці, Спасе, спаси нас.

Стих: Він покорив людей нам і народи під ноги наші.

Приспів: Молитвами Богородиці, Спасе, спаси нас.

Стих: Зійшов Бог під оклики веселі, Господь – під голос сурми.

Приспів: Молитвами Богородиці, Спасе, спаси нас.

Слава: І Нині: Єдинородний Сину ...

Третій Антифон

Співаємо звичайний третій антифон, але з приспівом: Спаси нас, Сину Божий, що родився від Діви, співаємо тобі: Алілуя.

Тропар, глас 6: Ангельські сили на гробі твоїм* і сторожі омертвіли * Марія ж стояла при гробі,* шукаючи пречистого тіла твого.* Полонив ти ад і, не переможений від нього,* зустрів ти Діву, даруючи життя.* Воскреслий з мертвих, Господи, слава тобі!

Тропар, глас 4: Вознісся ти у славі, Христе Боже наш,* радість сотворивши ученикам обітуванням Святого Духа,* утвердивши їх благословенням,* бо ти еси Син Божий,* ізбавитель світу.

Тропар, глас 8: Препрославлений ти, Христе Боже наш,* світила на землі – отців наших оснував ти* і ними до істинної віри всіх нас направив ти.* Багатомилосердний, слава тобі.

Тропар, глас 8: Хреста твого образ на небі побачивши,* і як Павло, покликання не від людей прийнявши,* між царями твій апостол, Господи, царюючий город у руку твою положив.* Спасай нас завжди в мирі, молитвами Богородиці,* єдиний Чоловіколюбче.

Кондак, глас 8: Апостолів проповідування і отців догмати* єдину віру утвердили Церкві,* яка і ризу істини з богослов'я вишнього носячи* право править, і славить* благочестя велике таїнство.

Слава: Кондак, глас 3: Днесь Константин із матір'ю Оленою показують хрест, всечесне Древо* – для всіх юдеїв посоромлення, зброя ж на противників вірним,* бо ради нас з'явилося знамено велике і в боях грізне.

І нині: Кондак, глас 6: Сповнивши промисел щодо нас* і те, що на землі, з'єднавши з небесним,* вознісся Ти у славі, Христе Боже наш,* ніяк не відлучаючись, але невідступно перебуваючи,* Ти кличеш до тих, що люблять Тебе:* Я з вами і ніхто проти вас.

Прокімен, глас 4: Благословен еси, Господи, Боже отців наших, і хвальне, і прославлене ім'я Твоє на віки. *Стих:* Бо праведний еси в усьому, що створив Ти нам (*Дан. 3:26,27*).

Прокімен, глас 8: На всю землю вийшло вістування їх і до кінців вселенної глаголи їх.

Апостол - Дія. 20:16-18, 28-36 - З книги Діань Святих Апостолів читання: Тими днями Павло вирішив плисти попри Ефес, щоб не баритися в Азію поспішав бо, щоб, по змозі, на день П'ятидесятниці бути в Єрусалимі. З Мілету він послав у Ефес і прикликав пресвітерів церкви. Коли ж вони прийшли до нього, він до них промовив: «Ви знаєте, як з першого дня, коли я вступив у Азію, увесь час поводився я з вами. Зважайте на самих себе й на все стадо, над яким Дух Святий поставив вас єпископами, щоб пасли церкву Божу, що він придбав кров'ю власною. Я знаю, що по моїм відході ввійдуть поміж вас вовки хижі, які не щадитимуть стада. Та й з-поміж вас самих повстануть люди, що говоритимуть погубні речі, щоб потягнути за собою учнів. Тому чуйте, пригадуйте собі, що я три роки, ніч і день, не переставав кожного з вас із сльозами наводити на розум. А тепер передаю вас Богові і слову його благодаті, що може збудувати й дати вам спадщину між усіма освяченими. Ні срібла, ні золота, ані одежі я не вимагав ні від кого. Ви самі знаєте, що моїм потребам і тих, які зо мною, служили оці руки. У всьому я показав вам, що, так працюючи, треба допомагати слабосильним і пам'ятати слова Господа Ісуса, що сам сказав: «Більше щастя – давати, ніж брати.» Промовивши це, він упав на коліна і з усіма ними почав молитися.

Алилуя, глас 1: *Стих:* Бог богів, Господь мовив, і призвав землю від сходу сонця до заходу. *Стих:* Зберіть Йому преподобних Його, що заповідують завіт Його в жертвах (*Пс. 49:1,5*). *Стих:* Возніс Я вибраного з людей Моїх (*Пс. 88:20*).

Євангеліє - Івана 17:1-13 - Ісус, підвівши очі свої до неба, проказав: «Отче, прийшла година! Прослав свого Сина, щоб Син твій тебе прославив, згідно з владою, що її ти дав йому над усяким тілом: дарувати життя вічне тим, яких ти передав йому. А вічне життя у тому, щоб вони спізнали тебе, єдиного, істинного Бога, і тобою посланого – Ісуса Христа. Я тебе на землі прославив, виконавши те діло, яке ти дав мені до виконання. Тепер же

прослав мене, Отче, у себе – славою тією, що її я мав у тебе перед тим, як постав світ! Я об'явив твоє ім'я людям, яких ти від світу передав мені. Вони були твої, ти ж передав мені їх, і зберегли вони слово твоє. Нині збагнули вони, що все, тобою дане мені – від тебе; слова бо, тобою мені дані, я їм дав, і сприйняли вони їх, і справді збагнули, що від тебе я вийшов, і увірували, що ти мене послав. Молю ж за них: не за світ молю, лише за тих, яких ти передав мені, бо вони – твої. І все моє – твоє, твоє ж – моє, і в них я прославився. Я вже більш не у світі, а вони у світі, і я до тебе йду. Отче Святий! Заради імени твого бережи їх, тих, що їх ти мені передав, щоб були одно, як ми! Бувши з ними у світі, я беріг їх у твоє ім'я; тих, яких ти передав мені, я їх стеріг, і ніхто з них не пропав, лише син загибелі, щоб збулося Писання. Тепер же іду до тебе, і кажу те, у світі бувши, щоб вони радощів моїх мали у собі вщерть.

Замість “Достойно...” ми співаємо: Величай, душе моя, Господа, що з плоттю во славі вознісся на небеса. **Ірмос, глас 5:** Тебе, вище ума і слова Матір Божу, що в часі безлітнього несказанно родила, вірні однодумно величаємо.

Причасний: Хваліте Господа з небес, хваліте Його в вишніх (Пс. 148:1). Ликуйте, праведні, у Господі: правим належить похвала (Пс. 32:1). На всю землю вийшло вістуння їх і до кінців вселенної глаголи їх (Пс. 18:5). Алилуя, алилуя, алилуя!

Замість “Ми бачили світло істинне”, “Нехай сповняться уста наші”, “Нехай буде ім'я”, співаємо: **Вознесися на небеса Боже і по всій землі слава Твоя.**

OF TRUE AND FALSE APOSTLES (*Acts 20:16-18a, 28-38*)

What happens when it's time for a strong leader to step down and be replaced by another? Sometimes there is continuity: the successor has similar gifts and a similar vision to his predecessor. Too often the successor is not up to the task: a poor choice to follow the predecessor's lead.

The Apostle Paul was a driving force in setting the Church at Ephesus firmly on the Rock of Christ. From AD 52 to 54, he lived in the city which became the base for his missionary travels as well during those years. St Paul, however, was not a local pastor but an apostle who traveled the Middle East and Europe preaching the Gospel, establishing or reinforcing local communities, then moving on.

Sometimes St Paul would leave his closest associates to oversee the development of the local Church. It seems that in Ephesus, however, Paul at first formed local leaders – bishops, presbyters (elders) – to be responsible for the local community, aided in their ministry by periodic visits and/or letters (the Epistles) from Paul himself. Only later did he send St Timothy to oversee the Church in this important city.

Chapter 20 of the Acts of the Apostles records how St Paul expressed his concern for the Church at Ephesus even when he could not pay them a personal visit. He called for the presbyters to meet him at the nearby port of Miletus for what we might call a pep talk, particularly as he feared they might not meet again in this life.

The Problem at Ephesus

St Paul warns the Ephesian elders, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among you men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves”* (Acts 20: 28-30).

The Apostles were not the only preachers exercising an itinerant ministry at the time. Pagan philosophers and religious teachers of all kinds brought their message to the chief cities of the Roman Empire. The new churches set up in the Roman world provided fertile ground for some of these teachers claiming to be bringing the fullness of the Gospel to young believers.

St Paul had done exactly that on his own first visit to Ephesus. *“Finding some disciples he said to them ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 19:1-2). Learning that these men had been baptized by followers of St John the Baptist, Paul preached Christ to them and baptized them in Jesus’ name. Paul then spent two years with the Ephesians grounding them in the Gospel.

St Paul feared his work would be undone by other itinerant preachers whom he called “savage wolves” and “false apostles” (2 Cor 11:13), worried that people would not be able to discern their teaching from the true Gospel of Christ: *“...if he who comes preached another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it!”* (2 Cor 11:4).

Christ vs. the Law

One of the “different gospels” circulating in the first-century Church taught that pagans who became Christians also needed to be circumcised and to observe other laws in the Torah such as its dietary practices. Its proponents claimed that following the Law was required to insure that the believer remained pure and thus be assured a place in the kingdom of heaven.

St Paul’s epistles frequently address this challenge, insisting that what saves us is belief in Christ rather than observance of the Law. *“We have been delivered from the Law,”* he would write to the Romans, *“having died to what we were held by so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter”* (Rom 7:6). A Christian who continued to observe the Law, he came to believe, was actually denying Christ. *“You have become*

estranged from Christ – you who attempt to be justified by the Law. You have fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4).

Proponents of Old Testament practices in the Church came to be known as Judaizers, and groups of them continued for many years. Some continued to observe the Sabbath, Passover, and Yom Kippur and to observe the Jewish dietary rules. By the fourth century such groups had distanced themselves from the Christian mainstream.

Faith in Christ vs. Secret Knowledge

A second brand of unorthodox teachers incorporated Gnostic philosophical ideas into their understanding of the Gospel. Some denied that God was the creator of the material world and taught that matter was evil, rejecting marriage and anything they perceived as unspiritual. Many taught that Jesus was a mere human who attained divinity through the secret lore (gnosis) which he knew and practiced. Acquiring such spiritual knowledge, reciting of mantras and the like, they taught, brings about the transformation of the human spirit and frees it from the body.

Several of the early strains of Gnosticism were described by St. Irenaeus of Lyons in his second century work, *Against Heresies*. He quotes from their writings and refutes them from the authentic Scriptures. He notes their widely divergent and inconsistent doctrines in contrast to the unity of faith in the Church. He credits this unity to the Holy Tradition preserved in the Apostolic Churches. The common faith of these Churches puts “... within the power of all in every church who may wish to see the truth to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world” (*Against Heresies* 3.3.1).

Tradition: the Voice of the Spirit

Today the historic Churches – Catholic and Orthodox – look to a number of aspects of their life as manifesting the Apostolic Tradition. First among them are the Holy Scriptures (the Bible), the liturgy (the Church’s worship), the teachings of the ecumenical councils and other authoritative teachings of the Church. In the writings of the Church Fathers, the holy icons, and the lives of the saints we also find authentic expressions of the Apostolic Tradition.

The fundamental expression of Tradition, however, is the Church itself which St Paul calls “*the pillar and ground of truth*” (1 Tm 3:16). The Church is the context within which all the expressions of Tradition find their true meaning. It is impossible to fully experience any element of the Tradition outside of the content of the Church.

Like St Paul, the Church today counsels us to hold fast to what we have received and to test every novel teaching or practice against the common tradition of the Apostolic Churches. Although there is a diversity in these expressions of Tradition from time to time and place to place (there are, after all, four Gospels and a number of liturgical traditions), there is still a fundamental unity coming from their common source, the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church.

Я ОБ'ЯВИВ ТВОЄ ІМ'Я ЛЮДЬМ, ЯКИХ ТИ ДАВ МЕНІ ЗІ СВІТУ. (Йо 17,1-13)

Між святом Вознесіння Ісуса Христа та Зісланням Святого Духа знаходиться 7-ма неділя після Пасхи - про святих отців першого Вселенського Собору. На перший погляд вона не має нічого спільного із цими святами. Вознесіння і Зіслання Святого Духа тісно пов'язані між собою часом та значенням. Прихід Святого Духа став завершенням вознесіння Христа на небо та сповненням обітниці, даної Ним апостолам – послати Утішителя – допомогу для них.

Перший Вселенський Собор у Нікеї віддалений від цих подій на 300 років та не має прямого зв'язку з апостолами. Та слова Євангелія цієї неділі своїм змістом відкривають нам її значення, показують як духовний місток між вознесінням Христа та Зісланням Святого Духа.

Євангелист Іван розповідає нам про молитву Ісуса Христа на Тайній вечері. У Ній Спаситель нагадує апостолам мету свого приходу на землю – об'явити людям істинного Бога та просить небесного Отця, аби зберіг їх у єдності між собою та з Богом. Ця єдність віри та любові між учнями важлива для Ісуса, бо вона відкриє поганам правдивий образ Бога. Адже Ісус Христос об'явив апостолам Господа Бога як спільноту Отця, Сина і Святого Духа, об'єднаних досконалою любов'ю. Коли така єдність буде між апостолами, вони стануть живим образом, відбитком правдивого Бога для інших людей. Зміцнювані благодаттю Утішителя, апостоли успішно виконали це завдання.

Такий образ Бога прийняли та проповідували наступники та послідовники апостолів – Святі Отці. У 325 році Отці Церкви зібралися на собор у Нікеї, щоб той образ Бога захистити, засудивши фальшиві вчення Арія про Христа, що Він не є Божим Сином, з'єднаним з Отцем і Святим Духом. Цим вони зберегли віру в єдиного правдивого Бога, якого пізнали через Ісуса Христа дією Святого Духа.

Приклад Отців 1-го Вселенського Собору показує нам, що апостоли були духовним містком віри між Ісусом Христом та Отцями Церкви. Так само і святі Отці стали таким містком віри в єдиного правдивого Бога між апостолами та наступними поколіннями християн.

Подібно і ми повинні бути таким духовним містком віри й образу Бога між нашими попередниками та наступними поколіннями. Для цього маємо самі глибше пізнавати Бога через Ісуса Христа з допомогою щирої молитви, Святого Письма та Святих Тайн. Тобто створювати щораз тісніший зв'язок любові з нашим Богом, ставати учасниками спільноти Отця, Сина і Святого Духа. Так зможемо словом і ділом наповнити світ правдивим образом та присутністю Бога. Тоді Христос буде постійно берегти, освячувати та провадити нас у земному житті, як знак своєї присутності у світі, та вчинить нас учасниками своєї спільноти в небі.
