

## The Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

John 17:1-13

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word., Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (KJV)

Saints Cyril and Methodius

Matthew 5:14-19

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (KJV)

God's Holy Church continues to celebrate the Great Feast of the Ascension. Jesus ascended to heaven when He completed His earthly work while in the flesh. Jesus taught those who listened. He worked miracles.

Jesus chose disciples and Apostles. He healed the blind and the sick. Jesus gave health to lepers, sound to those that could not hear and voice to those that could not speak. He expelled demons and raised the dead.

Jesus forgave sins. Jesus demonstrated compassion and humility. He was a lasting example of how to serve others. Ultimately Jesus was arrested, crucified and rose from the dead. He appeared to many who had known Him after His death.

Believers are blessed to learn about Jesus Christ throughout their earthly lives. God's Holy Church offers teachings about Christ. The Church offers direct experience with Christ in the Holy Mysteries.

The Church has examples through the centuries of miracles attributed to Christ. Miracles are also recorded attributed to Jesus' Mother, saints and martyrs. No one is compelled to believe in Christ or to follow Christ in the Church.

Believing in Jesus Christ, His death on the Cross and His Resurrection is completely voluntary. Believing in miracles attributed to Christ and to other known miracles in the Church is purely voluntary.

The richness, peace and joy that comes from believing in Christ is unequalled. Peace, love and joy in Christ is known only by personal experience. Believing in Christ withstands the greatest assaults as is demonstrated by the martyrs and saints.

Apostle Paul said "...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to **separate us** from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.(Rom.8:38-39)

The world offers many paths in life. Many people appear in the world promising roads to health, joy and happiness. The heart, mind and soul need the authenticity of Jesus Christ for the purity and fulness of life offered in the Church.

Remaining on the narrow path to God's Kingdom entails discipline, focus and repentance. Nourishing the soul constantly is part of the journey to God's Kingdom. Repelling and rejecting sin and perilous temptations protects the soul.

Elements and activities in the world attempt to divert the believer from remaining faithful to Christ in the Church. Attacks on the believer may be direct or subtle. Attempts to deceive believers even may appear as good choices on the surface.

The path to God's Kingdom is narrow. Following Christ means struggle against all that is not of Christ. Christ is genuine love. Genuine love is known through experience with Christ in the Church.

Believers experience Christ in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. Christ is experienced in genuine human relationships where Christ's love is paramount. Christ is known in the Gospel and in the lives of saints and martyrs.

Today's Gospel of St. John speaks about eternal life. Eternal life and God's Kingdom are the primary goals established at Baptism. Life's journey is intended to take place in the Church.

Thank God for the presence of Christ in the Church. Thank God for the opportunity to freely follow Christ. May we through the prayers of Saints Cyril and Methodius whom we celebrate today remain faithful in following Jesus Christ.

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Afterfeast of the Ascension. Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. Saints Cyril and Methodius. May 11/24, 2026. Father Rodney Torbic