

Sunday of the Fathers of the Six Ecumenical Councils

Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through Him, by faith, that we have been admitted into God's favor in which we are living, and look forward to exulting in God's glory. Let us also exult in our hardships, understanding that hardship develops perseverance, and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, we also remember the memory of the Holy Fathers, of the six Ecumenical Councils. Scripture says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb.13:7-8).

The Church venerates the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils because Christ has established them as "lights upon the earth," guiding us to the true Faith. In decisive moments of Church history, the holy Ecumenical Councils promulgated their dogmatic definitions, as trustworthy delimitations in the spiritual battle for the purity of our faith, which will last until such time, as "...we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Eph. 4:13).

The holy fathers had to attack and advise on internal problems that were growing out of control in the church. The church had to identify and rectify problems and deal strongly with the perpetrators. For example, abortion was revealed simply as murder and those guilty were not only those who had it done to them, but also those who performed it. A grave social problem had to be identified and its seriousness underlined.

The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, "...I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ, on earth, will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior's words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor's sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.

Today's other Gospel tells us about the healing of the blind men and of the man who was mute and demon-possessed. Throughout the Gospels, we hear of the great mercy and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ as He went about the towns and villages healing all those who were sick and in need.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this indeed was our Lord's work while He walked upon this earth, to teach, to preach the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to heal every sickness and disease among the people. Christ poured Himself out in compassion and in the generous giving of grace to heal and to raise up the people from the sins that bound them, granting instead health and life-giving freedom.

Therefore, dear ones, let us open our hearts to the words of our teacher, Jesus Christ:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you (Jn.15:1-12).

