



■ † **Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Œcumenical Synod**

**“Faith makes up the heart of the Church
and the essence of her confession”***

(Acts 20:16-18, 28-36)

In those days, Paul determined to sail past Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he was in haste, that it might be possible for him to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said unto them, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this: that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. “And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no man’s silver or gold or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my own necessities, and also to those who were with me. I have shown you all things, how that by so laboring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” And

when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all.

(St John 17:1-13)

Gospel

At that time, Jesus 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 whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to 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 whom 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.”

Arius began to deny the Divinity of the Son of God and His consubstantiality with God the Father.

The entire Church rose up against him; all believers, from all ends of the earth, unanimously confessed that **the Lord**

Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God, true God of true God; begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father.

One might think that this enthusiasm for unity was by chance, but this faith was then tried by fire when the authorities and powerful of this world began to side with the Arians.

Neither fire, nor sword, nor persecution could extinguish this faith, and it was immediately found in every place among all the Christians, as soon as the pressure from external powers ceased. This means that **it makes up the heart of the Church and the essence of her confession.**

Glory be to the Lord, Who preserves this faith within us! For, as long as it exists, we are still Christians, even though we may not live as such. If faith ceases to exist, that would be the end of Christianity.



(*) St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God.*