

Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical
Issued on the Occasion of the 1700th Anniversary
of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea

Prot. No. 335

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

By God's Mercy, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church: May God's Grace and Peace be with you!

We offer a hymn of thanks to the almighty, all-seeing, and benevolent God in Trinity, who vouchsafed that His people reach the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, which bore spiritual witness to the authentic faith in divine Word born without beginning and truly consubstantial with the Father, "who for us and for our salvation descended, was incarnate and became human, suffered and arose on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, who will come again to judge the living and the dead."

The Council of Nicaea constitutes an expression of the synodal nature of the Church, the culmination of its "earliest conciliarity," which is

inseparably linked to the eucharistic realization of church life as well as of the practice of assembling together for decisions “with one accord” (Acts 2:1) on current matters. The Council in Nicaea also signifies the emergence of a new conciliar structure, namely of Ecumenical Councils that would prove definitive for the development of church affairs. It is noteworthy that an Ecumenical Council does not comprise a “permanent institution” in the life of the Church, but an “extraordinary event” in response to a specific threat to the faith, aiming at restoring the ruptured unity and eucharistic communion.

That the Council of Nicaea was convened by the Emperor, that Constantine the Great attended its deliberations and embraced its decisions with the status of imperial law, does not render it “an imperial synod.”¹ It was an unquestionably “ecclesiastical event” whereby the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, decided about its internal affairs, while the Emperor implemented the principle “Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that belong to God” (Mt. 22:21).

In the face of the Arian heresy, the Church, in council, formulated the essence of its faith, which is experienced uninterruptedly. The pre-eternal Son and Word of God, “consubstantial to the Father . . . true God of true God,” through His incarnation, saves humankind from enslavement to the enemy and opens up to us the way of deification through grace. “He became

¹ Metropolitan John of Pergamon, *Works, Vol. 1: Ecclesiological Studies* (Athens: Domos Books, 2016), 675-6.

human so that we might become divine.”² The Symbol of Nicaea proclaims the sure conviction that the ongoing heretical deviation constitutes a denial of the potential for human salvation. In this sense, it is not simply a theoretical declaration, but a confession of faith, just like all the dogmatic texts of the Church, a genuine articulation of the living truth within it and through it.

What is of particular theological importance is the fact that the basis of the Sacred Symbol “We believe . . .” comprises a local baptismal Symbol or group of such Symbols. As the genuine bearer of the perennial self-conscience of the Church, the Council recapitulates and reaffirms the Apostolic deposit preserved by the local Churches. Athanasius the Great mentions that the Synodal Fathers “on matters of faith, do not write “It seemed to us . . .” but rather “This is what the catholic Church believes; and at once they confessed what they believe, in order to demonstrate that nothing novel was discovered in what they wrote, but that their mindset is apostolic, in other words exactly as the Apostles had taught.”³ The conviction of the divinely-instructed Fathers was that nothing was added to the faith of the Apostles and that the truly ecumenical Symbol of Nicaea comprises a proclamation of the common tradition of the catholic Church. The Conciliar Fathers, whom the Orthodox Church worthily honors and hymns as “precise protectors of the apostolic traditions,” adopted the

² Athanasius the Great, *On the Divine Incarnation*, PG 25.192.

³ Athanasius the Great, *Letter on the Councils of Ariminum in Italy and Seleucia in Isauria*, PG 26.688.

philosophical term “essence” (and its derivative “of one essence”) to express the Orthodox faith about the divinity of the Word, which Arius denied, and along with this denied the entire mystery of the universally salvific incarnate Divine Economy by becoming embroiled in Hellenistic concepts, thereby rejecting the “God of our Fathers” in the name of the “God of the philosophers.”

Another vitally important matter, which the Council of Nicaea was called to resolve for the sake of enhancing ecclesiastical unity in liturgical practice, was “when and how we should celebrate the Feast of Pascha.” The 1700th anniversary of the convening of this Council has brought back the timeliness of the matter of a common celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection. The Holy Great Church of Christ prays that Christians all over the world will return, in accordance with the decrees of the Council of Nicaea, to a celebration of Easter on a common day, as by a blessed coincidence this current year. Such a decision would serve as evidence and as a symbol of genuine progress in the struggle for our ecumenical co-sojourn and co-understanding through theological dialogue and the “dialogue of life,” as a tangible witness of our practical respect for what we have received from the undivided Church. The achievement of such a goal, in the context of this year’s anniversary, was the joint vision of the late Pope Francis of Rome and our Modesty. His passing immediately after all of Christendom celebrated

Easter emphasizes our responsibility to continue in this direction without wavering.

Moreover, the canonical work of the Council of Nicaea was also significant, formulating and affirming synodally the perennial canonical conscience of the Church, establishing the beginning and elevating the status of the metropolitan system, as well as of the prominent position and expanded responsibility of certain Thrones, out which gradually emerged the system of the Pentarchy. Inasmuch as the canonical legacy of Nicaea is a common inheritance for the entire Christian world, this year's anniversary is called to function as an invitation to return to the sources, namely to the primeval canonical regulations of the undivided Church.

The Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople has perennially served as the guarantor of the decisions of Nicaea. This spirit of the Great Church was also described through the Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical on the 1600th anniversary of the Council "as the first Ecumenical and truly greatest Council of the Church."⁴ The decision to celebrate the anniversary with "a festive and, indeed, joint, if possible, event of all Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, in order altogether to manifest the faith and persistence to this day of our Holy Orthodox Church in the teaching and spirit of that Council, whose inspired decision on the one hand established and sealed the one faith of the Church, while on the other also splendidly presenting the unity of the

⁴ Synodal Minutes, *Codex I*, 94 (August 10, 1925), 102–3.

structure of the church through the presence of delegates from all ends of the world.” Unfortunately, however, this event did not prove feasible due to exceptional circumstances and the vacancy of the Ecumenical Throne. On July 19, 1925, the first Sunday after the enthronement of Patriarch Basil III, the “delayed commitment” was fulfilled with the celebration of “a special Patriarchal and Synodal Liturgy” in the venerable Patriarchal Church. What is of particular ecclesiological importance is that the Encyclical underlines the value of adopting the obligation of the Church of Constantinople—“as more directly associated with and responsible for the feast”—to celebrate this anniversary “which is immense for all of Christendom . . .”

The Council of Nicaea constitutes a milestone in the formation of the doctrinal identity and canonical structure of the Church. It remained the model for handling problems of faith and canonical order on an ecumenical level. The 1700th anniversary since its convening reminds Christianity of the traditions of the ancient Church, the value of mutual struggle against misconceptions of the Christian faith, and the mission of the faithful to contribute to the multiplication of the “good fruits” of the life in Christ, according to Christ, and directed toward Christ in the world.

Today, we are called to highlight the enduring message of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, the soteriological dimensions and anthropological implications of the term “homo-ousios,” the inseparable link between Christology and anthropology in an age of anthropological

confusion and intense efforts to emphasize the “meta-human” as an open horizon and self-divinizing perspective of human evolution, with the contribution of science and technology. The principle of “divine-human reality” comprises the answer to the impasse of the contemporary vision of a “man-god.” Therefore, reference to the “spirit of Nicaea” presents an invitation for us to turn to the essential aspects of our faith, the nucleus of which is the salvation of humankind in Christ.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is the full and perfect revelation of the truth about God and man. “Whoever has seen me has seen my father” (Jn 14:9). The incarnate Word of God demonstrated “first and alone,” as St. Nicholas Cabasilas writes, “the true and perfect human being, exemplary in conduct, in the way of life, and in every other respect.”⁵ This Truth is represented in the world by the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; it is the same Truth that nurtures her, the same Truth that she ministers to. The Church bears the robe of Truth, “woven by theology from above,” always rightly expounding and glorifying “the great mystery of piety,” evangelizing the word of faith, hope, and love, while anticipating the “endless day that knows no evening and no succession,”⁶ the coming kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

⁵ Nicholas Cabasilas, *On the Life in Christ*, PG 150.680.

⁶ Basil the Great, *On the Hexaemeron*, PG 29,52.

The task of theology is to reveal the soteriological dimension of doctrine and its interpretation in existential terms, which, along with participation in the ecclesiastical event, demands sensitivity and genuine interest for the human being and the adventure of its freedom. In this sense, the proclamation of our faith in the incarnate divine Word must be accompanied by our tangible response to His saving word: “This is my commandment to you, that you love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

In memory, then, of the ineffable gifts that He made and makes in the world, we unceasingly glorify the most-holy and most-splendid name of the Lord of all and God of love, through whom we have known the Father and through whom the Holy Spirit came into the world. Amen!

On June 1st, in the year of the Lord 2025.

Πατριαρχική καὶ Συνοδική
Ἐγκύκλιος Ἐπιστολή
γιά τόν ἑορτασμό
τῆς χιλιοστῆς ἑπτακοσιοστῆς ἐπετείου τῆς
Πρώτης Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου στή Νίκαια

Ἀριθμ. Πρωτ.: 335

† Β Α Ρ Θ Ο Λ Ο Μ Α Ι Ο Σ
ΕΛΕΩΘΕΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ
ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ - ΝΕΑΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ
ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ
ΣΕ ΟΛΟ ΤΟ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΧΑΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ ΑΠΟ ΤΟ ΘΕΟ
* * *

Ὑμνο εὐχαριστίας ἀναπέμπουμε στόν πανσθενουργό, παντεπόπτη καί παντευεργέτη Θεό, ὁ ὁποῖος εἶναι Τριάδα, σέ αὐτόν πού ἀξίωσε τὸ λαό του νὰ φθάσει στή χιλιοστὴ ἑπτακοσιοστὴ ἐπέτειο τῆς Πρώτης Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου τῆς Νίκαιας, αὐτῆς πού μὲ Πνεῦμα Ἅγιο μαρτύρησε τὴν γνήσια πίστη στόν συνάναρχο μὲ Αὐτόν πού τὸν γέννησε καὶ ἀληθινὰ ὁμοούσιο μὲ Ἐκεῖνον Θεὸ Λόγο, «τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα καὶ σαρκωθέντα καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, παθόντα καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς, καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς».

Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Νίκαιας ἀποτελεῖ ἔκφραση τῆς συνοδικῆς φύσης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, κορύφωση τῆς «ἀρχεγόνου συνοδικότητος» αὐτῆς, ἀρρήκτως συνδεδεμένης μὲ τὴν εὐχαριστιακὴν πραγμάτωση τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ζωῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ τὴν πρακτικὴ τῆς ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνελεύσεως πρὸς λήψη «ὁμοθυμαδόν»¹ ἀποφάσεων ἐπὶ τρεχόντων θεμάτων. Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Νίκαιας σηματοδοτεῖ ταυτόχρονα καὶ τὴν ἀνάδυση μιᾶς νέας συνοδικῆς δομῆς, αὐτῆς τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου, ἡ ὁποία ἔμελλε νὰ ἀποβεῖ καθοριστικὴ γιὰ τὴν πορεία τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πραγμάτων. Ἀξιομνημόνευτο εἶναι ὅτι ἡ Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδος δὲν ἀποτελεῖ «μόνιμο θεσμό» στή ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἀλλὰ «ἔκτακτο γεγονός», ἀπάντηση σὲ μία συγκεκριμένη ἀπειλὴ κατὰ τῆς πίστεως, ἡ ὁποία ἀποβλέπει στὴν ἀποκατάσταση τῆς ἐνότητος καὶ τῆς εὐχαριστιακῆς κοινωνίας πού ἔχει διαρραγεῖ.

Τὸ ὅτι ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Νίκαιας συνεκλήθη ἀπὸ τὸν Αὐτοκράτορα, ὅτι ὁ Μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος παρακολούθησε τὶς ἐργασίες καὶ περιέβαλε τὰ ἀναθέματά

¹ Πράξ. β', 1.

της μὲ τὸ κύρος κρατικοῦ νόμου, δὲν τὴν καθιστᾷ «αὐτοκρατορική σύνοδο»². Ὑπῆρξε ἀμιγῶς «ἐκκλησιαστικὸ γεγονός», κατὰ τὸ ὁποῖο ἡ Ἐκκλησία, καθοδηγούμενη ἀπὸ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα, ἀποφάσισε γιὰ τὰ τοῦ οἴκου της, ἐνῶ ὁ Αὐτοκράτορας ἐφάρμοσε τὴν ἀρχὴ «Ἀπόδοτε οὖν τὰ Καίσαρος τῷ Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ»³.

Ἐνώπιον τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς πλάνης, ἡ Ἐκκλησία διατύπωσε συνοδικὰ τὸ οὐσιῶδες τῆς διηνεκῶς βιουμένης ἐντὸς αὐτῆς πίστεως. Ὁ «ὁμοούσιος τῷ Πατρί» προαιώνιος Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, «Θεὸς ἀληθινὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ», σώζει διὰ τῆς σαρκώσεώς του τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἀπὸ τῆ δουλεία τοῦ ἀλλοτρίου καὶ διανοίγει σὲ αὐτὸν τὴν ὁδὸ τῆς κατὰ χάρι θεώσεως. «Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρόπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν»⁴. Τὸ Σύμβολο τῆς Νίκαιας διατρανώνει τὴ βέβαιη πεποίθηση ὅτι ἡ αἵρετική ἀπόκλιση ποὺ σοβοῦσε ἀποτελεῖ ἄρνηση τῆς δυνατότητας τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Μὲ αὐτὴ τὴν ἔννοια, δὲν εἶναι ἀπλᾶ θεωρητικὴ διακήρυξη ἀλλὰ ὁμολογία πίστεως, ὅπως ὅλα τὰ δογματικὰ κείμενα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, αὐθεντικὴ διατύπωση τῆς ζωντανῆς ἀλήθειας, ἡ ὁποία ὑπάρχει ἐντὸς της καὶ μέσω αὐτῆς.

Ἰδιαίτερη θεολογικὴ βαρύτητα ἔχει τὸ γεγονός ὅτι βάση τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Συμβόλου «Πιστεύομεν...» ἀποτελεῖ ἓνα τοπικὸ βαπτιστήριον Σύμβολον ἢ ὁμάδα τέτοιων Συμβόλων. Ὡς γνήσιος φορέας τῆς διαχρονικῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς αὐτοσυνειδησίας, ἡ Σύνοδος ἀνακεφαλαιώνει καὶ βεβαιώνει τὴν Ἀποστολικὴ παρακαταθήκη, τὴν ὁποία διαφυλάσσουν οἱ κατὰ τόπους Ἐκκλησίαις. Ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος ἀναφέρει ὅτι οἱ Συνοδικοὶ Πατέρες ὅσον ἀφορᾷ «περὶ τῆς πίστεως δὲν ἔγραψαν Ἀποφασίσαμε», ἀλλὰ: Ἔτσι πιστεύει ἡ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία· καὶ εὐθὺς ὁμολόγησαν πῶς πιστεύουν, ὥστε νὰ δείξουν, ὅτι τὸ φρόνημά τους δὲν εἶναι κάτι νεώτερο, ἀλλὰ ἀποστολικό, καὶ ὅτι ὅσα ἔγραψαν δὲν εἶναι εὗρημα δικό τους, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἴδια, ἐκεῖνα ποὺ δίδαξαν οἱ ἀπόστολοι»⁵. Πεποίθηση τῶν θεοδιδάκτων Πατέρων ἦταν ὅτι τίποτα δὲν προστέθηκε στὴν πίστη τῶν Ἀποστόλων καὶ ὅτι τὸ ὄντως οἰκουμενικὸ Σύμβολο τῆς Νίκαιας ἀποτελεῖ διακήρυξη τῆς κοινῆς παράδοσης τῆς Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Οἱ Συνοδικοὶ Πατέρες, τοὺς ὁποίους ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἐπαξίως τιμᾷ καὶ ὑμνεῖ ὡς «Ἀποστολικῶν παραδόσεων ἀκριβεῖς φύλακας», χρησιμοποίησαν τὸν φιλοσοφικὸ ὄρο «οὐσία» (καὶ τὸ «ὁμοούσιον») γιὰ τὴν ἔκφραση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης πίστεως στὴ θεότητα τοῦ Λόγου, τὴν ὁποία ἀρνοῦνταν ὁ Ἀρειος, καὶ μὲ αὐτὴν ἀρνοῦνταν τὸ ὅλο μυστήριον τῆς πανσωστικῆς ἔνσαρκης

² Μητροπολίτου Περγάμου Ἰωάννου Ζηζιούλα, *Ἔργα Α΄. Ἐκκλησιολογικὰ Μελετήματα*, ἐκδ. Δόμος, Ἀθήνα 2016, σ. 675-6.

³ Ματθ. κβ', 21.

⁴ Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μεγάλου, *Λόγος περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Λόγου*, PG 25, 192.

⁵ «περὶ δὲ τῆς πίστεως ἔγραψαν οὐκ ἔδοξεν, ἀλλ', Οὕτως πιστεύει ἡ καθολικὴ Ἐκκλησία· καὶ εὐθὺς ὁμολόγησαν, πῶς πιστεύουσιν, ἵνα δείξωσιν, ὅτι μὴ νεώτερον, ἀλλ' ἀποστολικόν ἐστιν αὐτῶν τὸ φρόνημα, καὶ ἃ ἔγραψαν, οὐκ ἐξ αὐτῶν εὗρέθη, ἀλλὰ ταῦτ' ἐστίν, ἅπερ ἐδίδαξαν οἱ ἀπόστολοι», Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μεγάλου, *Ἐπιστολὴ περὶ τῶν γενομένων ἐν τῇ Ἀριμίνῳ τῆς Ἰταλίας, καὶ ἐν Σελευκείᾳ τῆς Ἰσαυρίας συνόδων*, PG 26, 688.

Θείας Οικονομίας, ἐμπλεκόμενος σὲ ἑλληνιστικὰ νοητικὰ σχήματα καὶ ἀπωθώντας τὸν «Θεὸ τῶν Πατέρων» ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ «Θεοῦ τῶν φιλοσόφων».

Ἄλλο κεφαλαιῶδες ζήτημα, τὸ ὁποῖο κλήθηκε νὰ ἐπιλύσει ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Νίκαιας, πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἐνότητος στὴ λειτουργικὴ πράξη, ἦταν τὸ «πότε καὶ πῶς πρέπει νὰ ἐπιτελοῦμε τὴν ἑορτὴ τοῦ Πάσχα». Ἡ χιλιοστὴ ἑπτακοσιοστὴ ἐπέτειος τῆς σύγκλησης τῆς Συνόδου ἐπανέφερε στὴν ἐπικαιρότητα τὸ θέμα τοῦ κοινοῦ ἑορτασμοῦ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Κυρίου. Ἡ Ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ εὐχεται οἱ ὅπου γῆς Χριστιανοὶ νὰ ἐπανέλθουν, σύμφωνα πρὸς τὶς προσταγές τῆς Συνόδου τῆς Νίκαιας, στὸν ἑορτασμό τοῦ Πάσχα σὲ κοινὴ ἡμέρα, ὅπως κατὰ εὐτυχίᾳ συγκυρία συνέβη κατὰ τὸ τρέχον ἔτος. Ἡ ἀπόφασις αὕτη θὰ λειτουργήσῃ ὡς ἔνδειξις καὶ σύμβολο γνήσιας προόδου στὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς οἰκουμενικῆς συμπόρευσης καὶ ὁμονοήσεως διὰ μέσου τοῦ θεολογικοῦ διαλόγου καὶ τοῦ «διαλόγου τῆς ζωῆς», ὡς ἀπτή μαρτυρία περὶ τοῦ ἔμπρακτου σεβασμοῦ τῶν κεκτημένων τῆς ἀδιαίρετης Ἐκκλησίας. Ἡ ἐπίτευξις τοῦ στόχου αὐτοῦ, στὸ πλαίσιο τῆς ἐφετεινῆς ἐπετείου, ὑπῆρξε κοινὸ ὄραμα τοῦ ἀειμνήστου Πάπα Ρώμης Φραγκίσκου καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας Μετριότητος. Ἡ ἐκδημία του, τὴν ἐπαύριον τοῦ παγχριστιανικοῦ ἑορτασθέντος Πάσχα, ἐπιτείνει τὴν κοινὴ εὐθύνη νὰ συνεχίσουμε ἀταλάντευτα πρὸς τὴν ἴδια κατεύθυνση.

Σπουδαῖο ὑπῆρξε ἐπίσης τὸ νομοκανονικὸ ἔργο τῆς Συνόδου τῆς Νίκαιας, διὰ τοῦ ὁποῖου ἀποτυπώνεται καὶ ἐπικυρώνεται συνοδικὰ ἢ διαχρονικὴ κανονικὴ συνείδησις τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ στὸ ὁποῖο βρίσκονται οἱ ἀπαρχές τοῦ μητροπολιτικοῦ συστήματος καὶ τῆς ἀναδείξεως τοῦ κύρους, τῆς ἐξέχουσας θέσης καὶ τῆς διευρυμένης εὐθύνης ὁρισμένων Θρόνων, ἐκ τῶν ὁποίων διαμορφώθηκε προοδευτικὰ τὸ σύστημα τῆς Πενταρχίας. Ἐφ' ὅσον ἡ κανονικὴ παρακαταθήκη τῆς Νίκαιας εἶναι κοινὴ κληρονομία ὁλόκληρου τοῦ χριστιανικοῦ κόσμου, ἡ ἐφετεινὴ ἐπέτειος καλεῖται νὰ λειτουργήσῃ ὡς προσκλητήριον γιὰ ἐπιστροφὴ σὲ τὶς πηγές, στὰ πρωταρχικὰ κανονικὰ θεσπίσματα τῆς ἀδιαίρετης Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἐγγυητὴς τῶν θεσπισμάτων τῆς Νικαίας ἀναδείχθηκε διαχρονικὰ ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Θρόνος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς Μεγάλῃς Ἐκκλησίας ἐκφράσθηκε καὶ διὰ τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς καὶ Συνοδικῆς Ἐγκυκλίου μὲ ἀφορμὴ τὴν χιλιοστὴ ἑξακοσιοστὴ ἐπέτειος τῆς Συνόδου⁶, «τῆς πρώτης τῶν Οἰκουμενικῶν καὶ μεγίστης ὡς ἀληθῶς Συνόδου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας». Ἡ εἰλημμένη ἀπόφασις ἢ ἐπέτειος νὰ ἑορτασθεῖ «πανηγυρικὰ καὶ δὴ ἀπὸ κοινοῦ, εἰ δυνατόν, ἀπὸ ὅλες τὶς Ὁρθόδοξες Αὐτοκέφαλες Ἐκκλησίαις, ὡς πάνδημη ἐκδήλωσις τῆς πιστῆς καὶ σήμερα ἀκόμη μὲ τὴ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐμμονῆς τῆς Ἁγίας μας Ὁρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας στὴ διδασκαλία καὶ στὸ πνεῦμα τῆς Συνόδου ἐκείνης, ἢ ὁποῖα ὅπως,

⁶ Κ.Π.Α. κωδ. Α' 94, 10 Αὐγούστου 1925, σ. 102-3. «πανηγυρικῶς καὶ δὴ ἀπὸ κοινοῦ, εἰ δυνατόν, ὑπὸ πασῶν τῶν Ὁρθόδοξων Αὐτοκεφάλων Ἐκκλησιῶν, εἰς ἐκδήλωσιν πάνδημον τῆς πιστῆς καὶ σήμερον τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτι ἐμμονῆς τῆς Ἁγίας ἡμῶν Ὁρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τῆς Συνόδου ἐκείνης, ἥτις ὅπως ἐξ ἑνὸς τὴν μίαν πίστιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας διὰ τῆς ἐν Ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι ἀποφάνσεως αὐτῆς ἐστερέωσε καὶ ἐσφράγισεν, οὕτως ἐξ ἄλλου καὶ τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς συγκροτήσεως διὰ τῆς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς παρουσίας ἀντιπροσώπων περιλάμπρας παρέστησεν».

ἀπὸ τῇ μία πλευρά, τῇ μία πίστι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μὲ ἀπόφασή της ἐν Ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι στερέωσε καὶ σφράγισε, ἔτσι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη πλευρὰ καὶ τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς συγκρότητος διὰ τῆς ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς παρουσίας ἀντιπροσώπων περίλαμπρα παρέστησε», δυστυχῶς δὲν κατέστη δυνατόν νὰ πραγματοποιηθεῖ ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν ἐκτάκτων περιστάσεων καὶ τῆς χρείας τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Θρόνου. Τὴν 19^η Ἰουλίου 1925, πρώτη Κυριακὴ μετὰ τὴν ἐνθρόνιση τοῦ Πατριάρχου Βασιλείου Γ', ἐκπληρώθηκε ἡ «ὀφειλὴ ποὺ καθυστέρησε», διὰ τῆς τέλεσης «εἰδικῆς Πατριαρχικῆς καὶ Συνοδικῆς Λειτουργίας» στὸν Πάνσεπτο Πατριαρχικὸ Ναό. Ἰδιαίτερη ἐκκλησιολογικὴ σημασία ἔχει τὸ γεγονός ὅτι στὴν Ἐγκύκλιο τονίζεται ἡ ἀξία τῆς ἐκτέλεσης τοῦ καθήκοντος τοῦ ἑορτασμοῦ αὐτῆς τῆς «μεγάλης γιὰ ὅλη τὴ Χριστιανοσύνη» ἐπετείου ὑπὸ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, «ἡ ὁποία ἔχει ἀμεσώτερη σχέση καὶ ὀφειλὴ πρὸς τὴν ἑορτὴ αὐτή».

Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Νίκαιας ἀποτελεῖ σταθμὸ στὴ διαμόρφωση τῆς δογματικῆς ταυτότητος καὶ τῆς κανονικῆς δομῆς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, παρέμεινε δὲ τὸ πρότυπο γιὰ τὴν ἀντιμετώπιση προβλημάτων πίστεως καὶ κανονικῆς τάξης ἐπὶ οἰκουμενικοῦ ἐπιπέδου. Ἡ χιλιοστὴ ἑπτακοσιοστὴ ἐπέτειος ἀπὸ τὴν πραγματοποίησή της ὑπενθυμίζει στὴ Χριστιανοσύνη τὶς παραδοχὲς τῆς ἀρχαίας Ἐκκλησίας, τὴν ἀξία τοῦ κοινοῦ ἀγῶνα κατὰ τῶν παρανοήσεων τῆς χριστιανικῆς πίστεως καὶ τὴν ἀποστολὴ τῶν πιστῶν νὰ συμβάλλουν στὸν πολλαπλασιασμὸ τῶν «καλῶν καρπῶν» τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ, κατὰ Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς Χριστὸν ζωῆς μέσα στὸν κόσμος.

Καλούμαστε σήμερα νὰ ἀναδείξουμε τὸ διαχρονικὸ μήνυμα τῆς Πρώτης Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου στὴ Νίκαια, τὶς σωτηριολογικὲς διαστάσεις καὶ τὶς ἀνθρωπολογικὲς συνέπειες τοῦ «ὁμοούσιου», τῆς ἄρρηκτης σύνδεσης τῆς Χριστολογίας μὲ τὴν ἀνθρωπολογία, σὲ μία ἐποχὴ ἀνθρωπολογικῆς σύγχυσης καὶ ἔντονων προσπαθειῶν ἀνάδειξης τοῦ «μετανθρώπου» ὡς τοῦ ἀνοικτοῦ ὀρίζοντα καὶ τῆς αὐτοαποθεωτικῆς προοπτικῆς τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ἐξέλιξης, μὲ τὴν συμβολὴ τῆς ἐπιστήμης καὶ τῆς τεχνολογίας. Ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς «θεανθρωπινότητας» ἀποτελεῖ τὴν ἀπάντηση στὴν ἀδιέξοδη ὀπτασία τοῦ σύγχρονου «ἀνθρωποθεοῦ». Ἡ ἀναφορὰ στὸ «πνεῦμα τῆς Νίκαιας» ἀποτελεῖ πρόσκληση νὰ στραφοῦμε στὰ οὐσιώδη τῆς πίστεώς μας, πυρήνας τῆς ὁποίας εἶναι ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Ὁ Κύριος καὶ Σωτήρας μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἶναι ἡ πλήρης καὶ τέλεια ἀποκάλυψη τῆς ἀλήθειας περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. «Ὅποιος ἔχει δεῖ ἐμένα, ἔχει δεῖ τὸν πατέρα μου»⁷. Ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος ποὺ ἐνανθρώπησε ἔδειξε «πρῶτος καὶ μόνος», ὅπως γράφει ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλαος ὁ Καβάσιλας, «τὸν ἀληθινὸ ἄνθρωπο καὶ τέλειο, λόγῳ καὶ τῶν τρόπων καὶ τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὅλων τῶν ἄλλων»⁸. Αὐτὴ τὴν Ἀλήθεια ἐκπροσωπεῖ στὸν κόσμος ἡ Μία, Ἀγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Αποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία, ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τρέφεται, αὐτὴν διακονεῖ. Φορῶντας τὸν χιτῶνα τῆς Ἀλήθειας, «τὸν ὑφαντὸ ἐκ τῆς ἁνῶ θεολογίας», πάντοτε ὀρθοτομεῖ καὶ δοξάζει

⁷ «Ὁ ἐμὲ ἐωρακώς, ἐώρακε τὸν πατέρα μου», Ἰωάν. ιδ', 9.

⁸ Νικολάου Καβάσιλα, *Περὶ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς*, PG 150, 680.

«τῆς εὐσεβείας τὸ μέγα μυστήριον», εὐαγγελιζόμενη τὸν λόγον τῆς πίστεως, τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ἐλπίδας, προσβλέποντας πρὸς τὴν «ἀνέσπερον καὶ ἀδιάδοχον καὶ ἀτελεύτητον ἡμέραν»⁹, τὴν ἐρχόμενην αἰώνια Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος.

Ἔργο τῆς θεολογίας εἶναι ἡ ἀποκάλυψις τῆς σωτηριολογικῆς διάστασης τῶν δογμάτων καὶ ἡ ἐρμηνεία τους μὲ ὑπαρξιακοὺς ὅρους, ἡ ὁποία ἀπαιτεῖ, μαζὶ μὲ τὴ μετοχὴ στὸ ἐκκλησιαστικὸ γεγονός, εὐαισθησία καὶ γνήσιο ἐνδιαφέρον γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ τὶς περιπέτειες τῆς ἐλευθερίας του. Μὲ τὴν ἔννοια αὕτη, ἡ διατράνωσις τῆς πίστεως στὸν ἐνανθρωπήσαντα Θεὸ Λόγον ὀφείλει νὰ συνοδεύεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἔμπρακτον ἀνταπόκρισίν μας στὸ σωτήριο λόγον του: «αὕτη εἶναι ἡ δική μου ἢ ἐντολή, νὰ ἀγαπᾶτε ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον ὅπως σᾶς ἀγάπησα ἐγώ»¹⁰.

Ἐνθυμούμενοι, λοιπόν, τὶς ἄφατες δωρεές, τὶς ὁποῖες χάρισε καὶ χαρίζει σὲ ὅλη τὴν κτίση, ἀκατάπαυστα δοξολογοῦμε τὸ ὑπεράγιο καὶ ὑπέρλαμπρο ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου τῶν ὅλων καὶ Θεοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης, διὰ τοῦ Ὁποίου γνωρίσαμε τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἐπιδήμησε στὸν κόσμον. Ἀμήν!

Κατὰ τὸ σωτήριο ἔτος 2025, κατὰ μῆνα Ἰούνιον (1)

Ἐπινεμήσεως Γ΄

Ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Βαρθολομαῖος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης.

- + ὁ Κολωνείας Ἀθανάσιος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Γορτύνης καὶ Ἀρκαδίας Μακάριος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Ἀρκαλοχωρίου, Καστελλίου καὶ Βιάννου Ἀνδρέας ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Βελγίου Ἀθηναγόρας ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Λέρου, Καλύμνου καὶ Ἀστυπαλαίας Παῖσιος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Ἀτλάντας Σεβαστιανός ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Κυδωνιῶν Ἀθηναγόρας ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Σηλυβρίας Μάξιμος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Αὐστραλίας Μακάριος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Ἑλβετίας Μάξιμος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Ἰρλανδίας Ἰάκωβος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης
- + ὁ Μεξικοῦ Ἰάκωβος ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχέτης

⁹ Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, *Εἰς τὴν Ἑξαήμερον*, PG 29, 52.

¹⁰ «αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολή ἢ ἐμὴ, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς», Ἰωάν. ιε', 12.

Νὰ ἀναγνωσθεῖ στοὺς Ἱεροὺς Ναοὺς κατὰ τὴ Θεία Λειτουργία τῆς Κυριακῆς, 1^{ης} Ἰουνίου 2025, μνήμη τῶν 318 θεοφόρων Πατέρων τῆς ἐν Νικαίᾳ Α΄ Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου, μετὰ τὸ Ἱερὸ Εὐαγγέλιο.