

My Beloved Ones,

We have been blessed to experience our Lord's Passion, His life-saving Resurrection, and this past Thursday, His glorious Ascension. Far from this feast representing an ending, it is the beginning: the beginning of the apostolic age, through the coming of the Holy Spirit, as well as the continuation of our unification with our Creator in Heaven.

Before we can celebrate the coming of Holy Spirit at Pentecost next Sunday, the Church in its wisdom has seen fit to honor on this Sunday, the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of 325; holy and great men whose determination to put to rest the Arian heresies produced the Nicene Creed, a statement of faith and belief common to all Christians, Eastern and Western (no matter what centuries may have changed).

These Fathers, at the instigation of the Emperor and Equal to the Apostles St. Constantine the Great, are also responsible for assembling the canons of the Bible, selecting the Gospel accounts that make up the New Testament.

In a predominantly Western Christian society, which often elevates the Bible to a place of supremacy above all else, this is another important reason to remember the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council. They themselves understood the value of these texts as divinely inspired accounts of Christ's ministry, teachings and Messianic mission—but not as the sole teacher and authority. Holy Tradition, the sacraments, the writings of the Fathers, are also a large part of our faith, and act as an important complement to Scripture.

However, I do not wish for you to believe that Holy Tradition is something which exists solely in the past. Holy Tradition, has been active force in the life of the Church since the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and even into the present; a recent example would be the discussions had, and the documents thereafter signed at last year's Holy and Great Council on the island of Crete.

In this way, we honor the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council by continuing to follow their example: we profess the Symbol of the Nicene Creed; we nurture our spiritual lives through not only the Holy Bible, but Holy Tradition as well; and we trust that the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire us as individuals, and as the collective Body of Christ.

Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this Sunday, do not think of these men as distant and remote; for through the gift of the Holy Spirit that is to come with Pentecost, past, present and future are all connected in our Holy Orthodox Church.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta

