



March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**The Sunday of Orthodoxy**

To the Reverend Priests, the Deacons in Christ, the monastics, and all the pious and Christ-loving Orthodox faithful:

*“In the icons, we see the sufferings of our Master for us: the Cross, the Grave, Hades slain and pillaged; we see the contests of the Martyrs, the crowns, that very salvation which our first Prize-winner and Contest-master and Crown-bearer wrought in the midst of the earth. This festival we celebrate today and together we rejoice and are made glad with prayers and processions, and we cry out with psalms and hymns: Who is so great a god as our God? You are the God who performs wonders.”*

— The Synodikon for the Sunday of Orthodoxy

Beloved Faithful, Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Today on this magnificent feast of the triumph of our Holy Orthodox Faith, we behold the icon of our Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is the Icon of the invisible God* (Col. 1:15). *Though no man has seen God at any time, the Only-Begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him* (Jn. 1:18). And in the living icons of our Lord Jesus Christ -- the Saints, Martyrs and Confessors of the Orthodox Faith, we behold those who, by their holy lives and oftentimes by their martyric deaths have exalted the truth of the Gospel for all the world to see. We, who are their spiritual descendants and heirs, are bound to confess their heroic and saintly deeds, which bear witness to the greatness of God and the power of faith.

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is most auspiciously placed at the beginning of the Great Lent as an encouragement for all of us to proclaim, and most importantly act, according to the ‘right belief’ of our Faith. We give honor to the memory of the Righteous by our authentic engagement in the spiritual disciplines of fasting, praying, and almsgiving. Through the help of our All-Merciful and Loving God, our sacrifices and spiritual efforts can bear fruit in our lives and in the lives of our families, church communities and society. What is more, these days of grace, repentance and transformation prepare us to become partakers of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ at Holy Pascha.

As the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, we exhort all the faithful to celebrate this Feast with special joy, and with a shared sense of our common Faith. The Assembly includes every canonical Orthodox presence in our region, and as such is a living icon of the varied traditions that have been carried to the New World by faithful Orthodox Christians from around the world. We encourage mutual celebrations and fellowship in the spirit of the Feast. Let us honor those who have come before us and preserved for us the integrity of Holy Orthodoxy. Let us be ourselves icons of the Living God, filled with faith, hope and love, and thus fulfill our Lenten struggle, and be counted worthy to worship the Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With paternal love in Christ,

*The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America*