

**MELKITE RESOURCES FOR THE DOMESTIC CHURCH
SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICEA**

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

Parents: Blessed ✠ is our God at all times, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Response: Amen.

Parents: Glory to You, our God, glory to You. Heavenly King, Consoler, Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, the Treasury of blessings and the Giver of life, come and dwell in us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

Children: Holy ✠ God! Holy Mighty One! Holy Immortal One! Have mercy on us! *(Three times w/ metany)*

Glory be to the Father ✠ and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us! Lord, forgive us our sins! Master, pardon our transgressions! Holy One, look upon us and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy! *(Three times)*

Glory be to the Father ✠ and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

RESURRECTIONAL TROPARION - TONE 4

The women disciples of the Lord,
having learned from the angel the joyful announcement of the resurrection,
and having rejected the ancestral sentence, proudly told the apostles:
Death is despoiled. Christ God is risen, bestowing to the world great mercy."

EPISTLE: TITUS 3:8 - 15

My son Titus, this saying is true, and in this matter, I want to insist that those who believe in God be careful to excel in good works: these are good and useful to people. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and quarrels, and disputes about the Law, for they are useless and futile.

Avoid a factious man after warning him once or twice, knowing that such a man is perverted and sins, since he is condemning himself.

When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to meet me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, taking care that they lack nothing. And let our people also learn to excel in good works, in order to help cases of urgent need so that they may not be unfruitful. All my companions greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. The grace of God be with all of you. Amen.¹

GOSPEL: LUKE 8:5 -15

The Lord told this parable: "The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up. And other seed fell upon the rock, and as soon as it had sprung up it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other seed fell upon good ground, and sprang up and yielded fruit a hundred-fold." As he said these things he cried out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

But his disciples then began to ask him what this parable meant. He said to them, "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that 'Seeing, they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And those by the wayside are they who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. Now those upon the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, but believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they who have heard, and as they go their way are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not ripen. But that upon good ground, these are they who, with a right and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bear fruit in patience." When he had said this, he cried out "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"²

¹ Epistle Book, English (Apostolos): Bishop Joseph Raya, Alleluia Press, 1980

² Gospel Book, English: Bishop Joseph Raya, Alleluia Press, 1978

CATECHETICAL SUMMARY

Today we remember the Fathers who defended the Orthodox faith at the Second Council of Nicea. It was in the 8th century that some men who were not Christians gained power and influence at the imperial court in Constantinople and began to say that we should not have icons of Jesus and the saints in the church. These men wanted nothing more than to cause division in the Church of God. Ultimately, the root of the error which they promoted was the denial that the material, created world could be a bearer of divine life. This is so important because it separates the apostolic and orthodox churches from the rest of Christianity today.

First, it is important to remember that we do not worship wood but rather we honor the one depicted in the icons. Just as we hang pictures of our loved ones, so we do well to paint images of the saints who are very much present to us today. We do so not because they are dead, but because they lived and continue to live the divine life. The saints are the men and women that are filled with divine life and bear the image and likeness of God himself. And when Divine Life is our life, then our life is no longer mortal life but eternal life.

We heard in the Gospel today about the seed which falls on bad ground and that which falls on good ground. As the Lord explained to his Apostles, and explains to us today, the ground represents the heart, and the seed is the Word of God. The seed is Christ himself who comes and makes his dwelling within us. The seed is Christ who makes his life our life.

It is for this reason that we celebrate today the memory of the Fathers of the Second Council of Nicea and also that we paint and honor and reverence the Saints depicted in the holy icons, because their heart was the "good soil" into which the seed, the Word of God, was planted deeply. They were filled with Divine Life and now live with God forever.

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS:

1. Is the soil of our heart ready to receive the Word of God or are we rocky ground? Do we hunger for the things of God? Is our Christian life choked by the concerns of this world and by distractions that are all around us?
2. Do we come earlier to church each Sunday to grow in divine life?
3. Are we patient in the face of adversity and kind to those who hate us and are mean to us?
4. Do we pray regularly before the icon of Christ in our home?