



The Trophy-Bearer

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<http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org/>

Through Whom All Things Were Made

Rev. Fr. Anthony Cook



Over these last several episodes, we have taken a slow and careful turn through the various phrases of the Creed that are devoted to forever excluding Arianism from the Christian Faith, by making it unmistakably clear that, to be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is truly and fully God. As we prepare to leave this section behind, however, I would like to zoom out, as it were, and observe a couple of things about it.

First - up to this point we have been emphasizing the sub-text of this part of the Creed, the way it is designed to negate and exclude the Arian belief that the Son of God is created and finite. We need to make certain as well that we don't miss the fact that negation and exclusion here remain only sub-text. The Fathers of the Church could have simply come right out and said, "We are Christians, and Christians believe that Jesus Christ is truly God, so if you are an Arian and don't believe that He is fully God, You aren't a Christian." We might prefer it if they had - it seems simpler than teasing out sub-text and history. And, in fact, the final decision of the Council of Nicaea DID include precisely such language, proclaiming anathema, a curse, on anyone who said "that there was a time when the Son of God was not, or that before He was begotten He was not, or that He was made of things that were not, or that He is of a different substance or being from the Father, or that He is a creature, or subject to change or alteration." But in the Creed that we confess each Sunday in the Liturgy, the Church omits this negative language.

This omission, and what we confess instead, shows us something important about the Orthodox Faith, something especially important in the modern day. The Orthodox Faith takes very seriously the responsibility to articulate a positive Faith, the Good News about God, and not only the negative aspect of what those who disagree with us get wrong. This is not to say that we don't criticize error when we see it - but to see an error requires not only that we understand where it comes from, and what makes it wrong, but far more importantly it requires that we then affirm the positive truth which remedies the error. And so, the Church Fathers didn't simply say to the Arians, "You're wrong!!" and leave it at that. They went further, to say, "And this is what is right, and true, and perfect." This is a principle that we will see throughout the life of the Church, from high theology to practical spirituality. We don't spend our energy resisting the darkness - instead, we turn toward the Light.

REGULAR SCHEDULE

Sunday

8:50 am – Orthros (Greek)
10 am – Div. Liturgy (bilingual)

Saturday

5 pm – Great Vespers (English)
Holy Confession by appointment

*Please see included calendar for other meetings
& weekday services, and for any variations to
this regular schedule.*

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Funerals

May 9, 2018

Edmon Akleh

May 26, 2018

Peter Tavulares

June 5, 2018

Harry Grias

June 8, 2018

Zaharoula Karaboyas

June 9, 2018

Theodore Meskos

June 15, 2018

Leonidas Kiliaris

Chrismations

May 20, 2018

Beretta Nicole Johnson

40-Day Blessings

May 20, 2018

Neophytos Mehregan
Parents: Robert & Elena

Weddings

May 26, 2018

Nickalus & Kaitlin (Grias)
Mazzola

SAINT GEORGE

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Outside of office hours, parishioners may leave a voicemail for Fr. Anthony or the office. In case of emergency, they may call Fr. Anthony directly on his cell. Please leave a message if Father does not answer, and he will return your call shortly.

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2018 Parish Council

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Michael Liakos

Louis Kircos

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Bill Colovos

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Pete Georvassilis

George Kaltsas

Sam Kiouis

George Kotronis

Pete Makarounas

Kim Moody

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Peter Vougiouklakis

The second thing I would like to note about this first part of the Creed begins from a structural analysis. We talked about this back in Episode 5, but it's good to recap - the Creed can be divided into three main clauses, first, for the Father, second, for the Son, and third, for the Holy Spirit, with a fourth clause describing the ongoing life of the Church. Of these, the second clause, concerning the Son, is by far the largest - more than half of the Creed is focused on the Son of God - and this second clause is itself divided into two parts. Today we are finishing with the first part, which focuses on the Divinity of the Son and His eternal relationship with the Father, that He is full and perfect God. In the coming episodes, we will move on to consider the human nature of the Son, His conception, birth, life, ministry, death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Second Coming.

From this structural analysis, then, we see two points upheld. First, the separation of these truths into two clauses affirms the self-evident truth that there is a difference, a distinction, a separation between human nature and divine nature. They are not the same thing. The second point, though, seems to contradict the first - for we are affirming that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Himself both divine and human.

We will address both of these points, but only one at a time. The first point, the distinction between human and divine natures, is one we discussed awhile ago, in Episodes 7 and 8, when we talked about the absolute gulf between the Creator and the Creation. This gulf, this distinction, this dichotomy is real, and we cannot ignore it - it is fundamental to how we live and experience the world. It is, however, a limitation of our nature, of our experience, not a limitation on God. In addition, there are two ways in which we experience this separation between Creation and our Creator. The first is natural and intended - the second is not. The first is a function simply of the fact that we are the ones created. We are intrinsically less, naturally finite and limited. God is not - He is greater: infinite, not limited. This distinction is absolute - it has been this way for us since we were created, and it will always be this way.

The second way in which we experience the separation between ourselves and God is something else entirely. We are more distant from God than we should be because of choices that we make. This brings us to the question of sin, and as we discussed in Episode 12, the idea of sin is often rather problematic, because most of us understand sin in a legalistic way. We tend to think that "sin" means "crime," a breaking of a rule, something that is only bad for us if we get caught and the penalty for breaking that rule can be imposed on us. But that is not what the word actually means.

To understand better what "sin" actually means in Orthodox Christianity, I want you to try something. Imagine yourself standing in front of someone you love, face to face, looking into their eyes. You are present in the moment, and so are they - there is an intimate connection between the two of you. Now, if you turn around and face the other direction, you won't be looking into their eyes any longer. There will be less of a connection with them than there was when you were looking at them. The lessened connection isn't something that they did to you to punish

you for turning away - it is just what happens when you turn and look in the opposite direction. That is what has happened to us, as individuals, and as the entire human race, with God. We were created to look at Him, to commune with Him, to be loved by Him and to love Him. And we have turned away, and our connection with Him is broken, and as a result, we experience life as something from which God is absent, just as you, if you turn your back on your loved one, put your fingers in your ears, and start saying “la la la la la” to yourself, can create the condition of isolation from them, even though they are standing right there.

The Creed, then, talks about God from within the constraints of our human experience. As it presents to us the essential truths about the Son of God, it respects the fundamental difference between the Creator and the Creation that is natural and right - and it confesses the broken truth of our condition as well, that we are estranged from communion with God, separate from Him and isolated. And so, it presents the Son of God to us in two sections, one dealing with His Divinity, and the other with His humanity.

But that brings us to the second point that we see upheld in our structural analysis of the Creed - that this separation between Creator and Creation is a limitation of our nature, of our experience, and not a limitation on God.

This is why, even as we talk about the uncreated, Divine Nature of the Son of God, as we have been doing for the past several episodes, we talk as well about His action and agency in the Created order. And so, the Creed, even as it affirms the distinction between Creator and Creation, also affirms something else - that He is nonetheless present and active in the Creation, and that He always has been, and thus it affirms that the truth of our experience does not reflect the actual truth of our existence. This is why, even as the Creed affirms that the Son of God is fully, perfectly, infinitely Divine, Uncreated, and Eternal, it calls Him the Lord Jesus Christ, the Name He assumed when He became a human being, and it further affirms that not only did He become flesh and dwell in our midst, but that He is the agent, the actor, the protagonist, the doer of Creation itself - that it is “through Him that all things were made.”

This serves, as we said before, as a transition to the next part of the Creed, in which we talk in detail about the historical facts of the life of Jesus Christ. But it reminds us too that His action in this created order is not limited to the years of His life on this earth, just as His Being is not constrained by time and space. To reflect on this is to reflect on the deepest mystery of the Christian Faith, the question of how God could have become Man, of how the Man Jesus Christ could possibly be God, of how Infinite Divinity can commune with Created Limitedness, and of what that means both for our experience of the world, and for the truth behind our experience. So next time, we will consider more fully Him through Whom all things were made, in Whom we live, and move, and have our being.

The above is the nineteenth installment of our new Adult Education Program, updated weekly at <http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com>. Comments/questions are welcome, by email or via a comment on the website.

Please note, as well, that we live stream each Sunday's Orthros & Divine Liturgy on our parish Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/franthonyc-stgeorgesouthgate>. A recording of the Sunday Sermons is also posted there.

As we are speaking of our internet offerings, please remember to check the parish website: <http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org>, for announcements, and for an updated calendar of feastsdays, readings, services, and events.

St. George Calendar of Events • JUNE & JULY 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
24 ✠ ← Nativity of John the Baptist Elizabeth, Mother of Forerunner Epistle: Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4 Gospel: Luke 1:1-25; 57-68; 76-80 Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)	25 ← Prokopios the New Martyr Righteous Pebronia Epistle: Romans 12:4-5; 15-21 Gospel: Matthew 12:9-13	26 ← David of Thessalonika Icon of Theotokos of Tikhvin Epistle: Romans 4:9-18 Gospel: Matthew 12:14-16; 22-30 Deaconess (7:00 pm)	27 Sampson the Innkeeper Joanna the Myrrhbearer Epistle: Romans 15:7-16 Gospel: Matthew 12:38-45	28 ◆ ← Relics of Cyrus and John Pappas the Martyr Epistle: Romans 15:17-29 Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50; 13:1-3 Vespers/Liturgy for Sts. Peter & Paul (5:30 pm)	29 ← Apostles Peter and Paul Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; 12:1-9 Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19	30 ◆ Synaxis of the Holy Apostles Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 Gospel: Matthew 9:36; 10:1-8 Byzantine Chant-Kids (4:30-5:45p) Great Vespers (5:00 pm)
1 ✠ Cosmos & Damian Unmercen. Constantine, Martyr of Cyprus Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8 Gospel: Matthew 8:23-34; 9:1 Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)	2 Deposition of Robe of the Theotokos in Vlachernae Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7 Gospel: Luke 13:9-49; 56	3 Hyacinth of Caesarea Anatolios, Pat. of Constan. Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30	4 Independence Day Andrew of Crete Marthia, mother Symeon (Stylite) Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; 3:1-8 Gospel: Matthew 13:31-36 Office Closed	5 Athanasios of Mount Athos Lampadius the Wonderworker Epistle: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 Gospel: Matthew 11:27-30	6 Sisoes the Great Archippus, Philemon, Onesimus Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:5-8 Gospel: Matthew 13:44-54	7 ◆ Thomas of Maloon Kyriaki the Great Martyr Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5 Gospel: Mark 5:24-34 Great Vespers (5:00 pm)
8 ✠ Prokopios the Great Martyr Theophilos the Myrrhbearer Epistle: Romans 12:6-14 Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8 Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)	9 Pancratios, Bishop of Sicily Dionysios the Orator Epistle: 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:1-11 Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58	10 45 Martyrs Nikopolis, Armenia Martyr Apollonios Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:1-12 Gospel: Matthew 14:1-13	11 Euphemia the Great Martyr Olga, Equal-to-the-Apostles Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 Gospel: Luke 7:36-50	12 Proklos & Hilarios of Ancyra Michael Malinus Epistle: 1 Corinthians 7:24-35 Gospel: Matthew 15:12-21	13 Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel Stephanos of Sarvas Monastery Epistle: Hebrews 2:2-10 Gospel: Matthew 15:29-31	14 ◆ Aquila of the 70 Joseph the Confessor Epistle: Romans 16:1-16 Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42; 11:1 Great Vespers (5:00 pm)
15 ✠ Holy Fathers Iulitta & Kyrkos the Martyrs Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles Epistle: Titus 3:8-15 Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19 Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)	16 Athenogenes of Heracleopolis Julia of Carthage Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:13-18 Gospel: Matthew 16:1-6	17 Marina of Antioch Veronika & Speratos the Martyrs Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5 Gospel: Mark 5:24-34	18 Emilianos of Bulgaria Paul, Thea and Oulalentine Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:12-22 Gospel: Matthew 16:20-24	19 Macrina, sister of St. Basil Bios, Abbot of Antioch Epistle: 1 Corinthians 10:28-33; 11:1-8 Gospel: Matthew 16:24-28 Seniors Luncheon (Noon) Parish Council (7:00 pm)	20 ☮ Elias the Prophet Epistle: James 5:10-20 Gospel: Luke 4:22-30	21 ◆ Symeon the Fool for Christ Parthenios, Bishop of Arta Epistle: Romans 13:1-10 Gospel: Matthew 12:30-37 Great Vespers (5:00 pm)
22 ✠ Mary Magdalene, Myrrhbearer Markella of Chios Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:10-17 Gospel: Matthew 14:14-22 Orthros/Liturgy (8:50 & 10 am)	23 Ploceas, Bishop of Sinope Ezekiel the Prophet Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:31-34; 12:1-6 Gospel: Matthew 18:1-11	24 Christina the Great Martyr Athanagoras the Apologist Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 Gospel: Matt. 18:18-22; 19:1-2; 13:15 Investment Oversight (7:00 pm)	25 ☮ Dormition of Anna, mother of Theotokos, Olympos Epistle: Galatians 4:22-27 Deaconess Gospel: Luke 8:16-21	26 Hermolaos & his Companions Paraskevi of Rome Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5 Gospel: Mark 5:24-34	27 ☮ Panteleimon the Great Martyr Nicholas of Noygorod Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10 Gospel: John 15:17-27; 16:1-2	28 Prochoros, Nicanor, Timon Irene of Chrysovalantou Epistle: Acts 6:1-7 Gospel: Matthew 15:32-39 NO Vespers

• Shaded days denote a fast day. ✠ denotes a Liturgy ◆ Great Vespers/Compline ❖ Akatist/Paraklesis ✂ Presanctified Liturgy ☮ fish/wine/oil allowed ☯ wine/oil allowed