



Sermon: On the Sunday of Orthodoxy

Saint John of Shanghai & San Francisco, March 7-20, 1954

Great Lent - all of its services are united by the idea of preparing for Holy Pascha, to meet the risen Christ with a clean heart. Why do we prepare in this manner? What is Pascha? Pascha is a taste of the joy of paradise! What is this joy? It is that we see God and His glory! The Church loves the glory of the Lord! When she celebrates the Feast of Orthodoxy, she keeps the festival of the day of the reestablishment of the veneration of icons. An icon is simply a reminder of Christ the God-Man on earth. Icons of the saints are reminders of all those who followed Christ, who were faithful and devoted to Him, and burned with love for Him. The veneration of the holy icons is the veneration of the glory of the Lord. He Who rejoices in the glory of God and in everything that reminds him of it in this life will also rejoice in the age to come. He who in this life strove toward God will rush to Him joyfully when he hears the words, "Come unto Me, ye blessed..." at the dread judgment.

All those who do not know how to rejoice in the glory of God, in whom the divine realm and its laws call forth a state of unhappiness, who love gloom or semi-gloom, who do not love the light, will not

answer to the call of "Come unto Me." They will shrink back in indignation, unhappiness, in jealousy and anger, from the humble and the meek who will go toward the light, from God Himself, Whom they will begin to blame for being in their state. They will even shrink from themselves, though they will not want to admit their guilt. Such a state is true suffering. Hades is not a place, no, but a state of the soul. It begins here on earth. Just so, paradise begins in the soul of a man here in the earthly life. Here we already have contact with the divine, on the day of the Bright Resurrection and when we worthily receive Holy Communion. It is necessary to prepare for confession: All of a splinter must be removed, for if there is any left, infection will begin. It is necessary to pray for repentance and for the joy of purification, so that a ray of light will touch our soul and it will come to love the light... It is necessary to pray to meet the Risen Christ with a clean heart, to taste of the joy of the kingdom of heaven at least in the smallest degree.