

Date: February 24, 2026

Subject: BURL-Choir TRIUMPH of ORTHODOXY Weekend NOTICE

Dear Friends!

First, I ask for your forgiveness and wish you a spiritually rewarding Great Lent and joyous celebration of Pascha.

This Saturday/Sunday the Church celebrates the Sunday of Orthodoxy (Torzhestvo Pravoslaviya), on the first Sunday of Great Lent.

This Sunday (and the following Sundays of Veliky Post), Liturgy will be according to Sv. Vasiliy Velikiy, in which to accommodate longer prayers that are read by clergy, special longer-duration arrangements of "Milost mira ...", "Tebe poyem ...", and "I vseh, i vsya" are used, and instead of "Dostoyno est ...", "O Tebe raduetza ..." is sung.

The attached (double-sided) Tropar / Kondak text sheet contains the special prayers that will be sung this Saturday / Sunday.

Earlier, on Friday / Saturday, the Church commemorates the miracle of holy Great Martyr Theodore.

Brief summaries about the Triumph of Orthodoxy, and the miracle of holy Great Martyr Theodore are provided below.

(Note: unless otherwise indicated, all dates are "old style".)

**** TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY

The Seventh Ecumenical Council dealt predominantly with the controversy regarding icons and their place in Orthodox worship. It was convened in Nicaea in 787 by Empress Irene at the request of Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople. The Council was attended by 367 bishops. Almost a century before this, the iconoclastic controversy had once more shaken the foundations of both Church and State in the Byzantine empire. Excessive religious respect and the ascribed miracles to icons by some members of society, approached the point of worship (due only to God) and idolatry. This instigated excesses at the other extreme by which icons were completely taken out of the liturgical life of the Church by the Iconoclasts. The Iconophiles, on the other-hand, believed that icons served to preserve the doctrinal teachings of the Church; they considered icons to be man's dynamic way of expressing the divine through art and beauty.

The Council decided on a doctrine by which icons should be venerated but not worshipped. In answering the Empress' invitation to the Council, Pope Hadrian replied with a letter in which he also held the position of extending veneration to icons but not worship, the last befitting only God. The decree of the Council for restoring icons to churches added an important clause which still stands at the foundation of the rationale for using and venerating icons in the Orthodox Church to this very day:

"We define that the holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on the sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Whenever these

representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor (timitiki proskynisis), but not of real worship (latreia), which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith and is proper for the divine nature. The veneration accorded to an icon is in effect transmitted to the prototype; he who venerates the icon, venerates in it the reality for which it stands".

An Endemousa (Regional) Synod was called in Constantinople in 843, under Empress Theodora. The veneration of icons was solemnly proclaimed at the Hagia Sophia Cathedral. The Empress, her son Michael III, Patriarch Methodios, and monks and clergy came in procession and restored the icons in their rightful place. The day was called "Triumph of Orthodoxy." Since that time, this event is commemorated yearly with a special service on the first Sunday of Lent, the "Sunday of Orthodoxy". Orthodox teaching about icons, as defined at the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, is embodied in the texts sung on this Sunday.

**** GREAT MARTYR THEODORE THE TYRO (RECRUIT)

The Holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit* was a soldier in the city of Amáseia in Pontus (Asia Minor) on the coast of the Euxine (Black) Sea, under the command of the Praepositus (regimental commander) Brincus. Saint Theodore was ordered to offer sacrifice to idols, but he proclaimed his faith in Christ the Savior in a loud voice. Brincus gave him a few days to think it over, during which time the Saint prayed.

* Note: His title comes from the Latin word tiro, because he was a newly-enlisted recruit, not because he came from the city of Tyre, as some mistakenly imagine.

Theodore was accused of setting a pagan temple on fire and destroying the idol of Rhea, and so he was thrown into prison to be starved to death. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him there, comforting and encouraging him. When he was brought before the Governor Publius, Theodore boldly confessed his faith, for which he was subjected to new torments and condemned to be burnt alive. The Great Martyr Theodore mounted an enormous pyre, and after he made the Sign of the Cross, the wood was lit, but the Holy Spirit cooled the flames. Saint Theodore stood in the flames, praising and glorifying God. Then he gave his holy soul into God's hands, and the onlookers saw his soul ascending to Heaven, according to the author of his Life, who was also an eyewitness.

This occurred in about the year 306 under the Roman Emperor Galerius (305-311). Unharmd by the fire, Saint Theodore's body was buried under a widow's house in the city of Eukháita, not far from Amáseia. Later, his relics were transferred to Constantinople, to the church which bears his name. His head is in the city of Gaeto, Italy.

Fifty years after the Saint Theodore's martyrdom, Emperor Julian the Apostate (reigned 361-363), planned to commit an outrage upon the Christians during the first week of Great Lent. He ordered the city magistrate of Constantinople to sprinkle all the food in the marketplaces with blood which had been offered to idols. Saint Theodore appeared to Archbishop Eudoxios in a dream, and told him to inform all the Christians that no one should buy anything in the marketplaces, but to eat boiled wheat with honey (kolyva) instead.

In remembrance of this occurrence, the Orthodox Church commemorates the holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit each year on the first Saturday of Great Lent. On Friday evening, at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, after the prayer at the Ambo, the Canon to the Holy Great Martyr Theodore, composed by Saint John of Damascus, is sung. After this, kolyva is blessed and distributed to the faithful.

The celebration of the Great Martyr Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent was established by Patriarch Nektarios of Constantinople (381-397).

The Troparion to Saint Theodore is very similar to the Troparion for the Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths (on the Sunday Before the Nativity of the Lord). The Kontakion to Saint Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, reminds us that he also had faith as his breastplate.

In iconography, Saint Theodore the Recruit is depicted in four different ways: either alone in military garb, battling a large snake, or together with Saint Theodore the Commander, standing upright or riding horses. He always wears his military uniform.

We pray to Saint Theodore the Recruit for the recovery of stolen articles.