

# Sermon for the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

John 17.1-13

Fr. John Vazquez

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—Amen!

Christ has ascended!

Happy Father's Day to all of the Father's here.

Being a father is one of the great blessings in my life and having a wonderful father has been a great blessing to me.

My dad is one of the people I look up to the most in my life. He has been a great example to me and shared a lot with me of his own experience.

Often he would share these experiences with me through his words.

Words are so important—they can bring us into communion with someone or they can remove us from communion with someone.

One of the greatest sadnesses in life is to be deceived or betrayed by someone. When someone says one thing and then they do another we can be lead astray by someone's word.

This is a great sadness and sin. When our words do not line up with who we really are. If we lead someone astray through our words we will be judged for this.

So we must do all we can to make sure that our words truly express us; that we are careful with our words

In some sense when Adam and Eve fell they turned away from the Word of God, the command of God, and this broke communion with God.

So now, we are trying to restore that communion with God and we do that through taking in the Word of God.

We hear in the Gospel today—eternal life is to know the Word of God who was sent by the Father.

So the Father has a Word for us that expresses who He is so that we can be in communion with Him.

Our Heavenly Father has a Word. He has a Word, and that Word is Jesus Christ, who came to the world to save us.

You know sometimes people try to explain the Trinity, and there are many different analogies we can use but one of the most helpful ways for me, as I think about it is if you think about a person.

A person has thoughts right?

And they've always had those thoughts. Right? A person is not a person if they don't have a word. . . if they don't have thoughts, right?

So, the father is like this—He's always had his Word with him. He's always had those thoughts with him.

And when He speaks His Word, that Word expresses who He is.

We have the expression, I'm trying to express myself. We use our words to express ourselves right?

So the Father speaks, and His Word is so True, so Powerful, so Good, that when He speaks, it can even bring light.

He can bring creation from nothing. This is who the Father is, and this is who the Word is. The Word is always with the Father. The Father has never been without His Word.

He's never been without His Son.

And also, when you speak, what comes out of your mouth? . . .

Breath. . . breath comes out of your mouth. So, the Word comes from the Father, as does the Spirit.

The Word is the only-begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father.

And this is one way that we can use to understand the Holy Trinity.

That the Word and the Spirit are with the Father from eternity.

The Father is not alive if he doesn't have His Spirit, and if he doesn't have His rational principle—His Word.

There was a heresy early on in the church that said that the Word was the highest creature, but He was created.

So in other words, there was a time when the Father didn't have His Word.

This teaching is nonsense. The Father would be irrational if He didn't have His thoughts, if He didn't have His Word right?

So this is a heresy that the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council that we remember today, fought against.

And they wanted to be very clear that they were speaking for what was true and what was right.

Why?

Well, if the church is Christ's body, right?

If the Church is Christ's body, the Church is Christ, then the Church needs to be perfect in its theology, in its doctrine, in its dogma.

This is why when we come to the church, we can be saved because we're united with that perfect Word of God. Because the Church perfectly expresses who God is. We are not deceived about who God is.

And this is why all this ink has been spilled and all these words have been said about who the Son is, who the Father is, who the Holy Spirit is.

Because this has to be correct if people are going to find salvation. If you unite yourself with falsehoods, you're not going to be saved right? You're not going to be saved.

But the Truth will save you. The Truth will set you free, as the holy scriptures teach us. (Jn 8.32)

So this is why the holy fathers have worked so hard to define the faith and say what it is. This is what we remember today. The 318 Holy Father's of the First Ecumenical Council.

But what does this have to do with us? Why is this important? Why does it matter?

Well, when we join ourselves to Truth—to Christ, then we can have life. And when we join ourselves to that perfect expression of the Word of God, which is found in the Holy Church, in the Holy Orthodox Church, then this is how we find salvation.

On the practical side why cant Jesus be someone who was created?

Well, what is salvation? I have said this over and over—salvation is union with God.

This is what salvation is. It's not sitting on a cloud in heaven and eating whatever you want...

Salvation is union with God. It's much more than anything we can even imagine.

And God is the only one who can unite us to Himself. A creature can't do that. Even if it's the highest creature, the best creature, the most perfect creature, right?

It can't, a creature can't do that. A creature can't unite us to God.

This is why the Son, who is the only-begotten of the Father, took on flesh. So that we could be united with God and have a union with Him.

So, how do we have this union with God? How do we participate in this communion with this perfect Word of God?

There are three things that we can do. Well, there's more than three things, but three things I want to say today.

The first is that we can practice silence.

We can listen to what God's Word is to us.

What is God trying to tell us? If we sit in silence for even a minute, then we have our thoughts start to boil up from within our hearts, within our minds, and there's all kinds of different things that we learn about ourselves when we sit in silence.

But if we sit in silence long enough and are able to sort of quiet those things and just let them pass along, this is when we can be in touch with the Word of God and hear that Word of

God.

We have to quiet ourselves so that we can hear God's Word. If we're not quiet, we can't hear.

So that's the first thing we do, we sit in silence, and this is how we can begin to be in communion with God's perfect Word. There's a lot of noise in the world today, lots of noise. Just sit in silence for five minutes every day. Five minutes. Not too long. On your drive, don't turn on the radio, don't listen to anything.

Just drive in silence. And see what comes up from inside of you and be in touch with God.

The next thing we can do is to read and hear the Holy Scripture. This is the Word of God to us. So we need to hear what that Word is. So we can take it into ourselves, and then meditate on it, think on it, have it change our lives, and then say it out again to other people.

To share that Word of Salvation with others. It's sharing that love with others, the mercy with others, the goodness with others.

We have to take God's Word in before we can say it out. Right? We all want to fix the world. We all want the world to be a better place. Right? We all want it to be better.

But we have to take in what's Good and True and Beautiful before we can have anything to give to the world. And this is what we find in the Holy Church. The word of God in holy scripture, right? And it doesn't mean just in Church we also hear the word of God when we read scripture when we're at home.

And the final way we can take in the word of God is to partake of the holy Eucharist. This is what this is. When we partake of the holy Word of God.

We take the Word into us, and it transforms us.

So we have all these ways of hearing the Word, and receiving the Word, and allowing the Word to transform us.

And it's this perfect Word of God that saves us and unites us with God. And this is why we must insist, we must insist, on who Jesus Christ is, and who God the Father is, and who the Holy Spirit is. And this is what, this is what we do in the creed. We're all getting ready to say at the creed together.

This is why the creed is so important. We insist on these things because this belief is what saves us and unites us together.

So, sit in silence for a few minutes every day. Read the scriptures every day. And come and partake of the Holy Eucharist.

And be transformed by the Word of God so that we may find salvation as the 318 holy fathers fought for and defended. May God strengthen us. Amen.