

FAMILY GOSPEL LESSON

John 1:44-51

The first Sunday in Lent is known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. For over 100 years, icons were banished from Christian worship by the Iconoclasts and either destroyed or desecrated. On this day we commemorate the triumph of Orthodoxy in the restoration of the holy icons to their proper veneration in the life of the Church. This restoration took place at the beginning of Great Lent in the year 843 AD.

At first glance, this Gospel passage appears to be little more than a historical account of Jesus meeting Nathanael, but when we look closer we see there are important lessons for each of us as we begin our Lenten journey. When Nathanael is curious about how Jesus knows him, Jesus responds, “I saw you.” How important it is for us to remember that Jesus “sees” all of us. He does not just see us where we are but He sees into our hearts and knows where we stand with Him. Nathanael is overcome by Jesus’ intimate knowledge of him and believes that He must be the Son of God. As we start the second week of the fast, let us remember that God knows us better than we know ourselves. He wants us to “come and see” so that we can know who He is—our everything, our Savior, our God.



For Consideration

- How does Jesus know Nathanael? What does this prompt Nathanael to proclaim?
- What does Jesus tell him? Is Jesus saying the same thing to all of us?
- What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

TO DO TOGETHER

Make a Family Icon Tree

Search on-line for icons of your family's patron saints and an icon of Christ and print them out the size you would like. Draw a tree with a branch for every member of your family; place Christ in the trunk. Mount the icons on a piece of wood or large rock using decoupage. Decorate as you like.

What Would Jesus See Journal

For one week have each member of your family keep a brief daily journal. In this journal, each person should write down what Jesus saw them do that day, what He saw in their hearts, and how they think it made Him feel. These journals are personal, so children should not be forced to share what they wrote in them. Try to encourage a family discussion on the topic at the end of the week.

Have Family Icons Blessed

If you have icons that have not been blessed, take them to church with you on Sunday. Be aware that the priest will want to keep the icons on the altar for 40 days. Make sure to put a tag on the back of each icon with your name and date. Write a note to remind your family to pick up the icons 40 days later.

CLOSING PRAYER

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Both now and forever, Amen.

Advancing from ungodliness to the true faith, and illumined with the Light of knowledge, let us clap our hands and sing aloud, offering praise and thanksgiving to God; and with due honor let us venerate the holy icons of Christ, of the all-pure Virgin and the saints, whether depicted on walls, on wooden panels or on holy vessels, rejecting the impious teaching of the heretics. For, as Basil says, the honor shown to the icon passes to the Prototype it represents. At the prayers of Your undefiled Mother and of all the saints, we beseech You, Christ our God, to bestow upon us Your great mercy.

-from the Vespers of Sunday of Orthodoxy

FINAL THOUGHT

According to Tradition, the origin of icons is a gracious story. Avgar, king of a province in Mesopotamia, entered into correspondence with our Lord, Jesus Christ. Avgar begged our Lord to come and heal him from a severe sickness. Christ refused the invitation, telling Avgar that His mission on earth was nearing completion. Avgar then sent his royal artist to paint the likeness of Christ, but the artist was unable to fulfill his task because he was dazzled by the brilliance of Christ's Divinity. In His mercy, the Lord took a handkerchief, placed it against His face; miraculously, the outline of Him was traced onto the cloth: this is believed to be the first icon, "Not Made By Hands." It is this likeness, however derived, we find in all authentic icons of Christ. Thus, icons were not only blessed by our Lord, but the first one was, according to tradition, made by Him, and of Him.

-Adapted from IKONS by John Tavener & Mother Thekla

