

Bishop Paul issues letter to parish clergy concerning OCF's "First Forty Days Initiative"

To all Rectors and Priests-in-charge in the Diocese of the Midwest.

Dear Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers,
Christ is Risen!

As many of you know, the loss of our Christian youth is a staggering problem today in our country. Statistics show us that more than 60% of our young people are graduating high school, going to college and never returning to their faith group. I do not mean their parish or community, but their faith. In other words, more than 6 out of 10 Orthodox young adults will abandon Orthodoxy. This is a huge challenge for all of us.

As the official campus ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America, the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) works on behalf of all Orthodox to connect students to Christ and His Church during college. Through its campus-based chapters, regional events and programs such as College Conference and Real Break, OCF engages Orthodox college students across the continent in fellowship, education, Worship, and service.

To fulfil this mission and seeking to reverse the trend of loss faith so prevalent among our young people, OCF has just launched its fifth year of the First Forty Days Initiative—a program designed to help your parish's high school graduates seamlessly join the OCF network by integrating them into the life of an OCF chapter during the first forty days of their college experience. It is critical to personally contact every first-year Orthodox college student so that they know that an Orthodox family awaits them on campus. Research has shown that most college students build the habits and peer groups they will maintain for their entire college career in the first six weeks of their freshman year. The Church must be here for them during this critical time.

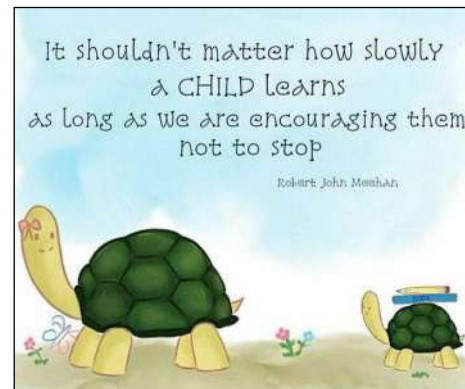
The First Forty Days Initiative allows local OCF student leaders, spiritual advisors, and lay coordinators to introduce themselves to all new incoming students, making sure that they know about Orthodoxy on campus and nearby Orthodox parishes. These students will also receive a summer mailing directly from the OCF office with information and materials to help them navigate their freshman year of college as Orthodox college students. It is our hope that through this personal connection, our young college students will not only stay connected but also deepen their faith during their years in post-secondary Education and graduate to be faithful stewards of parishes across the country.

Yours in Christ's service, Paul



PEACE WALK: CHILDREN HAVE A RIGHT TO GROW UP

We stand for all life (from conception to death). Please join me on Friday night June 17 to walk in peace with other faith based churches to bring peace to Chicago streets this summer. The walk begins at St Sabina in Chicago. If anyone is interested please contact me. We can bring signs, i.e. Orthodox Christians for life. It is our opportunity to bare witness about Christ and to bring Orthodoxy into our community



Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Commemorated on [June 12](#)

On the seventh Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the holy God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council.

The Commemoration of the First Ecumenical Council has been celebrated by the Church of Christ from ancient times. The Lord Jesus Christ left the Church a great promise, "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Although the Church of Christ on earth will pass through difficult struggles with the Enemy of salvation, it will emerge victorious. The holy martyrs bore witness to the truth of the Savior's words, enduring suffering and death for confessing Christ, but the persecutor's sword is shattered by the Cross of Christ.

Persecution of Christians ceased during the fourth century, but heresies arose within the Church itself. One of the most pernicious of these heresies was Arianism. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was a man of immense pride and ambition. In denying the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father, Arius falsely taught that the Savior is not consubstantial with the Father, but is only a created being.

A local Council, convened with Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria presiding, condemned the false teachings of Arius. However, Arius would not submit to the authority of the Church. He wrote to many bishops, denouncing the decrees of the local Council. He spread his false teaching throughout the East, receiving support from certain Eastern bishops.

Investigating these dissensions, the holy emperor Constantine (May 21) consulted Bishop Hosius of Cordova (Aug. 27), who assured him that the heresy of Arius was directed against the most fundamental dogma of Christ's Church, and so he decided to convene an Ecumenical Council. In 325, 318 bishops representing Christian Churches from various lands gathered together at Nicea.

Among the assembled bishops were many confessors who had suffered during the persecutions, and who bore the marks of torture upon their bodies. Also participating in the Council were several great luminaries of the Church: St Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (December 6 and May 9), St Spyridon, Bishop of Tremithos (December 12), and others venerated by the Church as holy Fathers.

With Patriarch Alexander of Alexandria came his deacon, Athanasius (who later became Patriarch of Alexandria

(May 2 and January 18). He is called "the Great," for he was a zealous champion for the purity of Orthodoxy. In the Sixth Ode of the Canon for today's Feast, he is referred to as "the thirteenth Apostle."

The emperor Constantine presided over the sessions of the Council. In his speech, responding to the welcome by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, he said, "God has helped me cast down the impious might of the persecutors, but more distressful for me than any blood spilled in battle is for a soldier, is the internal strife in the Church of God, for it is more ruinous."

Arius, with seventeen bishops among his supporters, remained arrogant, but his teaching was repudiated and he was excommunicated from the Church. In his speech, the holy deacon Athanasius conclusively refuted the blasphemous opinions of Arius. The heresiarch Arius is depicted in iconography sitting on Satan's knees, or in the mouth of the Beast of the Deep (Rev. 13).

The Fathers of the Council declined to accept a Symbol of Faith (Creed) proposed by the Arians. Instead, they affirmed the Orthodox Symbol of Faith. St Constantine asked the Council to insert into the text of the Symbol of Faith the word "consubstantial," which he had heard in the speeches of the bishops. The Fathers of the Council unanimously accepted this suggestion.

In the Nicene Creed, the holy Fathers set forth and confirmed the Apostolic teachings about Christ's divine nature. The heresy of Arius was exposed and repudiated as an error of haughty reason. After resolving this chief dogmatic question, the Council also issued Twelve Canons on questions of churchly administration and discipline. Also decided was the date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. By decision of the Council, Holy Pascha should not be celebrated by Christians on the same day with the Jewish Passover, but on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the vernal equinox (which occurred on March 22 in 325).

The First Ecumenical Council is also commemorated on May 29.

