



The Apostolic Church

Having celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, the Apostle's Fast begins each year the following week and concludes with the celebration of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul on July 12 (n.s.). The fast of the holy Apostles dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. Our Holy Father among the saints, St. Leo the Great (†461) said: "*After the long feast of Pentecost, fasting is especially necessary to purify our thoughts and render us worthy to receive the Gifts of the Holy Spirit ... Therefore, the salutary custom was established of fasting after the joyful days during which we celebrated the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.*" In keeping the Apostle's Fast, Orthodox Christians today strengthen their spiritual link to the Holy Apostles and Fathers of our faith.

The Ninth Article of the Nicene Creed states that we believe "*In One Holy Ecumenical (or Catholic) and Apostolic Church.*" In the catechism of St. Nikolai Velimirovic, he writes that the Church is called "Apostolic" because the spirit, the doctrine and the practices of Christ's Apostles are fully and carefully preserved in our Church. He goes on to say that the Church should obey the Apostles in everything, because Christ elected them and authorized them to speak and act in His name... "*Ye shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.*" (John 15:27) We should listen to the Apostles as we listen to Christ for "*He that receiveth you receiveth Me.*" (Matt. 10:40) The Lord gave His apostles the authority to bind and loose "*Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*" (Matt. 18:18), and also "*Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*" (John 20:23) St. Nikolai affirms that the Apostolic Succession is the unbroken chain of the practice of transferring the grace and authority in the Church from the Apostles and Bishops and from Bishops to Priests and Deacons by the laying on of hands. He also affirms that our ancient Eastern Orthodox Church has faithfully preserved that apostolic succession.

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to imitate the Holy Apostles by our faithfulness to our Holy Church and by our participation in the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world. As St. Paul said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" (I Cor. 11:1) The most effective means of spreading the Gospel is by our example. As Christ said, "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" (John 13:35)