

A LESSON ABOUT HOLY IMAGES

On this SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, let us ponder the wise words of the Church Father, ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS:

“In former times God, who is without form or body, could never be depicted. But now when God is seen in the flesh conversing with men, I make an image of God whom I see. I do not worship matter, I worship the Creator of matter who became matter for my sake. Never will I cease honoring the matter which wrought my salvation! I honor it, but not as God. How could God be born out of things which have no existence in themselves? God’s body is joined to His person by a union which shall never pass away. The divine nature remains the same, the flesh created in time is quickened by a reason endowed soul. Because of this I salute all remaining matter with reverence, because God has filled it with His grace and power. Through it, my salvation has come to me. Was not the blessed wood for the Cross considered Matter? What of the life bearing rock, the holy and life-giving tomb, the fountain of our resurrection, was it not matter? Is not the ink in the most holy Gospel-book matter? Is not the life-giving altar made of matter? From it we receive the bread of life! Are not gold and silver matter? From them we make crosses, patens, chalices! And over and above all things, is not the Body and Blood of our Lord matter? Either do away with the honor and veneration these things deserve, or accept the tradition of the Church and the veneration of images.