

SERMON

Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (John 17:1-13)

(24 May 2026)

A few days ago, my beloved brothers, our Holy Church triumphantly sang “Christ is Risen” for the last time, and on this present Sunday, perhaps so that we may not forget that Christ truly has risen, the Gospel reading today comes to remind us that Christ is the Son of God and the True God, the Conqueror of death and the Giver of Life—just as the Holy Fathers, whom we commemorate today, proclaimed at the First Ecumenical Council, condemning the Arian heresy.

You often hear, as a form of opposition against the Church and our faith, that the Gospels do not describe in detail the historical life of Jesus, and that we do not know what Christ was doing during all that period before He appeared in His public ministry. Various speculations are sometimes put forward merely to create impressions and noise, and nothing more. For the Gospels are not historical texts in the strict scientific sense of the term—although they do describe real events—but they are theological texts. Moreover, what is essential is not what Christ does, but who Christ is. Christ saves primarily by who He is, not by what He does; for if He is not the true God, then whatever He does has no meaning.

We heard in the Gospel reading the Lord praying shortly before His voluntary Passion, immediately after the Last Supper. It is a profoundly moving text in every respect, deeply theological, as within its lines we perceive the closest natural, ontological, and essential unity—or rather identity—of the Son with the Father, what the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council called “homoousios” (of the same essence). This was what the heretics, led by Arius, were disputing: the divinity of the Son and Word, the fact that the Son is of the same essence as the Father, that He is truly God.

Thus, in the Gospel narrative we hear the Lord in dialogue with the Father as equal with equal: “I have glorified You, now glorify Me,” “eternal life is that they may know You and Me,” “all that is Yours is Mine”... I do not think one needs to read anything else to understand the destructive errors of the heretics who, throughout the ages, have denied the divinity of Christ and who unfortunately continue to do so even today. Such modern heretics, followers of Arian teaching, are the unfortunate so-called “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” who, through a completely distorted translation of the Holy Scriptures, twist the truth of the Gospel and blaspheme the name of Christ, calling Him a created being. This is a dreadful heresy that has a destructive influence on people, breaking apart lives and families. It is not accidental, after all, that recently a court in Spain, a modern and democratic European state, described the organisation of Jehovah’s Witnesses as a “destructive sect.”

And do you know, my brothers and sisters, what this anti-Christian organisation attacks with such fury? “The glory of Christ,” about which the Lord Himself speaks to us today in the Gospel. And this glory is the Holy Cross, toward

which the Lord will soon go after speaking these words. That is why you will see that they do not even use the word “Cross”; they speak of the “wood of execution” and depict the Lord nailed to a vertical stake, unable to endure even the sight of the Holy Cross.

Let us, my brothers and sisters, remain within the safety of our Holy Church, glorifying Christ and proclaiming our faith in His Person, as it was formulated by the Holy Apostles and our Fathers, who correctly interpreted the Gospel. Let us remain far from heresies and false teachings so that we may not be lost like the “son of perdition,” but may remain always united with Christ. Amen!