"A feast of joy and gladness is revealed to us today. For the teachings of the True Faith shine forth in all their glory. The Church of Christ is bright with splendor, adorned with the holy icons which have now been restored. God has granted to the faithful a unity of mind."

Matins for the Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship
The First Sunday of the Great Fast

The First Sunday of the Great Fast
The Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship
Father Robert Holet

"As a precious adornment, the Church of Christ has received the venerable and holy icons of Christ the Savior, of the Most Holy Godbearer and of all the saints. Celebrating now their triumphal restoration, the Church is made bright with grace and splendor and thwarts all heretics...."

Vespers for the Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship

Today we are called to reflect upon the wealth of spiritual treasure afforded us through the iconographic tradition of our Byzantine Catholic Church. We recall the importance of icons in our lives by commemorating the "Triumph of True Worship" in the early ninth century when the proclamation of the validity of the theology of the veneration of icons was solemnly reaffirmed with the defeat of the iconoclastic heresy. As with every Sunday, we celebrate the Triumph of Christ through his glorious Resurrection. The Sunday of the Triumph of True Worship is important not only because of the teaching and tradition of iconography which has blossomed forth from it, but also because of the intrinsic value of the genuine witness of the Catholic Church to the truth of its teaching about the mysteries of our salvation in Christ.

If, as Saint Maximus attests: "The Holy Church presents an image, an icon of God," then we can be assured that the Church, as the Body of Christ, will reflect that spirit of truth in its teaching and worship. In every age, the witness of the Church to the truths of faith and human life must be heard clearly by believers and non-believers alike. As an icon of God, the Church reflects the transcendent glory of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, who as God-Man, radiates this heavenly glory into our humanity darkened by sin.

As Christians, this glory of God has been poured forth into our lives through the holy illumination of Baptism, Chrismation, and the Divine Eucharist. Our call is to reflect that glory of God personally by allowing the divine light of Christ to increase in our lives by spiritual purification. The holy icon, as a painted image, reflects this glory through the transcendent character of its style and coloration. It effectively portrays the exalted state of spiritual perfection in the person of Christ Who has divinized the lives of others. They are models of human participation in the divine life. By meditation before an icon, we are brought into an encounter with the All-Glorious One Himself. As we are touched, we too are transformed through the renewal and perfection of the image of God with us. This time of the Great Fast is a special opportunity to be renewed in our purpose—to open our hearts to this transforming light of Jesus. Through our communal greatfast worship, we reaffirm that this life and light is something to be shared with others in the community of believers; and in becoming church, we become the very reflection of the glory of God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40
John 1:43-51