

Whatever the soul may think fit to do itself, whatever care and pains it may take, relying only upon its own power, and thinking to be able to effect a perfect success by itself, without the co-operation of the Spirit, it is greatly mistaken. It is of no use for the heavenly places; it is of no use for the kingdom – that soul, which supposes that it can achieve perfect purity of itself, and by itself alone, without the Spirit. Unless the man who is under the influence of the passions will come to God, denying the world, and will believe with patience and hope to receive a good thing foreign to his own nature, namely the power of the Holy Spirit, and unless the Lord shall drop upon the soul from on high the life of the Godhead, such a man will never experience true life, will never recover from the drunkenness of materialism; the enlightenment of the Spirit will never shine in that benighted soul, or kindle in it a holy daytime; it will never awake out of that deepest sleep of ignorance, and so come to know God of a truth through God's power and the efficacy of grace.

Saint Macarius the Great



**Sunday 20 July 2014 is the  
Sixth Sunday of Matthew**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:36-53

**Epistle:** James 5:10-20

**Gospel:** Matthew 9:1-8

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

The Word without beginning with the Father and the Spirit, born from a Virgin for our salvation, let us believers praise and let us worship Him; for He was well-pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and undergo death, and to raise those who had died, by His glorious Resurrection.

To receive *Evangelion* by email,  
email [evangelion@goarch.co.za](mailto:evangelion@goarch.co.za)  
and put "Subscribe" in the  
heading.

Back issues are available online at  
[http://www.goarch.co.za/  
media/evangelion](http://www.goarch.co.za/media/evangelion)

### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday:** 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:1-11; Matthew 13:54-58  
John & Simeon; Parthenius, Bishop of Rabobysidius

**Tuesday:** 1 Corinthians 9:2-12; Luke 8:1-3  
Mary Magdalene; Virgin Martyr Markella

**Wednesday:** 1 Corinthians 7:12-24; Matthew 14:35-36; 15:1-11  
Hieromartyr Phocas; Prophet Ezekiel

**Thursday:** 1 Corinthians 7:24-35; Matthew 15:12-21  
Great Martyr Christina; Athenagorus the Apologist

**Friday:** Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 8:16-21  
Dormition of St. Anna; Olympias the Deaconess

**Saturday:** Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34  
Hermolaus, Hermippus, and Hermocrates; Martyr Paraskeve



# ***Evangelion***

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

20 July 2014

## **Your Sins are Forgiven**

In today's Gospel we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ healed a paralytic man. When this man was brought to Him, He scandalized the scribes by telling him that His sins were forgiven. Showing that He knew their thoughts, Christ asked them: "Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" And then He continued: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He then said to the paralytic – "Rise, take up your bed and go home."

This encounter reveals who Jesus truly is. St John Chrysostom points out that, by reading what was in the scribes' minds, Jesus shows Himself as truly God. Moreover, as they themselves point out, it is only God who can forgive sins. They are scandalized precisely because, by claiming to forgive sins, Jesus Christ is revealing Himself as truly God.

But this encounter also reveals the true nature of the healing that we need. St John Chrysostom continues by pointing out that, if anyone might have been annoyed, it was the paralytic man. He had come to Christ to be healed, but instead had had his sins forgiven. However, far from being annoyed, he recognizes Christ's authority, surrendering himself to the One who heals. And, in this, he is healed in both body and soul.

This incident teaches us that spiritual and physical healing are closely related. While the links between sin and illness are not clear cut – and Jesus elsewhere denies that a man's illness is a result of his sins (John 9:1-3) – there is a link between sin and suffering. When we come to God with what we think is our need, we need to be open to Him revealing our true need, for the healing that He offers us is often far greater than what we are aware we need.



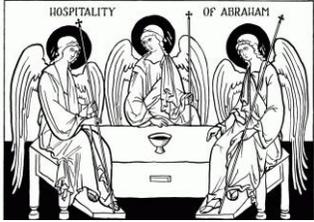
The paralytic is a descendent of the original man, Adam.  
In one person, Christ, all the sins of Adam are forgiven.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

# A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Having encountered the Light of Christ in the reception of Holy Communion, our reaction is to give thanks to God. The word "Eucharist" means thanksgiving, and the whole of the Divine Liturgy is an act of thanksgiving to God for the great gift that He has given to us in Jesus Christ. But after the reception of Holy Communion, we thank Him in a particular way. As the priest removes the consecrated Gifts from the altar, the choir sings:



*Let our moth be filled with your praise, O Lord, that we may sing of your glory, for you have counted us worthy to partake of your holy, divine, immortal and life-giving Mysteries; keep us in your holiness, that we may meditate on your righteousness all the day long. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

This is followed by a litany of thanksgiving in which we express our gratitude to God for blessing us with participation

in the "heavenly and immortal mysteries" and ask Him to make our whole day "perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless" and that, through our reception of Holy Communion, He would:

*Make straight our way, establish us all in the fear of you, watch over our life, and make firm our steps...*

We cannot properly express all that God has done for us, or the great gift that He has given us by coming to us in Holy Communion. In the words of Saint Symeon the New Theologian:

*Creator of all, Maker and Master,  
whom the Seraphim may not approach,  
You do not only see and speak to me and free me,  
But You have granted to me even to hold and eat  
Your flesh, in all reality,  
and to drink Your all-holy Blood...  
The mind is at a loss, the tongue enfeebled,  
and I find no words, my Saviour,  
to proclaim the works of Your goodness  
which You have performed for me Your servant...  
You have united Yourself with me, Lover of mankind,  
in your measureless compassion...  
You have swept out the house that was all begrimed  
and come to dwell in there, O Trinity, my God,  
and then You made me a throne of Your divine Godhead  
and a house of Your unapproachable glory and Your Kingdom.*

Abba Poemen said that Abba John said that the saints are like a group of trees, each bearing different fruit, but watered from the same source. The practices of one saint differ from those of another, but it is the same Spirit that works in all of them.

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers

A soldier asked Abba Mius if God accepted repentance. After the old man had taught him many things he said, 'Tell me, my dear, if your cloak is torn, do you throw it away?' He replied, 'No, I mend it and use it again.' The old man said to him, 'If you are so careful about your cloak, will not God be equally careful about His creature?'

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers

## Question Box

If you have a question about the faith and teaching of the Orthodox Church, you can send it to [evangelion@goarch.co.za](mailto:evangelion@goarch.co.za)

### **How should Orthodox Christians read the Old Testament? The stories I read there present such a violent, vengeful, angry God. Is the God of the Old Testament the same God as the God of the New Testament, or has he been superseded?**

You raise important points here about how the Orthodox Church reads not only the Old Testament, but the Scriptures as a whole.

It needs to be said that the Old and the New Testaments form a unity and that we believe that the God of the Old Testament is certainly the same God as the God of the New Testament. Although the Old Testament is sometimes seen as presenting a God of justice, while the New Testament presents a God of love, these are simplistic caricatures. The Old Testament also portrays God as loving, faithful and tender, while both the New Testament and the teaching of Jesus Christ portrays a God of justice who can discomfort as well as console us. Already in the second century, the Church rejected the heresy of Marcionism, which held that Christians believed in a different God to the God portrayed in the Old Testament.

However, it also needs to be said that not only the Old Testament, but all of Scripture, needs to be read in the light of Jesus Christ. It points to Him and finds its fulfillment in Him. As Orthodox Christians we do not read the Old Testament on its own, but always as part of a broader context, which is the history of salvation in Christ that it was both pointing to and preparing for.

Reading some parts of the Old Testament on their own and out of context could indeed be disturbing, which is why we should rather read the Scriptures with the Church. We can do this by looking at how Old Testament passages are used in the liturgical life of the Church – for example, the readings chosen for Vespers of Great Feasts teach us a lot about how those readings should be interpreted. And we can also read how the Fathers of the Church interpreted the Old Testament – one accessible example would be Saint Irenaeus of Lyon's *On the Apostolic Teaching*, which shows how Jesus Christ is a fulfillment of various Old Testament themes and prophecies.