

Holy Scripture says of the midwives who kept alive the Israelites' male children, that through the God-fearing midwives they made themselves houses. Does it mean they made visible houses? How can they say they acquired houses through the fear of God when we do the opposite, and learn in time, through fear of God to give up the houses we have? Evidently this does not refer to visible houses but to the houses of the soul which each one builds by for himself by keeping God's commandments. Through this Holy Scripture teaches us that the fear of God prepares the soul to keep the commandments, and through the commandments the house of the soul is built up. Let us take hold of them, brothers, and let us fear God, and we shall build houses for ourselves where we shall find shelter in winter weather, in the season of storm-cloud, lightning, and rain; for not to have a home in winter-time is a great hardship.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza



Sunday 31 August 2014 is the Twelfth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7

Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let everything in heaven rejoice, let everything on earth be glad, for the Lord has shown strength with His arm; by death He has trampled on death; He has become the first-born from the dead; from the belly of Hades He has delivered us, and granted the world His great mercy.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2; Matthew 10:16-22
Beginning of the Indiction; Synaxis of the Recovery of the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos

Tuesday: Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60; Mark 12:1-12
Martyr Mammias; John, Abp. Of Constantinople

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Matthew 14:14-22
Hieromartyr Anthimus; Righteous Theoctistus and Euthymius

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 11:31-34; 12:1-6; Matthew 18:1-11
Hieromartyr Babylas; Prophet Moses

Friday: 1 Peter's 1:1-25; 2:1-10; Matthew 18:18-22; 19:1-2; 13-15
Zacharias the Prophet; Urban, Theodore, Medimnos, & 77 Companions at Nicomedeia

Saturday: Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter's 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9
Miracle of Michael in Colossae; Martyr Calodote



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

31 August 2014

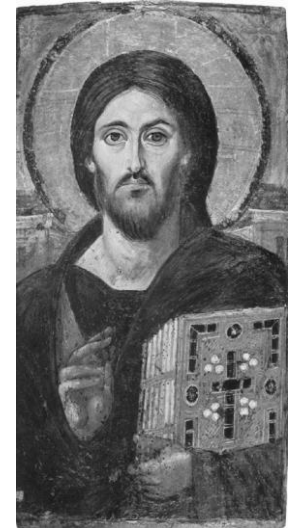
Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Your True Treasure

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of the rich young man who comes to Christ, asking what he must do to possess eternal life. Not content with being told to keep the commandments, he asks what more he must do. But when Jesus tells him: "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and ... follow me," he cannot cope with this. We are told that he had great wealth and Christ warns us that it is very hard for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

This incident does not present us with a universal command that we must all give away all our wealth, but instead, in warning us of the dangers of riches, it challenges us to look deeply into our own hearts. The rich young man was in many respects an exemplary Jew, keeping all the commandments, but he lacked the one thing necessary which was the freedom to respond to the call of Christ.

This man was trapped by his wealth and Jesus warns us that material wealth does indeed have a tendency to entrap us. But there are also other forms of riches, such as beauty, or intelligence, or particular human affections that can also too easily come between us and God. Today's Gospel encourages us to look at the things that we value and are attached to. Are we sufficiently convinced of the treasure that we have in our life in Christ that we are able to view all our possessions and abilities in their proper light, so that we are able to use them for God's service, rather than becoming possessed by them.



The tyranny of money is a powerful thing ...
Though we are practiced in other virtues, avarice brings the others to ruin.

Saint John Chrysostom

Joining Heaven and Earth

An Introduction to the Orthodox Understanding of Icons

When one enters a church building filled with icons or frescoes, one immediately realises that one is not alone. Since the earliest times, Christians have known that we are not alone when we pray, but that we are “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses” in “the city of the living God, the New Jerusalem ... the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven.” (Hebrews 12:1; 22-23)



One depiction of St Luke painting the Holy Theotokos

When we pray we are joining the angels and the saints who are engaged in an endless stream of heavenly worship.

It is therefore not surprising that, from the earliest times, Christians have produced images depicting Christ and the saints. According to tradition, Saint Luke painted an icon of the Mother of God and there are many other accounts of the use of icons from the early centuries of the Church's life. Various early accounts also tell of how Jesus Christ sent an icon of Himself to the king of Edessa. King Abgar had sent a letter to Jesus, asking Him to come and heal Him of an illness. In response, according to some accounts, Christ pressed a towel to His face and sent the image

that miraculously appeared on the towel back to the king to heal him.

In some early depictions that still exist, such as in the images in the Roman catacombs where the persecuted Christians gathered for worship, Christ was initially depicted symbolically – for example, as the Good Shepherd or as a fish, which was an acrostic for the words “Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour.” Likewise, scenes from the Old Testament were depicted symbolically, such as that of the three children in the fiery furnace (cf. Daniel 3) who encouraged endurance in the face of persecution. While many other early images are now lost to us, the historian Eusebius wrote early in the fourth century that:

I have seen a great many portraits of the Saviour, or Peter and Paul, which have been preserved up to our own times.

These early images portrayed not only Christ and the Virgin Mary, but also the saints. In the earliest period, Christians would often gather to pray at the tombs of the martyrs and there are wall paintings that depict the deceased with their hands raised in prayer and with inscriptions such as “Peace be with you,” and “Pray for us.” In this, they witnessed to their faith that death does not cause an ultimate separation, for the departed are still with us in the fellowship of the Church. Those who have died in Christ are alive in Him. They are present to God and are therefore able to pray with us and for us.

Possibly a contentious unbeliever will maintain that in venerating images in our churches we are convicted of praying to lifeless idols. Far be it from us to do this. Faith makes Christians, and God, who cannot deceive, works miracles ... Nor are the saints whom we glorify fictitious. They are in being, and are living with God; and their spirits being holy, they help, by the power of God, those who deserve and need their assistance.

Saint John of Damascus

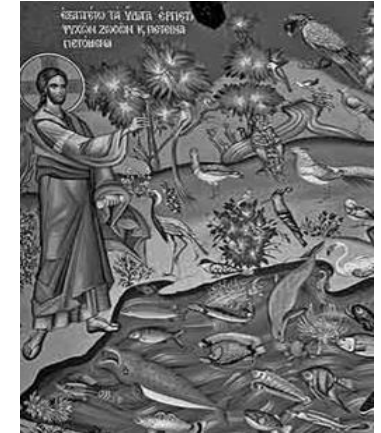
A New Church Year

Tomorrow marks the beginning of a new Church year. In the Roman Empire, the first of September was the day on which the emperor would announce a decree of taxation. But it was also the time (in the northern hemisphere) for harvesting the fruits of the earth and for beginning a new agricultural cycle as we also see in Jewish worship. The Church took over this calendar but gave it a deeper significance.

The Christian liturgical year comprises different cycles and feasts and we need a calendar in order to give them some cohesion and order. As the year unfolds it enables us to follow the various events in the life of Christ and in the history of our salvation. It shows us something of the power of the Holy Spirit which is made real for us in the lives of the saints. This is not simply a matter of giving us intellectual knowledge; instead the events and people are made present to us today.

Ultimately, the liturgical year exists in order to draw us closer to Christ and to be united with Him in the Church. By following the various events of His Life and His ministry, by hearing the Gospels read during the course of the year, by entering with Him into His suffering, death and resurrection, we are called to be conformed to Him as we gradually allow the Holy Spirit to form refashion the Image of God in us. We are invited to unite ourselves with His birth, His growth, His suffering, His death and His triumph.

During the course of the year we are also drawn into the cycle of the saints who are the glorified members of Christ's Body. Their light is really an extension of the light of Christ, and their sanctity is an extension of His sanctity. To celebrate the feast of a saint is to celebrate a special grace that flows from Christ to that saint, and in which we too are called to participate.



Creator of the universe, setting times and seasons by Your sole authority, bless the cycle of the year of Your grace, O Lord, guarding our rulers and Your nation in peace, at the intercession of the Theotokos, and save us.

Apolytikion for the New Year

Let us be satisfied simply with what sustains our present life, not with what pampers it. Let us pray to God for this, as we have been taught, so that we may keep our souls unenslaved and absolutely free from domination by any of the visible things loved for the sake of the body. Let us show that we eat for the sake of living, and not be guilty of living for the sake of eating. The first is a sign of intelligence, the second proof of its absence.

Saint Maximus the Confessor