

In love did God
bring the world into existence.

In love does He guide it
during its temporal existence.

In love is He going to bring it
to that wondrous
transformed state.

And in love will the world be
swallowed up in the great mystery
of Him who has
performed all these things.

In love will the whole course
of the governance of creation
be finally comprised.

Saint Isaac the Syrian



*Sunday 21 September 2014 is the
Sunday after the Elevation of the
Holy Cross*

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Angelic Powers were at your grave,
and those who guarded it became
as dead, and Mary stood by the
tomb, seeking your most pure Body.
You despoiled Hades and emerged
unscathed; you met the Virgin and
granted life. Lord, risen from the
dead, glory to you!

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Galatians 4:28-31; 5:1-10; Luke 3:19-22
Hieromartyr Phocas; Phocas the Cyprian

Tuesday: Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 1:5-25
Conception of the Forerunner; Xanthippe & Polyxene the Righteous

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 3:10-15; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Protomartyr Thekla; Silouan of Athos

Thursday: Ephesians 1:1-9; Luke 4:16-22
Euphrosyne of Alexandria; Paphnoutios & 546 Companions in Egypt

Friday: John 21:14-25; 1 John 4:12-19; John 19:25-27; 21:24-25
Translation of the relics of St John the Theologian

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 10:23-28; Luke 4:31-36
Martyr Callistratus & Companions; Apostle Aristarchus



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

21 September 2014

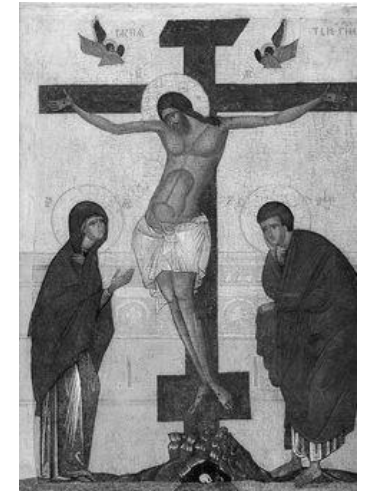
Take Up Your Cross & Follow Me

Today, on the Sunday after the Feast of the Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross, the Church continues to focus our attention on the Cross of Christ. In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words calling us to renounce ourselves, take up our own cross and follow Him.

In the Cross of Christ we see the extent to which God's love is poured out for us, as Christ enters into the very depths of our human need. We cannot adequately explain the Mystery of the Cross and it presents us with a paradox, for, as Saint Paul tells us, God's power is shown forth in weakness. The Cross of Christ shows us the power of suffering love, and proclaims that it is this love that ultimately conquers sin and death.

In some ways, our life as Christians is also based on a paradox. Jesus' call to us to renounce ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, may seem like a crazy and even irresponsible thing to do. Yet He tells us that it is only by doing this that we will be able to have true life.

Christ is not calling us to be killjoys who are unable to enjoy the good things in life. But He is challenging us to evaluate what it is that we really live for. Anything that is really worthwhile will inevitably involve suffering in one way, and as we choose to follow Christ we also need to be prepared to share in the Mystery of His Cross, for it is only through the Cross that we can find true life.



Do not seek the perfection of the law in human virtues,
for it is not found perfect in them.
Its perfection is hidden in the Cross of Christ.

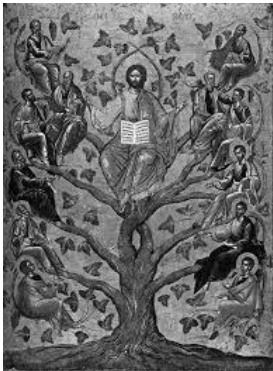
Saint Mark the Ascetic

Joining Heaven and Earth

An Introduction to the Orthodox Understanding of Icons

We saw last week that the Church's understanding of the icon is rooted in her understanding of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. By coming to share in our life, Jesus Christ enables us to share in His divine life. In the icons we see saints who have become radiant with the Light of Christ.

But the icon is also rooted in our understanding of the mystery of the Church. Icons are not simply works of art and they are certainly not dependent on an artist's individual creativity. Rather, they belong to the Church and, while the ability of an individual iconographer is important, it is also important that they work within the tradition of the Church. An iconographer cannot just make up an



icon as they go along, but needs to follow a "canon" that has developed over the centuries and that provides guidelines for their work. This influences choices for the colours of garments, the type and colour of hair or a beard, and specific postures and gestures. The various Apostles and saints are depicted so that we can recognise who they are.

Although iconographers retain a certain creativity, they need to be prepared to submit this to the tradition of the Church and to work within her boundaries. Their goal is not to express their own creativity, but to accurately pass on the faith of the Church.

In the same way, the iconographer is expected to be living an active Christian life. Traditionally many iconographers were monks, but even for those who aren't, the painting of an icon forms part of a life of prayer and ascetical struggle.

From this we see that the icon has an objective content. Unlike later western religious art, it does not seek to appeal to our emotions, or to speak to us subjectively. It is not in any way "sentimental." Rather, it portrays a reality that is objective and timeless. It invites us into this reality, but this may require that we learn to see things in a new way – that we learn to see with the eyes of faith.

To be continued...



The candles lit before icons of saints reflect their ardent love for God for Whose sake they gave up everything that man prizes in life, including their very lives, as did the holy apostles, martyrs and others. These candles also mean that these saints are lamps burning for us and providing light for us by their own saintly living, their virtues and their ardent intercession for us before God through their constant prayers by day and night. The burning candles also stand for our ardent zeal and the sincere sacrifice we make out of reverence and gratitude to them for their solicitude on our behalf before God.

Saint John of Kronstadt

Saint Silouan the Athonite

On Wednesday the Church commemorates Saint Silouan the Athonite, one of the more recent saints. Saint Silouan was born in rural Russia in 1866. As a child, he was inspired by the lives of the saints and said, "When I grow up, I shall go all over the world looking for God." However, he gradually lost the fervour of his childhood faith and led a more worldly life until he got involved in a fight in which he almost killed his opponent. This incident helped to bring him to his senses and was followed by a vision of the Mother of God that led him to change his ways. At the age of twenty-seven he set off for Mount Athos where he entered the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon.



Saint Silouan lived a busy – and outwardly not very noticeable – life in the monastery. However, he was taught how to struggle with his thoughts and the Jesus Prayer was his constant companion during his monastic duties. He was blessed with visions of the Mother of God and of Jesus Christ, but he also had to contend with the attacks of the demons. Through all this, Saint Silouan came to understand that all ascetic striving must be directed to acquiring the humility of Christ who said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." (Matt. 11:29)

With the gift of this divine humility, Saint Silouan's heart was filled with an inexpressible love for all people and for the whole world. With fiery tears he prayed for everyone, especially the dead. He taught that the final criterion of our knowledge of the truth is our love for our enemies, and that we are called to pray for the salvation of all. He prayed fervently that all people might know the grace of the Holy Spirit and said that, "To pray for people is to shed blood."

Saint Silouan lived his monastic life in self-effacement and prayer for all. But after his death in 1938 his teaching became known through his disciple Father Sophrony, who saw it as his task to make the life and teaching of this twentieth century prophet known to the wider Church.

I ask you to try something. If someone grieves you, or dishonours you, or takes something of yours, then pray like this: "Lord, we are all your creatures. Pity your servants, and turn them to repentance," and then you will perceptibly bear grace in your soul. Induce your heart to love your enemies, and the Lord, seeing your good will, shall help you in all things, and will Himself show you experience. But whoever thinks evil of his enemies does not have love for God and has not known God.

Saint Silouan the Athonite