

The candles which you light reveal to you the intelligible light. Just as the church, that house of great beauty, is full of light from many candles, so the house of your soul, which is more precious than that church, should be illumined and full of light in a noetic sense – that is to say, that within you all the spiritual virtues should burn with divine fire... The multitude of burning lamps signify the illumined thoughts which should shine within you like lamps, so that there should be no dark thought in the house of your soul, but that all should be aflame and shining with the light of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian



Sunday 5 October 2014 is the Second Sunday of Luke

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1

Gospel: Luke 6:31-36

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

You came down from above, O Compassionate, you accepted burial for three days, that you might free us from the passions. Our life and resurrection, Lord, glory to you!

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; John 20:19-31
Apostle Thomas; Martyr Erotidus

Tuesday: Ephesians 5:20-25; Luke 6:37-45
Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus; Hieromartyr Polychronus

Wednesday: Ephesians 5:25-33; Luke 6:46-49, 7:1
Righteous Pelagia; Virgin Pelagia

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 9:36-38; 10:1-8
Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus; Andronicus and Athanasia

Friday: Ephesians 6:18-24; Luke 7:31-35
Martyrs Eulampius & Eulampia; Righteous Theophilus

Saturday: Acts 8:26-39; Luke 5:27-32
Philip of the 7 Deacons; Theophanes the Confessor



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

5 October 2014

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Be Merciful as Your Father is Merciful

Today's Gospel reading is taken from Saint Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount, and in it we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words about loving our enemies.

We are used to the idea that we should not do to others what we would not wish them to do to us. However, Jesus Christ goes beyond this precept, turning a negative into a positive, and saying that we should treat others as we would wish to be treated by them.

And, as if that were not enough, Christ goes even further, insisting that our love for others should be disinterested. We are not to love them in the hope that they should love us back; instead, we are to "expect nothing in return." Most radically, perhaps, we are even called to love our enemies, those who most definitely do not seem to love us.



In such teachings we encounter the truly radical nature of the Gospel. If we are honest with ourselves, we should probably admit that this seems impossible – to love those who hurt us and continue to hurt us! But Christ gives us a clue in the final words of today's Gospel: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." This is not some abstract command or some external standard that we cannot live up to. By ourselves we cannot love. But we learn to love by becoming attentive to the love of God. For God is the "Lover of humankind" as we frequently repeat in the Liturgy, and it is only by coming to see His love in our lives that we can gradually come to share in His love, learning to see other people as He sees them, and acquiring perhaps even just a few drops from His measureless ocean of mercy.

The old men used to say that we should each of us look upon our neighbour's experiences as if they were our own. We should suffer with our neighbour in everything and weep with him, and should behave as if we were inside his body, and if any trouble befalls him, we should feel as much distress as we would for ourselves.

The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Joining Heaven and Earth

An Introduction to the Orthodox Understanding of Icons

We have seen that iconographers follow the tradition of the Church in painting icons. They are not simply creative artists who do their own thing. But neither are they purely mechanical copyists who simply copy someone else's work. Moreover, one can discern different styles of iconography within the history of the Church that represent both different historical periods and different geographical areas. In the icon, tradition and originality are held together in such a way that the time-bound and transitory reveals the eternal and witnesses to that which is greater than itself.



There are principles that are timeless and that need to be adhered to by all iconographers. For example, the persons portrayed in an icon need to be recognisable and portrayed in a way that is already established. But, at the same time, any two skilled iconographer who paint a particular saint will produce different results, and so there is certain legitimate variation.

Icons are not realistic art but are imbued with a spiritual perspective. They do not simply depict things as they appear to the eye. The perspective of buildings is different to what we find in photographs, the eyes are often enlarged, the noses are often elongated, and there is no shading. At a first encounter, many people see icons as "flat" and many westerners are inclined to judge them as primitive, undeveloped, and naïve.

But the reality is that there is a reason for all these things and the icon employs a certain style in order to depict not just outward appearances but also a deeper, spiritual reality. Just as a portrait painter uses certain techniques to bring out the character of the person being painted, so the iconographer works within a tradition that has developed various techniques for expressing the spiritual world of the icon.

To be continued...



Possibly a contentious unbeliever will maintain that we worshiping images in our churches 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. We do not rest contented with mere colouring. With the material picture before our eyes we see the invisible God through the visible representation, and glorify Him as if present, not as a God without reality, but as a God who is the essence of being. Nor are the saints whom we glorify fictitious. They are in being, and are living with God; and their spirits being holy, the help, by the power of God, those who deserve and need their assistance.

Saint John of Damascus

Tuesday is the feast of Saint Sergios and Saint Bacchus and the name day of our Archbishop Sergios. These saints were nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian who greatly valued them. When the emperor heard that they did not participate in worshipping the idols, he summoned them into his presence and they confessed their faith in the One God. The emperor was furious, had them stripped and paraded them around the streets in women's clothes. When they were urged them to save themselves by denying Christ, they declared: 'Both honour and dishonour, both life and death — all are one to him who seeks the heavenly Kingdom.' They were then scourged and Saint Bacchus died as a result of the scourging. After this Saint Sergios was taken to Resapha in Syria, where he was tortured and beheaded by the sword. The date of his repose is given as either 296 or 303. Resapha was later renamed Sergiopolis in honour of Saint Sergios.



On Tuesday we celebrate the name day of His Eminence Archbishop Sergios and wish him God's blessings and many years!



You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world.

When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying:

Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God (cf. Ps. 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law (cf. Gal 2:16)? No living person will be vindicated before God (cf. Ps. 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. Get behind me, Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23). I worship the Lord my God (cf. Matt. 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence.

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