

How wonderful, how pleasing, how charming is the image of those who hope in the God Who saves – in God the compassionate, the God of mercy, the good God Who loves mankind.

People who hope in God are truly blessed.

God is their constant helper and they fear no evil, even if others provoke them.

They hope in God and do good.

They have set their every hope on Him and they confess to Him with all their heart.

He is their boast, their God and they call upon Him day and night.

Their mouths direct praise to God; their lips are sweeter than honey and wax when they open them to sing to God; their tongue, full of grace, is moved to glorify God.

Their heart is eager to call upon Him, their mind ready to be elevated towards Him, their soul is committed to God and “His right hand has upheld them”. ...

They ask and find whatever they seek. They knock and the gates of mercy are opened.

Saint Nektarios the Wonderworker



**17 May 2015 is the
Sunday of the Blind Man**

Matins Gospel: John 20:11-18

Epistle: Acts 16:16-34

Gospel: John 9:1-38

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let us worship the Word, O ye faithful, praising Him that with the Father and the Spirit is co-beginningless God, Who was born of a pure Virgin that we all be saved; for He was pleased to mount the Cross in the flesh that He assumed, accepting thus to endure death. And by His glorious rising, He also willed to resurrect the dead.

Seasonal Kontakion

Though You went down into the tomb, You destroyed Hades' power, and You rose the victor, Christ God, saying to the myrrh-bearing women, "Hail!" and granting peace to Your disciples, You who raise up the fallen.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 17:1-9; John 11:47-54
Martyrs Peter, Dionysius & Paul; Julian the Martyr

Tuesday: Acts 17:19-28; John 12:19-36
Hieromartyr Patrick of Prusa; Memnonus the Wonderworker

Wednesday: Acts 18:22-28; John 12:36-47
Apodosis of Pascha; Martyr Thalleleus; Mark the Hermit

Thursday: Mark 16:9-20; Acts 1:1-12; Luke 24:36-53
Holy Ascension; Constantine & Helen, Equal-to-the Apostles; Pachomios the New Martyr

Friday: Acts 19:1-8; John 14:1-11
Hieromartyr Basiliscus; New Martyrs Demetrius and Paul

Saturday: Acts 20:7-12; John 14:10-21
Michael, Bp. Of Synnada; Mary the Myrrhbearer & wife of Cleopas



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

17 May 2015

The Light of the World

Today we commemorate the healing of the man who had been born blind. Saint John tells us how Jesus sought him out, applied a paste to his eyes, and instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. When the man returned, he was able to see.

This miracle which the Lord worked in giving sight to the blind man, is closely connected to the mysteries which we have been celebrating since Pascha. In rising from the dead, the Risen Christ has given light to the whole world and has released us from the powers of darkness. At last Sunday's Liturgy we proclaimed that Christ, "after being hidden from sight in the tomb, has risen again more brightly than the sun, and thereby illumines all believers."

However, the Resurrection of the Lord is not simply an external event that we are called to affirm, but a living reality that we need to learn to see. Like the man in the Gospel, we too are blind, although our blindness is probably more spiritual than physical. Our eyes have become darkened by sin, and by the fallen state of the world into which we are born.

The Risen Christ comes to enlighten us with His light, just as He came to the man born blind. He comes to heal us of our own spiritual blindness. However, in order to behold the true and saving light, we need to learn humility and repentance, acknowledging our own blindness and calling out to Him for healing.



Give sight, O Lord, to the eyes of my soul, maimed by gloomy sin, by grafting in humility, O merciful, and cleansing me with tears of repentance.

From Matins for the Sunday of the Blind Man

The Mystery of Repentance

A series on the meaning of Confession

Last week we saw that the Parable of the Prodigal Son provides us with a model for repentance, for the son in the story recognized the situation of exile that his sin had caused, took responsibility for it, took



action to return to his father, confessed his sin, and received the new life of forgiveness. Repentance involves a movement back to God and is something that affects the whole of our lives.

A Change of Mind

The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, literally means a changed mind – it means that one has come to see things in a different light. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to “be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” (Romans 12:2) However, for the biblical writers and the Fathers, the word “mind” (*nous* in Greek) conveyed more than just about cerebral rationality, but involved our inner being.

A Change of Heart

Repentance is therefore about more than just our thoughts and our actions, but also involves the transformation of the heart. For the Bible and the Fathers, the heart is not simply about emotion, but is the centre of our being – it is the root of all our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Saint Macarius the Great tells us that:

The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet dragons are there, and there are also lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. But there too is God, the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the apostles, the heavenly cities and the treasures of grace – all things are there.

We are often not in touch with our hearts, and entering into our heart involves an ongoing process. While repentance is certainly marked by concrete moments of turning around and confessing our sins, it also involves an ongoing journey of self-knowledge as we come to see ourselves as we truly are before God. For it is in the process of turning to God and becoming closer to Him that we get a better sense of our own sinfulness and experience true sorrow for our sins.

Prayer by reason of its nature is the converse and union of man with God, and by reason of its action upholds the world and brings about reconciliation with God; it is the mother and also the daughter of tears, the propitiation for sins, a bridge over temptations, a wall against afflictions, a crushing of conflicts, work of angels, food of all the spiritual beings, future gladness, boundless activity; it is the spring of virtues, the source of graces, invisible progress, food of the soul, the enlightening of the mind, an axe for despair, a demonstration of hope, the annulling of sorrow, the wealth of monks, the treasure of solitaries; it is the reduction of anger, the mirror of progress, the realization of success, a proof of one's condition, a revelation of the future, a sign of glory.

Saint John Climacus

The Ascension of the Lord

This coming Thursday is the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. On Wednesday, we “take leave” of the Easter feast, commemorating the last day of the presence of the Risen Christ among His disciples. And then on Thursday we celebrate Jesus Christ's Ascension into heaven where He is exalted at the right hand of the Father.

The Ascension of Christ is really the fulfillment of His Resurrection. When He rose from the dead, He did not simply resume a normal human life, but appeared to His disciples in a glorified body which was immortal and incorruptible. Now He ascends to the Father, and is no longer present on earth in a bodily way, yet He abides with the faithful forever.

With the Ascension of Christ, we also see our own human nature being taken up into the glory of heaven. “We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven,” says St John Chrysostom. Through His Ascension, Christ has opened the way by which we too will be able to be taken up into the glory of the Father.

However, Jesus Christ tells us that He will not leave us as orphans. By ascending to the Father, He is opening the way for the Holy Spirit whom He promises to send to comfort and help us. The Ascension of Christ is a joyful feast, both because it assures us that Christ's work is completed, and because it encourages us to await and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.



You were taken up in glory, Christ our God, giving joy to your Disciples by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, when through the blessing they had been assured that you are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Apolytikon of the Ascension

How many times have I prayed for what seemed a good thing for me, and not leaving it to God to do, as He knows best, what is useful for me. But having obtained what I begged for, I found myself in distress because I had not asked for it to be, rather, according to God's will.

Saint Nilus of Sinai