

If the poison of pride is swelling up in you, turn to the Eucharist; and that Bread, Which is your God humbling and disguising Himself, will teach you humility. If the fever of selfish greed rages in you, feed on this Bread; and you will learn generosity. If the cold wind of coveting withers you, hasten to the Bread of Angels; and charity will come to blossom in your heart. If you feel the itch of intemperance, nourish yourself with the Flesh and Blood of Christ, Who practiced heroic self-control during His earthly life; and you will become temperate. If you are lazy and sluggish about spiritual things, strengthen yourself with this heavenly Food; and you will grow fervent. Lastly, if you feel scorched by the fever of impurity, go to the banquet of the Angels; and the spotless Flesh of Christ will make you pure and chaste.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria



28 June 2015 is the Fourth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Romans 6:18-23

Gospel: Matthew 8:5-13

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let the Heavens rejoice; let earthly things be glad; for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm, He hath trampled upon death by death. The first-born of the dead hath He become. From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us, and hath granted great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion:

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: John 21:14-25; 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; 12:1-9; Matthew 16:13-19
Apostles Peter and Paul

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 9:36, 10:1-8
Synaxis of the 12 Apostles; Michael the New Martyr of Athens

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8; Matthew 10:1, 5-8
Unmercenary Cosmas & Damian; New Martyr Constantine of Cyprus

Thursday: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56
Robe of the Theotokos; Juvenal, Pat. of Jerusalem

Friday: Romans 16:1-16; Matthew 13:3-9
Martyr Hyacinth & Companions; Anatolius, Abp. of Constantinople

Saturday: Romans 8:14-21; Matthew 9:9-13
Andrew the Hymnographer; Martha, Mother of Symeon Stylites



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

28 June 2015

Just Give the Word...

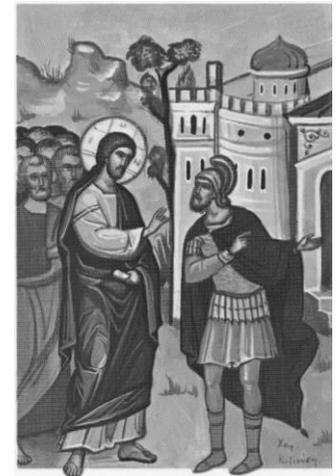
Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of how a Roman Centurion's came to Jesus Christ, asking Him to heal his servant. When Jesus offered to go with him to heal the man, he responded by saying that he was not worthy to have Christ come to his house. Instead, he asked Him to "Just give the word and my servant will be cured."

This man was an outsider; he was not part of the people of Israel. And yet Jesus praised his faith and said that nowhere in Israel had He encountered such faith.

The centurion did not give any intellectual statements about who Jesus was. Yet he clearly acknowledged the authority of Christ and he submitted himself to this authority. He also humbly recognized his own true place in front of Jesus Christ, considering himself unworthy to have Christ come to his house.

Here we see his great faith in the power of Christ's word. He not only respects the word of the Lord, but he actively seeks it, for he recognizes its great power. He recognizes that this word of the Lord is alive and active and cuts like a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12), and that it is something that will permeate his whole life.

The Scriptures and the teachings of the Fathers are absolutely clear that humility is a prerequisite for true prayer. Prayer is not simply asking favours of God, but is rather acknowledging who He is, who we are before Him, and His authority over our lives. This is true prayer, but it requires a humility that we need to learn and so we pray that we may be given faith like that of the Roman centurion.



In the mercy of God, the little thing done with humility will enable us to be found in the same place as the saints who have laboured much and been true servants of God.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We have seen that the sacraments or mysteries of the Church are the means that God gives us to become united with Him and to grow in His love. This is also true of Christian marriage. Although marriage is also found outside the Church and in various cultures, the Christian understanding of marriage is unique and in some ways rather revolutionary.



Male and Female God Created Them

Human love between a man and a woman is a common theme in the Old Testament. In the opening chapters of the book of Genesis, we are told that God created human beings male and female and intended them for each other. (1:27) He blessed them and instructed them to, "Be fruitful and multiply." (1:28) But He also established a relationship in which this was to occur. The man is to regard the woman as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," and therefore we are told that:

... a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. (2:24)

The Old Testament, especially the book of Genesis, contains several accounts of the relationships between husbands and wives – such as those between Abraham and Sara, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Rachel – that show God's blessing on their partnerships as He blesses them with descendants. God's attitude to marriage is also shown in the Song of Songs, which expresses the erotic delight that married partners find in each other.

Marriage was held in such high esteem that the Old Testament writers used it as an image for the relationship between God and the people of Israel. So the relationship between the husband and wife in the Song of Songs is seen as an image of the relationship between God and His people, while the prophets saw the unfaithful of the people of Israel as a wife being unfaithful to her husband.

This imagery is continued in the New Testament, where Saint Paul compares the relationship between a husband and his wife with the relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and His Church. (Ephesians 5:32) Jesus Christ also explicitly affirms:

Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.



When husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly, but as the image of God Himself.

Saint John Chrysostom

The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

Tomorrow the Church commemorates the Holy, Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

During His earthly life, Jesus Christ chose Apostles to carry on His work and to lead and guard the new Christian community. Saint Peter was the leader of this band of Apostles. He was an impetuous fisherman who, despite misunderstanding and denying Christ, had nevertheless played a key role in acknowledging who Jesus Christ was and was given the task by the Risen Christ to "feed my sheep." After the Resurrection, he preached the Gospel in Judea, Antioch, parts of Asia, and finally in Rome where he was martyred.

Saint Paul had not known Christ during His earthly ministry and had actively persecuted His followers. However, he had such a dramatic encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus that his whole life turned around and he became one of the most outstanding missionaries of the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about how he travelled widely throughout the empire, preaching the Gospel especially to the Gentiles.

Both saints were actively involved in spreading the faith and in teaching the early Church, and both were martyred in Rome. By commemorating them together the Church reminds us of how God uses very different people to work together to build up the Church.



First in prominence among the Apostles, and teachers to the Universe, intercede to the Master of all for peace in the world and for our souls great mercy.

Apolytikion for the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

Glory be to Him, Who never felt the need of our praising Him; yet felt the need as being kind to us, and thirsted as loving us, and asks us to give to Him, and longs to give to us. His fruit was mingled with us men, that in Him we might come near to Him, Who condescended to us. By the Fruit of His stem He grafted us into His Tree.

Saint Ephraim the Syrian