

Whatever the soul may think fit to do itself, whatever care and pains it may take, relying only upon its own power, and thinking to be able to effect a perfect success by itself, without the co-operation of the Spirit, it is greatly mistaken. It is of no use for the heavenly places; it is of no use for the kingdom – that soul, which supposes that it can achieve perfect purity of itself, and by itself alone, without the Spirit. Unless the man who is under the influence of the passions will come to God, denying the world, and will believe with patience and hope to receive a good thing foreign to his own nature, namely the power of the Holy Spirit, and unless the Lord shall drop upon the soul from on high the life of the Godhead, such a man will never experience true life, will never recover from the drunkenness of materialism; the enlightenment of the Spirit will never shine in that benighted soul, or kindle in it a holy daytime; it will never awake out of that deepest sleep of ignorance, and so come to know God of a truth through God's power and the efficacy of grace.

Saint Macarius the Great



**5 July 2015 is the
Fifth Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Having learned the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection from the Angel, and having cast off the ancestral condemnation, the women disciples of the Lord spake to the Apostles exultantly: Death is despoiled and Christ God is risen, granting 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 honour thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Romans 16:17-24; Matthew 13:10-23, 43
Sisoës the Great; Archippus, Philemon & Onesimos

Tuesday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34
Great Martyr Kyriake; Thomas of Malea

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 4:9-15; Luke 6:17-19, 9:1-2, 10:16-22
Great Martyr Procopius; Theophilios the Myrrhbearer

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; Matthew 13:36-43
Hieromartyr Pancratius; Dionysios the Orator

Friday: 1 Corinthians 4:5-8; Matthew 13:44-54
45 Martyrs of Nikopolis; Bishop Gregory of Assa

Saturday: Mark 5:24-34; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Luke 7:36-50
Great Martyr Euphemia; Olga, Equal to the Apostles



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

5 July 2015

What have you to do with us, O Son of God?

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ cast the demons out of two demoniacs who had been living in the tombs in the territory of the Gadarenes. We hear that they were so fierce that nobody could pass near them. When Jesus appeared they recognized Him and challenged Him saying: "What have you to do with us, O Son of God?" Sending the demons into a herd of swine, Christ healed the two men, restoring them to their senses.

Such accounts may seem strange to our modern ears. Yet Saint Matthew clearly shows us that the demons had taken possession of these men in a fairly dramatic way, that they recognized the authority of Christ, and that He had authority over them.

It is significant that these demoniacs were living in the tombs, for that is the place of the dead. And the fact is that the presence of the demonic, of evil, of the devil himself, leads to death. It also leads to violence, which is another characteristic of the devil, in total contrast to the peace which comes from God.

Today's Gospel account might sound like an extreme encounter with the demonic. While such encounters exist, the reality is that, for most of us, our encounter with the demonic comes in a much more subtle manner. The Fathers teach us that people are not possessed by demons overnight; rather such possession comes after first surrendering our free will and allowing our thoughts to be distracted by ideas that are evil, and from there it is a slippery slope as they increasingly come to exercise control over us. We need to guard our thoughts from evil and to ask for Christ's help in not allowing evil habits to take control over us.



Baptism does not take away our free will or freedom of choice, but gives us the freedom no longer to be tyrannized by the devil unless we choose to be.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We saw last week that the human love between a man and a woman is something that was created by God and blessed by Him. Not only do we find this affirmation in the account of creation in the book of Genesis, but Saint Cyril of Alexandria reminds us that Jesus Christ Himself attended a wedding feast at Cana (see John 2:1-12) and, by doing so, He Himself also blessed marriage.



The early Church did not have a specific marriage service in the first centuries of its existence. However, if a couple wished to marry they were expected to seek the bishop's blessing and their union and commitment to one another was sealed by participating in the Holy Eucharist together.

A counter-cultural commitment

From the very beginning, the Church's understanding of marriage was in striking contrast to the society in which it found itself. In the ancient world, sexuality was an area in which almost anything was acceptable, whether inside or outside of marriage, at least if one was powerful, and the strong were able to exploit the weak sexually. In contrast to this, the Church

taught that human sexuality was something sacred and that, precisely because of this sacredness, sexual relations could only find their proper place within the commitment of marriage, which was understood as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman.

However, the Church did not see marriage as simply a set of legal obligations – and when the Orthodox marriage service did develop it was notable for not having the juridical element of vows that are found in western marriage ceremonies. Rather, the marriage service was patterned after the sacraments of baptism and chrismation and the married couple are crowned with the glory of God's Kingdom, reminding us that marriage is their way to holiness and the path that they are called to follow to reach the Kingdom of God. For, as a husband and wife grow in their love for one another – if that love is real, and forged in the genuine self-giving that marriage requires – so they also grow in their love for God.



Imagine that the world is a circle, that God is the centre, and that the radii are the different ways human beings live. When those who wish to come closer to God walk towards the centre of the circle, they come closer to one another at the same time as to God. The closer they come to God, the closer they come to one another. And the closer they come to one another, the closer they come to God.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza

Saint Procopius the Great

*On Wednesday the Church commemorates the **Great Martyr Procopius**. This is how Saint Nikolaj Velimirović describes his life in the Prologue of Ohrid:*



Procopius was born in Jerusalem of a father who was a Christian and a mother who was a pagan. At first, his name was Neanias. Following the death of his father, the mother raised her son completely in the spirit of Roman idolatry. When Neanias matured, Emperor Diocletian saw him and, at once, took a liking to him and brought him to his palace for military service.

When this nefarious emperor began to persecute Christians, he ordered Neanias to go to Alexandria with a garrison of soldiers and there to exterminate the Christians. But, on the road, something happened to Neanias similar to that which happened to Saul [Paul]. In the third hour of the night there was a strong earthquake and, at that moment, the Lord appeared to him and a voice was heard: "Neanias, where are you going and against whom are you rising up?" In great fear, Neanias asked: "Who are You Lord? I am unable to recognize You." At that moment, a glowing cross as if of crystal appeared in the air and from the cross there came a voice saying: "I am Jesus, the crucified Son of God." And further, the Lord said to him: "By this sign that you saw, conquer your enemies and My peace will be with you."

That experience completely turned him around and changed the life of Commander Neanias. He issued an order to make the same kind of cross which he saw and instead of going against the Christians he, with his soldiers, turned against the Agarians who were attacking Jerusalem. He entered Jerusalem as a victor and declared to his mother that he is a Christian. Being brought before the court, Neanias removed his commander's belt and sword and tossed them before the judge thereby showing that he is only a soldier of Christ the King. After great tortures he was cast into prison where the Lord Christ, again, appeared to him, baptized him and gave him the name Procopius.

One day twelve women appeared before his prison window and said to him: "We too are the servants of Christ." Accused of this they were thrown into the same prison where St. Procopius taught them the Faith of Christ... After this, those twelve women were brutally tortured. Witnessing their suffering and bravery, the mother of Procopius also believed in Christ and all thirteen were slain. When St. Procopius was led to the scaffold, he raised his hands toward the east and prayed to God for all the poor and unfortunate, orphans and widows and especially for the Holy Church that it may grow and spread and that Orthodoxy shine to the end of time. And to Procopius there was a reply from heaven that his prayers were heard after which he joyfully laid his head under the sword and went to his Lord in eternal joy. St. Procopius... and was crowned with the glorious wreath of immortality on July 8, 303 A.D.