

We have within us deeply rooted weaknesses, passions, and defects. They cannot all be cut out with one sharp motion, but patience, persistence, care and attention. The path leading to perfection is long. Pray to God so that he will strengthen you. Patiently accept your falls and, having stood up, immediately run to God, not remaining in that place where you have fallen. Do not despair if you keep falling into your old sins. Many of them are strong because they have received the force of habit. Only with the passage of time and with fervour will they be conquered. Don't let anything deprive you of hope.

Saint Nektarios of Aegina



**26 July 2015 is the
Eighth Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: John 20:11-18

Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5

Gospel: Matthew 14:14-22

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

Apolytikion of the Holy Fathers:

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: 2 Timothy 2:1-10; Luke 21:12-19

Great Martyr Panteleimon; Nicholas of Novgorod

Tuesday: Acts 6:1-7; Matthew 18:18-22; 19:1-2; 13-15

Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon & Parmenas of the 70; Irene Chrysovalantou

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13; 14:1-5; Matthew 20:1-16

Martyr Callinicus; Virgin Martyr Theodota

Thursday: Acts 15:35-41; Matthew 20:17-28

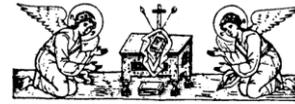
Silas, Silvan, Crescens, Epenetus and Andronicus of the 70; Julitta of Caesaria

Friday: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; Matthew 21:12-14; 17-20

Forefeast of the Holy Cross; Joseph of Arimathea

Saturday: Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2; Matthew 10:16-22

Procession of the Holy Cross; 7 Maccabean Youths, Solomone and Eleazar



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

26 July 2015

Give Them Something to Eat

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and see how Jesus Christ satisfies the deepest hunger of those who seek Him.

The crowds had followed Jesus into the wilderness where He had taken pity on them and healed the sick. However, when evening fell He was aware that they needed to be fed. When the disciples protested that they had no food, He instructed them to feed the crowd themselves, and the five loaves and two fish were miraculously multiplied to feed the crowd of five thousand men, not counting the women and children.

This incident shows Christ's compassionate concern for those in His care. And it also shows Him challenging His disciples to collaborate with Him in caring for those in need. Their first response was that they did not have anything with which to feed the people, but Jesus Christ shows us that even the little things that we often overlook can be transformed and put to a great use when they are offered to Him for the service of His Kingdom.

However, the multiplication of the loaves and fish is about more than simply satisfying people's physical hunger, but is also about a spiritual reality. Jesus Christ is Himself the Living Bread who feeds us both with His Word and with His own Body and Blood. This Gospel therefore challenges us to reflect on what it is that we really hungry for, and what sort of food will truly satisfy our souls.



A certain monk told me that when he was very sick, his mother said to his father, "How our little boy is suffering. I would gladly give myself to be cut up into pieces if that would ease his suffering." Such is the love of God for people. He pitied people so much that he wanted to suffer for them, like their own mother, and even more. But no one can understand this great love without the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We saw last week that the Orthodox marriage service expresses the couple's vocation to grow in holiness, and that it consists of two parts. The Service of Betrothal during which the rings are exchanged takes place in the narthex of the church and after it the couple process into the main body of the church for the **Service of Crowning**. Central to this second part of the marriage service are the joining of the hands, the crowning, and the drinking together from the common cup.



The Joining of Hands

The right hands of the bride and groom are joined while the priest prays imploring God to "join these thy servants, unite them in one mind and one flesh." Through this action, the two separate people become joined together mystically as "one flesh." Their hands remain joined throughout the remainder of the ceremony.

The Crowning

The crowning forms the climax of the marriage ceremony as the heads of the bride and bridegroom are crowned by the priest as he prays, "O Lord, our God, crown them with glory and honour." The crowns are a sign of the glory and honour of God's Kingdom and a reminder that they are to be king and queen of their home, working

with God to make it a little kingdom that they will rule with wisdom and justice. But the crowns are also a subtle reminder of the crowns of the martyrs, reminding the newly married couple that their way to holiness will also involve a form of martyrdom as they die to themselves and lay down their lives for the other.

The Common Cup

The rite of crowning is followed by the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, which describes the marriage at Cana in Galilee that Christ attended and blessed by changing water into wine. The newly-wed couple are given wine to drink in remembrance of this miracle and also to signify the beginning of their common life together, which will involve the sharing of both joy and sorrow.

The Dance of Isaiah and the Blessing

The priest then leads the couple in a ceremonial procession around a table with the Gospel Book and Cross, invoking both the prophet Isaiah who danced with joy and the martyrs who struggled for Christ. This is reminiscent of the procession around the font during the baptismal ceremony and expresses the reality that it is Jesus Christ who is at the centre of Christian marriage. The service concludes with the blessing in which the priest removes the crown of the groom praying:

Be magnified, O Bridegroom, as Abraham, and blessed as Isaac, and increased as was Jacob. Go your way in peace, performing in righteousness the commandments of God.

He then removes the crown of the bride, praying:

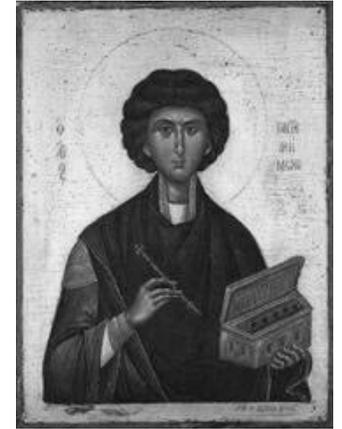
And you, O Bride, be magnified as was Sarah, and rejoiced as was Rebecca, and increased as Rachel, being glad in your husband, keeping the paths of the Law, for so God is well pleased.

And he then blesses them with the words:

O God our God, Who was present in Cana of Galilee and blessed the marriage there, do You also bless these Your servants, who, by Your Providence, are joined in the community of marriage. Bless their comings-in and their goings-out. Replenish their life with all good things. Accept their crowns in Your Kingdom unsoiled and undefiled; and preserve them without offense to the ages of ages.

Saint Panteleimon

Tomorrow we commemorate the Holy Great-martyr and healer, Saint Panteleimon. He was born in Nicomedia to a pagan father and a Christian mother. His mother taught him the Christian Faith and he was baptized. He became a physician, and practiced his art with compassion and generosity, healing many through both his prayer and his medicine. His parents had named him Pantoleon ("in all things a lion"), but because of his great compassion he was re-named Panteleimon ("all-merciful"). He once healed a man of blindness by calling on Christ, which led the once-blind man to embrace the Faith. When asked how he came to be healed, he named Panteleimon as his healer and proclaimed his newfound faith in Christ. For this the pagans executed him, then arrested Panteleimon, who was beheaded after being tortured in 305. He is considered the foremost of the Unmercenary Physicians.



Saint Pantaleimon is invoked in the prayers at the Blessing of the Waters and in the blessing of the holy oils used in the Sacrament of Holy Unction, together with the other unmercenary saints and wonder-workers. There is a most beautiful church dedicated to him on Mount Athos.

On Saturday, 1 August, the Church begins a two-week fast to prepare for the Feast of the Dormition, or falling asleep, of the Holy Theotokos on 15 August.

The fast begins with the procession of the Precious Cross of the Lord which originates from the twelfth century Constantinople when the Precious Cross was brought out in procession as a protection against disease.

On the weekdays during the fast the Paraklesis service is usually held in many churches. A Paraklesis is a service of supplication for the living and contains a supplicatory canon to the Most Holy Theotokos. It reminds us continually that the Mother of God is a refuge and protection to those who seek her aid. And it encourages us to place our concerns before her and implore her help, both for ourselves and for those who are dear to us and for the needs of the whole world.

Thou art also the fountain of true light, the inexhaustible treasury of life itself, the most fruitful source of blessing, who has won for us and brought us all good things — though for a while thou wast covered corporeally with death; nonetheless, thou dost pour out pure and inexhaustible streams of immense light, immortal life and true happiness, rivers of grace, fountains of healing and everlasting blessing.

Saint John of Damascus

