

Pursue the small consolation that is acquired in time from toil, that you may be accounted worthy of that great consolation which dispels the troubles of this life of sorrows for those who find it. Do not despise small things, lest you be deprived of great ones. Has no one ever seen an infant who, when he puts flesh in his mouth, sucks milk? By means of small things the door is opened to great ones. You dishonour God, O my brother, in that you desire Him to govern you without a definite order. For no man has been entrusted with great things without first having been tried in small ones.

Saint Isaac the Syrian



2 August 2015 is the Ninth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-31

Epistle: Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

From on high didst Thou descend, O Compassionate One; to burial of three days hast Thou submitted that Thou mightest free us from our passions. O our Life and Resurrection, Lord, glory be to Thee.

Seasonal Kontakion:

You were transfigured upon the mount, O Christ our God, and Your disciples, in so far as they could bear, beheld Your glory. Thus, when they see You crucified, they may understand Your voluntary passion, and proclaim to the world that You are truly the effulgence of the Father.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Matthew 21:18-22
Righteous Isaacius, Dalmatius, Faustus; Salome the Holy Myrrhbearer

Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 15:29-38; Matthew 21:23-27
Holy 7 Youths of Ephesus

Wednesday: 1 Peter 1:1-25; 2:1-10; Matthew 21:28-32
Forefeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Eusignius

Thursday: Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9
Holy Transfiguration

Friday: 2 Corinthians 1:12-20; Mark 9:2-9
Afterfeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Dometius

Saturday: Romans 15:30-33; Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4
Emilian the Confessor; Myronus, Bp. Of Crete



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

2 August 2015

Come to Me...

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ came to His disciples, walking across the water when they were caught in a storm while crossing the lake in a boat. Moreover, the Apostle Peter asked to be allowed to come to Christ across the water. But he began to sink when he took fright at the wind. He called out to Christ, who rescued him and calmed the storm.

This incident shows us that, without Christ, we are exposed to various dangers and storms. Jesus Christ comes to us in the midst of these, and He calls us to come to Him. However, even when we do respond to Him and seek to follow Him, we remain in danger of getting distracted. When we start to focus on the dangers around us, and lose our focus on Him, we begin to sink. However, even then Christ seeks to reach out to us if we are ready to turn to Him and, to cry with Saint Peter, "Lord, save me!"



The world that we live in will inevitably present us with temptations, and even when we seek to follow Christ we can find ourselves easily distracted. We can also get discouraged by our own failures. We therefore need to develop the habit of constantly turning to Christ and finding ways of focusing our thoughts and our gaze on Him and not on ourselves. By ourselves we can do nothing, but with His help we can conquer our fear and overcome the difficulties that we face.

The Christian should not fear nor be distressed in difficult circumstances, and thus be distracted from his trust in God; but should take courage as if the Lord were at hand directing his affairs and strengthening him against all his adversaries and as if the Holy Spirit were instructing him even as to the replies he should make to his foes.

Saint Basil the Great

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We have seen that the Church's marriage service joins a couple together and makes their new relationship the place where they are called to live out their call to holiness. However, this new unit that is formed in marriage is not just the joining of two individuals, but also opens the way to creating a new family unit.



The Home as a "Little Church"

As we saw at the beginning of this series, God created men and women and instructed them to "be fruitful and multiply." (Genesis 1:28) Although there are childless couples who cannot bear children, the Christian understanding of marriage presupposes an openness to children. Children are a gift from God and parents are given the responsibility to raise them well. As Saint John Chrysostom writes:

For a person does not become a father simply because he helped to bring about the birth of a child, but by raising the child correctly.

Saint John Chrysostom describes the home as a "little Church."

Just as marriage is pathway to holiness, so the family environment is the place where children are to be formed in virtue and holiness. Not only are parents responsible for their children's physical needs, but they are also to be attentive to their spiritual needs. Even in his own day, people were concerned about the state of the youth and the breakdown of society. However, Saint John Chrysostom laid the blame for this not at the door of the youth, but rather with their parents:

The reason for the overturning of all things is that we aren't caring for our own children. We take care of their bodies, but we ignore the upbringing of their souls ... Do you want a child that is obedient? From their first steps, feed them on the wisdom and counsels of the Lord.

Marriage therefore bears fruit in children and in the creation of an environment in which those children can grow up to know and love God. It is the parents' task to work with God in shaping and nurturing the gift of new life that He has given them.



What saves and makes for good children is the life of the parents in the home. The parents need to devote themselves to the love of God. They need to become saints in their relations to their children through their mildness, patience, and love. They need to make a new start every day, with a fresh outlook, renewed enthusiasm and love for their children. And the joy that will come to them, the holiness that will visit them, will shower grace on their children. Generally the parents are to blame for the bad behavior of the children. And their behavior is not improved by reprimands, disciplining, or strictness. If the parents do not pursue a life of holiness and if they don't engage in spiritual struggle, they make great mistakes and transmit the faults they have within them. If the parents do not live a holy life and do not display love towards each other, the devil torments the parents with the reactions of the children. Love, harmony and understanding between parents are what are required for the children. This provides a great sense of security and certainty.

Saint Porphyrios

The Transfiguration of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ

On Thursday, 6 August, we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. The Gospel for the Feast (Matthew 17:1-9) tells us how Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James and John with Him up a mountain, where He was transfigured before them, radiating light. The prophets Moses and Elijah also appeared, but a voice from heaven made clear to them that it was Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, echoing the voice that had sounded at His baptism in the Jordan: "This is my Son, the beloved. He enjoys my favour. Listen to Him."

At the Transfiguration, the Apostles encounter Jesus Christ in a new way, and this experience is given to them to prepare and strengthen them for His Passion. It is also given to the Church to reveal to us our own human destiny. Just as Christ's face and clothes were radiant with Light, so we are called to be cleansed of sin and to gradually learn to see and to participate in His Light. Moreover, Christ's Transfiguration illumines the whole universe with His Light.

For all of us who struggle in the darkness and brokenness of our lives and world, this feast reminds us that Jesus Christ is also present in our world, and it challenges us to develop the spiritual eyes so that we may learn to see Him. For, as the Apolytikion for the feast reminds us, we can only see Him as much as our own sight allows us to.



You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, showing your disciples your glory, as far as they could bear it. At the prayers of the Theotokos make your everlasting light shine also on us sinners. Giver of light, glory to You.

Apolytikion for the Feast

Let us, considering the Mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in accord with their teaching, strive to be illumined by this Light ourselves and encourage in ourselves love and striving towards the Unfading Glory and Beauty, purifying our spiritual eyes of worldly thoughts and refraining from perishable and quickly passing delights and beauty which darken the garb of the soul and lead to the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness.

Let us be freed from these by the illumination and knowledge of the incorporeal and ever-existing Light of our Savior transfigured on Tabor, in His Glory, and of His Father from all eternity, and His Life-Creating Spirit, Whom are One Radiance, One Godhead, and Glory, and Kingdom, and Power now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Saint Gregory Palamas