

The Mother of God committed to writing neither her thoughts nor her love for God and her Son, nor her soul's suffering at the Crucifixion, because in any case we could not have understood, for her love for God is stronger and more ardent than the love of the Seraphim and Cherubim, and all the hosts of angels and archangels marvel at her. And though the life of the Mother of God is hidden, as it were in a holy silence, our Lord allows our Orthodox Church to know that She embraces the whole world in this love of hers, and in the Holy Spirit sees all the peoples of the earth, and like her Son pities all men and has compassion on them.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

**9 August 2015 is the
Tenth Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: John 21:1-14

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Gospel: Matthew 17:14-23

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews and the soldiers were guarding Thine immaculate Body, Thou didst arise on the third day, O Saviour, granting life unto the world. Wherefore, the powers of the Heavens cried out to Thee, O Lifegiver: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ. Glory to Thy Kingdom. Glory to Thy dispensation, O only Friend of man.

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: 2 Corinthians 2:3-15; Matthew 23:13-22
Martyr Archdeacon Laurence; Chitus of Athens

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:1-3; Matthew 23:23-28
Martyr Euplus the Deacon; Patriarch Niphonus

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 23:29-39
Martyrs Photius & Anicetus; Soldier-martyrs of Crete

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 4:1-12; Matthew 24:13-28
Apodosis of Transfiguration; Maximus the Confessor

Friday: 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; Matthew 24:27-33, 42-51
Forefeast of the Dormition; Prophet Micah

Saturday: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Dormition of the Theotokos



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

9 August 2015

**Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa**

Faith Like a Mustard Seed

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of the healing of an epileptic boy. This incident occurs just after the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, and is particularly concerned with the power of faith in our lives.

This boy is brought to Jesus by his father after the Apostles had been unable to heal him. Jesus Christ rebukes them for their lack of faith and when they later ask Him why they had not been able to cast the demon out of the boy, He blames it on their lack of faith, declaring that, if we have faith like a mustard seed, we will be able to move mountains.

The image that Jesus evokes here is that of the contrast between a mustard seed and the mountain. The mustard seed is a tiny little seed, but Christ's point is that even a tiny bit of faith, if it is genuine, can do great things.

We are sometimes inclined to think of faith in intellectual terms, as assent to particular doctrines. But the faith that Christ speaks of here is far deeper than that. It is an attitude of total trust in the all-powerful goodness of God. It is the humility to place our whole lives and all our desires before God, trusting that He knows what is best for us.

If we have even a little of this sort of faith, new possibilities will open up for us and for those around us. It is this sort of faith that we see in the lives of the saints and it is such faith that was to enable the apostles to do such great and unexpected things.



Christian religion is not a certain philosophic system, about which learned men, trained in metaphysical studies, argue and then either espouse or reject, according to the opinion each one has formed. It is faith, established in the souls of men, which ought to be spread to the many and be maintained in their consciousness.

Saint Nektarios of Aegina

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We have seen in this series that marriage is the place where a married couple are called to grow in holiness as they deepen their love for God, for one another, for their family and for others. Their lives will be filled with trials as well as joy, and they are called to lay down their lives for one another, just as Jesus Christ gave His life for the Church.



Discussing the Orthodox Christian understanding of marriage raises some practical issues that we address here, although the details of this, and how they apply in individual cases are best left to the judgement of the local bishop or the parish priest.

A Common Faith

Everything that we have said about marriage presupposes that the married couple share a common faith. If marriage is a path to holiness, then it makes sense that the couple need to have a common understanding of this path, support each other on it, and receive the support of the Church by participating in its sacramental life.

However, given our pluralistic world, there are situations in which Orthodox find themselves in relationships with, or already married to, those who are not members of the Orthodox Church. Such situations pose extra challenges and are best discussed directly with your local priest.

When Marriages Fail

The Orthodox Church understands marriage as a permanent union and does not easily accept divorce and remarriage. However, given the reality of sin in our world, the Church does recognize that marriage sometimes fail and that it can sometimes be better for a couple to separate. For similar reasons, the Church makes provision for an ecclesiastical divorce as an exceptional measure when a marriage truly has no hope of recovery and allows for a second (and sometimes a third, but never more than a third) marriage.

Such provisions are rooted in the Church's pastoral care for the people involved and the recognition that what matters is the salvation of the individual souls. Jesus Christ came to call "not the righteous, but sinners to repentance," (Luke 5:32) and it is precisely when people experience the brokenness of their own lives that they most need the Church's care. However, how this care is best applied is left to the pastoral judgement of the particular priest or bishop.



Do not fall into despair because of stumbling. I do not mean that you should not feel contrition for them, but that you should not think them incurable. For it is more expedient to be bruised than dead. There is, indeed, a Healer for the man who has stumbled, even He Who on the Cross asked that mercy be shown to His crucifiers, He Who pardoned His murders while He hung on the Cross. 'All manner of sin,' He said, 'and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,' that is, through repentance.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

The Dormition of the Holy Theotokos

On Saturday, 15 August, we celebrate the great feast of the Dormition, or falling asleep, of the Most Holy Theotokos. At Vespers we sing: "The source of life is laid in the grave and her tomb becomes a ladder to heaven."

The account of the Dormition of the Mother of God has been persevered in the tradition of the Church, with accounts of how the apostles gathered around her bed as she "passed over into heavenly joy," and into the Kingdom of her Son.

We believe that the Holy Theotokos shared in the corruption of our human nature, although she was without personal sin. She too needed to be saved by Christ and, like her Son, she experienced the death that all of us will have to face. However, we believe that she also experienced Christ's victory over death in a direct and immediate way. The Dormition services teach us that the Holy Virgin passed through death to life without going through judgment, for the Mother of Life could not be overcome by corruption.

This feast is ultimately an extension of the Resurrection of Christ and shows us how His victory over death has become effective in His Mother. It has been called a "second Pascha" for in it we celebrate the resurrection of her who is already united to Christ before the Last Judgement and the general resurrection.



In birth, you preserved your virginity; in death, you did not abandon the world, O Theotokos. As mother of life, you departed to the source of life, delivering our souls from death by your intercessions.

Apolytikion for the Feast

Our preparation for meeting the heavenly King, and for the inheritance of eternal life in heaven, should consist of these things. The heavenly King desires souls adorned with immutable virtue, souls prepared so that the Very Lord Himself could abide in them. Do not marvel that the Very Lord wants to live in us. In fact the human soul is more spacious than the heavens and the earth, for it exists in the image of God. And if one removes sins from the soul, the Lord of all will settle in it and will fill it with Himself. "We will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23), says the Lord about the souls who love Him.

And so, ye participants in the Christian feasts, and especially the present feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, ye who are brightly adorned with every virtue and translated to the heavenly kingdom, to Her Son and God, proclaim to each and every one about preparing their souls to be the dwelling place of the Lord, about continual repentance, and about the incorruptible adornment of Christian virtue. Let your death also be unshamed and peaceful, serving as the pledge of a good answer at the dread judgment seat of Christ.

– Saint John of Kronstadt