

For some are saved by fear, as for example, when we break off from sin because we have our eyes on the threatened punishment of hell. There are others, too, who live lives of virtue because of the rewards promised to the good; and these possess their goal not by charity but by hope of reward. But he who runs in spirit to reach perfection, casts out fear. For it is the attitude of a slave, who does not stay with his master out of love and simply does not run away for fear he will be beaten. The truly virtuous man even despises rewards, lest he give the impression that he esteems the gift more than the giver. He loves with his whole heart and soul and strength (Duet. 6:5) not the creatures that come from God but Him Who is the source of all good. And He Who calls us to share in Him commands that this disposition be in the souls of all who listen to Him.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa



15 November 2015 is the Eighth Sunday of Luke

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

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.

Seasonal Kontakion:

Today, the most pure temple of the Savior, the precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the sacred treasure of God, enters the house of the Lord, bringing the grace of the Divine Spirit. The Angels of God praise her. She is the heavenly tabernacle.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Romans 10:11-21; 11:1-2; Matthew 9:9-13
Apostle and Evangelist Matthew

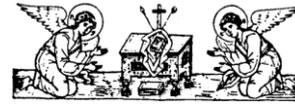
Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Luke 14:25-35
Gregory the Wonderworker; Gennadius and Maximus

Wednesday: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Luke 15:1-10
Great Martyr Plato; Martyr Romanus

Thursday: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 3:1-5; Luke 16:1-9
Prophet Obadiah; Barlaam of Caesarea

Friday: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18; Luke 16:15-18; 17:1-4
Forefeast of the Entry of the Theotokos; Gregory Decapolite

Saturday: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Entry of the Theotokos



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

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Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Who is My Neighbour?

Today we hear the familiar account of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Saint Luke tells us that a lawyer sought to test Jesus. Not content with knowing that the path to salvation involves loving both God and one's neighbour, he pushed Jesus further wanting to know exactly who his neighbour was. And it is in response to the question "Who is my neighbour?" that Jesus Christ tells this parable.

In order to understand Christ's response in this parable, we need to appreciate the hostility that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews despised the Samaritans and the thought that a Samaritan could have been the neighbour that the Law referred to would have been unthinkable to an observant Jew.

In this parable we see how God breaks through our "normal" human ways of thinking. Jesus Christ tells us that our neighbour is not exclusively someone connected to us by the ties of blood, language, or similar background. Rather, our neighbour is simply the person whom God has put on our path at any given moment. Our neighbour may be the last person we would choose to be associated with, but Christ teaches us that our path to salvation is intimately tied up with our response to our neighbour.

At another level we can also read this parable as referring to Jesus Christ Himself as the Good Samaritan. He is, in a sense, the ultimate neighbour, for He has reached out to us to share our human condition. As Saint Augustine writes: "Wine and oil have been poured on you. You have received the sacrament of the only-begotten Son. You have been lifted onto His mule. You have believed that Christ became flesh. You have been brought to the inn, and you are being cured in the Church." Or, as we pray in the first week of Great Lent:

I am the man who fell among thieves, even my own thoughts; they have covered all my body with wounds, and I lie beaten and bruised. But come to me, O Christ my Saviour, and heal me.



A Life Centred on Christ Alone

A series on the meaning of Monasticism

We have seen how monasticism developed and we looked briefly at the vows by which monastics commit themselves to an ongoing life of transformation. However, initiation into the monastic life is usually a long process. The vows taken bind the monk or nun to a life-long commitment and so a serious preparation and discernment is needed.



Stages of Monasticism

Originally, for the Desert Fathers, there was no formal ceremony of monastic commitment, but the very act of “leaving the world” and going to the desert was seen as a monastic initiation. However, in the course of history different stages of monastic life develop. These can vary according to different traditions, and the details can vary from monastery to monastery, but we can speak of the following stages in which the candidate is formed in the life under the guidance of the abbot or abbes.

Novitiate

After visiting a monastery as a guest, a candidate is usually made a novice, or *dokimos*, which literally means “one under obedience.”

Although there is no formal ceremony for this, and the clothing varies,

the novice receives the blessing of the abbot or abbess and will usually dress in black. Novices remain free to leave at any time, and may also be asked to leave if their abbot discerns that their vocation lies elsewhere. There is no limit to the length of the novitiate.

Rassaphore

If a novice continues, then he or she is tonsured as a Rassaphore, which literally means a “robe-bearer.” Although the service does not include vows, it is understood as a commitment to the monastic way of life and the candidate is tonsured by having four small bits of hair cut off in the form of a cross, and receives the monk’s outer robe with wide sleeves.

Stavrophore

After some years, the Rassaphore will usually be tonsured as a Stavrophore, which literally means “Cross-bearer,” and is also known as the Little Schema. At this stage, formal vows of stability, chastity, obedience, and poverty are made and the monk is tonsured again, receiving the *paramandyas*, a piece of square cloth worn on the back and embroidered with the instruments of the Passion, and connected by ties to a wooden cross worn over the heart. *The paramandyas* represents the yoke of Christ. He or she also receives a beeswax candle that will be burned at his funeral.

Great Schema

This is the final form of monastic tonsure and its use varies in different traditions. The tonsure to the Great Schema follows the same pattern as that to the Little Schema, but the monk schemamonk or nun receives the *analavos*, which is also embroidered with the instruments of the Passion and is draped over the monk’s shoulders, hanging down in the front and the back.

After tonsure to both the Little Schema and the Great Schema, the monk or nun will spend some days keeping vigil in the Church. With each new grade, he or she will usually be given an increased prayer rule and new responsibilities.



The Entrance of the Holy Theotokos into the Temple

On Saturday, we celebrate the feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple which is one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. According to the tradition of the Church, the Theotokos was brought into the Temple when she was three years old and consecrated to God. She was led into the Holy of Holies to be nourished by the angels in order to prepare her for her virginal conception of the Son of God.

This feast is not simply about the details of what happened to the Theotokos in the Temple, but is, more importantly, a symbolic statement about our salvation history. One of the hymns of the feast calls it “the prelude of the good will of God,” for it announces and prefigures the coming of God’s salvation in the Incarnation of Christ which we will celebrate at Christmas.

In this feast we see the Holy Theotokos taken into the temple, and yet we also know that she herself will become “the living temple of the Holy Glory of Christ our God.” She is “the temple that is to hold God” and is consecrated to be the “dwelling place of the Almighty.” She enters the Holy of Holies, but will herself become the Holy of Holies and the “abode of heaven.”



Today is the prelude of the good pleasure of God, and the proclaiming of the salvation of humankind. In the Temple of God the Virgin is revealed, and beforehand she announces Christ to all. To her then let us cry aloud with mighty voice: Hail, the fulfilment of the Creator’s dispensation!

Apolytikion for the feast

Some people tell me that they are scandalized because they see many things wrong in the Church. I tell them that if you ask a fly, “Are there any flowers in this area?” it will say, “I don’t know about flowers, but over there in that heap of rubbish you can find all the filth you want.” And it will go on to list all the unclean things it has been to.

Now, if you ask a honeybee, “Have you seen any unclean things in this area?” it will reply, “Unclean things? No, I have not seen any; the place here is full of the most fragrant flowers.” And it will go on to name all the flowers of the garden or the meadow.

You see, the fly only knows where the unclean things are, while the honeybee knows where the beautiful iris or hyacinth is.

As I have come to understand, some people resemble the honeybee and some resemble the fly. Those who resemble the fly seek to find evil in every circumstance and are preoccupied with it; they see no good anywhere. But those who resemble the honeybee only see the good in everything they see. The stupid person thinks stupidly and takes everything in the wrong way, whereas the person who has good thoughts, no matter what he sees, no matter what you tell him, maintains a positive and good thought.

Saint Paisios of Mt. Athos