



On **Wednesday**, we commemorate the Holy Great Martyr Catherine of Alexandria. Coming from a noble and wealthy family, she was both beautiful and intelligent and received an outstanding education. She was known for her debates with the leading philosophers of her day and when the Emperor Maximin tried to make his subjects offer idolatrous sacrifices, she objected and entered into public debate with the leading scholars and orators he could find, silencing them all with her arguments and resulting in them asking for baptism. After they had been sentenced to death, Saint Catherine was tortured on a specially constructed spiked wheel, but was freed by an angel. She was eventually beheaded outside the walls of Alexandria in 305.



22 November 2015 is the Ninth Sunday of Luke

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-7

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

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:

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: 1 Timothy 1:1-7; Luke 17:20-25

Amphilochius, Bp. Of Iconium; Gregory, Bp. of Agrigentum

Tuesday: Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Luke 17:26-37; 18:8

Pope Clement of Rome; Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria

Wednesday: Matthew 25:1-13; Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34

Apodosis of the Entry; Great Martyr Catherine

Thursday: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Luke 18:31-34

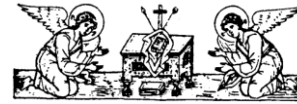
Alypius the Stylite; Nikon

Friday: 1 Timothy 4:4-8, 16; Luke 19:12-28

Martyr James the Persian; Righteous Nathaniel

Saturday: Galatians 3:8-12; Luke 10:19-21

Stephen the New; Martyr Irenarchos



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

Archbishopric of Good Hope

Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

22 November 2015

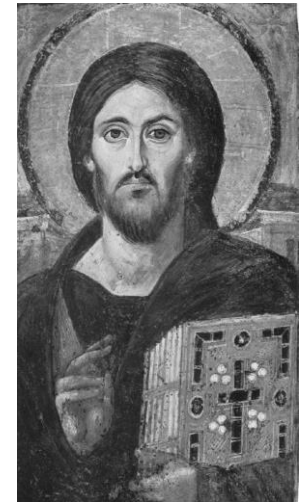
He who has Ears to Hear, Let him Hear

Today we hear Jesus Christ issuing a stern warning on the dangers of greed. He tells the parable of a rich man who “stores up treasures for himself instead of becoming rich in the sight of God.” Having had good returns on his harvest, this man had said to himself that he would pull down his barns in order to build bigger ones that would accommodate all his grains and his possessions. Little did he realize that he would die that very night and that all his possessions would be of no use to him.

While the fruits of the earth are good and given to us to be used wisely, our human nature has been corrupted by the fall and so we tend to hold onto them graspingly, becoming trapped by them, or thinking that they can provide us with security against the dangers that we face. This parable confronts us with the reality of death and with the fact that material wealth will be of no use to us when we die. Indeed, if we relate to it in a grasping, acquisitive way, it can even be a hindrance, for it prevents us from accumulating the spiritual treasures about which Christ speaks.

As we begin the Nativity fast in preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation of Christ at Christmas, we are called to be watchful and sober. This is a time for us to take stock of what life is really about. The reminder

that we will die, possibly unexpectedly, is not meant to make us gloomy and depressed, but should rather help us to focus on the things that do endure beyond the grave. For true joy consists not in piling up possessions, but rather in being in a right relationship with God and with those around us and in using our possessions in a way that will benefit others.



The things that are in the world remain in the world, and whatever riches we gather are bequeathed to our heirs. The things that we cannot take away with us are not ours either. Only virtue is the companion of the dead. Compassion alone follows us. It is the guide to the heavens and the first of the mansions.

Saint Ambrose of Milan

Recognise the Spirit within You

by Saint John of Kronstadt

Observe the difference between the presence of the life-giving spirit and the presence of the spirit that deadens and destroys your soul.

- When there are good thoughts in your soul you feel happy and at ease;
- When peace and joy are in your heart, then the spirit of good, the Holy Spirit, is within you;
- Whilst when evil thoughts or evil motions of the heart arise within you, you feel ill at ease and oppressed;
- When you are inwardly troubled, then the spirit of evil, the crafty spirit, is within you.

When the spirit of evil is in us, then, together with oppression of heart and disturbance, we generally feel a difficulty in drawing near to God in our heart, because the evil spirit binds our soul, and will not let it raise itself to God.

The evil spirit is a spirit of doubt, unbelief—of passions, oppression, grief and disturbance; whilst the spirit of good is one of undoubting faith, of virtue, of spiritual freedom and breadth—a spirit of peace and joy.

Know by these tokens when the Spirit of God is within you, and when the spirit of evil, and, as often as possible, raise your grateful heart to the most Holy Spirit that gives you life and light, and flee with all your power from doubt, unbelief, and the passions through which the evil serpent, the thief and destroyer of our souls, creeps in.

Sometimes in the lives of pious Christians there are hours when God seems to have entirely abandoned them—hours of the power of darkness; and then the man from the depths of his heart cries unto God:

“Why hast Thou turned Thy face from me, Thou everlasting Light? For a strange darkness has covered me.... Turn me, O Saviour, to the light of Thy commandments and make straight my spiritual way, I fervently pray Thee.”

If you do not yourself experience the action of the wiles of the evil spirit, you will not know, and will not appreciate and value as you ought, the benefits bestowed upon you by the Holy Spirit: not knowing the spirit that destroys, you will not know the Spirit that gives life.

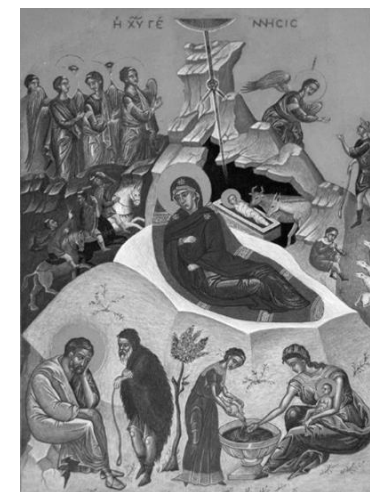
Only by means of direct contrasts of good and evil, of life and death, can we clearly know the one and the other: if you are not subjected to distresses and dangers of bodily or spiritual death, you will not truly know the Saviour, the Life-Giver, who delivers us from these distresses and from spiritual death.

Jesus Christ is the consolation, the joy, the life, the peace and the breadth of our hearts!



Preparing for Christ's Nativity

Last Sunday, 15 November, we began the period of preparation for Christmas known as the Nativity Fast, which in the West is sometimes also called Advent. We prepare for Great Feasts by a period of fasting and Christ's Nativity is preceded by a forty day fast that is similar in some ways to Great Lent. Indeed, the feasts of the Nativity and Theophany are in many ways patterned after Pascha, the great feast of feasts. Jesus Christ lay as an infant in the cave so that He might lie in a tomb. He was buried in baptism so that He might descend to the dead and conquer death by death. He was worshipped by the wise men so that all of creation might adore Him in His triumph over death.



Although the Nativity fast is not as strict as the Lenten fast, its purpose is the same. It calls us to simplify our lives, curb our desires and focus on that which we are about to celebrate, so that we may be able to welcome Christ's Incarnation with joy. It calls us to repent and change our lives so that, little by little, our hardened hearts may be broken open and we may become more receptive to His presence in our lives and better able to reflect His love to others.

During this time of preparation for the birth of Christ, the Church's liturgy is full of rich biblical symbolism. It draws on the Old Testament prophecies which speak of Christ's coming in the flesh, and identifies itself with the people of Israel which was longing for its Messiah. As we enter into the Church's liturgy, we realise that this coming of Christ is not simply something historical, but it is something that we are called to relive in our own lives today. The texts repeatedly speak about “now” and encourage us to be watchful and ready, so that we may greet the Incarnation of Christ with great joy.

Behold, the time of our salvation has drawn near.

O Cave, make ready!

The Virgin is drawing near to give birth.

***O Bethlehem, land of Judah, be glad and rejoice,
for from you our Lord has dawned.***

***Listen, mountains and hills, and lands around Judea,
for Christ is coming to save man whom He fashioned,
since He loves mankind.***

(Vespers of the Forefeast, 20 December)