

When Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgements of God, he asked, 'Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?' He heard a voice answering him, 'Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgement of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.'

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Abba Macarius said, 'If you reprove someone, you yourself get carried away by anger and you are satisfying your own passion; do not lose yourself, therefore, in order to save another.'

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Abba Paphnutius, the disciple of Abba Macarius, said, 'I asked my Father to say a word to me and he replied, "Do no evil to anyone, and do not judge anyone. Observe this and you will be saved."'

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers



**17 January 2016 is the  
Twelfth Sunday of Luke**

**Matins Gospel:** John 21:14-25

**Epistle:** Hebrews 13:17-21

**Gospel:** Luke 17:12-19

**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:**

Your birth sanctified a Virgin's womb and properly blessed the hands of Symeon. Having now come and saved us O Christ our God, give peace to Your commonwealth in troubled times and strengthen those in authority, whom You love, as only the loving One.

### ***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday:** John 10:1-9; Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19  
Athanasios and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria; Zenia the Martyr

**Tuesday:** Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 9:27-35  
Macarius the Great of Egypt; Mark, Bp. Of Ephesus; Arsenius of Corfu

**Wednesday:** 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Luke 6:17-23  
Euthymius the Great; Zacharias the New Martyr of Patra

**Thursday:** Philippians 1:12-20; Luke 12:8-12  
Maximus the Confessor; Martyr Neophytos; Neophytos, Agnes, Patroclus, Maximus and Eugene

**Friday:** 2 Timothy 1:3-8; Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30  
Timothy of the 70; Martyr Anastasius the Persian

**Saturday:** Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5  
Hieromartyr Clement; Martyr Agathangelus



## ***Evangelion***

***A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith***

17 January 2016

### **Giving Thanks**

Today the Church returns once more to listening to the Gospel readings according to Saint Luke, and we hear his account of how Jesus Christ healed ten lepers. Ten men suffering from leprosy came and asked Him to have mercy on them, and He told them to go and show themselves to the priests in order to confirm their healing. As they went away, they found that they were healed. On discovering this, one of the lepers, who was a Samaritan, returned to Jesus to thank Him. However, the other nine continued on their way, prompting Jesus to remark that it was only one of them who came back to give thanks.

This incident reminds us that we can all-too-easily take God's gifts for granted, and forget to thank Him for them. Cultivating a spirit of gratitude is of fundamental importance in our Christian life, for we often need to become aware of all that God does for us. We may wonder how the nine lepers could have forgotten to give thanks for their healing, yet if we are not grateful for all that God does for us in our everyday life, we can run the risk of also being blind to His more dramatic acts.

Often people think of prayer mainly as asking things from God. While we should indeed bring our needs and the needs of the world to God in prayer, true prayer begins with acknowledging who God is, with praising Him for who He is and thanking Him for all that He has done for us. For prayer is ultimately about cultivating a relationship with God as we learn to not only rely on Him for all our needs, but also recognize how He answers these needs and thank Him for it.



What words can adequately describe God's gifts? They are so numerous that they defy enumeration. They are so great that any one of them demands our total gratitude in response.

Saint Basil the Great

## Saints of the Church of Alexandria

*This week we commemorate several important saints of our Patriarchate of Alexandria. In the first few centuries of the Church's life, Alexandria was one of the leading centers of Christian thought, and the deserts of Egypt made a major contribution to the development of Christian monasticism.*



**Today**, we commemorate **St Anthony the Great**, who is sometimes seen as founder of monasticism, because his *Life*, written by St Athanasius, became very influential in different parts of the world and inspired many others to adopt a monastic life. St Anthony was born around 250. He had a devout youth and when he was about twenty years old, after the death of his parents, he heard the Gospel of St Matthew being read in Church and heard Christ speaking to him personally the words: “If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor; then come, follow me.” He took this literally, gave away the family fortune and apprenticed himself to an ascetic who was living on the outskirts of the village. He later moved into the desert

itself, eventually ending up in a very remote place. This physical journey to the heart of the desert was mirrored by an inner journey in which, through many ascetic struggles and temptations, he gradually overcame his passions and became radiant with the light of Christ. He attracted many disciples and became known as a true father of monks. He was also deeply loyal to the Church and left his solitude on occasion in order to support Christians who were being persecuted and to support St Athanasius in combating the Arian heresy.

Then **tomorrow**, we commemorate **St Athanasius the Great**, the great patriarch of Alexandria who was one of the most influential theologians of the Church and whose great efforts and sufferings made a major contribution to the triumph of Christian Orthodoxy when it was threatened by heresy. He was born around 296 and as a child his piety was noted by Patriarch Alexander who took Athanasius under his wing and guided his education. After spending some time with the desert monks, he returned to Alexandria where he was ordained a deacon. In 325 he attended the Council of Nicaea together with Patriarch Alexander and, although only a deacon, he was noted for his contribution in countering the Arian heresy. Shortly after this he succeeded St Alexander as Patriarch. He was a true pastor to his people, travelling throughout Egypt to visit Churches and monasteries. However, much of his energy as patriarch was taken up combating the Arian heresy which had reasserted itself. Arius denied that Jesus Christ was truly God and of one essence with the Father, and St Athanasius realised that this was a direct threat to our salvation, for, if God had not truly assumed our human nature, we could not have access to His divine life. Much of his life as patriarch was spent in exile, first in Rome and later hiding with the monks in the Egyptian desert. He was eventually allowed to return to Alexandria for good in 366 and reposed in peace in 373. Eight years after his death the Orthodox faith was reasserted at the Council of Constantinople in 381 which he did not live to see but which was certainly due in large part to his perseverance and commitment to the truth.

**Tomorrow** we also commemorate another great Patriarch of Alexandria. Just as St Athanasius had stood alone against all in defence of the divinity of the Word of God, so **St Cyril of Alexandria** devoted all his strength to maintain the dogma of the Incarnation against the Nestorian heresy in the fifth century. St Cyril had first tried to persuade Nestorius of the error of his ways by private correspondence, but when this failed he presided at the Council of Ephesus in 431 at which Nestorianism was defeated. St Cyril showed in his teaching how the Word of God has truly taken human nature on Himself, assuming it in His own Person, so that it may partake of His divine nature. After thirty-two years as patriarch, St Cyril reposed in 444.



*Saints Athanasius & Cyril*



**On Tuesday**, we commemorate another great monastic father of the Egyptian desert, **Saint Macarius the Great**. He was born around 300 in a village in the Nile delta and became a camel driver. In obedience to a call from God, he became an ascetic in his village, but moved to another village when the people wanted to make him a priest. There a girl who had become pregnant accused him of being the father of her child and although he was innocent he refused to defend himself, even helping to support the child. When his innocence was established, the people flocked to him full of admiration, but he fled to the desert in order to avoid vainglory. He settled in Scetis where he engaged in rigorous fasting and long prayer, but was also known for his hospitality to those who sought his counsel and for the gentleness with which he received people as he judged nobody and covered the sins of all.

They said of Abba Macarius the Great that he became, as it is written, a god upon earth, because, just as God protects the world, so Abba Macarius would cover the faults which he saw, as though he did not see them; and those which he heard, as though he did not hear them. “Christians,” he said, “should judge no one, neither an open harlot, nor sinners, nor dissolute people, but should look upon all with simplicity of soul and a pure eye. Purity of heart, indeed, consists in seeing sinful and weak men and having compassion for them and being merciful.” On the subject of prayer he counselled, “It is enough if you will often repeat from your whole heart, ‘Lord, as it pleases Thee and as Thou knowest, have mercy on me.’ And if temptation comes upon you: ‘Lord, help me!’ The Lord knows what is profitable for us and has mercy on us.”