

The only certainty [in prayer] is repentance and let every spiritual edifice be built upon it and let us continually seek repentance from God and nothing else except that.

We should not ask for lights or miracles, or prophecies, or gifts of the Spirit, only for repentance. Repentance brings humility; humility will bring grace from God, because grace always goes to the humble, of necessity. Therefore, repentance is necessary for our salvation and when we have it, the grace of God will come and it will teach us what we need to do for salvation even of our fellows too, if it is necessary.

Saint Porphyrios the Athonite



**24 January 2016 is the
Fourteenth Sunday of Luke**

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Gospel: Luke 18:35-43

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:

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: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2; John 10:9-16

Gregory the Theologian; Synaxis of the New Martyrs of Russia

Tuesday: Ephesians 6:10-17; Matthew 22:35-46

Xenophon & his Companions; Symeon the Elder

Wednesday: John 10:1-9; Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2; John 10:9-16

Relics of John Chrysostom; Peter the Righteous of Egypt

Thursday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Luke 6:17-23

Ephraim the Syrian; Isaac the Syrian; James the Righteous

Friday: Hebrews 10:32-38; Mark 9:33-41

Relics of Ignatius the Godbearer; Laurence the Recluse

Saturday: John 10:9-16; Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19

Three Hierarchs; Hippolytos, Pope of Rome



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

24 January 2016

Have Mercy on Me!

Today we hear Saint Luke's account of the healing of the blind beggar. This man was begging by the roadside when Jesus came by and, when he heard that it was Jesus, he cried out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" He continued to cry this until Jesus stopped, and asked him what he wanted. When he asked, "Lord, let me receive my sight!" Jesus responded by saying: "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

Many of us know what it is to pray for things that we think we (or others) desperately want or need. Yet dramatic incidents of healing like this can seem very distant for us. Yes, God does heal people dramatically, but this is not always our experience. What are we to make of healing accounts such as this one?

In the first place, we should understand that prayer is not so much asking for what we want, or even what we think we need, but is rather abandoning ourselves to the mercy of God. God does answer our prayers, but it is not always in the ways we expect or desire, because God knows what need far better than we understand ourselves.

In the second place, prayer is not simply a once-off request that may or may not be answered, but is the expression of our whole lives and our deepest desires. We cannot pray for things and yet continue to live as if God were not involved in our lives. To cry out to God, "Have mercy on me!" is not something we just say with our lips, but should come to express our awareness of our deep need for God as we grow in faith. The more we come to truly know ourselves, the humbler we become and the purer our prayer becomes.



The word was light to him who was blind, because it was the word of Him who is the True Light.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Saint Paisios the Athonite on Prayer

The soul must be constantly ready and alert and always in contact with the spiritual headquarters, that is, God. Only then, it will feel secure, full of hope and joy.

When I was in the army, during the war, I was a radio operator. I noticed that we felt secure only when we communicated with the Army Division on an hourly basis. When our communication was limited to every two hours, we felt a little bit insecure; sometimes, when we could only be in touch with them twice a day, we felt



uncomfortable, lonely and lost. The same thing applies to our prayer. The more we pray, the more secure we feel, on a spiritual basis, of course.

When someone is involved in manual labor, it helps him a lot to say the Jesus prayer and at the same time perform his task.

When someone is doing work that needs concentration, i.e. he is driving a car, or he is operating on a patient, he should also say the Jesus prayer so God can help him and enlighten him;

however, he should pray with his heart, and use his mind to concentrate on his work and thus avoid doing any mistakes.

The more the mind concentrates on praying, and is being humbled, the more it is enlightened by the grace of God. However, the more it gets dispersed and confused due to its haughtiness, the more it becomes troubled; therefore our mind, which is clean by nature, fills up with dirty thoughts.

Saint Silouan the Athonite on the Saints

In heaven all things live and move in the Holy Spirit. But this same Holy Spirit is on earth too.

The Holy Spirit dwells in our Church; in the sacraments; in the Holy Scriptures; in the souls of the faithful.

The Holy Spirit unites all men, and so the Saints are close to us; and when we pray to them they hear our prayers in the Holy Spirit, and our souls feel that they are praying for us.

The Saints live in another world, and there through the Holy Spirit they behold the glory of God and the beauty of the Lord's countenance.

But in the same Holy Spirit they see our lives, too, and our deeds. They know our sorrows and hear our ardent prayers.

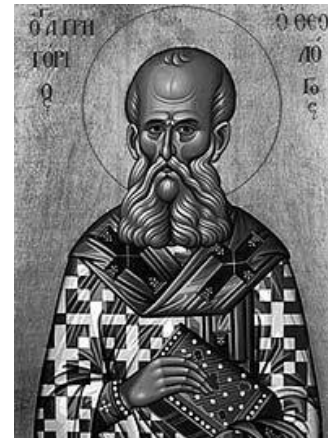
In their lives they learned of the love of God from the Holy Spirit; and he who knows love on earth takes it with him into eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven, where love grows and becomes perfect.

And if love makes one unable to forget a brother here, how much more do the Saints remember and pray for us!

Saint Gregory the Theologian

Tomorrow we commemorate St Gregory the Theologian, one of only three holy Fathers whom the Church has honored with the title "the Theologian" (the others are St John the Evangelist and Theologian, and St Symeon the New Theologian).

St Gregory was born in 329 in Arianzus in Cappadocia to a pious and holy family. His father Gregory, mother Nonna, brother Caesarius, and sister Gorgonia are all counted among the saints of the Church. St Gregory studied in Palestine, then in Alexandria, and then in Athens. On the way to Athens, his ship was almost sunk in a violent storm. Gregory, who had not yet been baptized, prayed to the Lord to preserve him, and promised that henceforth he would dedicate his entire life to God. Immediately the storm ceased.



In Athens, Gregory's fellow students included St Basil the Great and the future Emperor Julian the Apostate. The friendship between Gregory and Basil blossomed into a true spiritual friendship and they were loving brothers in Christ for the rest of their lives. After completing their studies, Sts Gregory and Basil lived together as monks in a hermitage at Pontus. Much against St Gregory's will, his father ordained him a priest, and St Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima (in the Archdiocese of Caesarea, over which St Basil was Archbishop).

In 381 the Second Ecumenical Council condemned Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople, and appointed St Gregory in his place. When he arrived in the City, he found that the Arians controlled all the churches, and he was forced to "rule" from a small house chapel. From there he preached his five great sermons on the Trinity, the *Triadika*. These were so powerful and influential that when he left Constantinople two years later, every church in the city had been restored to the Orthodox.

St Gregory was always a theologian and a contemplative rather than an administrator, and the duties of Archbishop were agonizing to him. In 382 he received permission from a council of his fellow-bishops and the Emperor to retire from the see of Constantinople. He returned to Nazianzus (for which reason he is sometimes called St Gregory of Nazianzus). There he reposed in peace in 391 at the age of sixty-two.

His writings show a theological depth and a sublimity of expression perhaps unsurpassed in the Church. His teaching on the Holy Trinity is a great bastion of Orthodox Faith. And in almost every one of his published homilies he preaches the Trinity undivided and of one essence.