

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



**31 January 2016 is the
Fifteenth Sunday of Luke**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When Thou didst descend unto death,
O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay
Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity.
And when Thou didst also raise the
dead out of the nethermost depths, all
the powers in the Heavens cried out: O
Life-giver, Christ our God, 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: Romans 8:28-39; Luke 10:19-21

Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord; Martyr Trypho

Tuesday: Luke 2:25-32; Hebrews 7:7-17; Luke 2:22-40

Presentation of Our Lord; Gabriel the New Martyr

Wednesday: Hebrews 9:11-14; Luke 2:25-38

Symeon & Anna; New Martyrs John, Nicholas and Stamatios

Thursday: James 1:19-27; Mark 10:17-27

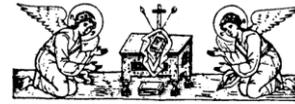
Isidore of Pelusium; Nicholas the Confessor

Friday: James 2:1-13; Mark 10:24-32

Martyr Agatha; Polyectus, Pat. Of Constantinople

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

Photius, Pat. Of Constantinople; Bucolus, Bp. Of Smyrna



Evangelion

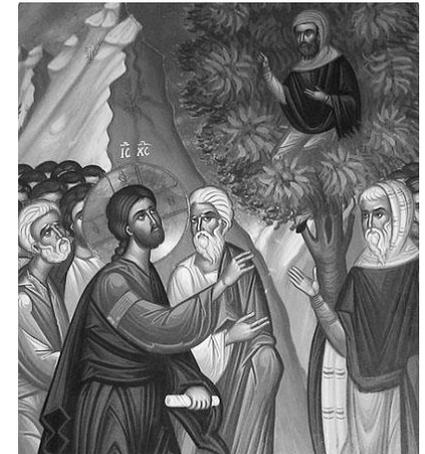
A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

31 January 2016

I am Coming to Your House

Today we hear Saint Luke's account of the charming and yet deeply challenging conversion of Zacchaeus. As a tax collector, he was regarded as an outcast among his own people because he collaborated with the Roman occupiers and enriched himself in the process. When Jesus came into Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted to see him but was too short to see over the heads of others and so climbed a sycamore tree. Aware that he was there, Jesus called to him to come down and announced that he was coming to his house. Zacchaeus responded with joy, welcomed Jesus into his home, and committed himself to giving half of his property to the poor and paying back those whom he had cheated fourfold.

Zacchaeus was clearly curious about Jesus, yet he was also uneasy. Aware of his outcast status and perhaps also awkward because of his shortness, he hid in a tree where he could see what was going on, and yet also remain at a certain distance to it. We may also feel drawn to a life of faith and be aware that something is missing in our lives, and yet we draw back, conscious of our own inadequacies or afraid of what others will think of us. Yet Jesus cut through Zacchaeus' defenses; He addressed him directly and knew exactly what he needed.



Jesus announces that he is coming to Zacchaeus' house. In Biblical language that meant that he was coming to share in Zacchaeus' life and to be in a relationship with him. Welcoming Jesus Christ into our lives means getting to know Him and allowing Him to get to know us, including the parts of ourselves that we would rather He doesn't see. But it is only through this that we can find true healing and peace and take the steps we need to take to be reconciled both to God and to those around us.

Blessed is he that has eaten from the bread of love which is Jesus. While still in this world, he breathes the air of the resurrection, in which the righteous will delight after they rise from the dead.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

Saint Basil the Great on Prayer

Ought we to pray without ceasing? Is it possible to obey such a command? ...

Prayer is a petition for good addressed by the pious to God. But we do not rigidly confine our petition to words.

Nor yet do we imagine that God requires to be reminded by speech. He knows our needs even though we ask Him not.

What do I say then? I say that we must not think to make our prayer complete by syllables.

The strength of prayer lies rather in the purpose of our soul and in deeds of virtue reaching every part and moment of our life.

“Whether ye eat,” it is said, “or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

As you take your seat at table, pray. As you lift the loaf, offer thanks to the Giver. When you sustain your bodily weakness with wine, remember Him Who supplies you with this gift, to make your heart glad and to comfort your infirmity.

Has your need for taking food passed away? Let not the thought of your Benefactor pass away too. As you are putting on your tunic, thank the Giver of it.

As you wrap your cloak about you, feel yet greater love to God, Who alike in summer and in winter has given us coverings convenient for us, at once to preserve our life, and to cover what is unseemly.

Is the day done? Give thanks to Him Who has given us the sun for our daily work, and has provided for us a fire to light up the night, and to serve the rest of the needs of life.



However important prayer, fasting, vigil and all the other Christian practices may be, they do not constitute the aim of our Christian life. Although it is true that they serve as the indispensable means of reaching this end, the true aim of our Christian life consists of the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. As for fasts, and vigils, and prayer, and almsgiving, and every good deed done for Christ's sake, are the only means of acquiring the Holy Spirit of God. Mark my words, only good deeds done for Christ's sake brings us the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

On Tuesday, 2 February, we celebrate the Great Feast of the Meeting, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. This feast comes forty days after the birth of the Saviour, for Saint Luke tells us (2:22ff), that the infant Christ was taken to Jerusalem to be presented in the temple in keeping with the law of Moses. The Church understands that Christ had to fulfil all the requirements of the law of Moses, in order to complete them and to bring the law to its fulfilment in Him.

This feast is called the Meeting, for it is the meeting of the Old and the New Testaments. In the Gospel for the feast, we encounter the devout Symeon who had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah and the prophetess Anna who spoke of the Child to all who had been looking forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. They represent the longing of the people of Israel which they now see fulfilled in the Child whom Symeon takes in his arms as he prays:

*Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace,
according to Your word; For my eyes have seen
Your salvation, which You have prepared before
the face of all people; A light to enlighten the
Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.*

This meeting of the old and the new covenants is very significant for us. It tells us that God's long work of preparation in the history of Israel is now complete. Israel has accomplished its God-given task and has given us the Messiah. The promises made to Abraham have now been fulfilled and Israel's glory has dawned in the Person of Christ, who is now presented as a "light to enlighten the Gentiles." In Him the whole world is illumined and saved.

The elderly Symeon and Anna represent the old rituals and customs which are passing away because that which they prepared for has now arrived. For, as the Apostle Paul says, the ancient laws were "only a shadow of what was coming: the reality is the Body of Christ." (Colossians 2:17)



Today Symeon the Elder enters the temple rejoicing in spirit, to receive in his arms Him who gave the Law to Moses and who Himself fulfils the Law. For Moses was counted worthy to see God through darkness and sounds not clear; and with his face covered he rebuked the unbelieving hearts of the Hebrews. But Symeon carried the pre-eternal Word of the Father in bodily form, and he revealed the Light of the Gentiles, the Cross and the Resurrection; and Ann was proved to be a prophetess, preaching the Saviour and Deliverer of Israel. Unto Him let us cry aloud: O Christ our God, through the Theotokos have mercy on us.

From Great Vespers of the Feast of the Meeting