

We all receive God's blessings equally. But some of us, receiving God's fire, that is, His word, become soft like beeswax, while the others like clay become hard as stone. And if we do not want Him, He does not force any of us, but like the sun He sends His rays and illuminates the whole world, and he who wants to see Him, sees Him, whereas the one who does not want to see Him, is not forced by Him. And no one is responsible for this privation of light except the one who does not want to have it.

God created the sun and the eye. Man is free to receive the sun's light or not. The same is true here. God sends the light of knowledge like rays to all, but He also gave us faith like an eye. The one who wants to receive knowledge through faith, keeps it by his works, and so God gives him more willingness, knowledge, and power.

Saint Peter of Damascus



**14 February 2016 is the  
Sunday of the Canaanite**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:1-12

**Epistle:** 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1

**Gospel:** Matthew 15:21-28

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Having learned the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection from the Angel, and having cast off the ancestral condemnation, the women disciples of the Lord spake to the Apostles exultantly: Death is despoiled and Christ God is risen, granting great mercy to the world.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honour thee.

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

**Monday, 15 Feb:** Philemon 1:1-25; Mark 12:13-17

Monday of Publican and Pharisee; Onesimus of the 70; Righteous Anthimus

**Tuesday, 16 Feb:** 1 Peter 3:10-22; Mark 12:18-27

Tue of Publican & Pharisee; Martyr Pamphilus and Companions; Flavian, Pat. Of Constantinople

**Wednesday, 17 Feb:** 2 Timothy 2:1-10; Luke 20:46-47; 21:1-4

Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro; Mariam Isapostola

**Thursday, 18 Feb:** 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:1-5; Mark 12:38-44

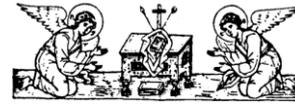
Thursday of Publican and Pharisee; Leo the Great; Agapetus the Confessor

**Friday, 19 Feb:** 2 Peter Letter 1:1-10; Mark 13:1-8

Friday of Publican and Pharisee; Philemon & Archippus, of the 70; Philothei of Athens

**Saturday, 20 Feb:** 2 Timothy 2:11-19; Luke 18:2-8

Saturday of Publican and Pharisee; Leo, Bp. Of Catania; Agathus of Rome



# ***Evangelion***

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

14 February 2016

## **Have Mercy on Me, O Lord!**

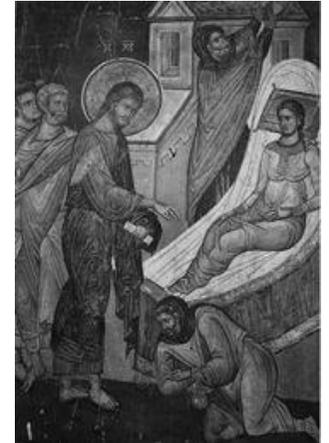
Today is the last Sunday before the beginning of Triodion, and the liturgical season that prepares us for Great Lent. And in order to prepare us for this season of repentance the Church holds before us the account of Christ's encounter with the Canaanite woman.

This Gospel reading may be somewhat shocking to us. When the Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter from demon possession, He responded rather abruptly, insisting that He was sent only to the Jews and not to the Canaanites whom the Jews despised. Yet the woman persisted and in the end Jesus not only healed her child but also praised her great faith.

Saint John Chrysostom tells us that Jesus Christ knew how this woman would respond, and that He put obstacles in her way in order to test her. Not only did she persist in calling upon God's mercy, but she did so with great humility.

As we begin to prepare for the season of Great Lent, we are reminded once more that what God wants of us is a humble heart. Humility is a great mystery. We can probably all give examples of fake humility and of the sort of hypocrisy that turns many people away from Christian faith. Yet genuine humility is a tremendously powerful thing and the Desert Fathers teach us that it is the one virtue that the demons cannot imitate.

The humility that this woman displayed did not make her a doormat who just accepted whatever was said. She showed great courage in persisting in her request, even when Jesus seemed to reject her. She had a deep awareness of her need of God and was determined to persist despite all obstacles. Indeed, it was precisely in acknowledging this need that she was prepared to see herself as the least of all and in this we see her true greatness.



**He who attains love cannot fall.**

Saint Macarius the Great

## *Saint Silouan the Athonite on the Soul that has Acquired Humility*

Nothing troubles the man who is given over to the will of God, be it illness, poverty or persecution.

He knows that the Lord in His mercy is solicitous for us. The Holy Spirit, whom the soul knows, is witness therefore.

But the proud and the self-willed do not want to surrender to God's will because they like their own way, and that is harmful for the soul.

Abba Pimen said: 'Our own will is like a wall of brass between us and God, preventing us from coming near to Him or contemplating His mercy.'



We must always pray the Lord for peace of soul that we may the more easily fulfil the Lord's commandments; for the Lord loves those who strive to do His will, and thus they attain profound peace in God.

He who does the Lord's will is content with all things, though he be poor or sick and suffering, because the grace of God gladdens his heart.

But the man who is discontent with his lot and murmurs against his fate, or against those who cause him offence, should realize that his spirit is in a state of pride, which has taken from him his sense of gratitude towards God.

But if it be so with you, do not lose heart but try to trust firmly in the Lord and ask Him for a humble spirit; and, when the lowly spirit of God comes to you, you will then love Him and be at rest in spite of all tribulations.

The soul that has acquired humility is always mindful of God, and thinks to herself: 'God has created me. He suffered for me. He forgives me my sins and comforts me. He feeds me and cares for me. Why then should I take thought for myself, and what is there to fear, even if death threaten me?'

The Lord enlightens every soul that has surrendered to the will of God, for He said: Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

No one on this earth can avoid affliction; and although the afflictions which the Lord sends are not great, men imagine them beyond their strength and are crushed by them. This is because they will not humble their souls and commit themselves to the will of God.

But the Lord Himself guides with His grace those who are given over to God's will, and they bear all things with fortitude for the sake of God Whom they have so loved and with Whom they are glorified forever.

## *Great-Martyr Theodore the Tyron*

Saint Theodore was a Roman legionary during the persecution of Maximian around 303. Although he had been a Christian since childhood, he had kept his faith secret while in the army. While stationed near a town called Euchaita, he learned that the people there were being terrorized by a dragon that lived in the neighboring forest. He set off to face the dragon, praying to God that the outcome of the contest would be a sign to him of whether the time had come to offer himself for martyrdom. Having found the dragon, he armed himself with the sign of the Cross, drove his spear through its head, and killed it.



His success convinced him that he was now ready to vanquish the spiritual dragon, the Devil. When the commander of his camp next ordered a sacrifice to the gods, Theodore refused boldly and said: "I am a Christian!" and encouraged the other Christians in his company to do the same. He went to a nearby pagan temple and burned it down. He was seen by witnesses and was brought before the governor.

Saint Theodore was thrown into a solitary dungeon cell. He refused bread and water, and said that Christ had promised him food from heaven. He spent his time there chanting hymns with the angels, so that the guards were convinced that other Christians had somehow joined him in his cell.

Failing to convince him by other means, the governor resorted to torture. He subjected the saint to terrible mutilations, but Theodore endured them calmly. The governor began to fear that his example would encourage other Christians and therefore ordered that he be burned. He was taken to the stake, where he walked freely into the flames, and gave back his soul to God. When his body was taken from the ashes by a pious Christian, it was found to be untouched. A church was built in Euchaita in honor of Saint Theodore and many pilgrims visited it for the healing of soul and body.

In 361 the Emperor Julian the Apostate ordered the Prefect of Constantinople to have all foods in the market places sprinkled with the blood of animals that had been sacrificed to the pagan gods, forcing the Christians to have contact with idolatry. However, Saint Theodore appeared in a vision to Patriarch Eudoxius, warned him of the plan, and told him to instruct his flock not to buy any food in the marketplace. Instead, they were to eat *kolyva* made from boiled wheat grains. Since then the Church has commemorated this miracle on the first Saturday of Great Lent. And since then *kolyva* has also been offered in honor of the saints and in memory of the departed.