

If a man has no worries about himself at all for the sake of love toward God and the working of good deeds, knowing that God is taking care of him, this is a true and wise hope. But if a man takes care of his own business and turns to God in prayer only when misfortunes come upon him which are beyond his power, and then he begins to hope in God, such a hope is vain and false. A true hope seeks only the Kingdom of God... the heart can have no peace until it obtains such a hope. This hope pacifies the heart and produces joy within it.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov



31 July is the Sixth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: Romans 12:6-14

Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let us worship the Word, O ye faithful, praising Him that with the Father and the Spirit is co-beginningless God, Who was born of a pure Virgin that we all be saved; for He was pleased to mount the Cross in the flesh that He assumed, accepting thus to endure death. And by His glorious rising, He also willed to resurrect the dead.

Seasonal Kontakion:

You were transfigured upon the mount, O Christ our God, and Your disciples, in so far as they could bear, beheld Your glory. Thus, when they see You crucified, they may understand Your voluntary passion, and proclaim to the world that You are truly the effulgence of the Father.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 1 August: Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2; Matthew 10:16-22
Procession of the Holy Cross; 7 Maccabean Youths, Solomone & Eleazar

Tuesday, 2 August: Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60; Mark 12:1-12
Translation of the relics of Stephen; New Martyr Theodore of Dardanelles

Wednesday, 3 August: 1 Corinthians 7:12-24; Matthew 14:35-36; 15:1-11
Righteous Isaacius, Dalmatius, Faustus; Salome the Holy Myrrbearer

Thursday, 4 August: 1 Corinthians 7:24-35; Matthew 15:12-21
Holy 7 Youths of Ephesus

Friday, 5 August: 1 Peter 1:1-25; 2:1-10; Matthew 15:29-31
Forefeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Eusignius

Saturday, 6 August: Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9
Holy Transfiguration



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

31 July 2016

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

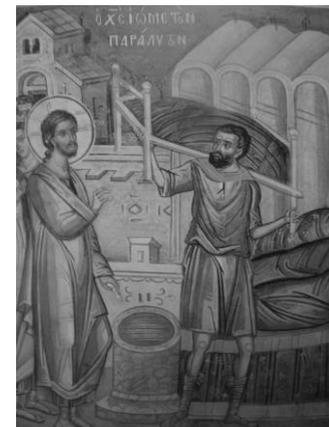
Your Sins are Forgiven

In today's Gospel we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ healed a paralytic man. When this man was brought to Him, He scandalized the scribes by telling him that His sins were forgiven. Showing that He knew their thoughts, Christ asked them: "Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" And then He continued: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He then said to the paralytic – 'Rise, take up your bed and go home.'"

This encounter reveals who Jesus truly is. St John Chrysostom points out that, by reading what was in the scribes' minds, Jesus shows Himself as truly God. Moreover, as they themselves point out, it is only God who can forgive sins. They are scandalized precisely because, by claiming to forgive sins, Jesus Christ is revealing Himself as truly God.

But this encounter also reveals the true nature of the healing that we need. St John Chrysostom continues by pointing out that, if anyone might have been annoyed, it was the paralytic man. He had come to Christ to be healed, but instead had had his sins forgiven. However, far from being annoyed, he recognizes Christ's authority, surrendering himself to the One who heals. And, in this, he is healed in both body and soul.

This incident teaches us that spiritual and physical healing are closely related. While the links between sin and illness are not clear cut – and Jesus elsewhere denies that a man's illness is a result of his sins (John 9:1-3) – there is a link between sin and suffering. When we come to God with what we think is our need, we need to be open to Him revealing our true need, for the healing that He offers us is often far greater than what we are aware we need.



A soldier asked Abba Mius if God accepted repentance. After the old man had taught him many things he said, "Tell me, my dear, if your cloak is torn, do you throw it away?" He replied, "No, I mend it and use it again." The old man said to him, "If you are so careful about your cloak, will not God be equally careful about his creature?"

The Family: Image of Christ's Love Towards the Church

The Message of the Holy and Great Council

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church was recently held from 19 to 26 June at the Orthodox Academy of Crete. After addressing our identity as Christians and as the Church, and the Church's mission in the world, the Council Fathers turned their attention to the importance of the family, and the challenges that Christian families face today.

The Orthodox Church regards the indissoluble loving union of man and woman as a "great mystery" ... of Christ and the Church (Eph 5.32) and she regards the family that springs from this, which constitutes the only guarantee for the birth and upbringing of children in accord with the plan of divine Economy, as a "little Church" (John

Chrysostom, *Commentary of the Letter to the Ephesians*, 20, PG 62.143), giving to it the appropriate pastoral support.



The contemporary crisis in marriage and the family is a consequence of the crisis of freedom as responsibility, its decline into a self-centered self-realization, its identification with individual self-gratification, self-sufficiency and autonomy, and the loss of the sacramental character of the union between man and woman,

resulting from forgetfulness of the sacrificial ethos of love. Contemporary society approaches marriage in a secular way with purely sociological and realistic criteria, regarding it as a simple form of relationship – one among many others – all of which are entitled to equal institutional validity.

Marriage is a Church-nurtured workshop of life in love and an unsurpassed gift of God's grace. The "high hand" of the "conjoining" God is "invisibly present, harmonizing those being joined together" with Christ and with one another. The crowns that are placed on the heads of the bride and groom during the sacramental rite refer to the dimension of sacrifice and complete devotion to God and one another. They also point to the life of the Kingdom of God, revealing the eschatological reference in the mystery of love.

The Holy and Great Council addresses itself with particular love and care to children and to all young people. Amid the medley of mutually contradictory definitions of childhood, our most holy Church presents the words of our Lord: "Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 18.3) and "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it (Luke 18.17), as well as what our Savior says about those who "prevent" (Luke 18.16) children from approaching Him and about those who "scandalize" them (Matt 18.6).

To young people the Church offers not simply "help" but "truth," the truth of the new divine-human life in Christ. Orthodox youth should become aware that they are bearers of the centuries-old and blessed tradition of the Orthodox Church and also the continuers of this tradition who will courageously preserve and will cultivate in a dynamic way the eternal values of Orthodoxy in order to give life-giving Christian witness. (See www.holycouncil.org for more).

The Transfiguration of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ

On Saturday we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. The Gospel for the Feast (Matthew 17:1-9) tells us how Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James and John with Him up a mountain, where He was transfigured before them, radiating light. The prophets Moses and Elijah also appeared, but a voice from heaven made clear to them that it is Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, echoing the voice that had sounded at His baptism in the Jordan: "This is my Son, the Beloved; He enjoys my favour. Listen to Him."

At the Transfiguration, the Apostles encounter Jesus Christ in a new way, and this experience is given to them to prepare and strengthen them for His Passion. It is also given to the Church to reveal to us our own human destiny. Just as Christ's face and clothes were radiant with Light, so we are called to be cleansed of sin and to gradually learn to see and to participate in His Light. Moreover, Christ's Transfiguration illumines the whole universe with His Light.

For all of us who struggle in the darkness and brokenness of our lives and world, this feast reminds us that Christ is also present in our world, and it challenges us to develop the spiritual eyes so that we may learn to see Him. For, as the Apolytikion for the feast reminds us, we can only see Him as much as our own sight allows us to.



You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, showing your disciples your glory, as far as they could bear it. At the prayers of the Theotokos make your everlasting light shine also on us sinners. Giver of light, glory to You.

Apolytikion for the Feast

We believe that at the Transfiguration He manifested not some other sort of light, but only that which was concealed beneath His fleshly exterior. This Light was the Light of the Divine Nature, and as such, it was Uncreated and Divine. So also, in the teachings of the Fathers, Jesus Christ was transfigured on the Mount, not taking upon Himself something new nor being changed into something new, nor something which formerly He did not possess. Rather, it was to show His disciples that which He already was, opening their eyes and bringing them from blindness to sight. For do you not see that eyes that can perceive natural things would be blind to this Light?

Saint Gregory Palamas