

How mistaken are those people who seek happiness outside of themselves, in foreign lands and journeys, in riches and glory, in great possessions and pleasures, in diversions and vain things, which have a bitter end! It is the same thing to construct the tower of happiness outside of ourselves as it is to build a house in a place that is consistently shaken by earthquakes. Happiness is found within ourselves, and blessed is the man who has understood this. Happiness is a pure heart, for such a heart becomes the throne of God. Thus says Christ of those who have pure hearts: "I will visit them, and will walk in them, and I will be a God to them, and they will be my people." (II Cor. 6:16) What can be lacking to them? Nothing, nothing at all! For they have the greatest good in their hearts: God Himself!

Saint Nektarios of Aegina



21 July is the Ninth Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-31

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-34

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:

Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection. As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal womb transposed her to life.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 22 August: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Matthew 21:18-22
Martyr Agathonicus; Martyr Anthuse

Tuesday, 23 August: Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Apodosis of the Dormition; Irenaeus, Bishop

Wednesday, 24 August: 1 Corinthians 16:4-12; Matthew 21:28-32
Hieromartyr Eutyche; Cosmas of Aitola

Thursday, 25 August: Titus 1:1-5; 2:15; 3:1-2, 12-15; Matthew 5:14-19
Apostle Bartholomew; Titus of the 70

Friday, 26 August: Hebrews 6:9-12; Matthew 22:23-33
Martyrs Adrian and Natalie; Righteous Joseph

Saturday, 27 August: Romans 15:30-33; Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4
Pimen the Great; Martyr Phanurius



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

21 August 2016

Lord, Save Me!

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ came to His disciples, walking across the water when they were caught in a storm while crossing the lake in a boat. Moreover, we see how the Apostle Peter asked to be allowed to come to Christ across the water. But he began to sink when he took fright at the wind. He called out to Christ, who rescued him and calmed the storm.

This incident shows us that, without Christ, we are exposed to various dangers and storms. Jesus Christ comes to us in the midst of these, and He calls us to come to Him. However, even when we do respond to Him and seek to follow Him, we remain in danger of getting distracted. When we start to focus on the dangers around us, and lose our focus on Him, we begin to sink. However, even then Christ seeks to reach out to us if we are ready to turn to Him and, to cry with Saint Peter, "Lord, save me!"



The world that we live in will inevitably present us with temptations, and even when we seek to follow Christ we can find ourselves easily distracted. We can also get discouraged by our own failures. We therefore need to develop the habit of constantly turning to Christ and finding ways of focusing our thoughts and our gaze on Him and not on ourselves. By ourselves we can do nothing, but with His help we can conquer our fear and overcome the difficulties that we face.

The Christian should not fear nor be distressed in difficult circumstances, and thus be distracted from his trust in God; but should take courage as if the Lord were at hand directing his affairs and strengthening him against all his adversaries and as if the Holy Spirit were instructing him even as to the replies he should make to his foes.

Saint Basil the Great

The Challenge of Scientific Progress

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. Having discussed the challenge of secularization, the encyclical of the Council Fathers now turns to the challenges posed by scientific progress:

Through the contemporary development of science and technology, our life is changing radically. And what brings about a change in the life of man demands discernment on his part, since, apart from significant benefits, such as the facilitation of everyday life, the successful treatment of serious diseases and space exploration, we are also confronted with the negative consequences of scientific progress. The dangers are the manipulation of human freedom, the use of man as a simple means, the gradual loss of precious traditions, and threats to, or even the destruction of, the natural environment.



Unfortunately, science, by its very nature, does not possess the necessary means to prevent or address many of the problems it creates directly or indirectly. *Scientific knowledge does not motivate man's moral will*, and even though aware of the dangers, he continues to act as if unaware of them. The answer to man's serious existential and moral problems and to the eternal meaning of his life and of the world cannot be given without a spiritual approach.

In our age, there is a very prevalent enthusiasm for the impressive developments in the fields of Biology, Genetics and Neurophysiology. These represent scientific advances, the wide-ranging applications of which will, in all likelihood, create serious anthropological and moral dilemmas. *The uncontrolled use of biotechnology at the beginning, during, and at the end of life, endangers its authentic fullness.* Man is experimenting ever more intensively with his own very nature in an extreme and dangerous way. He is in danger of being turned into a biological machine, into an impersonal social unit or into a mechanical device of controlled thought.

The Orthodox Church cannot remain on the sidelines of discussions about such momentous anthropological, ethical and existential matters. She rests firmly on divinely taught criteria and reveals the relevance of Orthodox anthropology in the face of the contemporary overturning of values. Our Church can and must express in the world her prophetic consciousness in Christ Jesus, who with His Incarnation assumed the whole man and is the ultimate prototype for the renewal of the human race. She projects the sacredness of life and man's character as a person from the very moment of conception. The right to be born is the first of human rights. The Church as a divine-human society, in which each human constitutes a unique being destined for personal communion with God, and she resists every attempt to objectify man, to turn him into a measurable quantity. No scientific achievement is permitted to compromise man's dignity and his divine destination. Man is not defined only by his genes.

Bioethics from an Orthodox point of view is founded on this basis. At a time of conflicting images of man, Orthodox bioethics ... insists on man's creation in God's image and likeness and his eternal destiny. (See www.holycouncil.org for more).

Question Box

If you have a question about the faith or teaching of the Orthodox Church, you can send it to evangelion@goarch.co.za

In St Paul's First Letter to Timothy (4:1-5), he writes that, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer."

Does this not make fasting and monasticism incorrect? How should we understand this passage?

To understand texts such as these, we need to understand the context in which the Apostle Paul was writing, in which there were various types of heretical groups who were teaching things that undermined the Christian faith. In this passage, Saint Paul addresses two specific groups that were leading some Christians astray.

Some groups (known broadly as Gnostics) taught that matter was evil. This meant that Jesus Christ had not really been truly human, or assumed a human body. It also meant that our only hope of salvation was to reject our bodies and seek a purely spiritual salvation. For some, this also meant rejecting marriage and sexuality, because it links us to the bodily world.

Other groups (known as Judaizers) insisted that Christians were expected to keep the whole Law of Moses, with all of its dietary expectations. They taught that Christians should abstain from certain foods because they were unclean.

In contrast to both of these positions, the early Christians taught that everything that God had created was good (Genesis 1:31) and that we should not consider anything that He has created as unclean (Acts 10). It is this understanding that Saint Paul is repeating in this passage.

However, none of this is related to either fasting or monasticism. The Christian understanding of fasting does not reject food because it is itself evil or unclean. Rather, we fast in order to discipline our bodies and through this to acquire a more accurate understanding of who we are in relationship to creation, other people, and God. It is not food that we reject, but our disordered desires – and fasting is given to us (among other reasons) to help us to gain a proper approach to God's creation.

Similarly, the choice of celibacy in monasticism is not based on seeing marriage as evil, but on a call to a specific way of life in which one seeks God to the exclusion of marriage and family. Elsewhere in his epistles St Paul extolls the benefits of celibacy (e.g. 1 Corinthians 7), so that cannot be what he is referring to here. The Church has always blessed both monasticism and marriage, but it has resisted any attempt to try and denigrate either of them.