

Protect the sinner without doing him wrong. But strengthen his courage for life; then the mercy of the Lord will bear you.

Support with your word the weak and the distressed in spirit whenever you can; then the hand that bears the universe will support you.

Participate with those who are suffering in heart, in passionate prayer and mourning of the heart; then before your demand a fountain of grace will be opened.

Be strenuous in prayer at all time before God, with a heart full of chaste deliberations mingled with passion; then He will preserve your mind from impure thoughts, so that the way of God be not disordered in you.

Saint Isaac the Syrian



**4 September is the
Eleventh Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: John 21:14-25

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12

Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35

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:

In your holy birth, Immaculate One, Joachim and Anna were rid of the shame of childlessness; Adam and Eve of the corruption of death. And so your people, free of the guilt of their sins, celebrate crying: "The barren one gives birth to the Theotokos, who nourishes our life."

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 5 September: 2 Corinthians 5:10-15; Matthew 24:13-28
Zacharias the Prophet; Urban, Theodore, Medimnos, & 77 Companions at Nicomedea

Tuesday, 6 September: Hebrews 2:2-10; Luke 10:16-21
Miracle of Michael in Colossae; Martyr Calodote

Wednesday, 7 September: 2 Corinthians 6:11-16; Mark 1:23-28
Theotokos' Nativity Forefeast; Martyr Sozon

Thursday, 8 September: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Nativity of the Theotokos; Sophronios of Iberia

Friday, 9 September: Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 8:16-21
Synaxis of the Holy Ancestors of God; Martyr Severian

Saturday, 10 September: 2:6-9; Matthew 10:37-42, 11:1
Martyrs Menodora, Metrodora & Nymphodora; Empress Pulcheria



Evangelion

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Forgiving from the Heart

Today, on the eleventh Sunday of Matthew, Jesus continues to teach us what life is like in the Kingdom of God. In a challenging parable on forgiveness, He tells us about a servant who was forgiven a large debt by a king. However, this same servant refused to forgive another servant a much smaller debt, which consequently angered the king who had him arrested again. In this way, Jesus warns us what will happen to us if we do not forgive those who wrong us.

Here we see that forgiveness essential to our Christian faith. On the one hand, we receive forgiveness from God. But, on the other hand, this is unavoidably bound up with how we treat our brothers and sisters. In several other places in the Gospels, Jesus gives us fundamentally the same message: If we do not forgive others, then God will not forgive us. Forgiveness is both a free gift, yet it also demands everything that we have. As Saint Cyprian of Carthage tells us, "There remains no ground of excuse in the day of judgment, when you will be judged according to your own sentence; and whatever you have done, that you also will suffer."

We all know that forgiveness is no easy matter. It is not simply a matter of saying the words, or putting up with people. True forgiveness occurs in the heart, and sometimes our hearts require a lifetime of learning to forgive. Forgiveness means learning to have empathy for other people, learning to see the various factors that made them who they are, learning to understand why they act as they do. It means laying aside our own judgments and learning to see them as God does.

After all, God forgives us because of the way He looks at us. He views us with eyes of compassion. He sees not so much our sins, but people who are created in His Image. And He calls us to look at other people in the same way.

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.

Saint Isaac the Syrian



The Church in the Face of Globalization

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 challenges posed by secularization, scientific progress, and the destruction of the environment, the Council Fathers turn to the challenged posed by globalization and the increasing gap between rich and poor:

The contemporary *ideology of globalization*, which is being imposed imperceptibly and expanding rapidly, is already provoking powerful shocks to the economy and to society on a world-wide scale. Its imposition has created new forms of systematic exploitation and social injustice; it has planned the gradual neutralization of the



impediments from opposing national, religious, ideological and other traditions and has already led to the weakening or complete reversal of social acquisitions on the pretext of the allegedly necessary readjustment of the global economy, widening thus the gap between rich and poor, undermining the social cohesion of peoples and fanning new fires of global tensions.

In opposition to the levelling and impersonal standardization promoted by globalization, and also to the extremes of nationalism, the Orthodox Church proposes the protection of the identities of peoples and the strengthening of local identity. As an alternative example for the unity of mankind, she proposes the articulated organization of the Church on the basis of the equality of the local Churches. The Church is opposed to the provocative threat to contemporary man and the cultural traditions of peoples that globalization involves and the principle of the “autonomy of the economy” or “economism,” that is, the autonomization of the economy from man’s essential needs and its transformation into an end in itself. She therefore proposes *a viable economy founded on the principles of the Gospel*. Thus, guided by the words of the Lord, “man shall not live by bread alone” (Luke 4.4), the Church does not connect the progress of mankind only with an increase in living standards or with economic development at the expense of spiritual values. (See www.holycouncil.org for more).



“But I say to you,” the Lord says, “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.” Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all equally in imitation of God.

Saint Maximus the Confessor

The Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos

On Thursday we celebrate the birth of the Mother of God, or Theotokos, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. Most of the direct references to her birth come from one of the apocryphal gospels, the *Protoevangelium of James*, which have been taken up and further developed in the liturgical texts of the Church. However, although the Scriptures do not refer to the actual birth of the Mother of God, they are full of indirect references to it, for the whole history of the Old Testament is a preparation for the coming Christ into our world. And a key part of this preparation was the preparation of the one who was to give birth to the Son of God. In the words of Saint Andrew of Crete:

The radiant and bright coming-down of God for people ought to possess a joyous basis, opening to us the great gift of salvation. Such like also is the present feast day, having as its basis the Nativity of the Mother of God, and as its purposeful end the uniting of the Word with flesh, this most glorious of all miracles, unceasingly proclaimed, immeasurable and incomprehensible. The less comprehensible it is, the more it is revealed; and the more it is revealed, the less comprehensible it is. Wherefore the present God-graced day, the first of our feast days, showing forth the light of virginity and as it were the crown woven from the unfading blossoms of the spiritual garden of Scripture, doth proffer creatures a common joy. Be of good cheer it says, behold, this is the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin and of the renewal of the human race! The Virgin is born, she grows and is raised up and prepares herself to be the Mother of God All-Sovereign of the ages. All this, with the assistance of David, makes it for us an object of spiritual contemplation. The Mother of God manifests to us Her God-bestowed Birth, and David points to the blessedness of the human race and wondrous co-kinship of God with mankind.



Today the barren gates are opened and the virgin Door of God comes forth. Today grace begins to bear its first fruits, making manifest to the world the Mother of God, through whom things on earth are joined with heaven, for the salvation of our souls.

From Vespers for the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos