



The Holy Eucharist is the first, most important, and greatest miracle of Christ. All the other Gospel miracles are secondary. How could we not call the greatest miracle the fact that simple bread and wine were once transformed by the Lord into His very Body and His very Blood, and then have continued to be transformed for nearly two thousand years by the prayers of priests, who are but simple human beings? And what is more, this mystery has continued to effect a miraculous change in those people who communicate of the Divine Mysteries with faith and humility.

Saint Ambrose of Optina



20 November is the Ninth Sunday of Luke

Matins Gospel: John 21:14-25

Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

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:

The whole world is filled today with joy and gladness on the Theotokos's auspicious and resplendent feast, whereon with great voice it crieth out: The heavenly tabernacle is she in truth

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 21 November: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Entry of the Theotokos

Tuesday, 22 November: Philemon 1:1-25; Luke 17:26-37; 18:8
Philemon & Archippus of the 70; Martyrs Cecilia and Companions

Wednesday, 23 November: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Luke 18:15-17, 26-30
Amphilochius, Bp. of Iconium; Gregory, Bp. of Agrigentum

Thursday, 24 November: Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Luke 18:31-34
Pope Clement of Rome; Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria

Friday, 25 November: Matthew 25:1-13; Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34
Apodosis of the Entry; Great Martyr Catherine

Saturday, 26 November: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Luke 10:19-21
Alypius the Stylite; Nikon



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

20 November 2016

The Remembrance of Death

In today's Gospel, Jesus Christ warns us of the danger of greed, but also of the danger of forgetfulness. Saint Paul tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6: 10), and the Fathers teach us that once the spirit of covetousness has gained a hold of us it eats us up. When we become controlled by this vice, we are no longer satisfied with what we have, but seek more and more as we see with this man in the Gospel. Instead of using material possessions to the glory of God, we seek to grasp onto them so that they ultimately destroy us.

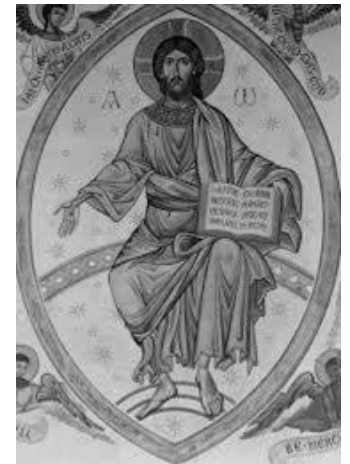
But this parable also teaches us the danger of forgetfulness. This man forgot who he truly was: A creature who was dependent on God, and who would die. The one thing that we all have in common is that we will die – and our worldly possessions will not help us then. Death is the great equaliser and does not distinguish between rich or poor.

The Fathers teach us that we should keep death daily before our eyes. This may sound rather pessimistic or even macabre to our ears, but in reality it is our modern denial of death – after all, we are far more sheltered from the reality of death than previous generations were – that is unhealthy, for it encourages us to avoid the fundamental reality of life. Remembering that we will die helps to re-orientate ourselves to who we really are and to what is truly important in life.

All of our life is a preparation for death, in which we are reborn into eternal life. If we have lived in a grasping, acquisitive, self-seeking way that is turned in on itself, then we will have difficulty. But if we use our life to remember who we truly are, and allow ourselves to be moulded after the pattern of Jesus Christ, then we will more easily be able to share in His conquering of death by self-sacrificial love.

The things that are in the world remain in the world, and whatever riches we gather are bequeathed to our heirs. The things that we cannot take away with us are not ours either. Only virtue is the companion of the dead. Compassion alone follows us. It is the guide to the heavens and the first of the mansions.

Saint Ambrose of Milan



It is true that a person's life is not from one's possessions or because of having an overabundance. He who is rich toward God is very blessed and has glorious hope. Who is he? Evidently, one who does not love wealth but rather loves virtue, and to whom few things are sufficient. It is one whose hand is open to the needs of the poor, comforting the sorrows of those in poverty according to his means and the utmost of his power. He gathers in the storehouses that are above and lays up treasures in heaven. Such a one shall find the interest of his virtue and the reward of his right and blameless life.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

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

Here is another question from the Sunday School children: Why doesn't God stop bad people from doing the things they do to hurt good people?

This is a huge question that has kept religious philosophers busy for centuries! It is posed in different forms that are basically variants of the question: If God is all-loving and all-powerful, then why is there evil in the world.

The evil that exists in the world *should* cause us discomfort and lead us to question. But it should cause us to question ourselves, rather than God.

God created us with free will, which means that we are free to choose to do good or to do evil, to help people or to hurt them. In fact, our human freedom is among our most precious attributes and is a sign that we are created in God's image. God offers us a good way to use this freedom, but if freedom is to be genuine, then it must mean that we can also choose against what God desires for us. And people do choose against what God desires, as we can see from looking at our world.

It is tempting to think that it would be better if God stopped people hurting others. But then they – and we – would no longer really be free. And would it really be good that we are doing if we are simply programmed to do it, if we have no real choice in the matter? Can we really imagine a world in which we don't genuinely choose to do anything?

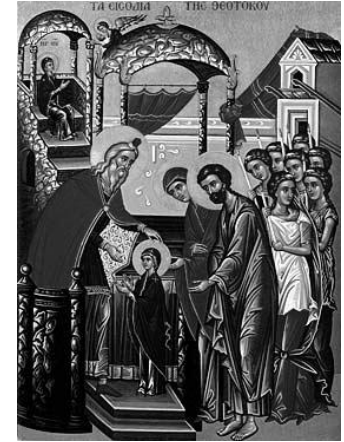
Human freedom is something precious and is essential to our humanity as we know it, but it also brings great responsibility. And it is important to remember that God does not desert us, even in the midst of the bad choices that we and others have made. He must respect our free will, but He nevertheless continues to reach out to us – seeking to draw all people back to Him, not by force but by His love that respects our freedom.

The Entrance of the Holy Theotokos into the Temple

Tomorrow we celebrate the feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple, which is one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. According to the tradition of the Church, the Theotokos was brought into the Temple when she was three years old and consecrated to God. She was led into the Holy of Holies to be nourished by the angels in order to prepare her for her virginal conception of the Son of God.

This feast is not simply about the details of what happened to the Theotokos in the Temple, but is, more importantly, a symbolic statement about our salvation history. One of the hymns of the feast calls it “the prelude of the good will of God,” for it announces and prefigures the coming of God's salvation in the Incarnation of Christ which we will celebrate at Christmas.

In this feast we see the Holy Theotokos taken into the temple, and yet we also know that she herself will become “the living temple of the Holy Glory of Christ our God.” She is “the temple that is to hold God” and is consecrated to be the “dwelling place of the Almighty.” She enters the Holy of Holies, but will herself become the Holy of Holies and the “abode of heaven.”



Today is the prelude of the good pleasure of God, and the proclaiming of the salvation of humankind. In the Temple of God the Virgin is revealed, and beforehand she announces Christ to all. To her then let us cry aloud with mighty voice: Hail, the fulfilment of the Creator's dispensation!

Apolytikion for the feast



There where only the High Priest may enter, and then rarely, only once a year, it is there in this holy sanctuary of grace that Mary is offered to stay there indefinitely. Who has ever heard anything similar? Who has ever seen or heard, now or formerly, that a woman was introduced into the intimacy of the Holy of Holies, and that it was in this place, almost inaccessible even to men, that she lived and ate. Is this not a striking demonstration of the strange magnificence of which her womb would be the object? Is it not a manifest sign, an irrefutable proof?

Saint Germanus of Constantinople