

You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world. When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying: "Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God (cf. Ps. 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law (cf. Gal 2:16)? No living person will be vindicated before God (cf. Ps. 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. Get behind me, Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23). I worship the Lord my God (cf. Matt. 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence."

Saint Symeon the New Theologian



**29 January is the  
Sunday of the Canaanite**

**Matins Gospel:** John 21:1-14

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

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

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross;  
Thou didst open Paradise to the thief;  
Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

Your birth sanctified a Virgin's womb and properly blessed the hands of Symeon. Having now come and saved us O Christ our God, give peace to Your commonwealth in troubled times and strengthen those in authority, whom You love, as only the loving One.

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

**Monday, 30 January:** John 10:9-16; Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19  
Three Hierarchs; Hippolytos, Pope of Rome

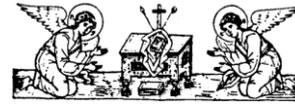
**Tuesday, 31 January:** 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8; Matthew 10:1, 5-8  
Unmercenaries Cyrus & John; Martyrs Theodote, Theoctiste & Eudoxia

**Wednesday, 1 February:** Romans 8:28-39; Luke 10:19-21  
Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord; Martyr Trypho

**Thursday, 2 February:** Luke 2:25-32; Hebrews 7:7-17; Luke 2:22-40  
Presentation of Our Lord; Gabriel the New Martyr

**Friday, 3 February:** Hebrews 9:11-14; Luke 2:25-38  
Symeon & Anna; New Martyrs John, Nicholas & Stamatios

**Saturday, 4 February:** 2 Timothy 2:11-19; Luke 18:2-8  
Saturday of Publican and Pharisee; Isidore of Pelusium; Nicholas the Confessor



# ***Evangelion***

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

29 January 2017

## **Lord, Help Me!**

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

## The Start of the Triodion

With today's Gospel of the Canaanite woman, we are reminded that the period of the Triodion is about to start. We know that Pascha, or Easter, is the centre of our faith and of the Church's year, and that it is preceded by a period of preparation and fasting known as Great Lent. However, because Lent is so important for us, it is also preceded by a period of preparation. This pre-Lenten period gently reminds us that the fast is approaching and allows us to orientate and prepare ourselves for Great Lent.

The word "Triodion" refers to the main hymn book for Lent, which we start using next Sunday on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and which we continue using until just before Pascha. (Its name literally means "Book of Three Odes" because during Great Lent there are three odes that are three canticles that are chanted at Matins.) These liturgical texts are rich in meaning and are designed to lead us on our Lenten journey to Pascha. While fasting is important (and the pre-Lenten period also prepares us for the fast), there is more to Lent than fasting. Lent is above all a season of repentance, of the softening of our hardened hearts, so that we are able to enter into them and meet God there.

This time of preparation for Great Lent consists of the following:

**The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee** (5 February). The week following this Sunday is a fast-free week in which the Wednesday and Friday fasts are suspended. The reason for this is to remind us of the danger of becoming proud about our fasting as the Pharisee did.

**The Sunday of the Prodigal Son** (12 February)

**The Sunday of the Last Judgement** (19 February). This is also known as Meatfare Sunday, because it is the last day on which meat is eaten until Pascha. It is followed by Cheesefare week, in which we fast from meat only all week.

**Forgiveness Sunday** (26 February). This is also called the "Expulsion of Adam from Paradise" which is the theme of the liturgical texts, reminding us that we too have been exiled from Paradise and that our journey through Lent is a journey back to God. This Sunday is also called Cheesefare Sunday because it is the last day on which cheese (or dairy products) are eaten until Pascha.

The theme of forgiveness is found not only in the Gospel for the day, but also in the Forgiveness Vespers on Sunday afternoon, which is the liturgical start of Lent. During this service, all those present ask the forgiveness of everyone else, for we are reminded that we cannot expect to receive God's forgiveness if we are not prepared to forgive others.



### The Three Holy Hierarchs

Tomorrow we commemorate the three Holy Hierarchs, Saints Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. This feast was instituted during the reign of the Emperor Alexis I Comnenus (1081-1118). A dispute arose in Constantinople about which of the three Fathers was the greatest. In typically Byzantine fashion, the people of the City joined in the dispute, which divided the populace into three hostile factions. At last, desiring to restore peace to the City and the Church, the three holy hierarchs themselves appeared to the monk John Mauropus; they revealed to him that they stand together in harmony and in equal glory before the heavenly throne, and instructed him to compose a common service for all three. Saint John (Mauropus) obeyed, and chose January 30 as the date of the commemoration.

## The Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

On Thursday we celebrate the Great Feast of the Meeting, or the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. This feast comes forty days after the birth of the Saviour, for Saint Luke tells us (2:22ff), that the infant Christ was taken to Jerusalem to be presented in the temple in keeping with the law of Moses. The Church understands that Christ had to fulfil all the requirements of the Law of Moses, in order to complete them and to bring the law to its fulfilment in Him.

This feast is called the Meeting, for it is the meeting of the Old and the New Testaments. In the Gospel for the feast, we encounter the devout Symeon who had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah and the prophetess Anna who spoke of the Child to all who had been looking forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. They represent the longing of the people of Israel which they now see fulfilled in the Child whom Symeon takes in his arms as he prays:

*Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace,  
according to Your word; For my eyes have seen  
Your salvation, which You have prepared before the  
face of all people; A light to enlighten the Gentiles  
and the glory of Your people Israel.*

This meeting of the old and the new covenants is very significant for us. It tells us that God's long work of preparation in the history of Israel is now complete. Israel has accomplished its God-given task and has given us the Messiah. The promises made to Abraham have now been fulfilled and Israel's glory has dawned in the Person of Christ who is now presented as a "light to enlighten the Gentiles." In Him the whole world is illumined and saved.

The elderly Symeon and Anna represent the old rituals and customs that are passing away because that which they prepared for has now arrived. For, as the Apostle Paul says, the ancient laws were "only a shadow of what was coming: the reality is the Body of Christ." (Colossians 2:17)



Enter eagerly into the treasure house that lies within you, and so you will see the treasure house of heaven. The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your soul. Dive into yourself, and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which you are to ascend.

Saint Macarius the Great



The Creator, having become a young child without undergoing change, has reshaped according to the form of His divinity our nature, taken from the earth and destined to return to earth once more.

From Matins of the  
Feast of the Meeting