

Human beings have accumulated in their coffers gold and silver, clothes more sumptuous than useful, diamonds and other objects that are evidence of war and tyranny; then a foolish arrogance hardens their hearts; for their brothers in distress, no pity. What utter blindness! . . . Attend not to the law of the strong but to the law of the Creator. Help nature to the best of your ability, honour the freedom of creation, protect your species from dishonour, come to its aids in sickness, rescue it from poverty . . . Seek to distinguish yourself from others only in your generosity. Be like gods to the poor, imitating God's mercy. Humanity has nothing so much in common with God as the ability to do good.

St Gregory the Theologian

On Sunday, 23 June 2013, we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints

Matins Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30

Apolytikion for All Saints:

Your Church, O Christ our God, clothed itself in the blood of Your martyrs from throughout the world, as though it were a robe of linen and purple; through them, she cries out to You, "Send down upon Your people compassion, grant peace to Your commonwealth, and to our souls, great mercy."

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8; Matthew 10:1, 5-8
Unmercenaries Cosmas & Damian; New Martyr Constantine of Cyprus

Tuesday: Luke 1:39-49, 56; Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 1:39-49, 56
Robe of the Theotokos; Juvenal, Pat. of Jerusalem

Wednesday: Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 7:21-23
Martyr Hyacinth & Companions; Anatolius, Abp. of Constantinople

Thursday: Romans 5:10-16; Matthew 8:23-27
Andrew the Hymnographer; Martha, Mother of Symeon Stylites

Friday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 11:27-30
Athanasius of Athos; Lampadus the Wonderworker

Saturday: Romans 3:19-24; Matthew 7:1-8
Sisoës the Great; Archippus, Philemon & Onesimos



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

30 June 2013

Called to holiness

As we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints today, we hear Jesus Christ both challenging His disciples and assuring them of the reward that awaits those who have left all to follow Him, and who have remained faithful to Him despite hardship and persecution. He tells us that those who "love father or mother more than me are not worthy of me" and that those who have left "houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

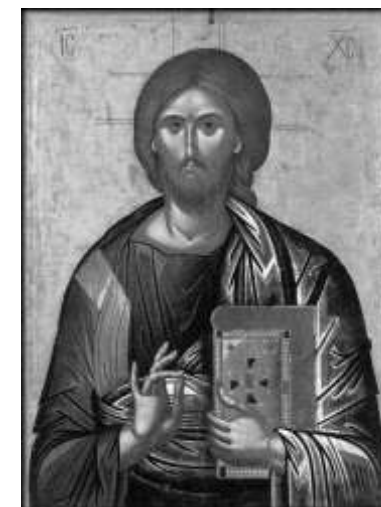
These are challenging words. We can certainly see them acted out dramatically in the lives of many of the saints, who literally left their families, and sometimes even their countries, for the sake of the Gospel. But we may wonder how they apply to us. Are we not also called to holiness?

It seems that the answer lies with what is in our hearts. Christ does not say that we should not love our families, nor are all called to leave their families and their lands. But He does say that if we love these things more than Him, then we are not worthy of Him.

What Jesus Christ is calling us to is the right ordering of that which we love. If He is at the centre of our lives, then we will be able to love all that He gives us, but in a way that gives glory to God. And, if we nurture our relationship with Him, then He will give us the wisdom to choose wisely so that our everyday lives may also become a path to holiness. For holiness is to be found not only in doing dramatic things for God, but in doing everyday ordinary things with a pure heart.

It was revealed to Abba Anthony in his desert that there was one who was his equal in the city. He was a doctor by profession and whatever he had beyond his needs he gave to the poor, and every day he sang with the angels.

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers



A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

After we have gathered together as the Church, separating ourselves from the world and becoming aware of our true identity and our destiny, the service proceeds with the deacon (or the priest if there is no deacon) calling to us: "In peace, let us pray to the Lord."

The Litany of Peace

This litany, which is also called the Great Litany, is found at the beginning of other services of the Church and consists of a series of petitions which are chanted by the deacon (or priest) on our behalf. The congregation (often represented by the choir) respond to each petition with "Lord, have mercy" and in this way we unite ourselves with the petition.



The Litany begins with three pleas for peace. The deacon prays:

"In peace, let us pray to the Lord."

"For the peace from on high and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord."

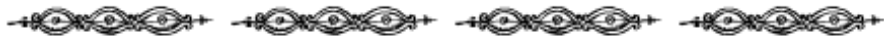
"For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord."

The word "peace" recurs frequently in the Divine Liturgy and is fundamental to what we are doing. We pray for peace as we begin our prayer because without peace we cannot pray. We need to be at peace with God, with one another and with ourselves if we are to truly pray as we ought to. Jesus Christ tells us that if we are bringing our gift to the altar and realise that our brother has something against us, we are first to be reconciled to our brother before

bringing our gift. (Matthew 5:23) As we begin the Liturgy we need to be able to put aside all grudges in order to make an acceptable sacrifice to God. Only if we are reconciled to those around us, will we be able to truly hear the holy Gospel and receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

For the biblical writers, peace is not simply the absence of war or conflict, but is rather the presence of something positive. It is the harmony, communion and well-being that exists between and among people. True peace is not simply the result of our own efforts but is rather a gift from God. Saint Paul calls it the peace beyond understanding (Philippians 4:7). It is this peace that the angels proclaimed at the birth of Christ and it is this peace that the Risen Christ proclaimed when He greeted His disciples with "Peace be with you."

Crying out for the gift of this peace, we begin our prayer to the Lord as we begin the Great Litany.



'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 you loves all equally in imitation of God."

Saint Maximus Confessor

All Saints Sunday

Today, on the first Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the Sunday of All Saints. The services for today are the final services in the "Pentecostarion," the book which contains the liturgical texts from Pascha until today. The Sunday of All Saints is therefore in many ways the culmination of our Easter faith, and it flows naturally from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which we celebrated last week.

In today's feast we recognize all those who have struggled to live lives of holiness, including those whom we would otherwise forget. We are all called to holiness, for we are called to share in God's own life. We are called to take our struggle for salvation seriously and the saints are those who provide us with an example in this, and who help us by their prayers.

However, true holiness is not simply making a great effort to conform to some ideal. Rather, it is about allowing the Risen Christ to live in us, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us and to restore in us God's Image which has become distorted by our sin.

The holiness of the saints is therefore the consequence and the proof of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is also the visible testimony to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit enlightens us and makes it possible for us to attain the destiny that God has prepared for us.



Tomorrow we commemorate the **Holy and Wonderworking Unmercenary Cosmas and Damian**, who were martyred at Rome in 284. These two brothers were from Rome and were born into a wealthy family. However, they gave most of their wealth to the poor and only set aside enough to enable them to devote their lives to the service of Christ. As doctors they healed people and animals, asking nothing in return except that those they healed should believe in Christ in thanks for their healing. When summoned before the Emperor Galerius, who interrogated them and commanded them to worship the gods, the brothers refused to do so. In order to show the truth of the Christian faith, they healed the Emperor of a grave infirmity and at this he proclaimed the truth of Christianity and released them. However, a doctor and a former teacher who envied their reputation lured them into the countryside on the pretext of collecting herbs and then killed them.