



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

22 September 2013

To judge sins is the business of one who is sinless, but who is sinless except God? Whoever thinks about the multitude of his own sins in his heart never wants to make the sins of others a topic of conversation. To judge a man who has gone astray is a sign of pride, and God resists the proud. On the other hand, one who every hour prepares himself to give answer for his own sins will not quickly lift up his head to examine the mistakes of others.

Saint Gennadius of Constantinople

If you are remembering evil against someone, then pray for him; and as you remove through prayer the pain of the remembrance of the evil he has done, you will stop the advance of the passion. And when you have attained brotherly love and love for mankind, you will completely cast this passion out of your soul. Then when someone else does evil to you, be affectionate and humble toward him, and treat him kindly, and you will deliver him from this passion.

Saint Maximus the Confessor

**Sunday 22 September 2013 is the
First Sunday of Luke**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24

Gospel: Luke 5: 1-11

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When the women Disciples of the Lord had learnt from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection, casting away the ancestral condemnation triumphantly they said to the Apostles: 'Death has been despoiled, Christ God has been raised, granting the world His great mercy.'

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 1:5-25

Conception of the Forerunner; Xanthippe & Polyxene the Righteous

Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:10-15; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28

Protomartyr Thekla; Silouan of Athos

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 13:3-13; Luke 5:33-39

Euphrosyne of Alexandria; Paphnoutios & 546 Companions in Egypt

Thursday: John 21:14-25; 1 John 4:12-19; John 19:25-27; 21:24-25

TRANSLATION OF JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN

Friday: Galatians 2:6-10; Luke 6:17-23

Martyr Callistratus & Companions; Apostle Aristarchus

Saturday: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Luke 6:17-23

Chariton the Confessor; Alkeisonus of Nicopolis; Prophet Baruch

Cast out into the deep

Today we hear Saint Luke's account of the calling of the first disciples. After preaching on the shores of the lake, Jesus Christ approached some fishermen who had been fishing all night but had caught nothing. On hearing this, He challenged them to cast their nets into the deep waters. When they obeyed Him, they caught so many fish that their nets could not contain them.

The call of Christ can often upset our normal ways of looking at things – after all, the fishermen knew that there were no fish around. And yet, when they responded to Christ's initiative new possibilities emerged. Their experience was to prove so overwhelming that it was to reshape their whole lives.

In this incident we see how the disciples came to recognize who Jesus is. From calling Him "Master," a common term of address for a teacher, the Apostle Peter came to recognize Him as "Lord" as he fell at His knees, saying: "Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man." He recognized his own sinfulness because he had glimpsed something of Jesus' true identity. And this recognition would reshape his entire life.

Like the Apostle Peter and these first disciples, we too are called to respond to Christ and this may lead to us to entirely unexpected things, for God seeks to use each of us in our own way to carry out His mission in our world.



Just as a little boat holds the dying fish that have been brought up from the deep, so also the vessel of the Church gives life to human beings who have been freed from turmoil. Within itself, I say, the Church gives life to those who were half-dead, as it were.

Saint Maximus of Turin

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Once the Book of Gospels has been enthroned on the altar in the Little Entrance, the Church prepares us to listen attentively to the Epistle reading and the Gospel. As the clergy take their places in the altar, the various hymns (Apolytikia and Kontakia) for the season or for the saints of the day are sung. They praise the struggle of the saints and remind us of the saving events through which God has reached out to us.



Heaven and earth are joined in praise

We do not celebrate the Liturgy alone, but always in the company of the saints and the angels. We are reminded of this by the prayer that the priest prays before entering into the altar:

Master, Lord our God, you have set orders and armies of Angels and Archangels in heaven to minister to your glory; grant that, with our entrance, holy Angels may enter, concelebrating with us, and with us glorifying your goodness.

This communion that we share with the angels and the saints is expressed most powerfully by the singing of the Trisagion or Thrice-holy hymn which is sung three times and then repeated again. The Trisagion hymn reminds us that we are

approaching the Kingdom of Heaven and helps us to quieten our minds and hearts as we prepare to hear the Scriptures proclaimed.

Holy God, Holy Strong, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

This is one of the most ancient hymns of the Church and has its roots in the Old Testament. It draws on the hymn of the angels that the prophet Isaiah heard in the vision he describes in Isaiah 6:1-3:

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory.*

With this hymn we truly enter into the Kingdom of God, for we are surrounded by the heavenly hosts and we identify our prayer with theirs. The holiness of God is not something that we can properly express in words. We ascribe holiness to God, but God's holiness goes beyond words for His Kingdom is totally different from anything we know. And so in singing to Him we seek to quieten our minds, knowing that our understanding can only take us so far, and crying out to Him for His great mercy.

Consider who they are who sing with you, and that should be enough to move you to vigilance. It should be sufficient when you remember that, while being clothed in a body and bound up with the flesh, you have been accounted worthy to hymn the Lord, who is common to all, together with the bodiless powers.

Saint John Chrysostom

Our generation is like a leaf whose time, once it falls, is over, but though the limit of our life is short, praise can lengthen it, for, corresponding to the extent of our love, we shall acquire, through praise, life that has no measure.

For it is in our Lord that the root of our faith is grafted; though far off, He is still close to us in the fusion of love.

Let the roots of our love be bound up in Him, let the full extent of His compassion be fused in us.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian

Question Box

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

I keep seeing references to the Desert Fathers. Who were they exactly? Are they different to the Church Fathers?

Generally speaking, the term Desert Fathers (there were also some Mothers) refers to those early Christian monks who retreated to the desert in the third and fourth centuries in order to follow Christ in the monastic life. The term is most immediately associated with Egypt, although there were also Desert Fathers in Palestine and Syria.

Since the time of the New Testament there had been Christians who had lived celibate lives of intense prayer, but they had usually done this within their families, and close to the cities and towns. In the late third and early fourth centuries we find a movement to the desert in which these early monks sought to distance themselves from the society of their day, although they were nevertheless known for their hospitality in receiving visitors who came seeking counsel.

These Desert Fathers and Mothers were known for the radical nature of their life, living very simply, supporting themselves by weaving baskets, and keeping long prayer vigils. Some of the accounts of their *Lives* became widely distributed and had a great influence. Just as important, however, were the collections of their *Sayings*. These were usually short and pithy quotes or accounts that nevertheless show their great insight into what it means to be human and how we can find true salvation in Christ. This teaching of theirs was to have great influence in the Orthodox monasticism of the following centuries but much of it is also helpful to all Christians.

Central to their teaching was the need for vigilance. They were aware of how capable human beings are of deluding themselves and they insisted on the need for accountability and obedience, which was seen as more important than extraordinary experiences. Most important of all, though, was humility and they repeatedly emphasize that humility is the one virtue that the demons are not capable of imitating.

Many of the Desert Fathers are canonized saints and may also be referred to as Church Fathers. However, as a group, they have a more specific identity.