

Strive in your prayer to never seek any evil to befall anyone, so that you do not destroy whatever you have built by making your prayer abhorrent.

Let the debtor of the ten thousand talents in the Gospel be an example to you.

If you do not forgive the person who has harmed you, neither will you attain the absolution of your sins; because the Gospel says of the debtor of the ten thousand talents who did not forgive his debtor that “he was delivered to his torturers” (Matt. 18:24-35).

It is appropriate that you do not pray only for yourself, but also for every fellowman, so that in this way, you will be emulating the angelic manner of praying.

Do not be sorrowed if you do not immediately receive from God that which you asked for, because He desires to benefit you even more through your patient perseverance in prayer.

Indeed, what is superior to associating with God and conversing with Him?

Saint Nilus the Ascetic

**Sunday 29 September 2013 is the
Second Sunday of Luke**

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 1:21-24; 2:1-4

Gospel: Luke 6:31-36

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

The Word without beginning with the Father and the Spirit, born from a Virgin for our salvation, let us believers praise and let us worship Him; for He was well pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and undergo death, and to raise those who had died, by His glorious Resurrection.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24; Matthew 24:42-47
Gregory the Illuminator; Mardonios & Stratonikos the Martyrs

Tuesday: Acts 9:10-19; Luke 6:37-45
Holy Protection of the Theotokos; Ananias of the 70

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 6:46-49, 7:1
Martyrs Cyprian and Justina; Martyrs Rusticus and Eleutherius

Thursday: Acts 17:16-34; Luke 7:17-30
Dionysios the Areopagite; John the Chozebite of Caesaria

Friday: Galatians 4:8-21; Luke 7:31-35
Hierotheus, Bp. of Athens; Domnina the Martyr

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 4:17-21; 5:1-5; Luke 5:27-32
Martyr Charitina; Methodia of Cimolus



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

29 September 2013

Love poured out

Today’s Gospel reading is taken from Saint Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, and in it we hear Jesus Christ’s challenging words about loving our enemies.

We are used to the idea that we should not do to others what we would not wish them to do to us. Indeed, this is found in various religions and was well-known to Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries. However, Jesus Christ goes beyond this precept, turning a negative into a positive, and saying that we should treat others as we would wish to be treated by them. And He goes even further by insisting that our love for others should be disinterested. We are not to love them in the hope that they should love us back; instead, we are to “expect nothing in return.” Most radically, perhaps, we are even called to love our enemies, those who most definitely do not seem to love us.



In such teachings we encounter the truly radical nature of the Gospel. If we are honest with ourselves, we should probably admit that this seems impossible – to love those who hurt us and continue to hurt us! But Christ gives us a clue in the final words of today’s Gospel: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” This is not some abstract command or some external standard that we cannot live up to. By ourselves we *cannot* love. But we learn to love by becoming attentive to the love of God. For God is the “Lover of humankind” as we frequently repeat in the Liturgy, and it is only by coming to see His love in our lives that we can gradually come to share in His love, learning to see other people as He sees them, and acquiring perhaps even just a few drops from His measureless ocean of mercy.

What Christ said in word, He proved also by example. Indeed, when He was on the Cross, He said in reference to His persecutors who were slandering Him, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Saint Ambrose of Milan

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

During the solemn singing of the Thrice-holy hymn the clergy proceed to the “High Place” behind the altar table. This is traditionally the bishop’s throne and symbolises the throne of God, reminding us that Jesus Christ is seated above the heavens from whence He blesses His assembled people with peace.



The Service of the Word

We are now being prepared to listen to the Word of God as it is proclaimed in the apostolic reading and the Gospel. This preparation is known as the *Prokeimenon* which literally means “that which goes before” and is intended to prepare us to listen to the readings, beginning by reminding us to “be attentive.” The *Prokeimenon* is largely composed of verses from the Psalms and, as we saw previously, their task is to purify the heart and illumine the intellect so that we may be able to hear and receive God’s Word.

The Epistle or, more accurately, the Apostolic reading is taken from either the Acts of the Apostles or from one of the Apostolic letters of the New Testament. These are letters that the Apostles wrote in the first century, either to particular local Churches, or to particular people, or to all Christians. These epistles were circulated among different Churches and carefully copied and handed on. During the course of the centuries the Church has developed a cycle of readings, so that there is a particular epistle and Gospel reading for each day of the year, with the exception of the weekdays of Great Lent when the Divine Liturgy is not celebrated.

Both the Epistle reading and the Gospel are chanted rather than simply read. This is to remind us that what we are listening to is a sacred text and not just any reading. But it is also chanted so as not to draw attention to the person reading it, for the reader is simply a transmitter

and should not give us his own interpretation by emphasising particular words. It is God’s word that we have come to hear, not the voice of any particular person.

In the readings from the Scriptures we see the gradual manifestation of Jesus Christ as He came among us. And by listening attentively to them, we experience the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God, the high point of which is reached in the chanting of the Gospel which we shall consider next week.



When you begin to read or listen to the Holy Scriptures, pray to God thus: “Lord Jesus Christ, open the ears and eyes of my heart so that I may hear Thy words and understand them, and may fulfil Thy will.” Always pray to God like this, that He might illumine your mind and open to you the power of His words. Many, having trusted in their own reason, have turned away into deception.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian

The way of all those who see is single and upward, illumined by the heavenly light, but the ways of those who do not see are many, dark and divergent; the one leads to the kingdom of heaven, uniting man to God, while the others lead down to death, separating man from God. Thus it is necessary for you and for all who are concerned about their salvation to make your way by faith, without deviation, surely and resolutely, lest in slacking, you remain in gross desires, or, erring, wander far from the right path.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

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 have Protestant friends who keep speaking about “the Word of God” by which they mean the Bible, and basing all their opinions on this. Do we Orthodox believe that the Bible was inspired by God and, if so, shouldn’t we be able to base all our beliefs and practices on it?

The Orthodox Church does believe that the Holy Scriptures are inspired by God. However, we should be careful about accepting categories of thought that developed in the modern era and which are foreign to the lived experience of the Church.

For the first Christians “the Scriptures” referred to the Old Testament. The New Testament writings were gradually circulated among the different local Churches, and gradually the idea of a canon or authoritative list of books emerged which were seen as trustworthy. But these texts were not found in a single book that one can hold in one’s hand, but were scattered around in different volumes, generally according to their liturgical use. Thus one had a Book of the Gospels which was kept on the altar, and a book with the Apostolic readings that was kept at the chanter’s stall. Books of the Gospels, or of the Psalms, or other writings, did circulate, but these had to be written out by hand and were considered precious possessions.

This arrangement reflected the fact that the Bible arose out of and was based on the Church’s faith and liturgical practice. To see it as somehow falling from heaven without any human mediation is really a more Islamic view of inspiration than a Christian one. Christian faith is based on God’s Word taking flesh and becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ, and on His presence among us continuing in His Body which is the Church. When we use the term “Word of God” with a capital “W” we usually use it to refer to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The Scriptures are certainly inspired and reveal the Word of God to us when we listen to them attentively and in communion with the whole Church. But the way they are treated by some Protestants would have been inconceivable before the advent of the printing press and is foreign to the faith of the Church.