



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

20 October 2013

Fasting, prayer, alms, and every other good Christian deed is good in itself, but the purpose of the Christian life consists not only in the fulfilment of one or another of them. The true purpose of our Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God. But fasting, prayer, alms and every good deed done for the sake of Christ is a means to the attainment of the Holy Spirit. Note that only good deeds done for the sake of Christ bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Everything else that is not done for the sake of Christ, even if it is good, does not bring us a reward in the life to come, not does it bring the grace of God in this life. This is why our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Whoever gathereth not with me scattereth.”

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

**Sunday 20 October 2013 is the
Sixth Sunday of Luke**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

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

Gospel: Luke 8:26-39

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

You came down from above, O
Compassionate, You accepted burial
for three days, that You might free us
from the passions. Our life and
resurrection, Lord, glory to You!

If you would like to receive
Evangelion by email,
you can email
evangelion@goarch.co.za
and put “Subscribe” in the heading.

Back issues are
available online at
[http://www.goarch.co.za/index.php/
media/evangelion/](http://www.goarch.co.za/index.php/media/evangelion/)

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Luke 10:22-24
Hilarion the Great; Christodoulus, Wonderworker of Patmos

Tuesday: Ephesians 5:20-25; Luke 11:1-10
Abercius of Hierapolis; 7 Youths of Ephesus

Wednesday: Galatians 1:11-19; Matthew 13:54-58
James (Iakovos), the Brother of the Lord; Patriarch Ignatius

Thursday: Ephesians 5:33; 6:1-9; Luke 11:14-23
Great Martyr Arethas; Martyr Sebastian

Friday: Ephesians 6:18-24; Luke 11:23-26
Martyrs Marcian & Martyrius; Tabitha the Merciful

Saturday: Luke 21:12-19; 2 Timothy 2:1-10; John 15:17-27; 16:1-2
Commemoration of the Earthquake; Demetrius the Myrrh-streamer

What is your name?

Today we hear Saint Luke’s account of how Jesus Christ cast many demons out of a man in the territory of the Gerasenes. The demons had reduced this man to a pitiable state and when Jesus confronted them they were terrified and begged Him to allow them to enter into a herd of pigs. The man was freed of his possession, and when the townspeople arrived they found him fully clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Christ.



This incident is very dramatic, but it teaches important truths about the power of evil in our world, and how Christ comes to free us from it. The possessed man was living among the tombs which signify death and corruption. He was naked, signifying the loss of his nature and virtue. He was divided within himself, for we are told that there were many demons in him – indeed, he was so possessed by them that when Christ asked him his name he replied “Legion.”

This dramatic incident presents us with an extreme example of the human condition that we all face in one way or another. Since the fall, our human nature has been corrupted by the power of death. We have all become naked to some degree, because the Image of God in us has become blurred. We have all become divided within ourselves as we find ourselves at the mercy of conflicting desires.

In asking this man his name, Jesus Christ seeks to bring this man back to himself and to restore him to the person he was created to be, free from the influence of the demonic powers. At Pascha we sing that Christ has given life to “those in the tombs.” He has come to us to restore God’s Image within us, to free us from our divided desires and to restore our inner unity so that we are able to serve Him.

Give your intentions in prayer to God, Who knows everyone, even before our birth. And do not ask that everything will be according to your will, because a man does not know what is profitable for him. But say to God: Let Thy will be done! For He does everything for our benefit.

Saint Gennadius of Constantinople

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

We saw last week that the first part of the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Catechumens, ends with the dismissal with of the catechumens. Originally those who were still preparing for baptism left the Church at this point and only those baptised Christians who were preparing to receive Holy Communion were allowed to remain for the second part of the Liturgy which is known as the Liturgy of the faithful. Even baptised Christians who were excommunicated, or under penance, and therefore excluded from receiving Communion, were not allowed in the main body of the Church.



The importance of Holy Communion

Although this practise is no longer kept so strictly, the prayers for the dismissal of the catechumens help to remind us not only of the Church's missionary task in preparing people for baptism, but also of the true nature of the Liturgy of the faithful. For, from this point onwards, the entire Liturgy will be directed at preparing us to receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

For the early Christians it was assumed that anyone who was in Church from this point onwards was there in order to receive Communion. It is no longer the case that those who are not planning to receive Holy Communion need to leave the Church. And there may indeed be important reasons why people do not receive Communion, and we certainly shouldn't receive it if we are not prepared to do so. Nevertheless, this original practice can help to remind

us of the importance of receiving Holy Communion for our life of faith. We do not come to Church simply to fulfil a social or religious obligation, or even to pray to God or listen to His Word. Rather the Liturgy presupposes that we are there to participate in Christ's Eucharistic sacrifice. We do this through the offering of our lives together with the bread and wine that is offered on the altar, and through receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

The dismissal of the catechumens therefore marks a watershed moment in the Liturgy. The focus now shifts and the tone changes. As we move towards the consecration of the Holy Gifts and the reception of Holy Communion, we are again reminded of the need for humility, reverence and awe as we prepare to meet the God who comes to feed us with His very self and to lead us to His Kingdom.



On Saturday we commemorate the Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrrhstreamer of Thessalonica. He was a commander of the Roman forces and a devout Christian. In 306 some jealous pagans denounced him to the emperor and he was taken prisoner. A young Christian named Nestor challenged a certain Lyaios, whom the emperor had brought with him, to combat and cried out before the Emperor 'God of Demetrius, help me!' and quickly killed the mighty Lyaios. The infuriated emperor had Nestor and Demetrius killed. Demetrius' servant Lupus retrieved his body and buried it with honor. He kept the saint's ring and blood-stained tunic, and through them worked several miracles and healings.

As a sign of the grace that rested on the holy Demetrius, a fragrant myrrh flowed copiously from the Martyr's body after his death, healing many of the sick. For many centuries, St Demetrius has been a patron Saint of Thessalonica.

On Wednesday we commemorate the **Holy Apostle James** (in Hebrew Jacob, in Greek Iakovos), the Brother of the Lord and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. He was a close kinsman of Christ, possibly the son of the first marriage of St Joseph the Betrothed. He took strict Jewish Nazarite vows and was known from a young age as "the Just" and "Rampart of the People." Saint James was called "the less" (Mark 15:40) to distinguish him from James, the son of Zebedee. After the Resurrection, the Apostles appointed him as the first bishop of Jerusalem and it was he who presided over the Council of Jerusalem which decided how gentile converts were to be received into the Church (see Acts 15). He also wrote the New Testament epistle that bears his name. He was martyred around the year 62 when he ascended the peak of the temple to bear witness to Christ and the Scribes and Pharisees cast him to the ground. Before finally being clubbed to death, he prayed: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do."



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

My daughter's friend was staying with us and came to Church with us. But when she went up to receive Communion the priest wouldn't give it to her, saying that she was not Orthodox. I thought that Jesus said the little children should come to Him? How could he turn her away?

We need to distinguish between two different things. Jesus certainly welcomed children, just as He welcomed all those who came to Him. In the same way, the Church welcomes all people, children as well as adults, who come sincerely seeking God. But this does not mean that all people are entitled to receive the sacraments of the Church without preparation.

Receiving Holy Communion, by its very nature, means participating in the Mystery of the Church. Receiving the Holy Gifts is not something that we do as individuals, but as members of Christ's Body the Church. The very name "Communion" implies that we are in communion not only with God, but also with the rest of the Church, and particularly with the bishop who is the centre of unity in the Church.

We enter into the life of the Church through baptism. This is followed by Chrismation in which we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This sacramental initiation culminates in the newly-illuminated person receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. To receive Holy Communion without being baptized makes no sense and would undermine everything we believe. But it would also be spiritually dangerous for the one who attempted to receive Communion in this way, for, as the prayers of preparation for Holy Communion remind us, the Holy Gifts are a fire that will consume those who do not approach them in the proper manner.