

When are we living in Christ? When we live according to His Gospel and His Church. For He Himself, and not only His Gospel, is in the Church with all of His perfections and virtues. The Church is the eternally living Body of the God-man Christ. In her we find the medium of the holy mysteries. In her we find the means of holy good deeds. Our Lord Jesus Christ abides inseparable from the Church in this world. He abides with each member of the Church throughout all ages. He has His entire self for us in the Church, and continually gives Himself to us entirely, so that we might be enabled to live in this world as He lived.

Saint Justin Popovich

Sunday 1 September 2013 is the beginning of the New Church Year

Matins Gospel: John 21:1-14

Epistle: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Gospel: Luke 4:16-22

Apolytikion:

Creator of the universe, setting times and seasons by Your sole authority, bless the cycle of the year of Your grace, O Lord, guarding our rulers and Your nation in peace, at the intercession of the Theotokos, and save us.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: 2 Corinthians 2:3-15; Matthew 23:13-22
Martyr Mammas; John, Abp. Of Constantinople

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:1-3; Matthew 23:23-28
Hieromartyr Anthimus; Righteous Theoctistus and Euthymius

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 23:29-39
Hieromartyr Babylas; Prophet Moses

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 4:1-12; Matthew 23:29-39
HP Zacharias; Urban, Theodore, Medimnos, and 77 Companions at Nicomedeia

Friday: Hebrews 2:2-10; Luke 10:16-21
Miracle of Archangel Michael in Colossae; Martyr Calodotus

Saturday: 1 Corinthians 2:6-9; Matthew 10:37-42, 11:1
Saturday before Holy Cross; Theotokos' Nativity Forefeast; Martyr Sozon



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

1 September 2013

The acceptable year of the Lord

Today, on the first day of the new Church year, we hear Saint Luke recounting how Jesus Christ began His public ministry. He came to Nazareth and went into the synagogue where He was given the book of the prophet Isaiah to read. Having read Isaiah's words about preaching good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, Christ did a dramatic thing. He announced that "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

This dramatic announcement stands at the beginning of Jesus Christ's public ministry and tells us what He was all about. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that this event "signifies the joyful tidings of His own advent, that the time of the Lord – yes, the Son – had arrived." This event marked the beginning of a process that would lead to Christ's death and ultimately to His victory over death in the Resurrection.



But Jesus' words are also addressed to each one of us personally and show us exactly what sort of good news it is that He brings us. We are all poor, if not materially then certainly spiritually. We are all held captive by our own egoism and sin. We are all blind to a lesser or greater degree, and not able to perceive the Divine Light. Christ comes to us to free us from all that hinders us from becoming what we were truly created to be.

We have heard all these things before, and we may have wasted many chances that were given to us. But the Church gives us this reading on the first day of the new Church year to remind us once more of the newness of the offer of salvation that is given to us in Christ. Today is the day of salvation. Let us hear once more the offer of Christ as if for the first time.

Abba Poeman said concerning Abba Pior that every day he made a new beginning.

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

We have seen that the Antiphons are part of our preparation to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. At the beginning of the Liturgy we were clearly told that our destination is “the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And now we are given another glimpse of where we are heading when, after the second Antiphon we sing what has been called a “mini Creed.”

A mini Creed

This hymn, which was written by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, was originally an entrance hymn that was sung at the beginning of the Liturgy. It sets out and sums up the most fundamental aspects of our Orthodox faith and is always sung at every Liturgy.



Only-begotten Son and Word of God, who, being immortal, accepted for our salvation to take flesh from the holy Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change became man; you were crucified, Christ God, by death trampling on death, being one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit: save us!

When we refer to the only-begotten Son and Word of God, we are referring to nobody other than Jesus Christ Himself. When we use the word “Word” with a capital letter, we are not speaking of a written or spoken word, but of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. This is the Word whom Saint John speaks about at the beginning of his Gospel, the Word who was “in the beginning with God” and “through whom all things were made.”

In this hymn we confess that Jesus Christ is not merely a prophet or moral teacher, but that He is truly God. He is the only-begotten Son of the Father who has always existed in a loving communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. However, because of Christ’s great love for us, He has taken on our flesh from the Holy Theotokos and, while remaining perfect God, has become man. This He did for the sake of our salvation, accepting to be crucified so He might destroy the power of death.

Orthodox worship cannot be separated from dogma, from what we truly believe. This is not an abstract knowledge but lies at the very heart of our faith. It is the source of our joy and our hope. For we believe that, just as Jesus Christ came to us and took on our own humanity, so we too are called to share in His divinity. And we are preparing ourselves for the moment when, in the course of the Liturgy, we shall be united to Him by receiving His very Body and Blood.

He who was in the bosom of God the Father accepted to take the form of a servant and to undergo all the states pertaining to the body ... gradually growing up, being circumcised, offering sacrifice, being hungry, thirsty and tired, and finally enduring death itself ... The Creator of all accepted all this for us and for our salvation. ... He who created all things out of nothing, He who makes the earth tremble when He so much as glances at it [Psalm 103:32]. the radiance of whose glory even the Cherubim cannot look upon ... This is He who for us and for our salvation accepted to become man!

Saint John Chrysostom

A New Church Year

Today marks the beginning of a new Church year. In the Roman Empire, the first of September was the day on which the emperor would announce a decree of taxation. But it was also the time (in the northern hemisphere) for harvesting the fruits of the earth and for beginning a new agricultural cycle as we also see in Jewish worship. The Church took over this calendar but gave it a deeper significance.

The Christian liturgical year comprises different cycles and feasts and we need a calendar in order to give them some cohesion and order. As the year unfolds it enables us to follow the various events in the life of Christ and in the history of our salvation. It shows us something of the power of the Holy Spirit which is made real for us in the lives of the saints. This is not simply a matter of giving us intellectual knowledge; instead the events and people are made present to us today.

Ultimately, the liturgical year exists in order to draw us closer to Christ and to be united with Him in the Church. By following the various events of His Life and His ministry, by hearing the Gospels read during the course of the year, by entering with Him into His suffering, death and resurrection, we are called to be conformed to Him as we gradually allow the Holy Spirit to form refashion the Image of God in us. We are invited to unite ourselves with His birth, His growth, His suffering, His death and His triumph.

During the course of the year we are also drawn into the cycle of the saints who are the glorified members of Christ’s Body. Their light is really an extension of the light of Christ, and their sanctity is an extension of His sanctity. To celebrate the feast of a saint is to celebrate a special grace that flows from Christ to that saint, and in which we too are called to participate.



Tomorrow we commemorate the **Holy Martyr Mamas** from Gangra in Paphlagonia. He was born in prison where his parents had been imprisoned as confessors of the faith. After their death he was raised by a pious woman and when he was fifteen years old, he was arrested for refusing to sacrifice to idols and was beaten and tortured but he refused to deny Christ.

After the authorities attempted to drown Him, the Lord delivered St Mamas and he retreated to a hermitage in the mountains where he lived a life of asceticism and prayer and lived in peace with the wild animals.

After being arrested again, there is an account that he saw a lion attempting to kill a lamb. He took the lamb in his arms and rode the lion

into town to face the authorities who were so impressed that they released him. Some time later, however, he was sentenced to death. After the wild beasts to whom he was thrown would not touch him, he was stabbed by a pagan priest and died of his wounds in the year 275.

Saint Mamas is known for his care for animals and one often finds services for the blessings of pets on his feast.