



# Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

4 August 2013

If a man has no worries about himself at all for the sake of love toward God and the working of good deeds, knowing that God is taking care of him, this is a true and wise hope. But if a man takes care of his own business and turns to God in prayer only when misfortunes come upon him which are beyond his power, and then he begins to hope in God, such a hope is vain and false. A true hope seeks only the Kingdom of God... the heart can have no peace until it obtains such a hope. This hope pacifies the heart and produces joy within it.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

**Sunday 4 August 2013 is the  
Sixth Sunday of Matthew**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:36-53

**Epistle:** Romans 12:6-14

**Gospel:** Matthew 9:1-8

**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 Peter 1:1-25; 2:1-10; Matthew 13:54-58  
Forefeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Eusignius

**Tuesday:** Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9  
Holy Transfiguration

**Wednesday:** 1 Corinthians 7:12-24; Mark 9:2-9  
Afterfeast of the Transfiguration; Martyr Dometius

**Thursday:** 1 Corinthians 7:24-35; Matthew 15:12-21  
Emilian the Confessor; Myronus, Bp. Of Crete

**Friday:** Acts 1:12-17, 21-26; Matthew 15:29-31  
Matthias; Anthony of Alexandria

**Saturday:** Romans 12:1-6; Matthew 10:37-42, 11:1  
Martyr Archdeacon Laurence; Chitus of Athens

## Your sins are forgiven

In today's Gospel we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ healed a paralytic man. When this man was brought to Him, He scandalized the scribes by telling him that His sins were forgiven. Showing that He knew their thoughts, Christ asked them: "Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" And then He continued: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He then said to the paralytic – 'Rise, take up your bed and go home.'"

This encounter reveals who Jesus truly is. St John Chrysostom points out that, by reading what was in the scribes' minds, Jesus shows Himself as truly God. Moreover, as they themselves point out, it is only God who can forgive sins. They are scandalized precisely because, by claiming to forgive sins, Jesus Christ is revealing Himself as truly God.

But this encounter also reveals the true nature of the healing that we need. St John Chrysostom continues by pointing out that, if anyone might have been annoyed, it was the paralytic man. He had come to Christ to be healed, but instead had had his sins forgiven. However, far from being annoyed, he recognizes Christ's authority, surrendering himself to the One who heals. And, in this, he is healed in both body and soul. We see here that spiritual and physical healing are closely related. While the links between sin and illness are not clear cut – and Jesus elsewhere denies that a man's illness is a result of his sins (John 9:1-3) – there is a link between sin and suffering. When we come to God with what we think is our need, we need to be open to Him revealing our true need, for the healing that He offers us is often far greater than what we are aware we need.



The paralytic is a descendent of the original man, Adam.  
In one person, Christ, all the sins of Adam are forgiven.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

# A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

As we continue in the Great Litany, having prayed that we may experience the blessings of creation, we continue by praying:

*For those who travel by land, air or water,  
for the sick, the suffering,  
those in captivity, and for their safety and salvation,  
let us pray to the Lord.*

*For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger and constraint,  
let us pray to the Lord.*



We see here that the prayer of the Church is all-encompassing and includes people in various sorts of need. In the Gospel Christ says: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Church is a place for all who suffer from various sorts of affliction and in the Divine Liturgy we are invited to come to this place of rest where we will be given refreshment. The Liturgy repeatedly reminds us that God is the Lover of humankind, and desires nothing more than to draw us to Himself and assist us in all our needs.

We all face suffering and affliction of one sort or another. Sometimes this is obvious, such as when people are overtaken by great disasters, sudden and drastic illness or violent crime. Likewise, many people are caught in a cycle of grinding poverty or live in situations of constant danger. Even when our lives seem successful, we remain vulnerable to sudden dangers. And all-too-often our happy exteriors can mask a hidden pain as continue to suffer from the invisible wounds of broken relationships.

The Church understands the afflictions that we face as originating from the entrance of sin into the world. Sin may

initially be pleasurable, but the pleasure soon turns into pain. It is not so much that God punishes us for our sin, as that He seeks to rescue us from it. Often the afflictions that we face may be a form of Divine therapy and the Fathers repeatedly teach us that affliction that is rightly borne can be a great source of healing.

How we approach suffering is crucial, for it can either harden our hearts, and turn us away from God, or it can soften them, breaking them open and enable us to lead a life of true repentance. We therefore need to cry out to God to save us and protect us from all the dangers that we face, for these dangers are both physical and spiritual.

In times of affliction, unceasingly call out to the merciful God in prayer. The unceasing invocation of the name of God in prayer is a treatment for the soul which kills not only the passions, but even their very operation. As a doctor finds the necessary medicine, and it works in such a way that the sick person does not understand, in just the same way the name of God, when you call upon it, kills all the passions, although we don't know how this happens.

Saint Barsanuphius the Great

# The Transfiguration of Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ

On Tuesday we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, one of the twelve Great Feasts of the Church. The Gospel for the Feast (Matthew 17:1-9) tells us how Jesus took the Apostles Peter, James and John with Him up a mountain, where He was transfigured before them, radiating light. The prophets Moses and Elijah also appeared, but a voice from heaven made clear to them that it is Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, echoing the voice that had sounded at His baptism in the Jordan: "This is my Son, the Beloved; He enjoys my favour. Listen to Him."

At the Transfiguration, the Apostles encounter Jesus Christ in a new way, and this experience is given to them to prepare and strengthen them for His Passion. It is also given to the Church to reveal to us our own human destiny. Just as Christ's face and clothes were radiant with Light, so we are called to be cleansed of sin and to gradually learn to see and to participate in His Light. Moreover, Christ's Transfiguration illumines the whole universe with His Light.

For all of us who struggle in the darkness and brokenness of our lives and world, this feast reminds us that the Christ is also present in our world, and it challenges us to develop the spiritual eyes so that we may learn to see Him. For, as the Apolytikion for the feast reminds us, we can only see Him as much as our own sight allows us to.



***You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God, showing your disciples your glory, as far as they could bear it. At the prayers of the Theotokos make your everlasting light shine also on us sinners. Giver of light, glory to You.***

Apolytikion for the Feast

The Lord who is beyond measure measures out nourishment to all, adapting to our eyes the sight of Himself, to our hearing His voice, His blessing to our appetite, His wisdom to our tongue.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian