

I ask you to try something. If someone grieves you, or dishonours you, or takes something of yours, then pray like this: "Lord, we are all your creatures. Pity your servants, and turn them to repentance," and then you will perceptibly bear grace in your soul. Induce your heart to love your enemies, and the Lord, seeing your good will, shall help you in all things, and will Himself show you experience. But whoever thinks evil of his enemies does not have love for God and has not known God.

Saint Silouan the Athonite, whom we commemorate on Thursday



20 September 2015 is the Sunday after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief; Thou didst transform the myrrh-bearers' lamentation, and didst bid Thine Apostles to preach that Thou art risen, O Christ God, granting great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion:

Lifted up on the Cross by Your free will, Christ God, grant mercies to the new commonwealth that bears Your name. Gladden our faithful rulers by Your power, giving them victories over their adversaries. May Your alliance be for them a weapon for peace, an invincible standard.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:1-3; Luke 3:19-22
Apodosis of the Holy Cross; Apostle Quadratus

Tuesday: Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:1-7; Luke 3:23-38, 4:1
Hieromartyr Phocas; Phocas the Cyprian

Wednesday: Galatians 4:22-27; Luke 1:5-25
Conception of the Forerunner; Xanthippe & Polyxene the Righteous

Thursday: 2 Timothy 3:10-15; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
Protomartyr Thekla; Silouan of Athos

Friday: Ephesians 4:17-25; Luke 4:22-30
Euphrosyne of Alexandria; Paphnoutios & 546 Companions in Egypt

Saturday: John 21:14-25; 1 John 4:12-19; John 19:25-27; 21:24-25
TRANSLATION OF JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

20 September 2015

Take Up Your Cross...

Today, on the Sunday after the Feast of the Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Giving Cross, the Church continues to focus our attention on the Cross of Christ. In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words calling us to renounce ourselves, take up our own cross and follow Him.

In the Cross of Christ we see the extent to which God's love is poured out for us, as Jesus Christ enters into the very depths of our human need. We cannot adequately explain the Mystery of the Cross and it presents us with a paradox, for, as Saint Paul tells us, God's power is shown forth in weakness. The Cross of Christ shows us the power of suffering love, and proclaims that it is this love that ultimately conquers sin and death.

In some ways, our life as Christians is also based on a paradox. Jesus' call to us to renounce ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him, may seem like a crazy and even irresponsible thing to do. Yet He tells us that it is only by doing this that we will be able to have true life.

Christ is not calling us to be killjoys who are unable to enjoy the good things in life. But He is challenging us to evaluate what it is that we really live for. Anything that is really worthwhile will inevitably involve suffering in one way, and as we choose to follow Christ we also need to be prepared to share in the Mystery of His Cross, for it is only through the Cross that we can find true life.



What is the will of God that Saint Paul urges and invites each of us to attain? It is total cleansing from sin, freedom from the shameful passions and the acquisition of the highest virtue. In other words, it is the purification and sanctification of the heart that comes about through fully experienced and conscious participation in the perfect and divine Spirit.

Saint Macarius of Egypt

Ordained to Serve the Church

A series on the meaning of Holy Orders

We have seen that the sacrament of Holy Orders is given to the Church by God in order to make the Church visible and to assure us of Jesus Christ's enduring presence in it. Priests are appointed by the bishop in order to assist him, and to lead the local parish community.



The Service of the Altar

Those chosen to be priests are ordained by the bishop during the Divine Liturgy. Married men can be ordained priests, but a priest may not marry after ordination. The priest is ordained after the Great Entrance but before the *anaphora* in order to participate in the consecration of the Gifts.

This shows us that central to the mystery of priesthood is the offering of the Holy Gifts in the Eucharist. Although the priest has other tasks and gifts (such as teaching, preaching, leading, confessing penitents and providing counsel), his most fundamental task is his service at the altar.

The priest is called to lead the whole congregation of the Church on their journey to the Kingdom of God. Saint Maximos the Confessor tells us that this journey is reflected

in the church building itself. The nave is the place of the laity, while the sanctuary of the altar is the place of the priest, but they are bound together in a unity that exists precisely because of their different callings.

Both the laity and the priest are necessary for the proper celebration of the Liturgy, and the one cannot exist without the other. Moreover, the sanctuary and the nave are not so much separated from each other, as united to each other by the iconostasis, which represents the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is this visible presence of Jesus Christ in the world that the priest makes present to us, enabling all of the members of the Church to become, in their own ways, witnesses for Christ.



Just as Christ conferred the divine power of His own Spirit on the apostles, by which the apostles were transformed into something other than what they were, He, in turn, consecrates the apostles through a genuine sanctification by making them partake of His own nature through participation in the Spirit, and thus in a way refashioning human nature into a power and glory that is above mankind.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Saint Thekla

On Thursday we commemorate the Holy Protomartyr Thekla, Equal to the Apostles. She was born in Iconium of prominent pagan parents and was converted to Christianity by the Apostle Paul himself. She forsook her family and her betrothed, vowing herself to a life of virginity in the service of Christ. She traveled in the ministry of the Gospel with Saint Paul. After many travels and sufferings for the sake of Christ, she retired to Seleucia to devote herself to prayer and asceticism. There she healed many of the sick by her prayers, and brought many more to the Faith. Some local doctors envied her and sent some young men to rape her, superstitiously thinking that her healing powers might reside in her virginity. Saint Thekla fled from these men and, when she saw that they would catch her, prayed to God for help in front of a rock, and the rock opened and hid the holy maiden. Saint Thekla fell asleep in Christ at the age of 90. Shortly after her death, a community of virgins gathered near her cave and built a chapel at her tomb. Her monastery still exists in the Syrian village of Ma'loula, although the nuns have endured great hardships in recent times.



Saint Sergios of Radonezh

On Friday we commemorate Saint Sergios of Radonezh, one of the greatest Russian saints. Born around the year 1314 of pious parents, he struggled with school until a holy starets (elder) helped him and he learnt to read through reading the Psalter and the Holy Scriptures. The starets prophesied: "This child is going to become a dwelling of the Holy Trinity, and will bring a huge throng of people to knowledge of His will." After the death of his parents he withdrew to the wilderness to become a monk, building a cell and a little Church which he dedicated to the Holy Trinity. He was joined by others and was eventually made abbot and priest, although he resisted this at first, only accepting it when begged to do so by his brethren. His Christ-like humility, burning love for God and his neighbour, and gifts for working wonders and guiding souls, radiated out from his community and influenced all of Russia in a period when it was under threat from the Tartar invaders. In a society ravaged by bloodshed, he pointed to a vision of the Holy Trinity that was to be a source of peace and healing. He reposed in 1392 and his relics were discovered to be incorrupt in 1422.

