

O Lord, my God, defend me  
like the pupil of the eye.  
Be Thou my protector,  
and under Thy wings  
I shall be shielded from temptations.

Be a guard to mine eye,  
that it look not stealthily.  
Be a guard to the ear,  
that it hear not wickedly.

Be a guard to the mouth,  
and watch also the lips  
that my heart  
decline not to vile sayings,  
nor perform unrighteous deeds.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian



*15 January is the  
Twelfth Sunday of Luke*

**Matins Gospel:** John 20:11-18

**Epistle:** Colossians 3:4-11

**Gospel:** Luke 17:12-19

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Let us worship the Word, O ye faithful,  
praising Him that with the Father and the  
Spirit is co-beginningless God, Who was  
born of a pure Virgin that we all be  
saved; for He was pleased to mount the  
Cross in the flesh that He assumed,  
accepting thus to endure death. And by  
His glorious rising, He also willed to  
resurrect the dead.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

Your birth sanctified a Virgin's womb and  
properly blessed the hands of Symeon.  
Having now come and saved us O Christ  
our God, give peace to Your  
commonwealth in troubled times and  
strengthen those in authority, whom You  
love, as only the loving One.

### *Readings and saints for this week:*

**Monday, 16 January:** Acts 12:1-11; John 21:14-25

Veneration of the Chains of Ap. Peter; Righteous Makarios of Kalogeras

**Tuesday, 17 January:** Matthew 11:27-30; Hebrews 13:17-21; Luke 6:17-23

Anthony the Great; Anthony of Berropas; New Martyr George of Ioannina

**Wednesday, 18 January:** John 10:1-9; Hebrews 13:7-16; Matthew 5:14-19

Athanasios and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria; Zenia the Martyr

**Thursday, 19 January:** 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 19:16-26

Macarius the Great of Egypt; Mark, Bp. Of Ephesus; Arsenius of Corfu

**Friday, 20 January:** 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Luke 6:17-23

Euthymius the Great; Zacharias the New Martyr of Patra

**Saturday, 21 January:** Philippians 1:12-20; Luke 12:8-12

Maximus the Confessor; Martyr Neophytos; Neophytos, Agnes, Patroclus, Maximus & Eugene



# *Evangelion*

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

15 January 2017

## **A Grateful Heart**

Today the Church returns once more to listening to the Gospel readings according to Saint Luke, and we hear his account of how Jesus Christ healed ten lepers. Ten men suffering from leprosy came and asked Him to have mercy on them, and He told them to go and show themselves to the priests in order to confirm their healing. As they went away, they found that they were healed. On discovering this, one of the lepers, who was a Samaritan, returned to Jesus to thank Him. However, the other nine continued on their way, prompting Jesus to remark that it was only one of them who came back to give thanks.

This incident reminds us that we can all-too-easily take God's gifts for granted, and forget to thank Him for them. Cultivating a spirit of gratitude is of fundamental importance in our Christian life, for we often need to become aware of all that God does for us. We may wonder how the nine lepers could have forgotten to give thanks for their healing, yet if we are not grateful for all that God does for us in our everyday life, we can run the risk of also being blind to His more dramatic acts.

Often people think of prayer mainly as asking things from God. While we should indeed bring our needs and the needs of the world to God in prayer, true prayer begins with acknowledging who God is, with praising Him for who He is and thanking Him for all that He has done for us. For prayer is ultimately about cultivating a relationship with God as we learn to not only rely on Him for all our needs, but also recognize how He answers these needs and thank Him for it.



What words can adequately describe God's gifts? They are so numerous that they defy enumeration. They are so great that any one of them demands our total gratitude in response.

Saint Basil the Great

## Saints Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria

On Wednesday, we commemorate two great saints of the Alexandrian Church.

**Saint Athanasius the Great** was one of the most influential theologians of the Church whose great efforts and sufferings made a major contribution to the triumph of Christian Orthodoxy when it was threatened by heresy. He was born around 296 and as a child his piety was noted by Patriarch Alexander who took Athanasius under his wing and guided his education. After spending some time with the desert monks, he returned to Alexandria where he was ordained a deacon. In 325 he attended the Council of Nicaea together with Patriarch Alexander and, although only a deacon, he



was noted for his contribution in countering the Arian heresy. Shortly after this he succeeded St Alexander as Patriarch. He was a true pastor to his people, travelling throughout Egypt to visit Churches and monasteries. However, much of his energy as patriarch was taken up combating the Arian heresy which had reasserted itself. Arius denied that Jesus Christ was truly God and of one essence with the Father, and St Athanasius realised that this was a direct threat to our salvation, for, if God had not truly assumed our human nature, we could not have access to His divine life. Much of his life as patriarch was spent in exile, first in Rome and later hiding with the monks in the Egyptian desert. He was eventually allowed to return to Alexandria for good in 366 and reposed in peace in 373. Eight years after his death the Orthodox faith was reasserted at the Council of Constantinople in 381. He did not live to see this, but it was certainly due in large part to his perseverance and commitment to the truth.

Like Saint Athanasius, **Saint Cyril of Alexandria** also devoted all his strength to maintain the dogma of the Incarnation against the Nestorian heresy in the fifth century. Saint Cyril had first tried to persuade Nestorius of the error of his ways by private correspondence, but when this failed he presided at the Council of Ephesus in 431 at which Nestorianism was defeated. Saint Cyril showed in his teaching how the Word of God has truly taken human nature on Himself, assuming it in His own Person, so that it may partake of His divine nature. After thirty-two years as patriarch, Saint Cyril reposed in 444, leaving us with many biblical commentaries and other writings.

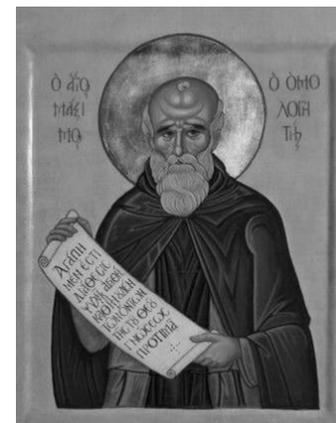


I ask you to try something. If someone grieves you, or dishonors you, or takes something of yours, then pray like this: “Lord, we are all your creatures. Pity your servants, and turn them to repentance,” and then you will perceptibly bear grace in your soul. Induce your heart to love your enemies, and 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

## Saint Maximus the Confessor

On Saturday, the Church commemorates Saint Maximus the Confessor. He was born into a noble family in Constantinople in 580, although there is also evidence that he may have been born in Palestine. He showed uncommon piety and understanding of Christian truth from a young age, but after completing his studies with distinction he came to serve in the court of the emperor, being appointed his chief secretary. However, after only three years he withdrew to a monastery and spent many years in ascetical training, overcoming his passions and learning the life of prayer, which he also shared with others through his writings. As a result of the Persian invasions, the monks had to disperse and St Maximus embarked on an itinerant life, spending time in Crete, Cyprus, and eventually Carthage.



During this time he was able to express the great depth of the Orthodox faith in his writings, presenting a magnificent synthesis which saw the human being as priest of a cosmic liturgy who is called to gather together the inner principles of all things in order to offer them to God.

However, this was also a time in which the Church was threatened by the monothelite heresy, which the emperor was attempting to impose on the Church as a compromise with the monophysites. St Maximus saw clearly that this teaching, which denied that Christ had a human will, struck at the very basis of our faith, for if Christ had not assumed our will, then He could not heal it, thus restoring human freedom to its original state. The emperor warned St Maximus to either accept the monothelite belief or else keep silent, but he was unable to avoid speaking out and he was arrested and exiled for six years. After this he was brought back to Constantinople to face a new trial before the patriarch and his synod. ‘What Church do you belong to, then?’ he was asked. ‘To Constantinople? to Rome? to Antioch? to Alexandria? to Jerusalem? For you see that all are united with us.’ ‘To the Catholic Church, which is the right and salutary confession of faith in the God of the universe,’ the Confessor answered. Threatened with capital punishment, he replied: ‘May whatever God has foreordained before all the ages find in me the conclusion which resounds to the glory that has been His since before all the ages.’

As a result of this witness St Maximus’ tongue was torn out, his right hand was cut off, and he was again sentenced to exile in the Caucasus. He died of his wounds shortly after this at the age of eighty-two, in the year 662. The Great Horologion comments that ‘at that time only he and his few disciples were Orthodox in the East.’ Nonetheless, his lonely and costly stand, whose fruit he did not see in his own lifetime, preserved the Orthodox Faith when emperors and patriarchs alike had fallen away.

Saint Maximus’ right hand is venerated today at the Monastery of St Paul on Mount Athos.