

# Evangelion

*A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith*

11 August 2013

We have within us deeply rooted weaknesses, passions, and defects. They cannot all be cut out with one sharp motion, but patience, persistence, care and attention. The path leading to perfection is long. Pray to God so that he will strengthen you. Patiently accept your falls and, having stood up, immediately run to God, not remaining in that place where you have fallen. Do not despair if you keep falling into your old sins. Many of them are strong because they have received the force of habit. Only with the passage of time and with fervour will they be conquered. Don't let anything deprive you of hope.

Saint Nektarios of Aegina

**Sunday 11 August is the  
Seventh Sunday of Matthew**

**Matins Gospel:** John 20:1-10

**Epistle:** Romans 15:1-7

**Gospel:** Matthew 9:27-35

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

When the angelic powers appeared at Your grave, the soldiers guarding it feared and became as dead. And standing by the sepulcher was Mary who was seeking Your immaculate body. You devastated Hades, not afflicted by it. You went to meet the virgin, and granted eternal life. You resurrected from the dead. O Lord, glory to You.

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## *Readings and saints for this week:*

**Monday:** 1 Corinthians 9:13-18; Matthew 16:1-6  
Martyrs Photius & Anicetus; Soldier-martyrs of Crete

**Tuesday:** 1 Corinthians 10:5-12; Matthew 16:6-12  
Apodosis of Transfiguration; Maximus the Confessor

**Wednesday:** 1 Corinthians 10:12-22; Matthew 16:20-24  
Forefeast of the Dormition; Prophet Micah

**Thursday:** Luke 1:39-49, 56; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28  
Dormition of the Theotokos

**Friday:** 1 Timothy 3:13-16; 4:1-5; Luke 9:51-57, 10:22-24, 13:22  
Martyr Diomedes

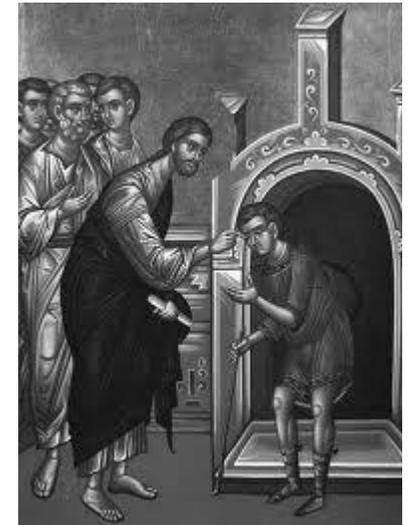
**Saturday:** Romans 13:1-10; Matthew 12:30-37  
Martyr Myron; Straton, Philip, Eutychian, & Cyprian of Nicomedeia

## The healing of speech and sight

Today we hear Saint Matthew's account of another healing miracle of Jesus Christ. In today's Gospel we are told of two blind men who came to Jesus asking to be healed. This is followed by an account of a dumb demoniac who, when the devil was driven out of him, was able to speak. Both of these healing miracles showed Christ's power, and people were amazed and began to revere Him.

Blindness and dumbness are among the greatest of our human infirmities. And even those of us who can see and speak are in many ways nevertheless spiritually blind and dumb. If our spiritual eyes are darkened, then this affects not only our knowledge of God, but also how we view the world around us. It is all too easy for us to view our fellow human beings through the lenses of our own prejudices and thus to miss seeing them for what they truly are, namely beloved children of God, created in His Image and Likeness. In the same way, sin has affected our power of speech; not only do we find it difficult to communicate with God, but our communication with each other becomes distorted. When we remain caught up in our own egos, we simply project our own views onto others, without really listening to them, and real dialogue becomes impossible.

The healing that Christ offers to us requires faith, and also a willingness to see reality for what it truly is. We need to pray that the Lord will shed His Light upon us, and give us the courage to allow it to shine into those dark corners of our lives that we would rather keep hidden.



As water and fire oppose one another when combined,  
so are self-justification and humility opposed to one another.

Saint Mark the Ascetic

# A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

As we come to the end of the Great Litany, we sum up all our petitions in the urgent words:

*Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us O God, by your grace.*

We then continue:

*Commemorating our all-holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady,  
Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints,  
let us entrust ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.*



We pray the Liturgy not as isolated individuals, but as a community, as the Body of Christ. And we pray not just for ourselves, but for all people. However, we are not the only ones praying and we should not think that we must rely on our own prayer. Instead, in every Liturgy we are joined by the Mother of God and the Saints and we know that we can rely on their prayers for us.

In this petition we are called to entrust our whole lives to Christ. Handing ourselves over in trust to God is at the heart of our faith. Yet it is not something that we do easily, for we often seem programmed to want to control our own lives and to know how things are going to work out.

The Virgin Theotokos is the great example to us of a life totally given over to the Will of God. At the Annunciation she responded to the Archangel Gabriel's message by saying: "Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38) even though she did not understand all that would follow. Her

life is one great act of trusting God, who was able to do such great things through her. It is therefore fitting that we invoke her intercession that we too may be able to entrust ourselves to the great mercy of God.

Moreover, the Theotokos entrusted herself to God so that she might become the place where God came to dwell among us in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Just as she received Christ into her body, so, at the beginning of the Liturgy, we too are preparing to receive Him into our bodies when we receive Holy Communion and we pray that we may become, like the Most Pure Virgin, the dwelling place of Jesus Christ.

The Mother of God committed to writing neither her thoughts nor her love for God and her Son, nor her soul's suffering at the Crucifixion, because in any case we could not have understood, for her love for God is stronger and more ardent than the love of the Seraphim and Cherubim, and all the hosts of angels and archangels marvel at her. And though the life of the Mother of God is hidden, as it were in a holy silence, our Lord allows our Orthodox Church to know that She embraces the whole world in this love of hers, and in the Holy Spirit sees all the peoples of the earth, and like her Son pities all men and has compassion on them.

Saint Silouan the Athonite

# The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

On Thursday, 15 August, we celebrate the great feast of the Dormition, or falling asleep, of the Most Holy Theotokos. At Vespers we sing: "The source of life is laid in the grave and her tomb becomes a ladder to heaven."

The account of the Dormition of the Mother of God has been persevered in the tradition of the Church, with accounts of how the apostles gathered around her bed as she "passed over into heavenly joy," and into the Kingdom of her Son.

We believe that the Holy Theotokos shared in the corruption of our human nature, although she was without personal sin. She too needed to be saved by Christ and, like her Son, she experienced the death that all of us will have to face. However, we believe that she also experienced Christ's victory over death in a direct and immediate way. The Dormition services teach us that the Holy Virgin passed through death to life without going through judgment, for the Mother of Life could not be overcome by corruption.

This feast is ultimately an extension of the Resurrection of Christ and shows us how His victory over death has become effective in His Mother. It has been called a "second Pascha" for in it we celebrate the resurrection of her who is already united to Christ before the Last Judgement and the general resurrection.

However, this feast is also our feast, for in the Holy Theotokos we see that we too are called to share in Christ's victory over death.



***In birth, you preserved your virginity;  
in death, you did not abandon the  
world, O Theotokos. As mother of  
life, you departed to the source of  
life, delivering our souls from death  
by your intercessions.***

Apolytikion for the Feast

Come, O gathering of those who love to keep the feasts, come and let us form a choir. Come, let us crown the Church with songs, as the Ark of God goes to her rest. For today is heaven opened wide as it receives the Mother of Him who cannot be contained. The earth, as it yields up the Source of life, is robed in blessing and majesty. The hosts of angels, present with the fellowship of the apostles, gaze in great fear at her who bore the Cause of life, now that she is translated from life to life. Let us venerate and implore her: Forget not, O Lady, thy ties of kinship with those who commemorate in faith the feast of thine all-holy Dormition.

From Vespers of the Feast