



If you ever wish to associate with someone, make sure that you do not give your attention to those who enjoy health and wealth and fame as the world sees it, but take care of those in affliction, in critical circumstances, who are utterly deserted and enjoy no consolation. Put a high value on associating with these, for from them you shall receive much profit, and you will do all for the glory of God. God Himself has said, "I am the Father of orphans and the protector of widows."

Saint John Chrysostom

5 June is the Sunday of the Blind Man

Matins Gospel: John 20:11-18

Epistle: Acts 16:16-34

Gospel: John 9:1-38

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:

Though You went down into the tomb, You destroyed Hades' power, and You rose the victor, Christ God, saying to the myrrh-bearing women, "Hail!" and granting peace to Your disciples, You who raise up the fallen.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 6 June: Acts 17:1-9; John 11:47-54
Hilarion the New; Bessarion the Wonderworker of Egypt

Tuesday, 7 June: Acts 17:19-28; John 12:19-36
Martyr Theodotus; Righteous Panagis

Wednesday, 8 June: Acts 18:22-28; John 12:36-47
Apodosis of Pascha; Relics of Theodore Stratelates; Martyr Kalliope

Thursday, 9 June: Mark 16:9-20; Acts 1:1-12; Luke 24:36-53
Holy Ascension; Cyril, Abp. of Alexandria; 3 Virgin-martyrs of Chios

Friday, 10 June: Acts 19:1-8; John 14:1-11
Martyrs Alexander and Antonina; Hieromartyr Timothy

Saturday, 11 June: Acts 11:19-30; Luke 10:16-21
Apostle Bartholomew; Apostle Barnabas



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

5 June 2016

I Was Blind, Now I See

Today we commemorate the healing of the man who had been born blind. Saint John tells us how Jesus sought him out, applied a paste to his eyes, and instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. When the man returned, he was able to see.

This miracle which the Lord worked in giving sight to the blind man, is closely connected to the mysteries which we have been celebrating since Pascha. In rising from the dead, the Risen Christ has given light to the whole world and has released us from the powers of darkness. At last Sunday's Liturgy we proclaimed that Christ, "after being hidden from sight in the tomb, has risen again more brightly than the sun, and thereby illumines all believers."

However, the Resurrection of the Lord is not simply an external event that we are called to affirm, but a living reality that we need to learn to see. Like the man in the Gospel, we too are blind, although for most of us our blindness is probably more spiritual than physical. Our eyes have become darkened by sin, and by the fallen state of the world into which we are born.

The Risen Christ comes to enlighten us with His light, just as He came to the man born blind. He comes to heal us of our own spiritual blindness. However, in order to behold the true and saving light, we need to learn humility and repentance, acknowledging our own blindness and calling out to Him for healing.



You, too, should come to Siloam, that is, to Him who was sent by the Father, as He says in the Gospel: "My teaching is not my own; it comes from Him who sent me." Let Christ wash you, and you will then see. ... You will be able to say, "I was blind, and now I see." And, as the blind man said when his eyes began to receive the light, you too can say, "The night is almost over and the day is at hand."

Saint Ambrose of Milan

God Invites Us, but We have to Choose Salvation

By Saint Nektarios the Wonderworker of Aegina

A study of the history of the redemption of humankind reveals the Son of God, Who became a man in order to save all of us, treading the path to His voluntary passion, bearing the sin of the world, healing our wounds, fulfilling the great mystery of divine dispensation, reconciling us with God and yet in no way infringing our free will.

There you are! The gate of Paradise, which had been shut, was opened; the fiery sword which guarded the entrance was removed and the voice of the Lord invited excluded humanity to enter thereby into a place of peace and quiet. But we were left free to enter or not, as we choose.



... The prime agent in the work of our salvation is indeed the grace of God, because Christ the Saviour came as Light to those who were in the dark and shed the light of His Grace on those “dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death”.

He sought the lost sheep, called back those who had strayed, spoke secretly to people’s hearts and showed us the way to salvation. It’s the grace of God which perfects and saves, yet our own will should not be accounted of any less importance.

We should regard it as the outstanding gem in the crown of our salvation, since it’s the main lever that shifts our outlook

that has been rendered inert by sin. This is what urges our footsteps to follow the Saviour, this is what strengthens our hearts to show self-denial, this is what bears the cross on the shoulder.

Because, although grace invites us, dispels the gloom and illumines the dark places, it is possible nevertheless, due to the carelessness and slothfulness, the contamination and spiritual idleness of the carnal view of life, for our free will to feign deafness, to close its eyes, to remain in darkness and to proceed in exactly the opposite direction: the one to perdition. In other words, our free will can act in total contradiction to what it actually wants.

So it is necessary for us truly to want our salvation, to seek it. We have to want to hear, in order to hearken to the voice of Him Who is calling us. We need to want to see in order to open our eyes to the brilliant, abundant light.

We have to want to move, to follow the Saviour, to refuse to be the people we once were, with our passions and desires, in order to take the cross upon our shoulders. We must follow the “strait and circumscribed road” so that we may pass through the narrow gate of Paradise.



The Ascension of the Lord

This coming Thursday is the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. On Wednesday, we “take leave” of the Easter feast, commemorating the last day of the presence of the Risen Christ among His disciples. And then on Thursday we celebrate Jesus Christ’s Ascension into heaven where He is exalted at the right hand of the Father.

The Ascension of Christ is really the fulfilment of His Resurrection. When He rose from the dead, He did not simply resume a normal human life, but appeared to His disciples in a glorified body which was immortal and incorruptible. Now He ascends to the Father, and is no longer present on earth in a bodily way, yet He abides with the faithful forever.

With the Ascension of Christ, we also see our own human nature being taken up into the glory of heaven. “We who seemed unworthy of the earth, are now raised to heaven,” says St John Chrysostom. Through His Ascension, Christ has opened the way by which we too will be able to be taken up into the glory of the Father.

However, Jesus Christ tells us that He will not leave us as orphans. By ascending to the Father, He is opening the way for the Holy Spirit whom

He promises to send to comfort and help us. The Ascension of Christ is a joyful feast, both because it assures us that Christ’s work is completed, and because it encourages us to await and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.



You were taken up in glory, Christ our God, giving joy to your Disciples by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, when through the blessing they had been assured that you are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Apolytikion of the Ascension

*The eternal and unoriginate God,
having mystically deified the human nature which He has taken, carries it up today!
Angels preceding, showed Him to the apostles,
as He was ascending into heaven in great glory!
And worshipping Him, they said: “Glory to the ascended God!”*

From Matins of the Ascension