

A Christian must be courteous to all. His words and deeds should breathe with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which abides in his soul, so that in this way he might glorify the name of God. He who regulates all of his speech also regulates all of his actions. He who keeps watch over the words he is about say also keeps watch over the deeds he intends to do, and he never goes out of the bounds good and benevolent conduct. The graceful speech of a Christian is characterized by delicateness and politeness. This fact, born of love, produces peace and joy. On the other hand, boorishness gives birth to hatred, enmity, affliction, competitiveness, disorder and wars.

Saint Nektarios of Aegina



10 July is the Third Sunday of Matthew

Matins Gospel: Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: Romans 5:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O Life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee.

Seasonal Kontakion:

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday, 11 July: Mark 5:24-34; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Luke 7:36-50
Great Martyr Euphemia; Olga, Equal to the Apostles

Tuesday, 12 July: Romans 10:11-21; 11:1-2; Matthew 11:16-20
Martyrs Proclus & Hilary; Michael of Malenius

Wednesday, 13 July: Hebrews 2:2-10; Matthew 11:20-26
Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel; Righteous Stephen

Thursday, 14 July: Romans 16:1-16; Matthew 11:27-30
Aquila of the 70; Joseph the Confessor

Friday, 15 July: 1 Corinthians 13:11-14; 14:1-5; Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4
Martyr Julitta & Cyricus; Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles

Saturday, 16 July: Romans 6:11-17; Matthew 8:14-23
Hieromartyr Athenogenes; Virgin Martyr Julia



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

10 July 2016

No One Can Serve Two Masters

Today, on the third Sunday of Matthew, we hear Jesus Christ's challenging words in the Sermon on the Mount. He reminds us that we cannot serve both God and money, for, as He points out, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." And He then proceeds to remind us of the pointlessness of worrying about material things, for "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."

We may be tempted to think that it is easy for Jesus to say this, and may think we have good reason to worry about material things. Moreover, we live in a society that seems to programme us to be concerned about what we will eat, or drink, or wear – or the size of our bank balance.

While we do need to take some concern for the matters of our earthly life, Jesus Christ goes to the heart of the matter by asking us who our true master is. Are we governed by our desires for wealth or success, whatever form they may take? Or are we governed by our desire for God, and for God's Kingdom?

The reality is that, for many of us, our hearts are divided as we seek to juggle the competing realities

of our lives. The conflicting demands that we experience exist because we live in a fallen world, and the conflict that we experience in our hearts exists because our desires have also been affected by the fall and are in need to healing. The path to salvation that Christ calls us to involves the healing of this division within ourselves so that, "If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light."

The Fathers understood this to mean living out of an inner unity and integrity in which our desires are aligned to the will of God. It is about learning to live out of a single heart that is wholly given to God – not so much because we "must" and because God is a "master" who will otherwise punish us, but because this is the only way to find true freedom. For, as Saint John Chrysostom tells us, money is a far more tyrannical master than our true Master who cares for our every need.



The Life of Faith Teaches Us Our Frailty

Saint Ignatius Brianchaninov on Repentance

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

Saint Simeon the New Theologian, who acquired his knowledge of truth through his holy experience ... said: “The careful fulfillment of the commandments of Christ teaches a man his own infirmities.”

Exactly! As soon as one who believes in Christ begins to fulfill the all-holy commandments of the Gospel, or also, to perform the works of renewed nature, his fallen nature is instantly revealed to him, which had been hidden from sight until then, and it enters into a sustained battle with the Gospel.



The life of one who struggles for Christ is filled with unseen falls. He involuntarily confesses with the Apostle: “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7: 22-24).

From such an observation of oneself, blessed poverty of spirit is engendered within a Christian, rational, spiritual mourning appears, and a broken and humble heart is established, which God will not destroy (Ps. 50: 20).

In living according to the Gospel, there appears in a man, as if naturally, the repentance commanded by the Gospel. Therefore, repentance is necessary not only in order to believe in Christ; it is necessary in order to have a living faith in Christ. “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”



When Abba Anthony thought about the depth of the judgments of God, he asked, “Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age?”

“Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?”

He heard a voice answering him, “Anthony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.”

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers

The Church: Body of Christ, Image of the Holy Trinity

The Message of the Holy and Great Council

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church was recently held from 19 to 26 June at the Orthodox Academy of Crete. In keeping with the tradition of the Orthodox Church that the Church is a universal communion of Churches that are gathered in unity by bonds of love and communion, the bishops of the various autocephalous (self-governing) Churches met together to discuss matters of common concern. However, as we saw last week, they also insisted that the Church has a duty to bring a message of hope to the world. This hope is rooted in the Church's own identity as the Body of Christ and Image of the Holy Trinity. Here is an extract from the Council Encyclical:

The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is a *divine-human communion in the image of the Holy Trinity*, a foretaste and experience of the eschaton in the holy Eucharist and a revelation of the glory of the things to come, and, as a continuing Pentecost, she is a prophetic voice in this world that cannot be



silenced, the presence and witness of God's Kingdom “that has come with power” (cf. Mark 9.1). The Church, as the body of Christ, “gathers” the world (Matt 23.37) to Him, transfigures it and irrigates it with “the water welling up to eternal life” (John 4.14).

The tradition of the Apostles and Fathers – following the words of the Lord, the founder of the Church, who at the Last Supper with his disciples, instituted the sacrament of the holy Eucharist – highlighted the Church's characteristic as the “body of Christ” (Matt 25, 26; Mark 14.22; Luke 22.19; 1 Cor 10.16-17; 11.23-29), and always connected this with the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. In this spirit, emphasis was always placed on the indissoluble relation both between the entire mystery of the divine Economy in Christ and the mystery of the Church, and also between the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the holy Eucharist, which is continually confirmed in the sacramental life of the Church through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The Orthodox Church, faithful to this unanimous apostolic tradition and sacramental experience, *constitutes the authentic continuation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church*, as this is confessed in the Symbol of faith and is confirmed in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. Thus, she is conscious of her greater responsibility not only to ensure the authentic expression of this experience in the ecclesial body, but also to offer a trustworthy witness to the truth to all humankind. (See www.holycouncil.org for more).