

Let us give thanks to God continually. For, it is outrageous that when we enjoy His benefaction to us in deed every single day, we do not acknowledge the favour with so much as a word; and this, when the acknowledgment confers great benefit on us. He does not need anything of ours, but we stand in need of all things from Him.

In point of fact, thanksgiving adds nothing to Him, but it brings us closer to Him. For if, when we recall the benefactions of men, we are the more warmed by affection for them; much more, when we continually bring to mind the benefits of the Master towards us, shall we be more earnest with regard to His commandments.

For this cause Paul also said, Be ye thankful. For the best preservative of any benefaction is the remembrance of the benefaction, and a continual thanksgiving for it.

Saint John Chrysostom



Sunday 18 January 2015 is the Eleventh Sunday of Luke

Matins Gospel: John 21:1-14

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Resurrectional Apolytikion

You abolished death by Your Cross,
You opened Paradise to the thief,
You transformed the Myrrhbearers' lament, and ordered Your Apostles to proclaim that You had risen, O Christ God, granting the world Your great mercy.

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: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Matthew 22:2-14
Macarius the Great of Egypt; Mark, Bp. Of Ephesus; Arsenius of Corfu

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Luke 6:17-23
Euthymius the Great; Zacharias the New Martyr of Patra;

Wednesday: Philippians 1:12-20; Luke 12:8-12
Maximus the Confessor; Martyr Neophytos

Thursday: 2 Timothy 1:3-8; Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30
Timothy of the 70; Martyr Anastasius the Persian

Friday: Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1-3; Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5
Hieromartyr Clement; Martyr Agathangelus

Saturday: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2; Luke 18:35-43
Xenia, Deaconess of Rome; Hieromartyr Babylas



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

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Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

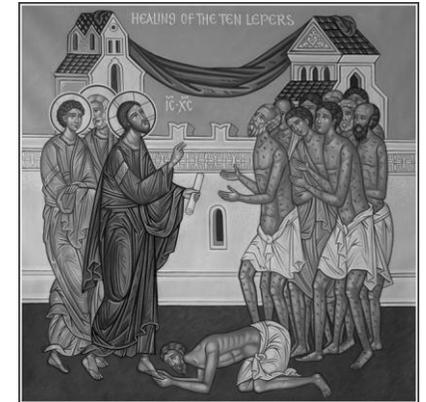
He Returned and Gave Thanks

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.



You should continually and unceasingly call to mind all the blessings which God in His love has bestowed on you in the past, and still bestows for the salvation of your soul.

Saint Mark the Ascetic

I Confess One Baptism

A series on the meaning of Christian Baptism

We saw last week that baptizing in water is an initiation ritual that is older than the Church, and that is connected to making a new start. However, with the coming of Christ, Christian baptism has taken on a new meaning. While it still signifies repentance and the beginning of a new life, it is also intimately connected to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In baptism we are clothed in Christ and receive a new identity.

Orthodox Christian baptism is rooted in our understanding of creation. The baptismal service refers repeatedly to the creation of the world, in which “the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2) The biblical account of creation tells us that the created world is good, and that the pinnacle of creation is the human being, who is created in the Image of God and is “very good.” (Genesis 1:31) Water is used in baptism because it is a symbol of life and, in some ways, of the world itself. Not only is water essential for life, but it makes up the greater part of our body weight.



But we also know that sin has entered into the world and that God’s good creation has been affected by it. Water is also a symbol of death, for we all know the damage that out of control water can do. The scriptures speak of dragons and sea-monsters, who symbolize the evil that lurks in the deeps. And so both the book of Genesis and the baptismal service speak of God containing the waters as He separates the land from the water. In His baptism, Christ sanctified the waters, crushing the heads of the dragons as He reclaims the water and returns it to

what it was intended to be in creation. Through His baptism, Christ reclaims water, and with it the whole of creation, so that it becomes the means of our being united to God.

It is this reality that is expressed in the blessing of the waters at the start of the baptismal service.

Great are You, O Lord, and wondrous are Your works, and no word will suffice to hymn Your wonders.(x3) For by Your Will have You out of nothingness brought all things into being and by Your power sustain all creation and by Your Providence direct the world. You from the four elements have formed creation and have crowned the cycle of the year with the four seasons; all the spiritual powers tremble before You; the sun praises You; the moon glorifies You; the stars in their courses meet with You; the Light hearkens unto You; the depths shudder at Your presence; the springs of water serve You; You have stretched out the Heavens as a curtain; You have founded the earth upon the waters; You have bounded the sea with sand ... for You, being boundless and beginningless and unutterable, did come down on earth, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; for You O Master, through the tenderness of Your Mercy, could not endure the race of men tormented by the devil, but You did come and saved us.

...

You hallowed the streams of Jordan, sending down from the Heavens Your Holy Spirit, and crushed the heads of dragons that lurked therein. Do You Yourself, O loving King, be present now also through the descent of Your Holy Spirit and hallow this water (x3). And give to it the Grace of Redemption, the Blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a loosing of sins, a healing of sicknesses, a destruction of demons, unapproachable by hostile powers, filled with angelic might...

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

Question Box

If you have a question about the faith and teaching of the Orthodox Church, you can send it to evangelion@goarch.co.za

I have been told that the Psalms are important for the Orthodox Church and that we should pray them. But some of them seem so dark, harsh, and frightening. Is it really good to pray these?

It is understandable that you should think this, given that there are indeed some dark and violent passages in the Psalms. Indeed, this has even caused some modern western Christians to edit these passages out of the Psalter. But this is a mistaken response from an Orthodox perspective, and we should rather seek to understand the nature of the Psalms and how we should pray them.

The Psalms have been said to contain the whole Bible in miniature. Saint Athanasius tells us that in them we find references to the various aspects of the people of Israel’s experience of God. They tell of the creation of the world, of the Exodus from Egypt, of the entrance into the Promised Land, and of the Prophets’ foretelling of the Messiah. But the Psalms have many layers, as it were, and they also speak to us of Christ and of the salvation that He has brought to us through His death and resurrection.

The Psalms speak to us about the whole of humanity, which longs for God and suffers in a violent world. And they also speak to us of our individual hopes and struggles as we long for God but are sometimes tempted to despair. Nothing human is foreign to the Psalms and for this reason they include the whole range of human emotions, including those that we may feel uncomfortable with. They present us with the reality of evil but, when prayed in Christ they also enable us to overcome it.

Praying the Psalms is not about escaping into another “spiritual” world, but is rather a reminder that we meet God in the world of persons, things, and events. As we pray them in Christ and with the Church, we are able to discover, little by little, that this world is also the world in which Christ has conquered death. And so, by praying the Psalms, we to are enabled to participate in His victory over death.