



On Friday we commemorate the Holy Apostle and Evangelist, **Saint Luke**. He was a physician from Antioch and the disciple and travelling companion of the Apostle Paul. Thanks to him we not only have the Gospel which bears his name, but also the Acts of the Apostles which describe the growth of the early Church. Saint Luke lived some eighty six years and died as a martyr. His emblem is the calf, the third symbolic beast mentioned in Ezekiel (1:10), which is a symbol of Christ's sacrificial and priestly office. The Church also remembers him as the first iconographer who painted an image of the Holy Virgin and for this reason he is honoured as the patron of iconographers.

Sunday 13 October 2013 is the Fourth Sunday of Luke and the Sunday of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Titus 3:8-15

Gospel: Luke 8:5-15

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.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:1-3; Luke 9:18-22
Martyrs Nazarius, Gervasius, Protasius, & Celsus; Cosmas the Hagiopolite

Tuesday: Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:1-7; Luke 9:23-27
Hieromartyr Lucian; Righteous Sabinus

Wednesday: Ephesians 3:8-21; Matthew 27:33-54
Longinus the Centurion

Thursday: Romans 9:18-33; Luke 9:49-56
Prophet Hosea; Martyrs Cosmas and Damian of Arabia

Friday: Colossians 4:5-11, 14-18; Luke 10:16-21
Luke the Evangelist; Martyr Marinus the Elder

Saturday: Acts 2:14-21; Luke 7:1-10
Prophet Joel; Martyr Varys



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

13 October 2013

Christ the Sower

Today we hear Saint Luke's account of the parable of the sower. Jesus Christ tells His listeners of a sower who went out to sow seed. Some of it fell on the path and was wasted, some of it fell on rocks and could not grow well, and some of it was choked by thorns. But some fell on good soil and grew well to produce a hundredfold.

When His disciples asked about the meaning of this parable, the Lord explained that the seed is the Word of God. God, or Christ, sows the seed, but, like the seed that is sown on the path, or among thorns, it may not be able to grow well. Only the seed that is sown on good soil produces a harvest.

In this parable Jesus Christ challenges us to look at the conditions that are necessary if God's Word is to take root within us. Our hearts are the soil where the seed is sown, and if we want it to bear fruit in our lives we need to ensure that they provide a positive environment in which His Word can grow in us.



The reasons that Jesus gives for why the seed was not fruitful give us clues about the conditions that we need if our Christian life is to be fruitful. For seed to grow it needs a certain protection from the hustle and bustle of the road and so we need to find times of withdrawal and silence. It also needs to be regularly watered and nourished and protected which we can do prayer and spiritual reading. It needs to be protected from harmful influences, so we should be discerning in the voices that we listen to. These things will vary from person to person, but we need to be conscious about preparing the soil of our own hearts so that the Word of God may germinate, take root and bear rich fruit in our lives.

He is truly the Sower of all that is good, and we are His farm. The whole harvest of spiritual fruits is by Him and from Him. He taught us this when He said, "Without me you can do nothing."

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the first part of the Divine Liturgy, which is sometimes called the Liturgy of the Word, but which is also called the Liturgy of the Catechumens. The reason for this is that shortly after the readings, which may be followed by a sermon, we have prayers for the dismissal of the catechumens. These prayers are often omitted today, but they nevertheless teach us something important about both the Church's mission and the nature of the Divine Liturgy.



The preparation for Baptism

In the early Church those who were preparing for baptism were known as catechumens and they were given a very rigorous instruction that could last between one and three years. The first part of the Liturgy is known as the Liturgy of the Catechumens because during it the catechumens would attend and listen to the reading of the Scriptures and receive instruction in the sermon, together with the baptised Christians. However, after this they were officially dismissed and only the baptised, who were preparing to receive Holy Communion, would remain for what was known as the Liturgy of the Faithful. Before being dismissed, the priest would pray for the catechumens as follows:

Lord, our God, dwelling on high and beholding things below, who for the salvation of mankind sent forth your only-begotten Son, our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, look upon your servants the catechumens, who have bowed their necks to you; and count them worthy in due time of the washing of rebirth, the forgiveness of sins and the garment of incorruption; unite them to your holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and number them with your chosen flock.

Although these prayers for the catechumens are often omitted today, they remind us that, in the formative period of the Church's life and liturgy, she had a fundamentally missionary orientation. In a period in which Christians were a minority in a pagan society, sharing the treasures of their faith with others, and uniting them to the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, was a natural thing to do. Later, when much of society was Christian, these prayers were often omitted. However, we are once more in a situation in which Orthodox Christians are often a minority and yet there are people around us who are hungry for the truth that the Church has to offer them.

Even when these prayers are still used today, the catechumens are not expected to leave the Liturgy at this point. However, their existence should surely remind us to pray for those people who are seeking the truth that is to be found in Christ's Church.



When you come out of the church, do not begin to be distracted toward empty and useless matters, lest the devil come and find you occupied with them. It is like when a crow finds on the plain a grain of wheat, before it has been covered with earth, and picks it off and flies off. The devil removes the memory of these words of catechetical lectures from your hearts, and you find yourselves empty and deprived of beneficial teaching.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian

The Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

Today, on the Sunday that falls immediately after the eleventh of October, we commemorate the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This council was convoked by the Empress Irene and met at Nicaea in 787, with Patriarch Tarasios presiding.

The council was called to put an end to the iconoclastic heresy which was threatening to divide the Church. The council Fathers established the veneration of icons as basic to the belief and spirituality of the Church. Many of the Fathers of this council were to die as confessors and martyrs during the second iconoclastic controversy in the following century.

In defending the veneration of icons, the Fathers of the Council were defending the integrity of the Church's faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God. For, as Saint John of Damascus insisted, if Jesus Christ has truly become human and has shared our material life, then it is most appropriate to depict and venerate His image and that of His saints.

This Council is the last ecumenical Council recognised by the Church. That does not rule out the possibility of other councils in the future. But the Seventh Ecumenical Council represents the closing of an era of the dogmatic disputes in the first centuries of the Church's life. In this it clearly set up the boundaries of the Orthodox Faith.



***You are greatly glorified,
O Christ our God,
who established our
Fathers as luminaries
upon the earth,
and through them led us all
to the true Faith.
O Most compassionate,
glory to You.***

Apolytikion for the Sunday of the Seventh Ecumenical Council

As the sacred and life-giving cross is everywhere set up as a symbol, so also should the images of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the holy angels, as well as those of the saints and other pious and holy men be embodied in the manufacture of sacred vessels, tapestries, vestments, etc., and exhibited on the walls of churches, in the homes, and in all conspicuous places, by the roadside and everywhere, to be revered by all who might see them. For the more they are contemplated, the more they move to fervent memory of their prototypes. Therefore, it is proper to accord to them a fervent and reverent adoration, not, however, the veritable worship which, according to our faith, belongs to the Divine Being alone — for the honour accorded to the image passes over to its prototype, and whoever adores the image adores in it the reality of what is there represented.

From the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council