



Evangelion

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We must know again that the Saviour here calls the grace of the Holy Spirit water. If anyone drinks of this water, he will have the gift of the divine teaching constantly welling up from within him. He needs no admonition from others. Rather, it is enough to exhort those who thirst after the divine and heavenly Word that they are living in this present life and on earth along with the holy prophets and apostles. They are heirs of their ministrations of whom it was written, "And you shall draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation."

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

**On Sunday, 2 June 2013,
we commemorate the Sunday of
the Samaritan Woman**

Matins Gospel: John 20:1-10

Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Apolitikion of Mid-Pentecost:

In the midst of this Feast, O Saviour, give Thou my thirsty soul to drink of the waters of true worship; for Thou didst call out to all, saying: Whosoever is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Wherefore, O Christ our God, Fountain of life, glory to Thee.

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Living Water

Today the Church commemorates the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman. Saint John's Gospel tells us of the extraordinary conversation she had with Jesus at Jacob's Well in Samaria. Not only does Jesus break through accepted Jewish practices by meeting with a woman and a Samaritan, but He reveals that He knew exactly what had been going on in this woman's past.

More fundamentally, however, Jesus Christ reveals to this woman her own deepest desires, and her thirst for God, and He Himself fulfils this thirst. He asks her for a drink of water, but she ends up realizing that He is the Living Water that she is longing for.

The Church gives us this Gospel account in the middle of the Easter season because we too are realizing our own thirst for the Living Water that only the Risen Christ can give us. This past Wednesday on mid-Pentecost we prayed: "Give to my thirsty soul to drink from the waters of true praise."

Like the Samaritan woman – whom the Church identifies as St Photini – we often do not realize our true need for God. We may even have become adept at lying about who we really are in the same way as she sought to cover up her shady past. A true encounter with the Risen Christ will involve acknowledging the truth of who we really are in order to be able to accept God's mercy and His overwhelming love..



He asks for water, who hung the earth upon the waters. He seeks water, who pours out springs and pools of water, as He wishes truly to draw her who is hunted by the warlike foe, and to quench with the water of life the thirst of her who is aflame with fowl desires, as He alone is compassionate and loves mankind.

From Small Vespers for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 12:12-17; John 8:42-51
Martyrs Lucillian and Paul; Athanasios the Wonderworker

Tuesday: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2; John 10:1-9
Metrophanes, Archbishop of Constantinople; Martha and Mary, Sisters of Lazarus

Wednesday: Acts 13:13-24; John 6:5-14
Hieromartyr Dorotheus; 10 Martyrs of Egypt

Thursday: Acts 14:20-28; 15:1-4; John 9:39-10:9
Hilarion the New; Bessarion the Wonderworker of Egypt

Friday: Acts 15:5-12; John 10:17-28
Martyr Theodotus; Righteous Panagis

Saturday: Ephesians 2:4-10; Matthew 10:16-22
Relics of Theodore Stratelates; Martyr Kalliope

A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy

We have seen that the Divine Liturgy is a Mystery of the Church. It is a Mystery because it leads us to God's Kingdom, feeding us with the Body and Blood of Christ, and drawing us into the eternal communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Saint Luke tells us in his Gospel how, after His Resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35). They had not yet heard the news of the Resurrection and did not recognise who He was. But the Risen Christ explained the Scriptures to them, showing how the Old Testament prophets had spoken about His death and Resurrection. He then stayed on to eat with them, and, having blessed the food and handed it to them, "their eyes were opened and they recognised Him."



This incident shows how the disciples came to recognise the Risen Christ both through a proper understanding of the Scriptures, and through His act of breaking and sharing bread with them. In the same way, we come to recognise and receive Jesus Christ both through listening to the Word of God in the Scriptures and through the sacramental meal of the Eucharist in which we too recognise and receive Him in the Breaking of Bread.

Both of these encounters are reflected in the structure of the Liturgy. The first part is sometimes called the Liturgy of the Word, or the Liturgy of the Catechumens. In it, we prepare to listen to the Word of God which is proclaimed in the Epistle, and especially in the Gospel reading. These texts are not simply read to impart information, but rather so that we too may believe in, recognise and welcome Jesus Christ as He comes to us.

This first part of the Liturgy is called the Liturgy of the Catechumens because in the early Church those who were preparing for baptism (known as catechumens) left at the end of it. There are still prayers for the catechumens in the text of the Liturgy which end by telling the catechumens to depart, but these are not often used today. Nevertheless, we can learn from this that the first part of the Liturgy is a preparation for the second part, which is known as the Liturgy of the Faithful, or the Liturgy of the Gifts. It also reminds us of the tremendous privilege that we have been given through our baptism to be able to participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy as members of Christ's faithful people.

This second part, the Liturgy of the Faithful, is the place where we offer the gifts of bread and wine, which are to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Together with these gifts, we offer God our lives, so that we may be united with the sacrifice of Christ and so that the Church may truly be the Body of Christ. The Liturgy of the Faithful reaches its climax when we receive the very life of Christ Himself in Holy Communion, before being sent back into the world to witness to His love.

These two parts of the Divine Liturgy are intimately related and cannot be separated. We need to experience and enter into both of them, for we need to be fed both with the Word of God and with the Body and Blood of Christ.

As regards all the commandments given us by God, we have already received from Him power to keep them, so that we may neither feel discontented as though anything strange were demanded of us, nor be elated as though we paid more than was given us. And by this power – if we work rightly and fittingly, we fulfill in godly manner the life of virtue; but if we corrupt its workings we are carried away into vice. This is a definition of vice – an evil use, and one contrary to the command of the Lord, of things given us by God for good. Similarly the virtue required by God may be defined as the use of them with a good conscience according to the commands of the Lord.

This being so, we may say the same about love. Having received a commandment – to love God – we possess the power to love implanted in us at the moment that we were formed. The proof of this is not external, but anyone can learn it from oneself and within oneself. For by nature we desire beautiful things, though we differ as to what is supremely beautiful; and without being taught we have affection towards those near and dear to us, and we spontaneously show goodwill towards our benefactors.

Now what is more marvelous than the divine beauty? What thought has more charm than the magnificence of God?

Saint Basil the Great

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

Why is the Church so rigid in not changing its liturgies? I was told that our current liturgy only dates from about 1000 A.D. and that the early Church was much more flexible in its worship. Is this true?

Unfortunately the propagation of such views is quite fashionable today, but they are fundamentally without substance. While the services of the Church certainly did grow and develop, it is very naïve to think that there was a sort of liturgical free for all in the early Church. The writers of the New Testament epistles insist on proper order being maintained in the Church's worship, and Saint Paul is at pains to point out that what he is insisting on is what he received from the Lord. (1 Cor. 11:23) In writings from the end of the first century, such as the *Didache*, we already find clear Eucharistic prayers and in the writings of Saint Justin the Martyr from the middle of the second century we have a clear and recognizable description of the Church's Liturgy. We also find an insistence, notably in Saint Ignatius of Antioch at the end of the first century, on only celebrating the Eucharist in communion with one's bishop.

The various liturgies of the Church certainly did grow and develop, just as the Church came to be more precise in how she expressed her theology in response to the challenges of various heresies. A key period was the fourth century in which both Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil wrote the liturgies that bear their names, probably building on and adapting earlier liturgical texts. Although some changes and developments still occurred after this, the fundamentals of the liturgies that the Church still uses were in place by this time.