

You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world. When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying: "Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God (cf. Ps. 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law (cf. Gal 2:16)? No living person will be vindicated before God (cf. Ps. 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. Get behind me, Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23). I worship the Lord my God (cf. Matt. 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence."

Saint Symeon the New Theologian

**Sunday 3 February 2013 is the  
Fifteenth Sunday of Matthew**

**Matins Gospel:** Mark 16:1-8

**Epistle:** 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

**Gospel:** Matthew 22:35-46

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

When you went down to death, O immortal life, then you slew Hades with the lightening flash of your Godhead; but when from the depths below the earth you raised the dead, all the Powers above the heavens cried out: 'Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to you!'

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### **Readings and saints for this week:**

**Monday:** Acts 10:44-48; 11:1-10; John 1:18-28  
Isidore of Pelusium; Nicholas the Confessor

**Tuesday:** 1 Timothy 3:13-16; 4:1-5; Matthew 3:1-6  
Martyr Agatha; Polyectus, Pat. Of Constantinople

**Wednesday:** Mark 1:9-11; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7; Matthew 3:13-17  
Photius, Pat. Of Constantinople; Bucolus, Bp. Of Smyrna

**Thursday:** Acts 19:1-8; John 1:29-34  
Parthenius, Bishop of Lampsacus; Luke the Righteous

**Friday:** Romans 6:3-11; John 3:22-33  
Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates; Prophet Zacharias

**Saturday:** 2 Timothy 2:1-10; Mark 1:9-15  
Apodosis of the Presentation; Martyr Nicephoros



Archbishopric of Good Hope,  
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

## *Evangelion*

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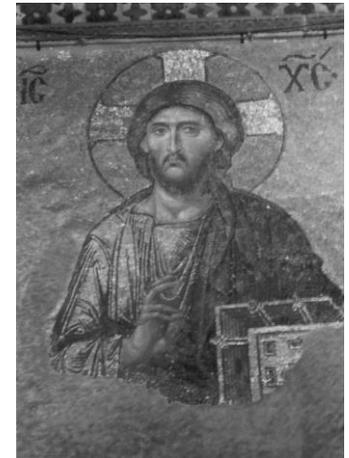
### **The heart of the commandments**

Today the Church listens once more to Saint Matthew's Gospel, and we hear the Pharisees trying to trick Jesus by asking Him which of the commandments is the greatest. In His reply, Jesus not only sidesteps their attempt to catch Him out, but He also reveals the deeper reality that was behind all the commandments that had been revealed to Moses (Exodus 20).

Jesus Christ answered them: "*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself.*"

In some ways there is nothing new about this answer, for both of these commandments were found already found in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). However, by answering like this Christ reveals the essence of all the commandments. They are not simply arbitrary rules that we are expected to obey, but they have an inner unity based on our relationship both with God, and with those around us.

We are created in God's Image and cannot truly be fulfilled without being in the right relationship to Him. God has also made us to be in community, and so we cannot truly be ourselves without being in relationship with our fellow human beings. But neither of these relationships are simply a matter of observing outward laws, important though these may be, but have to do with the deepest aspects of our being. We are called to love with the whole of our being. This may seem like an impossible task, for the more we grow in self-knowledge, the more we come to realise that we are not as loving as we may like to think. However, the path to salvation involves the purification of our hearts, so that we may gradually learn to love as God loves.



The person who is grounded in the love of God clearly also loves his neighbour in all things.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

# THE CHURCH YEAR

Anyone who attends Orthodox services more than a few times will be aware of particular seasons and feasts. The life of the Church is not only structured around the symbols that we use and the space that we arrange in a particular way in the Church building; it is also structured around how we organize our time. Although this can sometimes seem confusing, it is also deeply meaningful and exposes us to the central mysteries of our faith.



The Church's year has an objective character for during it we are exposed to the whole of our faith, all the central events in the life of Christ, and to a wide variety of Scripture readings. We do not simply pick and choose what we find attractive, but are called to fast as well as to feast, to keep watch for the coming of the Lord as well as to rejoice in His coming. The Church's year is not just about imparting information to us, but is an invitation to us to enter into the mysteries of Christ's life, death and resurrection in an ever-deeper way, and it also enables us to see how His life has continued to radiate in the lives of many saints.

The Church's liturgical life is based on various different cycles, which overlap one another and which we will look at more in the next few weeks. There is:

- the Paschal cycle, which is the hinge around which the whole year turns;
- the weekly cycle;
- the daily cycle;
- the feasts of the Church, including the twelve Great Feasts;
- the periods of fasting, which help us to prepare for these feasts.

The point of the Church's liturgical year is the sanctification of time, for Christ has entered into all of our human reality and there is nothing that should remain outside of His influence. All time is His and He uses it to draw us to Himself.



The heart itself is but a small vessel, yet dragons are there, and there are also lions; there are poisonous beasts and all the treasures of evil. But there too is God, the angels, the life and the kingdom, the light and the apostles, the heavenly cities and the treasures of grace—all things are there.

St Macarius 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](mailto:evangelion@goarch.co.za)*

**I am confused about the different Orthodox Churches. I have always thought that the Church was Greek, but now I realize that there are also Russians, and that they celebrate Christmas on a different day. Somebody even spoke about an Afrikaans Orthodox Church. And there are the Copts. Where do they all fit in? Are we part of the same Church or not?**

In the Creed we confess our faith in “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” There is only one Church which is found throughout the world. This one Church is united in a common faith and means that we are in communion with one another through the communion and contact which our bishops have with one another. Sadly, groups like the Copts (and the Ethiopians and Syrians), although they understand themselves as Orthodox Churches, have not been in communion with the Orthodox Church since 451.

However, even within the Orthodox Church things can still be confusing, as your question indicates, and this is partly tied up with historical developments. During the first millennium the countries of western Europe were also Orthodox, but with the schism between East and West and the falling away of the Church of Rome, the Church became more identified with Greek-speaking Byzantium. However, it also spread to other areas, particularly the Slavic countries of Eastern Europe. Over the course of the centuries the Church took root in these different countries and some local traditions developed. However, they remained part of the one Church.

This one Church is made up of a communion of different Churches, and over the centuries particular structures have emerged that help to order the life of the Church. Originally the Church consisted of the five ancient patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem which were responsible for all the Christians in their territories. With the falling away of Rome, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has been accorded an honoured role although all of these ancient Churches are self-governing or “autocephalous,” as are many of the other Churches such as the Church of Russia, of Cyprus, of Greece, of Bulgaria, of Romania, and so on.

Although people speak of the Greek Church or the Russian Church or the Romanian Church, it is more correct to speak of the Church of Greece, or Russia etc, for the Churches are not based on ethnicity but rather on the particular territory in which they are found and the bishop of a particular city is responsible for all the Orthodox Christians in his particular territory regardless of their nationality.

In Africa we have been part of the Patriarchate of Alexandria since the first century. Although most Orthodox Christians in South Africa have historically been Greek, and have Greek as the liturgical language, the Church comprises people of many different backgrounds. Moreover, within our Archbishopric we also have Churches that use Afrikaans and Zulu (and in principle any other local languages). However, that does not make them separate Churches for we all remain part of the one Church of Christ.