

How wonderful, how pleasing, how charming is the image of those who hope in the God Who saves – in God the compassionate, the God of mercy, the good God Who loves mankind.

People who hope in God are truly blessed.

God is their constant helper and they fear no evil, even if others provoke them.

They hope in God and do good.

They have set their every hope on Him and they confess to Him with all their heart.

He is their boast, their God and they call upon Him day and night.

Their mouths direct praise to God; their lips are sweeter than honey and wax when they open them to sing to God; their tongue, full of grace, is moved to glorify God.

Their heart is eager to call upon Him, their mind ready to be elevated towards Him, their soul is committed to God and “His right hand has upheld them”. ...

They ask and find whatever they seek. They knock and the gates of mercy are opened.

Saint Nektarios the Wonderworker

On Sunday 18 May 2014 is the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Matins Gospel: John 20:1-10

Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

When the women disciples of the Lord had learnt from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection, casting away the ancestral condemnation triumphantly they said to the Apostles: ‘Death has been despoiled, Christ God has been raised, granting the world His great mercy.’

Kontakion of the Samaritan Woman

Coming in faith, in the well the woman of Samaria saw you, the water of wisdom; and having been given unstintingly to drink she inherited the Kingdom from on high, and renown everlasting.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 12:12-17; John 8:42-51

Hieromartyr Patrick of Prusa; Memnonus the Wonderworker

Tuesday: Acts 12:25; 13:1-12; John 8:51-59

Martyr Thalleleus; Mark the Hermit

Wednesday: John 10:9-16; Acts 26:1, 12-20; John 10:1-9

Constantine & Helen, Equal-to-the Apostles; Pachomios the Righteous New Martyr

Thursday: Acts 14:20-28; 15:1-4; John 9:39-10:9

Hieromartyr Basiliscus; New Martyrs Demetrius and Paul

Friday: Acts 15:5-12; John 10:17-28

Michael, Bp. Of Synnada; Mary the Myrrhbearer & wife of Cleopas

Saturday: Acts 15:35-41; John 10:27-38

Symeon the Stylite; Saint Vincent of Lerins



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

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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 Christ 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



A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

We say last week that, as we prepare to pray the Lord's Prayer and to receive Holy Communion, we need to ask for unity so that we might praise God "with one voice and one heart" in a true communion of genuine love. And then, just before we pray the Lord's Prayer, the priest prays out loud:

And count us worthy, Master, with confidence and without condemnation to dare to call upon you, the God of heaven, as Father, and to say...

And we begin:

Our Father who art in heaven...

Often people think that "Father" is simply another name for "God," but for a Christian to call God our Father is really a revolutionary act. In the Old Testament, people did not dare to call God their Father.



Indeed, it is only the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, who can properly call God His Father. The gospels show us how Jesus relates to God as Father and calls God His Father. And they also show us how scandalized people are by this, for by calling God His Father, He was ultimately revealing Himself as God. "Father" is not simply another name for God, but expresses the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son in the communion of the Holy Trinity.

It is only in and through Jesus Christ that we have the right to call God our Father. Through His Incarnation, Christ has made us His brother and sisters. He has adopted us, enabling us to become, through grace, what He is by nature. Only by becoming identified with Jesus Christ through baptism and

coming to share in His life as we participate in the Mysteries of the Church, are we able to call upon God as our Father.

In the early Church, people were not taught the Lord's Prayer until after they were baptised and chrismated. Like the Creed, it was viewed as a doorway to the Mysteries and is therefore prayed just before the reception of Holy Communion as we exercise our great gift of divine sonship in Christ. Therefore, says Saint Maximus the Confessor,

Venerating this title of our begetter by grace, we should strive to stamp the characteristics of the Father on our lives, sanctifying His name on earth, taking after Him as our Father, showing ourselves to be His children through our actions, and through all that we think or do glorifying the author of this adoption, who is by nature Son of the Father.

Jesus calls the quickening gift of the Spirit "living water" because mere human nature is parched to its very roots, now rendered dry and barren of all virtue by the crimes of the devil. But now human nature runs back to its pristine beauty, and drinking in that which is life-giving, it is made beautiful with a variety of good things and, budding into virtuous life, it sends out healthy shoots of love towards God.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Who was Saint Photini?

The Samaritan woman whom we commemorate today is remembered in the Church as the Great Martyr Photini. She was baptized by the Apostles and, radically changing her way of life, she proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ in her own region of Samaria. She converted her four sisters and her two sons and they became tireless in preaching the Gospel. After the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul, Saint Photini travelled to Carthage and, together with her son Joses, helped to establish the Church there.



Saint Photini's other son, Victor, was in the service of the emperor and was ordered to root out the Christians in Galilee. However, instead of this, he preached the Gospel there. When the emperor heard this, he had him arrested and tortured, together with his brother.

When Saint Photini's two sons refused to renounce Christ despite three years of arrest and torture, the emperor ordered that Saint Photini be arrested. She was brutally tortured and finally martyred in the year 66. She is commemorated by the Church as "Equal to the Apostles."

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 a question about prayer. I have been praying very hard for someone but God does not seem to answer my prayer. Am I doing something wrong?

There is always a danger in looking for answers to our prayers. We do need to bring all of our concerns to God in prayer and He does promise to answer our prayers. But this is not always as simple as it may seem.

In the first place, prayer is about much more than just asking for specific things. Even when we do bring our requests to God, this is not just a matter of asking for specific results. It is placing our lives, and the lives of those we love and are concerned about before God – handing them over to God and trusting Him to do what is best for them.

In the second place, we cannot see the whole picture. We do not know everything that is going on, or how things will work out in the long term. Even when this may not seem obvious, we need to learn to trust that God knows what is best for us and for those for whom we pray.