



Parish Information Bulletin

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 17 MAY

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, John 4: 5-42

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

MONDAY 18 MAY

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY 19 MAY

- 6.30pm
Divine Liturgy in English

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY

- 4.00pm
Vespers

THURSDAY 21 MAY

Saints Constantine and Helen

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY 23 MAY

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 24 MAY

Epistle Reading: Acts 16: 16-34
Gospel Reading: John 9: 1-38

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

The saints were
people like all of us.
Many of them came
out of great sins,
but by repentance
they attained the
Kingdom of Heaven.
And everyone who
comes there comes
through repentance,
which the merciful
Lord has given us
through His
sufferings.



St. Silouan
the Athonite

THE LIVES OF STS. CONSTANTINE & HELEN ST. CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

This great and renowned sovereign of the Christians was the son of Constantius Chlorus (the ruler of the westernmost parts of the Roman empire), and of the blessed Helen. He was born in 272, in (according to some authorities) Naissus of Dardania, a city on the Hellespont. In 306, when his father died, he was proclaimed successor to his throne. In 312, on learning that Maxentius and Maximinus had joined forces against him, he marched into Italy, where, while at the head of his troops, he saw in the sky after midday, beneath the sun, a radiant pillar in the form of a cross with the words: "By this shalt thou conquer." The following night, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream and declared to him the power of the Cross and its significance. When he arose in the morning, he immediately ordered that a labarum be made (which is a banner or standard of victory over the enemy) in the form of a cross, and he inscribed on it the Name of Jesus Christ. On the 28th Of October, he attacked and mightily conquered Maxentius, who drowned in the Tiber River while fleeing. The following day, Constantine entered Rome in triumph and was proclaimed Emperor of the West by the Senate, while Licinius, his brother-in-law, ruled in the East. But out of malice, Licinius later persecuted the Christians. Constantine fought him once and again, and utterly destroyed him in 324, and in this manner he became monarch over the West and the East. Under him and because of him all the persecutions against the Church ceased. Christianity triumphed and idolatry was overthrown.

In 325 he gathered the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, which he himself personally addressed. In 324, in the ancient city of Byzantium, he laid the foundations of the new capital of his realm, and solemnly inaugurated it on May 11, 330, naming it after himself, Constantinople. Since the throne of the imperial rule was transferred thither from Rome, it was named New Rome, the inhabitants of its domain were called Romans, and it was considered the continuation of the Roman Empire. Falling ill near Nicomedia, he requested to receive divine Baptism, according to Eusebius (The Life of Constantine. Book IV, 61-62), and also according to Socrates and Sozomen; and when he had been deemed worthy of the Holy Mysteries, he reposed in 337, on May 21 or 22, the day of Pentecost, having lived sixty-five years, of which he ruled for thirty-one years. His remains were transferred to Constantinople and were deposited in the Church of the Holy Apostles, which had been built by him (see Homily XXVI on Second Corinthians by Saint John Chrysostom).

ST. HELEN, MOTHER OF ST. CONSTANTINE

As for his holy mother Helen, she was a native of Bithynia, and a daughter of an inn-keeper. In spite of her humble birth, she married a Roman soldier, the then Roman general Constantius I Chlorus about 270. Constantine, her son - who became Constantine the Great, was born in Nish, Serbia soon after, in 272. In 293, when Constantius was made Caesar, or junior emperor, he was persuaded to divorce Helen to marry Theodora the stepdaughter of Emperor Maximian. He lived for fourteen years after the divorce of St. Helen, and when he died at York in 306 his troops at York proclaimed their son Constantine caesar.

After her son had been victorious in battle and had made the Faith of Christ triumphant throughout the Roman Empire, she undertook, in her great piety, the hardships of a journey to Jerusalem in search of the cross, about the year 325. She was advanced in years by then. A temple to Aphrodite had been raised up by the Emperor Hadrian upon Golgotha, to defile and cover with oblivion the place where the saving Passion had been suffered. The venerable Helen had the statue of Aphrodite destroyed, and the earth removed, revealing the Tomb of our Lord, and three crosses. Of these, it was believed that one must be that of our Lord, the other two of the thieves crucified with Him; but Saint Helen was at a loss which one might be the Wood of our salvation. At the inspiration of Saint Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, a lady of Jerusalem, who was already at the point of death from a certain disease, was brought to touch the crosses, and as soon as she came near to the Cross of our Lord, she was made perfectly whole. Consequently, the precious Cross was lifted on high by Archbishop Macarius of Jerusalem; as he stood on the ambo, and when the people beheld it, they cried out, "Lord have mercy." It should be noted that after its discovery, a portion of the venerable Cross was taken to Constantinople as a blessing. The rest was left in Jerusalem in the magnificent church built by Saint Helen.

After this, Saint Helen, in her zeal to glorify Christ, erected churches in Jerusalem at the sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, in Bethlehem at the cave where our Saviour was born, another on the Mount of Olives whence He ascended into Heaven, and many others throughout the Holy Land, Cyprus, and elsewhere. She was proclaimed Augusta, her image was stamped upon golden coins, and two cities were named Helenopolis after her in Bithynia and in Palestine. Having been thus glorified for her piety, she departed to the Lord being about eighty years of age, according to some in the year 330, according to others, in 336.

-TAKEN FROM THE GREAT HOROLOGION (TRANSLATED BY HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONSATEY, BROOKLINE, MA)

Regular Water vs. Living Water

What do the words Perrier, Evian, Dasani, Aquafina, Poland Springs and Fiji bring to mind? They're all bottled waters. When many of us were young, no one heard of bottled or filtered water. In the last two decades there has been a growing emphasis on purified water that supposedly improves and maintains physical health as opposed to soda, alcohol caffeinated coffees and drinks. In fact, purified and bottled waters have been around so long now they are starting to wear out their welcome as many people are beginning to question if they are indeed more healthy than regular tap water.

Yet, no matter if it comes from a bottle with a brand name, or the faucet in our home or mountain spring, physical/liquid water can only improve our physical health. It cannot grant us eternal life. The mythical fountain of youth is just that: a myth. Jesus says this in today's Gospel reading from the Fifth Sunday of Pascha (John 4:5-42) when He meets the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Referring to the actual well of Jacob, Jesus says *'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again'* (v.13). By inference He refers to every well, stream, lake and source of fresh liquid water.

However, Jesus does tell us where the real, true fountain of eternal life is by saying, *'whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life'* (v.14). Jesus calls the water that He gives 'living water' (Greek: *idor zon*, v.10) but what exactly is this living water that quenches all thirst? In John 7 we read:

³⁷*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. ³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Thus, Jesus' living water is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. Now, the Samaritan woman, and anyone of us would do the same, hearing about the opportunity to drink this living water that bestows eternal life (Gr. *'zoen aonion'* v.14) asks, *'Where then do You get that living water?'* (v.11) *'Give me this water that I may not thirst'* (v.15).

Unlike bottled water at the convenience store we cannot just go and buy the living water of the Holy Spirit. Something more is required. That something is cleansing and purification of sin. In American society we put so much emphasis on keeping things clean. We wash everything--a lot: our clothes, our dishes, our hands, our bodies, even our water. It's not enough that it gets purified at the water treatment plant, it has to be filtered and purified again. Our approach to life is extremely antiseptic. This is well and good to a point. However, many researchers have hypothesized that the growth in food and latex allergies is due to the fact that our immune systems cannot find enough germs to fight in the environment around us, so they start reacting to stimuli that were previously benign.

We must ask ourselves: Do I give as much attention to the cleansing and purification of my soul from sin as I do with my body from germs? When Jesus reveals His knowledge about the Samaritan woman's serial marriages and current relationship outside of marriage (vv.17-18), He is pointing out that before she can drink living water, she must repent and change her current lifestyle.

The context for understanding how and where we must change is implicit in today's Gospel. It is within the context of a living, continual encounter and relationship with the Lord, God Jesus Christ. There is no way to receive the living water of the Holy Spirit without Christ. He alone gives this water. We confess in our Creed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father. Jesus said, *'I am the way, the truth and the life. No comes to the Father but through Me'* (John 14:6). Elsewhere Jesus says, *'But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me'* (John 15:26). At the same time, the Holy Spirit is the empowering force to live the life in Christ- to become like Him - to go beyond just knowing about Him to knowing Him personally. The Holy Spirit is the Light of Christ that illuminates the darkness in order to see Jesus more clearly. The Holy Spirit illuminates the path so we can follow Christ wherever He leads us.

Let us return to Jacob's well (v.6) for a moment. Like other springs, a well is a unique thing in the desert. Wells and springs were traditionally understood as places and signs of God's revelation, favour and blessing (Gen.16:7). We have spiritual springs in our modern day desert of secular society. These springs and wells are the Churches of Christ. These are the places to go to encounter Christ and drink of the living water of the Holy Spirit. Our sacramental entrance into the Body of Christ goes right through the baptismal font which is the spring or fountain of eternal life. And when we enter into the life of Christ in the Church we also are Chrismated with the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This personal encounter with God continues through another font or fountain; the chalice that holds the Body and Blood of Christ which we receive from with thanksgiving. The imagery cannot be any more obvious or clear.

On Mother's Day (today), we remember that our first encounter with physical water was in the womb of our mother. When she drank water, we drank of the same water. We were surrounded by warm, life-giving water in our mother's womb. When we became Christians we were surrounded by the purified, Spirit-filled waters of baptism. We give thanks to our mothers for the gift of earthly life. We should also give thanks to our spiritual Mother, the Church, for the gift of heavenly life. We can get regular water from nearly anyone or anywhere. The living water of the Holy Spirit only comes from Christ in the life of the Church. Regular water is a material substance with physical properties. Living water is a supernatural Person that can inspire the soul and animate the body to holiness and good works. Regular water is a bare necessity for life but does not have much energy. Living water is the breath of life and energy of the spiritual life.

Jesus also said in today's Gospel, *'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth'* (v.24). In 'spirit and truth' refers to the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. Knowing all this, why would we go anywhere else but to the Body of Christ, the Church, who provides us with the opportunity to personally encounter Christ and the Spirit? It is only here that we learn how to truly worship and pray, how to understand the scriptures, how to fast and give alms. Numerous false gospels, including various philosophies, beliefs, pseudo-religions and spiritualities, exist in our world and claim to have living water but they do not. For various reasons, we turn to them but they cannot quench our thirst for the one true God. They even attempt to pervert the understanding and experience of our own faith by teaching us that we can be spiritual without being religious. Don't be fooled, these are cheap imitations in fancy brand-named bottles but they are not the true living water of the Holy Spirit that gives eternal life. Amen!