



Parish Information Bulletin

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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,

SUNDAY 28 JUNE

THIRD SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 6: 22-33

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

MONDAY 29 JUNE

Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

TUESDAY 30 JUNE

Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY 1 JULY

*Holy Unmercenaries
Saints Cosmas and Damian*

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 5 JULY

Epistle Reading: Galatians 5: 22-26, 6: 1,2
Gospel Reading: Matthew 8: 5-13

June 29: The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul

The divinely-blessed Peter was from Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the son of Jonas and the brother of Andrew the First-called. He was a fisherman by trade, unlearned and poor, and was called Simon; later he was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who looked at him and said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)" (John 1:42).

On being raised by the Lord to the dignity of an Apostle and becoming inseparable from Him as His zealous disciple, he followed Him from the beginning of His preaching of salvation up until the very Passion, when, in the court of Caiaphas the high priest, he denied Him thrice because of his fear of the Jews and of the danger at hand. But again, after many bitter tears, he received complete forgiveness of his transgression.

After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he preached in Judea, Antioch, and certain parts of Asia, and finally came to Rome, where he was crucified upside down by Nero, and thus he ascended to the eternal habitations about the year 66 or 68, leaving two Catholic (General) Epistles to the Church of Christ.

Paul, the chosen vessel of Christ, the glory of the Church, the Apostle of the Nations and teacher of the whole world, was a Jew by race, of the tribe of Benjamin, having Tarsus as his homeland. He was a Roman citizen, fluent in the Greek language, an expert in knowledge of the Law, a Pharisee, born of a Pharisee, and a disciple of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and notable teacher of the Law in Jerusalem. For this cause, from the beginning, Paul was a most fervent zealot for the traditions of the Jews and a great persecutor of the Church of Christ; at that time, his name was Saul (Acts 22:3-4).

In his great passion of rage and fury against the disciples of the Lord, he went to Damascus bearing letters of introduction from the high priest. His intention was to bring the disciples of Christ back to Jerusalem in bonds. As he was approaching Damascus, about midday there suddenly shone upon him a light from Heaven. Falling on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And that heavenly voice and brilliance made him tremble, and he was blinded for a time. He was led by the hand into the city, and on account of a divine revelation to the Apostle Ananias (see Oct. 1), he was baptized by him, and both his bodily and spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness.

And straightway- O wondrous transformation! - beyond all expectation, he spoke with boldness in the synagogues, proclaiming that "Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 9:1-21). As for his zeal in preaching the Gospel after these things had come to pass, as for his unabating labours and afflictions of diverse kinds, the wounds, the prisons, the bonds, the beatings, the stonings, the shipwrecks, the journeys, the perils on land, on sea, in cities, in wildernesses, the continual vigils, the daily fasting, the hunger, the thirst, the nakedness, and all those other things that he endured for the Name of Christ, and which he underwent before nations and kings and the Israelites, and above all, his care for all the churches, his fiery longing for the salvation of all, whereby he became all things to all

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men, that he might save them all if possible, and because of which, with his heart aflame, he continuously travelled throughout all parts, visiting them all, and like a bird of heaven flying from Asia and Europe, the West and East, neither staying nor abiding in any one place - all these things are related incident by incident in the Book of the Acts, and as he himself tells them in his Epistles.

His Epistles, being fourteen in number, are explained in 250 homilies by Saint John Chrysostom and make manifest the loftiness of his thoughts, the abundance of the revelations made to him, the wisdom given to him from God, wherewith he brings together in a wondrous manner the Old with the New Testaments, and expounds the mysteries thereof which had been concealed under types; he confirms the doctrines of the Faith, expounds the ethical teaching of the Gospel, and demonstrates with exactness the duties incumbent upon every rank, age, and order of man. In all these things his teaching proved to be a spiritual trumpet, and his speech was seen to be more radiant than the sun, and by these means he clearly sounded forth the word of truth and illumined the ends of the world. Having completed the work of his ministry, he likewise ended his life in martyrdom when he was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Nero, at the same time, some say, when Peter was crucified.

Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

The Synaxis of the Glorious and All-Praiseworthy Twelve Apostles of Christ appears to be an ancient Feast. The Church honours each of the Twelve Apostles on separate dates during the year, and has established a general commemoration for all of them on the day after the commemoration of the Glorious and First-Ranked among the Apostles, Peter and Paul.

St. Peter of Damaskos: We should give thanks to God . . .

"We should give thanks to Him, as it is said: 'In everything give thanks' (I Thess. 5:18). Closely linked to this phrase is another of St. Paul's injunctions: 'Pray without ceasing' (I Thess. 5:17), that is, be mindful of God at all times, in all places, and in every circumstance. For no matter what you do, you should keep in mind the Creator of all things. When you see the light, do not forget Him who gave it to you; when you see the sky, the earth, the sea and all that is in them, marvel at these things and glorify their Creator; when you put on clothing, acknowledge whose gift it is and praise Him who in His providence has given you life. In short, if everything you do becomes for you an occasion for glorifying God, you will be praying unceasingly. And in this way your soul will always rejoice, as St. Paul commends (cf. I Thess. 5:16)."

-St. Peter of Damaskos, "Book I: A Treasury of Divine Knowledge"



The Birds of the Air and the Lilies of the Field

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

Today, on this Sunday, the Gospel reading is about what we really need in life, about what our real requirements are. In this Gospel, the Lord offers several images or comparisons, saying: *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness* (Matthew 6:22-23).

Here the Lord offers us three images.

First, the Lord speaks about the eyes, about how important it is for them to see all that is full of light, for then the whole body will be full of light. If the eyes only look for good, then the whole person will be good and light. But if the eyes are darkened, then the whole person will be blackened.

The second image compares the eye with a lamp. A lamp dispels the darkness around it and gives light to any quarter – and the eye should do likewise for the body.

The Lord implicitly offers us a third image, that of the mind. If our mind be full of light, then all the remaining powers of the soul will likewise be full of light. If, on the contrary, our mind be darkened, then our entire soul will become dark and gloomy.

This is the first instruction the Lord gives us today: we should seek not only visible light, but also the spiritual light that would illumine our mind and thereby our soul as well.

Next the Lord warns us against avarice, saying: *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on* (Matthew 6:25). Here He identifies two kinds of avarice. There are people who fall into the sin of avarice and begin to gather money. This form of avarice is called greed. Moreover, people who gather money give way to greed to such an extent that they are afraid to spend their money, so seized are they by this passion. There is another form of avarice, when one does not simply gather money, but hastens to spend it on mundane pleasures, thereby falling into spiritual dissipation. Both are dangerous. The Lord calls this "mammon," saying: *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon* (Matthew 6:24). Here the Lord is speaking about the qualities of our heart, that it is impossible to unite love for God with love for earthly riches. Moreover, there is also the risk that this "mammon" might not even be riches, but even a small amount of money. The Lord forewarns us, by giving us – as though we were little children – various images and comparisons. He comforts, instructs, and upholds us, saying: *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them* (Matthew 6:26). If He feeds the birds, surely He can feed us as well. What a vivid comparison, invigorating and admonishing us!

The Lord also says: *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* (Matthew 6:28-30). Here again the Lord instructs and comforts by making a comparison, saying that we, of course, are better than birds or ephemeral flowers. Moreover, the Lord calls us to break away from corrupt, earthly concerns that are vain and sinful, and to direct our gaze to the surrounding world that He created.

The most important thing is to see that God is present in everything in this world: He gives thought to birds and flowers of the field. But, brothers and sisters, when the Lord offers us these comparisons, He is also cautioning us against another extreme. When He offers us these examples of the birds of the heavens or flowers, He does not want us, once we have heard these examples, to stop doing anything, sit down, fold our hands, and say: "That's it, Lord! Now You will take care of us, and we'll put aside all earthly cares." No, nothing of the sort! The Lord certainly does not want us to wilt like these wildflowers. Indeed, their lifespan at time lasts only days or hours, but this does not mean that we should imitate flowers by stopping and doing nothing. Nor are we to be like birds that fly about at random, as they please, and do nothing else. The Lord guards us from extremes, and is certainly not calling upon us to do nothing.

Therefore, today's Gospel proclamation concludes with these sobering words: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Matthew 6:33). Amen.

-Igumen Theophylact (Bezukadnikov)