



Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

Parable of the Sower

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 8

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One. Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings. O Lord, our Life and Resurrection: Glory to Thee!

Troparion of Annunciation, Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with you.

Kontakion of Annunciation, Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts! We, your servants delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! As you possess invincible might set us free from every calamity so that we may sing: Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

October 17th, Tone 8, Luke 8:

The parable of the Sower, which is the gospel read for the 18th Sunday after Pentecost (Lu. 8:5-15) is one of the best known of the gospel texts. But this parable may perhaps be better known in its negative aspects (the instances of the seed that does not grow) than in its positive aspect. Generally speaking, we know that the seed grows if it falls on “good ground”, but we may not see precisely and concretely enough the conditions set out in the gospel for its germination.

Jesus explains to his disciples — he did not say this to the crowd — that the sowing represents the word of God. The sower, that is to say God himself or his Son, casts the seed. Sometimes the seed falls by the side of the road, but the passers-by tread on it and the birds eat it; thus those who are at the roadside receive the word, but the devil comes along and takes it out of their hearts. Sometimes the seed falls on a rock, and from lack of moisture dries up and withers; thus those who have received the word with joy, but have no roots, lose what they had received when temptation comes along. Sometimes the word falls among thorns, and the thorns choke it; thus worldly cares, riches and pleasures suffocate the word which had begun to take root. And sometimes the word falls “on good ground”, and it produces a hundred times for one; thus is it with those who have received it with a sincere heart and cling to it with patience.

It is enough for the word to fall “on good ground”. The reasons why the sowing did not bear fruit in the other instances show the conditions that are necessary for true spiritual life. We must not stand at the roadside within range of passers-by; a certain withdrawal from the world, a certain silence, a certain contemplation (which vary in each case, but are necessary in *all* cases without exception) will protect what has been divinely sown. The ground on which the seed falls must have moisture in it, it must be frequently and regularly watered; this means that we must have constant and regular recourse to prayer and to other sources of grace, without depending on moments of emotion or “inspiration”. We must not lightly reject a fixed framework, such as timetables and rules of life: they may constitute a useless hindrance to the free flight of eagles, but most often they are a help to children and cripples that we are.

We must not allow the thorns, that is to say the attractions and distractions of the world to suffocate the word: these are not only reprehensible passions, or earthly riches or ambitions; often entertainment which are not necessarily harmful in themselves (travels, parties, the theatre, novels, etc.) hinder and intimate relationship between God and us. The “good ground” is a mixture of natural gifts and of grace (and grace can, moreover, make up for the deficiencies of nature). But, even where “good ground” exists, no spiritual life is possible without *daily* and patient effort, without repressing certain things, without a certain regularity and stability, as much in material life as in mental life (the “roots”), without meditation and examination of conscience (the terms may be modern, but the Desert Fathers practiced these things). In short, the seed of the word cannot grow in us without a certain asceticism. Asceticism is not in fashion: people prefer talking about mysticism. But no true mystical life exists with-

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hours— This week's Coffee Hour is being sponsored by Nina T. and Efrosimnia. Next week's Coffee Hour will be bagels and coffee.

Diocesan Assembly—Your delegate, Matushka Cheryl and I attended the Assembly this past week. 2 Bishops, 45 Clergy and 30, or so Laity. The event began with the report of our Archbishop: who updated us on his health, saying that he hopes for a couple of more years but will cede them if his Parkinson's compels him to do so. He does not want to go on when it is not in the interest of all of us, his flock. Matushka has some photos and will report.

Church School/Adult Ed.—began today. We will next meet on Sunday, October 31st, at 9AM.

Parish Council— will meet today, after Coffee Hour.

Pray for... Hierarch Nikolai (Soraich)— battling cancer. Samir's friend, **Johnny**, who has been improving in the battle to save his sight. **Brian**, Sunday's brother. **George and Alex**, health problems. **Reposed Darrel**, Kyle's father. **Diane F. recovering from Surgery**. **Erika and Family**. All those who have lost their lives or are suffering as a result of the current Pandemic . **Archimandrite Alexander**— Fr. Lawrence's long-time father confessor, who reposed. **Kerrie Photine**— recent surgery, **Karen and Scott**— battling health issues. **Mitred Archbishop Basil**— a longtime friend of Father's, newly reposed. **Newly reposed Emiliane (Janie G.) and reposed Vadim**. **Our Vladyka Benjamin**— battling on-set parkinsons. **Tsige Roman and Abraham**— I know we are always mindful of Tsige, but please continue to pray for the work and for Ethiopia, torn by civil war, with all the problems that go with a regional terror. **Newly Reposed Maria S.**—who fell asleep in the Lord on Wednesday, around 11:30 PM. **Reposed Jonathan T. Reposed Vadim**, **Newly Reposed Donny**. **The newly reposed Protopresbyter Leonid**, the longtime chair of the Department of External Affairs for the OCA, and brotherinlaw to **Olga H., Brian, Kerrie and family**— asking prayers for family sickness. **Oxana**— traveling. **George and Alesis**, Brother and Daughter of Peter and Irene S. **Matushka Ioanna R., Reposed. Matushka Priscilla**, ill. **Anya J**— a longtime friend of the parish who is ill. **Stephen F.**— battling back pain. **John F.**— battling cancer. **Archpriest Anthony**— battling cancer. **Julie**— sister of Kathy M., battling health problems. **Archbishop Benjamin**— parkinsons. **Mitred Archbishop Sergei**— who reposed recently.

out a serious ascetic foundation: the word of God will not take possession of our soul if we have not cultivated the ground and cut back the thorns.

Taken from the *Year of Grace of the Lord*, by a Monk of the Eastern Church

From the Lives of the Saints...

THE HOLY PROPHET HOSEA

Hosea was the son of Beeri of the tribe of Issachar. Hosea lived and prophesied more than eight hundred years before the birth of Christ. His divinely inspired words are found in his book, which contains fourteen chapters. He strongly rebuked Israel and Judah for their idolatry and also foretold God's punishment for their sins, the destruction of Samaria and Israel for their apostasy, and God's mercy on the tribe of Judah. He foretold the abolition and the end of the sacrifices of the Old Testament. He foretold the coming of the Lord, and the richness of gifts that He would bring with Him to earth. He lived to a very old age and entered peacefully into rest.

THE HOLY MARTYRS COSMAS AND DAMIAN, THE UNMERCENARIES

There are three pairs of holy physicians by the name of Cosmas and Damian. The first entered into rest peacefully on November 1, the second pair was stoned in Rome on July 1, and the third was from Arabia; and it is these that we speak of under today's date. They were physicians by profession, and when they received the Christian Faith, they healed the sick in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They became widely known for their miraculous healings. The malicious pagans seized them, and took them before Governor Lysias in the town of Aegaea. Since neither of these brothers would renounce Christ at any cost, they were cast into the sea, then into fire, but the omnipotent God saved them from both the water and the fire. An angel of the Lord appeared to them and saved them. The pagan governor ascribed this to their alleged sorcery but they answered: "We know nothing of sorcery nor do we need sorcery, but we possess the power of Christ—which saves us and all who invoke His Most-holy Name." The pagans struck them with stones but the stones bounced off them; they shot them with arrows, but the arrows rebounded as well. Finally, they were beheaded with the sword. Saints Leontius, Anthimus and Eutropius also suffered with them, and received heavenly wreaths of glory. They suffered in the time of Diocletian and Maximian. Many miracles were manifested from their holy relics, even as miracles abounded from them during their life.

THE VENERABLE MARTYR ANDREW

St. Andrew was a Cretan by birth and a Christian priest. In the time of the iconoclastic persecution, he showed himself to be a great defender of the veneration of icons. Andrew went to Constantinople to denounce the wicked Emperor Copronymus. As the emperor stood in the Church of the Holy Martyr Mamas, Andrew entered the church, stood before him, and openly rebuked him before all. "It would be better for you, O Emperor, to attend to military matters and to govern the people, than to persecute Christ and His servants." For this, St. Andrew was beaten severely, tortured and dragged through the streets, where a heretic struck him with an axe and killed him. Thus, Andrew rendered his holy soul to God in the year 767 A.D. His relics gave healing to the sick.

The Prologue of Ochrid, edited and written by St. Nikolai

"There do not exist many or few, nor small or great problems. The only problem is the absence of Christ from our lives" (From the life and teachings of Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos)