



The Canaanite Woman

Troparion of the Resurrection, Tone 3

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the firstborn of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy!

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!

Weekly Bulletin

Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

The 36th Sunday after Pentecost, Tone 3, February 11th, Matt. 15:21-28

The gospel for this Sunday (Matt. 15:21-28) describes how a Canaanite woman comes up to Jesus in the region of Tyre and Sidon. Her daughter is possessed with a devil, and she implores Jesus and cries out to him; but Jesus does not answer, and His disciples want him to tell her to go away. Jesus then says that he has only been sent to the lost sheep in Israel; but still the woman is not discouraged and keeps on insistently. Jesus answers her with apparent hardness: is he to take the bread from the children to cast it to the dogs? Truth, Lord, says the woman humbly, but the dogs themselves eat the crumbs which fall from the table. "Great is thy faith" Jesus says to her: let it be done unto this woman according to her faith. And her daughter is immediately made whole.

This episode is probably reported by Matthew to show how the mission of the Messiah, at first destined for the Jews, is graciously extended to the Gentiles. Spiritually, this gospel shows what intense faith, and prayer which is humble and insistent can achieve. Jesus seems to be silent. He seems to say hard things

...Our Lord acts in this way when he wants to test the strength of our faith. But he does not refuse grace to someone who is humble enough to compare themselves to a dog feeding on crumbs fallen from the table. Let us look at the Canaanite woman's reaction when Jesus says that he has only been sent to the lost sheep of Israel: "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me". It is often at the very moment when Jesus seems to put up a decisive refusal that we must redouble our faith, come near to him, worship him and beg for his help. The formula "help me" is always acceptable to the Lord, even if the particular form of help we are seeking is not that which he desires to give us. "Lord, Thou dost say "no" to me. I come to Thee and adore Thee: help me as Thou dost judge it good

(taken from Year of the Grace of the Lord, by a Monk of the Eastern Church)

From the Lives of the Saints...The Hieromartyr (Priest-Martyr) Blaise

Blaise was born in the province of Cappadocia. From his early childhood he was God-fearing and meek. Because of his great virtues, he was chosen as bishop of the city of Sebaste [in Armenia]. Blaise was a great spiritual and moral beacon in this pagan city. During a grave persecution of Christians, St. Blaise encouraged his flock and visited the martyrs of Christ in prison. Foremost among them

Announcements and Activities

Great Vespers— Saturday, at 5:30 PM.

Divine Liturgy— Sunday, at 10AM.

Coffee Hour— This week's Coffee is being sponsored by Tricia C. and Edie O. Next week's Coffee Hour will be sponsored by Luci A.

Church School/Adult Ed— February 25th, at 9AM.

Parish Council— today, before Coffee Hour, we swore-in the newly elected members of parish council, after the Divine Liturgy.

Lent— As I have a little space in the Announcements section, please allow me to note that Lent is fast approaching. Next Sunday will be the first of our Lenten, preparatory Sundays. Please be sure to make every effort of mark your calendars for the Services of the first week of Lent: March 18-23. This year, our parish Feast, the Annunciation falls early. The Sunday of the first week of Lent will be the Vigil of Annunciation, at 6. Because it replaces the Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers we usually serve in Santa Barbara, several local priests in our clergy brotherhood will join us. Archbishop BENJAMIN will be with us for the celebration of the Feast. LOCK-IN your calendars to be present to honor the Theotokos on our parish feast. The Vigil will be at 6PM, on Sunday the 24th, and the Vespers Divine Liturgy at 5PM on Monday the 25th, followed by the festal banquet. Please remember to also LOCK-IN Holy Week, April 29th— PASCHA on May 5th. These are such powerful and life-changing services. Some people take the whole week off or work to attend every service— morning and evening. They are never the same, thereafter. Jump in, if you are able to do so.

Pray for... Sarah, the daughter of Fr. Lawrence's godfather, health issues. **Youseff and Jimmy**— who are ill. **Jonathan**— ill. **Reposed Barbara Ranjo**. **Laure**— battling Cancer. **Paul**— ill **Ralph**—ill **Archpriest Lawrence**, from Canada, progressive eye disease. **Tsige Roman**—our beloved Tsige reposed on December 3rd. Please keep praying for her homeland of Ethiopia. **Brian**— ill. **Jonathan**— ill. **Katia**— sister of Shkbarra's. **Patrick**, reposed. **Heather Mary**—uncommon fatigue Dr. Joseph— personal needs. **Lance**— special request for prayers. **Christian**—prayers for upcoming surgery. Mike Meko's Mother-in-law, Larissa's newly-reposed husband **Raphael**. Departed **Matushka Priscilla** and **Newly-departed, George**. **Luci F.** recovering from surgery. **Newly- Departed Marylyn**; ill, **Diane**, ill, **Colin**. **John Truman**—lightheadedness and a recent fall. **Daniel** reposed, Tom and Amy, who lost their son. **Nicholas, the father of a friend**. **Rose Marie**—Rachel's mother, cancer. **Barbara H.**—recovering from a fall. **Claude (Moses)**- in need of housing

was the eminent and glorious Eustratius. When the city of Sebaste was completely emptied of Christians—some were slain and others fled—the elderly Blaise withdrew to Mount Argeos and settled there in a cave. Wild beasts recognized the holy man and gathered around him, and he tenderly caressed them. But the persecutors found the saint in this remote place and brought him to trial. Along the way, Blaise cured a young boy who had a bone caught in his throat. At the plea of a poor widow whose pig had been snatched by a wolf, the saint, by the power of his prayer, made the wolf return it. The sinister judges tortured Blaise severely, flogging him and scraping him with an iron comb. By his steadfastness in the Christian Faith, Blaise converted many pagans to the Faith. Seven women and two children languished in prison with him. The women were beheaded first, and afterward the wonderful Blaise was beheaded with the two children. He suffered and was glorified in the year 316 A.D. People pray to St. Blaise for the well-being of their domestic livestock and for protection against wild beasts. In the west, he is also invoked against diseases of the throat.

THE HOLY MARTYR GEORGE OF KRATOVO

By origin, George was a Serb from the town of Kratovo. He was a silversmith by trade, and in his heart and soul he was a convinced and devout Christian. George was eighteen years old when the Turks tried to convert him to Islam, but George remained as firm as a diamond in his faith. The Turks tortured him with many cruel tortures and finally burned him at the stake. He suffered for the beautiful Faith of Christ on February 11, 1515 A.D., in Sofia, Bulgaria, during the reign of Sultan Selim, and was glorified with unfading glory in the heavens.

SAINT THEODORA

Theodora, a Greek empress, was the wife of the nefarious Emperor Theophilus the Iconoclast. After the death of Theophilus, Theodora became the ruling empress and reigned together with her son Michael III. At the Council in Constantinople in 842 A.D., she immediately restored the veneration of icons. On this occasion the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy was instituted, which is still celebrated today on the First Sunday of Great Lent. This holy and praiseworthy woman of the Church gave up her soul to God on February 11, 867 A.D. By the divine and wonderful providence of God, it was at the time of the solemn triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies that Saints Cyril and Methodius were sent as Christian missionaries to the Slavs.

REFLECTION

Matter is not evil of itself, as certain Christian heretics (i.e., the Manicheans) and other philosophers have taught. Not only is matter not evil, but matter is not the sole conduit of evil. In the same way that matter is a conduit of evil, so also is the spirit. Every material thing is miserable and even fearful because of man's sins, but matter is not evil. Matter is corruptible, weak and insignificant in comparison with the immortal spirit, but it is not evil of itself. If it were evil, would our Lord Christ have instituted Holy Communion of bread and wine and would He call the bread and the wine His Body and His Blood? If matter of itself were evil, how then could men be baptized with water? How could the Apostle James have commanded that the sick be anointed with oil? How could holy water remain fresh and have miracle-working properties? How could the Cross of Christ have power? How could the garment of Christ transmit the Savior's healing power, by which the woman with the issue of blood was healed? How could icons and the relics of the saints have performed so many miracles and conveyed to people so much good from the Kingdom of grace? How then could good come to man through evil? No, no: matter is never evil of itself alone.

Taken from the Prologue of Ochrid, Compiled and written by St. Nikolai Velimirovic

“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)