



18th Sunday After Pentecost

Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite

3 / 6 October 2011

Resurrection Tropar, Tone 1: When the stone had been sealed by the Jews; / while the soldiers were guarding Thy Most Pure Body; / Thou didst rise on the third day, O Saviour, / granting life to the world. / The Powers of Heaven therefore cried to Thee O Giver of Life: / glory to Thy Resurrection O Christ! / Glory to Thy Kingdom; / Glory to Thy Dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind.

Troparion tone 4: O holy Hieromartyr Dionysius, thou wast fully instructed, / sober in action, with a good conscience as befits a priest. / Thou didst draw mysteries from the Vessel of Grace / and having kept the Faith thou didst complete thy course as he did. / Intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.

Resurrection Kondak, Tone 1: As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, / Raising the world with Thyself. / Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. / Adam exults O Master, Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage, and cries to Thee; / Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ.

Kontakion tone 8: When in spirit thou didst pass through the heavenly gates as disciple of him who attained to the third heaven, / thou wast enriched with ineffable knowledge and didst enlighten those in darkness of ignorance. / Therefore we cry: Rejoice, O Father Dionysius.

EPISTLE: Corinthians 9:6-11

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, While you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.

HE WHO SOWS SPARINGLY WILL ALSO REAP SPARINGLY, AND HE WHO SOWS BOUNTIFULLY WILL ALSO REAP BOUNTIFULLY

He called the thing sowing, so you might at once look into the recompense, and having in mind the harvest, you might feel that you receive more than you give. For this reason he did not say, 'he who gives,' but 'he who sows' ...A man when left to himself, does a thing more readily than when compelled. Therefore he dwells on this ...For if it is a work of virtue and yet all that is done is of necessity, it is shorn of its reward. So he labours at this point with reason. And he does not merely advise, he also adds a prayer ...By this prayer he waylays a thought which lay in wait against this liberality and which is now also a hindrance to many. For many persons are afraid to give alms, saying, 'Lest perchance I become poor' ...To do away with this fear then, he adds this prayer, saying, May 'He make all grace abound towards you.' Not merely fulfil, but 'make it abound.' 'Fill you,' he means, 'with such great things, that you may be able to abound in this liberality' ...He does not pray for riches, nor for abundance, but for all sufficiency...For in carnal things he asks for a sufficiency for them, but in spiritual things for abundance, not only in almsgiving, but in all others things as well, 'unto every good work.'

Then he brings the prophet forward as a counsellor for them, having sought out a testimony inviting them to bountifulness ...Let us not therefore nicely calculate, but sow with a profuse hand. Do you see how much others give to players and harlots? Give at any rate the half to Christ, of what they give to dancers ...For they clothe the persons of wantons with untold gold, but you do not cover even with a threadbare garment the flesh of Christ, and that though beholding it naked.

St. John Chrysostom. Homily XIX on II Corinthians IX, 2, 3. B#56, pp. 369-370.

Second Epistle: Acts 17:16-34

GOSPEL: LUKE 6:31-36

The Lord said, as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

“LOVE YE YOUR ENEMIES”

Starting with the Sunday about “the talents,” the Sunday readings have been showing us how a talent (the strength given to each of us by God to fulfil His commandments of love for God and neighbour) was manifested in various Christian qualities of the human soul. On the Sunday about “the Canaanite woman”—in deep humility; on this Sunday about “the miraculous catch of fish”—in obedience to the word of God, in unshakable faith. And here in the Apostle and Gospel readings for this Sunday—in great patience in sorrows, in great spiritual comfort, and especially in the unspeakable joy which is hidden in mercy and love for one’s enemies. The last one, by human standards, appears to be unnatural; but because of the strength of the Lord’s talent, it is possible, joyous, wonderful.

This is what the Apostle says today: “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not” (II Cor. 11:31). What is this? What is the Apostle going to say further if he makes such a beginning in which he affirms, “I lie not”? Further on, he reveals what happened to him in Damascus: “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands” (II Cor. 11:32-33). As you can see, a terrible epoch of martyrdom was opening up, which the first Christians lived through after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the beginning of the preaching.

The Apostle Paul was going to Damascus to persecute the Christians. But on the way, the Lord Himself appeared to him in a vision and said: “Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” (Acts 9:4). And here the truth was revealed to the Apostle Paul. The Messiah, the true Messiah appeared to him on the road to Damascus. And when he arrived in Damascus, instead of persecuting the Christians, he himself started to preach Christ. Knowing his past, they did not believe him at first. But later, when they did believe, they began to consider him a traitor, an enemy of the Jews. This is why the Apostle Paul begins this passage with the words: “I lie not.” Because in order to preach Christ as the Messiah Who had come, strength was required; and a special grace of God was needed, that talent which God gives to his servants, to strengthen such a preacher. And here the same talent which strengthened the Apostle earlier in Damascus, when he was almost caught to be martyred (and only a miracle delivered him from their hands); this same talent supported and encouraged him even now.

And further on in this Epistle, the Apostle Paul shows us in more detail what actually strengthened his spirit in such a difficult struggle. “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (II Cor. 12:2). A mysterious revelation. There, Christ appeared on the road, and here, Christ revealed to him a great mercy. He revealed the state in which the soul perceived “the third heaven,” a state of spirit, a peace of heart which is ineffable.

So in giving us this reading today, the Holy Church shows us that there was something in the martyrdom of the first Christians which supplied them with that strength in which appeared an unearthly force, which is this same godly talent, the gift of God. This was a peace of soul which covered all suffering, covered all earthly sorrows, which was completely above everything. Here is the state of spiritual strength which is presented to us today for our edification. We must follow the Lord. But how do we start on this way? Today’s Gospel shows us the beginning, the first steps which a Christian must make in order to walk. If you remember, the Gospel said: “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?” (Lk. 6:31-32). And further, “If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? ...But love ye your enemies, and do good [to those who hate you], and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest” (Lk. 6:34-35).

“Love ye your enemies.” This is the first step which today’s Gospel reading offers us, so that we may receive that strength which the Apostle Paul also received in a vision of the third heaven, as did all the martyrs. If we will fulfil what the Holy Church gives us in the words of the Gospel, then let us only start to do so; let us step on this new way. And we will receive that revelation which will help us in those terrible moments when grief invades our soul, when sorrows surround us. The grief and sorrows will go away. Yes, they will leave us, because in that moment these points of grace, this godly light of Christ, will be revealed to us and will give us strength to bear the burdens of our earthly life, so that we may be comforted in Eternal Life with Christ.

Archbishop Andrei, The One Thing Needful

Second Gospel: Matthew 13: 44-54

Saints of the week

3 / 16 October - The Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite - He is counted among the seventy lesser apostles. This wonderful man was of a noble, pagan family in Athens. Finishing his education in Athens, he went to Egypt to learn more. One day while he was there, the Lord Christ breathed His last on the Cross, and the sun was darkened and it was dark in Egypt for the space of three hours. Then Dionysius cried out: 'Either God the Creator of the world is suffering, or the world is ending.' Returning to Athens, he married a woman called Damaris and had sons by her. He was a member of the highest court in

Greece, the Areopagus, and was always thereafter known as the Areopagite. When the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel in Athens, Dionysius was baptised with his whole household (Acts 17:34). Paul consecrated him bishop of Athens (he having left his wife and children and status from love of Christ), and he travelled widely with Paul, coming to know all the other apostles. He went especially to Jerusalem, to see the most holy Mother of God, and wrote of his meeting with her in one of his works, being at the burial of the Most Pure along with the other apostles. When his teacher, St Paul, suffered martyrdom, Dionysius desired to die such a death himself, so he went off to Gaul to preach the Gospel among the barbarians, accompanied by Rusticus, a priest, and a deacon called Eleutherius. They endured much but met with great success. By their labours, many were turned to the Christian faith and Dionysius built a small chapel in Paris where he celebrated divine service. When he was ninety years old, he was seized and tortured for Christ, together with Rusticus and Eleutherius, until they were all three beheaded with the sword. The severed head of St Dionysius jumped a long way and fell in front of a Christian woman, Catula, who buried it with his body. He suffered in the time of Domitian, in the year 96. He wrote several famous works: on the names of God, on the heavenly and ecclesiastical hierarchies, on mystical theology and on the most holy Mother of God. Our Holy Father John the Chozebite; Our Holy Father Dionysius of the Kiev Caves; St Hesychius the Chorebite.

4 / 17 October - The Hieromartyr Hierotheos - He was a friend of Dionysius the Areopagite, and received the Christian faith from the Apostle Paul a little after Dionysius. This Apostle later made him bishop in Athens. At the time of the Dormition of the most holy Mother of God, Hierotheos arrived in Jerusalem and took part in the funeral. With his divine singing, he brought heartfelt joy to many and showed himself to be greatly inspired. He laboured greatly for the sake of the Gospel, brought many pagans to the truth, governed his flock well and finally ended a martyr for Christ, who gave him a twofold wreath in His heavenly Kingdom: of the hierarch and of the martyr. St Stephen Stiljanovic; Our Holy Father Ammon of Nitria; Our Holy Father Paul the Simple.

5 / 18 October - Sts. Peter, Alexis, Jonah, Philip, Hermogenes (Germogen), Philaret, Innocent (Veniaminov), and Tikhon, metropolitans of Moscow. The Holy Martyr Charitina of Amisus - Orphaned young, she was adopted by an eminent Christian man called Claudius, who brought her up as his own daughter. Charitina was meek, humble, obedient and silent. She studied the law of God day and night and vowed to live in perpetual virginity as a true bride of Christ. But, Charitina having brought others to the Christian faith, the Emperor Diocletian's governor, Dometius, heard of her and sent soldiers to take her from her foster-father for trial. The judge asked her: 'Is it true, little girl, that you are a Christian, and that you delude others by bringing them to this dishonourable faith?' Charitina courageously replied: 'It is true that I am a Christian, and a lie that I delude others. I lead those in error to the way of truth, bringing them to my Christ.' The wicked judge ordered that her hair be cut off and live coals put on her head, but the maiden was preserved by God's power. They threw her into the sea, but God delivered her from it. She was bound to a wheel which began to turn, but an angel of God stopped the wheel and Charitina remained unharmed. Then the wicked judge sent some dissolute youths to rape her. Fearing this dishonour, St Charitina prayed to God to receive her soul before these dissolute men could foul her virginal body and so, while she was kneeling in prayer, her soul went out from her body to the immortal Kingdom of Christ. The Hieromartyr Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria; Our Holy Father Eudocimus of Vatopedi; Our Holy Fathers Damian, Jeremiah and Matthew.

6 / 19 October - Fast Day - The Holy and Glorious Apostle Thomas - He was one of the twelve Great Apostles. Through his doubt of the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, a new confirmation was given of that wonderful and saving event, for the risen Lord appeared again to His disciples, to convince Thomas. The Lord said to Thomas: Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing', and Thomas cried: 'My Lord and my God! (John 20). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, when the apostles cast lots to see who would go where to preach the Gospel, it fell to Thomas to go to India. He was somewhat saddened at having to go so far away, but the Lord appeared to him and comforted him. In India, St Thomas converted many, both rich and poor, to the Christian faith, and founded a Church there, making priests and bishops. Among others, St Thomas converted two sisters, Tertiana and Mygdonia, wives of Indian princes. Both sisters were ill-treated for their faith by their husbands, who would not live with them after their baptism, and divorced them. Being freed from their marriages, they lived godly lives till their deaths. Dionysius and Pelagia, a couple at first betrothed to each other, heard the Apostle's teaching and did not live together, but devoted themselves to the ascetic life. Pelagia died a martyr for the Faith and Dionysius was made bishop by the Apostle. Prince Misdaeus, the husband of Tertiana, whose wife and son Iuzanes Thomas baptised, condemned the Apostle to death, and sent five soldiers who ran him through with their lances, and thus the holy Apostle Thomas gave his soul into the hands of his Christ. Before his death, he, with the other apostles, was miraculously borne to Jerusalem for the funeral of the most holy Mother of God. Arriving late, he grieved bitterly and, at his request, the tomb of the Most Pure was opened, but the body was not there; the Lord had taken His Mother to His heavenly home. Thus St Thomas first, by his unbelief, confirmed the faith in the Resurrection of the Lord and then, by his late arrival, revealed to us the wondrous glorification of the Mother of God. Our Holy Father, the New Martyr Macarius.

7 / 20 October - The Holy Martyrs Sergius and Bacchus - These holy and wonderful martyrs and heroes of the Christian faith were at first nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian. The Emperor himself valued them greatly for their courage, wisdom and zeal, but, when he heard that these great nobles of his were Christians, his love for them turned to fury. And once, when there was a great offering of sacrifices to idols, the Emperor summoned Sergius and Bacchus to offer sacrifice together with him, and they openly refused to obey him in this. Beside himself with anger, the Emperor ordered that their robes, rings and marks of eminence be stripped from them and they be dressed in women's clothing. He then put iron yokes on their necks and led them thus through the streets of Rome, to be mocked by each and all. The Emperor then sent them to Asia, to Antiochus the governor, for torture. Antiochus had achieved his distinguished rank with the help of Sergius and Bacchus, who had at one time recommended him to the Emperor. When Antiochus began to urge them to deny Christ and save themselves

from dishonourable suffering and death, the two saints replied: 'Both honour and dishonour, both life and death—all are one to him who seeks the heavenly Kingdom.' Antiochus threw Sergius into prison and ordered that Bacchus be tortured first. The servants took turns in beating holy Bacchus until his whole body was broken into fragments. His holy spirit went forth from his broken and bloodstained body and was borne to the Lord by angels. St Bacchus suffered in the town of Varvallis. Then holy Sergius was led out. Iron shoes studded with nails were put on his feet, and he was driven out into the Syrian town of Resapha, and there beheaded with the sword. His soul went to Paradise where, together with his friend Bacchus, he received the wreath of immortal glory from Christ his King and Lord. These two glorious knights suffered for the Christian faith in about 303; The Holy Martyr Polychronius; St. Dubtach, bishop of Ardmagh (513); Holy Martyr Princess Osyth of Crich, England (c.700).

8 / 21 October - Fast Day - Our Holy Mother Pelagia -A repentant sinner, she was born a pagan in Antioch and endowed by God with great physical beauty, but she used this beauty to destroy her own soul and those of others, acquiring great wealth from her prostitution. One day, walking past the church of the holy martyr Julian, where Bishop Nonnus was preaching, she turned into the church and listened to the sermon, which was about the Dreadful Judgement and the punishment of sinners. These words so shook her, and wrought so great a change in her, that she was of a sudden filled with self-loathing and fear of God, and, repenting of all her filthy sins, fell down before St Nonnus, begging him to baptise her: 'Holy father, be merciful to me, a sinner; baptise me, and teach me repentance. I am a sea of iniquity, an abyss of destruction, a net and weapon of the devil.' Thus this penitent implored Christ's hierarch with tears. And he baptised her. Blessed Romana, a deaconess of that church, stood sponsor to her at her baptism and, after that, as her spiritual mother, grounded her well in the Christian faith. But Pelagia was not content just to be baptised. Feeling the weight of her many sins and the pricking of her conscience, she decided on a great ascesis. She gave away to the poor the enormous wealth she had amassed by her immorality and went secretly to Jerusalem, where, under a man's name as the monk Pelagius, she shut herself in a cell on the Mount of Olives and there began a strict ascesis of fasting, prayer and vigils. Three years later, St Nonnus's deacon, James, visited her and found her still alive, but when he went to her again a few days later, he found her dead body and gave it burial. St Pelagia entered into rest in about 461. Thus that sometime great sinner, by repentance and striving, received the mercy of God, the forgiveness of her sins and sanctification, and her purified and sanctified soul was made worthy of the Kingdom of God. Our Holy Mother Thals; The Holy Martyr Pelagia.

9 / 22 October - The Holy Apostle James - The son of Alphaeus and one of the twelve Great Apostles, he was the brother of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew. He was a witness of the true words and miracles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and a witness of His Passion, Resurrection and Ascension. After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it fell to the lot of the Apostle James to preach Christ's Gospel in Eleutheropolis and the surrounding area, and then in Egypt, where he suffered for his Saviour. With great power both in word and act, James spread abroad the saving news of the incarnate Word of God, rooting out idol worship, driving demons out of men, healing all manner of sickness and disease in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His labours and his zeal were crowned with great success. Many pagans came to belief in Christ the Lord, churches were founded and set in order and priests and bishops were made. He suffered in Egypt in the town of Ostracina, being crucified by the pagans. Thus this great and wonderful apostle of Christ went to the heavenly Kingdom, to reign forever with the King of glory. Our Holy Father Andronicus and his wife Athanasia; Holy and Righteous Abraham and Lot; St Dimitrios, Patriarch of Alexandria; St Stephen, Despot of Serbia; Hieromartyr Dionysius (Denis) of Paris, bishop (c. 258) - an Italian sent to Paris in the year 250 with six other missionaries, including two bold assistants, Eleutherius and Rusticus. The pagan citizens of the Roman city were disturbed by the success of the Christian Gospel, as a result of the labours of the missionaries. The Roman governor, Fescenninus Sisinnus, arrested the three and put them in prison. For a long time they suffered privations until they were beheaded and their corpses thrown into the River Seine. Montmatre, 'Martyr's Hill', marks the place of their death.

HYMN OF PRAISE

The Holy Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite

Glorious saint Dionysius, Wondrous theologian and lucid scribe! His mind, gathered in his heart, he directed to God; He witnessed heavenly mysteries and revealed them to us. He perceived the glory of the heavenly orders And described the hierarchy of heaven:
Principalities, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Wondrous Thrones, Seraphim, Cherubim and Archangels,
Golden-winged Angels of God, And the Mother of God.-He beheld all with fear, And also that which shines above the dust of the earth: Heavenly powers of infinite strength, Immortal suns and stars most brilliant! All that he witnessed, Dionysius made clear And told to the Church. Thus he adorned and enriched the Church, And his accomplishments were made golden By his bloody death for his Christ. Now he shines in heaven; And the angelic hosts, blazing with the glory of God, Call Dionysius ``Brother."