

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Reader Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM

**June 2, 2024 – Fifth Sunday of Pascha | Sunday of the
Samaritan Woman | Afterfeast of Mid-Pentecost**

By St. Luke the Surgeon, Bishop of Simferopol

"Whoever is thirsty among you, let them come to Me and drink" (John 7:37). These wondrous words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of Mid-Pentecost in the Temple of Jerusalem. Roughly the same words were given in the Holy Spirit by the Prophet Isaiah, who lived seven centuries before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was as if the Prophet heard what 700 years later would be spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ. He said the following: "Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Is. 55:1). "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Is. 12:3).

You see how great are the words of Christ, even though it had been foretold in the Holy Spirit 700 years earlier. These words must be engraved in our hearts and to glorify our Christ and God, the source of our lives! Of what water did our Lord Jesus Christ speak when He said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). In other words,



those who believe in Him, rivers of living water will flow through them. And the living water that will flow through them, who with all their hearts loved the Lord Jesus Christ, is the grace of the Holy Spirit.

This grace is given to us by the Lord if we ask for it, if we accept it with awe and respect. If with all our hearts we believe in the power that grace has, when this grace floods us, then it is poured out and rivers of living water flow from within us. This is what the words of Christ mean. When the grace of the Holy Spirit fills man, He does not remain in him unnoticed. It is uttered with the words of love full of meekness, humility and truth. Divine grace illuminates all his being, changes even his external appearance, and we see it in all the work he does, even in his movements, because this man truly becomes the bearer of the grace of God.

We need very much the grace of God, the living water that the Lord Jesus Christ gives freely to those who are thirsty. We have many different needs in our lives. Our hearts are tormented by many sorrows. Some are thirsty for knowledge and wisdom. And where should they look for genuine and true wisdom? In the books that record human wisdom? Surely not! There is almost no true wisdom found there, nor the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. These books contain our own human wisdom. Genuine wisdom and knowledge is received by those who drink insatiably the living water that the Lord Jesus Christ gives us.

I have spoken to you about what the first Christians thought about the value of knowledge and true wisdom. They said the following: if one knows all the sciences and possesses all human wisdom and does not know God, he is the most miserable among men. But if someone does not know at all human wisdom and is illiterate, but with his heart he knows God, then this man is truly blessed, for this is the true and the most valuable knowledge. Therefore those who seek true knowledge and eternal wisdom ask for them from our Lord Jesus Christ and He lets them drink the living water that He gives.

Our hearts have no peace. They are tormented by many and various sorrows, many times intolerable. Where can we find calm and peace for our souls? It is only in Him who Himself is peace, the only one and true peace. It is He of whom the Apostle Paul says, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation" (Eph. 2:14). Who are these two parts that Christ united? They are the ones who were separated, because they came from different countries, they spoke different languages, they had different traditions and beliefs, and they each believed differently. All of them, who were separated and did not feel that they were united with their neighbors, were united by the Lord Jesus Christ, making them one out of many.

What middle wall is the apostle talking about? It is the middle wall of mutual prejudices, of nationalism, of the burden between the different social classes. This is the middle wall that the Lord has shattered, abolishing enemies and making them one out of many. The Lord gives us peace, the peace of which he spoke to his disciples, saying, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). This peace cannot be given by the world. This peace can only be found in those who drink the living water from the source of immortality, who ask for peace only from Him who has it, from the source of peace our Lord Jesus Christ.

Aren't there many, even among us, those who bear the burden of their sins? Doesn't our conscience torment us when we think about the evils we have done in our lives? If we have no peace and quiet, our conscience does not let us rest. Where are we going to find the silence? We find it as soon as we think of Him who was lifted up not only for our own sins, but the sins of the whole world, and nailed them to the cross. We find it only in Him who suffered for our sins and gives us to drink the living water insatiably.

When we feel weak and humbled and we need strength, we think about what is this strength that we need and must seek. Physical strength? Can we say that physical strength has the utmost value? Does the power of authority have this value? If we think about it well, we will understand that either one or the other have no worth and are worthy of contempt. Let's think about it, let us think about it well and lead our steps to Christ, who gives us this living water, to drink insatiably, and then we will receive the strength that the world does not know. It is the power of the spirit freed from the bondage of the flesh, from the bondage of sufferings, which pulls us down to the earth while we are looking for the heavenly good things.

It is the power that raises us high. It is the power that the saints had, the power of righteousness, of love, of the truth of Christ, of the truth with which Christ defeated the world. We will also become partakers of this power of Christ if we seek it. If we seek this power and only this and we beg Christ to give it to us. If we come to Him who is the source of the living water and drink insatiably this water.

Many are those who envy the glory of others and who themselves seek glory. What glory? It was this glory, which was condemned by Christ, when He said: "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (Jn. 5:44). All of them seek human glory and want the praise of others and not the glory of God; the glory which they receive when with all their hearts they love God; the glory that Christ gives freely to those who have understood that the unique, the true, the most precious and the unfathomable glory is the glory of God. This glory is received by those who drink insatiably from the source of the living water and from Him they are waiting for the highest glory.

You don't have freedom and the situation you are in looks too much like slavery? Seek genuine freedom, not the one that the world appreciates. Seek the unique, genuine and true freedom – freedom from sin and from passions. Remember what the Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews who believed in Him: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32). Only the truth of Christ can make us truly free. Only this truth has value and no other. It is the truth that the world despises, and those who possess it they call slaves. Let them call us slaves, let us be seen as slaves in the eyes of the world but be free in the eyes of God.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, with whose mouth the same God said: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). Perhaps some of us are concerned about these terrible words of the prophet. I don't want to believe it, my God! It is possible to let go of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deny the grace of the Holy Spirit! Many such pits were dug by people and filled with the water of their own wisdom, their own knowledge and beliefs, and their own understanding of life. These cisterns, however, could not hold the water, for in it there was no truth.

Let none of us look like such a cracked cistern. But let us drink the genuine and only true water of life, which is offered to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, whose glory and dominion is the glory and dominion of the ages. Amen.

Is it possible to remain calm and indifferent while listening to the conversation of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan woman (see John 4:5–42)? This is one of His most important and deepest discourses. Our hearts should be filled with amazement before the mystery and depth of His words.

The Lord walked on a long journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, walked through the mountains, in a hot season, and, tired, on a hot afternoon, sat down to rest at the well of Jacob near the city of Sychar. A Samaritan woman came up to draw water from the well. Jesus asked for a drink. The Samaritan woman was surprised: "How can You, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink? After all, the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). The Lord answered: "If you knew Who says to you: 'Give Me a drink,' you yourself would ask Him, and He would give you living water" (John 4:10).

The Samaritan woman does not understand these words, considering the Interlocutor an ordinary Jewish wanderer. How does He say that she herself must ask for living water? What kind of living water? She asks with surprise: "Can you get water from the well? You have nothing to draw, and the well is deep. Are You

greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well? Who are you?" (see John 4:11). What is the answer of the Lord Jesus Christ? "Whoever drinks this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

The Samaritan woman still continues to think only of fresh spring water and, amazed that the Lord can give her such water that will stop her thirst, she asks Him: "Give me this water so that I will not have thirst and not come here to draw" (John 4:15). He did not speak of simple water, but of that which the Samaritan woman had never thought of, which was completely unknown to her. He, as on the feast of Mid-Pentecost, spoke of water flowing unto eternal life. The holy Apostle John the Theologian will later say the same about this in the Apocalypse, depicting the Heavenly Jerusalem: he saw a pure river of life, bright as a crystal, proceeding from the Throne of God and the Lamb, and the tree of life growing on its bank, which brings forth fruits every month and these feed with mysterious fruits all the righteous who have been honored to enter the New Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 22:2–14).

What is this wonderful water? Everyone knows that nothing living can exist without water. Without water, the life of our body is impossible, because those complex processes in which its life is manifested depend on it. In nature, the law of constant motion is fundamental: everything flows, everything changes, nothing is at rest. Even a stone only seems to be unchanged, because in its depths there is an incessant movement. To arise and move, it must be under the power of a driving force. So, in the physical world, movement does not stop for a moment.

And how could it be otherwise in the life of our spirit? Is it possible to think that our spirit is motionless? After all, this would be a violation of universal law. And in our spirit there is an uninterrupted movement directed towards eternal life, so that, as it improves, it approaches the Spirit of God, and thereby realizes the highest goal of its creation. Our spiritual growth, our movement along the path of goodness, virtue, mercy, worship of God indicated by the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest form of movement in the whole world, and it also needs a source. It is about this source of the life of the spirit that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks, meaning by water the living grace of the Holy Spirit, which serves as the source of all energy in the direction of good to the Throne of God.

No Christian can or should remain spiritually inactive. Even the apostle Paul said about himself: "I count not myself yet to have laid hold" (Phil. 3:13). He always strove forward on the path to God. This commandment is for us too.

The Samaritan woman does not understand anything, but she is still amazed at the extraordinary words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then He says: "Go, call your

husband and come hither" (John 4:16). She replies: "I have no husband" (John 4:17). - "You told the truth that you have no husband, for you had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband" (John 4:17-18). The woman is smitten. "So this is a prophet, for He said everything that happened in my life!" And the structure of her thoughts suddenly changes. "If this is a prophet, then He can remove all doubt." And she says, "Lord! I see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you say that the place where worship should be is in Jerusalem" (John 4:19-20).

It was established among the Jews that in all Palestine there should be one single temple - Jerusalem - and only here should sacrifices be made. And the Samaritans believed that it was necessary to worship on Mount Gerizim, which towered over the place where the Lord Jesus Christ spoke with the Samaritan woman. And see what Jesus answers her: "Believe me, the time is coming when you will worship the Father not on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but the time will come and has already come when true worshipers will worship in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21-24).

These words of the Lord did not fit into the consciousness of the people of that time: neither the Jews nor the Samaritans. For the ancient law of Moses was to a large extent ritual: containing the great truths of the knowledge of God and the great commandments, at the same time it prescribed a whole series of ritual service to God. And people thought that salvation consisted in the fulfillment of all the rites prescribed by law, that it was enough to come to the Jerusalem temple for the feasts. They could not comprehend more and did not understand at all that there is another form of worship of God - in spirit and in truth.

Why was this ancient law given to the Jews, and why was it largely ceremonial? This happened at a time when people were mostly still spiritual babies, uncultured, incapable of knowing the higher secrets of being. Just as small children are fed with milk, so the infant Jewish people had to be given a law that could be understood by them - a ritual law. But behind the rites, in the depths of this law, were hidden the great mysteries of the knowledge of God, which still remain unshakable in the New Testament. The same explains the dispute that arose between the Jews and the Samaritans about the place of worship of God.

What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? God is a Spirit, and man is a spirit limited in his body; man is a particle of the Spirit of God. Worship of God is the worship of the Spirit of God on the part of the human spirit, and it consists in the fact that the human spirit enters into communion with the Spirit of God, and this becomes possible when it is cleansed and sanctified by repentance, constant prayer and striving to fulfill the commandments of Christ.

Worship must be done in truth. What is the truth, you heard from the mouth of Christ: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). And serving God in truth should be a procession along the path of suffering and spiritual exploits indicated by the Lord to that eternal Divine Truth, which Jesus Christ revealed to the world....

We will... go to the Source of living water. The great ascetic of piety, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, said beautifully about this: "Whoever thirsts for anything, no matter how contrary to the Spirit of the Lord, will certainly find satisfaction. If you are thirsty for knowledge, go to the Lord, for He is the only Light that truly enlightens every person. If you are thirsty for cleansing from sins and quenching the burning of conscience, go to the Lord, for He lifted up the sins of the whole world on a tree and tore their handwriting. If you are thirsty for peace of heart, go to the Lord, for He is the Treasure, the possession of which will make you forget all hardships and despise all blessings in order to possess Him alone. Whoever needs strength, He has all strength. Glory - He has the glory of the world. Liberty - He is the Giver of true freedom. He will solve all our perplexities, dissolve the bonds of passions, dispel all sorrows, allow us to overcome all obstacles, all the temptations and intrigues of the enemy, and level the path of our spiritual life. Let us all go to the Lord!" Amen. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 11:19-26, 29-30 EOB

In those days, those who had been scattered abroad by the oppression that arose in connection with Stephen had traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they were only proclaiming the word to Jews. But some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, spoke to the Greeks and preached the Lord Jesus when they arrived in Antioch. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. News of these things came to the ears of the Church which was in Jerusalem. So, they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced. He encouraged them all to remain close to the Lord with a resolute heart. Indeed, Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas went out to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year, they assembled with the Church and taught many people. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. According to their ability, each one of the disciples determined to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea. This is indeed what they did, sending their gift to the presbyters through the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Epistle Lesson for Mid-Pentecost – The Acts of the Apostles 14:6-18 EOB

In those days, Paul and Barnabas fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, Derbe, and to the surrounding region. There, they continued to preach the Good News. At Lystra, there was a certain man sitting without strength in his feet. He was a cripple from his mother's womb and he had never walked. He was listening to Paul speak when Paul fixed his eyes on him. Seeing that the man had faith to be healed, Paul said with a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk. When the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, shouting in the language of Lycaonia, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" They called Barnabas "Jupiter" and Paul "Mercury," because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Jupiter, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and they wanted to offer a sacrifice along with the crowd. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, crying out, "Friends, why are you doing these things? We are men just like you, bringing you the Good News so that you should turn away from these vain things toward the living God who made the heaven, the earth and the sea, and all that is in them. In past generations, he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. However, he did not leave himself without witness: he did good and gave you rains from the sky as well as fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Even by saying these things, they could hardly prevent the multitudes from offering a sacrifice to them.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 4:5-42 EOB

At that time, Jesus arrived at a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me [something] to drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food). The Samaritan woman then said to him, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water!" The woman replied, "Sir, you have nothing to draw [water] with, and the well is deep! Where then do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank of it himself, as did his children and his livestock?" Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again! But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. Not only this, the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or come all the way

here to draw [water]!” Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered, “I have no husband.” Jesus replied, “You said well, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truthfully.” The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet! Our ancestors expressed adoration on this mountain, and you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where people should express adoration.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, a time is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you express adoration to the Father. You express adoration to what you do not know. We express adoration to what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will express adoration to the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such [people] to express adoration to him. God is a spirit, and those who express adoration to him must express adoration in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming, (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus replied, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then, his disciples arrived. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “What are you looking for?” or, “Why do you speak with her?” Then, the woman left her water jar, went away into the city, and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I have done! Could this be the Christ?” The people [then] went out of the city, and were coming to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, saying, “Rabbi, eat!” But he told them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The disciples then said one to another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months until the harvest comes?’ Behold, I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields! They are already white for the harvest! [Already], the one who reaps is receiving his wages and gathering fruit a to eternal life; so that both the one who sows and the one who reaps may rejoice together! For in this, the saying is true, ‘One sows, and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Others have labored, and you have entered into [the rewards of] their labor.”

Many of the Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who had testified, “He told me everything that I did!” For this reason, when the Samaritans came to him, they begged him to stay with them. So, he stayed there two days, and many more believed because of his word. Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, but because we have heard for ourselves and [we] know that this is indeed the Savior of the world, the Christ.”

Gospel Lesson for Mid-Pentecost – Saint John 7:14-30 EOB

At that time, when it was the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. At this, the Jews were amazed and said, “How does this man have such learning without having been educated?” Jesus therefore answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but [it comes] from the one who sent me. Anyone who desires to do God’s will recognize the teaching, whether it is from God, or if I am speaking from myself. Whoever speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and [there is] no unrighteousness in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? Why [then] do you seek to kill me?” The crowd replied, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?” Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel because of it. Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers), and on the Sabbath, you circumcise a boy. If a boy receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, [why] are you angry with me because I made a man completely healthy on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but make a right judgment.” Then, some people from Jerusalem said, “Is this not the one whom they seek to kill? Behold, he is speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Could it be indeed that the rulers acknowledge that this is truly the Christ? However, we know where this man comes from! But when the Christ comes, no one will know where he comes from.” Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You both know me, and know where I am from. I have not come of myself, but he who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.” At this, they sought to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion – When the Lord came to the well, the woman of Samaria asked the Compassionate One, "Grant me the water of faith, and I shall receive the streams of the font, joy and redemption."

My soul, do not hide the talent that was given you, lest you bear the shame of sloth, on the day when God judges the world; for when he comes he will at once demand judgment of you; as he reckons his accounts, he will collect from you not what you took away, but what you have gained; for he takes from each one the loan with its interest. My soul, do not be negligent. My soul, do business. My soul, give and receive, so that when your King comes in return for your trading he may grant you joy and redemption.

You were not worthy of having, and you have what you hold through the grace of the Giver. Do not be slow to share with those who ask, as the woman of Samaria once shared; for having drawn water alone, she granted to others also of what she had received. No one asked her and yet she gave to all, not grudging the gift. She thirsts yet pours abundantly. Not having drunk, she gives to drink; without having tasted, but like one inebriated, she cries to her fellows, "Come, see a stream that I have found. Is not this the One who grants joy and redemption?"

Having lately drunk of the immortal waters, of which the faithful woman of Samaria has become like the finder, let us diligently Search all the channels; let us briefly take up the words of the Gospel as we see Christ the Light the Water that of old the woman of Samaria drank, and how she from this Water granted another water, and the reason why she did not give drink to the One who was thirsty, and what prevented her. For all these things the book of mighty works, the Bible, contains, and it grants joy and redemption.

What then does the Bible teach? Christ, it says, who is for humans the source of the breath of life, weary from his journey, sat by the source of Samaria. And it was the heat of the day, for it was around twelve, as it is written. In the middle of the day when the Messiah came to shed light on those in night, a Source reached a source to wash clean, not to drink, a Fount of immortality came to the stream of the pitiable woman like one in need. He is tired from walking, the One who trod the sea unwearied, who grants joy and redemption.

But when the Compassionate One was by the well, as I said, then a woman of Samaria lifted the water jar upon her shoulders and came out from Sychar, her own town. Who does not call her coming out and her coming in blessed? For she came out in filth, but came in unblemished as a type of the Church. She came out and drew out life like a sponge. She came out a carrier of water, she came in a carrier of God. And who does not call this woman blessed, or rather revere the woman from the nations, the type, who received joy and redemption?

The holy woman, then, approached and drew with wisdom. For seeing the Master tired and thirsty and crying, "Woman, give me drink," she was not irritated, but said reproachfully, "And how can you, being a Jew, make a request of me?" She recalled the rule, but afterwards with prudence promised the drink. For she did not say, "I am not giving you, a foreigner, drink," but said, "How can you ask?" as once the Mother of God said to the angel, "How shall this be, how does he who has no mother take me as mother, He, the One who grants joy and redemption?"

So, for me, the woman of Samaria from Sychar appears like the painter of two images: of the Church and of Mary. Therefore let us not hurry past her, for she has great attraction. Let the woman say once again to her Fashioner, "How can you

ask me? If I give you a drink, by drinking you will transgress the Jewish Law, and from the water I shall receive you as a husband of one mind with myself." How fair are the words of my woman of Samaria as they sketch out, upon the well, the font from which he receives his maidservant, He who grants joy and redemption.

"Now hear me, woman," cried Jesus, "If you knew my gift and who it is who says to you, 'Give me drink', you would have asked him for living streams, for he grants living water." To this she answered in perplexity, "You carry no bucket, and the well is deep, and from where are your streams? Are you greater or better than our ancestor Jacob? For it was he who, of old, granted us this source. And can you now say, 'I can give you living streams that do not fail to give to the one who asks joy and redemption'?"

"You do not know, woman, what I am saying; you have not reached where I wish. Therefore incline your ear and open your mind to me, that I may enter and dwell in them; for so I wish. One who drinks every day of this water will thirst again, while the water that I shall give to those aflame with faith is relief from thirst, because from within those who drink the stream there will come a fount of immortality springing up and pouring out eternal life. For it was from this that the children of the Hebrews drew out once in the desert, but they did not find joy and redemption."

By these words the woman of Samaria was inflamed with thirst, and the roles were reversed. For she, who just before was providing drink, now thirsted, and he, who at the start was thirsty, now provides drink. The woman then prostrates, "Give me this water, Sir," she says, "that I may no longer hurry to this well that Jacob granted me. Let what grows old decline and let what is young flourish. Let what is for a time pass away, for the time has come of the water that you possess. Let this spring up and provide water for me and for those who, with faith, seek out joy and redemption."

"If you wish me to give you streams of unsullied waters, go, call your husband. I will not imitate your manner, I will not say to you, 'You are a woman of Samaria and how did you ask for water?' I do not torment your thirst for, by thirst, I have drawn you to thirst. I acted being thirsty and like a thirsty man I was tormented that I might show you to be thirsty. Go then, call your husband, and come back." The woman said, "Alas, I have no husband." The Fashioner answered her, "Indeed you have not; for you have had five, but the sixth you do not possess that you may receive joy and redemption."

O wise riddles, O wise images. By the faith of the holy woman all those of the Church are depicted in true colors that do not age. As the woman of many husbands denied her husband, so the Church denied and left like husbands the

many gods, and from the waters betrothed herself to one Master. The former had five and did not have the sixth, while the latter has now left the five of impiety and from the waters takes the sixth, you, who are joy and redemption.

Let us hate the forms of idolatry. She who became a bride from the nations rejects and denies the pleasure as bitter, that is a sweet root. But doubtless someone will ask, "These five forms, what are they?" The error of idols has many forms, but has five horns: impiety, immorality and copulation, beyond these, cruelty and the murder of children, as David teaches, saying, "They sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons and did not find joy and redemption."

She who was betrothed from the nations then abandoned such things and hurries here to the well of the font. She denies what once was, just as the woman of Samaria once did. For she did not conceal it from the One who knows everything before it happens, but said, "I do not have." She did not say, "I used not to have," meaning this, I think, "Though I had husbands before, I now do not want those that I had, for now I possess you who have caught me in a net drawn up by faith from the filth of my evils, that I may receive joy and redemption."

When the holy woman understood the dignity of the Savior from what had been revealed, she longed even more to discover what and who was the one at the well, and perhaps she was in the grip, not unreasonably, of thoughts like these, "Is it God or man at whom I am looking? A being of heaven or of earth? For see, he makes the two known to me in one. He is thirsty, yet gives drink, he learns, yet predicts, and again he invites me, who am outside the Law, and he shows me all my faults, that I may receive joy and redemption."

"Is he then of heaven yet bears an earthly form? If then, being God and mortal, he has been revealed to me as human, and when thirsty he gives me drink as God and prophecies – because it was not for a human to know my way of life and to imagine it, but for the Invisible, who is now seen, to accuse me and rebuke me – it was for him to know me and proclaim to me what I am. I will draw on his mind, I will drink his knowledge, I will wash away with his words all the stain of my sins, that with pure intent I may receive joy and redemption."

"Son of a mortal, as I see you, Son of God, as I understand you, enlighten my mind, Lord, teach me who you are." So the woman of Samaria fittingly entreated Christ, "Behold, I see you clearly as I look at you with faith. Do not hide it from me; are you not the Christ, whom, the prophets foretold was coming? If you are he, as they said, tell me plainly; for I see that indeed you know what I have done and all the secrets of my heart, and therefore freely I implore that I may receive joy and redemption."

But when the One who sees saw the ideas of the wise woman and the faith in her heart, at once he answered her, "The one you call Messiah, whom the prophets foretold was now coming, you see and you hear his voice. It is I whom you see, it is I whom you have in the midst of your heart. With longing I have come to attract you and to save you. Now proclaim the message to all who wish to be saved in the town of Sychar, to your relatives and townsfolk, and come all together, you who thirst for joy and redemption."

"See, woman, you have been drawn from a pit of wretchedness. I, who have no bucket, purified your heart without a stream, and without waters I washed clean your mind. Willingly I came to dwell in you and I showed you who I am and I did not drink." As these things were being said and concluded, the disciples came, for they were not, so it is written, at the well during this, but they came after this, and when they knew all of it they cried out with amazement, "O ineffable compassion! He has condescended to a woman, the One who grants joy and redemption."

Her courage nerved, the woman of Samaria runs to the Samaritans, abandoning her pitcher and taking on the shoulders of her heart the One who searches the inner being and the heart, and reaching the town she trumpets the message to all, crying out, "Elders and youths, young men and maidens," run to the well; the water has overflowed and pours out for all. There I saw a man, whom one should not call a man, for his works are God's, as he foretells and prophesies all things, wishing to save all and granting joy and redemption."

The heralds of the Savior said absolutely nothing when they found him talking with a woman, the One who came and by his dispensation was born on earth from a Virgin. For having gone away to bring nourishment, they found food that had not been cultivated giving to those who ask the nourishment of immortality. He answered them, "My food is the will of my Father. And so you do not know the food that I am eating, which when eaten is a source for all of the breath of perfection and faith that cannot be taken away; that gives joy and redemption."

The multitude from Samaria crowded to the Creator, leaving their houses behind, and by their faith, they were revealed as houses of the One who said in the Scriptures inspired by God, "I will dwell among them and I will walk among them"; as it is written, "In such houses as abandon all things, lands, parents, and what is dearest, and I will be their God and their Savior from snares, while they will be for me a people sanctified who make a dwelling for the unseen and undivided Trinity, which unstintingly pours out joy and redemption."

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 9 "On the Samaritan Woman"*

St. Nikephoros the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople

By Protopresbyter Fr. George Papavarnavas

Saint Nikephoros the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople, was from Constantinople. His parents Theodore and Evdokia were wealthy and of aristocratic origin, but they were primarily pious and virtuous. His father was especially distinguished for his zeal and love for the Orthodox faith, as well as his struggles against the heresy of iconoclasm, for which his life ended in exile.

Saint Nikephoros, like his father, was also zealous and fiery, but also held an excellent education and therefore served as chief secretary at the Palace for a long time. Then he retired to his estate near the Bosphorus, to dedicate himself to prayer, study and asceticism. Later he entrusted his address to the large poor houses of Constantinople, where he ministered with admirable zeal until the day of his election as Patriarch of Constantinople. He rapidly received the three orders of the Priesthood consecutively, and on Pascha Sunday in 806 he ascended the patriarchal throne.

As Patriarch of Constantinople, beside his pastoral ministry, he also saw to the preservation of the Orthodox faith, which heretical iconoclasts tried to distort, thus preserving the unity of his flock, which they tried to divide. This resulted in his suffering unimaginable hardships, persecutions and exile. It is worth noting that thirteen of his twenty years as patriarch were spent in exile and it was there that his earthly life ended. But first and foremost he was interested in the prosperity of his flock and their preservation from the noetic wolves, the heretics, and not his own personal progress and stay in power. For him, the ministry of the throne was crucifying and not about a rise to earthly pleasures. Besides, great figures of the Church, the divine Chrysostom, Saint Gregory the Theologian and many others, did not remain on the throne till the end of their lives and for this they are particularly honored, because the first was exiled by the enemies of the Truth and reposed "in peace" while in exile, and the second resigned in order to preserve the unity of the faithful by preventing potential schism within the Church, although he was not to blame in any way.

The sacred hymnographer, in the hymn composed for Saint Nikephoros, summarizes in a few words his life and conduct, his exiles and courageous confession, which resulted in the victory of the Church against heresy:

Through your inspired confession, you gained victory for the Church, divinely-inspired Hierarch Nikephoros. You suffered unjust exile because of your reverence for the icon of God the Word. Venerable Father, entreat Christ our God to grant us His great mercy.

I wanted to dwell a little on the phrase "your reverence for the icon of God the Word," and mention briefly the Orthodox teaching on sacred icons. First we must say that Christ, the Son and Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is an icon (or image) of God the Father. Man is made according to the image (or icon) of God and is an image (or icon) of Christ. In other words, man is an image of an Image, an icon of an Icon (Basil the Great).

Anyone who reveres and loves Christ embraces the image of His form, as well as the icons of the Panagia His Mother and His friends the Saints. It is striking that the more one loves a person the more they love to see them and enjoy their presence. And when this is not possible due to the distance between them or for any other reason, then they take their photograph, they kiss it, hold it to their heart, and do not consider the fact that it is paper and ink, but it represents the person they love. In a similar way are holy icons embraced, for which our respect and love is given to the person depicted, and not the material object, because, as Basil the Great stresses: "The honor towards the image passes on to the prototype." Here it should be clarified that worship belongs only to the Holy Triune God, but to the Theotokos and the Saints is given honor and not worship.

But the person who reveres the imprint of Christ on paper or wood, should also revere and love the living image of Christ, namely all people. Indeed, the more one loves Christ, the more they will love His image, namely people. As St. Porphyrios would say: "When the soul falls in love with Christ, it also loves people and cannot hate them." And as it follows that they honor the icons, even when they are old and dirty and fallen over, they lift them up, clean them off and kiss them, in the same way, and even more so, they revere the living images of Christ, even if they are fallen and dirty, and they neither scorn them nor condemn them. Judgment belongs to God and we are not allowed to grab hold of with impudence and appropriate the rights of God. Also, we must not forget that there is repentance, by which immortal souls are saved.

Once St. Paisios, saying goodbye to a guest priest, said to him among other things: "Go to your parish and clean the icons." He meant the living icons, which through purification have the ability to arrive at illumination and theosis, namely the enjoyment of eternal divine life. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Right-Believing Juliana, Princess of Vyazma

Saint Juliana, Princess of Vyazma and Novy Torg, a daughter of the noble Maximus Danilov, was known for her virtues and her chastity. Her spouse, Prince Simeon of Vyazma, and also Prince Yuri of Smolensk, were compelled to flee their native lands, which the Lithuanian prince Vitovt had seized. Then Prince Basil of Moscow bestowed the Tver city of Torzhok upon the exiled princes.

Prince Yuri became captivated by Juliana's beauty and tried in every way to persuade her to commit adultery, but Juliana remained faithful to her husband. During a feast, Prince Yuri killed Juliana's husband, in the hope of taking her by force. Saint Juliana resisted the ravisher, wounding him with a knife. The enraged Prince Yuri ordered that her hands and feet be cut off, and that her body be thrown into the Tvertsa River.

Troubled by his conscience and censured by everyone, Prince Yuri fled to the Tatars, but even there he did not find peace. He settled in the Ryazan wilderness where he died in 1408.

The martyrdom of Saint Juliana occurred in the winter of 1406. In the spring of 1407, they saw the body of Princess Juliana floating in the river. A certain peasant heard a voice from above, commanding that the body of Saint Juliana be buried in the Torzhok cathedral on the right side by the south doors.

The relics of the holy Princess Juliana of Vyazma were uncovered in 1819.

A tomb for her body was afterwards built at the Savior-Transfiguration cathedral, where many received healing from her. In connection with the glorification of Saint Juliana on June 2, 1819 a chapel was built on the right-hand side, and dedicated to her. At the cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord, where earlier there had been a chapel over the grave of the saint, a church was built and also dedicated to Saint Juliana in 1906. *(from oca.org)*

Also Commemorated Today

Great-martyr [John](#) the New of Suceava, at Belgorod (Cetatea Alba) (1332).

["Kiev-Bratsk"](#) Icon of the Mother of God (1654).

New Martyr [Demetrius](#) of Philadelphia (1657) (*Greek*).

St. [Odo](#), archbishop of Canterbury (959) (*Celtic & British*).

New Martyr [Constantine](#) of the Hagarenes (Mt. Athos) (1819) (*Greek*).

Confessor [Erasmus \(Elmo\)](#), bishop of Ochrid (Formica), and 20,000 Martyrs with him (303) (*Greek*).

New Martyr John of Trebizond (*Greek*).

New Martyr Asprocastron (White Castle).

St. [Adalgis](#) (Adelgis, Algis, Algis) of Thierarche, priest hermit (686)

[Bodfan](#) (Bobouan), monk (7th c.)

Martyrs [Marcellinus](#), priest, and [Peter](#), exorcist, of Rome (304)

St. Blandina (French, slave, martyred by beheading in 177)

Pope St. Eugenius I, defender of orthodoxy against the Monothelites (657)

[Martyrs](#) St. Photinus (bishop of Lyons), Sanctius, Vetius, Epagathus, Maturus, Ponticus, Biblides, Attalus, Alexander, and about forty companions (Gaul) (177)

38 Martyrs sealed in a bath house (unk)

Martyred mother and her three children, slain by the sword (unk)

Social Team for June 9

Team 1 – Amelia Hanbury, Patty Blaydoe, Mickey Norfolk. Thank you!

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Diocesan Website: <http://www.acrod.org>

Camp Nazareth: <http://www.campnazareth.org>

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Tina Crull, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Johnson family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Fr. Nectaros & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine & the Holy Land, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)