

PSALM 120

A Song of Ascent

1. I lifted my eyes up to the mountains, from whence my help shall come.
2. My help is from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth.
3. Do not allow your foot to be moved, and let not your guardian slumber.
4. Behold, He that guards Israel neither drowzes nor sleeps.
5. The Lord shall keep you: the Lord shelters you upon your *right hand* *.
6. The sun shall not burn you by day, nor the moon by night.
7. May the Lord preserve you from everything bad. May the Lord guard your soul.
8. May the Lord keep your coming in, and your going out, from now and unto the ages.

This is the second psalm of Kathisma XVIII. It is read during the Midnight Service of weekdays and Saturdays.

Verses 2 and 1 are the Prokeimenon during the Vespers celebrated on Thursdays.

Psalm 119 and the following psalms through Psalm 133 are titled *Songs of Ascent* [Ὁδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν] because they were sung by the Hebrews as they ascended up the mount to Jerusalem on their high holidays when this journey was a pilgrimage for them to the Temple. All of these psalms are read during the Kathismata of the Presanctified Liturgy as a sign of our ascent through Great Lent to Pascha.

* The word *right* [δεξιάν] is used alone frequently among the psalms. Its importance lies in the sense that *the right hand* is the arm and hand used almost exclusively among the ancients in wielding their weapon during battles. This single word is also used in referring to the Lord's *might*, i.e. *His power*, when He is asked for, or exerts His protection.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ὁ Ναός τῆς Αγίας Σοφίας τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

June 20, 2010

Fourth Sunday of Matthew

The Tone for this day is the Third

The Morning Gospel of the Orthros is No. 4

Luke 24:1-12

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

The Epistle is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 6:18-23

BRETHREN, having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Gospel Reading is from Matthew 8:5-13

AT THAT TIME, as Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered him, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

In Today's Epistle

📖 These words involving “slaves” may be repugnant to some. But the slavery of which Paul speaks is the voluntary assumption of certain patterns of life. If we are slaves of sin then let us not even conjecture where this will lead. But slaves of righteous living will get a “free gift” from God which we must not refuse.

In Today's Gospel Lesson

📖 The reading today has to do with Authority and Belief. The centurion comes to Jesus to ask for His help in healing his beloved servant. This man acknowledges and understands authority and he demonstrates this in his discussion with Jesus. History tells us that Rome was most proud and naughty, particularly towards those conquered peoples who endeavored to regain their lost freedom. We would expect this officer of Capernaum, then, to be exceptionally harsh and cruel. But he was not. He was a kind man, with human feelings — humble and pious in spite of the fact that he grew up in heathen Rome. He realized that the religious convictions of others differed from his own, and he accepted this, unlike the fanatical Pharisees who felt that they possessed the whole truth, to the exclusion of everyone else. But even more important is that he has faith and belief in Jesus because he *perceives* His authority. Arcane reasoning but these words are important for us all to understand.