

PSALM 131

A song of Ascent

1. **Lord, remember David, and all his gentleness.**
2. How he took an oath to the Lord, shouting it to the God of Jacob,
3. **I will not approach the tabernacle of my house;**
nor will I recline upon the trappings of my bed.
4. I will not dispose sleep unto my eyes, nor dozing to my eyelids,
nor repose for my temples,
5. until I find a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.
6. **Behold, we heard of it in Ephratha¹; we discovered it in the plains of the oaks.**
7. Let us enter his tabernacles; let us worship at the place where his feet had stood.
8. **Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest; Thou, and the Ark of Thy holiness.**
9. **Thy priests are clothed with righteousness; and Thy saints rejoice.**
10. For the sake of Thy servant David,
do not turn Thy face away from Thy anointed.
11. **The Lord truthfully swore to David, and He will not rescind it:**
“**I will set upon your throne from the fruit of your body.**
12. If your sons will observe my covenant,
and these my testimonies which I shall teach them,
their children also shall sit upon your throne unto the ages.”
13. **For the Lord has selected Sion,**
He has chosen her as a dwelling for Himself:
14. **“This will be My respite for ages unto ages;**
here I will dwell for I have chosen her.
15. I will greatly bless her gate. I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16. Her priests I will clothe with salvation; and her saints shall greatly rejoice.
17. **There I shall cause an army² to spring up for David.**
I have prepared a lamp for My anointed.
18. I shall clothe his enemies with shame;
but upon him my holiness shall flourish.”

This is the thirteenth psalm of Kathisma XVIII. It is intoned during the Sixth Hour of the Nativity of our Lord and at the Consecration of a Church. Verses 9 and 14 are the Alleluarion during commemorations of Hierarch and Priest Martyrs. Verses 1, 3 and 6 (and Psalm 45:6) are the responses of the First Antiphon, while verses 11, 13 and 17 are the responses to the Second Antiphon, and verse 14 (plus Psalm 45:5, and Psalm 65:5-6) are the responses to the Third Antiphon during the Liturgy of the Nativity of Holy Virgin. Verse 8 appears in the Orthros Katavasia on the Entry of the Holy Virgin to the Temple. Verse 11 appears in Canticle 5 of the Orthros and verse 13 is the Communion Hymn on the Annunciation. Verses 8 and 11 serve as the Alleluarion at the Liturgy of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Verse 9 is said by the priest as he puts on his Pheloneon before each service.

SAINT SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

Ἁγία Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ

Washington, D.C.

September 5, 2010

The Fifteenth Week After Pentecost

The Tone for this day is Plagal 2

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.

Compiled by John P. Nasou, M.D.

**PROKEIMENON: O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance
To you, O Lord, have I cried, O my God** Psalm 27:9 + 1

Fifteenth Sunday of Matthew

The Reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:6-15

BRETHREN, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believed, and so we speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

The Gospel Lesson is from Matthew 22:35-46

AT THAT TIME, a lawyer asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying "What do you think of Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put your enemies under your feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Today's Gospel summarizes our whole faith: 'Love God and love your neighbor as yourself'. Unfortunately, we are so accustomed to hearing these words that we sometimes forget what they mean. In fact in order to love God, two things are necessary.

First of all, we must believe in a God Who is the Creator of all things. It is no use believing in a god who is just a convenient idea, on whom we can peg responsibilities or blame, as it pleases us. For example, it is very common nowadays to hear the words: 'We all have the same god'. These words are quite untrue. We do not have the same god.

Secondly we have to believe in a God who is Love. Only the Christian God is the Maker of all and also the God of Love. All the teachings of the Church are based on Love. The Christian God is a God in Three Persons, Who love each other, a perfect Unity in Diversity. The Christian God is He who sent His Son to earth. In an act of self-sacrificial Love He gave up His life out of compassion for mankind. And when the Son had of His own will thus saved mankind from sin by being crucified and risen, overcoming death by death, the same Son sent the Comforter from His Father to us, the Comforter, Who is the Holy Spirit, the Presence of God, the Spirit of Truth and Love.

It is true that throughout history the name of the Church has been abused and misused by various people as a political tool. Nevertheless the mere fact that the Church continues to exist after two thousand years and the truths of Christ are still preached through Her, is proof that the Church is not a human institution, but a divine one.

The second commandment given by Christ is to love our neighbors as ourselves. Christ says that this commandment is like the first one. For if we are called to love the Creator, then we must surely also love His Creation, including our fellow-men, who are made in the image and the likeness of God the Creator. In this commandment we are also called to love ourselves, not in the sense of selfishness and vain self-admiration, but in the sense of the image or beauty of God that is within us. It is this image or beauty of God which we have first to discover, and then to develop, so that the likeness of God may grow within us. In order to do this, we must listen to the voice of God calling us to our true destiny. In the Scriptures the holy Apostle Paul writes that at the end of the world the love for others will grow cold. It seems that this has not yet happened. For as long as there are a few who continue to keep the commandments, to love God and love their neighbor as themselves, the world will continue. What are we to do? In the words of the Psalms, it is all very clear: **'Seek God and your soul shall live'**.

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