

***STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS  
HEALING THE BLIND MEN  
Feast Day for Paraskeva, Unmercenary Healer***

July 26, 2009  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
**Revision F**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 9:27-35**  
**EPISTLE: Romans 15:1-7**

Today's Gospel lesson is not used in the West at all. Today's Epistle lesson is used in the West for the second Sunday in Advent from verse 4 to 13 only.

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**Introduction: Jews and Gentiles in Rome**

The Church in Rome was a diverse group of Jews and Gentiles living in a turbulent culture. About 49 AD Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2), even though he had previously treated the Jews with favor. Priscilla and Aquila, Jews and members of the Seventy, then moved to Corinth where they met Paul. By the time Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans in 55 AD, Claudius' wife (Nero's mother) had poisoned<sup>1</sup> him, and Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome with the Church meeting in their house (Romans 16:3-5).

For Jews living in a Gentile culture, it was especially difficult to follow the Mosaic Law dietary rules. How could one find kosher meat when some of the meat sold in the marketplace had even been offered to idols? And one may not know which was which! It was enough to turn some Jews into vegetarians.

For Jews coming into the Church, it was hard to accept Gentile customs. Paul addressed this in Romans 14. He said that while there may be nothing unclean (i.e. nothing non-kosher) of itself; yet to him who considers it unclean, to him it is unclean (Romans 14:14). The Gentile believers needed to show love for the Jewish believers rather than destroy with their food the one for whom Christ died (Romans 14:15). On the other hand, the Jew who held onto the old dietary

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XX, viii, 1-2.

rituals may not be as strong in the Faith as someone who realizes the proper place of food. But still, others were not to pass judgment on him. For it is to his own Master (the Lord Jesus) that he stands or falls (Romans 14:4, 10). The Lord had said that it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles a man (makes him unclean) but what comes out of his mouth (Matthew 15:11).

The Apostle Peter had a vision from the Lord (Acts 10:9-16) to indicate that the Gentiles should be equal partakers (Acts 10:44-48) of the New Covenant as the Jews. Yet it was difficult for Peter to convince the Jews in Jerusalem to accept this (Acts 11:1-18). Finally they did (Acts 11:18) probably due largely to the influence of Bishop James, the Lord's brother.

Peter's vision and the Gentile Pentecost occurred in the late 30's AD. In about 48 AD following the Council of Jerusalem, James and the Apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem drafted a letter (Acts 15:13-29) to be circulated among the Gentile Churches informing them officially that they did not have to follow the Mosaic Law in all its details. Just abstain from:

- Things polluted by idols
- Sexual immortality
- Things containing blood, such as things strangled.

This was for their own benefit since:

- Someone eating meat offered to idols is a partaker of the altar of the idols (1 Corinthians 10:18ff)
- Sexual immorality joins Christ to the harlot (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)
- One needs to discern the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26-30).

While this applied to Gentiles, no such relaxation is recorded as applying to Jewish believers in Jerusalem. In 57 AD when Paul returned from his third missionary journey (or shortly after writing the Epistle to the Romans in 55 AD), he immediately went to meet with Bishop James in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). There were a great number of Jewish believers in Jerusalem who were all zealous to keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:20) and they had been informed (probably by the Jewish leaders, definitely not by James), that Paul taught Jews abroad that they didn't have to follow the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:21, 28-31). Paul had written to the Corinthians in 55 AD, "Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised" (1 Corinthians 7:18). To someone who was zealous to follow the Mosaic Law to the letter, Paul's statements may have been misinterpreted.

To prove to the Jews in Jerusalem that their concept of Paul was not accurate, James and the Jerusalem presbyters instructed Paul to follow the Nazarite Laws (which Paul had been doing) together with four other men in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 21:22-25, Numbers 6:1-21). That way everyone would see that Paul, himself, kept the Mosaic Law and that the rumors were misleading. We might note that Christians were still considered a branch of Judaism at that time.

The Lord had said to Photina, the Samaritan woman, that the day was coming when people will worship the Father neither on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria nor on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (John 4:21). Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), and this is what Bishop James was teaching in

Jerusalem using the illustrations of the Mosaic Law rituals. But the Father was also seeking true worshippers who would worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were resisting James on this count – which led to his martyrdom in about 62 AD. Paul said “the way into the Holy of Holies was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle (in Jerusalem) was still standing” (Hebrews 9:8). With the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, people had no alternative but to worship the Father in spirit and truth at some location outside Jerusalem (John 4:24). Thus, Jewish Christians worldwide were forced into a significant re-appraisal of the situation in the late first century. At the time Paul wrote Romans, however, Jewish Christians abroad trying to hold onto the Mosaic Law practices could be easily weakened in the Faith by the “liberty” of their Gentile brothers (1 Corinthians 8:9).

**Epistle: Romans 15:1-7**

The Epistle lesson speaks of some Christians who are strong versus others who are feeble. The feeble ones may very well be those who have one foot still in Judaism and are having difficulty with the changes that occurred when Messiah came. There are a number of Greek words that refer to different aspects of strength and weakness as follows:<sup>1</sup>

GREEK WORD	MEANING	STRONG’S REF. #
Dunatos	Powerful, capable (compare English dynasty, dynamo)	1415
Ischuros	Forcible, powerful, characterized by force	2478
Kratos	Vigor, greatness	2904
Stereoo	Make solid, confirm	4732
Arrhaphos	Not healthy	732
Astheneia	Feebleness (physical or mental)	769
Kakos echo	Badly held (i.e. not well)	2560 & 2192
Kamno	To labor and get tired	2577
Malakia	Softness, lack of toughness	3119
Nosema	A sickness	3553
Paralutikos	Paralyzed	3885
Puresso	On fire (i.e. with a fever)	4445
Exoutheneo	To belittle as nothing	1848

The Epistle lesson opens (Romans 15:1) with Paul encouraging the Romans who are strong (i.e. *dunatos*) to bear with the feebleness (i.e. *astheneia*) of the not-strong (i.e. *adunatos*) and not just to please themselves. We might ask, “Is this just a nice thing to do – condescending to put up with someone – or is there more to it than that?” Let us look at some examples from the life of Paul and the life of Christ.

Paul was criticized (2 Corinthians 10:10) for being feeble (Greek: *astheneia*) when he was present bodily and for having speech that was belittled as nothing (Greek: *exoutheneo*).

<sup>1</sup> Each of these words has several related words for the different parts of speech: noun, verb, adjective, etc.

Today, he would be characterized as having a weak personality. Yet his epistles were weighty and powerful (*ischuros*) according to his critics, and the Apostle Peter referred to this just before his martyrdom (2 Peter 3:15-16). Of course the stone, which the builders rejected (i.e. the Lord Jesus), was also belittled as nothing (*exoutheneo* Acts 4:11). Some in the Roman Church were also belittling their brothers as nothing (*exoutheneo* Romans 14:10). Paul's actions seem to be intentional. He said, "Now I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I, who in presence am humble among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Corinthians 10:1). Paul went on to say that he had a thorn in the flesh that he asked the Lord to remove (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). Instead, the Lord replied (2 Corinthians 12:9), "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength (*dunatos*) is perfect in feebleness (*astheneia*)." This thorn in the flesh was given to Paul in order that he might not get too exalted in his own eyes or in the eyes of others (2 Corinthians 12:7). And Paul actually boasted in the feebleness (*astheneia*) created by the thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:5). For, says Paul, whenever I am feeble (*astheneia*), then I am strong (*dunatos*) (2 Corinthians 12:10).

On the Sundays of the Adoration of the Cross and the Sundays surrounding the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, we consider Paul's words from 1 Corinthians: "For the Word (Greek: *logos*) of the cross is moronic to those who are perishing, but to those being saved, it is the power or strength (*dunatos*) of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Paul continues (1 Corinthians 1:27): "but the moronic things of the world God has chosen in order that He may shame the wise men, and the feeble things (*astheneia*) of the world God chose in order that He may shame the powerful things" (*ischuros*).

### **Christ Did Not Come to Please Himself**

In their relationship with weak brothers, Paul encouraged the Romans to "please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Romans 15:2). We are to do this just as Christ did not please Himself (Romans 15:3). To demonstrate this, Paul mentioned the example of Christ: "The reproaches of those who reproached You (i.e. the Father) fell on Me" (Psalm 69:9). Christ had the strength to avoid this reproach; He could have called for twelve legions of angels to avoid His crucifixion (Matthew 26:53). He didn't have to stay on the cross while others mocked Him: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40-42).

So how does this help the relationship between those who are strong and those who are feeble? The question needs to be directed inward to consider what is real strength and what is real feebleness. If the Apostle Paul's humble, gentle personal demeanor was really Apostolic strength (interpreted by some as worldly feebleness), and if the Lord God dying on the Cross was really the Power of God conquering death and Satan, and if the Lord intentionally chooses the feeble things of the world, perhaps most peoples' perception of strength vs. feebleness is turned around. And if turned around, then perhaps we ought to look at those who appear feeble a little differently.

For example, our culture tends to focus on the interests and attitudes of young men and women to the neglect of the elderly. Yet the elderly, especially those who are physically feeble, often have considerably more insight into the things of God than the young men and women that drive the norms of society. Similarly, our society tends to shun those who are overly sensitive and easily offended. But sometimes, sensitive people are also sensitive to the things of God.

In His mission in becoming Incarnate, Christ had to put up with a lot from people who treated Him disrespectfully. He didn't come to please Himself, but out of His love for mankind. John Chrysostom stated<sup>2</sup> it this way:

“For our Lord Jesus was both spit upon and beaten with rods by pitiful slaves; not only did he not count it inappropriate, but he even exulted and called the thing glory. In discoursing with a harlot, when the by-standers all accused Him (Luke 7:37-39), He counted it wonderful, not disgraceful, and allowed her to kiss His feet, wash His body with her tears, and wipe them with her hair; and all this amid a company of spectators who were His enemies”.

Paul had earlier said, “Let no one seek his own good, but each one the others' good” (1 Corinthians 10:24). Here Paul repeats that aspect of love: “love does not seek its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:5). John Chrysostom gave<sup>3</sup> a good analogy,

“For your own profit lies in the profit of your neighbor, and his in yours. This is as if one had his own gold buried in the house of his neighbor. Should he refuse to go and there look for it and dig it up, he will never see it. So likewise, he that will not seek his own profit in the advantage of his neighbor will not attain the crowns due to this”.

The context in which Paul wrote the above was a church where self-centeredness was prevalent. At the love feast<sup>4</sup> that accompanied the Lord's Supper, “each one took his own supper ahead of others, and one was hungry and another was drunk” (1 Corinthians 11:21). During the worship, many spoke in tongues, just edifying themselves (1 Corinthians 14:4); Paul encouraged them to seek to edify the Church instead of just themselves (1 Corinthians 14:12). Paul also stated, “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned (i.e. in martyrdom), and have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

John Cassian stated<sup>5</sup> that the stronger person is the one who is able to put up with the reproaches of the weak. A weak man will never support another weak man, but it takes a strong man to support the weak. By doing so, the strong man gains a lot by his virtue of patience.

“You must certainly know that he plays a stronger part who subjects his own will to his brother's, than he who is found to be the more tenacious in defending and clinging to his own decisions. For the former, by bearing and putting up with his neighbor, gains the character of being strong and vigorous. The latter gains that of being weak and sickly, who must be pampered and petted, so that sometimes for the sake of his peace and quiet, it is a good thing to relax something even in necessary matters. In this he hasn't lost anything of his own perfection, though by yielding he has given up something of his intended strictness; on the contrary he may be sure that he has gained much more by his virtue of long-suffering and patience. For this is the Apostle's command: ‘You who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak’ (Romans 15:1); and: ‘Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ’ (Galatians 6:2). For a

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<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXIII, 2.

<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXIII, 3.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Churches imitated the original Lord's Supper, and served it with a meal. Because of problems such as occurred at Corinth, this was changed so that people might be able to discern the Lord's body and blood better.

<sup>5</sup> John Cassian, The First Conference of Abbot Joseph, XVI, 23-24.

weak man will never support a weak man, nor can one who is suffering in the same way, bear or cure one in feeble health. One who is himself not subject to infirmity brings remedies to one in weak health”.

“We must note too the fact that the nature of the weak is always such that they are quick and ready to offer reproaches and sow the seeds of quarrels, while they themselves cannot bear to be touched by the shadow of the very slightest wrong. While they are riding roughshod over us and flinging about wanton charges, they are not able to bear even the slightest and most trivial ones themselves. And so according to the opinion of the Elders, love cannot last firm and unbroken except among men of the same purpose and goodness. For at some time or other it is sure to be broken, however carefully it may be guarded by one of them”.

John Chrysostom commented<sup>6</sup> on this by calling us to a greater citizenship. Those who show love to us in return, when we show love to them, in essence, pay us back. The ones that we are especially called to are those who cannot pay us back.

“But you are called to a greater citizenship, and are enrolled in the books of Heaven, and are liable to greater laws. For the reward is greater then, when one draws to himself a person not inclined to show love. For if He bids us invite to supper those that cannot make us any recompense, that what goes for recompense may be the greater. Much more ought we to do this in regard to friendship. Now he that is loved and loves in return, pays you recompense. But he that is loved and does not love in return, has made God a debtor to you in another sense. And besides, when he loves you, it is easy for him to do so, because you’ve shown kindness to him. But when he doesn’t love you, then he stands in need of your assistance. Don’t make the difficulty a cause for listlessness. And do not say, because he is sick that is the reason I take no care of him (for the dulling of love is indeed a sickness), but be sure to warm again that which has become chilled. But suppose he will not be warmed, what then? Continue to do your own part. What if he grows more perverse? He is but generating for you so much greater return, and shows you to be so much the greater imitator of Christ. For if the loving one another was to be the characteristic of disciples (John 13:35), consider how great the loving of one that hates us must be. For your Master loved those that hated Him, and called them to Him; and the weaker they were, the greater the care He showed them. For He said, (Matthew 9:12), “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”.

## **Our Conscience Helps Us**

A key element in the discussion of strength-feebleness in the Faith is one’s conscience. Some people have a weak conscience. In Paul’s day, there were some Jewish-Christians that were struggling with the dietary laws (Leviticus 11) of the Mosaic Law and had a weak conscience with regard to food (1 Corinthians 8:7).

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<sup>6</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXVII, v. 7.

This term, conscience, has been somewhat abused in our society. The Greek word “*suneidesis*” (translated conscience) denotes seeing in union with someone else – in this case, God. It’s a glimpse where we see (perhaps briefly) what God sees. If we join ourselves with demons and speak lies in hypocrisy, our conscience can become seared as with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2). To one who is thus defiled, his conscience gets defiled also (Titus 1:15). Yet one’s conscience can still convict someone who is intent on doing evil (John 8:9). Even people who have no knowledge of God from the Scriptures can see (in glimpses) what God sees via their conscience (Romans 2:15).

However, we need to be careful with our conscience since our conscience may be feeble in some matters. Paul wrote a lot about peoples’ conscience being feeble in regard to food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8:7-13, 10:23-33). Paul also wrote about one’s conscience being cleansed from dead works to serve the Living God (Hebrews 9:14). The aim, of course is to have a pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9, 2 Timothy 1:3) and a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:5, 19; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21).

Just prior to the Epistle Lesson, Paul gave a series of discussions that contrast someone who is feeble (*astheneia*) in the Faith (Romans 14:1, 2), or who is made feeble (*astheneia*) by the carelessness of someone else (Romans 14:21). This can happen if someone’s feeble (*astheneia*) conscience gets wounded (1 Corinthians 8:12). The two illustrations in Romans 14 are:

- Eating meat vs. eating vegetables (Romans 14:2)
- Keeping the Jewish feast days (Romans 14:5-6)

Paul’s admonitions were:

- Receive the one who is feeble (*astheneia*) and don’t judge him (Romans 14:1-4, 10-12)
- Whether feeble or strong, we each answer to God (Romans 14:4-8)
- Do not put a stumbling block in your brother’s way (Romans 14:13-16)
- As we treat the least of our brothers, so we treat Christ (Romans 14:17-19, compare Matthew 25:31-46)
- Whatever things we don’t do out of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

The text of the Epistle lesson is the concluding statement of Romans 14. If someone is feeble (*astheneia*) and can’t bring himself to eat meat (it may be from the altar of an idol!) or can’t bring himself to break away from Old Covenant practices, bear with him. After all, Christ put up with the Twelve Apostles (Romans 15:7) and they started out pretty feeble also. And Christ puts up with us even though we seem pretty feeble at times. And just as we have hope through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, so we are told to be like-minded toward one another (Romans 15:4-5), and to receive one another as Christ received us (Romans 15:7). Doing so makes for unity in the body of Christ (Romans 15:6) and righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>7</sup> that in doing so and not pleasing ourselves, God gets the glory and not us – which is as it should be.

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<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXVII,

## The Scriptures Were Written for Our Admonition

Paul stated, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures<sup>8</sup> might have hope” (Romans 15:4). John Chrysostom connected<sup>9</sup> Paul’s words to those of Christ, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old” (Matthew 13:52).

Chrysostom used<sup>10</sup> the example of the paralytic (John 5:1-6) to point out that the Scriptures are a treasury of medicines for all purposes.

“The divine oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines, so that whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull desire to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience, from them one may find abundant resource. For what man of those who struggle with long poverty or who are nailed to a grievous disease, will not, when he reads the passage before us (John 5:1-6), receive much comfort? This man had been a paralytic for 38 years, and saw each year others delivered, and himself bound by his disease. He did not fall back into despair, even though despondency for the past, and hopelessness for the future were sufficient to overcome him. Hear what he says, and learn the greatness of his sufferings. When Christ had said, ‘Do you want to be made well?’, he said, ‘Yes, Lord, but I have no man, when the water is stirred, to put me into the pool’ (John 5:7). What can be more pitiful than these words? What can be sadder than these circumstances? Do you see a heart crushed through long sickness? Do you see all violence subdued? He uttered no blasphemous word; he didn’t curse his birthday; he was not angry at the question. He didn’t say, ‘Have You come to make a mockery of us, that You ask whether I desire to be made well?’ But he replied gently, and with great mildness, ‘Yes, Lord’. He didn’t know Who it was that asked him, nor that He would heal him, but still he mildly relates all the circumstances and asks nothing further, as though he were speaking to a physician, and desired merely to tell the story of his sufferings”.

Gregory the Great wrote<sup>11</sup> to Natalis, Bishop of Salons, encouraging him to read the Scriptures more, even during the height of persecution. The Scriptures help us to know what we ought to do during times of persecution.

“You say that you are unable to read because of the pressure of tribulations upon you. I think that this is no excuse, since Paul says, ‘Whatever things are written are written for our instruction, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope’ (Romans 15:4). If, then, Holy Scripture has been prepared for our comfort, we ought to read it so much the more as we find ourselves more wearied under the burden of tribulations. We should not rely only on that sentence, which you quote in your letter, wherein the Lord said, ‘When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what you shall speak; for it is not you that speak,

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<sup>8</sup> For Paul, the “Scriptures” were the Old Testament.

<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIII, v. 16.

<sup>10</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXVII, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory the Great, Epistles, II, 52.



but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you ‘(Matthew 10:19). I say that Holy Scriptures have been given us in vain, if, being filled with the Spirit, we have no need of any other words, such as the Scriptures. But, dearest brother, trusting in God without doubt is one thing, when we are straightened in a time of persecution. What we ought to do when the Church is at peace is another. For it is our duty, through this same Spirit, to learn by reading now what we may be able to show forth also in suffering, should cause arise”.

Clement of Alexandria stated<sup>12</sup> that the achievements of the ancients, such as the martyrs, are images for our correction. When persecution comes, studies along with some of the other virtues are often neglected. Those who aren’t prepared by study of the Scriptures may become distraught. Poverty can also be a type of persecution that distracts us from the Lord.

“Job, through excellence of faith, put the Tempter to shame and blessed his Creator when he fell from rich to poor, from honor to dishonor, from being good-looking to unsightly, and from healthy to sick. He bore what came second, just as what came first, most clearly teaching that it is possible to make an excellent use of all circumstances. Ancient achievements are proposed as images for our correction. The apostle shows this when he says, ‘So that my bonds in Christ have become recognized in all the palace; and several of the brethren in the Lord, growing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear’ (Philippians 1:13-14). Martyrs’ testimonies are examples of conversion gloriously sanctified. ‘For the things the Scripture speaks were written for our instruction, that we, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have the hope’ (Romans 15:4). When pain is present, the soul appears to decline from it, and to seek release. At that moment it slackens from studies, and the other virtues also are neglected. And yet we do not say that it is virtue itself, which suffers, for virtue is not affected by disease, but it is pressured by disease. If he, who has not yet attained the habit of self-command, is not a courageous man, he is distraught; and the inability to endure is equivalent to fleeing from it”.

“The same holds true also in the case of poverty. For it compels the soul to desist from necessary things, I mean contemplation and from pure sinlessness, forcing him, who has not wholly dedicated himself to God in love, to occupy himself with provisions. Health and abundance of necessities keep the soul free and unimpeded, and capable of making a good use of what is at hand. ‘For’, says the apostle, ‘such shall have trouble in the flesh. But I spare you. I would have you without anxiety, that you may serve the Lord without distraction’” (1 Corinthians 7:28, 35).

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<sup>12</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 5.

## ***HEALING THE BLIND MEN***

**July 26, 2009**  
**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision F**

### **Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35**

Today's Gospel lesson begins by focusing on two men who were not very well off physically, but who were strong in the Faith. The two blind men, whose only lot in life was begging, kept crying out as they followed Jesus (i.e. following the noise of the crowd), "Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27). This expression indicates that they recognized Jesus as Messiah. John Chrysostom stated<sup>13</sup> that the prophets also used the term "Son of David" when addressing the king, whom they wished to honor and declare great (compare Isaiah 37:35). Jesus allowed the blind men to continue crying out to Him along the way as He traveled to the house He was to stay at that evening.

The blind men had confident faith that Jesus was able to restore their sight (Matthew 9:28). As Jesus healed the two blind men, he said, "According to your faith, let it be done to you" (Matthew 9:29). This miracle followed immediately the raising of Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56) where Jairus, the synagogue ruler, was a little shakier in his faith and had to be encouraged by Jesus (Mark 5:35-36).

### **According to Our Faith**

We might ask, why did Jesus put the blind men off for so long? The two blind men had followed Jesus from Jairus' house (Matthew 9:25-26) to the house where He was staying (Matthew 9:28). This must have been quite an ordeal for two blind men. He didn't even address their request until He was within the privacy of the house. Thus He drew out their faith like He did that of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25-30).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>14</sup> that Jesus was "teaching us utterly to repel the glory that comes from the multitude. Because the house was close by, he led them there to heal them in private. And this is evident from the fact that He charged them to tell no one" (Matthew 9:30).

"But this is no light charge against the Jewish leaders. These two men, though their eyes were struck out, received the Faith by hearing alone; but the Jewish leaders, beholding the miracles and having their sight to witness what was happening, do just the contrary".

Chrysostom compared<sup>15</sup> the faith the Lord asked of the blind men with the faith He asked of the paralytic, where He did not ask for any faith. But the paralytic acquired faith afterward.

"But why did Jesus not require faith of the paralytic (John 5:5-9), as He did in the case of the blind men, when He said, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' (Matthew 9:28) It was because the paralytic did not yet know who He was (John 5:12-13). For persons who had seen His power exerted on others, He

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<sup>13</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 1.

<sup>14</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII,

<sup>15</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXVII, 2.

might say this to them. Those, who had not yet learned who He was, but who were to know afterwards by means of signs, end up acquiring faith after the miracles”.

Irenaeus noted<sup>16</sup> that there is a correlation between our faith and our free will. We have to want it, like the blind men, and this part is under our own power. If we reject it, like the Jewish leaders, it is not forced upon us.

“Not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you’ (Matthew 9:29). He thus shows that there is a faith especially belonging to man, since he has an opinion especially his own. And again, ‘All things are possible to him who believes’ (Mark 9:23); and, ‘Go your way; as you have believed, so let it be done for you’ (Matthew 8:13). Now all such expressions demonstrate that man is in his own power with respect to faith. And for this reason, ‘He that believes in Him has eternal life, while he who does not believe the Son shall not see eternal life, but the wrath of God shall remain on him’ (John 3:36). In the same manner therefore the Lord both showed to Jerusalem His own goodness, and indicated that man is in his own free will and his own power. ‘How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Therefore your house shall be left to you desolate’” (Matthew 23:37-38).

Clement of Alexandria stated<sup>17</sup> that the reward that we receive at the Resurrection is in proportion to our faith now. The darkness of ignorance blinds us to the truth of faith, but the illumination we receive is the knowledge of faith.

Jerome stated<sup>18</sup> that just as the Lord seldom found a strong faith, such as the centurion (Matthew 8:10) or the woman with the flow of blood for twelve years (Matthew 9:22), so it was in his day. Instead of a faith that cleanses his heart and clings to the Cross, he often found his mind drifting onto base thoughts, the mere mention of which would make him blush. From this point of view, he felt that if it were done unto him according to his faith, he would perish. Thus this life is a struggle from beginning to end.

“Let every one commune with his own heart, and he will find throughout the whole of life how rare a thing it is to find a soul so faithful that it does nothing through the love of glory, nothing on account of the petty gossip of men. For he who fasts does not as an immediate consequence fast unto God, nor does he who holds out his hand to a poor man, lend to the Lord. Vice is next-door neighbor to virtue. It is hard to rest content with God alone for judge”.

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<sup>16</sup> Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxvii, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, I, 6.

<sup>18</sup> Jerome, “The Dialogue Against the Luciferians”, 15, Treatises.

## Healing by the Power of Beelzebul?

The Pharisees accused Jesus of using the power of demons to do what He did (Matthew 9:34). On another occasion, they said that He cast out demons by Ba'alzebul<sup>19</sup>, the ruler of the demons (Luke 11:15).

One might wonder why they thought that Jesus was using demonic power to do what He did. Why did that occur to them? We can see their reasoning from the historical context. At another occasion, Jesus had claimed to be the Light of the world (John 8:12), and God, Who had come down from heaven (John 8:23-30, 3:13, 6:51-58). This is very similar to what Simon<sup>20</sup> Magus (Acts 8:9-23) said about himself 50 miles away in Samaria. Four years later, when Peter encountered Simon Magus, everyone in Samaria believed that Simon was “the great power of God” (Acts 8:10) because of all the incredible “miracles” that he had performed. Simon, who had been a follower of John the Baptist, learned sorcery in Egypt and used illusions and magic tricks to make it seem that he was performing miracles. The Jewish leaders were unable to see through Simon’s “miracles”, and assumed that he and Jesus were both in league with demons. About a year later, Jewish leaders again accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul. They said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48) Jesus said this was blasphemy on their part (Matthew 12:24-37, Luke 11:15-26).

John Chrysostom noted<sup>21</sup> Jesus’ response to the blasphemy of the Jewish leaders. He showed them that He knew what they were thinking, but He didn’t rebuke them harshly. He left it to their conscience to convict them. His aim was to bring them to the truth, and He showed great kindness to His enemies in doing so.

“They had accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, but He did not rebuke them. He allowed them both to know His power by His more numerous miracles, and to learn His majesty by His teaching. When they continued saying the same, He proceeded to rebuke them, first by showing His Godhead, that He made their secrets public; and secondly, by the very act of casting out the demons with ease”.

“Because of the exceeding impudence of such a suspicion, and because of the fear of the multitude, they didn’t dare make these charges publicly, but they were turning them in their mind. To show them that He knew all that, He did not put down the accusation, nor did He expose their wickedness. He added the refutation, leaving it to the conscience of those that said it to convict them. He was bent on one thing, to do good to them that were sinning, and not to expose them. Surely, if He had wanted to make them ridiculous, there was nothing to hinder Him. He put aside all these things, and had one object only: rendering

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<sup>19</sup> Ba'alzebul (Literally *Lord of the flies*) was the god of the Philistines of Ekron that Ahaziah sent messengers to inquire of about concerning his sickness and injury (2 Kings 1:2-16). When Elijah interfered with Ahaziah’s plans, Ahaziah sent three successive companies of soldiers to arrest him. The first two companies were destroyed by fire from heaven, and the third commander begged Elijah to spare his life. Ahaziah never did get to inquire of Ba'alzebul before his death. Other similar names are Ba'alzebel (Lord of the dung), and Ba'alzeboul (Lord of the house).

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the Arch Heretic Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLI, 1.

them less contentious and more truthful, and so to make them more open toward amendment”.

## **Have Mercy on Us**

Following the healing of the blind men, some un-named people brought Jesus a man who was mute and demon-possessed (Matthew 9:32). Jesus cast out the demon and by doing so He cured the muteness. This elicited the response from the crowd, “Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel!” (Matthew 9:33) From a similar crowd reaction in response to an act of faith by a paralytic’s friends (Mark 2:12), there may very well have been an act of faith on the part of those who brought the mute man to Jesus.

We notice that Jesus was very meek as he healed various people. He had just healed Jairus’ daughter privately (Matthew 9:25) and here he healed the two blind men privately, even asking them not to publish the results (Matthew 9:28-30). When the mute demoniac confronted him, He just cast the demon out. In doing this, He was teaching the Twelve and the Seventy how He wanted them to conduct themselves when He sent them out to do the same thing. Immediately following our Gospel lesson, Jesus sent the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons all by themselves (Matthew 10:1). He followed that by doing the same thing for the Seventy almost a year later (Luke 10).

For the Lord to conduct Himself in this manner is a good example of strength in weakness. He had emptied Himself at His Incarnation (Philippians 2:7) of the glory He had with the Father (John 17:5). And in His humble human condition, He went about healing parts of His creation that had been broken because of sin. And He asks us to take on the same humility, realizing that glory awaits us also as it did Him.

Jesus healed the two blind men in late 28 AD in Galilee. In early 30 AD, a few months before He was crucified, Jesus healed another pair of blind men near Jericho. They also cried out to Jesus as He passed by, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 20:29-34) Jerome applied<sup>22</sup> the wisdom of these blind men to our everyday life.

“Imitate those blind men for whose sake the Savior left His home and heritage and came to Jericho. They were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death when the light shone upon them (Matthew 4:15-16). When they learned that it was the Lord who was passing by they began to cry out saying: ‘Son of David, have mercy on us’ (Matthew 20:30). You too will have your sight restored, if you cry to Him, and cast away your filthy garments (Mark 10:50) at His call. ‘When you turn and bewail yourself then you shall be saved, and then you shall be able to see where you have been’. Let Him but touch your scars and pass his hands over your eyeballs. Although you may have been born blind from the womb (John 9:1) and although your mother may have conceived you in sin (John 9:2-3), he will purge you with hyssop and you shall be clean, he will wash you and you shall be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:5, 7).

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<sup>22</sup> Jerome, Letter to Sabinianus, CXLVII, 9.

**THE UNMERCENARY HEALERS**  
*Apostolic Work of Healing*  
*Demonstrating the Love of God*  
*Preparation for the Lord's Return*

July 27, 2009  
Revision C

**GOSPELS:** Matthew 10:1-8  
John 15:17-16:2  
Luke 10:16-21  
Luke 12:32-40

**EPISTLES:** 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:8  
2 Timothy 2:1-10  
2 Timothy 3:10-15  
Galatians 5:22-6:2

In the history of the Church, there have been a number of saints and martyrs that possessed an extraordinary measure of the gift of healing. As the Lord had instructed the Twelve, “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8), those coming later followed the same example and refused to accept payment for their services. This became surprising since many of the unmercenary healers were physicians by trade.

The Orthodox Church today has a healing service called “The Sacrament of Holy Oil.” It is used infrequently and privately. Its theme comes from the mission of the Twelve Apostles who performed their healing accompanied by the anointing of oil (Mark 6:13, James 5:14).

During the Holy Oil service, the names of some of the Unmercenary Healers are mentioned by way of the example of their prayers. Those mentioned are listed in Table I. Other healers are mentioned as part of the Sunday Matins commemoration; these are listed in Table II. Appendix I contains a list of other healers that are well-known for their work.

**TABLE I**  
**HEALERS REMEMBERED DURING**  
**HOLY OIL SERVICE**

Name	Doctor	Century	Feast	Died	Gospel	Epistle
Cosmas <sup>23</sup> & Damian of Asia	yes	4 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 1	?	Matt 10:1-8	1 Cor 12:27-13:8
Cyrus & John	yes	4 <sup>th</sup>	Jan. 31	martyr	Matt 10:1-8	1 Cor 12:27-13:8
Panteleimon	yes	4 <sup>th</sup>	July 27	martyr	John 15:17-16:2	2 Tim 2:1-10
Hermolaus	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	July 26	old age	-----	1 Tim 3:13-4:5
Sampson	yes	6 <sup>th</sup>	June 27	old age	Luke 12:32-40	2 Cor 9:6-11
Diomedes	yes	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sept. 11	martyr	-----	1 Tim 3:13-4:5
Photius	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	Aug.12	martyr	-----	-----
Anicetas	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	Aug. 12	martyr	-----	-----

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<sup>23</sup> There is another Cosmas and Damian of Rome (martyred 284 AD) who were also doctors and unmercenary healers and are remembered on July 1 with the same Gospel and Epistle Readings.

**TABLE II  
HEALERS REMEMBERED DURING  
SUNDAY MATINS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Doctor</b>	<b>Century</b>	<b>Feast</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>Gospel</b>	<b>Epistle</b>
Spiridon	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dec. 12	old age	John 10:1-9	Eph 5:8-19
Charalampos	no	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Feb. 10	martyr	John 15:17-16:2	2 Tim 2:1-10
Menas	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 11	martyr	-----	2 Cor 4:6-15
Eleutherias	no	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dec. 15	martyr	-----	2 Tim 1:8-18
Catharine	yes	4 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 24	martyr	Mark 5:24-34	Gal 3:23-4:5
Thekla	yes	1 <sup>st</sup>	Sept. 24	martyr	Matt 25:1-13	2 Tim 3:10-15
Paraskeva	no	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Oct. 28	martyr	-----	Gal 3:23-4:5
Irene	no	1 <sup>st</sup>	May 5	old age	-----	-----

One will note that all these healers are post-Apostolic. The earliest of the group, Thekla of Iconium, was a convert of the Apostle Paul, but did most of her work in the late 1st and early 2nd Century. Also, all of them were celibate and most were martyrs. Except for Irene, the only non-martyrs lived after peace came to the Church in the 4th Century.

In the lives of these healers, there are a number of themes that are illustrated by the Scripture readings that have been chosen for their feast days.

## *Apostolic Work of Healing*

July 27, 2009  
Revision C

<b>GOSPELS:</b>	<b>EPISTLES:</b>
<b>Matthew 10:1-8</b>	<b>2 Timothy 2:1-10</b>
<b>John 15:17-16:2</b>	<b>2 Timothy 3:10-15</b>
<b>Luke 10:16-21</b>	
<b>Luke 12:32-40</b>	

### **APOSTOLIC WORK OF HEALING**

Many miracles accompanied the work of the Twelve and the Seventy in their various missionary journeys. This was true both when they were first sent out by the Lord (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9, 17), later on after Pentecost (Acts 3:1-8, 5:15-16, 9:39-42) and wherever they went on their missionary journeys. Paul joined them later and performed similar miracles: “God performed unusual miracles by the hands of Paul so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11, 12). Paul refers to this in his Epistle: He did not come to Corinth “with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The Gospel readings for the feast days of some of the Unmercenary Healers have similar themes. For example, the feast days for Cyrus and John, Cosmas and Damian of Asia (Table I) and Cosmas and Damian of Rome (Appendix I) use Matthew 10:1, 5-8) which is the account of the sending out of the Twelve. The feast days for the Apostle Luke and Tryphon (Appendix I) use Luke 10:16-21 which is the account of the return of the Seventy. A detailed account of the missionary journeys of the Twelve and the work of the Seventy is included in Appendix A for further reading.

Both with the Twelve and the Seventy, there was extensive conflict with the forces of Satan. They were both instructed to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9, 17), and the Twelve were given the additional authority to raise the dead (Matthew 10:8). Commenting on this conflict at the return of the Seventy, the Lord said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:18, 19).

John Cassian (4<sup>th</sup> Century) classified healing into three different classes (Conferences, XV, i). “The first is indeed for the sake of healing when the grace of signs accompanies certain elect and righteous men on account of the merits of their holiness. For example, the Lord said, ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give’” (Matthew 10:8).

The second is for edification of the Church and proceeds from either the faith of those who bring the sick or from those who are to be cured. “The virtue of health proceeds even from

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sinner and men unworthy of it. Of whom the Savior says, 'Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out devils, and in Your Name done many mighty works? And then I will confess to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity' (Matthew 7:21-23). If the faith of those who bring the sick or if the faith of the sick is wanting, it prevents those on whom the gifts of healing are conferred from receiving the healing. For example, Mark said, 'And Jesus could not do any mighty works there because of their unbelief.' (Mark 6:5-6). The Lord Himself said, 'Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian'" (Luke 4:27).

"The third (class) of healing is copied by the deceit and contrivance of devils. When a man who is enslaved to evident sins is, out of admiration for his miracles, regarded as a saint and a servant of God, men may be persuaded to copy his sins. Thus an opening is made for caviling and the sanctity of religion may be brought into disgrace. Or else he who believes that he possesses the gift of healing may be puffed up by pride of heart and so fall more grievously. Hence it is when the names are invoked of those who, as they know, have no merits of holiness or any spiritual fruits, they (the devils) pretend that by their merits they are disturbed and made to flee from the bodies they have possessed. Of which it says in Deuteronomy, 'If there rise up in the midst of you a prophet, or one who says he has seen a dream, and declare a sign and a wonder. And that which he has spoken comes to pass, and he says to you: Let us go and follow after other gods whom you do not know, and let us serve them. You shall not hear the words of that prophet or of that dreamer, for the Lord your God is tempting you that it may appear whether you love Him or not with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). And in the Gospel it says, 'There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so that, if it were possible, even the elect should be led astray'" (Matthew 24:24).

### **Hatred by the World**

As one can expect, there was a reaction by the world to the work of the Unmercenary Healers as there was to the Twelve. Just as all of the Twelve except John died the death of a martyr, so did many of the Unmercenary Healers. The reason for this is explained in the Gospel reading for the feast day of some of the Unmercenary Healers, such as Panteleimon (Table I) and Haralampos (Table II), which is John 15:7-16:2. This reading addresses the hatred of the world in response to their work. This hatred is a very passionate, but often totally illogical hatred. How can one logically hate people who go around healing their fellow men for free?

Usually it was the civil authorities and seemingly good people that were behind the hatred and martyrdom of the Unmercenary Healers. But why would seemingly good people persecute the righteous? This is something that occurs today also, and this is described in the above Gospel reading. In the case of the Lord and the Twelve in the Gospel reading, it was the Jewish leaders or King Herod (trying to please the Jewish leaders). This was not the underbelly of Jewish society but the leaders who were respected and who upheld the law -- seemingly good people. There was a dark side to this, however. The Lord pointed out that there was considerable hypocrisy involved regarding the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23). And the Jewish historian, Josephus, describes in chapter after chapter the sordid, scheming, homicidal family life of the Herods. But most people didn't see this side of it; it seemed like good people were persecuting the righteous.

In the Gospel lesson, the Lord said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Because Christ and the Twelve were not of the world, they were hated by the world (v. 19). Because they were of the Father (John 17:11, 12) and the ruler of this world hated the Father, they were hated by the world. This then led to persecution of the Lord and the Twelve by the world. In the centuries that followed, the same thing applied to the Unmercenary Healers: they stood out very dramatically as being of the Father.

This same Gospel lesson is used for the warrior-martyrs Demetrios of Thessalonica (Salonica) and George of Cappadocia. For a more detailed discussion of this, see the study for October 26 on the feast day of Demetrios and George.

### **The Purpose of Suffering**

One of the Epistle readings for the Unmercenary Healers is 2 Timothy 2:1-10. This is used for Panteleimon (Table I), Haralampos (Table II) and Laurence (Appendix I) as well as for the warrior-martyrs Demetrios and George. In this Epistle, Paul penned his last words before his martyrdom in encouraging Timothy to continue the Apostolic work that he was called to. In this Epistle, Paul wrote that he had “finished the race” and that “his departure (i.e. martyrdom) was at hand” (2 Timothy 4:6,7). A year or so earlier, Paul had established Timothy as Bishop of Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), and his encouragements to Timothy in this Epistle were:

- Be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1).
- The things you heard from me, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (v.2).
- You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (v.3).

Why should Timothy, Paul, the Lord, the Twelve and the Unmercenary Healers have to suffer? The answer is that they do this for the sake of those who follow them in the Faith. They help others to see what is beyond this life and what really matters.

John Chrysostom made some analogies as follows: “In war, the Captain who sees his General wounded and recovered again, is much encouraged. And thus it produces some consolation to the faithful, that the Apostle Paul should have been exposed to great suffering and not rendered weak by the utmost of them. For Timothy heard that he who possessed so great powers (see Acts 19:11-12), was a prisoner, and afflicted, yet was not impatient nor discontented upon the desertion of his friends. Timothy, if ever exposed to the same sufferings himself, would not consider that it proceeded from human weakness, nor from being a disciple, nor because he was inferior to Paul, but that all this happened in the natural course of things” (Homily IV on 2 Timothy 2). For if Paul endured these things, much more Timothy ought to be able to bear them.

In this regard, the Lord had said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master... If they have called the Master of the house ‘Beelzebub’, how much more will they call those of His household” (Matthew 10:24).

Chrysostom added that Timothy knew where the battle lines were drawn and that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). Paul said to stand firm not to depress

Timothy but to excite him. “Be sober therefore, he means, and watch; have the Grace of the Lord cooperating with you, and aiding you in the contest; contribute your own part with much alacrity and resolution” (Ibid.). When we go to watch a wrestling match today, we don’t go there in depression, but with excitement to root for our favorite contestant. In the same vein, we are all contestants in a larger wrestling match where the angels and saints are cheering for us.

Chrysostom concluded with a very fitting example: a comparison of the Emperor Nero with the Apostle Paul, where it was Nero who had Paul beheaded. “Nero had the glory of this world, Paul had the dishonor of this world. Nero was a tyrant who had great success, many trophies, wealth overflowing, numerous armies, the greater part of the world in his sway, the Senate crouching to him and a splendid palace to live in. When he went out, he was arrayed in gold and precious stones and was surrounded by guards and attendants. When he sat down, he was clothed in robes of purple. He was called lord of land and sea, Emperor, King and other high-sounding names. Even wise men, potentates and sovereigns trembled at him for he was said to be a cruel and violent man. He wished to be thought of as a god, and he despised both all the idols and the very God Who is over all.”

“Now in opposition to him, let us consider Paul, a Cilician, a tent-maker, a poor man, unskilled in the wisdom of Rome, knowing the Hebrew language, which was especially despised by the Italians. He was a man that often lived in hunger, often went to bed without food, a man that didn’t have clothes to put on, often in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27). And Paul was cast into prison by Nero himself, confined with robbers, impostors, grave-robbers and murderers, and scourged as a malefactor. Yet (in the 4th Century), the greater part have never heard of Nero while Paul is daily celebrated among Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians and those who inhabit the extremities of the earth. No one knows where Nero’s grave is, while the tent-maker occupies the midst of the city as if he were a king and living.”

“Yet let us consider what the case was when Paul was in chains, dragged bound from prison, while Nero was clothed in purple and walked forth from a palace. Nero, with armies at his command, said, ‘Do not disseminate the Word of God!’ Paul said, ‘I cannot stop, the Word of God is not chained!’ Thus the Cilician, the prisoner, the poor tent-maker, who lived in hunger, despised the rich Roman emperor with all his armies. He that was in chains was a conqueror; he that was in a purple robe was conquered. A single man defeated the Emperor and his armies. The surrounding multitudes were all slaves of Nero, yet they admired not their lord but him who was superior to their lord.”

“And yet I am but praising the lion for his claws, when I ought to be speaking of his real honors. How will Paul come in shining vesture with the King of Heaven? How will Nero stand then, mournful and dejected? Let us, my beloved children, be imitators of Paul, not in his faith only, but in his life, that we may attain to heavenly glory, and trample upon that glory that is here” (Ibid.).

For more discussion on the purpose of suffering, see the Epistle lesson for the Feast Day of Demetrios and George.

## Exposing the World for What It Is

Another aspect of the Apostolic work performed by the Unmercenary Healers is illustrated by the Epistle reading for Thekla of Iconium (Table II). This reading, 2 Timothy 3:10-15, is also used for the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican prior to Lent, which can be consulted for more details on this topic.

Paul begins by referring to Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians who resisted Moses. Paul stated “these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the Faith. They will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs (i.e. Jannes’ and Jambres’) also was” (2 Timothy 3:8, 9).

Paul comments that people will come into contact with Timothy who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God and who have a form of piety but deny its power. Like Jannes and Jambres, they will have corrupt minds [having the characteristics described in 2 Timothy 3:2-4, 1 Timothy 6:3-5] and will resist the Truth. In verse 13, Paul refers to them as “evil men and impostors...deceiving and being deceived.” Yet, Paul says, they will advance no farther, for their folly will be manifest to all as was that of Jannes and Jambres when Egypt was destroyed by the plagues and in the Red Sea (v.9).

John Chrysostom points out that this may seem contradictory, since Paul had just said, “They will increase to more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:16). “He there means that beginning to innovate and deceive, they will not pause in their error but will always invent new deceits and corrupt doctrines, for error is never stationary. But here (2 Timothy 3:9), he says that they shall not be able to deceive, nor carry men away with them; for however at first they may seem to impose upon them, they will soon be easily detected”. “For their folly, will be manifest to all, as (Jannes’ and Jambres’) also was” (2 Timothy 3:9). For if errors flourish at first, they do not continue to the end. For so it is with things that are not attractive by nature, but attractive in appearance; they flourish for a time, then are detected and come to nothing. But not such are our doctrines, and of these, you (Timothy) are a witness. For in our doctrines there is no deceit, for who would choose to die for a deceit?” (Homily VIII on 2 Timothy 3).

But there is a partially hidden agenda here. The key is in verse 12, “All who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (i.e. like Moses and like Paul himself). The Lord spelled out the reasons for this in John 15:18-16:4: some people simply hate God! Jesus said, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”, and “if they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:18, 20).

And why does the world hate God? Because He exposes its inadequacy just as Moses and Aaron exposed the inadequacy and impotence of the secret arts of Jannes and Jambres.

This happens to us also, without our even trying. Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words...” (John 14:23-24). The world, on the other hand, loves the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (John 2:5-17). By loving God, we testify that all this is passing away and is inadequate and impotent - whether we say anything or not! The Unmercenary Healers made this contrast very obvious.

## **Doing Battle with Demons**

Sickness of all kinds is related to activities of demons that try to discredit God and turn man away from God. For example, the Patriarch Job was the most righteous man of his day, yet Satan demanded, and received, permission to afflict Job with very painful diseases. It was so bad that Job's own wife advised her husband to just "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Another example of the connection between demons and sickness is the healing of various physical ailments by merely casting out the demon who brought on the ailment. This occurred for the blind and mute demoniac (Matthew 12:22), the mute demoniac (Matthew 9:32-33) and the epileptic demoniac (Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 9:17-27, Luke 9:38-42). For more details on the relationship of sickness to demoniac activity, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.

If sickness is demon-related, then the Unmercenary Healers are likely to incur a great deal of demonic wrath by their work. It should be no surprise, then, that many of the Unmercenary Healers died as martyrs.

One of the traditional activities of many ascetics for the last 2,000 years has been to withdraw from society in order to do battle with demons, either in seclusion or in company with other ascetics. Again, it should be no surprise that all or most of the Unmercenary Healers were also ascetics.

## **THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE BODY OF CHRIST**

A major characteristic of the lives of the Unmercenary Healers is a vivid demonstration of the love of God, but always within the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

### **What is the Body of Christ?**

Paul speaks of the Trinity as One Spirit, One Lord and One God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Interspersed between these references to the Trinity are the references to one body, one faith and one baptism; the result is that God the Father is above all, through all and in all. The glue that holds all this together is love (Ephesians 4:2). Chrysostom comments, "The love which Paul requires of us is no common love, but that which cements us together and makes us cleave inseparably to one another; it accomplishes as great and as perfect a union as though it were between limb and limb" (Homily XI on Ephesians 4). One of the most intimate moments of this union occurs as the Body of Christ (the Church) meets to worship her Lord and Head and partakes of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. This is a great mystery: how the body of Christ partakes of the body of Christ.

Chrysostom refers to the Body of Christ as, "the faithful throughout the whole world, both which are, and which have been, and which shall be. And again, they that before Christ's coming who pleased God are 'one body' also, because they knew Christ. 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad' (John 8:56). And again, 'If you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me' (John 5:46). And the prophets, too, would not have written of One of whom they knew not what they said. They both knew Him and worshipped Him. Thus they were also 'one body' " (Homily X on Ephesians 4).

In order to establish and promote this union, each one of us was given Grace according to the measure of Christ's gift to us (v.7). These gifts, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., are for the equipping of the saints for the work of (literally) deaconing and for the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11, 12, 16). These gifts have their purposes listed as follows:

- That we all come to the Unity of the Faith and knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).
- That we all come to a Perfect Man (Ephesians 4:13). This is the New Man referred to elsewhere (Ephesians 2:15, 4:24).
- That we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
- That the truth of this might be preserved in spite of deceitful attempts to undo it (Ephesians 4:14).
- That the whole body might grow up in love with every part of the body doing its share, being joined and knit together with every joint supplying (Ephesians 4:15, 16).

Thus, all the gifts are directed toward an unselfish end as directed by the Head of the Body.

The members of the Body of Christ are the elect of God, are holy and beloved, (Colossians 3:12) and are sanctified by the Spirit according to the foreknowledge (Greek *prognosis* = before + knowledge) of God (1 Peter 1:2).

It behooves us therefore to bear with one another and forgive one another (Colossians 3:13) by putting on (v.12):

- tender mercies
- kindness
- humility
- meekness
- long suffering

An illustration of how we do this in everyday life comes from the way we treat the different limbs of our own body. If our eye has a speck in it, the other members of the body treat the eye tenderly, kindly and with long suffering until the speck has been removed.

By doing so, we put on love (Colossians 3:14) which is the greatest of the gifts of God (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13) and is the bond of perfection. John Chrysostom referred to love as the rigging ropes of a sailing ship and the ligaments of an arm or leg. It ties things together and makes the sails or the arm functional; without it the sails or the arm would be useless (Homily VIII on Colossians 3). Love also covers a multitude of sins and weakness in the Body (1 Peter 4:8). Isaac of Syria put it this way: "Let our compassion be a mirror where we may see in ourselves that likeness and true image which belongs to the Divine nature and Divine essence" (Directions on Spiritual Training, Text 85). In other words, let us love as God loves.

Cyril of Alexandria, quoting Isaiah, saw the Body of Christ, the Church, as a lofty mountain: "The blessed Prophet Isaiah introduced those who by faith in Christ have been won unto life, as calling out eagerly unto one another, and saying: 'Come, let us go unto the mountain of the Lord, and unto the house of the God of Jacob, and He shall teach us His way, and we will walk in it' (Isaiah 2:3 LXX). Now by the mountain here we affirm to be meant not any earthly

mountain, for to imagine this would be foolish, but rather the church which Christ has rescued for Himself. For it is high and conspicuous to people everywhere, and exalted, because there is nothing in it which brings men down to earth. For those who dwell within it care nothing for the things of earth, but rather desire those things that are above” (Homily 112 on Luke 10).

## *Demonstrating the Love of God*

July 27, 2009  
Revision C

**EPISTLE LESSONS: 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:8  
Galatians 5:22-6:2**

### **Unmercenary Healers Demonstrate Love**

The Epistle reading for the feast days of Cosmas and Damian of Asia, Cyrus and John (Table I), and Cosmas and Damian of Rome (Appendix I) is 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:8. In this reading, Paul advises the Corinthians to earnestly desire the greater gifts (v.31) where he listed the gift of Apostle first (v.28).

John Chrysostom stated that Paul listed the gift of Apostle first in honor since they had all the gifts plus an abundance of love for their fellow man. Chrysostom defined workers of miracles (1 Corinthians 12:29) as having the power both to punish and to heal, whereas the gift of healing (1 Corinthians 12:30) involved cures only. Yet Paul listed both of these after prophets and teachers. This was for two reasons: (1) Miracles and healings are done for the sake of teaching. (2) Teachers teach by word and by their life; miracle workers and healers may possibly have a corrupt life. As examples, Chrysostom listed Judas Iscariot (John 12:6) and those at the Judgment who are dismayed at being rejected even though they worked miracles in Jesus' name (Matthew 7:22, 23). Chrysostom also noted that Paul always listed the gift of tongues last since this was being used for selfish purposes (1 Corinthians 14:4-14) and not for edifying the brethren (Homily xxxii on 1 Corinthians 12).

Yet Paul also pointed out "a more excellent way": whether one has the gift of:

- Tongues: speaking to men or angels (v.1)
- Prophecy: understanding all mysteries and knowledge (v.2)
- Faith: able to move mountains (v.2)
- Asceticism: selling everything to feed the poor (v.3)
- Martyrdom: giving up ourself to be burned (v.3)
- 

If one doesn't have love, it profits one nothing. The more excellent way is love because love makes us able to handle and direct the other gifts without pride or arrogance, and love gives us a vision beyond this present life.

From the Epistle reading, love:

- Suffers long and is kind (v.4)
- Does not envy (v.4)
- Does not parade itself, is not puffed up (v.4)
- Does not behave rudely (v.5)
- Does not seek its own (v.5)

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- Is not provoked (v.5)
- Thinks no evil (v.5)
- Does not rejoice in iniquity; rejoices in the truth (v.6)
- Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (v.7)
- Never fails (v.8)

These characteristics of love apply very well to the Unmercenary Healers, especially to those that were physicians by trade but wouldn't take any payment for their work. For details on the lives of some of the Unmercenary Healers, see Appendix II which contains a brief summary from the Prologue of those listed in Tables I and II.

The Lord had stated that the greatest love was that of martyrdom, "Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Yet Paul points out that even martyrdom ("thought I give my body to be burned", v.3) without love profits me nothing. If love for one's fellow man can be thought of as a way of life, then our way of life is more important than any of the gifts of the Spirit. A pure life can lead to salvation; but as the example of Judas and the unrighteous miracle-workers at the Judgment show, the gifts of the Spirit don't guarantee that one will escape punishment. The testimony of the Unmercenary Healers is that they had a righteous life, filled with love for their fellow man.

In the First Century, perhaps more commonly than today, many people gave up all their goods to feed the poor (v.3). An example of this is the early church in Jerusalem where "all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 3:44, 45). This included Barnabas, who sold his land (which included property near the Mount of Olives) and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:34-37). Ananias and Sapphira did this also, but without love similar to Judas, and paid dearly (Acts 5:1-10).

John Chrysostom commented on this kind of love as follows: "If love were truly observed, there would be neither slave nor free, neither ruler nor ruled, neither rich nor poor, neither small nor great. Nor would any devil then ever have been known. For sooner would grass endure the application of fire than the devil the flame of love. Love is stronger than any wall, is firmer than any adamant; or if you can name any material stronger than this, the firmness of love transcends them all."

"Therefore Paul says that the love which we are speaking of is the mother of all good things, and he prefers it to miracles and all other gifts. For where there are vests and sandals of gold, we require some other garments by which to distinguish the king. But if we see the purple and the crown, we require not to see any other sign of his royalty. Similarly, when the crown of love is upon our head, it is enough to point out the genuine disciple of Christ; not to ourselves only, but to the unbelievers. For, 'by this', says He, 'all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35). So that this sign is greater surely than all signs, in that the disciple is recognized by it. For though anyone should work 10,000 signs, but be at strife one with another, they will be a scorn to the unbelievers. Just as if they do no signs, but love one another exactly, they will continue to be revered by all men" (Homily xxxii on 1 Corinthians 13).

Chrysostom continued to examine what makes up love, and to dissect what it is composed of. In enumerating this, he noted that Paul began with long-suffering (v.4), which Chrysostom called the root of self-denial. "A man that is long-suffering is of great

understanding. By this we implement the Lord's command of not returning evil for evil; by this we bless those who curse us and show love of our enemies" (cf Matthew 5:43-48). Yet one could have a love that is long-suffering and still be envious; if so, the envy would spoil the excellency of the love (Homily xxxiii on 1 Corinthians 13).

Further, one could have a deep love for one's fellow man which includes kindness and long-suffering, yet continually parade this virtue and be puffed up over it. Perfect love, however, does not allow pride to swell up in this manner.

Love also does not behave unseemly (literally shapelessly, compare 1 Corinthians 7:36). Chrysostom phrased it this way: "In suffering the most shameful things for him whom she loves, love does not ever count the things an unseemliness. She does not even entertain any sense at all of the shame. For the lovers of money endure all manner of reproaches for the sake of that sordid traffic of theirs. Far from hiding their faces, they even exult in it. Much more will he that has love refuse nothing whatsoever for the safety's sake of those whom he loves. Nothing that he can suffer will shame him."

"For our Lord Jesus was both spit upon and beaten with rods by pitiful slaves; not only did he not count it an unseemliness, but he even exulted and called the thing glory. In discoursing with a harlot, when the by-standers all accused Him (Luke 7:37-39), He counted the thing not only not to be disgraceful, but allowed her to kiss His feet, wash His body with her tears, and wipe them with her hair; and all this amid a company of spectators who were His enemies" (Ibid.).

Paul had earlier said, "Let no one seek his own good, but each one the others' good" (1 Corinthians 10:24). Here Paul repeats that aspect of love: "love does not seek its own way" (1 Corinthians 13:5). Chrysostom added, "For your own profit lies in the profit of your neighbor, and his in yours. This is as if one had his own gold buried in the house of his neighbor; should he refuse to go and there look for it and dig it up, he will never see it. So likewise, he that will not seek his own profit in the advantage of his neighbor will not attain the crowns due to this" (Ibid.).

The context in which Paul wrote these things was a church where self-centeredness was prevalent. At the love feast<sup>24</sup> that accompanied the Lord's Supper, "each one takes his own supper ahead of others, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:21). During the worship, many spoke in tongues, just edifying themselves (1 Corinthians 14:4); Paul encouraged them to seek to edify the Church instead of just themselves (1 Corinthians 14:12).

The Church in Corinth also had a number of factions, some following Peter, some Apollos, some Paul and some claiming to follow just Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12). This undoubtedly caused many disagreements because of their lack of love for each other. Thus Paul added to the characteristics of love by saying that love "is not provoked and does not even think evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5). If one did not even suspect or think anything amiss in one's brothers, the disagreements and factions would not occur.

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<sup>24</sup> In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Churches imitated the original Lord's Supper, and served it with a meal. Because of problems such as occurred at Corinth, this was changed so that people might be able to discern the Lord's body and blood better.

Paul also said that love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Paul amplified on this in his Epistle to the Romans, which he wrote a few months after writing 2 Corinthians: “Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:15-18).

Paul concluded this characterization of what is love by saying that love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8). As an example of this, Chrysostom pointed to King David in his dealing with his rebellious son Absalom: “For what could be more intolerable than to see a son rising up against him, aiming for usurping the throne and thirsting for his father’s blood? Yet this did that blessed one (David) endure such that he could not bear to throw out one bitter expression against the parricide. But even when he left all the rest to his captains, he gave a strong injunction respecting Absalom’s safety (2 Samuel 15-18). For strong was the foundation of his love” (Ibid.)

In the case of Absalom, David bore all things, believed all things, hoped all things and endured all things even though Absalom might have been characterized as worthless, and was certainly considered such by David’s commander, Joab (2 Samuel 18:9-18, 1 Kings 2:1-6, 28-34). “For love does not merely hope but also believes from its great affection. And even if these good things should not turn out according to its hope, but the other person should prove yet more intolerable, it bears even these things. For love endures all things” (Ibid.)

Paul counseled the Thessalonians regarding those who refused to receive his words: “Do not keep company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15). Chrysostom added, “For it is the work of the devil to tear us apart from one another, and he has used great diligence to take away love that he may cut off the way of correction. Thus he may retain him in error and you in enmity, and block the way of his salvation. For when the physician hates the sick man and leaves, and the sick man turns away from the physician, when will the distempered person be restored? Do you turn away from him because he is ungodly? For this cause you ought to welcome and attend to him, that you may raise him up in his sickness. Even if he is incurably sick, still you have been bidden to do your part. Judas was incurably sick yet God did not refuse to continue attending to him. Wherefore, neither should you grow weary. For even if after much labor you fail to deliver him from his ungodliness, yet you shall receive the deliverer’s reward. And you will cause him to wonder at your gentleness, and so all this praise will pass on to God. For though you should work wonders and raise the dead and whatever work you do, the heathen will never wonder at you as much as when they see you displaying a meek, gentle, mild disposition. And this is no small achievement, since many will even be entirely delivered from their evil way; there is nothing that has such power to draw men as love.

## **Bearing One Another's Burdens**

The Corinthians were not the only ones Paul wrote to concerning how love bears all things (1 Corinthians 13:7). He also wrote of this to the Galatians and the Colossians, and the sections where Paul discussed bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 5:22-6:2; Colossians 3:12-16) are used as the Epistle lessons for six of the healers listed in Appendix I: Pachomius, David of Thessalonica, Cyriacus, Daniel the Stylite, and both Simeon Stylites. In Galatians, Paul listed this along with other "fruits of the Spirit" such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In Colossians, Paul linked this with forgiving one another by putting on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness and long-suffering (Colossians 3:12, 13). After all, this is what the Body of Christ is all about and this is what we are called to (Colossians 3:15).

This brings up a faith-works issue. These "fruits of the Spirit" are things that we do as a result of our faith. As James said, "Faith was working together with works and by works, faith was made perfect" (James 2:22). In the case of the Unmercenary Healers, they performed great miracles which would lead us to expect that they had great faith. As the Lord said, "If you have faith (the size of) a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there', and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

John Chrysostom pointed out that Paul mentioned the flesh "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24); and also the Spirit, "if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). What is the place, then, of the soul? "The mastery of the passions belongs to her and concerns her (the soul). Being placid amid vice and virtue, if she has used the body fitly, she has wrought it to be spiritual. But if she separate from the Spirit and give herself up to evil desires, she makes herself more earthly. You observe throughout that Paul's discourse does not relate to the substance of the flesh, but to moral choices, that which is or is not vice. He refers to 'the fruit of the spirit' (Galatians 5:22) because evil works originate in ourselves alone and therefore he calls them 'works'. But good works require not only our diligence but God's loving kindness" (Commentary on Galatians 5). Knowing the Scriptures is part of this, "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Another example of good works is illustrated by the Epistle lesson for Sampson the Hospitable (Table I). This Epistle lesson, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, is also used for the 18th Sunday after Pentecost and aptly illustrates the life of Sampson. Born of wealthy parents and trained as a physician, he gave away his wealth and lived very simply as an Unmercenary Healer. As this Epistle lesson describes, Sampson was a cheerful giver who sowed abundantly, and therefore will reap abundantly of treasure in heaven (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7, Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 12:33). For more details on this see the Epistle lesson for the 18th Sunday after Pentecost.

## *Preparation for the Lord's Return*

July 27, 2009

Revision C

**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 12:32-40**

### **PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S RETURN**

While the passions and desires of the flesh tend to hinder us from a close walk with God and Paul encouraged us to live and walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:24, 25) the Lord also encouraged us to be ever mindful of His return in glory. The Gospel lesson for the 6th Century Unmercenary Healer, Sampson the Hospitable, illustrates this spirit of watchfulness. In this Gospel lesson, Luke 12:32-40, the Lord began with the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21). For a detailed discussion of this, see the Gospel lesson for the 9th Sunday of Luke. Then He spoke of the birds and the flowers and living very simply; for further discussion of this, see the Gospel lesson for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost.

With these as background, the Lord began the Gospel lesson with “Do not fear, little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). He then went on to give some specific things we can do to get ready. These include:

- Sell what you have and give alms; this is treasure in heaven (v.33).
- Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (v.34).
- Be ready to depart; let your waist be girded and your lamps be burning (v.35).
- Be like men who wait for their master returning from the wedding (v.36).
- Blessed are those servants whom the master will find watching when He comes (v.37).
- Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming like a thief in the night at an hour you do not expect (v.40).

A similar theme is used for the Gospel lesson for Thekla, a First Century Unmercenary Healer (Table II). Thekla was a convert of the Apostle Paul in Iconium and spent most of her life living in a cave near Seleucia (which is near Antioch). She had been born into a wealthy family, but gave that up to concentrate on the things of God. The Gospel lesson used for her Feast Day is Matthew 25:1-13, and Parable of the Five Wise and Five Foolish Virgins. The theme is, again, preparation as if one is awaiting his Master’s return from the wedding. This parable was used along with the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) to introduce the Lord’s discussion of the Judgment of Works (Matthew 25:31-46). For more discussion on this, see the Gospel lessons for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost and Meatfare Sunday prior to Lent.

### **Living Simply and Without Covetousness**

A distinguishing characteristic of all the Unmercenary Healers is the simple life they led. Many came from positions of wealth, but they followed the Lord’s instructions and gave it away in order to live more simply. The point of this is not just to be poor, but to avoid covetousness. As Cyril of Alexandria (4th Century) put it, “In teaching His disciples not to be covetous of wealth, He also withdraws them from worldly anxiety, and from vain toils and luxury and

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splendor of attire, and whatsoever evil habits follow upon these things. And He bids them rather courageously to be earnest in the pursuit of this simple life” (Homily 91 on Luke). Compared to the Kingdom of Heaven which “it is the Father’s good pleasure to give us” (Luke 12:32), everything else pales in comparison. For “eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 64:4).

Cyril made an analogy to purchasing a house: “Suppose one of us wanted to sell a very beautifully built house and one of you who had plenty of gold were to conceive the desire of purchasing it. Would you not feel pleasure in buying it, and readily give the money that was laid up in your coffers, and even add to this with other money on loan? The transaction would not expose you to loss, but rather the expectation of your future gains would make you in a flutter of joy.”

“Similar to this, the God of all offers to sell you Paradise. There you will reap eternal life, unending joy and an honorable and glorious habitation. Once there, right blessed will you be, and will reign with Christ. Draw near, therefore, with eagerness and purchase the estate. With these earthly things obtain things eternal; give that which abides not and gain that which is secure; give these earthly things and win that which is in heaven; give that which you must leave, even against your will, that you may not lose things hereafter; lend to God your wealth that you may be really rich.”

“And besides it is a very absurd thing, that while we often entrust men of probity with our earthly wealth, and feel no fear lest any loss should result from our confidence in the uprightness of those who receive it, yet we will not trust it to God, who receives from us these earthly things, as a loan, and promises to give us things eternal, and that with interest. ‘For good measure’ He says, ‘pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom’ (Luke 6:38). For the measure to run over is a direct proof of its great abundance. Pleasure-loving wealth chains the human mind in indolence toward all that is good, and stretches out, so to speak, a stiff and haughty neck against God. For it yields not itself to that yoke which would lead it to piety” (Ibid.)

## **Watchfulness**

Watchfulness was compared to having our waist girded and our lamp burning (Luke 12:35). In the First Century, people wore long flowing robes. If one were to take time off and relax, one would unfasten the belt around his waist. But going back to work, he would put the belt back on so that his clothes didn’t hinder his work. Similarly, an oil lamp would be left burning all night while everyone slept, but the wick would be trimmed down to give a dim light, and also burn less fuel. But when one was awake, the lamp would be trimmed bright. This was the problem faced by the five foolish virgins when the bridegroom came: they didn’t have enough oil to allow the lamp to burn brightly (Matthew 25:1-13).

Cyril interpreted the girding of the loins as “the readiness of the mind to labor industriously in every thing praiseworthy. For such as apply themselves to bodily labors, and are engaged in strenuous toil, have their loins girt”. The lamp, Cyril said, represents “the wakefulness of the mind and intellectual cheerfulness. And we say that the human mind is awake when it repels any tendency to slumber off into that carelessness which often is the means

of bringing it into subjection to every kind of wickedness. Being sunk in stupor, the heavenly light within it is liable to be endangered from a violent and impetuous blast of wind” (Homily 92 on Luke).

At the Exodus from Egypt, the nation of Israel was commanded that as they ate the Passover meal, they were to eat “with their loins girded, their sandals on their feet and their staff in their hand” (Exodus 12:11). Normally one ate with his belt off, his sandals by the door and his staff outside. The Passover, however, was a state of watchfulness because the gods of Egypt were to be judged that night (Exodus 12:12).

The Apostle Peter also encourages a state of readiness: “The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God? Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Peter 3:10, 11, 14).

The Gospel lesson also referred to different watches: “And if He should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them (watching), blessed are those servants” (Luke 12:38). Why should the Lord omit the first watch? This requires a little insight. Cyril comments on that as follows: “Observe, I pray, the breadth of the divine gentleness, and the bountifulness of His mildness towards us. For He knows our frame and the readiness with which man’s mind wanders into sin. He knows that the power of fleshly lust tyrannizes over us, and that the distractions of this world even, so to speak, against our will drag us on by force, leading the mind into all that is unseemly. But in that He is good, He does not leave us to despair, but on the contrary, pities us, and has given us repentance as the medicine of salvation. For this reason, He says, that whether He come in the second watch, or whether He come in the third watch, and find them so doing, blessed are they. Now the meaning of this you will certainly wish to understand clearly. Men, therefore, divide the night into three or four watches. For the sentinels on city walls, who watch the motions of the enemy, after being on guard three or four hours, deliver over the watch and guard to others. So with us there are three ages: the first, that in which we are still children; the second, in which we are young men; and the third, that in which we come to old age. Now the first of these, in which we are still children, is not called to account by God, but is deemed worthy of pardon, because of the imbecility as yet of the mind, and the weakness of the understanding. But the second and the third, the periods of manhood and old age, owe to God obedience and piety of life, according to His good pleasure. Whosoever, therefore, is found watching, and, so to speak, well girt, whether, if it so chance, he be still a young man, or one who has arrived at old age, blessed shall he be. For he shall be counted worthy of attaining to Christ’s promises (Ibid.)

The Apostle Paul spent a great deal of time in watchfulness, fasting and prayer. Even though it was difficult, he did it for the joy of the kingdom of God. For example, five times he was given 39 lashes, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned and left for dead, three times he was in a ship wreck, spending a night and a day adrift at sea. Not to mention the intrigue of robbers, bounty hunters and false brethren, he was often up all night watching, hungry, thirsty, cold and poorly clad (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).

Paul described his reasons for doing all this earlier; “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:11-17). The above passage is used as the Epistle lesson for the feast days of the Unmercenary Healers Menas (Table II), Euthymius and Alypius the Stylite (Appendix I).

Watchfulness requires work and dedication. This is what James, the Lord’s brother, referred to when he said, “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:22, 24). The Unmercenary Healers worked hard at their calling. But yet they also remembered the Lord’s words: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). The preceding quote from Matthew 11 is used as the Gospel lesson for the Unmercenary Healers. Euthymius (5th Century) and Sergius of Radonezh (14th Century).



**APPENDIX I  
OTHER WELL-KNOWN HEALERS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Doctor</b>	<b>Century</b>	<b>Feast</b>	<b>Died</b>	<b>Gospel</b>	<b>Epistle</b>
Luke	yes	1 <sup>st</sup>	Oct. 18	martyr	Luke 10:16-21	Col 4:5-18
Cosmas & Damian of Rome	yes	3 <sup>rd</sup>	July 1	martyr	Matt. 10:1,5-8	1 Cor. 12:27-13:8
Euthymius	no	5 <sup>th</sup>	Jan. 20	-----	Matt. 11:27-30	2 Cor. 4:6-15
Tryphon	no	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Feb. 1	martyr	Luke 10:19-21	Rom. 8:28-39
Pachomius	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	May 15	-----	Matt. 4:23-5:13	Gal. 5:22-6:2
Simeon Stylite I	no	5 <sup>th</sup>	Sept. 1	-----	John 10:9-16	Col. 3:12-16
Simeon Stylite II	no	6 <sup>th</sup>	May 24	-----	Matt. 5:14-19	Col. 3:12-16
David of Thessalonica	no	6 <sup>th</sup>	June 26	-----	Luke 6:17-23	Gal. 5:22-6:2
Laurence	no	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Aug. 10	martyr	-----	2 Tim. 2:1-10
Sergius of Radonezh	no	14 <sup>th</sup>	Sept. 25	-----	Matt. 11:27-30	-----
Cyriacus	no	6 <sup>th</sup>	Sept. 29	-----	-----	Gal. 5:22-6:2
Joannicius	no	9 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 4	-----	-----	2 Cor. 9:6-11
Gregory of Agrigentum	no	7 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 23	-----	-----	Heb. 13:7-16
Alypius the Stylite	no	7 <sup>th</sup>	Nov. 26	-----	-----	2 Cor. 4:6-15
Ambrose of Milan	no	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dec. 7	-----	-----	2 Thess. 2:13-3:5
Patapius	no	7 <sup>th</sup>	Dec. 8	-----	-----	2 Thess. 2:13-3:5
Daniel the Stylite	no	5 <sup>th</sup>	Dec. 11	-----	-----	Gal. 5:22-6:2
Sava of Mutalaska	no	6 <sup>th</sup>	Dec. 5	-----	-----	Gal. 5:22-6:2

**APPENDIX II**  
**LIVES OF UNMERCENARY HEALERS**  
**FROM TABLES I AND II**

**Cyrus and John, January 31** These compassionate and wonderful saints were not blood-brothers, but were brothers in spirit. Cyrus lived at first in Alexandria, and working as a doctor, healed people by the power of Christ together with medicine for the body. Discovering that illness came upon people mainly through sin, he always told them to cleanse their souls from sin by repentance and prayer, that they might be restored and strengthened in body. When Diocletian began his persecution of Christians, Cyrus went off to Arabia, where he received the monastic habit. But, as he had become known in Alexandria, so he became known also in Arabia, and people went to him for help. John, hearing of him and being at that time a Roman officer in Edessa, came to Arabia to see Cyrus. On seeing each other, they loved each other as brothers and remained together to live in asceticism. At that time, a Christian woman called Athanasia was tortured together with her three daughters in the town of Canopus. Cyrus and John heard of this, and came to Canopus to encourage the mother and daughters not to fall back from the Faith. And, grateful indeed for the counsel of these saints, Athanasia endured all the tortures and, with her daughters, was slain for Christ. The daughters were: Theoctista, age 15, Theodota age 13 and Eudocia age 11. Then the torturers took Cyrus and John and, after torture and imprisonment, slew them with the sword in the year 311. These holy martyrs performed innumerable miracles, both during their lives and after their death. Their relics were translated to Rome in the time of the Emperor Arcadius. They are invoked for help especially for the sleepless and for the blessing of water and food.

**Cosmas and Damian of Asia, November 1** Unmercenaries and wonderworkers, they were brothers in the flesh and in the spirit, born somewhere in Asia of a pagan father and a Christian mother. After their father's death, their mother Theodota devoted all her time and energy to the bringing-up of her sons as true Christians. God helped her, and her sons grew as two choice fruits and as two holy lamps. They were skilled in medicine and ministered to the sick without payment, and so fulfilled Christ's command: "Freely have ye received; freely give" (Matthew 10:8). They were so strict in their unpaid ministry to men that Cosmas became greatly enraged with his brother Damian when he took three eggs from a woman, Palladia, and gave orders that, after his death, he should not be buried with his brother. In fact, holy Damian had not taken those eggs as a reward for healing Palladia's sickness, but because she had sworn by the Most Holy Trinity that he should have them. However, after their death in Fereman, they were buried together in obedience to a revelation from God. These two holy brothers were great wonderworkers both during their lifetime and after their death. A farm laborer, on lying down to sleep at one time, was attacked by a snake, which entwined itself around his mouth and stomach. This poor man would have breathed his last in the greatest torment had he not at the last moment invoked the help of Cosmas and Damian. Thus the Lord glorified forever by miracles those who glorified Him here on earth by their faith, purity and mercy.

**Panteleimon, July 27** Born in Nicomedia of a Christian mother, Eubula, and a pagan father, Eustorgius, he studied medicine as a young man. The priest Hermolaus befriended him, instructed him in the Christian faith and baptized him. Panteleimon miraculously healed a blind man whom other doctors had treated in vain: he healed him by the name of Christ and baptized him. From jealousy, the doctors denounced Panteleimon as a Christian, and he went before the Emperor Maximian for judgment. "He stood before the earthly ruler in the body, but in his mind

he stood before the heavenly King.” He freely declared himself to be a Christian before the Emperor, and, in front of his eyes, healed a paralytic of a long infirmity. This miracle brought many of the pagans to the Christian faith. The Emperor put him to torture, but the Lord appeared to him on several occasions and delivered him whole and uninjured. Then Hermolaus suffered, along with Hermippus and Hermocrates. Condemned to death, Panteleimon knelt in prayer. At that, the executioner gave him a blow on the neck with his sword, and the sword broke as if made of wax. The executioner could not kill him until he had finished his prayer and had himself given the word to behead him. Panteleimon was beheaded under an olive tree, which after that became laden with fruit. “Panteleimon” means “all-merciful”. God the all-merciful received his righteous soul, and glorified him among His greatest saints, his relics remaining incorrupt. This wonderful martyr suffered with honor as a youth for Christ on July 27th, 304. Panteleimon is invoked in the prayers at the blessing of water and the blessing of oil, together with Hermolaus and the other unmercenaries and wonderworkers. The loveliest church dedicated to him is to be found on the Holy Mountain, Athos.

**Hermolaus**, July 26 He was a priest in Nicomedia in the time of the Emperor Maximian, and was with the twenty thousand martyrs condemned by the Emperor to be burned in their church (see December 28th). Hermolaus somehow escaped death on that occasion, together with two other priests, Hermippus and Hermocrates. Hermolaus baptized Panteleimon, with whom he was brought to trial, tortured and finally beheaded. Hermippus and Hermocrates suffered with them, and they were all crowned with wreaths of victory and glory in the Kingdom of Christ. They suffered with honor in about 304.

**Sampson the Hospitable**, June 27 This saint was born of rich and eminent parents in ancient Rome, where he studied all the secular wisdom of that time, devoting himself in particular to the study of medicine. Sampson was a compassionate and liberal physician, and gave the sick medicine for both soul and body, counseling each man to fulfill the requirements of the Christian faith. He moved to Constantinople, where he lived in a tiny house from which he distributed alms, comfort, advice, hope, medicine and all possible aid to those suffering in spirit and in body. The Patriarch heard of Sampson’s great virtue and ordained him priest. At that time the Emperor Justinian the Great became ill with what his doctors believed to be an incurable disease. The Emperor prayed with great fervor, and God revealed to him in his sleep that Sampson would heal him. When the Emperor summoned Sampson to court, the old man had only to put his hand on the diseased place and the Emperor was healed. When Justinian offered him an immense sum of money, Sampson thanked him but would accept nothing, saying to the Emperor: “O Emperor, I had silver and gold and other riches, but I left it all for the sake of Christ, that I might gain heavenly and eternal wealth.” When the Emperor insisted on doing something for him, Sampson asked him to build a home for the poor. In that home, Sampson cared for the poor as a father cares for his children. His compassion for the poor and weak was second nature to him. This holy man, filled with heavenly power and goodness, entered peacefully into rest on June 27th, 530. He was buried in the Church of the Holy Martyr Mocius, his kinsman.

**Diomedes**, August 16 A doctor from Tarsus of eminent parents, he taught the people the Christian faith as he healed them. The Emperor Diocletian ordered that he be beheaded in Nicaea in 298. Those who beheaded him and took his head to the Emperor were blinded, and when they restored the head to his body, with prayer, they were healed.

**Anicetas and Photius, August 12** The Emperor Diocletian at one time visited the city of Nicomedia with the evil intention of utterly exterminating the Christians there. But, when he began his merciless torture of the Christians, Anicetas, one of the governors of the city, presented himself before him and courageously confessed before the Emperor his faith in Christ the Lord, God incarnate in the flesh for our salvation. Anicetas also denounced the worship of idols as that of deaf and dumb stones, unworthily worshipped by ignorant men. The furious Emperor commanded that his tongue be cut out, but Anicetas, by the power of God, continued to speak. Then a lion was let loose on him, which fawned about him. At that moment, the Temple of Hercules fell down. Photius, a kinsman of Anicetas', seeing the wonders and his kinsman's endurance, embraced him, confessed that he himself was a Christian and cried out to the Emperor: "You should be ashamed, you idolater; your gods are nothing!" The Emperor ordered that he be beheaded immediately, but the executioner, lifting up his hand against Photius, gave himself a blow with his sword and died. After harsh torture, the two of them were thrown into prison, where they remained for three years. They were then taken out and thrown into an enormous burning furnace. Many other Christians, men, women and children, went into the flames voluntarily after them, and the prayers of the Christians were heard rising from the flames, thanking God for their death by martyrdom. They all suffered in about 305. Anicetas and Photius are invoked in the prayers at the blessing of oil and water.

**Spiridon, Bishop of Tremithus, December 12** The island of Cyprus was both the birthplace of this famous saint, and the place in which he spent his life in the service of the Church. He was of simple farming stock, and remained simple and humble to the end of his days. He married young and had children, but, when his wife died, he devoted himself entirely to the service of God. He was chosen for his devotion as Bishop of Tremithus, and even as a bishop did not change his simple style of life, taking charge of his cattle himself and tilling his own land. He consumed very little of his own produce, giving the greater part to the poor. He performed great wonders by God's power, making rain fall in a drought, stopping the course of a river, raising several of the dead, healing the Emperor Constans of a grave sickness, seeing and hearing angels, foreseeing future events and penetrating the secrets of the human heart. He turned many to the true Faith, and did much else. He was present at the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325, and, by his simple and clear expositions of the Faith, as well as by convincing miracles, brought back many heretics to Orthodoxy. He dressed so simply that once, when he was invited by the Emperor to the imperial court, a soldier took him for a beggar and struck him a blow. The meek and guileless Spiridon turned him the other cheek. He glorified God with many miracles, and was of great aid both to individuals and the whole Church of God. He entered into rest in the Lord in 348.

**Charalampus, February 10** This great saint was bishop in Magnesia, and suffered for Christ at the age of 113. When a violent persecution broke out under the Emperor Septimus Severus, the aged Charalampus did not hide from his persecutors, but freely and openly preached the Christian faith. He endured all tortures as though not in the body, and when they flayed the living flesh from him, the godly saint said to the Emperor's soldiers: "Thank you, my brethren, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for new and eternal life." He performed many wonders and brought many to the Faith. Even the Emperor's daughter, Gallina, repudiated the paganism of her father and became a Christian. Condemned to death and led to the place of execution, Charalampus raised his arms to heaven and prayed for all men, that God would give them bodily health and salvation of soul, and that He would grant them the fruits of the earth in abundance: "Lord, Thou knowest that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour

out Thy blessing on all.” After praying thus, the saintly elder gave his soul to God before the executioner had laid his sword to his neck. He suffered in 202. Gallina took his body and buried it.

**Menas**, November 11 An Egyptian by birth and a soldier by profession, Menas, as a true Christian, could not bear to look upon the foul offering of sacrifice to idols, so he left the army and the town, the society of men and everything else, and went to a deserted mountain. It was easier for Menas to live with the wild beasts than with pagans. One day, Menas looked from afar in spirit as a pagan festival in the town of Cotyaeus, then went to the town and, before them all, confessed his faith in Christ the living God, denouncing idolatry and paganism as falsehood and darkness. The governor of that town, one Pyrrhus, asked who and what he was. The saint replied: “My fatherland is Egypt; my name is Menas. I was an officer, but, seeing the worship of idols, I rejected your honors. I have come now to proclaim my Christ before you all as the living God, that He may reveal me as His servant in the Kingdom of God.” Hearing this, Pyrrhus put holy Menas to harsh torture. He was flogged, flayed with iron flails, burned with torches and tortured in many other ways, finally being beheaded. His body was burned to prevent Christians taking it, but they did succeed in rescuing some bits from the flames. They buried these remains with care, and they were later taken to Alexandria and buried there, a church being built over them. Means suffered in about 304, and entered into the Kingdom of Christ.

**Eleutherius**, December 15 A good fruit of a good tree, this wonderful saint had noble and eminent parents. He was born in Rome, where his father was in imperial service. His mother, Anthea, heard the Gospel from the great Apostle Paul himself, and was baptized by him. Being early left a widow, she entrusted her only son to the education and service of the Bishop of Rome, Anacletus. Seeing how greatly Eleutherius was gifted and illumined by the grace of God, the bishop ordained him deacon at the age of fifteen, priest at eighteen and bishop at twenty. Endowed by God with wisdom, he made up for what he lacked in years. This godly man was made bishop in Illyria, with his seat at Valona in Albania. He kept his flock like a good shepherd, adding to their number from day to day. The Emperor Hadrian, a persecutor of Christians, sent a commander, Felix, with soldiers, to seize Eleutherius and take him to Rome. When the furious Felix arrived in Valona and went into the church, and heard and saw God’s holy hierarch, his heart was suddenly changed and he became a Christian. Eleutherius baptized him and set off with him for Rome, as merrily as though he were going to a feast, not to trail and torture. The Emperor put the gently-born Eleutherius to harsh torture, flogging him, burning him on an iron grid, boiling him in pitch and burning him in a fiery furnace. But, by God’s power, Eleutherius was delivered from all these deadly torments. Seeing all this, Choribus the governor proclaimed that he himself was a Christian. Choribus was tortured and then beheaded, and so also blessed Felix. Finally, the imperial executioners cut off the honored head of Eleutherius. When his mother, holy Anthea, came and stood over the dead body of her son, she was also beheaded. Their bodies were taken to Valona, where Eleutherius glorifies the name of Christ to this day.

**Catharine**, November 24\_ The daughter of King Constus, she lived with her mother in Alexandria after her father’s death. Her mother was secretly a Christian and, through her spiritual father, brought Catharine to the Christian faith. In a vision, Catharine received a ring from the Lord Jesus Himself as a sign of her betrothal to Him. This ring remains on her finger to this day. Catharine was greatly gifted by God, exceptionally well-educated in Greek philosophy,

medicine, rhetoric and logic, and added great physical beauty to this. When the wicked Emperor Maxentius offered sacrifice to idols and ordered everyone to do the same, Catharine came with daring before him and denounced his idolatrous errors. The Emperor, seeing that she surpassed him in wisdom and learning, summoned fifty of the wisest men, to dispute with her about faith and put her to shame, but Catharine was wiser than they, and put them to shame. The furious Emperor commanded that all fifty wise men be burned. These wise men, at Catharine's prayers, all confessed the name of Christ at the moment of death, and proclaimed themselves Christians. When the martyr was in prison, she brought Porphyrius the general, with two hundred of his soldiers, to the Faith, and also the Empress, Augusta-Vasilissa. They all suffered for Christ. At Catharine's martyrdom, an angel of God appeared to her, stopping and breaking the wheel on which she was being tortured, and after that the Lord Christ Himself appeared to her, strengthening her. After many tortures, Catharine was beheaded with the sword at the age of eighteen, on November 24th, 310.

**Thecla, Equal to the Apostles, September 24** Thecla was born in Iconium of eminent pagan parents. She was betrothed at the age of eighteen to a young man, at the time that the Apostle Paul came to Iconium with Barnabas to preach the Gospel. Listening to Paul for three days and nights, Thecla turned utterly to the Christian faith and vowed to live in virginity. Her mother, seeing that she shunned her betrothed and thought no more of marriage, first talked to her and then beat her and starved her. Finally, she gave her over to the judges and demanded, wicked mother that she was, that Thecla be burned. The judge threw her into the flames, but God preserved her unharmed. Thecla then became a follower of the Apostle Paul, and went with him to Antioch. Attracted by Thecla's beauty, an elder of the city attempted to take her by force, but Thecla tore herself out of his grasp. The elder denounced her to the governor as a Christian who was averse to marriage. The governor condemned her to death and threw her to the wild beasts, but the animals would not touch the body of this holy virgin. Amazed at this, the governor asked: "Who are you, and what is the power that you have in you, that nothing can do you harm?" Thecla replied: "I am a servant of the living God." Then the governor let her go free, and she began to preach the Gospel and succeeded in bringing many to the true Faith, among whom was an eminent and honored widow, Tryphena. After this, Thecla, with the blessing of the Apostle Paul, withdrew to a solitary place near Seleucia. She lived a long time there in asceticism, healing the sick with miraculous power and in this way bringing many to Christianity. The doctors in Seleucia were jealous of her and sent some young men to assault her, hoping that, in losing her virginity, she would lose also her miraculous power. Thecla fled from these insolent young men and, when she saw that they would catch her, prayed to God for help in front of a rock, and the rock opened and hid the holy maiden and bride of Christ. This rock was her hiding-place and her tomb. Chrysostom says of this wonderful Christian heroine and saint: "I seem to see this blessed virgin going to Christ with virginity in one hand and martyrdom in the other."

**Paraskeva, July 26** Born in Rome of Christian parents, she was brought up from her earliest youth in the Christian faith and gave herself wholeheartedly to the fulfilling of God's commandments in her life. She brought others to the Way by means of her true and deep faith and devout life. When her parents died, Paraskeva gave all her goods away to the poor and received the monastic habit. As a nun, she preached the truth of Christ with ever more burning zeal, not hiding from anyone, even though the Christian faith was at that time subject to bloody persecution by the Roman authorities. Wicked Jews denounced Paraskeva for preaching a forbidden faith, and she was brought to trial before the Emperor Antoninus. All the Emperor's

flattery was unavailing in shaking the faith of this servant of God. She was then put to torture by fire, and a white-hot helmet was placed on her head, but God saved her miraculously and she escaped and left Rome. She again began to go from city to city, there to bring the pagan people to the true Faith. In two more cities she was brought before princes and judges, and tortured for her Lord, performing on these occasions great miracles by the power of God and quickly recovering from her wounds. The pagans, as ever, called her miracles magic, and ascribed her recovery to the power and mercy of their gods. Paraskeva once said to a prince who was torturing her: "It is not your god, O Prince, who heals me, but my Christ, the true God." She was finally beheaded by a Prince Tarasius. Thus gloriously ended the fruitful life of this holy woman. Her relics were later taken to Constantinople. She suffered for Christ in the second century.

**Irene, May 5** She lived in the Balkans in apostolic times, in the town of Magedon where her father Licinius was a governor of a small region. Some think that she was a Slav. She was born a pagan of pagan parents. Penelope - for that was her pagan name - learned the Christian faith from her teacher, Appelianus. St. Timothy, the disciple of the Apostle Paul, baptized her and her lady-in-waiting, and brought her a letter from the Apostle Paul to read. She infuriated her father by her refusal to marry, and he intended to torture her, but she brought him to Christianity in a miraculous way. She was tortured in different ways by four kings, other than her father, but God saved her through His angels. King Sedechias buried her up to the neck in a pit full of snakes and scorpions, but an angel of God neutralized the poison of the reptiles and preserved the holy maiden untouched. Then the same king attempted to saw her in two, but the saw broke against her body as against stone. This same king once again bound her to the wheel of a water-mill, then let the water in to drown her, but the water would not flow, but stood still, and the maiden remained whole and alive. King Sapor, Sedechias's son, shod her with nails, loaded a sack of sand onto her, put a bridle on her and commanded that she be led like an animal far outside the city. "Truly I am as a beast before Thee, O Lord!", said the holy martyr as she ran bridled behind her torturers. But an angel of God caused an earthquake, and the earth opened and swallowed up her tormentors. Surviving all these tortures, by which an enormous number of pagans were brought to Christianity, Irene went to the city of Kallinikos, where she preached the Christian faith. The local king, Numerian, tried to kill her, throwing her into three burning metal oxen one after the other. But the maiden was preserved and remained alive, and many saw and believed. The Eparch, Vaudon, took her to the city of Constantina, where he thought to kill her by putting her onto a burning grid. But this did not harm Irene, and many were brought to the true Faith. Finally, Irene came to the city of Mesembria, where the king killed her but God restored her to life. And the king, seeing this, together with many of the people, believed in Christ and was baptized. And thus Irene, by her sufferings and miracles, brought over 100,000 pagans to faith in Christ. At last she laid herself in a grave and commanded Appelianus to close it. After four days, when the grave was opened, her body was not in it. Thus God glorified forever the maiden and martyr Irene, who had sacrificed all and endured all, that God should be the more greatly glorified among men.