

Martyrs Barbara, Catherine, Paraskeva and Kyriake Healing on the Sabbath

**The Martyrs Barbara, Catherine, Paraskeva and Kyriake
July 7, October 28, December 4, November 25, 2016**

Gospel: Mark 5:24-34, Matthew 4:25-5:12; Luke 13:10-17

Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29, 4:1-5

Today's Gospel and the first half of today's Epistle lesson are used in the West in late June. The second half of the Epistle lesson is not used in the West.

Saint	Date	Gospel	Epistle
Barbara	December 4	Mark 5:24-34	Galatians 3:23-4:5
Catherine	November 25	Mark 5:24-34	Galatians 3:23-4:5
Paraskeva of Iconium	October 28	--	Galatians 3:23-4:5
Kyriake	July 7	Matthew 4:25-5:12	Galatians 3:23-4:5

Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29, 4:1-5

The Law as a Pedagogue¹

Paul stated, "But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, kept for the faith, which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the Law was our pedagogue² until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a pedagogue" (Galatians 3:23-25). This applied to the life of the Martyr Barbara in a special way. Barbara was kept in a tower away from people by her father, but learned about Christ anyway by looking out at the beauty of nature. The idolatry of her father kept Barbara under guard, but faith was revealed to her in spite of the "Law" of her father. After faith came to Barbara, she no longer needed to be under the pedagogue of her father, and he tried to kill her out of anger against her faith. For more details of the life of Barbara, see Appendix A. As we understand how the Epistle lesson applies to us, we can also get some insight into the mercy and grace of God toward the Martyrs Barbara and Catherine.

The Mosaic Law has a similar effect on us in training us toward righteousness. Clement of Alexandria taught³ that the Law is not theoretical but practical. Like a pedagogue, its goal is primarily to train one to a virtuous, not an intellectual life. In this fashion, there is a great difference between health and knowledge, where it is difficult for one to learn unless he is healthy. The Law aims to get us healthy, by healing the passions, so that we can learn from the Word.

"When the heavenly guide, the Word, was inviting men to salvation, He exhorted us to yearn after true life now and to come. But now, following in His own steps, He makes what had been prescribed the subject of persuasion,

¹ For a more detailed study of other aspects of the Mosaic Law as applied to our life today, see the Study for Holy Week: Holy Tuesday Matins and Holy Thursday Evening

² A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.

³ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor or Pedagogue, I, 1.

promising the cure of the passions within us. Let us then designate this Word appropriately by the one name *Tutor*” (or *Pedagogue*, or *Instructor*).

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“The Instructor being practical, not theoretical, His aim is thus to improve the soul, not to teach, and to train it up to a virtuous, not to an intellectual life. This same Word is a good teacher, but not yet in the present instance. For the Word teaches us in matters of doctrine by explaining and revealing. But our Educator, being practical, first exhorts to the attainment of right dispositions and character. Then He persuades us to the energetic practice of our duties, enjoining on us pure commandments, and exhorting us to follow representations of those who formerly wandered in error. Both are very useful; that which assumes the form of counseling leads to obedience, and that which is presented in the form of example leads to imitation. The latter is of two kinds — the one having for its purpose that we should choose and imitate the good, and the other that we should reject and turn away from the opposite”.

“From this ensues the healing of our passions due to the quieting of those examples. The Pedagogue strengthens our souls, and by His benign commands, as by gentle medicines, guides the sick to the perfect knowledge of the truth”.

“There is a wide difference between health and knowledge. Learning produces knowledge; healing produces health. One, who is ill, will not therefore learn any branch of instruction till he is well. Neither to learners nor to the sick is each injunction expressed the same way. To learners, it is expressed in such a way as to lead to knowledge, and to the sick in such a way as to lead to health. For those of us who are diseased in body, a physician is required, so also those who are diseased in soul require a pedagogue to cure our maladies. Following this a teacher is needed to train and guide the soul to all required knowledge when it is made able to admit the revelation of the Word. Eagerly desiring to perfect us by a gradual process that is conducive to salvation, and that is suited for effective discipline, a beautiful arrangement is observed by the all-beneficial Word, who first exhorts, then trains, and finally teaches”.

The Martyrs Barbara and Catherine were thus prepared by their training in morality and discipline to receive Christ!

We ask for the same assistance from the Lord all our lives. For example, in both “The Evening Prayer” at Vespers and in “The Great Doxology” at Matins, we say:

1. Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.
2. Blessed are You, O Sovereign; let me understand Your statutes.
3. Blessed are You, O Holy One; enlighten me with Your statutes.

There is a progression here in our understanding of the things of God as we are first taught, then we understand, and finally the Holy Spirit enlightens us.

The Evlogetaria, that is sung during Sunday Matins, illustrates the interaction of the Law with the Holy Spirit. As the cantor describes the work of the Holy Spirit during the Resurrection, the congregation responds by asking the Lord to teach us His Statutes. If we understand the Lord’s statutes, and are enlightened by them, we will also understand what the Holy Spirit is doing in our midst! The Evlogetaria goes as follows:

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.

Cantor: The Company of the Angels was amazed, when they beheld You numbered among the dead. Yet You, O Savior, destroyed the power of death, and with You raising up Adam and releasing all men from Hell.

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.

Cantor: Why, O women disciples, do you mingle sweet-smelling spices with your tears of pity? The radiant angel within the sepulcher cried to the Myrrh-Bearing women. ‘Behold the grave and understand; for the Savior is risen from the tomb’.

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.

Cantor: Very early in the morning the Myrrh-Bearing women ran lamenting to Your tomb. But an angel came toward them saying: ‘The time for lamentation is passed; do not weep; but announce to the Apostles the Resurrection’.

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.

Cantor: The Myrrh-Bearing women mourned; as bearing ointments they drew near Your tomb, O Savior. But the angel spoke to them, saying, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? In that He is God, He is risen from the dead’.

We may not consider that a good understanding of the Resurrection is the Lord teaching us His Statutes. We may think of His Statutes as being rote “do’s” and “don’ts”, but there is more depth to His Statutes than that.

John Cassian stated⁴ that the Law was implanted in man at the Creation; if man had kept it, there would have been no need for the Law of Moses. Examples of the working of this primitive Law are Abel, Enoch and Noah. Because the original Law was utterly corrupted by freedom and the opportunity to sin, the severe restrictions of the Law of Moses were added as its helper.

“At man’s creation, God implanted in him naturally complete knowledge of the Law. If man had kept this, as at the beginning, according to the Lord’s purposes, there would not have been any need for another Law to be given, which He afterwards proclaimed in writing. It would be superfluous for an external remedy to be offered, where an internal one was still implanted and vigorous. But since this had been utterly corrupted by freedom and the opportunity of sinning, the severe restrictions of the Law of Moses were added as the executor and vindicator of this earlier Law and to use the expressions of Scripture, as its helper. Through fear of immediate punishment, men might be kept from completely losing the good of natural knowledge, according to the word of the prophet who says, ‘He gave the Law to help them’ (Isaiah 8:20 LXX). It is also described by the Apostle as having been given as a schoolmaster or pedagogue (Galatians 3:24) to little children, as it instructs and guards them to prevent them from departing, through sheer forgetfulness, from the teaching in which they had been instructed by the light of nature”.

“That the complete knowledge of the Law was implanted in man at his first creation is clearly proved from this. Before the Law, and even before the flood, all holy men observed the commands of the Law without having the letter to read. How could Abel, without the command of the Law, have known that he

⁴ John Cassian, Second Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 23.

ought to offer to God a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof (Genesis 4:4), unless he had been taught by the Law which was naturally implanted in him? How could Noah have distinguished what animals were clean and what were unclean (Genesis 7:2), when the commandment of the Law had not yet made a distinction, unless he had been taught by a natural knowledge? How did Enoch learn how to ‘walk with God’ (Genesis 5:22), having never acquired any light of the Law?”

Clement of Alexandria stated⁵ that the Law, besides creating good government, attracted those who were interested in knowing God. The Law is spiritual, coming from the Holy Spirit; understanding the Law is true wisdom, since it leads us to Christ.

“We may call the Law with accuracy the divine ordinance, inasmuch as it was given by God through Moses. It accordingly conducts to the divine. Paul said, ‘The Law was instituted because of transgressions, till the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made’ (Galatians 3:19). Then, as if in explanation of his meaning, he added, ‘But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up’, clearly through fear, in consequence of sins, ‘unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the Law was a schoolmaster or pedagogue until Christ, that we should be justified by faith’ (Galatians 3:23-24). The true legislator is he who assigns to each department of the soul what is suitable to it and to its operations. Moses was a living Law, governed by the benign Word. Accordingly, he furnished a good government, which is the right discipline of men in social life. He also handled the administration of justice, which is that branch of knowledge, which deals with the correction of transgressors in the interests of justice, where punishment is the correction of the soul. The whole system of Moses trains us to become good and noble men, and seeks out men like us. And that wisdom, which is capable of treating those rightly, who have been caught by the Word, is legislative wisdom. Possessing and using this wisdom is most kingly”.

“It is the wise man alone whom the philosophers proclaim king, legislator, general, just, holy, God-beloved. We discover these qualities in Moses, as shown from the Scriptures themselves, so that we may pronounce Moses to be truly wise. It is the shepherd’s art to care for the sheep; for ‘the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep’ (John 10:11). So also legislation, as it presides over and cares for the flock of men, establishes the virtue of men, by fanning into flame, what good there is⁶ in humanity”.

“He Himself is the good Shepherd and Lawgiver of the one flock, ‘of the sheep who hear Him’ (John 10:3, 16, 27). He is the one who cares for them, ‘seeking’, and finding by the Law and the word, ‘that which was lost’ (Luke 15:4-7), since the Law is spiritual and leads to contentment. For that which has arisen through the Holy Spirit is spiritual. And he is truly a legislator, who not only announces what is good and noble, but also understands it. The Law of this man

⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, I, 26.

⁶ As Clement wrote, Christianity was illegal and banned by the Roman Empire. Today, however, the system of justice of most civilized nations is based on the Mosaic Law. By saying what he does, Clement has anticipated the effect of the Mosaic Law on the civilized world today, 18 centuries after his time.

who possesses knowledge is the saving precept; or rather, the Law is the precept of knowledge. For the Word is ‘the power and the wisdom of God’ (1 Corinthians 1:24). The expounder of the laws is Christ, who gave the Law on Mt. Sinai; He is the first expounder of the divine commands, who unveiled the bosom of the Father, the only-begotten Son”.

“Those who obey the Law, since they have some knowledge of Him, cannot be ignorant of the truth. But those who disbelieve, and have shown a repugnance to engage in the works of the Law certainly confess their ignorance of the truth”.

The Jewish leaders of Christ’s day had a problem with the Law. Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁷ that they “did not know, neither did they understand, therefore they walked in the daytime as in darkness, feeling for, but not touching, the truth we possess, which was contained in the Law. They conformed to the letter, but did not submit to the spirit”.

Irenaeus stated⁸ that they should not say that their unbelief came from the Law. For the Law never hindered them from believing in the Son of God, but it even exhorted them so to do, saying that men can be saved in no other way from the old wound of the serpent.

Clement of Alexandria stated⁹ that the Law was given to them, and terror ensued for the prevention of transgressions and for the promotion of right actions, getting their attention, and so winning them to obedience to the true Instructor. He was one and the same Word, who reduced them to conformity with the urgent demands of the Law. For Paul says that the Law was given to be a ‘schoolmaster until Christ’ (Galatians 3:24). So that from this it is clear, that one alone, true, good, just, in the image and likeness of the Father, His Son Jesus, the Word of God, is our Instructor. God has entrusted us to Him, as an affectionate father commits his children to a worthy pedagogue, expressly charging us, ‘This is my beloved Son; hear Him’ (Matthew 17:5).

Adoption as Sons

This process of entrusting us to Christ is called “adoption”. Paul stated, “Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:1-5). The martyrs of the Church over the ages have illustrated this by their lives in being obedient even to a horrible death. By their free choice, they accepted their lot, and they were shown to be men and women of God, and not children, even though they may not have had much instruction in the Faith, like the Martyr Barbara.

⁷ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, I, xix, 2.

⁸ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, ii, 7.

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor or Pedagogue, I, 11.

Clement of Alexandria stated¹⁰ that those under grace are equal and spiritual, and have free choice. By adopting us as sons, He has conferred manhood on us, which requires responsibility on our part.

“Do you not hear that we are no longer under that Law, which was accompanied with fear, but under the Word, the master of free choice? There are not, then, in the same Word some illuminated and some natural men; but all who have abandoned the desires of the flesh are equal and spiritual before the Lord”.

“In the adoption of sons, He has admitted that those, who are under fear and sins, are children; but has conferred manhood on those who are under faith, by calling them sons, in contradistinction from the children that are under the Law. ‘For you are no more a servant’, he says, ‘but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God’” (Galatians 4:7).

Clement continued¹¹ that when we were babies, even though heirs, we were kept under guard by the elements of the world. Even philosophers are like this unless Christ makes them adults; without Christ, they are unable to consume solid food and can only consume milk like a baby.

“Some worship the elements, the air by Diogenes, the water by Thales, the fire by Hippasus; those who suppose that atoms are the first principles of things arrogantly claim the name of philosophers, but are wretched creatures devoted to pleasure. ‘This I pray’, Paul says, ‘that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all discernment, that ye may approve things that are excellent’ (Philippians 1:9-10). ‘When we were children’, he says, ‘we were kept in bondage under the elements of the world. And the child, though heir, does not differ at all from a slave, until the time appointed by the father’ (Galatians 4:1-3). Philosophers, then, are children, unless Christ has made them men. ‘For if the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free’ (Genesis 21:10, Galatians 4:30), at least he is the seed of Abraham, though not of promise, and receives what belongs to him by free gift. ‘But solid food belongs to those that are of full age, that is, those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil’ (Hebrews 5:14). ‘For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness; for he is a baby’ (Hebrews 5:13), and not yet acquainted with the word. He has believed and does good works, but is not able to give a reason from himself when asked. ‘Prove all things’, the Apostle says, ‘and hold fast that which is good’ (1 Thessalonians 5:21), speaking to spiritual men, who judge what is said according to truth, to determine whether it truly holds by the truth”.

To illustrate where this leads, Clement of Alexandria also spoke¹² of degrees of glory in heaven, in proportion to one’s faith and works. As we follow the path of righteousness, humbly submitting to the trials and tortures of this life, we move from one mansion to a greater one in our reward. Even unbelievers have this opportunity, through philosophy and the worship of the

¹⁰ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor or Pedagogue, I, 6.

¹¹ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, I, 11.

¹² Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VI, 14.

heavenly bodies, if they respond to the Word of God in these things. Barbara and Catherine were able to find their place in the Kingdom of God, even though they were not born into it.

“‘And other sheep there are also, which are not of this fold’ (John 10:16), but are deemed worthy of another fold and mansion, in proportion to their faith. ‘My sheep hear My voice’ (John 10:27); that is, understand the commandments. And this is to be taken in a worthy acceptance, accompanied by works. So that when we hear, ‘Your faith has saved you’ (Mark 5:34), we do not understand Him to say absolutely that those who have believed in any way whatever shall be saved, unless works follow also. It was to the Jews alone that He spoke this, those who kept the Law and lived blamelessly, who wanted faith in the Lord. No one, then, can be a believer and at the same time be licentious; he must put off the passions, so as to be capable of reaching his own mansion”.

“Now to know is more than to believe, as to be dignified with honor after being saved is a greater thing than being saved. Accordingly the believer, through great discipline, divests himself of the passions, and passes to a mansion, which is better than the former one”.

“For instance, Solomon, calling those wise who understand, speaks of those who admire the dignity of his mansion. ‘For they shall see the end of the wise, and to what a degree the Lord has established him’ (Wisdom 4:17). And of his glory they will say at the Judgment, ‘This was he, whom we once held up to derision; fools that we were! We thought his life madness, and his end dishonorable. Now is he reckoned among the sons of God, and his inheritance is among the saints’” (Wisdom 5:3-5)

“Not only then the believer, but also the heathen, is judged most righteously. For since God knew, because of His omniscience, that he would not believe, He nevertheless, in order that he might receive his own perfection gave him philosophy, but gave it to him prior to faith. And He gave the sun, and the moon, and the stars to be worshipped. God made these for the nations, the Law says, that they might not become altogether atheistic¹³, and so utterly perish (Deuteronomy 4:19). But they have become devoid of sense, in spite of this commandment, and addicted themselves to graven images; they are judged unless they repent. Some of them, though able, would not believe God; others, though willing, did not take the necessary pains to become believers. There were also those who, from the worship of the heavenly bodies, did not return to the Maker of them. For this was the way given to the nations to rise up to God, by means of the worship of the heavenly bodies. But those who would not abide by those heavenly bodies assigned to them, but fell away from them to wood and stones, ‘were counted’, it is said, ‘as small dust and as a drop in a bucket’ (Isaiah 40:15), beyond salvation, cast away from the body”.

Basil listed¹⁴ a number of blessings that we have through the Holy Spirit, including adoption as sons and daughters. Yet these are just the down payment and we see their grace

¹³ It was through viewing the stars and the beauty of nature that Barbara was led to faith in God. She realized that her pagan teachers and the idols they worshipped were counterfeits, and she sought more information about the true God. Catherine came on a similar path through the wisdom of ancient Philosophy.

¹⁴ Basil, On the Spirit, XIV, 36.

dimly by reflection as if they were already established in fullness. Some people, who have been martyred, have undergone a special test by the Holy Spirit by being baptized in their own blood.

“Through the Holy Spirit comes

1. Our restoration to Paradise,
2. Our ascension into the kingdom of heaven,
3. Our return to the adoption of sons,
4. Our liberty to call God our Father,
5. Our being made partakers of the grace of Christ,
6. Our being called children of light,
7. Our sharing in eternal glory, and
8. Our being brought into a state of all “fullness of blessing,” (Romans 15:29)

both in this world and in the world to come. Of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise, through faith, we behold the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, and we await the full enjoyment. If this is the down payment, how much more is the perfection! If this is the first fruit, how much more is the complete fulfillment! Furthermore, from this too we may apprehend the difference between the grace that comes from the Spirit and the baptism by water: John baptized with water, but our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. ‘I baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire’ (Matthew 3:11). Here He calls the trial at the judgment the baptism of fire, as the apostle says, ‘The fire shall test every man’s work, of what sort it is’. ‘The day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire’ (1 Corinthians 3:13). There have been some who, in their championship of the true Faith, have undergone death for Christ’s sake, not in mere similitude, but in actual fact. They have needed none of the outward signs of water for their salvation, because they were baptized in their own blood”.

Putting On Christ

Besides being sons and daughters of God, we have put on Christ and are clothed with Christ because of our baptism (Galatians 3:26-27). This is something that the Martyrs Barbara and Catherine did in a very obvious fashion. There are implications of this regarding how we carry ourselves in our walk with God.

Gregory of Nazianzen spoke¹⁵ of our clothing in Christ as having two aspects: one in our preparation for Baptism; the other in our preserving the Baptismal Gift. Assisting us in this are the clothing of good works, done as to the Master Himself. Gregory gave a number of illustrations of how this works.

“We begin to struggle in a twofold conflict; first, to prepare ourselves for baptism by purifying ourselves; and next, to preserve the baptismal gift. It is a matter of equal difficulty to obtain a blessing, which we have not, and to keep it when we have gained it. Often what zeal has acquired, sloth has destroyed; and what hesitation has lost, diligence has regained”.

¹⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, Oration on Holy Baptism, XL, 31.

“A great assistance is vigils, fasts, tears and almsgiving. And let these be your thanksgiving for what you have received, and at the same time your safeguard of them. You have the benefit of many commandments to remind you; so do not transgress them. Does a poor man approach you? Remember how poor you once were, and how rich you were made. One in want of bread, perhaps another Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), is cast at your gate; respect the Sacramental Table to which you have approached, being consecrated by the Sufferings of Christ. If a homeless stranger falls at your feet, welcome him in; remember Him who for your sake was a stranger, who came to dwell in you by His grace, and who drew you towards the heavenly dwelling place. Be a Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-9), who yesterday was a Publican, and is today a liberal soul; offer all to the coming in of Christ. A sick or a wounded man lies before you; respect your own health, and the wounds from which Christ delivered you. If you see someone naked clothe him, in honor of your own garment of incorruption, which is Christ, for as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). If you find a debtor falling at your feet (Matthew 18:23-35), tear up every document, whether just or unjust. Remember the 10,000 talents which Christ forgave you, and don't be a harsh exactor of a smaller debt from your fellow servant, when you were forgiven so much more by the Master”.

Cyprian of Carthage stated¹⁶ that while we have put on Christ, the wisdom of God the Father, our most difficult task is watchfulness for our enemy creeping up on us secretly. This is how Adam and Eve fell! When he tried the same subterfuge with Christ, Christ recognized him and beat him back.

“The Lord warns us, saying, ‘You are the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5:13). He wants us to be simple and yet prudent, to use foresight and watching with an anxious heart, both to perceive and to beware of the wiles of the crafty foe. We, who have put on Christ, who is the wisdom of God the Father, should not be lacking in wisdom in the matter of providing for our salvation. It is not persecution alone that is to be feared; nor those things, which advance by open attack to overwhelm the servants of God. Caution is easier where danger is clear, and the adversary announces himself. The enemy is more to be feared and to be guarded against, when he creeps up on us secretly. When he deceives by the appearance of peace, he steals forward by hidden approaches, which is why he has received the name of the Serpent. That is his subtlety; that is his dark and stealthy artifice for circumventing man. Thus from the very beginning of the world he deceived; and flattering with lying words, he misled inexperienced souls who were very gullible (Genesis 3:1-7). Thus he endeavored to tempt the Lord Himself. He secretly approached Him, as if he would creep up on Him again, and deceive; yet he was understood (Matthew 4:1-10), and beaten back, and therefore knocked down, because he was recognized and detected”.

Jerome stated¹⁷ that we have put on Christ and we are a royal and priestly race looking forward to Christ's return in glory. By contrast, the Pharisees, who do not believe in the Lord's

¹⁶ Cyprian, Treatises, I, 1.

¹⁷ Jerome, Letter to Paula, XXXIX, 4.

resurrection, are being made ready for the advent of Antichrist. When one of their number dies, they weep, go barefoot, crouch in sackcloth, roll in ashes and eat lentils, to show, it would seem, for what poor fare they have lost their birthright. We, who are clothed in Christ, are like the Old Testament priests. Just as they were not allowed to remove their priestly vestments to grieve for the dead, for the anointing oil of God was upon them (Leviticus 21:10-12, Luke 9:59-62), so we need not grieve for those who have gone to be with the Lord. No grief should distract a soul engaged in offering sacrifice to God, and wholly devoted to the Divine mysteries.

The Problem with a Garment of Wealth

One of the stealthy approaches that the Serpent makes comes through the cover of wealth. John Chrysostom wrote a great deal about the problems the people of his day had with wealth. He compared¹⁸ putting on Christ with wearing gold ornaments and with wearing the king's apparel. He stated that clothing oneself in gold, and living only for oneself, while someone else is starving, is sin. Even being clothed in royal garments pale compared to being clothed with the King of kings. The best looking clothes are alms, benevolence, modesty and humbleness.

“When you wear gold while another is perishing; when you, for vainglory, take so much gold, while another has not enough to eat, have you not increased your sins? Put Christ about you, and not gold. Where mammon is, Christ is not; where Christ is, mammon is not. Wouldn't you prefer to put on the King of all? If someone had offered you the purple, and the diadem, would you not have taken them before all the gold in the world? I give you not the regal ornaments, but I offer you to put on the King Himself. And how can one put on Christ? Hear Paul saying, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Hear the Apostolic precept, ‘Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts’ (Romans 13:14). In this way one puts on Christ, if one does not provide for the lust of the flesh. If you have put on Christ, even the demons will fear you. If all you put on is gold, even men will laugh you to scorn; if you put on Christ, men also will reverence you”.

“Do you want to appear good-looking? Clothe yourself in alms, benevolence, modesty and humbleness. These are all more precious than gold; these make even the beautiful yet more beautiful; these make even the maimed to be well formed. For when anyone looks at someone's face with good will, he gives his judgment from love; but an evil woman, even though she is beautiful, can't be called beautiful, because the mind is confounded and doesn't speak right”.

“That Egyptian woman of old was adorned; Joseph too was adorned (Genesis 39:6-20); which of them was the more beautiful? I don't mean when she was in the palace, and he in the prison. He was naked, but clothed in the garments of chastity. She was clothed, but more inappropriate than if she had been naked; for she didn't have modesty. When you are excessively adorned, then you have become more inappropriate than someone who is naked; for you have stripped yourself of your fair adorning. Eve also was naked¹⁹; but when she had clothed

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, X, 4:3.

¹⁹ According to some of the Church Fathers, Adam and Eve were clothed in light prior to the Fall. Their appearance may have been similar to that of the righteous shining forth as the sun after the resurrection (Matthew

herself (Genesis 3:7, 11), then was she more inappropriate. When she was naked, she was adorned with the glory of God; but when she had clothed herself with the garment of sin, then was she inappropriate”.

“If someone had given you kingly apparel, and you had taken a beggar’s clothing, and put it on top, besides the inappropriateness, you would also have been punished for doing this. You have put on the Lord of Heaven and of the Angels, and are you still busy with the things of earth?”

Chrysostom is not saying that rich people cannot be Christians. To define the problem of riches, Jesus gave an illustration of camels and needles (Matthew 19:24-26) that has been little understood in our generation. The main gates of most cities in ancient times were huge wooden structures set in an archway and often overlaid with brass for strength and flame proofing. At night, the gates were closed and locked with a bar on the inside and not opened until morning. Travelers that arrived late in the day after the gates were closed were forced to spend the night outside the city unless there was some provision for them to get into the city. Outside the city, law and order did not exist at night and travelers were at the mercy of outlaws. This is still the case today in some third world countries.

To deal with this situation, many ancient cities had a “needle’s eye gate” which was a small, low door beside the main gate. Such a feature existed²⁰ on at least one of the gates of Jerusalem and Damascus. A man could fit easily through the “needle’s eye gate”, but a camel, being a large animal, could not fit easily. If the camel’s pack (which could weigh up to 1,000 pounds) were removed and the camel were made to kneel, the camel could just barely crawl through the “needle’s eye gate.”

The statement Jesus made, that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle’s eye gate than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, made use of this imagery. Like the camel, the rich man first needs to unload his pack or burden. The parable of the sower refers to this pack as “the cares of this world, the deceit of riches, the desire for other things” (Mark 4:19) and the pleasures of life (Luke 8:14). These are things that appeal to our flesh and which can lead us away from God. Some of the early disciples, like Barnabas (one of the Seventy) sold a large amount of property and brought the entire proceeds to the Twelve (Acts 4:34-37). Ananias and Sapphria on the other hand, were caught in the deceit of riches and held back part of the proceeds – and paid dearly (Acts 5:1-10).

The problem is not the wealth or pack itself, but its effect on our lives. The Patriarch Job was very wealthy (Job 1:1-3, 42:12-17), yet the Lord referred to him as a blameless and upright man who had no peers in his righteousness (Job 1:8, 2:3). In Jesus’ illustration, nothing is said about the camel’s pack being loaded back up once the camel is inside. The key here is discerning the deceitfulness of wealth and the strength of its pull on one’s heart. Job was able to let his pack be taken off without remorse. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord” (Job 1:21; also Job 2:9-10). Many Christians throughout the ages have been unable or

13:43). This would make sense: after they disobeyed God and the lights went out, then they noticed that they were naked! See for example Methodius, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, VIII, 5; IV, 5.

²⁰ Weiss, Insight into Bible Times and Customs, pp. 24-25

unwilling to continue fighting this pull and have taken oaths of poverty to thrust a sword (so to speak) into the heart of the demon of wealth. Other Christians have used their wealth to help others, and by doing so, they “plant” their wealth to grow treasure in heaven.

The Serpent’s goal is getting us to feed ourselves with our wealth, and to become self-centered by it. The Early Church turned this completely around when everyone sold what they had, and laid the proceeds at the Apostles’ feet.

The Garment of Celibacy

Celibacy is also a garment that can be put on, as a special calling (1 Corinthians 7:1-9), and not everyone is able to put this garment on. Some, like the Martyr Barbara, who pursued this calling, have a special relationship with God, and begin, in this life, to live as the angels do in heaven. Many of the Church Fathers interpreted Paul’s words in the Epistle Lesson as referring to people living in celibacy, as we can see in the following quotes.

Gregory of Nyssa described²¹ celibacy as very similar to physical marriage, but in a spiritual sense, where it has many of the same features as physical marriage.

“It is impossible, as far as manual exercise goes, to ply two arts at once; for instance, farming and sailing, or tinkering and carpentry. If one is to pursue one, the other must be left alone. Similarly, there are two marriages for our choice, the one affected in the flesh, the other in the spirit; and preoccupation in the one must cause alienation from the other. Just as the tongue can’t utter two different languages, like pronouncing a Hebrew word and a Greek word in the same moment, by analogy, our emotional powers don’t possess a nature which can at pursue the pleasures of sense and court the spiritual union at the same time. When two masters are before us to choose between, we cannot be subject to both, for ‘no man can serve two masters’ (Matthew 6:24); he who is wise will choose the one most useful to himself. So when two marriages are before us to choose between, and we cannot contract both, for ‘he that is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, but he that is married cares for the things of the world’ (1 Corinthians 7:33-34), it would be the aim of a sound mind to choose the more profitable one”.

“In the case of a marriage of this world a man who is anxious pays great attention to physical health, proper adornment, adequate means and the security from any disgraceful revelations regarding his relatives. By doing so, he thinks things will most likely to turn out as he wishes. In the same way the man who is courting the spiritual alliance will begin by the renewal of his mind (Ephesians 4:22-23). Next he will concentrate only in the heavenly treasures and not pride himself on worldly wealth. He will not exalt family distinction, but consider the successful efforts of his own zeal and labors. Strength and health he will perfect by the Spirit’s strength in the body’s weakness, and not try to gain by bodily training and feeding. The suitor’s gifts to the bride are contributed out of the wealth peculiar to the soul in such a wedding and are not procured by the money that perishes”.

²¹ Gregory of Nyssa, “On Virginitly”, Ascetic and Moral Works, II, 20.

“Paul, that excellent adorer of the Bride, mentions what the wealth of those consists, and adds ‘in chastity’ (2 Corinthians 6:6); and besides this all the recognized fruits of the spirit are gifts of this marriage. Solomon spoke of taking for a helpmate and life companion that true Wisdom of which he says, ‘Love her, and she shall keep you, honor her, that she may embrace you’ (Proverbs 4:6-8 LXX). Thus he will prepare himself in a manner worthy of such a love. Then he will feast with all the joyous wedding guests in spotless clothing, rather than be cast out for not having put on the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11-12). It is plain that the argument applies equally to men and women, to move them towards such a marriage. ‘There is neither male nor female’ (Galatians 3:28), the Apostle says; ‘Christ is all, and in all’ (Colossians 3:11). He who is enamored of wisdom should hold the Object of his passionate desire, Who is the True Wisdom. The soul which cleaves to the undying Bridegroom should have the fruition of her love for the true Wisdom, which is God”.

Jerome, a strong advocate of the celibate life, urged²² the widow Theodora, who had recently lost her husband, to remain unmarried. She and her husband had already begun to live the celibate life as brother and sister before he died. Now he is victorious and reigns with Christ, while she still struggles in this life. By living the celibate life, she prepares herself for how she will live after the Resurrection with the angels in their mode of life.

“While you regret the loss of your Lucinius, a true brother, rejoice as well that he now reigns with Christ. For, as it is written, he was ‘taken away lest that wickedness should alter his understanding. For his soul pleased the Lord. And he, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time’ (Wisdom 4:11-14). We may more rightly weep for ourselves that we stand daily in conflict with our sins, that we are stained with vices, that we receive wounds, and that we must give account for every idle word (Matthew 12:36). Victorious now and free from care he looks down upon you from on high and supports you in your struggle, and prepares for you a place near to himself. His love and affection towards you are still the same as when, disregarding his claim on you as a husband, he resolved to treat you even on earth as a sister, or indeed I may say as a brother, for difference of sex, while essential to marriage, is irrelevant to a celibate life. In the flesh, if we are born again in Christ, we are no longer Greek and Barbarian, bond and free, male and female, but are all one in Him (Galatians 3:28). How much more true will this be when this corruptible has put on incorruption and when this mortal has put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). ‘In the resurrection’, the Lord tells us, ‘they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels in heaven’ (Matthew 22:30). This means that there is no taking away of a natural and real body but only an indication of the greatness of the glory to come. For the words are not ‘they shall be angels’ but ‘they shall be AS the angels’. Likeness to the angels is promised; identity with them is refused. They will not cease to be human! Glorious indeed they shall be, and graced with angelic splendor, but they will still be human; the Apostle Paul will still be Paul, Mary will still be Mary”.

Christ is Truly Man, Born of Mary

²² Jerome, Letter to Theodora, LXXV, 2.

One of Paul's statements in the Epistle Lesson played a key role in the Christological arguments of later centuries. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). This statement was quoted many times during the history of the Church to counter the statements of heretics.

For example, Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, had a good concise statement²³ of the relationship of Christ's humanity to His Deity. This was something that the Arians of his day just could not comprehend.

"This union of God and man, whereby the Creator is joined to the creature, Arian blindness could not see with the eyes of intelligence. Not believing that the Only-begotten of God was of the same glory and substance with the Father, they spoke of the Son's Godhead as inferior, drawing its arguments from those words 'the form of a slave' (Philippians 2:7). In order to show that 'the form of a slave' belongs to no other person in Himself, the same Son of God with the same form, says, 'The Father is greater than I' (John 14:28), just as He says with the same form, 'I and my Father are one' (John 10:30). For in 'the form of a slave', which He took at the end of the ages for our restoration, He is inferior to the Father. But in the form of God, in which He was before the ages, He is equal to the Father. In His human humiliation He was 'made of a woman, made under the Law' (Galatians 4:4); in His Divine majesty He remains the Word of God, 'through whom all things were made' (John 1:3). Accordingly, He Who in the form of God made man, in the form of a slave was made man. For both natures retain their own proper character without loss; as the form of God did not do away with the form of a slave, so the form of a slave did not impair the form of God. And so the mystery of power united to weakness, with respect to the same human nature, allows the Son to be called inferior to the Father. But the Godhead, which is One in the Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, excludes all notion of inequality. For the eternity of the Trinity has nothing temporal, nothing dissimilar in nature. Its will is one, Its substance identical, Its power equal, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God; because it is a true and inseparable unity, where there can be no diversity. Thus in the whole and perfect nature of true man was true God born, complete in what was His own, complete in what was ours. And by 'ours' we mean what the Creator formed in us from the beginning, and what He undertook to repair. For what the deceiver brought in, and what man, when deceived, committed, had no trace in the Savior. Even though He partook of man's weaknesses, He did not share our faults. He took the form of a slave without stain of sin, increasing the human and not diminishing the divine. The 'emptying of Himself' (Philippians 2:7), whereby the Invisible made Himself visible, was the bending down of pity, not the failing of power".

Athanasius of Alexandria compared²⁴ Christ with the Prophets, since the heretics of his day considered Christ to be another of the Prophets.

²³ Leo the Great, Sermons, XXIII, 2.

²⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, Personal Letter to Epictetus, II, lix, 11-12.

“Some say that the Word came upon one particular man, the Son of Mary, just as it came upon each of the Prophets, but their madness carries its own condemnation clearly with it. For if He came thus,

- (1) Why was that man born of a virgin, and not like others of a man and woman?
For in this way each of the saints also was begotten.
- (2) Why is not the death of each one said to have taken place on our behalf, but only this man’s death?
- (3) Why is it said only in the case of Him born of Mary that He sojourned here ‘once at the consummation of the ages?’ (Hebrews 9:26)
- (4) Why did the Son of Mary alone rise again on the third day?
- (5) Why is the Son of Mary alone called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), as though a Body filled full of the Godhead were born of her? For Emmanuel is interpreted ‘God with us’.
- (6) Why is it not said that when each of the saints ate, drank, labored, and died, that He (the Word) ate, drank, labored, and died, but only in the case of the Son of Mary. For the Word suffered in that Body. And while we are merely told of the others that they were born, and begotten, it is said in the case of the Son of Mary alone that ‘The Word was made Flesh’”.

“This proves that while to all the others the Word came, in order that they might prophesy, from Mary the Word Himself took flesh, and proceeded forth as man. He was by nature and essence the Word of God, but after the flesh man of the seed of David, and made of the flesh of Mary (Galatians 4:4, Romans 1:3). Him the Father pointed out both in Jordan and on the Mount, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’ (Matthew 3:17, 17:5; 2 Peter 3:17). Him the Arians denied, but we recognize and worship, not dividing the Son and the Word, but knowing that the Son is the Word Himself, by Whom all things are made, and by Whom we were redeemed”.

Martyrs Barbara, Catherine, Paraskeva and Kyriake

July 7, October 28, November 25, December 4, 2016

Gospel: Mark 5:24-34, Matthew 9:19-22, Luke 8:43-48

In the Gospel Reading for Barbara and Catherine, an unknown woman crept up to Jesus in the crowd and secretly touched the hem of His robe, thus healing her hemorrhage. Barbara and Catherine both lived in the early 4th Century and suffered for the Faith under Emperor Maximian. Neither Barbara nor Catherine was raised as a Christian, and both came to know Christ under unusual circumstances. Like the woman who touched Christ's hem, Barbara and Catherine touched the periphery of Christ's Church and were rewarded for their faith.

From the healing of the woman's hemorrhage, we have an example of the use of physical objects for spiritual purposes. Jesus taught that one thing sanctifies another. Here power went out from Him (Luke 8:46) via a touch of the hem of His garment. The Master sanctified the garment and the garment sanctified the hem. Jesus had criticized the scribes and Pharisees for saying that whoever swears by the Temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the Temple, he is obliged to perform it. Jesus pointed out: Which is greater, the gold or the Temple that sanctified it? (Matthew 23:16-17). Thus, one thing sanctifies another. This is also the case with icons, holy water, holy oil and many instances of relics of the saints.

Non-Orthodox Christians in the West are generally unaccustomed to dealing with holy relics. But if we consider the effects of Elisha's relics, perhaps it might serve as an introduction to a different consideration of holy relics. This incident occurred after the death of Elisha, where a man was raised from the dead by touching Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20-21). We might ask where the faith to perform this miracle came from? In this account, a burial crew was trying to bury someone, when some Moabite raiders came by. To get away, they just threw the body into Elisha's grave and ran away. No faith at all existed on the part of the burial crew, and it was completely unintentional that the man was raised from the dead. The only answer is that the relics of Elisha, which had been sanctified by the power behind the life of Elisha, raised the man from the dead. Similarly during the two years that Paul was in Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey, handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul's body were used to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:12). Again, one thing sanctified another.

Uncleanness Touches the Master

The Mosaic Law specified that anyone with a bodily discharge was unclean, and so was anyone who touched them (Leviticus 15:1-7), and this also applied to a woman during her menstrual cycle (Leviticus 15:19-24). In the case of a woman with a discharge of blood that is not related to her menstrual cycle, she was "unclean" during the entire duration of her discharge (Leviticus 15:25-30). However, there is a question whether this latter aspect applied for a situation that lasted twelve years, or whether it was intended to apply to much shorter duration problems.

After the woman touched Jesus' hem, Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45-46), and the woman was petrified. She had made the Teacher unclean and He had caught her doing so! But the Son of God cannot be made unclean unless He so permits, as He did by bleeding during his beatings prior to and on the Cross (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, uncleanness touching the Clean One became clean also. After she fell at His feet and confessed, He said, "Be of good cheer, your faith has made you well!"

John Chrysostom pointed out²⁵ that the woman did not approach Jesus boldly since she was ashamed of her affliction and considered herself unclean. Under the Law, her affliction was considered a "great uncleanness". Being unclean, she was equivalent to a leper and couldn't participate in the worship or sacrifices of Israel. By touching Jesus, she would make Him unclean also; this may be why she touched only the hem of His garment (Luke 8:44), as if that would make a difference to the Pharisees, who would be very quick to point out uncleanness.

Tertullian stated²⁶ that the heretics (such as Marcion) interpreted Christ's remarks as indicating that He didn't know who the woman who touched His hem was, since He wasn't fully God. Marcion was wrong; in fact, Christ addressed the woman very similar to the way God questioned Adam in the Garden after Adam's sin. Tertullian stated further that the woman touched Him in faith, knowing that He was God, and not susceptible to uncleanness. She discerned God correctly as preferring mercy to sacrifice, and Tertullian felt she discerned the Law correctly as applying to specific cases, and not to hers.

"The woman who had an issue of blood touched Jesus, but He said that He didn't know by whom. 'Who touched Me?', He asked, when His disciples offered the excuse of the pressing crowd. He even persisted in His assertion of ignorance, 'Somebody has touched Me', He said, and advances some proof, 'For I perceive that power has gone out from Me' (Luke 8:46). What does our heretic, Marcion, say? Could Christ have known the woman? And why did He speak as if He were ignorant? Surely it was to challenge her faith. Precisely as He had once questioned Adam, as if in ignorance, 'Adam, where are you?' (Genesis 3:9) Thus you have both the Creator excused in the same way as Christ, and Christ acting similarly to the Creator".

"In this case He acted contrary to the Law. While the Law forbids contact with a woman with an issue of blood (Leviticus 15:19), He desired not only that this woman should touch Him, but also that He should heal her. Because of the merit of this woman's faith, He said to her, 'Your faith has healed you' (Luke 8:48). Why does Marcion detect hostility to the Law in that act, which the Lord Himself shows us to have been done as a reward of faith? Marcion says that the woman's faith consisted in contempt for the Law? This does not make sense; why should she infringe that Law of God, if she did not know God? Her touch at least was an act of faith. And if of faith in the Creator, how could she have violated His Law, when she was ignorant of any other God? Whatever her infringement of the Law amounted to, it proceeded from and was proportionate to her faith in the Creator. But how can these two things be compatible? That she

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 2.

²⁶ Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 20.

violated the Law, and violated it in faith, which ought to have restrained her from such violation? Her faith, above all, was this: it made her believe that her God preferred mercy before sacrifice. She was certain that her God was working in Christ. She touched Him, therefore, not simply as a holy man, nor as a prophet, whom she knew to be capable of contamination by reason of his human nature, but as truly God, whom she assumed to be beyond all possibility of pollution by any uncleanness. She interpreted for herself the Law, as meaning that such things as are susceptible to defilement become defiled, but not so God, whom she knew for certain to be in Christ”.

“She recollected also that what came under the prohibition of the Law was that ordinary issue of blood which proceeds from natural functions every month, and in childbirth, not that which was the result of disordered health. Her case, however, was ill health of long duration, for which she knew that the aid of God’s mercy was needed, and not the natural relief of time. She may be regarded as having discerned the Law, instead of breaking it. This will prove to be the faith, which confers intelligence likewise. ‘If you will not believe, you shall not understand’ (Isaiah 7:9 LXX). When Christ approved of the faith of this woman, He declared by His answer to her, that He was Himself the divine object of the faith of which He approved. Nor can I overlook the fact that His garment, by being touched, demonstrated also the truth of His body. Of course it was a body, and not a phantom as Marcion claimed, which the garment clothed! This indeed is not our point now; but the remark has a natural bearing on the question we are discussing. For if it were not a true body, but only a phantom one, it could not for certain have received contamination”.

Dionysius of Alexandria stated²⁷ that the woman, who touched Christ’s hem in order to be healed, is not the same as a menstruating woman as described in Leviticus. She was a pious woman asking for help, and as such was blameless.

²⁷ Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (3rd Century), “The Epistle to Bishop Basilides”, Extant Fragments of the Works of Dionysius, Part 5, Canon 2.

Appendix A The Life of St Barbara²⁸

The Holy Great Martyr Barbara lived and suffered during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-311). Her father, the pagan Dioscorus, was a rich and illustrious man in the Syrian city of Heliopolis. After the death of his wife, he devoted himself to his only daughter.

Seeing Barbara's extraordinary beauty, Dioscorus decided to hide her from the eyes of strangers. Therefore, he built a tower for Barbara, where only her pagan teachers were allowed to see her. From the tower there was a view of hills stretching into the distance. By day she was able to gaze upon the wooded hills, the swiftly flowing rivers, and the meadows covered with a mottled blanket of flowers; by night the harmonious and majestic vault of the heavens twinkled and provided a spectacle of inexpressible beauty. Soon the virgin began to ask herself questions about the Primal Cause and Creator of so harmonious and splendid a world.

Gradually, she became convinced that the soulless idols were merely the work of human hands. Although her father and teachers offered them worship, she realized that the idols could not have made the surrounding world. The desire to know the true God so consumed her soul that Barbara decided to devote all her life to this goal, and to spend her life in virginity.

The fame of her beauty spread throughout the city, and many sought her hand in marriage. But despite the entreaties of her father, she refused all of them. Barbara warned her father that his persistence might end tragically and separate them forever. Dioscorus decided that the temperament of his daughter had been affected by her life of seclusion. He therefore permitted her to leave the tower and gave her full freedom in her choice of friends and acquaintances. Thus Barbara met young Christian maidens in the city, and they taught her about the Creator of the world, about the Trinity, and about the Divine Logos. Through the Providence of God, a priest arrived in Heliopolis from Alexandria disguised as a merchant. After instructing her in the mysteries of the Christian Faith, he baptized Barbara, and then returned to his own country.

During this time a luxurious bathhouse was being built at the house of Dioscorus. By his orders the workers prepared to put two windows on the south side. But Barbara, taking advantage of her father's absence, asked them to make a third window, thereby forming a Trinity of light. On one of the walls of the bathhouse Barbara traced a cross with her finger. The cross was deeply etched into the marble, as if by an iron instrument. Later, her footprints were imprinted on the stone steps of the bathhouse. The water of the bathhouse had great healing power. St. Simeon Metaphrastes (November 9) compared the bathhouse to the stream of Jordan and the Pool of Siloam, because by God's power, many miracles took place there.

When Dioscorus returned and expressed dissatisfaction about the change in his building plans, his daughter told him about how she had come to know the Triune God, about the saving power of the Son of God, and about the futility of worshipping idols. Dioscorus went into a

²⁸ From www.oca.org for December 4th.

rage, grabbed a sword and was on the point of striking her with it. The holy virgin fled from her father, and he rushed after her in pursuit. His way became blocked by a hill, which opened up and concealed the saint in a crevice. On the other side of the crevice was an entrance leading upwards. St. Barbara managed then to conceal herself in a cave on the opposite slope of the hill.

After a long and fruitless search for his daughter, Dioscorus saw two shepherds on the hill. One of them showed him the cave where the saint had hidden. Dioscorus beat his daughter terribly, and then placed her under guard and tried to wear her down with hunger. Finally he handed her over to the governor of the city, named Martianus. They beat St. Barbara fiercely: they struck her with rawhide, and rubbed her wounds with a haircloth to increase her pain. By night St. Barbara prayed fervently to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and the Savior Himself appeared and healed her wounds. Then they subjected the saint to new, and even more frightful torments.

In the crowd where the martyr was tortured was the virtuous Christian woman Juliana, an inhabitant of Heliopolis. Her heart was filled with sympathy for the voluntary martyrdom of the beautiful and illustrious maiden. Juliana also wanted to suffer for Christ. She began to denounce the torturers in a loud voice, and they seized her.

For a long while they tortured both holy martyrs: they raked and tore their bodies with hooks, and then led them naked through the city amidst derision and jeers. Through the prayers of St. Barbara the Lord sent an angel who covered the nakedness of the holy martyrs with a splendid robe. The steadfast confessors of faith in Christ, Sts. Barbara and Juliana, were then beheaded. Dioscorus himself executed St. Barbara. The wrath of God was not slow to punish both torturers, Martianus and Dioscorus: bolts of lightning struck them.

In the sixth century the relics of the holy Great Martyr Barbara were transferred to Constantinople. Six hundred years later, they were transferred to Kiev (July 11) by Barbara, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenos, who married the Russian prince Michael Izyaslavich. They rest even now at Kiev's St. Vladimir cathedral, where an Akathist to the saint is served each Tuesday.

Many pious Orthodox Christians are in the habit of chanting the Troparion of St. Barbara each day, recalling the Savior's promise to her that those who remembered her and her sufferings would be preserved from a sudden, unexpected death, and would not depart this life without benefit of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

Appendix B

The Life of St Catherine of Alexandria²⁹

The Holy Great Martyr Catherine was the daughter of Constus, the governor of Alexandrian Egypt during the reign of the emperor Maximian (305-313). Living in the capital, the center of Hellenistic knowledge, and possessed of a rare beauty and intellect, Catherine received an excellent education, studying the works of the greatest philosophers and teachers of antiquity. Young men from the most worthy families of the empire sought the hand of the beautiful Catherine, but she was not interested in any of them. She told her parents that she would enter into marriage only with someone who surpassed her in nobility, wealth, comeliness and wisdom.

Catherine's mother, a secret Christian, sent her to her own spiritual Father, a saintly Elder living in a cave outside the city, for advice. After listening to Catherine, the Elder said that he knew of a Youth who surpassed her in everything. "His countenance is more radiant than the shining of the sun, and all of creation is governed by His wisdom. His riches are given to all the nations of the world, yet they never diminish. His compassion is unequalled."

This description of the Heavenly Bridegroom produced in the soul of the holy maiden an ardent desire to see Him. "If you do as I tell you," said the monk, "you will gaze upon the countenance of this illustrious man." In parting, the Elder handed Catherine an icon of the Theotokos with the divine Child Jesus on Her arm and told her to pray with faith to the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of the Heavenly Bridegroom, and She would hear Catherine and grant her heart's desire.

Catherine prayed all night and was permitted to see the Most Holy Virgin, Who said Her Divine Son, "Behold Thy handmaiden Catherine, how fair and virtuous she is." But the Child turned His face away from her saying, "No, she is ugly and unbelieving. She is a foolish pauper, and I cannot bear to look at her until she forsakes her impiety."

Catherine returned again to the Elder deeply saddened, and told him what she had seen in the dream. He lovingly received her, instructed her in the faith of Christ, and admonished her to preserve her purity and integrity and to pray unceasingly. She then received the Mystery of holy Baptism from him. Again St. Catherine had a vision of the Most Holy Theotokos with Her Child. Now the Lord looked tenderly at her and gave her a beautiful ring, a wondrous token of her betrothal to the Heavenly Bridegroom (This ring is still on her hand).

At that time the emperor Maximian was in Alexandria for a pagan festival. Therefore, the celebration was especially splendid and crowded. The cries of the sacrificial animals, the smoke and the smell of the sacrifices, the endless blazing of fires, and the bustling crowds at the arenas defiled the city of Alexandria. Human victims also were brought, the confessors of Christ, those who would not deny Him under torture. They were condemned to death in the fire. The saint's love for the Christian martyrs and her fervent desire to ease their sufferings compelled Catherine to speak to the pagan priest and to the emperor Maximian.

²⁹ From www.oca.org for November 24th.

Introducing herself, the saint confessed her faith in the One True God and with wisdom exposed the errors of the pagans. The beauty of the maiden captivated the emperor. In order to convince her and to show the superiority of pagan wisdom, the emperor ordered fifty of the most learned philosophers and rhetoricians of the Empire to dispute with her, but the saint got the better of the wise men, so that they came to believe in Christ themselves. St. Catherine made the Sign of the Cross over the martyrs, and they bravely accepted death for Christ and were burned alive by order of the emperor.

Maximian, no longer hoping to convince the saint, tried to entice her with the promise of riches and fame. Receiving an angry refusal, the emperor gave orders to subject the saint to terrible tortures and then throw her in prison. The Empress Augusta, who had heard much about the saint, wanted to see her. She prevailed upon the military commander Porphyrius to accompany her to the prison with a detachment of soldiers. The strong spirit of St. Catherine, whose face was radiant with divine grace, impressed the empress. The holy martyr explained the Christian teaching to them, and they were converted to Christ.

On the following day they again brought the martyr to the judgment court where, under the threat of being broken on the wheel, they urged that she renounce the Christian Faith and offer sacrifice to the gods. The saint steadfastly confessed Christ and she herself approached the wheels; but an angel smashed the instruments of execution, which shattered into pieces with many pagans standing nearby.

Having beheld this wonder, the Empress Augusta and the imperial courtier Porphyrius with 200 soldiers confessed their faith in Christ in front of everyone, and they were beheaded. Maximian again tried to entice the holy martyr, proposing marriage to her, and again he was refused. St. Catherine firmly confessed her fidelity to the heavenly Bridegroom Christ, and with a prayer to Him she herself laid her head on the block beneath the executioner's sword.

The angels took the relics of St. Catherine to Mount Sinai. In the sixth century, the venerable head and left hand of the holy martyr were found through a revelation and transferred with honor to a newly constructed church of the Sinai monastery, built by the holy Emperor Justinian (November 14).

St. Catherine is called upon for relief and assistance during a difficult childbirth. Pilgrims to her monastery on Mt. Sinai are given souvenir rings as a remembrance of their visit.

Appendix C The Life of St Kyriake of Anatolia³⁰

Saint Kyriake was the only child of Dorotheus and Eusebia. Since she was born on a Sunday (Kyriake, in Greek), she was named Kyriake.

One day a wealthy magistrate wished to betroth Kyriake to his son. Not only was she young and beautiful, but her parents were wealthy, and the magistrate wished to control that wealth. The magistrate went to her parents to request her hand, but St Kyriake told him that she wished to remain a virgin, for she had dedicated herself to Christ.

The magistrate was angered by her words, so he went to the emperor Diocletian to denounce the saint and her parents as Christians who mocked the idols, and refused to offer sacrifice to them.

Diocletian sent soldiers to arrest the family and have them brought before him. He asked them why they would not honor the gods which he himself honored. They told him that these were false gods, and that Christ was the one true God.

Dorotheus was beaten until the soldiers grew tired and were unable to [continue](#). Since neither flattery nor torment had any effect, Diocletian sent Dorotheus and Eusebia to Melitene on the eastern border between Cappadocia and Armenia. Then he sent St Kyriake to be interrogated by his son-in-law and co-ruler Maximian at Nicomedia.

Maximian urged her not to throw her life away, promising her wealth and marriage to one of Diocletian's relatives if she would worship the pagan gods. St Kyriake replied that she would never renounce Christ, nor did she desire worldly riches. Enraged by her bold answer, Maximian had her flogged. The soldiers who administered this punishment became tired, and had to be replaced three times.

Shamed by his failure to overcome a young woman, Maximian sent St Kyriake to Hilarion, the eparch of Bithynia, at Chalcedon. He told Hilarion to either convert Kyriake to paganism, or send her back to him.

Making the same promises and threats that Diocletian and Maximian had made before, Hilarion was no more successful than they were. St Kyriake challenged him to do his worst, because Christ would help her to triumph. The saint was suspended by her hair for several hours, while soldiers burned her body with torches. Not only did she endure all this, she also seemed to become more courageous under torture. Finally, she was taken down and put into a prison [cell](#).

That night Christ appeared to her and healed her wounds. When Hilarion saw her the next day, he declared that she had been healed by the gods because they pitied her. Then Hilarion urged her to go to the temple to give thanks to the gods. She told him that she had been healed by Christ, but agreed to go to the temple. The eparch rejoiced, thinking that he had defeated her.

In the temple, St Kyriake prayed that God would destroy the soulless idols. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake which toppled the idols, shattering them to pieces. Everyone fled the temple in fear, leaving Hilarion behind. Instead of recognizing the [power](#) of Christ, the eparch blasphemed the true God as the destroyer of his pagan gods. He was struck by a bolt of lightning and died on the spot.

St Kyriake was tortured again by Apollonius, who succeeded Hilarion as eparch. When she was cast into a fire, the flames were extinguished. When she was thrown to wild beasts, they became tame and gentle. Therefore, Apollonius sentenced her to death by the sword. She was

³⁰ From www.oca.org for July 7th.

permitted time [to pray](#), so she asked God to receive her soul, and to remember those who honored her martyrdom.

Just as St Kyriake ended her [prayer](#), angels took her soul before the soldiers could strike off her head. Pious Christians took her relics and buried them in a place of honor.

Appendix D **The Life of Paraskeva of Iconium³¹**

The Great Martyr Paraskeva of Iconium, lived during the third century in a rich and pious family. The parents of the saint especially revered Friday, the day of the Passion of the Lord, and therefore they called their daughter Paraskeva. This name, Paraskeva, also means Friday.

Young Paraskeva with all her heart loved purity and the loftiness of the virginal life, and she took a vow of celibacy. She wanted to devote all her life to God and to enlighten pagans with the light of Christ.

Because of her confession of the Orthodox Faith, the pagans in a frenzy seized her and brought her to the city prefect. They demanded that she offer unholy sacrifice to the pagan idols. With a steady heart, and trusting on God, the saint refused this demand. For this she underwent great torments: after stripping her, they tied her to a tree and beat her with rods. Then the torturers raked her pure body with iron claws. Finally, they threw her into prison, exhausted by the torture and lacerated to the bone. But God did not forsake the holy sufferer, and miraculously healed her wounds. Not heeding this divine miracle, the executioners continued with their torture of St Paraskeva, and finally, they cut off her head.

St Paraskeva has always enjoyed a special love and veneration among the Orthodox people. Many pious customs and observances are associated with her. In the ancient Russian accounts of the Saints' Lives, the name of the Great Martyr is inscribed as: "St Paraskeva, also called Piatnitsa (in Russian: Friday)." Churches dedicated to St Paraskeva in antiquity were given the name Piatnitsa. Small wayside chapels in Rus received the name Piatnitsa. The simple Russian people called the Martyr Paraskeva variously Piatnitsa, Piatina, Petka.

Icons of St Paraskeva were especially venerated and embellished by the faithful. Russian iconographers usually depicted the martyr as an austere ascetic, tall of stature, with a radiant crown upon her head. Icons of the saint guard pious and happy households. By Church belief, St Paraskeva is protectress of fields and cattle. Therefore, on her Feastday it was the custom to bring fruit to church to be blessed. These blessed objects were kept until the following year. Moreover, St Paraskeva is invoked for protection of cattle from disease. She is also a healer of people from grievous illness of both body and soul.

³¹ From www.oca.org for October 28th.

HEALING ON THE SABBATH

December 4, 2016
10th Sunday of Luke
Revision E

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Today's Gospel lesson is not used at all in the West.

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Background: Jesus and the Sabbath Laws

The Mosaic Law concerning the Sabbath was very clear, specific and strict; and the Law had teeth in it. For example:

Mosaic Law	Reference
Complete rest was required.	Exodus 23:12, 31:15, 35:2
One could not even kindle a fire (to cook a meal).	Exodus 35:3
All cooking had to be done the day before.	Exodus 16:23-29
No gathering of wood for the day after the Sabbath was allowed either.	Numbers 15:32-36
This was one of the Ten Commandments.	Exodus 20:9-11, Deuteronomy 5:13-15
The death penalty was prescribed for anyone breaking the Sabbath.	Exodus 31:15, 35:2
One could not carry heavy loads or use pack animals to do so either. The day of rest applied to animals also.	Exodus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14, Jeremiah 17:21-22
One could not travel on the Sabbath but had to stay in one's place and rest.	Exodus 16:29
Later this traveling restriction was limited to "a Sabbath day's journey" of 2000 cubits ³² (about half a mile).	Acts 1:12
No buying and selling were allowed on the Sabbath. Nehemiah locked the gates of Jerusalem to prevent Gentile vendors from selling on the Sabbath.	Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15-21

These Sabbath rules did not just appear suddenly with Moses. In ancient Babylon, even prior to Abraham, there was a Sabbath observance³³. It was not as strict as the Sabbath of the Mosaic Law and it was also tied to astrology. Other ancient countries had Sabbath traditions also. Thus, when the Lord commanded the Sabbath observation to remember how He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 31:15-17, 20:9-11), this was probably what other cultures commemorated also.

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³² 2000 cubits is the distance between the Ark and the people as Israel traveled in the desert (Joshua 3:4) and also the limit of the pasturelands outside the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:4-5).

³³ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 939. The origin of the "Sabbath" went back to pre-Semitic days, and the name "Sabbath" is actually of Babylonian origin. This day was described on cuneiform tablets as "a day of rest for the soul". In Accadian times (early Babylonian), the Sabbath was a day on which certain work was forbidden.

Tertullian described³⁴ the gist of the Mosaic Law as having been given in embryo to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that if Adam and Eve had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. This is reflected in the Sabbath laws of other cultures prior to Moses

But also tied in to the Sabbath observation was a recalling of the time Israel was being “worked to death” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Thus the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). This is very apparent from a careful re-reading of the original Sabbath commands where the whole point is complete rest (Exodus 23:12, 31:15-17, 35:2; Deuteronomy 5:14).

The Sabbath was more than just rest, however. It was also a holy day (Exodus 16:23, 20:11, 31:15), and a day of gladness (Numbers 10:10). On this day, the daily offering was doubled (four lambs versus two, see Numbers 28:3-15) and the showbread was set out in the Holy Place (Leviticus 24:8) before the Lord. The Sabbaths were also to be a sign (or omen) between Israel and God “that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Thus, there was to be a focus on the things of God and on doing good.

In the true spirit of the Sabbath, Jesus did a number of healings on the Sabbath. For example:

Healing	Reference
The paralytic (4 th Sunday of Pascha)	John 5:9
A man with a withered hand	<i>Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 6:7</i>
The man born blind (6 th Sunday of Pascha)	John 9:14
A woman’s hunchback (today’s Gospel)	Luke 13:14
A man with dropsy	Luke 14:3

When the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for these things – saying that He was working on the Sabbath – Jesus replied:

Work Allowed on the Sabbath	Reference
The priests work on the Sabbath in performing all the sacrifices.	Matthew 12:5
Circumcision is performed on the 8 th day, whether that day is a Sabbath or not.	John 7:22
The Jewish leaders will lead their animals to water on the Sabbath.	Luke 13:15
They will also pull their animals out of a hole on the Sabbath.	Luke 14:5
He also challenged them regarding Mosaic Law regulations for or against doing good on the Sabbath.	John 7:23, Mark 3:4, Luke 6:9
The bottom line was: He’s Lord of the Sabbath. He’s the One who gave the Law to Moses.	Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5
Mercy, not sacrifice was to be the spirit of the Sabbath.	Matthew 12:7, Hosea 6:6

³⁴ Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.

The paradoxical aspect of all this confrontation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders over the keeping of the Sabbath is that they thought they were upholding the letter of the Law while Jesus was merely doing good on the Sabbath, which is what the Sabbath was for. And Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8, Mark 2:27-28) for He gave the Sabbath Law to Moses and made the Sabbath for man.

John of Damascus stated³⁵ that the Sabbath rest was made for people who were carnal and worldly. Since they did not devote their whole life to God, the Law bound them, with stiff penalties for disobedience, to devote a small part of their week to distraction from worldly things. Those people who did devote their whole life to God are noted as sometimes “breaking the Sabbath” in doing the Lord’s will.

“The seventh day is called the Sabbath and signifies rest. For in it God rested from all His works, as the divine Scripture says; and so the number of the days goes up to seven and then circles back again and begins at the first. This is the precious number with the Jews. God ordained that it should be held in honor, and that in no chance fashion but with the imposition of most heavy penalties for the transgression. And it was not in a simple fashion that He ordained this, but for certain reasons understood mystically by the spiritual and clear-sighted”.

“God, knowing the denseness of the Israelites and their carnal love and propensity towards material in everything, made this Law: (1) in order that the servant and the cattle should rest as it is written, for the righteous man regards the life of his beast. (2) In order that when they take their ease from the distraction of material things, they may gather together to God, spending the whole of the seventh day in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, the study of the divine Scriptures and resting in God”.

“For when the Law did not exist and there was no divinely inspired Scripture, the Sabbath was not consecrated to God. But when the Scripture was given by Moses, the Sabbath was consecrated to God in order that on it they, who do not dedicate their whole life to God, and who do not make their desire subservient to Him as though to a Father, may on that day discuss the purpose of the Sabbath. Thus they may abstract a small, truly a most insignificant, portion of their life for the service of God, and this from fear of the chastisements and punishments, which threaten transgressors. For the Law is not made for a righteous man but for the unrighteous. Moses was the first to endure fasting with God for forty days and again for another forty. Thus he afflicted himself with hunger on the Sabbaths, although the Law forbade self-affliction on the Sabbath. But if they should object that this took place before the Law, what will they say about Elijah the Tishbite who accomplished a journey of forty days on one meal? For he, by thus afflicting himself on the Sabbaths not only with hunger but also with the forty days’ journeying, broke the Sabbath. Yet God, Who gave the Law, was not angry with him but showed Himself to him on Horeb as a reward for his virtue. And what will they say about Daniel? Did he not spend three weeks without food? And again, did not all Israel circumcise the child on the Sabbath, if

³⁵ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 23.

it happened to be the eighth day after birth? And do they not hold the great fast³⁶, which the Law enjoins if it falls on the Sabbath? And further, do not the priests and the Levites profane the Sabbath in the works of the tabernacle and yet are held blameless? If an ox should fall into a pit on the Sabbath, he who pulls it out is blameless, while he who neglects to do so is condemned. And did not all the Israelites surround the walls of Jericho, bearing the Ark of God for seven days, in which the Sabbath was included? The observance of the Sabbath was devised for the purpose of securing leisure to worship God in order that they might, both servant and beast of burden, devote a very small share to Him and be at rest. For the carnal that were still childish and in the bonds of the elements of the world, were unable to conceive of anything beyond the body and the letter”.

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

The Gospel lesson took place in late 29 AD just before the Feast of the Dedication (i.e. Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights, John 10:22) and probably occurred in Perea on the Eastern side of the Jordan as Jesus was heading toward Jerusalem (Luke 13:22). Jesus had been teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10) and He used the occasion to give an important teaching on the Sabbath itself. There was a woman who had a severe hunchback or spinal injury such that she couldn't straighten her back (Luke 13:11). Jesus remarked that Satan had bound her like this for 18 years (Luke 13:16). This seems very similar to the affliction of the Patriarch Job by Satan, both in the destruction of his family and property (Job 1:9-22) and the destruction of his health (Job 2:4-10). It would seem like all health problems might be traceable to Satan in some way. For more discussion on this, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.

Knowing that He would get a reaction, Jesus called the woman over to Him, laid His hands on her and said, “woman, you are loosed from your infirmity” (Luke 13:12). The Synagogue Ruler (equivalent today to the pastor of a church) rebuked Jesus publicly for doing work on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14). The Synagogue Ruler undoubtedly had the backing of the other attendants and council of the synagogue since Jesus' reply addressed a number of people (Luke 13:15). Jesus' reply compared the practice of the Synagogue Ruler and the others in caring for their animals on the Sabbath. The animals needed to be unbound from their stall and led to water; why couldn't a daughter of Abraham also be unbound? (Luke 13:15,16).

Jesus stated His reply very strongly as a confrontation, calling the Synagogue Ruler a hypocrite (Luke 13:15). The result was that the Synagogue Ruler and his attendants were put to shame while the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things done by Jesus (Luke 13:17).

Cyril of Alexandria made³⁷ three points in commenting on this:

1. God had commanded men to rest on the Sabbath. When Jesus gave rest to the crippled woman freeing her from diseases, and the Synagogue Ruler forbid it, plainly it was the Synagogue Ruler and not Jesus who was breaking the Law of the Sabbath.

³⁶ That is, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32)

³⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 97, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

2. Jesus did no manual labor in healing the woman. If the Synagogue Ruler wished to forbid labor of the mouth, does this mean that one can't sing Psalms or pray on the Sabbath either?
3. The Synagogue Ruler was not really angry on account of the Sabbath Law being broken, but because he saw Christ honored and worshipped as God. This was concealed in his heart and the Sabbath Law ruse was just a pretext. For this reason, he was most excellently convicted by the Lord and called a hypocrite.

On another occasion about a year and a half earlier (early 28 AD) in Galilee, the Scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for munching on heads of grain that they picked as they walked through the grain fields (Mark 2:23-24). They had interpreted the Sabbath regulations as prohibiting work such as "harvesting grain", even though the Law did not address such minutia as walking and munching.

Later that day in early 28 AD, when Jesus was in the synagogue, they watched Him closely so they would have witnesses against Him if He did any healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-2). Knowing this, Jesus asked a man with a withered hand to step forward (Mark 3:3). Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees, He asked them: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. Looking around, He was grieved by the hardness of their hearts. So Jesus told the man to stretch out his hand and it was restored. The Pharisees then went out and began plotting with the Herodians (their enemies) on how they might destroy Jesus (Mark 3:4-6).

All this represents taking the Sabbath Law to an unmerciful, legalistic extreme. Christ had said, "For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" speaking of Himself. Referring to our humanity, He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28, Luke 6:5). John Chrysostom commented³⁸ as follows:

"Why then was he punished who was gathering sticks? (Numbers 15:32-36) If the laws were to be despised at the beginning, of course they would not be observed afterwards".

"The Sabbath at first conferred many great benefits; for instance, it made them gentle towards those of their household, and humane; it taught them God's providence and the creation; it trained them by degrees to abstain from wickedness, and disposed them to regard the things of the Spirit. Did Christ then repeal a thing so profitable? Far from it; no! He greatly enhanced it. For it was time for them to be trained in all things by the higher rules".

Irenaeus stated³⁹ that the Jewish leaders, in their desire to uphold their traditions, were unwilling to be subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ.

"For not only by actual transgression did they set aside the Law of God, but they also set up their own law in opposition to it, which is termed, even to the present day, the pharisaical law. In this law they suppress certain things, add others, and interpret others, as they think proper, which their teachers use, each one in particular. Desiring to uphold these traditions, they were unwilling to be

³⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIX, 3.

³⁹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 12.

subject to the Law of God, which prepared them for the coming of Christ. They even blamed the Lord for healing on the Sabbath, which the Law did not prohibit. For they themselves, in one sense, performed acts of healing upon the Sabbath, when they circumcised a man on that day. But through tradition and the pharisaical Law, they did not blame themselves for transgressing the command of God, and for not keeping the commandment of the Law, which is the love of God”.

Chrysostom also stated⁴⁰ that Jesus had prepared the Jewish leaders for His healing on the Sabbath by driving the moneychangers and merchandisers out of the Temple. In all His doings, He was clarifying to them various aspects of the Law that He had given to Moses.

“Do you see their excessive malice, and how the benefits done to others incensed them more than reproofs? At one time He said that they made the Temple ‘a den of thieves’ (Mark 11:15-19), showing that what they sold was gotten by theft, pillage, and covetousness, and that they were rich through other men’s calamities; at another time, He called it ‘a house of merchandise’ (John 2:13-17), pointing to their shameless trafficking. Why did He do this? Since he was about to heal on the Sabbath, and to do many such things, which they thought were transgressions of the Law, in order that He might not seem to do this as though He had come to be some rival God and opponent of His Father, He took occasion to correct any such suspicion of theirs. One who had exhibited so much zeal for the House was not likely to oppose Him who was Lord of the House, and who was worshipped in it”.

Tertullian noted⁴¹ that there are distinctions of “work” on the Sabbath: God’s work and man’s work. Christ sought to clarify this distinction with the Jewish leaders and included a number of examples. As the “Lord of the Sabbath”, He could have annulled the Sabbath, since it was He that instituted it, but He didn’t since God’s work continues today.

“The Pharisees were in utter error concerning the Law of the Sabbath, not observing that its terms were conditional, when it commanded rest from labor, making certain distinctions of labor. For when it says, ‘In it you shall not do any work of yours’ (Exodus 20:10), by the word *yours*⁴² it restricts the prohibition to human work — which everyone performs in his own employment or business — and not to divine work. Now the work of healing or preserving is not proper to man, but to God. So in the Law it says, ‘You shall not do any manner of work in it’ (Exodus 12:16 LXX), except what is to be done for any soul, that is to say, in the matter of delivering the soul⁴³; because what is God’s work may be done for the salvation of the soul. When Christ wanted to initiate them into this meaning of the Law by the restoration of the withered hand, He asked, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or not? To save life, or to destroy it?’ (Luke 6:9) In order that He might remind them what works the Law of the Sabbath forbids and what

⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXIII, 2.

⁴¹ Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 12.

⁴² Tertullian connects this to the previous verse “all your work”.

⁴³ That is, saving life.

it commands, He was called ‘Lord of the Sabbath’ (Luke 6:5), because He maintained the Sabbath as His own institution”.

“Even if He had annulled the Sabbath, He would have had the right to do so, as being its Lord, and as He who instituted it. But He did not utterly destroy it, in order that it might be plain that the Creator did not break the Sabbath, even at the time when the ark was carried around Jericho. That was really God’s work, which He had ordered for the sake of the lives of His servants when exposed to the perils of war”.

“He has in a certain place expressed an aversion of Sabbaths, by calling them *your Sabbaths* (Isaiah 1:13-14 LXX), reckoning them as men’s Sabbaths, not His own, because they were celebrated without the fear of God by a people full of iniquities, and loving God ‘with the lip, not the heart’ (Isaiah 29:13). He put His own Sabbaths (those, that is, which were kept according to His prescription) in a different position. By the same prophet, in a later passage, He declared them to be ‘true, delightful, and inviolable’ (Isaiah 58:13, 56:2). Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the Law, and did a work, which was beneficial to the life of His disciples, for He indulged them with the relief of food when they were hungry (Matthew 14:15-20), and cured the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14). In each case, He stated, ‘I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it’ (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law, while interpreting its condition. Moreover, He exhibited in a clear light the different kinds of work, while doing what the Law excuses from the sacredness of the Sabbath, while imparting to the Sabbath day itself an additional sanctity by His own action. In like manner, the prophet Elisha, on this day, restored to life the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-37). It was *proper employment* for the Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it; Christ introduced nothing new, which was not after the example, the gentleness and the mercy of the Creator. He fulfilled the prophetic announcement, ‘The weak hands are strengthened’, as were also ‘the feeble knees’ (Isaiah 35:3) of the two paralytics” (Mark 2:1-12, John 5:1-9).

Sometime during the 1st Century, Christians began meeting for worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, which was the traditional Sabbath. This was done to proclaim the Resurrection, which occurred on a Sunday, and also to distance themselves from the unrighteous Jews. The Apostle John refers to this in Revelation 1:10, where Revelation was written in about 95 AD. Ignatius of Antioch (107 AD) refers⁴⁴ to the Lord’s Day having replaced the Sabbath as the time for worship. The Didache also refers⁴⁵ to the Lord’s Day. Sunday was seen then as comparable to the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles represented the coming of the Kingdom of God in Glory and the eighth day of the feast – a Sabbath – represented the Feast as stretching into eternity. It was on this eighth day – the Great Day – that Jesus stood up and said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). Where the living water refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39)!

⁴⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:1.

⁴⁵ The Didache, or the Teaching of the Twelve, from the late 1st or early 2nd Century, 14:1.

Taking the Sabbath as Christ meant it to be taken in our lives today, we as individuals often need healing on the Sabbath also. Our culture sometimes drives us to be workaholics where working harder or longer gives us the illusion that we will catch up. When demons try to bind us with this treadmill lifestyle, we should remember that the Sabbath Laws brought to mind how Israel was being “worked to death” by slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). We should also remember Jesus’ gentle rebuke to Martha, Lazarus’ sister, who had gotten into a workaholic state serving God: “One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part (i.e. sitting at Jesus’ feet, hearing His Word) which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42).

The Lord used as an example of the spirit of the Sabbath how the priests under the Old Covenant worked on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:5). This was hard work also: killing, gutting, and butchering animals one after another to prepare the peoples’ sacrifices. Yet the priests also had days off to spend time with their families; they didn’t have to work seven days per week. For those of us that have to work on the Lord’s Day, we should follow their example and plan for some time off on other days to devote to Sabbath type activities.