

A Voice in the Wilderness

The Newsletter of St. George Orthodox Christian Church

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Christ is Risen! Al Maseeh Qam! Christos Voskrese!



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5th Sunday of Pascha-Samaritan Woman

May 14, 2023



Our Lord Jesus Christ preached to large crowds, for example, at the Sermon on the Mount, and he also spent time with individuals, in one-on-one situations. The Gospel for this Sunday, the account of the Woman at the Well, the Samaritan Woman, is one example of this, and a very interesting one it is.

The Lord and His followers had come to the city of Sychar in Samaria, near Mount Gerizim, which is about

forty miles north of Jerusalem. They stopped at Jacob's Well, a site venerated by Jews and Christians to this day because the spring here was contained in a cistern created by the Old Testament Patriarch Jacob.

It was evening and the Savior, in His human nature, was tired, hungry, and thirsty and sat down at the well. His followers went into the town to see what they could find for a communal meal with the Lord, and at this moment a woman arrived to draw water and the Lord asked her for a drink.

There are two important points to make here: first, she was a Samaritan, and the Samaritans were a sect, regarded as heretics by the Jews. Observant Jews would actually close their eyes when a Samaritan approached so as to avoid looking at them.

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+5th Sunday –Samaritan Woman+
+ Martyrs Isidore and Myrope +

Epistle: Acts 11:19-26, 29-30

Gospel: John: 4: 5-42

St. George Orthodox Christian Church is a community of believers who strive to live a life according to the Gospel of Christ and teachings of the Church.

We worship God in Trinity -
Father+Son+Holy Spirit.

We are dedicated to living out Christ's commandment to, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, ad with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

Orthodox Theology toward Animals, by Dr. Nicholas Kios

Orthodox theology maintains an attitude of respect towards animals, as it does towards the whole of creation, recognizing in it the words of God himself which he pronounced when forming it. As Saint Silouan the Athonite taught, people whose hearts have loved the Creator ardently can't help but burn with compassion for everything created.

We see a similar perception in the teachings and also in the personal behavior of many of the Fathers and Saints of the

Church. However, this approach doesn't lead to dogmatic or idolatrous stances towards creation, animate or inanimate, plants or animals.

The Church views creation with respect. People have to 'guard' creation, but, at the same time, have to live in it and from it. Plants and animals serve as sources of food, as aids in our work, and all of them deserve to be accommodated.

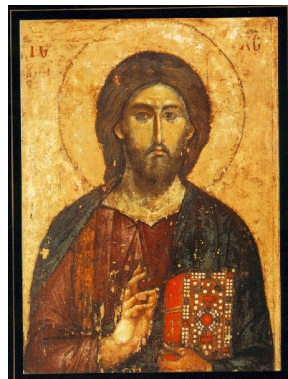
So, the Saints and Fathers themselves, while expressing their love and

respect for nature, neither condemn nor forbid the consumption of meat, fish or any other comestible, nor the use of animals in work. Although we see many instances in the lives of the Saints where they've cultivated a special, often wonderful, interaction with animals, they never recognize that the latter have sovereign rights, which would put them on a par with human beings. In general, there's no Biblical or Patristic tradition to support the extreme
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We invite all to worship in our services. Sunday Divine Liturgy begins at 9:30 AM

If you have any questions about the church or would like to speak with our pastor, please call Fr. Matthew at 607-280-1586

Glory be to
Jesus Christ.
Glory be Forever.





As the deliverer
of captives
and defender
of the poor,
healer of the infirm
and champion of kings,
victorious great
martyr George
intercede with Christ
our God that our souls
may be saved.

News and Notes

We welcome all who are with us today and invite you to join us at our coffee social following the Divine Liturgy.

Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17)

Please keep the following in your prayers: Mother Onufria, Meg, Larissa, Jack, Stephen, Evan, Ryan, Anatoly, Alexey, Heidi, Mackenzie, Mike, Jessica, Lisa, Jeff, Bonnalee, Skip, Colleen, Stan, David, Carol, Norris, Debbie, Linda, Daniel, Matthew, Michael the homeless, the hungry, victims of abuse and violence, & those persecuted for their faith in Christ

St. Augustine on the Scriptures

Lord my God, hear my prayer, and let your mercy heed my yearning, since it burns not for myself alone, but because it desires to benefit brotherly love; you see in my heart that this is so. I would sacrifice to you the service of my thought and tongue; give me what I want to offer you. I'm poor and needy; you're rich to all those who call upon you.

Cleanse my inner and outer lips from all rashness and from all lying. Let your

scriptures be my chaste delights. Let me neither be deceived in them, nor deceive others through them. Lord, hear and take pity on me. Lord my God, light of the blind, and strength of the weak; the light of those who see, and strength of the strong, attend to my soul, and hear it crying out of the depths. Because if your ears aren't present in the depths also, what recourse do we have? Who shall we cry to?

The day is yours, and the night is also yours. At your behest the minutes fly by. Grant us some of this time for our meditations on the hidden things of your law; and don't close the door on us who are knocking. You haven't willed that the obscure secret of so many pages should be written to no purpose.

Guide my steps, Lord, and reveal them to me. Your voice is my joy. Give that which I love, for I do love; and this is something you've given me. Let me confess to you whatever I'll find in your books and let me hear the voice of praise. Let me reflect on the wonderful things of your law.

Orthodox Theology toward Animals, cont'd from p.1

views propounded by certain animal welfare or ecological organizations. Naturally, the fact that the creation is unequal doesn't mean that moral theology, in Orthodox terms, can accept the mistreatment of animals or cruelty towards them. Abandoning animals on the streets, which results in large numbers of strays; cruel and provocative maltreatment even to the extent of killing them; wretched living conditions for animals destined for food, the way they're bred and slaughtered, all display irresponsibility and don't reflect in the slightest the Orthodox ethos as regards the creation.

But the movements which support animal rights go to the other extreme. They not only want to put animals on a par with humans, but often want to displace the latter in order to ensure the rights of the former. In other words, in general, there's an interest in animals which borders on the excessive. Indeed, there are animal-loving behaviors which approach the limits of perversity. According to ex-

tremist animal-lovers, resources which could be used for people who are struggling for survival, especially in times of crisis, belong by right to stray animals, a position they justify by



claiming that humans are responsible for their abandonment in the first place. It should also be noted that, because of interventions by animal-lovers' movements, legislation in many countries has become very strict towards people and excessively supportive towards animals and their rights.

We might say that a sign of the times is the new law in Greece which imposes blanket mandatory sterilization on all controlled pets, as a way of dealing with the chronic problem of strays. This involves the cruel mutilation of animals without any medical necessity. The Panhellenic Association of Veterinarians reacted to this with a statement. But beyond the medical and legal-constitutional problems which clearly exist, questions of a moral, theological and anthropological order also arise.

Instead of stomping on the root of wickedness within people- the greed and vanity which lead to irresponsible forms of behavior- society has ended up abusing creation, on the pretence of animal welfare. It's now sacrificing the bodily integrity of animals with practices which are a reminder of times of totalitarianism. There's no respect for their natural function, which is an expression of the creative urges which the creator himself instilled in them.

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Secondly, a pious Jewish man would not enter into conversation with a woman in public, not even if she was related to Him. Further, as most of us have heard, an observant Jewish man, even in our time, begins the day with a prayer thanking God for not making him a woman.

So, here we see Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, immediately breaking two of the laws that were binding on the Jews. This woman—whose name, by the way, was Photini—was taken aback and challenged Christ in a tone of voice that said, “Who do you think you are, you, a Jew, speaking to me?” And He responded: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, Give me to drink; you would have asked of Him, and he would have given you living water.”

Now, “living water” is an interesting term. The Savior meant a “water” that gives life. There is a considerable amount of important information packed into this. First, the Lord speaks of a free gift, something you can’t earn. Then, He makes it clear that He is the only one who can give this gift. And the gift itself life—that is, eternal life and union with God for those who are otherwise dead in sin, as this woman was.

The effect of these words had an immediate effect and she quickly changed tone in which she was talking to Him. Suddenly He was a “somebody” to her. So she initiated a theological conversation with Him, asking if, since He claimed to give “living water,” He is greater than the Patriarch Jacob, at whose well they are conversing. The Lord saw that she did not yet understand and explained to her that anyone who drinks of the water He can give, will never be thirsty again. At this, the woman immediately asked for this “water.”

We all remember—and we heard again in the reading this morning—that Jesus now moved to gently expose her sins to her—and these sins were many and serious. Needless to say, this was even more startling to the woman. Their conversation continued, but we don’t have time to touch on all of the other important elements of this encounter today, except to recall that the Woman at the Well finally said that she knew the Messiah is coming, and when He comes,” she says, “He will teach us everything.”

We must pause here for a moment to note that the Samaritan woman clearly believes that a Messiah is coming but has not yet arrived; that this Messiah was not an abstract idea but a real person and a teacher, not a military conqueror. One writer has observed that she seemed to have a clearer understanding of Christ than even some of His weak-kneed and weak-minded disciples did! And then the Lord Jesus Christ quietly said to the woman, who has just acknowledged that the Messiah will come, “I,” He proclaims, “I, the very one speaking to you, am He.”

Now this is only one of several times in the Gospels when Christ speaks in this very distinct and recognizable way—recognizable to the Jews, who knew their Scripture. When the Lord says to her, “I am He,” He uses the Greek from the Book of Exodus (3:14) where the Lord

God reveals His personal name, “I AM.” Jesus used this expression in order to show that He and the Father are One; He and the Father are God.

The Holy Fathers of the Church tell us that, safely tucked away in this remarkable encounter, like a nugget, is a story about how we may obtain the Holy Spirit—for, the Fathers explain, this woman of Samaria did indeed receive the Holy Spirit. In both Scripture and the Fathers, the Holy Spirit is referred to as both water and, sometimes, fire. As water—for example in Holy Baptism—the Holy Spirit washes the sinner clean. When the Spirit is described as fire, it reminds us that fire burns sin away and also warms a person. In the conversation at Jacob’s Well, the Lord chose to use the image of the Holy Spirit as Living Water.

Jesus Christ put Himself on the path this woman at the Well, just as He often confronts us, too. He did this because He wanted to forgive her sins and also because He wanted to give her Living Water, that is, the Holy Spirit—salvation. In order for us to have the Holy Spirit fully and completely living in us, in our hearts and souls, we must change. We must not shrink away or hide when Christ puts Himself on our path, directly in front of us, which happens more often than we think or will admit. Instead, we must be like the Samaritan Woman, and eagerly ask for and receive the Holy Spirit, this Living Water.

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To “change” means to become something other than what we are right now, at the present moment. It means admitting that we can’t go on like this. But this can only happen if we choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this saving work, for, as we are now, we have changed very little or not at all from what we perhaps were, say, a year ago, and this lack of ongoing change could well keep us out of the Kingdom of Heaven unless we wake up and pay attention.

Remember, Christ will not always continue to confront us, placing Himself on our path, in front of us. There will come a time when, if we continue to disdain Him, He will stop trying to make “contact” by revealing Himself. And then there will be no change, and the Living Water of the Holy Spirit will not fill us up, and we will be lost. of the Holy Spirit.

We all of us received Baptism and Chrismation, and in these Holy Mysteries, we received the potential for all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the washing away of sins.

For some, we were but wee babes when this mystical event occurred. Others of us were already full-grown, but we received the same potential as those who came on to the saving Ark of Orthodoxy as infants. At some point in our lives, however, we had an experience with meeting Christ. Perhaps it was very subtle and fleeting, perhaps it was much more than that. But it happened, and it was real. But when we encountered the Lord, did we change? Again, that is the question with which I want to leave us all this morning.

The Lord is here, in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He is here as surely as when He walked upon the earth 2 thousand years ago. He will shortly descend and enter into the Holy Gifts, the Bread and the Wine. This is done when the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to complete this mystical action. Therefore, whether you thought about it or not, whether you like it or not, the Lord is right here on your path, right before each and every one of us, once again, through the agency of the

Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, may we eagerly listen to Him, like the Samaritan Woman at the Well, and ask the Holy Spirit for the strength to change!

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In Western societies in particular, people are going through a period of individualism and isolation. The number of people who end their lives of their own accord is increasing rapidly. Using the company of an animal to fill the gap of living with another person, be it a partner or a friend, is a decades-long practice in the Western world. Animals have been shown to be agents of sociability to such an extent that scientific research

has become involved with the issue on many levels.

The phenomenon certainly has not a few deep causes which can be subjects of study for the sciences of psychology and sociology.

Naturally, there are also working domesticated animals which assist people in a variety of activities of their life (guarding spaces or herds, guide dogs for the blind, hunting and so on), a relationship which has existed almost since the appearance of humanity on earth. Co-operation between humans and animals is an image of the organic relationship we have with creation, rather than the idealized museum exhibit which, alas, is tending to become increasingly widespread nowadays.

The Christian attitude to animals, as well as our relationship to them, springs from the attitude of Christians towards the whole of creation. Respect and honor for the creation is of profound theological and social significance for the Church. They’re indissolubly linked

to the worship and honor of ‘*The Creator of all things*’ and to a loving relationship with our neighbor, and have a vertical as well as horizontal dimension. There’s no justification for prioritizing dumb* creation over human beings, who are made in the image of God. The true relationship between people and God, as well as with their neighbors, does, however constitute the basis of a healthy relationship between humans and the rest of creation.

