GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

5th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST —


HOLY HYMNS:

Tone 4 Troparion (Resurrection)
When the women disciples of the Lord learned from the angel the joyous message of thy Resurrection, they cast away the ancestral curse and elatedly told the apostles: “Death is overthrown! Christ God is risen! granting the world great mercy!”

Tone 4 Troparion (for Saints Simeon and John)
O God of our Fathers, always act with kindness towards us; take not Thy mercy from us, but guide our lives in peace through the prayers of Venerable Simeon and John!

Tone 2 Troparion (Prophet Ezekiel)
We celebrate the memory of Thy Prophet Ezekiel, O Lord; through him, we beseech Thee:// save our souls!

Tone 4 Kontakion (Resurrection)
My Savior and Redeemer as God rose from the tomb and delivered the earth-born from their chains. He has shattered the gates of hell, and as Master, // He has risen on the third day!

Tone 2 Kontakion (for Saints Simeon and John)
Let us praise the venerable Simeon as an equal to the angels, for he walked in the flesh upon the earth as a bodiless angel shining forth to all as an example of the virtues; and with him let us honor his companion, the ever memorable and God-bearing father John, for they ceaselessly pray to the Lord for us with faith and love!

Tone 4 Kontakion (Prophet Ezekiel)
Thou hast been revealed as a Prophet of God, wondrous Ezekiel, proclaiming to all the incarnation of the Lord, the Lamb and Creator, the Son of God, Who has ever revealed Himself.

Tone 4 Prokeimenon
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all. (Ps 103/104:24)
v: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, Thou art very great! (Ps 103/104:1)

Tone 4 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!
v: Go forth, prosper and reign, for the sake of meekness, righteousness and truth! (Ps 44/45:5)
v: For Thou livest righteous, and hasten iniquity. (Ps 44/45:8)

HOLY SCRIPTURE:
 Romans 10:1-10 (Epistle)
Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Matthew 8:28-9:1 (Gospel)
When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.” And He said to them, “Go.” So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everyone, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.
it this way:

The classical worldview assumes something quite different. "Blessed Christian minds. At least a suspicion of "something else" will haunt some modern sponsor. Nonetheless, the sacramental understanding continues then, that worldview was only displaced through revolution and state

The assumptions of these two worldviews could hardly be more contradictory. The naturalistic/secular model has the advantage of explainable through science and manageable through technology. Modern Christians, quite innocently, accept this account of the world with the proviso that there is also a God who, on occasion, intervenes within this closed order. The naturalist unbeliever says, “Prove it.” The sacramental world of classical Christianity speaks a wholly different language. It presumes that the world as we see it is an expression of a greater reality that is unseen. It presumes that everything is a continuing gift and a means of communion with the good God who created it. The meaning and purpose of things is found in that which is not seen, apart from which we can only reach false conclusions. The essential message of Christ, “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” is a proclamation of the primacy of this unseen good God who created it. The

Within the Christianity of our time, the great spiritual conflict, unknown to almost all, is between a naturalistic/secular world of modernity and the sacramental world of classical Christianity. The first presumes that a literal take on the world is the most accurate. It tends to assume a closed system of cause and effect, ultimately explainable through science and manageable through technology. Modern Christians, quite innocently, accept this account of the world with the proviso that there is also a God who, on occasion, intervenes within this closed order. The naturalist unbeliever says, “Prove it.” The sacramental world of classical Christianity speaks a wholly different language. It presumes that the world as we see it is an expression of a greater reality that is unseen. It presumes that everything is a continuing gift and a means of communion with the good God who created it. The meaning and purpose of things is found in that which is not seen, apart from which we can only reach false conclusions. The essential message of Christ, “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” is a proclamation of the primacy of this unseen good God who created it. The

The struggle between classical/sacramental Christianity and modernity (including its various Christianities) is not a battle over information. The heart of the struggle is for sacramental Christianity to simply remain faithful to what it is. That struggle is significant, simply for the fact that it takes place within a dominant culture that is largely its antithesis. A complicating factor in this struggle is the fact that the dominant culture (naturalistic/secular) has taken up traditional Christian vocabulary and changed its meaning. This creates a situation in which classical Christianity is in constant need of defining and understanding its own language in contradistinction to the prevailing cultural mind. The most simple terms, “faith, belief, Baptism, Communion, icon, forgiveness, sin, repentance,” are among those things that have to be consistently re-defined. Every conversation outside a certain circle requires this effort, and, even within that circle, things are not always easy. Such an effort might seem exhausting. The only position of relaxation within the culture is the effortless agreement with what the prevailing permutations tell us on any given day. Human instinct tends toward the effortless life – and the secular mentality constantly reassures us that only the effortless life is normal. Indeed, “normal, ordinary, common,” and such terms, are all words invented by modernity as a self-description. Such concepts are utterly absent from the world of Scripture. Oddly, no one lived a “normal” life until relatively recently. That which is “normal” is nothing of the sort. It is the purblind self-assurance that all is well when nothing is well.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1Co 2:14)

This understanding disturbs the sensibilities of many contemporary Christians. Some go so far as to suggest that it is “gnostic” (by this they mean that the very notion of spiritual knowledge that is less than democratic is suspect). Sola Scriptura is a modern concept that posits the Scriptures as subject to objective interpretation. The Scriptures thus belong to the world of public, democratic debate, whose meaning belongs within the marketplace of opinion. The Scriptures are “my Bible.”

The classical model is, in fact, the teaching found in the Scriptures. It utterly rejects the notion of spiritual knowledge belonging to the same category as the naturalistic/secular world. It clearly understands that the truth of things is perceived only through the heart (nous) and that an inward change is required. It is impossible to encounter the truth and remain unchanged.

The classical model, particularly as found within Orthodoxy, demands repentance and asceticism as a normative part of the spiritual life. These actions do not earn a reward, but are an inherent part of the cleansing of the heart and the possibility of perceiving the truth.

The rationalization (secular/rationalist) of the gospel has also given rise to modern “evangelism.” If no particular change is required in a human being in order to perceive the truth of the gospel, then rational argument and demonstration becomes the order of the day. Indeed, modern evangelism is largely indistinguishable from modern marketing. They were born from the same American social movements.

The classical model tends to be slower in its communication, for what is being transmitted is the fullness of the tradition and the transformation of each human life. Evangelism, in this context, has little to no relationship with marketing. The primary form for the transmission of the gospel is the community of the Church. The Christian faith, in its fullness, is properly only seen in an embodied community of believers living in sacramental union with God through Christ by the Holy Spirit. In the early Church, the catechumenate generally lasted for as much as three years. The formation that took place was seen as an essential preparation for the Christian life. “Making a decision” was almost beside the point. The struggle between classical/sacramental Christianity and modernity (including its various Christianities) is not a battle over information. The heart of the struggle is for sacramental Christianity to simply remain faithful to what it is. That struggle is significant, simply for the fact that it takes place within a dominant culture that is largely its antithesis.

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God have mercy on us. By Fr. Stephen Freeman