

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
**PARISH OF ST. PARASKEVI, ST. BARBARA &
ST. JOHN THE MERCIFUL**

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PROGRAMME MAY 2019



SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Kontakion

“The Samaritan Woman, having come to the well in faith, beheld You, the Water of Wisdom from which she drank plentifully and inherited the Heavenly Kingdom as one who is blessed forever.”

THE SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Introduction

The fifth Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman. The day commemorates the encounter of Christ with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The biblical story of this event and the dialog between Christ and the woman is found in the Gospel of Saint John 4:5-42.

Background

One of the most ancient cities of the Promised Land was Shechem, also called Sikima, located at the foot of Mount Gerazim. There the Israelites had heard the blessings in the days of Moses and Jesus of Navi. Near to this town, Jacob, who had come from Mesopotamia in the nineteenth century before Christ, bought a piece of land where there was a well. This well, preserved even until the time of Christ, was known as Jacob's Well. Later, before he died in Egypt, he left that piece of land as a special inheritance to his son Joseph (Gen. 49:22). This town, before it was taken into possession by Samaria, was also the leading city of the kingdom of the ten tribes. In the time of the Romans it was called Neapolis, and at present Nablus. It was the first city in Canaan visited by the Patriarch Abraham. Here also, Jesus of Navi (Joshua) addressed the tribes of Israel for the last time. Almost three hundred years later, all Israel assembled there to make Roboam (Rehoboam) king.

When our Lord Jesus Christ, then, came at midday to this city, which is also called Sychar (John 4:5), He was wearied from the journey and the heat. He sat down at this well. After a little while the Samaritan woman mentioned in today's Gospel passage came to draw water. As she conversed at some length with the Lord and heard from Him secret things concerning herself, she believed in Him; through her many other Samaritans also believed.

Concerning the Samaritans we know the following: In the year 721 before Christ, Salmanasar (Shalmaneser), King of the Assyrians, took the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel into captivity, and relocated all these people to Babylon and the land of the Medes. From there he gathered various nations and sent them to Samaria. These nations had been idolaters from before. Although they were later instructed in the Jewish faith and believed in the one God, they worshipped the idols also. Furthermore, they accepted only the Pentateuch of Moses, and rejected the other books of Holy Scripture. Nonetheless, they thought themselves to be descendants of Abraham and Jacob. Therefore, the pious Jews named these Judaizing and idolatrous peoples Samaritans, since they

lived in Samaria, the former leading city of the Israelites, as well as in the other towns thereabout. The Jews rejected them as heathen and foreigners, and had no communion with them at all, as the Samaritan woman observed, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9). Therefore, the name Samaritan is used derisively many times in the Gospel narrations.

After the Ascension of the Lord, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the woman of Samaria was baptized by the holy Apostles and became a great preacher and Martyr of Christ; she was called Photine, and her feast is kept on February 26.

Icon of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

The icon of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman depicts the biblical story of the Christ conversing with the woman at the well. Our Lord is shown sitting beside the well, speaking with and blessing the Samaritan woman. She is shown with her right hand outstretched toward Christ, indicating both her interest in what He is saying, and also as a sign of her faith and her efforts to bring others to hear what Christ has to say. In the background of the icon, the city is visible together with the Mount Gerazim.

Hymn for the Samaritan Woman

Blessed are you, O woman, drawer of ordinary water, who turned out to be a drawer of living water. You found the treasure, the Source from whom a flood of mercies flows.

The spring had dried up, but it broke through to you and gave you to drink. He was poor, but he asked in order to enrich you. The Glorious Fount, He who was sitting at the well as Giver of drink to all, flows to each according to His will: different springs according to those who drink.

From the well a single drink comes up each time for those who sup, but the Living Fount lets distinct blessings flow to distinct people.

Blessed are you to whom he gave living water to drink, and you did not thirst again, as you said. For he called the truth "living water," since all who hear it will not thirst again.

Blessed are you who learned the truth and did not thirst; for one is the Messiah, and there is no more.

Blessed are you, O woman, for not suppressing your judgement about what you discovered. Your love was zealous to share your treasure with your city. You left behind your pitcher, but filled with understanding you gave your people to drink.

In you, O woman, I see a wonder as great as Mary! For she, from within her womb, in Bethlehem brought forth his body as a child, but you by your mouth made him manifest as an adult in Shechem.

Blessed are you, woman, Who brought forth by your mouth light for those in darkness. Mary, the thirsty land in Nazareth, conceived our Lord by her ear. You too, O woman thirsting for water, conceived the Son by your hearing.

Blessed are your ears that drank the source that gave drink to the world. Mary planted him in the manger, but you planted him in the ears of his hearers. Your voice, O woman, brought forth first fruit, before even the apostles, announcing the Messiah.

The apostles were forbidden to announce him among pagans and Samaritans. Blessed is your mouth that he opened and confirmed.

(From Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns, The Classics of Western Spirituality)



ST PHOTINI, THE SAMARITAN WOMAN Commemorated February 26

The New Testament describes the familiar account of the "woman at the well" (John 4:5-42), who was a Samaritan. Up to that point she had led a sinful life, one which resulted in a rebuke from Jesus Christ. However, she responded to Christ's stern admonition with genuine repentance, was forgiven her sinful ways, and became a convert to the Christian Faith - taking the name 'Photini' at Baptism, which literally means "the enlightened one". A significant figure in the Johannine community, the Samaritan Woman, like many other women, contributed to the

spread of Christianity. She therefore occupies a place of honour among the apostles. In Greek sermons from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries she is called "apostle" and "evangelist." In these sermons the Samaritan Woman is often compared to the male disciples and apostles and found to surpass them. Later, Byzantine hagiographers developed the story of the Samaritan Woman, beginning where Saint John left off. At Pentecost Saint Photini received baptism, along with her five sisters, Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve, Kyriake, and her two sons, Photeinos and Joseph. She then began a missionary career, traveling far and wide, preaching the good news of the Messiah's coming, His death and resurrection. When Nero, the emperor of Rome, began to persecute Christians, Photini and her son Joseph were in Carthage, in Africa, where she was preaching the Christian gospel. After Jesus appeared to Photini in a dream, she sailed to Rome. Her son and many Christians from Africa accompanied her. Photini's arrival and activity aroused curiosity in the capital city. Everyone talked about her, "Who is this woman?" they asked. "She came here with a crowd of followers and she preaches Christ with great boldness."

Soldiers were ordered to bring her to the emperor, but Photini anticipated them. Before they could arrest her, Photini, with her son Joseph and her Christian friends, went to Nero. When the emperor saw them, he asked why they had come. Photini answered, "We have come to teach you to believe in Christ." The half-mad ruler of the Roman Empire did not frighten her. She wanted to convert him! Nero asked the saints their names. Again Photini answered. By name she introduced herself, her five sisters and younger son. The emperor then demanded to know whether they had all agreed to die for the Nazarene. Photini spoke for them. "Yes, for the love of Him we rejoice and in His name we'll gladly die." Hearing their defiant words, Nero ordered their hands beaten with iron rods for three hours. At the end of each hour another persecutor took up the beating. The saints, however, felt no pain. Nothing happened to their hands. Photini joyfully quoted words of a psalm by David: "God is my help. No matter what anyone does to me, I shall not be afraid." Perplexed by the Christian's endurance and confidence, Nero ordered the men thrown into jail. Photini and her five sisters were brought to the golden reception hall in the imperial palace. There, the six women were seated on golden thrones, In front of them stood a large golden table covered with gold coins, jewels and dresses. Nero hoped to tempt the women by this display of wealth and luxury. Nero then ordered his daughter Domnina, with her slave girls, to go speak with the Christian women. Women, he thought, would succeed in persuading their Christian sisters to deny their God.

Domnina greeted Photini graciously, mentioning the name of Christ. On hearing the princess' greeting, the saint thanked God. She then embraced and kissed Domnina. The women talked. But the outcome of the women's talk was not what Nero wished.

Photini catechized Domnina and her hundred slave girls and baptized them all. She gave the name Anthousa to Nero's daughter. After her baptism, Anthousa immediately ordered all the gold and jewels on the golden table distributed to the poor of Rome.

When the emperor heard that his own daughter had been converted to Christianity, he condemned Photini and all her companions to death by fire. For seven days the furnace burned, But when the door of the furnace was opened, it was seen that the fire had not harmed the saints. Next the emperor tried to destroy the saints with poison, Photini offered to be the first to drink it. "O King," she said, "I will drink the poison first so that you might see the power of my Christ and God." All the saints then drank the poison after her. None suffered any ill effects from it. In vain Nero subjected Photini, her sisters, sons and friends to every known torture. The saints survived unscathed to taunt and ridicule their persecutor. For three years they were held in a Roman prison. Saint Photini transformed it into a "house of God." Many Romans came to the prison, were converted and baptized. Finally, the enraged tyrant had all the saints, except for Photini, beheaded. She was thrown first into a deep, dry well and then into prison again. Photini now grieved that she was alone, that she had not received the crown of martyrdom together with her five sisters, Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve and Kyriake and her two sons, Photeinos and Joseph. Night and day she prayed for release from this life. One night, God appeared to her, made the sign of the cross over her three times. The vision filled her with joy. Many days later, while she hymned and blessed God, Saint Photini gave her soul into God's hands. The Samaritan Woman conversed with Christ by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar. She drank of the "living water" and gained everlasting life and glory. For generation after generation, Orthodox Christians have addressed this prayer to the woman exalted by the Messiah when He sat by the well in Samaria and talked with her:

*Illuminated by the Holy Spirit, All-Glorious One,
from Christ the Saviour you drank the water of salvation.
With open hand you give it to those who thirst.
Great-Martyr Photini, Equal-to-the-Apostles,
pray to Christ for the salvation of our souls.*

THE RESURRECTION



PROGRAMME MAY 2019

Every Thursday Evening the program is as follows:

6pm: The St Ignatius children's group and choir (primary school age and up)

7pm: Paraklesis service to the Theotokos (in English)- OR ENGLISH DIVINE

LITURGY at 7.30 once a month

7.45: Bible study group (for all ages), led by Fr Demosthenes

SUNDAY 5 May: **Great Martyrs Ephraim and Irene**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY 8 May: **Saint John the Theologian**, Matins and Divine Liturgy at PANAGIA SOUMELA KEILOR, from 8am

SUNDAY 12 May: **SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY 14 May: **Saint Therapontus Bishop of Cyprus**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-9.30am

SUNDAY 19 May: **SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

TUESDAY 21 May: **Saints Constantine and Helen, Equal to the Apostles**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

WEDNESDAY 22 May: **Mid-Pentecost**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

SUNDAY 26 May: **THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

THURSDAY 30 May: **Evening: ENGLISH DIVINE LITURGY**, 7.30-9pm