

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, November 2, 2025

"21st Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Weekend

In this Gospel, Christ crosses the lake into the country of the Gerasenes, a place beyond the borders of Israel, a land considered unclean. It is there, among tombs and shadows, that He meets a man possessed by many demons. This encounter reveals the unfathomable depth of divine mercy and the boundless reach of Christ's saving power.

The Lord does not turn away from impurity or madness. Instead, He steps directly into the place of death, into the very domain of spiritual darkness. Here we see a revelation of the mystery sung in the **Paschal Canon**: *"Today hell groans and cries out: It would have been better for me if I had not received Him!"* For just as Christ descended into the tomb to shatter the gates of Hades, He now descends into the tombs of human misery to liberate one soul held captive.

The man possessed is the icon of fallen humanity, tormented, fragmented, alienated from himself and from God. Naked, dwelling among the dead, he symbolizes what sin does to the human heart: it strips away our dignity and isolates us from communion.

The Fathers of the East often speak of the passions as "demons of the heart", forces that take hold of us when our soul loses its proper harmony with the divine. Yet Christ approaches this man not with judgment, but with compassion that sees beyond the ruin to the original beauty still hidden within.

When the demons name themselves "Legion," they reveal the chaos that reigns in the absence of God. The human soul, made for the unity and simplicity of divine life, becomes a battleground of conflicting desires. But before the presence of Christ, even the legions tremble. His mere word restores order where there was confusion, peace where there was turmoil. In this, we glimpse the **true authority of Christ**, not domination, but healing; not coercion, but liberation.

After the healing, the people of the region, rather than rejoicing, beg Jesus to depart. They prefer the familiarity of their darkness to the unsettling brightness of divine light. St. Isaac the Syrian teaches that *"the light of Christ is a torment to those who have never desired it."* The presence of holiness exposes the hidden sickness within the soul, and many would rather remain asleep in their tombs than awaken to transformation.

But the man who was healed becomes a missionary. Clothed, in his right mind, sitting at the

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The Courage to Keep Sunday Holy

To keep Sunday holy in our time requires a courage that is both humble and heroic. In an age when every hour seems claimed by noise, work, or entertainment, to stop, to rest, to worship, to turn our face toward God, is a quiet act of resistance.

It is to declare that our lives are not owned by schedules or demands, but are held in the hands of the Living God.

When we enter the **Divine Liturgy**, we do not simply attend a service; we cross a threshold between time and eternity. We step out of the restless rhythm of the world and into the peace of the Kingdom. Here, heaven and earth meet, and our hearts are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. This is not a routine, but a lifeline, the breath of the soul. To neglect it is to starve the spirit that longs for communion with its Creator.

Keeping Sunday holy means remembering that **we are not made for endless labor, but for divine rest**. God Himself rested on the seventh day not because He was weary, but to bless and sanctify time, to teach us that holiness begins when we make space for Him. The courage to worship amid worldly demands is the courage to trust that God will provide, that time given to Him is never wasted.

When we choose to prioritize **Confession** and the **Divine Liturgy**, we are saying “yes” to life. Confession is the return of the prodigal heart, it restores within us the light of grace that the world cannot give. The Liturgy, our “heaven on earth,” renews that light, uniting us once more with Christ and His Body, the Church. Together they form the rhythm of a truly spiritual life: repentance and communion, humility and joy, death and resurrection.

The Fathers teach that the Christian life is a continual **struggle to balance the spiritual and the worldly**, to live in the world without being enslaved by it. St. John Chrysostom once said, *“You cannot pray at home as you can in the church, where many are gathered, where Christ is present in a special way.”* To make the effort to come to church, even when tired, even when burdened, is to offer a small cross to God, and from that cross, grace flows abundantly. To keep Sunday holy is not simply to fulfill an obligation, it is to **allow God to re-order our loves**. When we give Him the first day of the week, He sanctifies all the rest. When we give Him our hearts in prayer, He gives us His peace in return. Slowly, our worries lose their tyranny, our hearts regain their clarity, and our lives begin to reflect the harmony of heaven. So let us find the courage to keep Sunday holy, to silence the world for a few sacred hours, to stand before the Holy Mysteries, to listen to the still voice of God. Let us make Confession a place of freedom, and the Divine Liturgy the center of our week. For in doing so, we rediscover who we truly are: not servants of time, but children of eternity, redeemed and sanctified by the Lord who rose on the first day, and who still calls us to share in His everlasting rest.

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feet of Jesus, he is the image of restored humanity. Once he was a vessel of demons; now he is a dwelling place of grace. Christ does not allow him to follow physically, but sends him to proclaim the mercy of God. Thus the first apostle to the Gentiles in that region is a man once possessed, a living witness that **no one is beyond redemption**.

In this mystery, the Church beholds the drama of every soul. Each of us, in some way, has known the tombs of despair, the chains of sin, the wounds of inner division. Yet Christ comes to us not when we are strong, but when we are lost. He crosses the stormy waters of our hearts to find us in our brokenness. His love descends into our darkness and calls us forth into new life.

As the hymn of the **Orthros of the Resurrection** proclaims:

“You arose, O Christ, raising up Adam with Yourself; break the chains of my passions, and make me stand in the brightness of Your mercy.”

So too, the healing of the Gerasene demoniac is not merely an ancient story, it is the Gospel written anew in every heart that turns toward Christ. Where sin once reigned, now grace abides; where there was madness, now peace; where there was isolation, now communion.

May we, like the healed man, sit at the feet of the Savior, clothed in the light of baptism, and bear witness to the great mercy of God who seeks us, even among the tombs, to restore in us the image of His divine glory.



Thank you for Your Prayers

I wanted to share an update regarding my surgery. My hematologist decided not to clear me at this time after discovering three blood clots in my legs.

He expressed concern that during surgery, a clot could potentially travel to my heart or lungs, which could be fatal, or to my spine, which could cause paralysis.

For now, I am undergoing treatment for the blood clots for the next six months. I am deeply grateful for your continued prayers, kindness, and support during this time.

Your care and faith mean more to me than words can express. With heartfelt thanks and trust in God's mercy. Fr Hugo

With heartfelt gratitude, I thank you for your generous financial support to our church.

Your kindness and love for God's house are a true blessing to our parish family.

May the Lord, in His abundant mercy, reward you a hundredfold with His grace, granting you good health, happiness, and many blessings for you and your loved ones.

The Meaning and Role of the Tetrapod in the Byzantine Catholic Church

1. The Word and Its Origin

The term **“tetrapod”** comes from the Greek τετράπους (tetrapous), meaning “four-footed” or “four-legged.” It refers literally to the small, four-legged table that stands in front of the **iconostasis**, usually at the center of the church, before the Royal Doors.

But this simple term carries deep spiritual and liturgical significance: it is the **table of encounter**, the visible place where heaven and earth touch in the life of the faithful.

2. The Physical Description

The **tetrapod** is a small, often beautifully carved and covered table placed in front of the **icon screen (iconostasis)**.

It is usually adorned with:

- A **cross**, often standing upright;
- One or two **icons** (typically Christ, the Theotokos, or the feast being celebrated);
- A **lighted candle** or vigil lamp (symbol of the light of Christ);

Occasionally a **Gospel Book**, **blessing cross**, or **holy relic**.

A cloth or cover, often of liturgical color, veils the table to show reverence.

3. Liturgical and Sacramental Function

The **tetrapod** serves as a **liturgical focal point** for several important sacramental and devotional actions:

a. Blessing and Anointing

During certain services, especially at **Vespers of a feast**, the **Blessing of Bread, Wheat, Wine, and Oil (Artoklasia)**, the blessed gifts are placed on the tetrapod. The faithful later approach to receive the blessed bread and oil as a sign of God’s mercy and provision.

b. Veneration of Icons

At the conclusion of the **Divine Liturgy** or **Great Vespers**, the faithful come forward to **venerate the cross or icon** placed upon the tetrapod. This symbolizes approaching Christ Himself to receive His blessing and to affirm communion with Him and His Church.

c. The Place of the Gospel and Cross

On major feasts, the **Gospel Book** may be placed there for the faithful to kiss after the reading of the Word of God.

On other days, the **hand cross** is placed there for the priest to bless the people after the Liturgy.

d. Services of Prayer and Blessing

When the priest blesses water, icons, or individuals, the act is frequently performed at the tetrapod.

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It becomes a **liturgical “altar” for the people**, distinct from but related to the Holy Table (the altar behind the iconostasis).

4. Theological and Symbolic Meaning

a. A Bridge Between Sanctuary and Nave

The tetrapod occupies a sacred **“in-between space”**. It stands between the **Holy of Holies** (the altar area) and the **assembly of the faithful** (the nave).

Thus, it embodies the **meeting point between God and humanity**, the threshold where the grace proceeding from the altar is made accessible to the people.

In this way, it is a **symbol of the Incarnation**: God who is infinitely beyond us takes flesh and becomes touchable, blessable, near.

b. The Table of Encounter

The tetrapod is a **manifestation of divine condescension** (synkatabasis).

Just as Christ “came forth” from the sanctuary of heaven into the world, so the gifts of sanctification, icons, the cross, the Gospel, come forth from the altar and are placed on the tetrapod for the faithful’s veneration.

It expresses that **the sacred is not confined** to the sanctuary, but overflows into the life of the faithful.

c. An Image of the Heart

Many Eastern Fathers speak of the human heart as the “inner temple.”

The tetrapod, standing in the center of the church, can be seen as a **symbol of the heart of the Church**, the place where divine grace is received in love and reverence.

As St. Maximus the Confessor taught, “*The Church is the image of the world, and the altar is the image of heaven. In between stands the human heart, mediating through prayer.*”

The tetrapod visually expresses that mediating heart: between heaven (the altar) and earth (the nave).

d. The Cross and Light

The cross that crowns the tetrapod reminds the faithful that all blessing, healing, and grace come through the sacrifice of Christ.

The candle or lamp that burns there recalls the **Light of the Resurrection**, the flame of divine life that illumines those who approach with faith.

5. Historical Development

The **tetrapod** evolved from early Christian and Byzantine traditions of placing icons and relics in the center of the assembly for veneration.

By the Middle Ages, particularly in Slavic and Byzantine territories, a fixed table was used for these purposes.

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*Its position and form are not accidental but organically developed to serve the **communal liturgical experience**, helping the faithful to **participate bodily and spiritually** in the mystery celebrated behind the iconostasis.*

6. Spiritual Meaning for the Faithful

For the worshiper, the tetrapod is not merely a piece of furniture; it is:

- *The **table of blessing**, where we approach to be sanctified;*
- *The **table of witness**, bearing the icons of Christ and His saints;*
- *The **table of mercy**, where the priest blesses and anoints;*

*The **table of encounter**, where we draw near to the living God.*

*Approaching the tetrapod to venerate the icon or the cross is an act of **personal communion with Christ**, a continuation of the Eucharistic mystery. We come forward not just to “kiss an image,” but to affirm our faith that God became visible and near for our salvation.*

7. A Mystical Summary

*If the **altar** symbolizes Heaven, and the **nave** symbolizes the world, then the **tetrapod** is the **doorway between the two**, a small, humble table that silently proclaims: “God has come down to meet us. The Word has taken flesh. The Invisible has become visible, the untouchable touchable, the distant near.”*

Every veneration, every blessing, every candle lit before it is a small participation in that great mystery of God’s nearness.

In the words of a Byzantine hymn:

*“We venerate Your most pure image, O Good One,
Asking forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ God.
For of Your own will You deigned to ascend the Cross,
That You might deliver those whom You created from bondage to the enemy.”*
*The **tetrapod** is the visible place where that veneration takes form, where the faith of the Church bends low before the mercy of God made manifest.*



First Banns of Marriage

We joyfully announce the intention of **Tiffany Anne Goldberg** and **Christian Andrew Walter Turner** to receive the **Holy Mystery of Matrimony** in our church.

As they prepare to enter this sacred covenant, let us surround them with our prayers, that the Lord may bless their union, strengthen their love, and grant them a life of faith and peace. If anyone knows of a canonical impediment to this marriage, please contact the pastor in due time.

May God, who united man and woman from the beginning, bless Tiffany and Christian as they prepare to become one in the grace of the Holy Mystery of Matrimony.

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Sunday Divine Liturgy:
8:50 a.m. The Third Hour
And
Prayer Service for Peace in
Ukraine.
9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

Religious Education
September - May

Sacraments Penance:
Sunday before Liturgies
or by appointment

Baptism - Matrimony
In most instances
six-month membership
required

Funerals
Membership of an
immediate family member
required

**Communion to the
Homebound**
If you or your family
members are confined to a
health center or are
homebound, please contact
Fr. Hugo directly so that
arrangements can be made
for his visitation.

Sunday, November 2

"21st Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy Martyrs Acindynus, Pegasius and Others with Them"

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20 Gospel: Luke 8:26-39

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and

Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine

9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, November 3

"The Holy Martyrs Acepimas the Bishop"

Epistle: Colossians 2:13-20 Gospel: Luke 11:29-33

Tuesday, November 4

"Our Venerable Father Joannicius the Great"

Epistle: Colossians 2:20-3:3 Gospel: Luke 11:34-41

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, November 5

"The Holy Martyrs Galaction and Epistemis"

Epistle: Colossians 3:17-4:1 Gospel: Luke 11:42-46

Thursday, November 6

"Our Holy Father Paul, Archbishop of Constantinople and Confessor"

Epistle: Colossians 4:2-9 Gospel: Luke 11:47-12:1

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, November 7

"The Thirty-three Holy Martyrs of Militene"

Epistle: Colossians 4:10-18 Gospel: Luke 12:2-12

Saturday, November 8

"Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers of Heaven"

Epistle: Hebrews 2:2-10. Gospel: Luke 10:16-21.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, November 9

"22nd Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy Martyrs Onisiphorus and Porphyry"

Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18 Gospel: Luke 8:41-56

8:50 a.m. The Third Hour and

Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine

9:30 a.m. Gods blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends