



**This week meditations on liturgical texts
from **Skynia Magazine****

May 23 - 29
The Julian calendar

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Stages of meditation

Please find below some schematic prompts for each stage of the meditation on the Word of God. [Read more.](#)

1. Reading

- Read the text
- What does it tell by itself?
- Clear up the context
- Look up the comments
- Find the key-phrase

2. Meditation

- What is my here and now?
- What does the Word tell me?
- Use your imagination
- "Digest" the text
- The Word and my life

3. Prayer

- What will I say in response?
- Recognition and request
- Gratitude and glorifying
- Prayer in the Word
- My participation in the Divine Liturgy

4. Contemplation

- A call to conversion
- Now I am silent
- Staying in the presence of God
- Now He is guiding me

Biblical readings and meditations

May 23

Sunday of the Paralytic

Acts 9: 32-42

John 5: 1-15

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 9: 32-42

Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!" And immediately he got up. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt

down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up.” Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

John 5: 1-15

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more,

so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Meditation

Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the second time on the occasion of a Jewish festival. The Bethzatha (Bethesda) echoes the pagan cult of the gods of healing. Waiting for the movement of water, caused by the angel, is probably a remnant of a folk legend. Water could move due to the pressure difference in the interconnected vessels or irregular water inflow from a local spring.

Even if it was so, the initiative is still with Jesus. He is depicted as the master of health. He can heal even from the most severe diseases. His word is so powerful that it can provide immediate healing. Christ is a real healer of the whole human and each human. This event particularly stresses that Jesus is the Savior of the weakest, abandoned people, forgotten by everyone.

Some exegetes see in Bethzatha a hint to the Law of Moses, which is incapable of healing, unlike the words of Jesus that bring health back. Alfred Loisy wrote: *The waters of Bethesda, the same as the baptism of John, symbolize the rule of the law. And the case with the paralytic is to show that this rule does not bring salvation. There exists incurable paralysis only Jesus can heal. And really, it is only Him who restores mankind thanks to the gift of eternal life.*

Other exegetes open in five porticoes of Bethzatha the image of five books of the Law of Moses, while the sick person who has been waiting for his healing for already 38 years constitutes a prototype of those who are looking for salvation in the law. Brown, one more

exegete, wrote: *The figure 38 years is rather symbolic. There is some point in associating 38 years of expectation with the time, under Deuteronomy 2:15, which the Israeli spent in the desert before they reached the promised land.*

The healing of a man who has been sick for 38 years, carried out by Jesus, is not so much a deed of mercy as the manifestation of the very God's deed of salvation, the deeds of the Father via the grace of forgiveness and salvation. Let God heal us from our physical and spiritual diseases, particularly, in our times that are difficult for the whole world.

May 24

Monday

The Holy Cyril and Methodius

Hebrews 7:26 - 8, 2

John 10: 9-16

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Hebrews 7:26 - 8:2

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.

John 10: 9-16

And the Lord said: "I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief

comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

Meditation

God the Father, staying in the heaven, sent His Son – Jesus, who is also God, like the Father, His equal, Existing – to this world. Jesus opens up the mystery of the Holy Trinity. This speech is not simple for Hebrews – people who believed in one God. Many peoples, religions and sects still find it problematic to recognize Jesus-human to be God at the same time, to recognize that One God may be in three persons.

Jesus directly tells people that He has come from above, from the heaven, that He is not from this world. He calls Himself Existing, Eternal – which is God. These are astonishing words. But listening to them many people believed Him. They saw with their own eyes a man, a young person, a Hebrew – and trusted Him. They were convinced by His words and deeds. He taught important things,

spoke as a sovereign, did good things. People with open hearts recognized the truth, saw the light with their spiritual sight and believed.

Jesus does not do and does not tell anything for himself, He is obedient to the Father's will in everything. There are no grounds to consider that the God from the Old Testament is strict, envious and just, while Jesus is merciful to sinners, good, and obedient. Jesus shows the Father with His life. The Heavenly Father Himself blesses and hugs people through Jesus, saves the adulterous woman from stoning and forgives her sins, touches lepers and heals them, visits publicans. Father via Jesus washes the legs of the apostles, calls all those tired and overburdened to Him in order to give relief to them. He does not demand, but helps. He does not judge, but shows mercy. He does not punish, but rescues.

Jesus tells about His death, about His crucifixion and about His resurrection that will become the sign and confirmation of the authenticity of His words. At first this will look as a defeat, humiliation, punishment, the sign of lost connection with God, but, in fact, that will transform into a victory.

May 25

Tuesday

Acts 10: 21-33

John 7: 1-13

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 10: 21-33

So Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?” They answered, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. The following day they came to Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. On Peter’s arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshiped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, “Stand up; I am only a mortal.” And as he talked with him, he went in and found that many had assembled; and he said to them, “You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you sent for me?”

Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this very hour, at three o’clock, I was praying in my house when suddenly a man in dazzling clothes stood before me. He said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is called Peter; he is staying in the home of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ Therefore I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. So now all of us are here in the presence of God to listen to all that the Lord has commanded you to say.”

John 7: 1-13

After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near. So his brothers said to him, “Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing; for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” (For not even his brothers believed in him.) Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. Go to the festival yourselves. I am not[d] going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come.” After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret. The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, “Where is he?” And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, “He is a good man,” others were saying, “No, he

is deceiving the crowd.” Yet no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews.

Meditation

The Jewish people are celebrating the festival of Booths in Jerusalem. That is one of the greatest holidays, in memory of the miracles the Lord did while exiting from the Egyptian captivity, as well as thanksgiving for good crop yield. Jesus’ brothers are going to the festival and invite Him to go with them. They suggest that Jesus should show Himself to the world: *If you do these things, show yourself to the world.* The gospel writer John says that *not even his brothers believed in him!* Therefore, this proposal of His brothers could contain some sarcasm, some mockery of Christ. According to them, a great festival in Jerusalem was a nice occasion for those who want to show themselves. But Christ does not accompany them, and He goes to Jerusalem later, *not publicly but as it were in secret.*

The Judeans are looking for Jesus at the festival, many people speak about Him, asking: *where is He?* Some are looking for Him to blame Him for something, others – to see His miracles, still others – in the hope to recognize the Messiah in Him. They are trying to also understand what He is like: *While some were saying, “He is a good man,” others were saying, “No, he is deceiving the crowd”.* Jesus gives them some time, waits till the middle of the celebration. About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. Why does Christ give that time to Judeans? The following can be assumed: for them to compose their thoughts and get clear about their doubts, to see what their hearts are filled with,

to realize what the actual reason for their looking for Christ is. But one can tell it for sure: the Lord knows it better when and how to act.

Probably, there have been moments in our life when we asked: *Where are you, o Lord?* Probably, we wanted to realize what the Lord is like, were contemplating or had some doubts, wanted Him to show Himself to us. Probably, we have already prepared an instruction for God's actions in our life. And in those moments it seems to us that God is not near us. But He was staying with us, but *as it were in secret*. Probably, that was the time Jesus gave us to better cognize ourselves, our intentions, our sinful nature; He was preparing us for something known only to Him. Probably, that was the time of our conversion or preparation for it. Living through such moments, let God give us time; let Him be the Lord in our life.

May 26

Wednesday

Acts 14: 6-18

John 7: 14-30

- [Reading](#)
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- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 14: 6-18

The Apostle learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; and there they continued proclaiming the good news.

In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And the man sprang up and began to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the City, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, “Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who

made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.” Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

John 7: 14-30

About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished at it, saying, “How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?” Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.

“Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?” The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?” Jesus answered them, “I performed one work, and all of you are astonished. Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man’s whole body on the sabbath? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Meditation

The background of today's Gospel reading is the Festival of Booths. In the New Testament it is mentioned only here, in this chapter. It was celebrated in early autumn and lasted for one week. At the end of it people thanked the Lord for the crops of the fields and asked for rain. During this holiday week, the Jews lived in tents set up in the courtyards and terraces of Jerusalem to commemorate the life of the Jews in the wilderness at the time of the Exodus. There were also processions from the pool of Siloam, where the spring flowed, to the Temple. Much attention was paid to the night lighting of the Temple.

Only when His family members went to the festival did Jesus also go to Jerusalem incognito. He rejected the temptation to show Himself in the company of a large family and make a show.

The people of Jerusalem knew of the intentions of their authorities to kill Jesus, so they were astonished that He was openly teaching. They knew Messianic theology well. They knew that His origin from Galilee was a crucial sign which excluded His messianic nature. But the origin of Jesus is a real mystery. Despite His apparent origin from Galilee, His earthly homeland is Judea. Besides, at the origins of His life and mission is not the man, but God.

Jesus loudly repeats in ironic terms the convictions of the inhabitants of Jerusalem regarding their understanding of His essence and origin. These Jews rely too much on their knowledge, even though they live in a complete ignorance of the true nature of Christ. In this context, Jesus alludes to His divine origin. He says He did not come from Himself, but was sent by God. He who sent Jesus is truthful, that is, He does not lie and does not unmistakably reveal Himself in whom He has sent. Ignorance of God and His Messenger by Jesus' enemies is a tragic reality that manifests itself even in the conversations at the Last Supper (see John 16:3; 17:25).

The enemies of Jesus cannot arrest Him because the time of His death and resurrection has not yet come.

May 27

Thursday

Acts 10: 34-43

John 8: 12-20

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
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Acts 10: 34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

John 8: 12-20

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” Then the Pharisees said to him, “You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.” Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf.” Then they said to him, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

Meditation

Have you ever thought why it happens so: you go to church, pray with your whole heart, probably, try to do the most of what the Lord has commanded, and then... it appears that you don't know God at all! Even more – you don't want to know Him as the one He really is. You keep adapting Him to your needs.

A thing like that happened to the Jews. Their spiritual leaders were mainly really highly pious. They knew almost everything *about* God. But they did not know *God*.

This talk starts in the church of Jerusalem on the last day of the feast of Booths, one of the main religious holidays of Israel. On that day the church yard is full of light, according to the tradition. And here Jesus draws people's attention to the fact that He is the real light which needs to be lit today, that no other light can fill the shrine. That is a very serious statement since He does not tell that He has better light to lighten the yard or that He keeps this light in Him. No, He is the light.

Christ is not just something you need to introduce into your daily religious practices. He is not an *addition* to your piety. He is the addressee, the core, the heart. He would not accept less.

How often do we attach God in our prayers and religious practices only with the function of *filler*, placebo. And what then makes the axis of our prayer, internal life? The form. Why do we pray? Well, how could we do without prayers! But whom do we pray to? It does not matter! Here is a nice prayer, and there, and there, and it's also worth praying to Jude Thaddaeus, and the nine-day prayer cycle to my favourite saint. Haven't we made a schedule with our favourite prayers that we practice, having not a single idea about their addressee on our mind?

Once a woman complained a lot that the priest assigned her the penance at the confession asking her to pray the rosary, since she had already so accurately made a plan of her daily prayers of

which there were plenty that she just could not squeeze anything longer than one *Our Father* into it!

The Jerusalem church was the centre of the spiritual life of Jews. It was a tabernacle: the Arc of the Testimony with commandment tables was kept there, above which the glory of God was resting – a special sign of the presence of God. And there, with time, the very walls of the shrine became much more important for Israel than what was supposed to be there. And what do the walls of the shrine of your heart, your tabernacle look like? Is it open for the Light of the world?

It is by no accident that John mentions that the talk took place near the treasury. *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Luke 12:34). Make your choice today what the real treasure for you is: the form, the walls of the church, or the Light of the world that is to fill it.

May 28

Friday

Acts 10:44 - 11:10

John 8: 21-30

- [Reading](#)
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Acts 10:44 - 11:10

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Now the apostles and the believes who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, “Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?” Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, staying, “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and

birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.' But I replied, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' But a second time the voice answered from heaven, 'What God has made clean, you must not call profane.' This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven.

John 8: 21-30

Again he said to them, "I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." Then the Jews said, "Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." They said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Meditation

Jesus is again involved in a dispute with a group of people, who oppose His word. The subject is His essence, which is discussed from the perspective of His imminent death. We hear a very strong statement which sounds like a threat of condemnation: *you will die in your sin*. The term *sin* refers to unbelief, which leads to distancing oneself from God, and thus to death. It means not only physical death, but also the spiritual one, that is, being y from the One Who is the source of life; it also leads to the breakdown of any relationship with Him. Not to believe in *I am* of Jesus means to deny the divine reality revealed in Him. Such people live without looking up at the sky, and search for the answers in their own worldly thoughts. Therefore, they are in sin, because they live separated from God, apart from His will. Under such conditions, the understanding between them and Jesus is impossible. The question of the Jews: *Who are you?* openly points to their unbelief. In the last attempt to explain, Jesus tells them about His death. What they cannot understand now will become apparent to them when He is lifted up on the cross. The effect is unexpected: despite stubbornness and distrust, many Jews accept this word of Jesus. It is as if the Cross, placed between this inability to understand and unbelief, becomes a bridge linking these two shores which seemed too far away from each other. This is indeed a bright image. It means that the sacrifice of His life is in fact a bridge: crossing it opens up a possibility for those who seemed doomed to death to come to life. The resurrection becomes the seal of this transition in

case the gift of life is accepted. This image of the Passover, which symbolically overcomes the misunderstanding between Jesus and the Jews, is inspiring. I wonder if all this is reminiscent of our daily situations of misunderstanding. I think it is a common experience when it is not enough to be open to a dialogue and look for common ground with others. I do not want to underestimate the importance of a dialogue. But sometimes it does not lead to solving a problem. And in some cases it becomes just an opportunity to inflict a few more new wounds. Of course, I don't have any single advice for resolving conflicts. I am only meditating on this Gospel reading. And I ask myself, talking into consideration the cases when I could not correct misunderstanding: was I really ready to seek life for another person and not some other things? And was I willing to risk my own life for this matter? Maybe under such conditions both of us could have been saved. Resurrection is building bridges so that another person could understand his/her life!

May 29

Saturday

Acts 12: 1-11

John 8: 31-42

- [Reading](#)
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Acts 12: 1-11

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision.

After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

John 8: 31-42

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father."

They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does." They said to him, "We are not

illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.” Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.

Meditation

What the world likes and what constitutes a precondition for success is far from always being the only way, or the right development vector, or the most reliable way to goal attainment. God always offers us ways that are absolutely different from the ways of this world, and we may be sure of that. He does it not to show us how blind or unseeing we are or that we are incapable of choosing and walking along His roads, but to show how much we should trust Him. He shows us that it's been long since He took care of our paths, that they are often extraordinary and unclear for this world. The release of St. Peter who was staying in the chains, closed *under lock and key*, with four squads of guard from prison shows that there is nothing impossible for God.

God often tries St. Peter out for his trust in Him. Peter is in doubt again and again, and this is very much characteristic of us, people. But when he finally dares follow God, he overcomes the difficulties that cannot be overcome by humans. Each of us may be such *Peter*. One should take inconceivable paths, overcome superhuman difficulties, find ways out of dead-end situations, get released from the chains. The only precondition for those graces is to listen to the Word of God and to follow Him.

The enemy's strategy lies in fear and lies. Most often the enemy gets killed, with all the danger neutralized. Herod kills his most

serious enemies (often – helpless Christians) since he is not capable of understanding them, he is not capable of believing in other truth. Due to inability to cope with his inner human he deactivates the enemy. He is not brave enough to sort himself out and to acknowledge his deficiencies or faults. Quite often we do the same, responding to the good things with aggression, though somewhere in the depth of our thoughts we realize the truth. A little *herod* lives in each of us, and he will rather kill a good thought, the truth than accept it.

Overcoming the boundaries of the evil and moving towards the good things are a great mercy we need to ask God for. These are the small steps of the truth on the way to perfection that is cognized on the way of Love, on the way of God.

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