



SYNAXARIA OF THE PENTECOSTARION

by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos

SUNDAY of THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

On this day, the fifth Sunday of Pascha, we commemorate the conversation of the Lord with the Samaritan woman.

Verses

When thou camest to obtain perishable water, O woman, thou didst
Draw forth living water, whereby thou didst wash away the stains of
thy soul.

Synaxarion

Since on this Sunday Christ openly confesses Himself to be the Messiah, which means “Christ” or “the anointed one” (for *messa* is the Hebrew word for oil), for this reason, the present feast is placed in the week of Mid-Pentecost; and also because, on the previous Sunday, Christ wrought a miracle at the Sheep’s Pool. On this Sunday, He works a miracle at Jacob’s well, which Jacob himself dug and bestowed upon his son Joseph. This was a special place, for here, in the vicinity of Mount Somor, the Samaritans inhabited many cities. Christ came to Sichar, where Jacob once lived with his daughter Dinah and his sons. Sychem, the son of Emmor the Chorraean, lusted after Dinah and raped her; thereupon, her brothers, provoked to zeal, suddenly entered their city and slew everyone, including Sychem and his father Emmor. Jacob lived in that place and dug the present well.

The Hebrews who originally lived on this mountain were not called Samaritans, but Israelites. During the reign of King Pekah, they offended God by falling into idolatry and other iniquities. During the reign of King Hoshea, who became a vassal of the Assyrians and paid tribute to them, the Assyrians came and deported the inhabitants of Samaria, together with their women and children, to their own country. Subsequently, the King of

the Assyrians, in order that the land should not remain uncultivated, dispatched men from Babylon and the neighboring regions to settle in the territory of the Israelites; but God sent lions against the heathen, and by His permission, the lions devoured them. On learning of this, the King of the Assyrians wanted to know the reason why. The Israelites held captive in Assyria replied that it was because the settlers did not know the ways of the God of that place. Hence, the King sent them a priest from the Jews to instruct them in the Law of God. They accepted only the five books of Moses, rejecting the Prophets and the rest of Scripture, and continuing to worship their own idols. They were called Samaritans after Mount Somor. They were hated by the Hebrews who returned from captivity, because they were only semi-Jewish; the Jews did not eat with them, regarding them as worthy of abomination. For this reason, they frequently called Christ a Samaritan, on the ground that, like the Samaritans, He supposedly violated certain provisions of the Law.

Jesus, therefore, came to Sichar, and being weary from His journey, sat down at about the sixth hour of the day. A certain woman came from the city to draw water, the Disciples having gone to purchase food. Jesus asked her for water, but she excused herself by saying that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (St. John 4:9); for she knew who He was, both by His accent and by His apparel. Jesus raised their conversation to a higher level by introducing the idea of spiritual water, which connotes abundance and cleansing power, since the Spirit is always likened to water and fire. The woman was sure, from the fact that He had not brought a bucket, that He did not have such water, and added that the well was deep. She then went on to talk about their forefather Jacob, saying that he had dug the well and that he and his children had drunk from it, commending the rich resources of the well, and also its usefulness and the coolness of its water. Christ, however, did not say that He was greater than Jacob, so as not to frighten the woman, but again He spoke about the water, thus proving His superiority; for one who drank from that water, He said, would in no wise be thirsty.

The woman asked for this water, but He told her to call her husband, since His words needed to be more firmly understood. She denied that she had a husband. Jesus, knowing all things, replied: "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands," which the Law forbiddeth, and the sixth whom thou now hast, since thou livest with him unlawfully, "is not thy husband" (St. John 4:17-18).

Some interpreters consider the five husbands to be the five books of Moses, which the Samaritans accepted, and the sixth to be the very words of Christ, which were not yet hers, since Grace had not yet been poured out

upon her. Other interpreters suppose that they are the five laws given by God—in Paradise, after the banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise, in the time of Noah, in the time of Abraham, and in the time of Moses—and the sixth to be the Gospel, which she did not yet have. There are still others who say that they are the five senses.

The woman replied to Him, calling Him a Prophet, and then asked Him about the mountain where one should worship: should it be in Somor or in Jerusalem? For the Samaritans, being imperfect in their understanding, did not believe that God existed everywhere, but abode only in that place where they worshipped, that is, on Mount Gerizim, on account of the blessings given by God in that place, or because it was there that Abraham first set up an altar to God. The Jews, likewise, also said that one must worship God only in Jerusalem, and for this reason Jews from everywhere gathered there for feasts. Christ replied that the salvation of the world was of the Jews, but that God is non-material and that those who would be vouchsafed to worship Him would do so, not with sacrifices, as they had thitherto, but in Spirit and truth, and in this way they would not only know God, but would also know Him in the Holy Spirit and in the Son; for the Son is the Truth. The woman then said: “We have heard from the Scriptures that the Messiah cometh Who is the Christ” (St. John 4:25). Jesus, foreknowing the woman’s gratitude, said: “I am He.” The Samaritans, too, knew about the Messiah from the books of Moses, especially from the verse, “The Lord God shall raise up a Prophet for you” (Deuteronomy 18:15), and many others.

At the conclusion of this conversation, the Disciples returned and were amazed at Christ’s extreme condescension in talking with a woman. In the meantime, they besought Him to eat, both because of His weariness and on account of the heat of the day. But He spoke to them about eternal food, namely, the salvation of mankind and how they needed to harvest the labors of the Prophets.

When the woman reached the city and recounted what had happened to her, all the inhabitants were aroused and went to Christ, convinced that the woman would not have reproached herself unless she had come to know something of importance. They implored Him to stay with them and persuaded Him to remain for two days. He worked very many miracles during His sojourn there, which, on account of their multitude, are not recorded by the Evangelists.

The woman in question was the Samaritan woman, who was subsequently named Photine by Christ, and who, along with her five sisters and two sons, received the crown of martyrdom in the reign of Nero, after much hardship, in the course of which her flesh was scraped, her breasts were cut off, her hands were crushed, fine reeds were inserted under her

fingernails, she was forced to swallow molten lead, and suffered countless other torments.

It should be known that the Emperor Justinian transferred from there with honor to the palace of God the Word, that is, the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, not only the mouth of that well, which he placed on a well outside the narthex, but also the stone on which Christ sat and conversed with the Samaritan woman. To this day, they remain there, healing every kind of disease, and providing remedies especially for those suffering from fevers and chills.

By the intercessions of Thy Martyr Photine, O Christ God, have mercy on us. Amen.

