

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

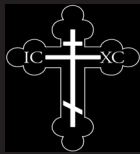
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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

## In This Issue:

- On Baptism and the Reception of Converts (p. 5)
- A NASA Tutorial (p. 6)
- Conversion and Salvation (p. 11)
- Remember Your Baptismal Vows (p. 12)



- Μνημόσυνο στὸν Κῦρ-Ἀλέξανδρο (σελ. 7)
- Νὰ Ἀγωνίζεστε στὴν Πνευματικὴ Ζωὴ Ἀπλά, Ἀπαλά, Χωρὶς Βία (σελ. 8)
- Νὰ Εἶναι Ἀδιάλειπτη Ἡ Μνήμη Τοῦ Θεοῦ (σελ. 10)



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## THE SLAUGHTER OF THE INNOCENTS

By Fr. Alexandros Agonistes.

*From the OH Editor: Our publication is honored to publish in our first 2007 issue, and on the grievous 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that ungodly Supreme Court decision that has given legal status to the slaughter of God's most precious and innocent human beings, a superb and long-overdue article which we pray will be read by all of our Orthodox brethren, world-wide. May His divine mercy be upon all of us and may 2007 become a year of renewed interest and activism by all Orthodox Christians against the evil practice of abortion.*

† † †

*[If thou speak not to warn the lawless one from his way, the lawless one himself shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at thy hand.*

(Ezek 33:8)

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, our Holy Church commemorated the Holy 14,000 Infants slain by Herod. The Synaxarion gives us the following description of this infanticide: *That foe [i.e., Herod] of the infant-fashioning Infant, destroyed—with the sword—the mothers' unripe infants.* How perfectly these few words describe a slaughter of innocents that has been taking place, “legally,” in the United States for the past 34 years: a slaughter in which over 45 million “unripe infants” have been brutally killed inside the womb of their mothers; a slaughter in which Herod is no longer an insane Hebrew King, but is found in the form of “law-abiding citizens” from many professions—physicians, nurses, counselors, lawyers, judges, politicians and even clergy; a slaughter in which the mother (usually with the encouragement of the child's father) is no longer trying to protect the infant that the “infant-fashioning Infant” is forming in her womb, but is paying money to have him/her killed; a slaughter that has almost annihilated

the soul of a nation, and is preparing millions of “law-abiding citizens” for eternal damnation.

While I have a deep sadness in my heart because of this satanic infanticide that takes place daily in our hospitals and the various abortion chambers, my grief intensifies when I reflect on what awaits the unrepentant perpetrators and supporters of this ungodly slaughter of God's *little ones*—especially those who are Orthodox Christians. Forgive my naivety, but I cannot comprehend how someone, who has been baptized of water and the Spirit into the *One True Church*, could ever—in any way—be a participant in this very great sin against the One Who became an Infant in order to bring us home to Paradise. How can an Orthodox Christian physician receive money to destroy, in brutal fashion, a *living ikon* of the newborn Child, the pre-eternal God? What causes Orthodox lawyers and judges to defend the satanic law of man that sanctions this slaughter, and deny the law of God that condemns it? Why do Orthodox nurses and family counselors choose to become willing accomplices to these heinous crimes against the crown of God's creation? How is it possible that Orthodox politicians, on the local, state and national levels, would choose to continually vote in support of the “pro-death” (falsely called “pro-choice”) viewpoint? Finally, what makes an Orthodox woman choose to have her child's life ended, before he/she takes its first breath?

There are many “secondary” reasons that are frequently offered in an attempt to explain a mother's decision, such as: environment, financial condition, social standing, family pressure, and irresponsibility. And there is at least one “secondary” reason that can be applied to all of the other professions mentioned above: the individuals having chosen to adapt their reasoning to the self-centered, secular-humanistic mindset that is so prevalent in our society today.

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However, I believe there are two *primary*—interrelated—reasons that explain why Orthodox Christians willingly support and/or participate in the slaughter of the innocents: (1) The great majority of these misguided souls have yet to find what it means to be an Orthodox Christian. They may have some awareness of its form, but they are unaware of its essence. (2) The Orthodox Jurisdictions—in general, and the individual clergy, in particular—are not ‘standing up’ on behalf of the 4,000+ unborn (and occasionally, partially-born) children that are being legally murdered everyday!

It is beyond the scope of this article to give an in-depth description of the first reason. Let us simply say that all Orthodox Christians need to have a spiritual father, confess their sins regularly, and strive to apply the Christ-centered life of our Faith in all of their thoughts, words, and actions. In this way, with God’s grace: striving to worship God, *in spirit and in truth*, (Jn 4:24) will become the center of their daily lives; the Gospel of Jesus Christ will *take flesh* within them; and such things as defending the right to life for the child in the womb will be inherent to their character.

We will concentrate our efforts on the 2nd reason as to why many Orthodox Christians today give their support to—and/or participate in—the “pro-death” mentality that is saturating our land, and their hands, with innocent blood. Much of the fault can be placed upon the failure of the Orthodox Hierarchy and parish priests to do such things as: (1) Through the teachings of the Holy Church Fathers on the sanctity of human life, unconditionally condemn the 1973 Supreme Court decision by means of sermons, newsletters, and group meetings on behalf of their faithful; (2) Contact the doctors (and other health care people such as nurses, social workers and family counselors), lawyers/judges, and politicians living within their respective diocese/parishes, to determine if they are involved in the abortion culture, and—if they are—to call them to repentance; (3) Refuse Holy Communion and—out of *true love* for their souls—excommunicate those who do not repent of this horrible sin; (4) Try to locate the wounded souls,

who have had an abortion but have not yet gone to confession, and ask their permission to bring them God’s healing grace and forgiveness. Let us now look briefly at each of these four subjects individually.

#### Informing the Faithful as to the Great Evil of “Legalized” Abortion

On a Diocesan level, at least four Jurisdictions within SCOBA (The Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America) have made verbal pronouncements: The Orthodox Church in America (OCA); The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of America (AOA); the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA (CROA); and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA). The strongest comments appear to have come from the OCA, beginning in the very year (1973) that abortion become legal. The late Metropolitan Ireney called the legalization “a horrible symbol of [our nation’s] moral decay ... [and a] frightening transgression of the most sacred of all Divine commandments.” His Beatitude then sent a telegram to President Nixon, signed by all the Bishops of the OCA Synod, entreating him to “initiate all constitutional procedures to reverse this tragic decision.” In 1989, the All-American Conference of the OCA issued a very strong series of resolutions: condemning abortion “in all cases;” establishing the Sunday nearest the date of January 22nd as Sanctity of Life Sunday; calling for spiritual, pastoral, and educational efforts on the diocesan and parish levels; and recommending active support be given to the *Orthodox Christians for Life* (founded in 1986 by Fr. Edward Pehanich of the CROA and Deacon John Protopapas of the OCA. We will talk about this group at the end of this article).

The weakest archdiocesan involvement in combating the legalization of abortion is that of the GOA. In 1976, the Clergy-Laity Congress issued a brief position statement (not a series of resolutions, which both the OCA and AOA have done) that begins by accurately noting the Orthodox Church regards abortion as the murder of a human being. However, it then states—quite erroneously—that the Orthodox Church permits

abortion “if the preponderance of medical ‘opinion’ determines that unless the embryo or fetus is aborted, the mother will die.” And the final sentence is very disappointing: “Decisions by State and National governments which allow abortion, with or without restrictions should be viewed by practicing Christians as an affront to their beliefs on the sanctity of life.” An affront --- an insult? The following words of Deacon Protopapas are far more appropriate to describe how the Orthodox Christian should regard legalized abortion: “Killing an innocent human being can be seen as an act of blasphemy against God. It is the ultimate act of iconoclasm.”

Other than four Orthodox Hierarchs (2 OCA, 1 CPOA, and 1 GOA) participating—with several hundred Orthodox Christians—in the annual *March for Life* on a few occasions, and a few written statements in the past from Orthodox Primates (such as that of Metropolitan Theodosius in 1980), this writer is not aware of any other major developments in defense of the unborn child at the diocesan levels over the past 34 years.

#### **Contacting Orthodox in the Medical, Political and Legal Professions to Verify that They Are not Involved—in Any Way—with the “Pro-Death” Culture**

Some people, perhaps even the majority, may regard this as an unwarranted intrusion by the Church into the personal life of the individual. That may be a reflection of the fact that most Orthodox Christians in our nation are not seeking healing for the wounds in their souls. Could this be caused by the bishops and priests not fervently proclaiming the Gospel message of repentance and confession to the wounded souls entrusted to their care? God knows, and so do the clergy that have chosen to maintain an external, superficial relationship with their flock, rather than become—through God’s grace—the spiritual physicians of their souls.

How many of these professionals are in grave danger of losing their soul, because they are not being approached by their priests? In the majority of the local Orthodox communities in North America, the parish priest would probably have to contact less than a dozen souls; and, most likely, only a few of those professionals would be abortion providers or supporters. Such a personal pastoral visitation would allow the priest to: present the Orthodox teaching on abortion in a compassionate manner; bring the individual’s soul to accountability; and encourage the person to repent, receive Confession, and forever abandon being a perpetrator of, or an accomplice to, the murder of pre-born children.

In the past 34 years of legalized abortions, how many hierarchs and priests have tried to determine if any of their members are involved in the multi-billion dollar abortion industry? How many of our clergy brothers in Christ are aware that one or more of their faithful are abortion providers, but have chosen to ignore this fact? How many of us, who offer the Bloodless Sacrifice in every Divine Liturgy, should be convicted by these words spoken by God to His Prophet, Ezekiel: *... [I]f thou speak not to warn the lawless one from his way, the lawless one himself shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at thy hand?*

#### **Excommunicating, out of Love for their Souls, the Unrepentant Abortion Providers and Accomplices**

There is something far worse than a priest/bishop who chooses to overlook an Orthodox Christian who is guilty, in some manner, of the sin of abortion: allowing these poor souls all the rights of a so-called ‘member in good standing’ --- including the ability to receive the Most Holy Life-giving Body and Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Not only will these clergymen have to answer to God for the blood of these unrepentant Christians, they will also become accomplices of the blood from the innocent “little ones” being executed through the actions of those whom they have chosen to ignore. How can this pastoral neglect of dying souls be regarded as an act of love? Furthermore, if the bishop or priest gives honors to these self-excommunicated people, how can they be led to tears of repentance, forgiveness and healing?

If these Orthodox Christians are ever to have any hope for salvation, then their parish priests must prohibit them from receiving the Cup of Life; and their hierarchs must officially excommunicate them. But this does not mean that the clergy then totally abandons them. On the contrary, they should be praying daily for God to lead them to repentance; and be ready to embrace them, when they “come to themselves” --- desiring to return to their Father’s House, in order to receive forgiveness and healing.

Unfortunately, we have not been informed of any such *healing-centered* excommunications. For it would be necessary for every Orthodox Jurisdiction to officially notify the local parishes of such ecclesiastical actions, in order that the excommunicated soul could not simply go to a church within another Orthodox Jurisdiction and receive Holy Communion. Therefore, the Orthodox doctor—who receives money to murder pre-born babies—can still be praised for giving thousands of dollars of his blood money to his parish or Diocese; the Orthodox judge, who continues—through his decisions—to uphold the satanic law allowing this infanticide, can remain as Parish Council President; the Orthodox politician, who consistently casts his vote in favor of abortion, can remain as the Sunday School teacher for the high school class; and the Orthodox woman, who continues to believe that it was her right to have an abortion, can begin her second term as the President of the Philoptochos.

While the above hypothetical situations may—or may not—exist in the real world, the following illustration is one of **fact**: In the GOA, there are two U.S. Senators, a woman from Maine and a man from Maryland, who have voted the pro-death position every time for three decades. It saddens me deeply to say that they both also voted—on two occasions—to uphold President Clinton’s veto of the law that would have outlawed partial birth abortion. That is the disgusting ungodly procedure, during which the only portion of the live baby not outside the womb is his/her precious little head. Next, the doctor uses scissors to open a hole at the base of the baby’s skull. Then he inserts a tube in the hole and suctions out the child’s brains. Finally, he removes the head of the dead child from



the mother's birth canal, and disposes of the body. How can **any** human being, much less an Orthodox Christian, vote in favor of such a despicable crime? Nevertheless, both of these Greek Orthodox Christians have received **numerous honors**, and praises from GOA Hierarchs and priests, over the past 30 years. For example, the distinguished Senator from Maryland has received such honors from the GOA as: an Honorary Doctor's Degree from the Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology; the Leadership 100 Award of Excellence in 2003; being selected to offer the Keynote Address at the National Clergy-Laity Congress in New Orleans in 1992.

Fortunately, this Senator officially retired on December 31, 2006. However, what bishop or priest is going to approach him and try to lead him to repentance? Is there some Orthodox clergyman who has enough love for the soul of the Orthodox Senator from Maine to admonish her? Will the Synod of Bishops of the GOA issue orders of excommunication for these two politicians, if they refuse to beg for forgiveness for being willing accomplices to the murder of millions of pre-born babies? Will they excommunicate every Orthodox doctor who performs abortions, or will they continue to ignore their sacred responsibility to God and His Church? When will **all** Orthodox Hierarchs and Priests begin to seek out—in an effort to save their souls from perdition—those Orthodox Christians that are actively involved, on some level, in the killing of the children being formed—by the “infant-forming Infant”—in the wombs of their mothers? Listen, O Bishops and Priests, who choose to not hear the cries of the slaughtered innocent ones! Hear the word of the Lord and tremble: *...[I]f thou speak not to warn the lawless one from his way, the lawless one himself shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at thy hand.*

#### **Seeking out the Wounded Souls that Have Had Abortions, But Have Yet to Repent and Receive the Mysterion of Confession**

There are untold numbers of Orthodox women in America—perhaps several thousand—who have had one or more abortions. While many have had the conviction to seek forgiveness and healing through Confession and the pastoral care of their priests, many more are still in need of the *spiritual medication* of their Church in order to successfully restore their broken souls to wholeness.

The time has come for all Orthodox Hierarchs to prepare compassionate letters to be read in all of the local churches that are under their respective care --- entreating all such women to *come home*. It would seem appropriate for such an epistle to be read from the pulpits on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son on February 4, 2007.

Perhaps each parish priest could offer a sermon on January 21, 2007 (the day before the 34th Anniversary of that ungodly Supreme Court decision), to serve as a *forerunner* to the pastoral encyclical of his Bishop. The Gospel lesson relates how Zacchaeus of Jericho climbed a tree, in order to rise above the crowd and get a view of Jesus. The priests could explain that, everyday, our All-compassionate Lord Jesus *walks* near

the ‘Jericho’ of the soul of every woman that has been sorely wounded by having the child within them forcibly removed and discarded. In a mystical way, each woman needs to ascend the ‘tree’ of courage. Then, she will rise above the “crowds” of despair, fear, anti-depressants and false identities, with which the demons have helped her to surround her soul. If the priest prays and fasts all week in preparation for this sermon, his Spirit-filled words can become that tree of courage for the woman to mystically ascend; from where she will be able to “hear” the inner call to “make haste and come down” into the presence of her Lord, through the Mysterion of Confession. And having confessed this grave sin with many tears, the house of her soul will, indeed, hear the Lord proclaiming: *Today salvation has RETURNED to this house!*

I grieve within my heart for all women, especially our Orthodox daughters in Christ, who have had abortions. It is my firm belief that the vast majority of them would have never aborted their children, if they had been able to speak with someone—like their priest, or a lay person with the skill and understanding that could speak to their heart—regarding the sacredness of the life growing within them. It would seem that the group, *Orthodox Christians for Life*, could be of great benefit to our Church's efforts to: educate the faithful on the grave sin of abortion; help persuade women not to abort their children; bring healing to women who have had abortions; and identify, contact, admonish and—if needed, as a last resort in an effort to *save* their souls—officially excommunicate all those professionals that perform (or assist in) the slaughter of God's innocent ones.

As mentioned earlier, this Orthodox pro-life group was sanctioned by two major Jurisdictions over 17 years ago. However, there must not have been very much follow-up. Why is it that there are over 1000 Orthodox Churches in the United States, and over 2 million Orthodox Christians, but only 800 souls—world-wide—have joined this group? I propose that every Orthodox parish and diocese establish a local chapter of Orthodox Christians for life—today. Their website is: [www.oclife.org](http://www.oclife.org), and mailing address: P.O. Box 805 – Melville, NY 11747, USA. They have prepared an outstanding handbook on abortion, euthanasia, and stem-cell research that every Orthodox bishop and priest needs to read.

O Holy Orthodox Hierarchs, and my brother priests that serve under their authority, as you read these words: Orthodox doctors are preparing to kill children of the “infant-forming Infant,” and Orthodox nurses, counselors, lawyers and politicians are willingly assisting them; Orthodox women are being persuaded by their boyfriends and others to kill the child growing within them; Orthodox women that have had abortions are suffering in great pain --- critically in need of compassion and healing for their wounded souls! It is time for action! Thus saith the Lord,

*...[I]f thou speak not to warn the lawless one from his way, the lawless one himself shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at thy hand.*

+Fr. Alexandros Agonistes



## ON BAPTISM AND THE RECEPTION OF CONVERTS

*Statement of the 1755 Local Orthodox Synod, Constantinople.*

The 1755 Constantinople Synod decreed that no westerners—Latin or Protestant—had any valid sacraments and converts from those heresies could only be admitted into the Orthodox Catholic Church through Orthodox Baptism! The Synod Statement follows:

Many are the means by which we attain our salvation. And these, so to speak, in a ladderlike fashion are interlinked and interconnected, all aiming at one and the same end. First of all, then, is the baptism, which God delivered to the sacred Apostles, such being the case that without it the rest are ineffectual. For it says: *Unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.* (John 3:5) The first manner of generation brought man into this mortal existence. It was therefore imperative, and necessarily so, that another, more mystical manner of generation be found, neither beginning in corruption nor terminating therein, whereby it would be possible for us to imitate the author of our salvation, Jesus Christ. For the baptismal water in the font takes the place of a womb, and there is birth for him who is born, as Chrysostom says; while the Spirit which descends on the water has the place of God who fashions the embryo. And just as He was placed in the tomb and on the third day returned to life, so likewise they who believe, going under the water instead of under the earth, in three immersions depict in themselves the three-day grace of the Resurrection, the water being sanctified by the descent of the All-holy Spirit, so that the body might be illumined by the water which is visible, and the soul might receive sanctification by the Spirit which is invisible. For just as water in a cauldron partakes of the heat of the fire, so the water in the font is likewise transmuted, by the action of the Spirit, into divine power. It cleanses those who are thus baptized and makes them worthy of adoption as sons. Not so, however, with those who are initiated in a different manner. Instead of cleansing and adoption, it renders them impure and sons of darkness.

Just three years ago, the question arose: When heretics come over to us, are their baptisms acceptable, given that these are administered contrary to the tradition of the holy Apostles and divine Fathers, and contrary to the custom and ordinance of the catholic and Apostolic Church? We, who by divine mercy were raised in the Orthodox Church, and who adhere to the canons of the sacred Apostles and divine Fathers, recognize only one Church, our holy, catholic, and Apostolic Church. It is her Mysteries [i.e. sacraments], and consequently her baptism, that we accept. On the other hand, we abhor; by common resolve, all rites not administered as the Holy Spirit commanded the sacred Apostles, and as the Church of Christ performs to this day. For they are the inventions of depraved men, and we regard them as strange and foreign to the whole Apostolic tradition.

Therefore, we receive those who come over to us from them as unholy and unbaptized. In this we follow our Lord Jesus Christ who commanded His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”; we follow the sacred and divine Apostles who order us to baptize aspirants with three immersions and emersions, and in each immersion to say one name of the Holy Trinity; we follow the sacred Dionysios, peer of the Apostles, who tells us “to dip the aspirant, stripped of every garment, three times in a font containing sanctified water and oil, having loudly proclaimed the three-fold hypostasis of the divine Blessedness, and straightway to seal the newly baptized with the most divinely potent myron [i.e. chrism], and thereafter to make him a participant in the supersacramental Eucharist”; and we follow the Second and Penthekte holy Ecumenical Councils, which order us to receive as unbaptized those aspirants to Orthodoxy who were not baptized with three immersions and emersions, and in each immersion did not loudly invoke one of the divine hypostases, but were baptized in some other fashion.

We too, therefore, adhere to these divine and sacred decrees, and we reject and abhor baptisms belonging to heretics. For they disagree with and are alien to the divine Apostolic dictate. They are useless waters, as Sts. Ambrose and Athanasios the Great said. They give no sanctification to such as receive them, nor avail at all to the washing away of sins. We receive those who come over to the Orthodox faith, who were baptized without being baptized, as being unbaptized, and without danger we baptize them in accordance with the Apostolic and synodal Canons, upon which Christ’s holy and Apostolic and catholic Church, the common Mother of us all, firmly relies.

Together with this joint resolve and declaration of ours, we seal this our Oros, being as it is in agreement with the Apostolic and synodal dictates, and we certify it by our signatures.

In the year of salvation 1755,

+ **Cyril,**

*by God’s mercy Archbishop of Constantinople New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch*

+ **Matthew,**

*by God’s mercy Pope and Patriarch of the great city of Alexandria, and Judge of the Ecumene*

+ **Parthenios,**

*by God’s mercy Patriarch of the holy city of Jerusalem and all Palestine*



Whoever confesses his sins with simplicity of heart - with feelings of compunction and humility, and the desire to correct himself - will receive [both] forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience through the power of the grace of God acting in the Mystery.

**St. Nikon (+1931)**

## A NASA TUTORIAL

*From a Christian pamphlet.*

Our Almighty God is unquestionably Awesome and He works in mysterious ways! This is intended for all the scientists out there as well as for all the students who have a hard time convincing the skeptics regarding the truth of the Bible. The topic of this article is something that exemplifies God's awesome creation and proves to all that He is in complete control.

Are you aware that the US Space Program is keeping quite busy proving what was often referred to as a Bible "myth" to be true?

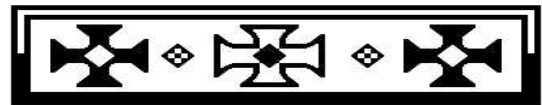
Mr. Harold Hill, President of the Curtis Engine Company in Baltimore, Maryland, and a consultant in the Space Program relates the following development: "I think one of the most amazing things that God has for us today happened recently to our astronauts and space scientists at Greenbelt, Maryland. They were checking the position of the sun, moon, and planets out in space. They wanted to know where they would be 100 years from now. This is important to know so that we won't send a satellite up and have it bump into something later that makes it to within its orbits. We have to lay out the orbits in terms of the life of the satellite, and where the planets will be, so the whole thing will not bog down. They run the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant there was something wrong, either with the information fed into it or with the results as compared to the standards. They called in the service department to check it out and they in turn said, 'What's wrong?' Well, they found there is a day missing in space, in elapsed time."

He continued: "They scratched their heads and tore their hair. There was no answer. Finally, a Christian man in the team said, 'You know, one time I was in Sunday school and they talked about the sun standing still.' While they didn't believe him, they didn't have an answer either, so they said, 'Show us.' He got the Bible and went back to the books of Joshua where they found a pretty 'ridiculous' statement for anyone with common sense. There they found the Lord saying to Joshua: *Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.* (Jos 10:8) Joshua was extremely concerned because he was surrounded by the enemy and if darkness fell, they would overpower them. Thus, Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun stand still! *Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.* (Jos 10:12-13) The astronauts then said 'There is the missing day!' They checked the computers going back into the time it was

written and found it was close but not close enough. The elapsed time that was missing back in Joshua's day was 23 hours and 20 minutes—not a whole day. They read the Bible and there it was—about (approximately) a day."

He went on: "These little words in the Bible are important, but they were still in trouble because if you cannot account for 40 minutes, you'll still have a problem 1,000 years from now. Forty minutes had to be found because it can be multiplied many times over in orbits. As the Christian employee thought about it, he remembered somewhere in the Bible where it said the sun went backwards. The scientists told him he was out of his mind, but they got out the Book and read these words in Isaiah that told them of the following story: Hezekiah, on his deathbed, was visited by the prophet Isaiah, who told him that he was not going to die. Hezekiah asked for a sign as proof, and Isaiah said: *Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.* (Isa 38:8) Isaiah spoke to the Lord and the Lord brought the shadow 10 degrees backwards! Ten degrees is exactly 40 minutes (dividing the minutes of a day into 360 degrees corresponds to 4 minutes per degree, or 40 minutes for 10 degrees)! We thus have 23 hours and 20 minutes in Joshua and 40 minutes in Isaiah (also discussed in 2 Kings 20:9-11); the total amount of time corresponds to the missing day in the universe."

Let us never forget that amateurs built the Ark; professionals built the Titanic...



### ON FAITH, HOPE, AND PATIENCE

Why do you worry and grieve more than necessary for the various incidents? We are not outside of Divine Providence, so as to be directed by mere chance. Therefore, whatever happens to us happens with God's knowledge, and so nothing will happen to us beyond our strength!

Let those who do not believe in Divine Providence drown in worry; they are certainly justified. But we, who believe that God is present everywhere and that there is no creature outside His providence, are not justified when we worry more than necessary, for through this action we show a lack of faith and illumination.

*Blessed is the man who hopes in God, for as a lion he will trust in Him.* (Prov 28:1). If God is the One Who permits it, Thy will be done, Lord. *Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?* (Rom 11:34). Who is able to search out the will of the Lord! *If you do not become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven,*" (Mt 18:3), that is through faith and innocence.

From *Counsels from the Holy Mountain: The Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim*

## Μνημόσυνο στὸν Κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρο

Τοῦ πρ. Χρήστου Χαχαμίδη.



Ένα μικρὸ στενὸ δωμάτιο, με̐ ἀσβεστωμένους τοίχους... Ένα τζάκι κοντὰ στὸ παράθυρο, ποὺ βλέπει πρὸς τὸ αὐλάκι... Ἀντὶς ἀπὸ κρεβάτι, μέσα σ' ἓνα εἶδος ντουλάπας τοῦ τοίχου, καὶ με̐ κάτι κηλίμια στὸ πάτωμα. Στὸ τζάκι, λίγη ζεστὴ ἀκόμα στάχτη. Έξω,

τὸ κρύο εἶναι δυνατό. Κατάχαμα, πάνω στὰ κηλίμια, ὁ κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης ἀναρριγεῖ. Φώναζε τὸν ἀρχιμανδρίτη Μπούρα καὶ τοῦ ζήτησε νὰ τοῦ διαβάσῃ ἀπὸ τὸ ὥραϊο καὶ ἱστορημένο χειρόγραφο, ὅπου ἔχει μαζί τις λειτουργίες τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Χρυσοστόμου καὶ τοῦ Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, τὴν ὥραϊα προσευχὴ τῶν μεγάλων ἀμαρτωλῶν ποὺ μετανοοῦν. Μέρες τώρα, δὲ μπορούσε νὰ ἡσυχάσῃ· τόσο πονεμένο ἦταν ὅλο του τὸ κορμί. Εἶχε μία ἄσχημη γρίπη, πνευμονία λένε. Δὲν ἤθελε νὰ τὸν ἰδῇ γιατρός. Ἦταν τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου, ἀνήμερα τῆς Πρωτοχρονιάς. Θέλησε νὰ σηκωθῇ, μὰ δὲν βρῆκε τὴ δύναμη· τὰ μάτια του γέμισαν δάκρυα.

Τὴ νύχτα, ζήτησε ἀπὸ τις ἀδελφές του κάποιο βιβλίο. Αὐτὸ ποὺ τοῦ ἔφεραν δὲν ἦταν αὐτὸ ποὺ ζητοῦσε. «Μπά, δὲ πειράζει», εἶπε. Τὸ παίρνω αὐριο». Τί νὰ 'ταν ἄραγε; Ὁ Ὅμηρος, τὰ Εὐαγγέλια, ὁ Θουκυδίδης, ὁ Σαίξπηρ—αὐτὸ τὸ βιβλίο, ποὺ στὶς στερνὲς ἐκεῖνες ὥρες τὸν εἶδαν νὰ θωπεύῃ σὰν τυφλός, ἀδύναμος ἀκόμα, καὶ νὰ τὸ κρατᾷ στὰ πυρετικά του χέρια. Εἶπε στὶς ἀδελφές καὶ στοὺς φίλους του νὰ τὸν ἀφήσουν καί, γυρνώντας πρὸς τὸν τοῖχο, ἄρχισε νὰ ψάλλῃ χαμηλόφωνα τὸ δοξαστικὸ τῆς ἐνάτης ὥρας τῶν Θεοφανίων. «*Τὴν χεῖρα σου τὴν ἀψαμένην τὴν ἀκήρατον κορυφὴν τοῦ Δεσπότου... ἔπαρον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πρὸς αὐτὸν Βαπτιστά...*»

Στὴ μία μετὰ τὰ μεσάνυχτα, οἱ ἀδελφές του τὸν βρῆκαν κοιμισμένο, με̐ τὰ μάτια κλειστά, παγωμένο. Ὁ κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρος εἶχε πετάξει! Ἦ ἐξόδιος ἐνάλῃ τὴν ἐπομένη, στὶς 3 Ἰανουαρίου τοῦ 1911. Έξω χιόνιζε. Κατὰ τὸ ἔθος τὸν πῆγαν στὴν ἐκκλησία καὶ μετὰ στὸ κοιμητήριό με̐ τὸ φέρετρό ανοικτό. Οἱ νιφάδες ἔπεφταν στὸ μέτωπό του καὶ στὰ μαλλιά του, γιὰ νὰ παρουσιαστῇ θαρρεῖς ἀκόμα καθαρότερος καὶ λευκότερος ἐνώπιον τοῦ Δικαίου Κριτοῦ. Ἀκόμα καὶ ἡ φύση, ποὺ τόσο ἐρωτικά τὴν ὕμνησε, συνηγόρησε σ' αὐτό...

Κάθε λογοτεχνία, μεγάλη ἢ μικρή, ἀκολουθεῖ ἓνα νόμο ποὺ στάθηκε ἀκατάλυτος στοὺς αἰῶνες. Παρουσιάζει ποικιλία ἐκδηλώσεων καὶ συνάμα καταμερισμὸ δυνάμεων. Έχει τις μεγάλες δυνάμεις τῆς, τις ἀναμφισβήτητες μεγαλοφυεῖς τῆς ἢ ἰδιοφυεῖς, ἔχει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς τῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς μετρίους καὶ βλαβερούς. Ἡ Νέα Ἑλληνικὴ Λογοτεχνία ἔχει

κάτι ἀκόμα: τὸν Ἅγιό της! Καὶ τὸ μικρὸ τοῦτο μνημόσυνο εἶναι ἀφιέρωμα καὶ συνάμα προσκύνημα στὸ ὄνομά του καὶ στὸ θαῦμα ποὺ προσέφερε, στὸ ἱλαρὸ φῶς ποὺ ἔριξε καὶ με̐ αὐτὸ παραμέρισε ἀρκετὰ ἀπὸ τὰ σκοτάδια ποὺ σκέπαζαν καὶ κράταγαν στὴ νάρκη ἢ στὴν πλάνη τὸν τόπο μας.

Ὁ κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης πέθανε τὸ βράδυ τῆς 2ας πρὸς 3ῃ Ἰανουαρίου τοῦ 1911. Μὲ ἀφορμὴ αὐτὴ τὴ μέρα τοῦ Γενάρη, γράφουμε τις λίγες αὐτὲς ἀράδες. Δὲν τὸν ξεχάσαμε, οὔτε μία στιγμὴ, παρὰ τὰ 96 χρόνια ποὺ μεσολάβησαν ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατό του. Ἀντίθετα, νιώθουμε μία νοσταλγία καὶ μία ἀνάγκη νὰ πᾶμε ὅσο τὸ δυνατό πιὸ κοντά του, νὰ ἀκούσουμε τὸν ἥρεμο καὶ βαθὺ παρηγορητικὸ του λόγο, καὶ νὰ ἐπικοινωνήσουμε με̐ μία ἀπὸ τις πιὸ γνήσιες πνευματικὲς δυνάμεις, γιὰ νὰ πάρουμε θάρρος καὶ αἰσιοδοξία. Καὶ τρέμει πραγματικά τὸ χέρι τοῦ καθενός, ποὺ θὰ προσπαθήσῃ, ἔστω καὶ γιὰ λίγο, νὰ ἀσχοληθῇ με̐ τὸν κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρο, μὴν τύχει καὶ ἀδικήσῃ τὸν τιμώμενο. Χριστέ μου, δώστου τὴ χαρά, τὴ μόνη ποὺ θὰ μπορούσε νὰ σοῦ ζητήσῃ, ἀπάνω ἐκεῖ νοσταλγικά ἢ ψυχὴ του. Κάνε τὸ θάμα κι ἄσε τον νὰ ζήσῃ ὅπως ἐζοῦσε, σὲ μιὰ μεριά ποὺ τάχατες νὰ μοιάζῃ τὸ νησί του.

### Ἡ Ταπεινοφροσύνη τοῦ Προέγκλητος τῶν Ἑλλήνων Λογογράφων

Ένας ποὺ συνάντησε τὸν κύρ-Ἀλέξανδρο Παπαδιαμάντη εἶναι ὁ κ. Σταμάτης Σταματίου (ὁ λεγόμενος Στάμ Στάμ). Πῆγε ὁ Παπαδιαμάντης στὰ γραφεῖα τῆς Ἑφημερίδος «Ἀκρόπολις» γιὰ νὰ δώσῃ ἓνα Χριστουγεννιάτικο διήγημα. Ὁ Στάμ Στάμ δὲν τὸν ἀνεγνώρισε, καὶ μάλιστα σχημάτισε τὴν ἐντύπωση ὅτι ἦταν ἀμπτωχὸς ποὺ πῆγε νὰ πάρῃ τις δέκα δραχμὲς γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα, ὅπως ὅλοι οἱ πτωχοί. Ὁ Παπαδιαμάντης τις πῆρε, ἀλλὰ ἤθελε νὰ δώσῃ καὶ τὰ γραπτὰ του. Καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὁ ἐξῆς διάλογος:

«—Κι' αὐτὰ τί νὰ τὰ κάμω; Δὲν τὰ θέλετε;

Καὶ μοῦ ἔδειχνε κάτι χαρτιά. Νόμισα πὼς ἦταν πιστοποιητικά ἀπορίας.

—Κράτησέ τα, τοῦ εἶπα, ἐμᾶς δὲν μᾶς χρειάζονται.

Έσείστηκε, λυγίστηκε ὀλίγο, ἔκανε, σκυφτὸς νὰ φύγῃ, ξαναγύρισε.

—Τότε ἀφοῦ δὲν σᾶς χρειάζονται αὐτά, ἐγὼ με̐ τί δικαίωμα θὰ πληρωθῶ;

—Δὲν πειράζει, ἀρκούμεθα εἰς τὸν λόγον σας. Χριστούγεννα εἶναι τώρα.

—Ναί, ἀλλὰ ἂν δὲν πάρετε αὐτά, ἐγὼ δὲν μπορῶ νὰ πάρω χρήματα.

—Μὰ δὲν τὰ παίρνετε ἐσεῖς τὰ χρήματα, σᾶς τὰ δίνουμε ἐμεῖς!...

—Έ, τότε, πᾶρτε κι' ἐσεῖς ἐτοῦτα ποὺ μοῦ τὰ ζητήσατε. Καὶ τὰ ἄφησε σιγὰ καὶ μαλακὰ ἀπάνω στὸ τραπέζι.

Έσκέφθηκα, μήπως τοῦ ζήτησε τίποτα πιστοποιητικά τὸ λογιστήριό.

—Μὰ τί εἶναι, ἐπὶ τέλους αὐτά, τοῦ λέω, ποὺ πρέπει ἀπαραιτήτως νὰ τὰ πάρουμε;



—Τὸ διήγημα τῶν Χριστουγέννων, ποὺ μοῦ ἐζητήσατε.  
—Τὸ διήγημα τῶν Χριστουγέννων... καὶ ποιοὺς εἶσθε  
σεῖς;

—Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης!

—Ὁ ἴδιος;

—Ὁ ἴδιος καὶ ὁλόκληρος!

Ἔπεσε τὸ ταβάνι καὶ μὲ πλάκωσε, ἡ πέννα ἔφυγε ἀπὸ  
τὰ χέρια μου, ὅλα ἐκεῖ μέσα, εἰκόνες, καρέκλες, βιβλία,  
ἐφημερίδες, σὰν νὰ στροβιλίσθηκαν γύρω μου, καὶ ἔκανα  
ῶρα νὰ συνέλθω».

Καὶ καταλήγει ὁ Στάμ Στάμ:

«Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Παπαδιαμάντης! Αὐτὸς ὁ πρίγκηψ  
τῶν Ἑλλήνων λογογράφων, ποὺ τὸν φανταζόμουν  
ἀκτινοβολοῦντα, γελαστόν, ὠραῖον, καλοντυμένον, εὐτυχί,  
γεμάτον ἐγωῖσμόν, ἀέρα καὶ μεγαλοπρέπεια, αὐτός!...  
Αὐτὸς ὁ μαλακός, ὁ καλός, ὁ δειλός, ὁ φοβισμένος, καὶ  
τσαλακωμένος ἄνθρωπος, ποὺ στεκότανε μὲ συστολή  
μαθητοῦ ἐπιμελοῦς, ἐκεῖ ἐνώπιόν μου!... Αὐτός, ποὺ μᾶς  
ἔδωκε γλύκες πνευματικὲς καὶ συγκινήσεις ψυχικές, ποὺ  
ἀνιστόρησε κόσμους θαλασσινούς, κι' ἐζωντάνεψε, ἐμπρός  
μας, ἀνθρώπους μακρυνούς κι' ἀγνώστους, ποὺ τοὺς ἔκαμε  
δικούς μας, ἐντελῶς δικούς μας, σὰν νὰ περάσαμε μιὰ ζωὴ  
μαζί, αὐτὸς σὲ μιὰ τέτοια κατάστασι, ἐκεῖ ἐνώπιόν μου!...  
Τοῦ ἔσφιξα τὸ χέρι χωρὶς νὰ ἡμπορῶ οὔτε μιὰ λέξι νὰ  
προφέρω. Ἀπὸ τὴν ταραχὴ μου καὶ τὴν σαστιμάρα μου οὔτε  
τὸ φῶς δὲν ἄναψα. Αἰσθάνθηκα ἓνα τρεμουλιαστὸ χέρι νὰ  
σφίγγῃ τὸ δικό μου καὶ τὸν ἔχασα μέσα εἰς τὸ σκοτάδι...  
Ἔμεινε ὁμως πίσω μιὰ μοσχοβολιὰ κηριοῦ ποὺ λυώνει  
ἐμπρός στὶς ἄγιες εἰκόνες, κάτι ἀπὸ τοῦ καντηλιοῦ τὸ  
σβύσιμο, κάτι ἀπὸ θυμιατοῦ πέρασμα μακρυνό, μακρυνὸ  
πολύ...».

Αἰωνία νᾶναι ἡ μνήμη του, μέσα στὶς καρδιὲς καὶ ψυχὲς  
ὅλης τῆς Ἑλληνορθοδοξίας...

**Ὅπου καὶ νὰ σᾶς βροῖσκη τὸ κακό, ἀδελφοί,  
ὅπου καὶ νὰ θολώῃ ὁ νοῦς σας,  
μνημονεύετε Διονύσιο Σολωμὸν,  
καὶ μνημονεύετε Ἀλέξανδρο Παπαδιαμάντη.  
Ἡ λαλιὰ ποὺ δὲν ξέρει ἀπὸ ψέμα  
θ' ἀναπαύσῃ τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ μαρτυρίου  
μὲ τὸ λίγο βάμμα τοῦ γλαυκοῦ στὰ χεῖλη.  
Ὁ δ υ σ σ έ α ς Ἑ λ ύ τ η ς  
Ἄξιον Ἔστι (1959)**

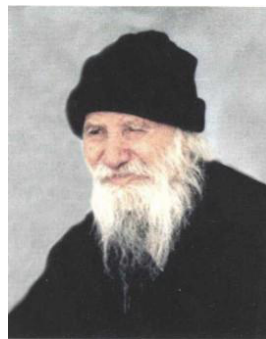


Ἀρκετοὶ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι ἀγνώμονες. Ἄν περιμένουμε  
ἀνταπόδοση, θὰ στενοχωρηθοῦμε. Ἄν δὲν περιμένουμε  
τότε θὰ εἴμαστε ἥρεμοι.

**Πρ. Ἐπιφάνιος Θεοδωρόπουλος**

## Νὰ Ἀγωνίζεστε στὴν Πνευματικὴ Ζωὴ Ἀπλά, Ἀπαλά, Χωρὶς Βία

Γέροντος Πορφυρίου Κανσοκαλυβίτου, «Βίος καὶ Λόγον», Τερὰ  
Μονὴ Χρυσοπηγῆς, Χανιά 2003.



**Τ**έλεια, βαθιὰ, καὶ φιλοσο-  
φημένη εἶναι ἡ θρησκεία  
μας. Τὸ ἀπλὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ πιὸ  
πολύτιμο. Ἔτσι ν' ἀγωνίζεσθε  
στὴν πνευματικὴ ζωὴ, ἀπλά,  
ἀπαλά, χωρὶς βία. Ἡ ψυχὴ  
ἀγιάζεται καὶ καθαρίζεται μὲ τὴ  
μελέτη τῶν λόγων τῶν Πατέρων,  
μὲ τὴν ἀποστήθιση ψαλμῶν,  
ἀγιογραφικῶν χωρίων, μὲ τὴν  
ψαλτική, μὲ τὴν εὐχή.

Δοθεῖτε, λοιπόν, σ' αὐτὰ τὰ πνευματικὰ, κι ἀφῆστε τα  
ὅλα τ' ἄλλα. Στὴ λατρεία τοῦ Θεοῦ μποροῦμε νὰ φθάσουμε  
εὐκόλα, ἀναίμακτα. Εἶναι δυὸ δρόμοι ποὺ μᾶς ὁδηγοῦν στὸ  
Θεό, ὁ σκληρὸς καὶ κουραστικὸς, μὲ τὶς ἄγριες ἐπιθέσεις  
κατὰ τοῦ κακοῦ, καὶ ὁ εὐκόλος, μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη. Ὑπάρχουν  
πολλοὶ ποὺ διάλεξαν τὸ σκληρὸ δρόμο καὶ «ἔχυσαν αἷμα,  
γιὰ νὰ λάβουν Πνεῦμα», ὥσπου ἔφθασαν σὲ μεγάλη ἀρετή.  
Ἐγὼ βρίσκω ὅτι πιὸ σύντομος καὶ σίγουρος δρόμος εἶναι  
αὐτὸς μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη. Αὐτὸν μπορεῖτε ν' ἀκολουθήσετε κι  
ἐσεῖς.

Μπορεῖται, δηλαδή, νὰ κάνετε ἄλλη προσπάθεια. Νὰ  
μελετᾶτε καὶ νὰ προσεύχεσθε καὶ νὰ ἔχετε ὡς στόχο νὰ  
προχωρήσετε στὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Μὴ  
πολεμάτε νὰ διώξετε τὸ σκοτάδι ἀπ' τὸ δωμάτιο τῆς ψυχῆς  
σας. Ἀνοίξτε μία τρυπίτσα, γιὰ νὰ ἔλθῃ φῶς, καὶ τὸ σκοτάδι  
θὰ φύγῃ. Τὸ ἴδιο ἰσχύει καὶ γιὰ τὰ πάθη καὶ τὶς ἀδυναμίες.  
Νὰ μὴ τὰ πολεμάτε, ἀλλὰ νὰ τὰ μεταμορφώνετε σὲ δυνάμεις,  
περιφρονώντας τὸ κακό. Νὰ καταγίνεσθε μὲ τὰ τροπάρια,  
τοὺς κανόνες, τὴ λατρεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ θεῖο ἔρωτα. Ὅλα  
τὰ ἅγια βιβλία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἡ Παρακλητικὴ, τὸ  
Ὁρολόγιο, τὸ Ψαλτήρι, τὰ Μηναῖα περιέχουν λόγια ἅγια,  
ἐρωτικά πρὸς τὸ Χριστό μας. Νὰ τὰ διαβάσετε μὲ χαρὰ καὶ  
ἀγάπη καὶ ἀγαλλίαση. Ὅταν δοθεῖτε σ' αὐτὴ τὴν προσπάθεια  
μὲ λαχτάρα, ἡ ψυχὴ σας θ' ἀγιάζεται μὲ τρόπο ἀπαλό,  
μυστικό, χωρὶς νὰ τὸ καταλαβαίνετε.

Οἱ βίοι τῶν ἁγίων, καὶ πιὸ πολὺ ὁ βίος τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου  
τοῦ Καλυβίτου, μοῦ ἔκαναν ἐντύπωση. Οἱ ἅγιοι εἶναι φίλοι  
τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅλη τὴν ἡμέρα μπορεῖται νὰ ἐντρυφᾶτε καὶ ν'  
ἀπολαμβάνετε τὰ κατορθώματά τους καὶ νὰ μιμεῖσθε τὸ βίο  
τους. Οἱ ἅγιοι εἶχαν δοθεῖ ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου στὸ Χριστό.

Μὲ αὐτὴ τὴ μελέτη, σιγὰ-σιγὰ, θ' ἀποκτήσετε τὴν  
πραότητα, τὴ ταπείνωση, τὴν ἀγάπη, καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ σας θὰ  
ἀγαθύνεται. Νὰ μὴ διαλέγετε ἀρνητικούς τρόπους γιὰ τὴ  
διόρθωσή σας. Δὲν χρειάζεται οὔτε τὸν διάβολο νὰ φοβᾶσθε,  
οὔτε τὴν κόλαση, οὔτε τίποτα. Δημιουργοὺν ἀντίδραση.

Ἔχω κι ἐγὼ μία μικρὴ πείρα σ' αὐτά. Ὁ σκοπὸς δὲν εἶναι νὰ κάθεσθε, νὰ πλήττετε καὶ νὰ σφίγγεσθε, γιὰ νὰ βελτιωθεῖτε. Ὁ σκοπὸς εἶναι νὰ ζεῖτε, νὰ μελετᾶτε, νὰ προσεύχεσθε, νὰ προχωρᾶτε στὴν ἀγάπη, στὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, στὴν ἀγάπη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ ἅγιο καὶ ὠραῖο, ποὺ εὐφραίνει καὶ ἀπαλλάσσει τὴ ψυχὴ ἀπὸ κάθε κακό, ἢ προσπάθεια νὰ ἐνωθῇ κανεὶς μὲ τὸ Χριστό. Ν' ἀγαπήσῃ τὸ Χριστό, νὰ λαχταρήσῃ τὸ Χριστό, νὰ ζῇ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, σὰν τὸν Ἀπόστολο Παῦλο ποὺ ἔλεγε: «Δὲν ζῶ ἐγώ, ἀλλὰ ζῇ μέσα μου ὁ Χριστός». Αὐτὸς νὰ εἶναι ὁ στόχος σας. Οἱ ἄλλες προσπάθειες νὰ εἶναι μυστικές, κρυμμένες. Ἐκεῖνο ποὺ θὰ πρέπει νὰ κυριαρχῇ εἶναι ἡ ἀγάπη στὸ Χριστό. Αὐτὸ νὰ ὑπάρχῃ μὲς τὸ μυαλό, στὴ σκέψη, στὴ φαντασία, στὴ καρδιά, στὴ βούληση. Αὐτὴ ἡ προσπάθεια νὰ εἶναι ἡ πιὸ ἔντονη, πῶς θὰ συναντήσετε τὸ Χριστό, πῶς θὰ ἐνωθεῖτε μαζί Του, πῶς θὰ Τὸν ἐνστερνισθεῖτε μέσα σας.

Τὶς ἀδυναμίες ἀφήστε τις ὅλες, γιὰ νὰ μὴν παίρνη εἶδηση τὸ ἀντίθετο πνεῦμα καὶ σᾶς βουτᾶει καὶ σᾶς καθηλώνει καὶ σᾶς βάζει στὴ στενοχώρια. Νὰ μὴ κάνετε καμιά προσπάθεια ν' ἀπαλλαγεῖτε ἀπ' αὐτές. Ν' ἀγωνίζεσθε μὲ ἀπαλότητα καὶ ἀπλότητα, χωρὶς σφίξιμο καὶ ἄγχος. Μὴ λέτε: «Τώρα θὰ σφιχτῶ, θὰ κάνω προσευχὴ ν' ἀποκτήσω ἀγάπη, νὰ γίνω καλὸς κ.λ.π.». Δὲν εἶναι καλὸ νὰ σφίγγεσαι καὶ νὰ πλήττῃς, γιὰ νὰ γίνῃς καλός. Ἔτσι θ' ἀντιδράσετε χειρότερα. Ὅλα νὰ γίνονται μὲ ἀπαλὸ τρόπο, ἀβίαστα κι ἐλεύθερα. Οὔτε νὰ λέτε: «Θεέ μου, ἀπάλλαξε μὲ ἀπ' αὐτό», παραδείγματος χάριν, τὸ θυμὸ, τὴ λύπη. Δὲν εἶναι καλὸ νὰ προσευχόμαστε ἢ καὶ νὰ σκεπτόμαστε τὸ συγκεκριμένο πάθος. Κάτι γίνεται στὴ ψυχὴ μας καὶ μπλεκόμαστε ἀκόμη περισσότερο. Ρίξου μὲ ὀρμὴ, γιὰ νὰ κινήσῃς τὸ πάθος καὶ θὰ δεῖς τότε πῶς θὰ σ' ἀγκαλιάσει, θὰ σὲ σφίξῃ καὶ δὲ θὰ μπορέσῃς τίποτα νὰ κάνεις.

Μὴ πολεμᾶτε ἀπευθείας τὸν πειρασμό, μὴν παρακαλεῖτε νὰ φύγῃ, μὴ λέτε: «Πᾶρ' τον, Θεέ μου!». Τότε τοῦ δίνετε σημασία κι ὁ πειρασμὸς σφίγγει. Γιατί παρόλο ποὺ λέτε, «πᾶρ' τον Θεέ μου», βασικὰ τὸν θυμᾶστε καὶ τὸν υποθάλλετε περισσότερο. Ἡ διάθεση γιὰ ἀπαλλαγὴ, βέβαια, θὰ ὑπάρχῃ, ἀλλὰ θὰ εἶναι πάρα πολὺ μυστικὴ καὶ λεπτὴ, χωρὶς νὰ φαίνεται. Θὰ γίνεται μυστικά. Θυμηθεῖτε ἐκεῖνο ποὺ λέγει ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή: «Νὰ μὴν γνωρίζῃ τὸ ἀριστερό σου, τί κάνει τὸ δεξιό σου». Ὅλη ἡ δύναμή σας νὰ στρέφεται στὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, στὴ λατρεία Του, στὴν προσκόλλησή σ' Αὐτόν. Ἔτσι ἡ ἀπαλλαγὴ ἀπ' τὸ κακό καὶ τὶς ἀδυναμίες θὰ γίνεται μυστικά, χωρὶς νὰ παίρνετε εἶδηση, χωρὶς κόπο.

Αὐτὴ τὴν προσπάθεια κάνω κι ἐγώ. Βρῆκα ὅτι εἶναι ὁ καλύτερος τρόπος ἀγιασμοῦ, ἀναίμακτος. Καλύτερα, δηλαδὴ νὰ ρίχνομαι στὴν ἀγάπη, μελετώντας τοὺς κανόνες, τὰ τροπάρια, τοὺς ψαλμούς. Αὐτὴ ἡ μελέτη κι ἐντρύφηση, χωρὶς νὰ τὸ καταλάβω, πηγαίνει τὸ νοῦ μου πρὸς τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ γλυκαίνει τὴ καρδιά μου. Συγχρόνως, εὐχομαι ἀνοίγωντας τὰ χέρια μὲ λαχτᾶρα, μὲ ἀγάπη, μὲ χαρὰ καὶ ὁ

Κύριος μὲ ἀνεβάζει στὴν ἀγάπῃ Του. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ σκοπὸς μας, νὰ φθάσουμε ἐκεῖ. Τὶ λέτε, αὐτὸς ὁ δρόμος δὲν εἶναι ἀναίμακτος;

Ὑπάρχουν καὶ πολλοὶ ἄλλοι τρόποι, ὅπως, γιὰ παράδειγμα, νὰ θυμᾶσαι τὸ θάνατο, τὴν κόλαση, τὸ διάβολο. Ἔτσι ἀπὸ φόβο καὶ ὑπολογισμὸ ἀποφεύγεις τὸ κακό. Ἐγὼ ὁ ἐλάχιστος δὲν ἐφάρμοσα στὴ ζωὴ μου αὐτοὺς τοὺς τρόπους ποὺ κουράζουν, φέρνουν ἀντίδραση καὶ πολλὰ φορὲς τὸ ἀντίθετο ἀποτέλεσμα. Ἡ ψυχὴ, κι ὅταν μάλιστα εἶναι εὐαίσθητη, εὐφραίνεται στὴν ἀγάπῃ κι ἐνθουσιάζεται, ἐνδυναμώνεται καὶ μετασηματίζεται καὶ μεταποιεῖ καὶ μεταστοιχειώνει ὅλα τὰ ἀρνητικὰ καὶ τ' ἄσχημα.

Γι' αὐτὸ ἐγὼ προτιμῶ τὸν «εὐκόλο δρόμο», δηλαδὴ αὐτὸ τὸ τρόπο ποὺ τὸν πετυχαίνουμε μὲ τὴ μελέτη τῶν κανόνων τῶν ἁγίων. Στους κανόνες θὰ βροῦμε τρόπους ποὺ μεταχειρίσθηκαν οἱ ἅγιοι, οἱ ὁσιοὶ, οἱ ἄσκηται, οἱ μάρτυρες. Καλὸ εἶναι νὰ κάνουμε αὐτὴ τὴ «κλοπὴ». Νὰ κάνουμε κι ἐμεῖς ὅ,τι ἔκαναν ἐκεῖνοι. Αὐτοὶ ρίχθηκαν στὴν ἀγάπῃ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἔδωσαν ὅλη τὴ καρδιά τους. Νὰ κλέψουμε τὸν τρόπο τους.



## Τὰ Ὑστρακα καὶ ἡ Τοῦ Κυρίου Ἐκκλησία

Ὅπως τὰ Ὑστρακα κολλᾶνε στὶς πλευρὲς τοῦ πλοίου καὶ δυσκολεύουν τὴν κίνησή του, ἔτσι καὶ στὰ πλευρὰ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ πλοίου κολλᾶνε ἄτομα, τὰ ὁποῖα, ὄχι μόνο δὲν προσφέρουν τίποτα στὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, ἀντίθετα συντελοῦν στὸ νὰ χάνει τὴν ταχύτητά του τὸ σκάφος τῆς καὶ νὰ γίνεται δυσκίνητο. Φίλαυτα, ἰδιοτελή, συμφεροντολόγα, αἰσγρά, δειλὰ καὶ ἄνανδρα ἄτομα, αὐτὰ εἶναι τὰ Ὑστρακα! Οἱ ἄνθρωποι αὐτοὶ ὀνομάζονται μὲν χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ πλὴν τοῦ ὀνόματος τῶν τίποτα ἄλλο δὲν ἔχουν νὰ παρουσιάσουν ἀπὸ τὰ γνωρίσματα τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ. Ὑστρακα λαϊκοί, ἀλλὰ προπαντὸς κληρικοί, ἀνάξιοι τῆς ἱερᾶς ἀποστολῆς, διάκονοι καὶ ἐπίσκοποι, οἱ ὁποῖοι δὲν ζοῦν διὰ τὴν θρησκείαν ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὴν θρησκείαν. Αὐτοὶ σὰν Ὑστρακα ἔχουν κολλήσει στὰ πλευρὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ δυσκολεύουν τὴν κίνησή της.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, ἂν θέλει νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ καὶ πάλι τὴ ζωτικότητα τῶν πρώτων ἡμερῶν, πρέπει νὰ ἀπαλλαγῇ ἀπὸ τὰ Ὑστρακα αὐτά. Τὸ πλοῖο πρέπει νὰ ἀποκτήσῃ καὶ πάλι τὴν πνευματικότητα καὶ τὴ δραστηριότητα, αὐτὴν ποὺ εἶχε, ὅταν κατὰ τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς Πεντηκοστῆς μὲ λίγους ἐπιβάτες ξεκίνησε ἀπὸ τὸ ὑπερῶο ἐκεῖνο τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ.

**Ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Καντιώτης**



## Νὰ Εἶναι Ἀδιάλειπτη Ἡ Μνήμη Τοῦ Θεοῦ

Απὸ τὸ Βιβλίον «Ὁ Δρόμος Τῆς Ζωῆς» ἐπιστολὲς Ὁσίου Θεοφάνους τοῦ Ἐγκλείστου, Ἐκδόσεις Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Παρακλήτου.

Τὸ ὄνομα Χριστιανὸς ἢ Χριστιανὴ εἶναι παράγωγον τοῦ ὀνόματος Χριστός. Αἱ Πράξεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων (11:26) ἀναφέρουν ὅτι στὴν Ἀντιόχεια ἐχρησιμοποιήθη διὰ πρώτην φοράν τὸ ὄνομα «Χριστιανός». *Χρηματίσαι τε πρῶτον ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητάς Χριστιανούς. Τοῦτο κατὰ τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν ἱστορικὸν συγγραφέα Εὐσέβιον Καισαρείας* (Βιβλ. Β', 2) συνέβη τὴν ἐποχὴν τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Τιβερίου (14-37 μ.Χ.). Γράφει ἐπακριβῶς ὁ Εὐσέβιος Καισαρείας: «Τιβέριος οὖν, ἐφ' οὗ τὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ὄνομα εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσελήλυθεν» (= ὁ Τιβέριος, λοιπόν, ἐπὶ τοῦ ὁποίου εἰσηλθεν τὸ ὄνομα τῶν Χριστιανῶν εἰς τὸν κόσμον).

Σὰν καλὴ Χριστιανή, λοιπόν, ἐξομολογήθηκες καὶ κοινῶνισες πρὶν τῶν Χριστουγέννων; Συγχαρητήρια. Εὐχομαι τὰ Θεῖα Μυστήρια νὰ ζωογονήσουν τὸ πνεῦμα σου, νὰ φέρουν τὴν καρδιά σου πιὸ κοντὰ στὸν Θεό, νὰ δώσουν νόημα στὴν ζωὴ σου καὶ νὰ ὀχυρώσουν τὴν ψυχὴ σου, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσης ἀποκρούοντας ἀποτελεσματικὰ τὶς ἐπιθέσεις τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, νὰ εὐαρεστήσης τὸν Θεό. Πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα, πάντως, εὐχομαι καὶ ἐλπίζω νὰ βιώνης τὴν χαρὰ τῆς σωτηρίας ποὺ ἔφερε ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Γιατί ὁ Χριστὸς εὐρίσκεται τώρα μέσα σου. Καὶ ὅπου βρίσκεται ὁ Χριστός, ἐκεῖ εἶναι καὶ ἡ σωτηρία.

Κάποτε ταξίδευε ὁ Κύριος μὲ τοὺς μαθητὲς του στὴν θάλασσα τῆς Γαλιλαίας. Ξέσπασε, ὅμως, ἀνεμοθύελλα καὶ τὸ πλοῖο τοὺς κινδύνευε. Στὸ μεταξὺ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶχεν ἀποκοιμηθῇ. Οἱ ἀπόστολοι τὸν ξύπνησαν φοβισμένοι. «Δάσκαλε, δάσκαλε, χανόμεσθε»!, φώναξαν. Ἐκεῖνος τότε ἐπετίμησε τὸν ἀνεμο καὶ τὴν τρικυμία καὶ ἔγινε γαλήνη. Ὑστερα εἶπε στοὺς μαθητὲς Του: «Ποῦ εἶναι ἡ πίστις σας;» (Λουκᾶ 8:22-25).

Ὅποιος ἔχει πίστη στὸν Χριστό, ὅποιος εἶναι μαζί μὲ τὸν Χριστό, δὲν πρέπει νὰ φοβάται. Ὁ Χριστός, λοιπόν, εἶναι τώρα μαζί σου! Μὴ φοβάσαι μήτε τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ, μήτε τὴν ἐξωτερικὴ ταραχή. Κράτα ζωντανὴ τὴν πίστη σου στὸν Κύριο καὶ στὴν βοήθειά Του, καὶ ἡ καρδιά σου θὰ πῇ μὲ βεβαιότητα: «Καὶ ἂν ἀκόμα πορευθῶ, Κύριε, μέσ' ἀπὸ μέρη ποὺ τὰ σκιαζεῖ ὁ κίνδυνος τοῦ θανάτου, δὲν θὰ φοβηθῶ ὅτι μπορεῖ νὰ πάθω κάτι κακό, γιατί Ἐσὺ εἶσαι μαζί μου» (Ψαλμ. 22:4). Ὅλοι ὅσοι κοινωνοῦν μποροῦν νὰ ψάλλουν: «Ὁ ἅγιος τῶν δυνάμεων εἶναι μαζί μας. Βοηθός μας εἶναι ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ Ἰακώβ» (Ψαλμ. 45:8).

Τώρα ποὺ ἔχεις ἀνακαινισθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν Θεία Χάρι, τώρα ποὺ ἔχεις ἐνισχυθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ θεῖον ἔλεος, τώρα ποὺ ἔχεις ἀλλοιωθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν Θεϊκὴ παρουσία, βάδισε στὸν δρόμο τοῦ Κυρίου, ποὺ διάλεξες μὲ τόση φιλοτιμία. Βάδισε σ' αὐτὸν τὸν δρόμο ὡς τὸ τέλος τῆς ζωῆς σου, ἔχοντας ὡς

βακτηρία στὴν πορεία σου τὴν ἀδιάλειπτη μνήμη τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀγωνίσου ἐπίμονα νὰ κρατᾷς στὸ νοῦ σου τὸν Θεό, ὥσπου ἡ μνήμη Του νὰ μὴ σ' ἐγκαταλείπη πιά. Ὁ Κύριός μας βρίσκεται σὲ κάθε τόπο καὶ σὲ κάθε στιγμή μαζί μας, δίπλα μας, μέσα μας. Ἐμεῖς, ὅμως, δὲν εἴμαστε πάντα μαζί Του, γιατί δὲν τὸν θυμόμαστε. Γι' αὐτὸ ἄλλωστε κάνουμε καὶ πράγματα ποὺ ποτὲ δὲν θὰ κάναμε, ἂν τὸν θυμόμασταν. Ἀγωνίσου, λοιπόν, ν' ἀποκτήσης τὴν εὐλογημένη αὐτὴ συνήθεια. Δὲν χρειάζεται παρὰ θέληση κι' ἐπιμονή. Καὶ δὲν ἔχεις παρὰ ἀπλῶς νὰ θυμᾷσαι πὼς ὁ Κύριος εἶναι κοντὰ σου, βλέπει τί κάνεις, καὶ γνωρίζει τί σκέπτεσαι. Στὴν ἀρχὴ θὰ δυσκολευτῇ λίγο νὰ κρατήσης μέσα σου ἀμετάπτωτη αὐτὴ τὴν σκέψη. Μὲ τὸν καιρὸ καὶ μὲ τὴν προσπάθεια ὅμως, θὰ συνηθίσῃς νὰ τὴν κρατᾷς. Σιγὰ – σιγὰ θὰ γίνῃ μόνιμο βίωμά σου. Καὶ τότε θὰ ᾄδῃς τὴν λυτρωτικὴ ἐπίδρασή της στὴν ψυχὴ σου, ποὺ θὰ πλημμυρίσῃ ἀπὸ εὐλάβεια καὶ θεῖο φόβο.

Ἐμεῖς οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι, γιὰ τὴν εὐκολότερη ἀπόκτηση τῆς ἀδιάλειπτης μνήμης τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔχουμε μία εἰδικὴ μέθοδο, τὴν ἐπανάληψη τῆς σύντομης προσευχῆς «Κύριε ἐλέησον» ἢ «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησόν με», ἢ «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν». Ἄν ποτὲ δὲν ἔχεις ἀκούσει γι' αὐτὴ τὴν προσευχή, ποὺ λέγεται εὐχή τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κι' ἂν ποτὲ δὲν τὴν ἔχεις κάνει, ἄρχισε ἀπὸ τώρα νὰ τὴν ἐπαναλαμβάνῃς. Ὅταν κάθεσαι, ὅταν βαδίζεις, ὅταν ἐργάζεσαι, ὅταν τρῶς, ἀκόμα καὶ ὅταν βρίσκεσαι στὸ κρεβάτι, λέγε χωρὶς διακοπὴ καὶ μὲ προσήλωσι τῆς προσοχῆς στὶς λέξεις: «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με». Ἐπειτα ἀπὸ καιρὸ ἡ εὐχή θὰ στερεωθῇ στὴ γλῶσσα καὶ στὸ νοῦ σου, κι' ἔτσι θὰ ἐπαναλαμβάνεται μόνη της. Ἡ ἀδιάλειπτη αὐτὴ προσευχὴ ἀποτρέπει τὴν διάχυση καὶ περιπλάνηση τῶν λογισμῶν, ἐμπνέει τὸν φόβο τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ συντηρεῖ τὴν εὐλάβεια.

Νὰ εἶσαι εὐδιάθετη καὶ χαρούμενη τώρα ποὺ μπαίνεις στὸ δρόμο τοῦ Κυρίου, τὸν δρόμο ποὺ ὀδηγεῖ στὴν οὐράνια βασιλεία. Ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ ἡ πάναγνη Μητέρα Του νὰ σὲ βοηθήσουν.



Δυστυχισμένοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ δὲν τοὺς λείπει τίποτα, καὶ δὲν ἔχουνε τὴν ἐλπίδα νὰ λαχταρήσουνε κάποιο πράγμα, εἴτε φαγητὸ εἶναι εἴτε ξεκούρασμα, εἴτε ὁμιλία, εἴτε ζεστασιά, εἴτε δροσιά. Καὶ καλότυχοι ἀληθινὰ ὅσοι δὲν τὰ ἔχουνε ὅλα εὐκόλα, καὶ γιὰ τοῦτο γίνονται γιὰ δαύτους ὁλοένα νέα καὶ δροσερά ὅλα τὰ πράγματα.

**Φώτης Κόντογλου**



## CONVERSION AND SALVATION

*By Frank Schaeffer, from "Dancing Alone," pp. 254-261 (edited for length).*

One of the root problems contributing to our present state of [spiritual] lawlessness is that in most Protestant theology, conversion seems to have been confused with salvation. As a result, Protestantism has implicitly taught that people can do as they please since salvation and character formation—works—are completely unrelated. But, according to the historical Church, conversion and salvation are two very different things. Georges Florovsky ("The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers," pp. 33-34) reminds us that St. Paul writes that we "are children of God, and if children, also heirs, heirs on the one hand of God, co-heirs on the other hand of Christ." But all this has a condition, for there is the all-important "if indeed." Our glorification, according to St. Paul is contingent upon a mighty "if" and that "if" leads us to the spiritual reality of "co-suffering." The very use of the word "co-suffer" presupposes the reality of the idea of "co-suffering" and both presuppose an active, dynamic, spiritual action or activity on the part of the one who "co-suffers," else there is no meaning to the "co." The Orthodox Church thus teaches that the crown of salvation goes only to those who "finish" the race, not the so-called "elect" or to those who merely believe they are "born again," regardless of the content of their actions.

In the parable of the sower, we see that the majority of those converted failed to persist to salvation (Mt 13:3-9). On the other hand, we read of Jesus saying that the Roman Centurion had the greatest faith that Jesus had found in Israel. Yet the Centurion, while on the road to salvation, had no conversion experience at all and was almost certainly not a Jew, let alone a Christian (Mt 8:5-13).

According to the teaching of the Church, conversion is that process by which we start over—change our behavior—do an about-face. At its most dramatic, conversion may involve an inaugural and powerful encounter with Christ. Conversion consists of a sudden recognition of the fact that Christ is Lord, Savior and King, as in the story of the conversion of Zaccheus (Lk 19:1-10).

The Church has always taught, however, that salvation is a journey, not a one-time experience. Christ called it a difficult journey, one in which there are many pitfalls, as the parable of the sower, or the wise and foolish virgins illustrates so graphically. Christ told Zaccheus that he should do certain specific things in order to begin his journey; belief was simply not enough.

Because Protestants, since the beginning of the Reformation have tended to reduce the way of salvation to a sort of magical one-time, "predestined" conversion experience, they have unwittingly reduced to near zero the importance of the sacraments. After all, if one can be instantly "saved," what

need does one have of the spiritual tools—crutches, if you will—provided by a sacramental form of worship? Indeed, why even bother to do the hard work to become Christ-like at all if one is already saved? Why bother to read the Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes, let alone try to become like Christ? Why not simply read John 3:16 once, "believe," and forget the rest of Scripture?

If salvation is a one-time experience, then the teachings of Christ, the Beatitudes for instance, become absurdities. The Christian's attempt to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and to learn good habits of mind, body and spirit, are wasted if the outcome of the spiritual journey is already decided. If there is no need to run the race, fight the good fight, or finish the course.

By confusing conversion with the lifelong journey of salvation, Protestantism has also made nonsense of Christ's warnings about the dire consequences of failing to pursue holiness as an ongoing quest. Salvation, as Christ reveals it, means a search for the "pearl of great price" for which we are to be willing to sell all we have in the course of a lifetime struggle to become perfect even as God is perfect. Indeed if salvation could be easily or instantly achieved, then the majority of the Bible's teachings on how to live a moral, lawful, sacramental life make no sense. In fact, Christ was wasting His time when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. And all the Saints, monks and ascetics who have struggled to live holy lives have been deluded.

The fact remains that so many would-be Christians have been sold a false bill of goods, instant, easy "salvation," and the promise of instant painless change in their characters. They have been given to understand that after being "born again," all will be well, God will bless, and their troubles will be behind them, if they only have sufficient "faith," if they only "trust God." According to the Holy Tradition, this is a diabolically false teaching. It is an idea that actually leads people away from God. This is because the Church teaches that we can only imitate Christ and become like God through ascetic perseverance, that there is no short cuts to sanctity.

The thief of the cross found salvation because he was being crucified alongside of Jesus. Jesus did not magically help the suffering thief come down off the cross. The thief's conversion in no way altered his excruciating circumstances, and brief as his spiritual journey was, nevertheless he had to complete his hard journey, his road of faith. He could have lost hope in his last hour, especially after Christ has passed on; he could have let his extreme pain lead him to despair; he could have changed his mind and railed and jeered Jesus, along with his fellow condemned companion, especially when he saw that he would not be saved from pain and physical death by Christ. We thus see that, even in the thief's case, there was more required than a mere "conversion experience." To the extent that his knowledge of Christ permitted him to imitate

Christ, the thief had to finish his journey, his course, just as we must.

Anthony M. Coniaris summarizes what the journey of Salvation entails: "What does it mean to be saved? What is salvation in Christ? Salvation is freedom – freedom from tyranny of self-centeredness, freedom from the bondage of fear and death. Salvation in Christ is being freed from myself so that I can become the person God created me to be and intends me to become...."

If we are truly seeking God our question should not be: Am I saved? Rather it must be: Am I becoming more like Christ? *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* (Rom 5:10)

Christ describes the journey to salvation as the quest to become like God. *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.* (Mt 5:48). So humanly impossible is this journey—this quest to be God-like—that *there are few who find it.* (Mt 7:14) For some salvation is as unattainable as a camel passing through the eye of a needle. Nevertheless, the Church teaches that Christ gives us all the opportunity and grace to come to Him if we choose to do so.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ is the narrow gate, and only through Him are we saved. There is no other gate. There is not a wider, less exclusive or more democratic gate. Nor is there any tradition of the inter-faith dialogue with those outside of the narrow way of Christ to be found in the historic Church's teaching, as if the means of salvation can be defined as a consensus of points of view between man and women of good will. The Church teaches that we can only pass through the gate by imitating Christ. Thus the consistent prayer of the Saints has always been Christ's prayer *...not as I will, but as You will.* (Mt 26:39).

The false "churches" of multi-denominationalism may, like amoebas, endlessly subdivide again and again but that does not mean that the one true historical Orthodox Church does not exist, any more than the fact that divorce rate has been going up means that marriage is no longer a Christian sacrament. It only reveals that many people have gone sadly astray from God and refuse to obey His Church's sacramental and apostolic authority.

Christ's "narrow" teaching in today's pluralistic, pragmatic, democratic world of relativistic, academic fundamentalism, will appear very out of date and politically incorrect to many people. It is not fashionable to say that there is only one way to do anything. To have no fixed moral absolutes and beliefs is now understood to be a virtue. But for those who reject the myth of salvation through the theological sleight-of-hand of "sensitivism" and a good feeling, and who choose instead to pass through the narrow gate onto the royal way, there remains the real test: the difficult way on the hard road that leads to life and the journey of faith from the death to life.

As Clement of Alexandria wrote in A.D. 202: "When we hear, 'your faith has saved you' (Mt. 9:22), we do not understand [the Lord] to say simply that they will be saved who have believed in whatever manner, even if works have not followed."

Christ promised that His way is difficult and He provided only one path toward God for us to tread: the lifelong ascetic-sacramental path of worship, sacrifice and obedience.

St. John Cassian wrote of meeting the famous African desert monk, Abba Moses. He asked him: "What is the purpose with which we are to pursue the Kingdom of heaven?" Abba Moses replied, "The goal...as we have said is the Kingdom of God. Its immediate purpose, however, is purity of heart...And, should it ever happen that for a short time our heart turns aside from the direct path, we must bring it back again at once, guiding our lives with reference to our purpose as if it were a carpenter's rule."

Christ's own life was one of ascetic struggle. He often went into the desert to pray and fast. According to Holy Tradition, the false church has lied to people when it taught that following God would be easy or automatic. It lied when it taught that there is some spiritual formula through which Christians, like the unbelievers around them, can "have it all," including purity of heart and so-called spiritual gifts absent from struggle and a lifelong monastic hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

Contrary to the false "prosperity gospel" preached by many of the materialistic modern, so-called charismatic, Protestant denominations, Christ made no promise of material well-being or physical healing in this life as a "reward" for faith. Quite to contrary: *But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers the false prophets* (Lk 6:24-26).

Christ promises woe to people who enjoy the very selfsame "blessings" that many Protestant denominations teach is the birthright of a Christian, as one of the "Elect" practitioners of the American Dream. Yet St. Mark the Ascetic writes, "[H]e who does something good and expects a reward is serving not God but his own will."

Christ did not "have it all." He gave freely of Himself, receiving nothing in return. Christ's teaching, by example, is the opposite of the contemporary prosperity gospel which seeks to baptize the American Dream as if it were part of a parcel of the ancient Christian faith. It is also the opposite of the secular "religion" of our day: belief in the "right" to be happy at all times. The psalmist, writing what might be a fitting epitaph to modern America, said, *The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him, saying, 'Here is the man [nation] who did not make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.'* (Ps 52:7).

According to the Church, the struggle against sin, and its consequences, is the lot of true Christians. Our dream is of righteousness, not wealth. Our hope is in God, not politics or a new social order.

The Church teaches that there will be true peace for the followers of Jesus. But it is not the peace of this world. Nor is it the “inner peace” of modern physiological counseling and “therapeutic” religion, of the sort that deadens our conscious in the name of self-love. Nor, according to the Fathers, is it the financial prosperity promised to the duped audiences of “Christian” television who send in their money hoping for a material blessing in return.

Far from making life easy, Christ predicted His followers would suffer. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Mt 10:16). The promise of suffering is such an insistent theme in the Gospels that we might wonder if those who did not suffer for their faith are actually following Christ.

Christ told His disciples to have no illusions about the brotherhood of man. The picture He painted of the unbelieving world was one of ravaging wolves, a harsh world in which His followers needed the wariness, guile and canniness of serpents to survive the onslaught. At the same time Jesus also told His disciples to be harmless, to be as clever as serpents in protecting themselves from temptation and demons, but without venom. *Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.* (Mt 10:17) We are to pray for the best for all people; but, because we know all men are sinners and will sin against us we must also expect persecution for our faith.

Holy Tradition teaches that those who follow Christ do not do so to feel good, or to improve their self-esteem, or because it will be “good for America,” or even necessarily good for them in the present world. The Church teaches us that the one reason to follow Christ and strive to be like Him – that is, to change to change the content of our characters through fasting, prayer, confession, sacrament and obedience – is so the “he who endures to the end will be saved.” This is what it means to seek first the kingdom of God, that we struggle toward God by obeying Christ and practically imitating Him. This is what being saved from our sins requires. We are asked to join in the life of the historical Church and come to God in the only way His Son told us to.



**I**f sorrows surround you, rejoice; for then you are traveling on the right path. And he who does not run away from sorrows, but bears them as he is able, will receive the Eternal Kingdom.

St. Anatoly (+1894)

## REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISMAL VOWS

By St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, from “*The Journey to Heaven*,” translated by Fr. George Lardas.

**H**oly Baptism is like a door by which those that are baptized enter into the holy Church and become *fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God* (Eph 2:19). And not just so, but before Baptism there are renunciations and vows:

1. We then renounced Satan and all his evil works. Satan is a wicked and evil spirit. He was created good by God, but he and those of like mind with him apostasized from Him, and so from light they became dark, and from good they became evil and wicked. His works are idolatry, pride, adultery, prodigality, all uncleanness, slander, blasphemy and every sin; for he is the inventor of sin, and he beguiled our ancestors in paradise and led them into sin and apostasy from God. We renounce this wicked spirit and all his evil works before Baptism.

2. We renounce every vanity, pride and pomp of this world, as ones called to and renewed for everlasting life.

3. We promise to serve Christ the Son of God in faith and in truth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to follow in His footsteps.

4. Thus we establish a covenant between God and us. We, who have renounced Satan, promise to serve God and be faithful to him. God accepts us in His supreme mercy and promises us an inheritance in everlasting life and the Kingdom, and washes us who are defiled by sin in the laver of Baptism. He sanctifies and justifies us, as the priest says over everyone who is baptized, *Thou art washed, thou art sanctified, thou art justified* (cf. I Cor 6:11).

Beloved Christians, let us remember these renunciations and vows, and consider whether we keep them, for it is a grave thing to lie to God, and it is very dangerous to be found false before Him. Let us consider, then, whether any of us have not gone back to Satan, whether we have not renounced Christ and abandoned Him? Let us consider on whose side we find ourselves, on Satan’s or on Christ’s. One serves and belongs to him whose will he performs. He renounces Christ not only he who renounces His holy name and does not confess Him to be the Son of God and his Saviour, but also he who sins against conscience and recklessly breaks His holy commandments. This is the teaching of the Apostles. For the Apostle says, *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, and the rest* (Tit 1:16).

Do you see that people reject God in works too, and not just with their lips? Is anyone a prodigal, and does he commit adultery? He rejects Christ. Does anyone hate his neighbor and seek him out to harm him? He has apostasized from Christ. Does anyone steal; does he rob and take away his neighbor’s goods? He has departed from Christ. Does anyone deceive



and flatter his neighbor? He is no longer with Christ, but in all these things he submits to the enemy of salvation, and so he does not stand in the promises which he made to God, and so he has lied to God. Let us examine then, beloved, our conscience and our life. To which side do we belong, to Christ's or to His enemy's? To the good, or to the evil? To the lot of the saved or to that of the lost? He that is not with Christ is the enemy of Christ. For Christ Himself said, *He that is not with Me is against Me* (Mt 12:30).

Beloved, let us watch ourselves and let us be with Christ here in this world, as we have vowed at Baptism: let us be with Christ here that we may be with Christ in the age to come, according to His promise that cannot lie, *Where I am, there shall also My servant be* (John 12:26). Let us serve Him here as our King and God, that on the Day of Judgment He will acknowledge us as His laborers and number us with His faithful servants and open unto us the doors of everlasting joy. Remember the vows made at Baptism.

So that you may act on the aforementioned points, you must remember the vows you made at holy Baptism. For though not you yourself but your sponsor made those vows before God on your behalf, you promised then, spitting on Satan, and on his pride, and on his service, and on his evil works—you promised, I say—and vowed to serve Jesus Christ your Lord and Redeemer in faith and in truth, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Consider, Christian, what vows you made and to Whom. It is a grievous thing to lie to a man; how incomparably more grievous it is to lie to God. *God is not mocked* (Gal 6:7). When a Christian does not stand on his promises and does not keep them, what mercy, then, should he expect from God, to Whom he lied? He that keeps his promises shall find himself in God's mercy and in His Kingdom. He remains faithful to God, and God will hold him in mercy and in His protection as His own. And this is what the prophet sings to God, *With the holy man wilt Thou be holy, and with the innocent man wilt Thou be innocent. And with the elect man wilt Thou be elect, and with the perverse wilt Thou be perverse* (Ps 17:26-27).

Christians! All they that commit iniquity and act against their conscience do not keep their vows. These include fornicators, adulterers, and all defilers, robbers, thieves, brigands, the sly, and crafty, deceivers and the guileful, revilers and men of evil speech, drunkards, fault finders, the hateful, and the malicious; they that live in the pride and pomp of this world, and all that do not fear God. They have all lied to God and have not kept their vows, and are outside of the holy Church, though they may even go to churches and pray and receive the Mysteries and build churches and adorn them and display other signs of a Christian. Since they shall be powerfully put to the test at the Judgment of Christ and tormented more there than Turks and idolaters, avoid these deeds, Christian and do not imitate the aforementioned doers of iniquity, lest you be condemned with them to eternal fire by the just judgment of God, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not*

*quenched* (Mk 9:44, 46, 48), but by all means endeavor so to live and act as the word of God teaches, as was said above.

Keep in mind those vows of yours, and this will guide you toward the Christian life and restrain you from every evil and do you good. If you notice that you do not keep those vows, then repent and begin the Christian life anew, lest you appear before God in a lie, and perish with liars: *The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death* (Rev 21:8).



*What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands... we proclaim now to you. (1 Jn 1:1-3).*

Behold, such is the apostolic preaching! The apostles speak neither as worldly sages, nor like philosophers and even less as theoreticians who make suppositions about something in order to discover something. The apostles speak about things which they have not sought but which unexpectedly surrounded them; about the fact which they did not discover but, so to speak, unexpectedly found them and seized them.

They did not occupy themselves with spiritual researches nor have they studied psychology, neither did they, much less, occupy themselves with spiritism. Their occupation was fishing—one totally experiential physical occupation. While they were fishing, the God-Man [Jesus] appeared to them and cautiously and slowly introduced them to a new vocation in the service of Himself. At first, they did not believe Him but they, still more cautiously and slowly with fear and hesitation and much wavering, came toward Him and recognized Him. Until the apostles saw Him many times with their own eyes and until they discussed Him many times among themselves and, until they felt Him with their own hands, their experienced fact is supernatural but their method of recognizing this fact is thoroughly sensory and positively learned. Not even one contemporary scholar would be able to use a more positive method to know Christ.

The apostles saw not only one miracle but numerous miracles. They heard not only one lesson but many lessons which could not be contained in numerous books. They saw the resurrected Lord for forty days; they walked with Him, they conversed with Him, they ate with Him, and they touched Him. In a word: they personally and first handedly had thousands of wondrous facts by which they learned and confirmed one great fact, i.e., that Christ is the God-Man, the Son of the Living God, the Man-loving Savior of mankind and the All-Powerful Judge of the living and the dead.

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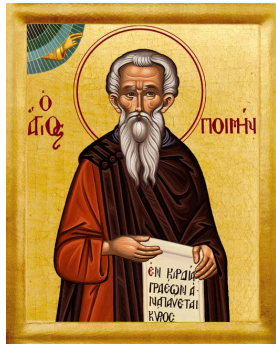
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## THE WORD “ANATHEMA” AND ITS MEANING

By St. John Maximovitch.

The Greek word *anathema* consists of two words: *ana*, which is a preposition indicating movement upwards and *thema*, which means a separate part of something. In military terminology, *thema* meant a detachment; in civil government *thema* meant a province. We currently use the word *theme*, derived from *thema*, to mean a specific topic of a written and intellectual work. *Anathema* literally means the lifting up of something separate.

In the Old Testament this expression was used both in relation to that which was alienated due to sinfulness and likewise to that which was dedicated to God. In the New Testament, in the writing of the Apostle Paul it is used once in conjunction with *maranatha*, meaning the coming of the Lord. The combination of these words means separation until the coming of the Lord; in other words, being handed over to Him (1 Cor 16:22).

The Apostle Paul uses *anathema* in another place without the addition of *maranatha* (Gal 1:8-9). Here *anathema* is proclaimed against the distortion of the Gospel of Christ as it was preached by the Apostle, no matter by whom this might be committed, whether by the Apostle himself or an angel from the heavens. In this same expression there is also implied: *Let the Lord Himself pass judgement*, for who else can pass judgement on the angels?

St John the Theologian in Revelation (22:3) says that in the New Jerusalem *there will not be any anathema*; this can be under-

stood in two ways, giving the word *anathema* both meanings: (1) there will not be any lifting up to the judgement of God, for this judgement has already been accomplished; (2) there will not be any special dedication to God, for all things will be the Holy things of God, just as *the light of God enlightens all* (Rev 21:23).

In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church of Christ, the word *anathema* came to mean complete separation from the Church. *The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes, let him be anathema, let it be anathema*, means a complete tearing away from the church. While in cases of *separation from the communion of the Church* and other epitimia or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation in her grace filled life was limited, those given over to *anathema* were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly church lifts them up to the judgement of God.

That judgment is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ... for our God is a consuming fire* (Heb 10:31 ; 12:29).

*Anathema* is not final damnation: until death repentance is possible. *Anathema* is fearsome not because the Church wishes anyone evil or God seeks their damnation. They desire that all be saved. But it is fearsome to stand before the presence of God in the state of hardened evil: nothing is hidden from Him.



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

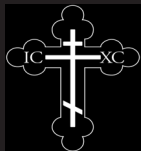
Vol. 05, Issue 02

February 2007

Brotherhood of St. Poimen

## In This Issue:

- **Forgiveness Sunday**  
(p. 4)
- **How to Save Our Soul**  
(p. 5)
- **St. Amoun and His Wife**  
(p. 6)
- **St. Arsenios the Cappa-**  
**docian (p. 11)**
- **Preparation for Holy**  
**Confession (p. 13)**



- **Ἡ Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλη**  
**Τεσσαρακοστή (σελ. 7)**
- **Δροσίσετε τὴν Ψυχὴ**  
**σας στὴν Καλωσύνη καὶ**  
**Ἀγνότητα (σελ. 9)**
- **Ὁ Γέροντας Παῖσιος καὶ**  
**οἱ Παπικοὶ (σελ. 10)**



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## THE ORTHODOX LIFE

*By Fr. Demetrios Carellas (a homily for the  
Sunday of Orthodoxy).*

From the standpoints of scientific, technological, and medical achievements, our nation has witnessed many extraordinary advancements over the past 50 years: space travel, cell phones, credit cards, the internet, discovery of cures for a variety of diseases, organ transplants and laser surgery are a few of these man-created wonders available to us. And at the rate technology has progressed in the last 5 years, we can expect even more such human wonders.

Unfortunately, other than superficially, all of these so-called benefits to mankind have had very little impact on improving our relations with one another. On the contrary, things have become much worse over the past 50 years—especially in the United States, where love of God is being overtaken by love of pleasure, love of convenience, and love of materialism.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are living in a society in which the prince of this world—the evil one—has been able to establish a new religion; and its spread—throughout both the soul of our nation in general, and the souls of the individual citizens in particular—has reached epidemic proportions. I am referring to the new form of paganism known as secular humanism. Furthermore, this neo-paganism is far more dangerous than its prototype of false human and animal-like gods. The items which Satan would have us worship today are such things as: our jobs; our worldly knowledge; our bodies and their apparel; our possessions; major sporting events; our leisure time; hedonism; other people, even our own egos. And when we center our lives upon one or more of these worldly objects, we take our focus off the “one thing needful,” which is to worship God *in spirit and in truth*.

The politically correct, secular humanistic mindset is continuously replacing principles and truth with compromises and falsehood. Thus, we find ourselves living within: a society which hastens to establish strict laws to protect the polar bear or the manta ray, but turns an indifferent ear to the silent screams of several thousand innocent babies being slaughtered in hospitals and abortion chambers everyday; a society in which the darkness of sin is now honored as light; a society which is perpetually in search of new ways to pamper and rejuvenate the human body, which is destined for burial and foul-smelling decomposition, but has no concern for the immortal human soul; a society with plenty of external form, but greatly lacking in internal essence.

Since you and I find ourselves daily within this very anti-Orthodox, anti-Christian environment, we may often lose sight of the new life given to us when we emerged from our common Mother's womb, the Baptismal Font. Perhaps we often become so involved with the cares of this temporary life, that we lose awareness of the priceless treasure of God's heavenly Kingdom, which is hidden within our hearts. Our souls need healing from the wounds of the demons' darts, so that we can return to living that reborn life “of water and the Spirit.” By doing this, we are returning to Him, Who, for our sakes: took upon our flesh, being born in a cave and placed in a manger of straw amongst animals; had no place to lay His head; was falsely accused, beaten, spat upon, crowned with thorns, given vinegar to drink and pierced with a spear. O my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, how infinite is His love for us! With His outstretched arms upon the Tree of Life, He personally seeks to embrace each one of us, calling us into communion with Him, having shed His precious Blood to wash away our sins and grant us the grace to spend eternity with Him in Paradise!

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The key, however, both to the healing of our souls and the return to our new life, can be found only within the Bride of Christ, Our Holy Orthodox Church. As our common Mother, She continually invites us to nourish our souls and bodies with the pure milk of Her Christ-centered life, a life whose core is *both Mystical and ascetical*. Such a life, while it is in direct opposition to this secular humanistic culture, is nevertheless its only hope for cure. But in order for the Mystical-ascetical life of Holy Orthodoxy to heal our nation, it must first heal each of us. In other words, you and I must become daily practitioners of the Orthodox way of life, so that our Lord Jesus, through His Church, can mold us into living vessels of His Mystical grace.

Thanks be to God for our Church Fathers, who—through the guidance of the Holy Spirit—have provided us with this glorious 40-day period of fasting, to help us return: from an outward existence centered on worldly cares, to an inward life centered on Christ. Otherwise, how could we begin to experience the true essence of our Lord’s awesome Passion and glorious Resurrection? Unfortunately, many, if not most, of us do not put our hearts into this sacred period that is provided for the healing of our souls. This year’s journey officially begins with the *Forgiveness Sunday Vespers*; and I wonder if even 10% of our Orthodox faithful in America will be present in their respective churches to hear the words of this Spirit-filled hymn: *Let us set out with JOY upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we abstain from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit, may we persevere with love; and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and - with great spiritual gladness - to behold His Holy Pascha.*

How can I be so bold as to assume only a tiny percentage of Orthodox Christians will hear these words during that Sunday evening? Because it is safe to conclude that the great majority who will attend are souls that know—within their hearts—they need forgiveness. And since very few Orthodox Christians regularly confess their sins before their spiritual father (how many even have a spiritual father?!), why would they take time to attend a Forgiveness Sunday Vespers?

Judging by the terrible state of the world today, we could indeed be nearing the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, I think we all need a “wake-up” call, before it is too late. This one sentence from the teachings of an Athonite Elder of blessed memory, Elder Paisios, is a good start: *Today we continue to call ourselves Orthodox Christians, but we do not live Orthodox lives.* What does it mean to live an Orthodox life? In simple terms, we must become—in our thoughts, words, and actions—the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And the Mystical-ascetical life of our Faith leads us to our personal incarnation of this Divine Revelation of God, which was: preached by the Holy Apostles; confirmed by the Ecumenical Councils; explained and handed down, through Apostolic Succession, by our God-bearing Church Fathers; and kept pure and unadulterated by the blood of our holy Martyrs.

I will share with you, ever so briefly, two items that are required of us, if we are to truly experience the Orthodox life: **obedience** and **truth**. St. John of the Ladder tells us that *obedience is the tomb of the will, and the resurrection of humility*. The Great Fast can serve as an excellent teacher of obedience for us. During this time, the Church calls upon us to fast from meat, dairy products and fish for 40 days and all of Holy Week. Everyone here in this church, from age 12 to senior citizen, who does not have a health problem that requires certain foods in their diets, can (and should) do this.

In addition, it is certainly within our power—our will—to practice some of the other forms of fasting necessary during this time: limiting significantly the time we spend watching TV, the DVD, listening to secular music, playing video games or being on the internet; choosing not to go to movies, dances and other social events; struggling to place more control on our passionate desires, such as lust, anger, envy, and disrespect towards others, especially loved ones. The hours of extra time that we will have each week could then be devoted to feeding our souls through more prayer, worship, and reading from the Bible, the lives of the Saints and the writings of the Church Fathers. I entreat all of us to do these things, even though we may have no desire for this at the present time in our life. As St. Theophan the Recluse reminds us: *You have termed unwilling obedience [to be] “mechanical obedience.” In actual fact, the only kind of obedience that effectively shapes our character is obedience performed against our own will and our own ideas. If you do something because that is the way your heart is inclined, where is the obedience? You are merely following your own will and your own tastes... But in true obedience, you obey without seeing the reason for what you are told to do; and in spite of your own reluctance.*

So let us start at this very moment to observe all of the different fasts in which our Church calls for us to participate during the days of our journey to Holy Week and Pascha; and thus we will begin to entomb our wills, so that our humble Lord Jesus' presence can be resurrected within us. Although it will be difficult to say “no” to our desires, the benefits gained will be both glorious and eternal. Perhaps the following example will help us to understand this. If I were a prisoner in one of Russia's concentration camps during Stalin's era, then I would have to eat the disgusting food served there. At first, my system would continuously vomit the fowl-smelling, bug-infested food. In time, however, my system would adjust to eating this disgusting hash, so that my body would not starve to death. If, after several years of this diet, I gain my freedom and immediately try to down a big steak with all the trimmings and a fabulous dessert, my body would rebel and vomit the good food; but soon, by trying to eat small and less heavy quantities of good food, my system would return to normal. In like manner, our souls were created to feast on the good foods of: worshipping Christ, prayer, reading His Gospel and other spiritual books, and trying to practice the virtues in the trenches of our daily lives. If, however, we choose to feed it primarily with worldly activities and the carnal passions, then it, like our bodies in a concentration camp, adjusts to “eating” such things as: hours of TV or internet, reading secular novels, gossiping, being envious or judgmental of others, fulfilling lustful desires, and having angry outbursts towards our spouses, our parents, our children. By forcing ourselves to abstain from eating meat, dairy products and fish—by forcing ourselves to: turn off the TV and computer, so that we can read the Paraklesis to Panaghia or the Small Compline; put down the secular magazines and novels, so that we can read God's Word and the lives of

the Saints; stop gossiping and limit our idle chatter, so that we can say the Jesus Prayer more often—then: our soul will begin to re-discover its true appetite; we will begin to lose our excessive desires for the things of this world; and we will yearn instead to feast on the spiritual foods that fill our hearts with joy, the joy, our Lord tells us, that *no one can take away!*

Together with obedience, it is imperative that we also have truth, the one, infallible Truth that is expressed in the dogma, teachings, worship, and everyday life of our Holy Orthodox Church. In today's politically correct society, there seems to be an aversion for any kind of truth, especially the Divine Truth that is present within our Faith. How many times have we heard people say, even Orthodox Christians, such things as: “We all worship the same God”? What a demonic statement! The Word of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, took our flesh upon Himself to bring us God's Truth and to die on the Cross so that His precious Blood could wash away our sins. How then can those religions that deny He is the True God—that deny that God is both One in essence and Three in persons—be worshipping the same God? Furthermore, the Church is One, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of our Holy Orthodox Faith. Is Christ divided? Of course not! Then why are there over 22,000 protestant denominations and new ones are being created everyday? Since they broke away from the Church 1,000 years ago, why has the Roman Catholic Church added such heretical teachings as Papal infallibility, Purgatory, and the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. Let me express this in another way. If you believe, for example, that the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary gave birth to other children, then your christ cannot be the True Christ; or if you accept that one Bishop can singularly make infallible teachings that must be believed in order to be saved, then your christ cannot be the True Christ.

During the Great Fast, let us carefully examine our current relationship to this revealed Truth of God that resides in our Church. Have our words or actions ever compromised, diluted, even denied this Truth? Then we need to go confess these sins to our spiritual father, so that we can be forgiven and healed from the grave wounds such actions place within our souls. In Orthodox countries, such as Greece, Russia and Serbia, the blood of millions of martyrs saturates the ground, filling the very land and air with Orthodox DNA. These men, women and children chose horrible tortures and physical death, rather than denial of their Faith; and now they are part of that “great cloud of witnesses” that are interceding for us, who continue to struggle down the narrow path, so that we can be with them in God's heavenly Kingdom. Perhaps we are on the threshold of the era of martyrdom in our own country. How many of us are ready to add Orthodox DNA to the air we breathe and the land upon which we dwell, by shedding our blood for God's Truth? We can begin to prepare ourselves for such a sacred honor—if God so wills it upon us—by starting tonight to avoid saying or doing anything that would compromise or



deny the One True Faith that we received as a gift, when we emerged from the “womb of the Church.”

Before we conclude, I feel it necessary to make some clarifications. By making the above statements, I am in no way implying that only Orthodox Christians can be saved. I am saying, however, that salvation can only be granted through God's One True Church. Furthermore, I readily concede that most people in the various other religions and Christian formations are better people than I am. However, they cannot have the True Faith until they rebuke their various heresies and embrace the One True Church through Baptism and Chrismation.

My brethren, I beg your forgiveness for anything that this wretched sinner and unworthy priest may have said that has caused you offense. The sad reality is that, while I often proclaim the true patristic teachings of our Holy Faith, such teachings are given in combination with my hypocrisy and shallowness of belief. Therefore, my sinfulness may cause them not to reach your precious souls in their true form. Entreat our Lord to forgive me for this, and to allow His word to reach you in spite of me. All I know is that it is time for all of us Orthodox Christians, clergy and laity, to both resist and rebuke the worldly sights and cacophony that seek to lead us away from obedience to—and confession of—God's Truth, as it has been handed down to us through Holy Tradition.

Remember in the mythological story of Ulysses how he commanded his crew to tie him firmly to the mast of the ship, so that he would not succumb to the alluring calls of the Sirens, and thus guide himself and his crew to destruction? Unlike Ulysses, we are living souls; and the Sirens that we face are very real. Each day we are confronted by their soul-destroying sounds of secular humanism, and the false claims that all faiths worship the same God, that no Church is the unique source of God's revealed Truth. Through these demonic Sirens, the evil one seeks to entice us to imitate Esau and sell our birthright of Paradise for the “porridge” of worldly pleasures and spiritual falsehoods.

Let us not become despondent, my brethren. Help is at hand! Let us entreat our Lord Jesus to give each of us the grace never to leave His one Ship, our Holy Orthodox Faith, as we continue our journey on the fetid sea of this temporal life. That Divine grace is guaranteed, provided we daily struggle to become more obedient to His Church and more tenacious in confessing—through our words and actions—the Truth that He has given to Her. Let us also, through the prayers, worship services, and Spirit-filled teachings of the Holy Church Fathers, seek to be bound firmly to the ‘Mast’ of this Holy Ship, which is none other than the very Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In this way, we will remain firmly within the Heavenly “Ark” of Holy Orthodoxy; which will take us together into the Divine Harbor of God's limitless love, because we will no longer be simply called Orthodox Christians, but we will be living the **Orthodox Life!**

Grant this, O Lord!

## FORGIVENESS SUNDAY

*By Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh (+2003)*

*Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh was a senior bishop in the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Church and the head of the Russian Church in Great Britain and Ireland, a most influential voice of the Orthodox tradition in the British Isles.*

The Gospel on Forgiveness Sunday, in the beginning of our Lent that starts tonight, speaks to us divine words of hope and divine words of warning: Forgive those who trespass against you, forgive, because unless you do forgive you cannot be forgiven. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of mutual recognition, of mutual acceptance and of love, which is simultaneously the joy of communion, but also the readiness to carry one another's burdens.

Forgive—but how? Where does forgiveness begin? It would be so easy and so wonderful if forgiveness could begin by such a change of heart that those who are repellent to us should become dear, that things that have hurt us should be forgotten, that we could begin as if nothing had happened before.

But this is not what happens. We feel the pain of the past, we cannot forget, we cannot simply begin as though there had been nothing before. But this is not what forgiveness means. Forgiving is not forgetting, forgetting leads nowhere. When we forget how, for what reason, in what circumstances, because of what weakness, what frailty someone has done wrong, we leave him unprotected. Someone who has done wrong must be protected against another fall. What he has done, the reasons and circumstances of his fall should not be forgotten because he needs our thoughtful, loving care not to slip again, not to sin again.

And this is where forgiveness begins: forgiveness begins at the moment when, realizing the frailty of others as I realize mine, the need of others for help, for mercy and for protection, I am prepared together with them to bear the burden of their weakness, their frailty or their sinfulness. Forgiveness begins at the moment when I take upon myself to put up with others, without waiting for them to change, to put up with them as they are in order to make lighter their burden and to make it possible for them eventually to change.

But the condition of forgiveness is in me: my readiness to take up this cross, this burden, that others should be healed or at least protected against evil. And this everyone can do, it takes a moment of understanding and it takes an act of determination and of goodwill. Everyone of us, side by side with them, have people who are difficult to bear, who are a cause of suffering, of misery or of anger; we can undo this anger and outgrow this misery if we make our task, the task of our life, our business, to carry their burden together with them, to be the person who, wounded and offended, and rejected will turn to God and say, ‘Lord, forgive, because I bear no grudge, I want to become and to remain solid with this person in his frailty and his sinfulness. I will not stand in judgment against him, and if I am not yet capable of doing

this, You do it for me: do not endorse my judgment, do not endorse the condemnation I rashly have pronounced, do not stand by me in my anger. Stand by the person who has done wrong, because he, because she needs help, forgiveness and healing for that very reason.'

This is where forgiveness begins and unless it begins there, it will never develop into anything at all. Bear one another's burden, accept solidarity with those who have done and are doing wrong, love them into newness of life and then only will forgiveness become what it is to be: an act of intercession before God that heals, transforms. This beginning of forgiveness we all can make, it is within our power to take up this task. Let us then do what we can, and let us wait for God to do within us, for us, in our midst, more than we can out of goodwill to build gradually a kingdom of mutual love, a kingdom which is truly the Kingdom of God. Amen.



## HOW TO SAVE OUR SOUL

*By St. Theophan the Recluse.*

What does one say to the person who asks: "How can I save my soul?"

This: Repent, and being strengthened by the power of grace in the Holy Mysteries, walk in the path of God's commandments, under the direction which the Holy Church gives you through its God-given priesthood. All of this must be done in a spirit of sincere faith which has no reservations.

What then is faith?

Faith is the sincere confession that God, Who is worshipped in the Trinity, Who created all things and provides for all, saves us who are fallen, through the power of the death on the Cross of the incarnate Son of God, by the grace of the Most Holy Spirit in His Holy Church. The beginnings of renewal, which are established in this life, will appear in all their glory in the future age, in a way that the mind cannot comprehend not the tongue express.

O our God, how great are Thy promises!

How then does one walk in the path of the commandments unswervingly?

This cannot be answered in one word, for life is a complex matter. Here is what is necessary:

a) Repent, and turn to the Lord, admit your sins, weep for them with heartfelt contrition, and confess them before your spiritual father. Vow in word and in your heart before the face of the Lord not to offend Him further with your sins.

b) Then by abiding in God in mind and heart, endeavour to fulfill in body the duties and affairs which your station in life imposes on you.

c) In this labor most of all guard your heart from evil thoughts and feelings -- pride, vainglory, anger, judging of others, hatred, envy, scorn, despondency, attachment to things and people, scattered thought, anxiety, all sensual pleasures and everything that separates the mind and heart from God.

d) In order to stand firm in this labor, resolve beforehand not to withdraw from what you recognize to be necessary, even if it may mean death. To achieve this, when you first resolve to do so, offer your life to God in order to live not for your own sake, but for God alone.

e) A support for life in this manner is a humble offering of one's self to the will of God, and not depending on one's self; the spiritual arena in which this life is accomplished is patience and an unswerving posture next to the ranks of redeemed life, with a cheerful endurance of all the labors and unpleasantness that are linked with this.

f) A support for patience is faith, or the assurance that, working in this way for God, you are His servant and He is your Master, Who sees your efforts, is gladdened by them and values them; hope that the help of God which is ever protecting you, is always ready and waiting for you, and will descend upon you in your time of need, that God will not forsake you to the end of your life, and preserving you as one faithful to His commandments here, among all temptations, He will lead you through death to His eternal Kingdom; love, which meditates day and night upon the beloved Lord, in every way strives to do only what is pleasing to Him, and avoids everything that might offend Him in thought, word or deed.

g) The weapons of such a life are the following: prayers in church and at home, especially mental prayer, fasting according to one's strength and the rules of the Church, vigilance, solitude, physical labors, frequent and thorough confession of sins, Holy Communion, reading of the Word of God and the writings of the Holy Fathers, conversations with God-fearing people, frequent consultation with one's spiritual father about all the events of one's internal and external life. The foundation of all these labors in measure, time and place is wisdom, with the counsel for those who are experienced.

h) Guard yourself with fear. For this remember the end—death, judgment, hell, the heavenly Kingdom. Most of all, be attentive to yourself: preserve a sober mind and an untroubled heart.

i) Set as a final goal the kindling of the fire of the spirit, so that the spiritual fire will burn in your heart and, gathering up all your strength into one, will begin to build your inner man and finally burn up the tares of your sins and passions.

Arrange your life in this manner, and with God's grace you will be saved.

## ST. AMOUN AND HIS WIFE

*By Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis (+431—Palladius is also the author of the Life of St. John Chrysostom).*

He was about twenty-two when his parents died, and his uncle made him get married. He couldn't argue against his uncle's claim that it was necessary, so he agreed to be decked with the crown, and enter the marriage chamber. After being escorted into the bedroom and put to bed, the blessed Amoun got up as soon as the guests had left, shut the door, sat down and spoke to his blessed wife like a brother talking to a sister.

"Can you bear with me while I unburden myself of something? You are not just a married woman; you are like a sister to me. The fact that we have been joined together in matrimony is not really anything very marvelous. Let's do something really special for the love of Christ. Let's sleep separately right from the beginning and keep our virginity intact." At this he pulled out of his pocket a little book and read the greater part of it to her, as she was unable to read. Like an Apostle and Saviour he added some divinely inspired teaching of his own, setting out the reasons for living a life of virginity and chastity.

The effect of this was that she became filled with the Grace of Christ and said, "My dear husband, I also am convinced that I can gladly embrace a life of chastity. So if that is what you wish, I agree, right from the start."

"What I want and ask you for," he said, "is that we should live apart."

"I don't agree with that," she said. "Let us stay in the same house but have separate beds."

So he lived with her for eighteen years in the same house, passing his time in the garden and in the balsam room. For he was a producer of balsam, which is planted out like vines, and involves a great deal of labour in cultivating it and looking after it. He would go home in the evening and after saying prayers would have a meal with her. At night he would pray and do the synaxis (A non-Eucharistic service of psalms, Scripture and prayers), and first thing in the morning go out into the garden. Living like this, they both came at last to be entirely free from passions, and his prayers came to be very strong and powerful.

That blessed woman said to him at last, "There is something I want to say to you, my husband, and if you will listen to me it will show me that you truly love me for God's sake."

"Well, say it," he said.

"You are a devout, religious and upright person", she said "and I too have followed the same rule of life. It would be only right if we were to live apart for the benefit of others. It is not fair that for my sake such great virtue and wisdom should be hidden away while you go on living with me in chastity."

He thanked her and gave glory to God. "I think you have made a good decision", he said, "and if you like you can have this house and I will go away and build another."

He left, and went into the inner parts of Mount Nitria, where at that time there were no cells, and built himself a two-roomed cell with domes. He lived for another twenty-two years, disciplining himself into the highest degree of virtue. Holy Amoun died as a monk, or rather was translated into heaven, at the age of sixty-two, having never failed to visit the blessed companion of his life twice a year.

While he was living alone in Nitria, a boy shaking with rabies was brought to him, having been bitten by a rabid dog. He was bound in chains, for the force of the disease had been making him cut himself. When Amoun had seen them coming and had listened to their cries for help, he said to them: "Why are you telling me all your troubles, my friends, and asking me for something which is beyond my powers when the remedy lies in your own hands? Compensate the widow woman whose ox you secretly slaughtered, and your son will be healed."

Thus they were convicted, and willingly did what they had been told, so that by Amoun's prayers the boy was healed.

There were some others who sought him out whose integrity he tested by asking them if they would bring him a dolium (a large globular water jar) so that he could store enough water to satisfy the needs of those who came to visit him. They promised they would. When they got back to their village, however, one of them changed his mind.

"I don't want to kill my camel," he said. "If I load it up with a dolium it will die."

When he heard this, the other one with great difficulty managed to yoke his asses together and transported the dolium to Amoun.

When Amoun saw him coming he said, "What? Has your friend's camel died in the meantime while you have been on the journey?" And when he got back home he found that that the camel had been eaten by wolves.

Amoun was responsible for many other things like this also. Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, narrated the following story in his Life of St. Anthony the Great. At the time when St. Anthony was in his inner mountain, he sent some of his monks to Amoun, who then began to walk back with them. When he came to cross the river Lycus with Theodore, his disciple, he was worried about getting undressed, lest anyone should see him naked. While they were still discussing the problem, he suddenly found himself on the other side of the river. Without the aid of any boat he was carried across by an angel while in an ecstasy. The brothers however had to swim across.

As soon as St. Anthony had welcomed them he said, "God has revealed many things to me about you, and in particular the way you crossed the river shows me that your visit to me is absolutely necessary for our mutual benefit so that we can pray for each other."

When he had established how far away it was that Amoun lived, he begged him not to go back there to die, but when eventually he did die a long way off from him, St. Anthony saw his soul being taken up to heaven by the angels.



## Ἡ Ἀγία καὶ Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή

Τοῦ Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Καισαριανῆς, Βύρωνος καὶ Ὑμηττοῦ, κ. Δανιὴλ.

**Ἡ** περίοδος τῆς Ἀγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστῆς εἶναι περίοδος πνευματικοῦ ἀγῶνος, ἀσκήσεως καὶ ἀθλήσεως πνευματικῆς· γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν Ὑμνολογία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀποκαλεῖται «στάδιον».

Ἕνας λόγος τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ συνοψίζει ὁλόκληρη τὴν Χριστιανικὴ ζωὴ. «Ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολέσει αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ μισῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον φυλάξει αὐτήν» (Ἰωάν. ιβ' 25). Κατὰ τὴν ἐννοια τῶν λόγων τοῦ Κυρίου, ὅποιοι δὲν θέλει νὰ πολεμήσῃ καὶ νὰ νεκρώσῃ τὴν ζωὴ καὶ τὴν δύναμι τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἡ ὁποία ἐνεργεῖ διὰ τῶν ἐπιρρῦτων παθῶν, αὐτὸς οὐσιαστικῶς θὰ ἔχῃ ἀπωλέσει τὴν αἰώνιο ζωὴ, τὴν ζωὴ μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅποιος ἀγαπᾷ τὴν ἁμαρτωλὴ ζωὴ θὰ χωρισθῇ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό.

Οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι μᾶς ἔδωσαν ὁδηγίες γιὰ τὸ πῶς θὰ ἀγωνισθοῦμε νὰ ζήσουμε τὴν χριστιανικὴ ζωὴ. Ἀναφέρω τοὺς λόγους τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου, ὁ ὁποῖος διδάσκει: «Νεκρώσατε οὖν τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, πορνείαν, ἀκαθαρσίαν, πάθος, ἐπιθυμίαν κακὴν, καὶ τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ἥτις ἐστὶν εἰδωλολατρεία, δι' ἣ ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας· ἐν οἷς καὶ ὑμεῖς περιεπατήσατέ ποτε, ὅτε ἐζήτε ἐν αὐτοῖς· νυνὶ δὲ ἀπόθεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς τὰ πάντα, ὀργὴν, θυμὸν, κακίαν, βλασφημίαν, αἰσχρολογίαν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν· μὴ ψεύδεσθε εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτόν, ὅπου οὐκ ἔνι Ἑλλήν καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομὴ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσι Χριστός. Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἅγιοι καὶ ἡγαπημένοι, σπλάγχνα οἰκτιρμοῦ, χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πρᾶότητα, μακροθυμίαν, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς, ἔαν τις πρὸς τινα ἔχη μομφήν· καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐχαρίσατο ὑμῖν, οὕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς· ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις τὴν ἀγάπην, ἥτις ἐστὶ σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος. Καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ Θεοῦ βραβεύετω ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, εἰς ἣν καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι· καὶ εὐχάριστοι γίνεσθε· ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως, ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ἐν χάριτι ᾄδοντες ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ Κυρίῳ· καὶ πᾶν ὅ,τι ἂν ποιῆτε ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ, πάντα ἐν ὀνόματι Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαριστοῦντες τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ δι' αὐτοῦ» (Κολ. γ' 5-17).

Τὸν σκοπὸ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ ἀγῶνος κατὰ τὴν κατανυκτικὴν περίοδο τῆς Ἀγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστῆς ὀρίζει σαφέστατα ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας σὲ μιὰ περιεκτικὴ εὐχὴ τῆς Ἀκολουθίας τῆς Προηγιασμένης. Σ' αὐτὴ τὴν εὐχὴ ἀναφέρεται ὅτι κατὰ τὶς ἅγιες καὶ ἱερὲς αὐτὲς ἡμέρες ἀγωνιζόμαστε «πρὸς καθαρισμόν ψυχῶν καὶ σωμάτων,

πρὸς ἐγκράτειαν παθῶν, πρὸς ἐλπίδα ἀναστάσεως». Ἀς τὰ δοῦμε ἀναλυτικότερα.

### Πρὸς Καθαρισμὸν Ψυχῶν καὶ Σωμάτων

Ἡ ἁμαρτία μολύνει τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὸν χωρίζει ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ Δημιουργό, Κύριο καὶ Πατέρα Του. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ Κύριος διὰ τοῦ Προφήτου Ἡσαΐου ἐπισημαίνει καὶ συνιστᾷ, ἀπαιτεῖ «λούσασθε καὶ καθαροὶ γίνεσθε· ἀφέλετε τὰς πονηρίας ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν μου, παύσασθε ἀπὸ τῶν πονηριῶν ἡμῶν, μάθετε καλὸν ποιεῖν, ἐκζητήσατε κρίσιν, ρύσασθε ἀδικούμενον, κρίνατε ὀρφανῷ καὶ δικαιώσατε χήραν» (Ἡσ. α' 16-17). Ἡ ἁμαρτία εἶναι ἀσθένεια τῆς ἀνθρώπινης φύσεως. Ὁ κάθε ἄνθρωπος γεννιέται ἐχοντας ἔμφυτη, φυτεμένη μέσα στὴν ὑπαρξί του, τὴ φορὰ πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτία «ὅτι ἐγκτεται ἡ διάνοια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπιμελῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρὰ ἐκ νεότητος αὐτοῦ» (Γέν. η' 21).

Αὕτῃ τὴν ροπὴ ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος κάλεσε «ἕτερον νόμον» καὶ διεκτραγωδεῖ τὴν πάλιν τοῦ μολυσμένου ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία ἀνθρώπου κατὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας: «Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικὸς ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ σαρκικός εἰμι, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Ὁ γὰρ κατεργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω· οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ' ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ. Εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός. Νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία. Οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τουτέστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐχ εὐρίσκω· οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλ' ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω. Εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω ἐγὼ τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία. Εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται· συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσί μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσί μου. Ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ρύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου;» (Ρωμ. ζ' 14-24). Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος προτρέπει· «καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ Θεοῦ» (Β' Κορ. ζ' 1).

Πῶς ἐνεργεῖται ὁ καθαρισμός; Ὁ Κύριός μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μᾶς ἐκαθάρισε διὰ τῆς σταυρικῆς θυσίας Του ἀπὸ τὶς ἁμαρτίες μας κατὰ τὸν Ἀπόστολο Παῦλο «δι' ἑαυτοῦ καθαρισμόν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν» (Ἑβρ. α' 3). Ἐμεῖς ἐπιτυγχάνουμε αὐτὸ τὸν καθαρισμό μὲ τὴ συμμετοχὴ μας στὰ Ἅγια Μυστήρια. Ἀκοῦμε τὸν Ἀπόστολο Παῦλο ὁ ὁποῖος λέει, ὅτι ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καθάρισε τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας «ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ρήματι» (Εφεσ. ε' 26). Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ Μυστήριον τοῦ Βαπτίσματος ἀποκαλεῖται «λουτρὸ παλιγγενεσίας». Ἐν συνεχείᾳ ὁ πιστὸς καθαρίζεται ἀπὸ τὸν ρυπο τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ὅταν μεταλαμβάνει τοῦ Σώματος καὶ τοῦ Αἵματος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ «εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ εἰς ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον»

Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος διδάσκει: «Τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ Πνεύματος αἰωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἅμωμον τῷ Θεῷ, καθαριεὶ τὴν συνείδησιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεῖν Θεῷ ζῶντι» (Ἐβρ. θ' 14). Καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος καὶ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης ὁμοίως κηρύσσει: «Τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας» (Α' Ἰωάν. α' 7). Ὁ Κύριος συνέστησε νὰ καθαρίσουμε τὸ ἔσωθεν τῆς υπάρξεώς μας: «καθάρισον πρῶτον τὸ ἐντὸς τοῦ ποτηρίου καὶ τῆς παροψίδος, ἵνα γένηται καὶ τὸ ἐκτὸς αὐτῶν καθαρὸν.» (Ματθ. κγ' 26).

### **Πρὸς Ἐγκράτειαν Παθῶν**

Τὰ πάθη εἶναι ὁ τρόπος μὲ τὸν ὁποῖον ἐκδηλώνεται ἡ ἁμαρτία. Εἶναι τὰ συμπτώματα τῆς ἀσθενείας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Κι ὅπως ἡ κάθε ἀσθένεια ἐκδηλώνεται μὲ συμπτώματα καὶ ὑποφέρει ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἔτσι καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὅταν ἐνεργεῖ καὶ μὲ τὴν ἔντασι πού ἔχει δείχνει τὰ συμπτώματα τῶν ἐνεργούντων παθῶν, εἴτε λεληθότως εἴτε ἐγρηγόρως.

Οἱ Πατέρες, οἱ ὁποῖοι μελέτησαν τὴν ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, διεπίστωσαν, ὅτι ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐκδηλώνεται στὰ τρία μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς: τὸ λογιστικόν, τὸ θυμοειδὲς καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν. Ἄλλοι πάλι συγκέντρωσαν τὰ πάθη σὲ 7 ἢ 8 ομάδες καὶ ἔθεσαν σὲ κάθε ομάδα ἓνα ὄνομα. Ἔτσι τὰ πάθη εἶναι α) ὁ ἐγωϊσμός, β) ὁ φθόνος, γ) ὁ φόνος, δ) ἡ λαιμαργία-γαστριμαργία, ε) ἡ πλεονεξία, ς) ἡ πορνεία καὶ ζ) ἡ ἀκηδία. Γίνεται σαφὲς ὅτι κάτω ἀπὸ τὰ ὀνόματα αὐτὰ ἐντάσσονται πολλές κακίες ὅπως π. χ. στὸν ἐγωϊσμό τίθεται ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια, ἡ ματαιοδοξία, ἡ κενοδοξία κι ἄλλα. Τὸ αὐτὸ συμβαίνει καὶ μὲ τὶς ἄλλες ομάδες.

Ὁ πιστός, μὲ ἀσκήσεις πνευματικὲς καλεῖται νὰ νεκρώσῃ τὴ δύναμι τῆς ἁμαρτίας, νὰ περιορίσῃ τὰ πάθη· ἡ γενικὴ αὐτὴ πνευματικὴ ἐργασία καλεῖται «ἐγκράτεια παθῶν» καὶ σημαίνει νὰ συγκρατήσουμε, νὰ περιορίσουμε τὴν ἐνέργεια τῶν παθῶν καὶ οὐσιαστικῶς τὴν δύναμι τῆς ἁμαρτίας, πού ἐνεργεῖ διὰ τῶν παθῶν.

Γι' αὐτὴ μίλησε ὁ Κύριος ὅταν εἶπε: «ὅστις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μου» (Μάρκ. η' 34). Πρόκειται περὶ τῆς νεκρώσεως γιὰ τὴν ὁποία μιλοῦν οἱ ὕμνοι «καὶ νεκρωθῶμεν δι' Αὐτὸν ταῖς τοῦ βίου ἡδοναῖς» (Ἰδιόμελον Ὁρθρου Μ. Δευτέρας). Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πού δουλεύει στὰ πάθη του, ὑπηρετεῖ αὐτά, εἶναι ὑποδουλωμένος σ' αὐτὰ κατὰ τὸν εὐαγγελικὸ νόμο τὸν διαγορεύοντα, ὅτι «ὧ γάρ τις ἡττηται, τούτῳ καὶ δεδούλωται» (Β' Πέτρου β' 19). Ὁ πιστὸς πού θὰ περιορίσῃ τὴ δύναμι τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ θὰ τὴν ἐξαφανίσει, θεωρεῖται ἐλεύθερος πνευματικῶς κατὰ τὸν ἀποστολικὸν λόγον «τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ οὖν, ἣ Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἠλευθέρωσε, στήκετε, καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε» (Γαλ. ε' 1).

### **Πρὸς Ἐλπίδα Ἀναστάσεως**

Τὰ δύο πρῶτα ἀγωνίσματα γεννοῦν στὴν ψυχὴ τοῦ πιστοῦ τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς ἀναστάσεως, τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῆς ψυχῆς.

Κατὰ τὴν διδασκαλίαν τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀποτελεῖται ἀπὸ ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα. Ἔτσι αὐτὴ ἡ διφυῖα συνεπάγεται, ὅτι ὁ ἄνθρωπος γεννᾶται κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ γεννᾶται κατὰ τὸ πνεῦμα· ὅπως καὶ ἀποθνήσκει

σωματικῶς καὶ πνευματικῶς. Ἔτσι ἀνίσταται σωματικῶς καὶ πνευματικῶς. Καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀνάστασι τοῦ σώματος ὁ Κύριος ἐχάρισε σ' ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἐνῶ τὴν ἀνάστασι τῆς ψυχῆς σ' ἐκείνους, οἱ ὁποῖοι θὰ ἔχουν τὶς θεόδοτες προϋποθέσεις.

Γιὰ τὰ θέματα αὐτὰ συζήτησε ὁ Κύριος μὲ τὸν νυκτερινὸ ἐπισκέπτη Του τὸν Νικόδημο: «ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μὴ τις γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ Πνεύματος, οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ. τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστὶ, καὶ τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστι» (Ἰωάν. γ' 5-6).

Καὶ στὸ πιὸ ἐνδοξο κεφάλαιο τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης, ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος διαπραγματεύεται μὲ ἐπιχειρήματα αὐτὴ τὴν πίστι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γιὰ τὴν ἀνάστασι τοῦ σώματος, τὴν καθολικὴ ἀνάστασι δικαίων καὶ ἀδίκων: «Ἄλλ' ἔρει τις: ἐγείρονται οἱ νεκροί; Ποίῳ δὲ σώματι ἔρχονται; Ἄφρον, σὺ ὁ σπείρεις, οὐ ζωοποιεῖται, ἐὰν μὴ ἀποθάνῃ· καὶ ὁ σπείρεις, οὐ τὸ σῶμα τὸ γενησόμενον σπείρεις, ἀλλὰ γυμνὸν κόκκον, εἰ τύχοι σίτου ἢ τινος τῶν λοιπῶν· ὁ δὲ Θεὸς αὐτῷ δίδωσι σῶμα καθὼς ἠθέλησε, καὶ ἐκάστῳ τῶν σπερμάτων τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα. Οὐ πᾶσα σὰρξ ἡ αὐτὴ σὰρξ, ἀλλὰ ἄλλη μὲν σὰρξ ἀνθρώπων, ἄλλη δὲ σὰρξ κτηνῶν, ἄλλη δὲ ἰχθύων, ἄλλη δὲ πτηνῶν. Καὶ σώματα ἐπουράνια, καὶ σώματα ἐπίγεια· ἄλλ' ἑτέρα μὲν ἡ τῶν ἐπουρανίων δόξα, ἑτέρα δὲ ἡ τῶν ἐπιγείων. Ἄλλη δόξα ἡλίου, καὶ ἄλλη δόξα σελήνης, καὶ ἄλλη δόξα ἀστέρων· ἀστὴρ γὰρ ἀστέρος διαφέρει ἐν δόξῃ. Οὕτω καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις τῶν νεκρῶν. Σπείρεται ἐν φθορᾷ, ἐγείρεται ἐν ἀφθαρσίᾳ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δόξῃ· σπείρεται ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ, ἐγείρεται ἐν δυνάμει· σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. Ἔστι σῶμα ψυχικόν, καὶ ἔστι σῶμα πνευματικόν. Οὕτω καὶ γέγραπται: Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδάμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν· ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. Ἄλλ' οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικόν, ἔπειτα τὸ πνευματικόν. Ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ὁ Κύριος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ. Οἷος ὁ χοϊκός, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ χοϊκοί, καὶ οἷος ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι. Καὶ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ. Τοῦτο δὲ φημι, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν Θεοῦ κληρονομεῖσαι οὐ δύναται, οὐδὲ ἡ φθορὰ τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν κληρονομεῖ» (Α' Κορ. 15-50).

Ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης μακαρίζει ὅσους ἀποκτοῦν τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς ἀναστάσεως μὲ τὴν πίστι, μὲ τὴν σωστικὴ, φωτιστικὴ καὶ ἁγιαστικὴ χάρι τῶν Μυστηρίων καὶ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ ἀγῶνος κατὰ τῶν παθῶν καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας γενικῶς: «μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῇ πρώτῃ· ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν» (Ἀποκ. κ' 6).

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μὲ σαφήνεια ἔθεσε ἐνώπιόν μας τὸν σκοπὸ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ ἀγῶνος μας (οἱ βουλόμενοι ἀθλήσαι εἰσέλθητε). Ἐμεῖς ἂς ἀγωνισθοῦμε μὲ προθυμία «ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν» (Ἐβρ. ιβ' 2).



## Δροσίσετε την Ψυχή σας στην Καλωσύνη καὶ Ἀγνότητα

*Τοῦ Φώτη Κόντογλου, ἀπὸ τὸ «Εὐλογημένο Καταφύγιο».*

**Τ**οῦτος ὁ κόσμος εἶναι ἀνάποδος. Ὅπως καὶ νὰ κάνης, δὲν τὸν εὐχαριστᾷς. Οὐτε στὸν ἥλιο τὸν βρίσκεις, οὐτε στὸν ἴσκιο. Ὁ κάθε ἕνας λέγει τὸ κοντό του καὶ τὸ μακρύ του. Γιὰ ὅ,τι ἐνθουσιάζεται ὁ ἕνας, γιὰ ἴδιο στενοχωριέται ὁ ἄλλος. Ἄλλη φορά μπορεῖ οἱ ἄνθρωποι νὰ μὴν ἦτανε ὅλοι σύμφωνοι, μὰ γιὰ τοὺς πιὸ πολλοὺς τὸ καλὸ ἦτανε καλὸ καὶ τὸ κακὸ, κακὸ. Τώρα ὁ καθένας ἔχει σηκώσει μιὰ παντιέρα καὶ κάνει τὸν καπετὰν Ἐναν.

Μὰ οἱ πιὸ πολλοὶ μοδιζονται ἀπὸ τιποτένια πράγματα: ὁ ἕνας θέλει νὰ φαίνεται πιὸ «βαθυστόχαστος» ἀπὸ ὅ,τι εἶνε, ὁ ἄλλος θέλει νὰ φαίνεται μοντέρνος, νὰ μὴν τὸν πάρουνε γιὰ χωριάτη, ὁ ἄλλος φοβᾶται μὴν τὸν πάρουνε γιὰ «ἀφελή», γιὰ ὅχι «σοβαρόν» ἄνθρωπο, ὁ ἄλλος δὲν θέλει νὰ δυσανεστήσῃ κάποιον, ἕτερος κολακεύει τὶς γυναῖκες καὶ κάνει τὸν «ἰππότην» μιλώντας μὲ ψεύτικη εὐγένεια, κ.λ.π. Ὅσοι εἶναι ἴσιοι καὶ ἀπλοῖ, δὲν ἔχουνε καμμιὰ σκοτούρα. Ζοῦνε μακριὰ ἀπὸ λιβανίσματα ἀπὸ πονηριὲς εἰδῶν-εἰδῶν, ἀπὸ δυσπιστίες ποὺ φαρμακώνουνε τὸν ἄνθρωπο, ἀπὸ σκηνοθεσίες, ἀπὸ ψευτιές. Χαίρονται γιὰ τὰ καλὰ, γιὰ τὰ ἀπλά, γιὰ τὰ ἀγνά, γιὰ τὰ σεμνά, γιὰ τὰ ταπεινά. Ἐνῶ οἱ ἄλλοι ὀλοένα ταραζονται, ὀλοένα ἐξιχνιάζουνε.

Πολλοὶ κατατρίβονται μὲ πράγματα ποὺ δὲν ἔχουν καμμιὰ σημασία. Ρωτᾶνε, νὰ ποῦμε, νὰ μάθουνε γιὰ μένα, τί σοὶ ἄνθρωπος εἶμαι, πῶς εἶναι τὸ σχέδιό μου, ἂν εἶμαι θαλασσινός, καὶ τοῦτο, καὶ κεῖνο. Ἀδελφέ μου, ἂν σοῦ ἀρέσῃ ἡ συντροφιά μου, ἔλα ἐκεῖ ποὺ πηγαίνω, ἔλα νὰ νοιώσεις μαζί μου τὰ ὥραϊα ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν θησαυρὸ ποὺ ἔχουνε μέσα τους κρυμμένον οἱ ἀπλοῖ ἄνθρωποι... Παράτησε πίσω σου τὴν ὑποκρισία τῆς ζωῆς, κι ἔλα νὰ δροσισθῇς στὴ βρυσούλα ποὺ τρέχει κρυμμένη στὴ ρίζα τοῦ βουνοῦ, κοντὰ στὸ παλιὸ ἐρημοκλήσι. Τὶ κάθεσε κι ἐξετάζεις τὰ ἀνεξέταστα; Τὶ σὲ μέλλει ἂν εἶμαι τὴν ὄψη ἔτσι ἢ ἄλλοιῶς, ἐγὼ καὶ κάθε ἄλλος; Τὶ ρωτᾷς ἂν εἶμαι ψηλὸς ἢ κοντός, μαῦρος ἢ ἄσπρος; Σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ διαβάσεις βρίσκεται ὁ ἑαυτός μου, τὸ πῶς περπατῶ, τὸ πῶς μιλῶ, δηλαδὴ ὁ σαρκικὸς ἄνθρωπος; Ὅχι ἀγαπητέ μου. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι πνεῦμα, ὅπως ὁ Θεός. Αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα νὰ σὲ ἐνδιαφέρει, αὐτὸ εἶναι πνεῦμα ὅπως ὁ Θεός. Αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα νὰ σὲ ἐνδιαφέρει, αὐτὸ εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ σύσταση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Ἀπάνω ἀπ' ὅλα νὰ ἀγαπᾶμε τὴν καλωσύνη. Νὰ χαιρόμαστε, νᾶμαστε καλοὶ καὶ νὰ νοιώθουμε κοντὰ μας καλοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Κανένα πρᾶγμα δὲν εἶνε σὰν τὴν καλωσύνη. Τὸ πρόσωπό της λαμποκοπᾷ σὰν τὸν ἥλιο ποὺ χρυσώνει τὴν πλάση τὸ πρωὶ τῆς ἑμορφῆς μέρας τοῦ καλοκαιριοῦ. Τὶ εὐλογημένοι ποὺ εἶναι οἱ καλοὶ ἄνθρωποι, οἱ πρόσχαροι, οἱ γλυκομίλητοι, οἱ ἀπλοῖ, οἱ ἀπονήρευτοι, οἱ πονετικοί, οἱ ταπεινοί! Τὶ ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος μέσα σὲ μιὰ τέτοια καρδιά! Καὶ τί φτώχεια, τί μιζέρια, τί ἀσχήμια μέσα στίς κακές

ψυχές, στίς ἐγωιστικές, κι' ἄς φουσκώνουνε ἀπ' ἔξω κι' ἄς παραστένουνε τὸν πλούσιο! Πόσο ξεκουράζεται ἡ ψυχὴ μας ἀπὸ τὴν δροσιὰ τῆς καλωσύνης καὶ πόσο κουράζεται ἡ ψυχὴ μας ἀπὸ τὸν λίβα τῆς κακίας.

Μὰ οἱ καλοὶ ἄνθρωποι εἶνε δυστυχισμένοι, ὑποφέρουνε, τυραννιοῦνται. Ναί. Ὁ σατανᾶς τοὺς βασανίζει, τοὺς ρίχνει σὲ συμφορές. Μὰ ἔτσι γίνονται ἀκόμα πιὸ καθαροί, σὰν τὸ χρυσάφι ποὺ πέφτει στὸ χωνευτήρι. Ζοῦνε φτωχικά, μακριὰ ἀπὸ δόξες, κρυμμένοι, μὰ ζοῦνε ἀληθινά. Νὰ μὴν ζεῖς βουτηγμένος μέσα στὴν ψευτιά. Αὐτὸ εἶνε ποὺ εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς «Τὶ θὰ ὠφελήσῃ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἂν κερδίσῃ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον καὶ ζημιωθεῖ τὴν ψυχὴ του;» Αὐτός, ὁ φτωχός, ὁ παραπεταμένος, κέρδισε τὴν ψυχὴ του. Ἀφοῦ κέρδισε τὴν ψυχὴ του, τί ἔχασε; Ὅ,τι ἔχασε εἶνε τιποτένιο μπροστὰ σ' αὐτὸ ποὺ κέρδισε. Κι' ὁ ἄλλος ὁ χοντροπετσιασμένος ἀπὸ τὴν σαρκικὴ καλοπέραση, ἀπὸ τὰ σπὸρ, ἀπὸ τὰ λουτρά, ἀπὸ τὶς γυναῖκες, ἀπὸ τὶς διάφορες ματαιότητες, τί κέρδισες ἄραγε, ἀφοῦ ἔχασε τὴν ψυχὴ του; Πόσοι καὶ πόσοι ὕστερα ἀπὸ μιὰ ζωὴ γεμάτη λογῆς-λογῆς σαρκικὲς ἀπολαύσεις, κοσμικὲς τυμπανοκρουσίες, πλούτη, ρεκλάμες κλπ., ἔρχονται σ' ἓναν λογαριασμό καὶ ξεζαλίζονται ἀπ' αὐτὰ τὰ σπιρτόζα πιστὰ καὶ νοιώθουνε τὴ γύμνια τους καὶ ζητᾶνε τὸν ἑαυτό τους ποῦ βρίσκεται; Μὰ δὲν ὑπάρχει πιά. Ἐρημιά, ξέρακας τῆς ἀπελπισίας ζώνει τοὺς ἐγωιστές! Τρομάζουνε μὲ τὴ μοναξιά τους μόλις τὴ νοιώσουνε. Ἀπὸ πάνω τους ὁ οὐρανὸς εἶναι ἔρημος, ἀδειανός, ἡ γῆ ἔρημη, οἱ ἄνθρωποι καρδιὲς ἔρημες, γιατί ποτέ τους δὲν γνοιασθήκανε γι' αὐτές, καὶ ἔτσι κόπηκε κάθε τρυφερὴ ἀνταπόκριση μαζί τους. Στὸ τέλος καταλαβαίνουμε οἱ τέτοιοι πῶς μὲ τὰ λεπτὰ δὲν ἀγοράζονται ὅλα τὰ πάντα. Καὶ πῶς, ἴσια-ἴσια, ὅσα δὲν ἀγοράζονται μὲ τὰ λεφτὰ, αὐτὰ εἶνε ποὺ ἔχουνε τὴν πιὸ μεγάλη ἀξία. Καὶ πῶς ἀπ' αὐτὰ ἔχουνε μεγάλη ἀνάγκη, ἀπ' αὐτὰ ποὺ δὲν ἀγοράζονται. Σὲ ποῖο μέρος πουλᾶνε τὴν ἡσυχία τῆς ψυχῆς, τὴν ἀγνότητα, τὴν ἀπλότητα, τὴν κρυφὴ χαρὰ ποὺ νοιώθει ὁ ἄνθρωπος κοντὰ στὸν Θεὸ σὲ στιγμὴ ποὺ ζεῖ κρυμμένος ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμον, τὴν πραότητα, τὴν ἀγάπη; Δὲν τὰ πουλᾶνε σὲ κανένα ἀπὸ τὰ μαγαζιά κι' ἀπὸ τὰ παζάρια γιὰ τὸ διάφορο, τὴν ἀπονία γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, τὴν ψευτιά κάθε λογῆς, κι' ὅσα πᾶνε μαζί μ' αὐτά, δηλαδὴ τὸν ἐγωισμό, τὴν περηφάνεια, τὴν καταλαλιά μ' ἓναν λόγον τὸ χοντροπέτσιασμα τῆς ψυχῆς.

Τὶ μεγαλομανία σ' ἔχει πιάσει, ἀδελφέ μου, καὶ δὲν βρίσκεις ἡσυχία καὶ χτίζεις πατώματα ἀπάνω στὰ πατώματα, κι' ἔχεις δυὸ τρία αὐτοκίνητα καὶ κότερα καὶ κάθε λογῆς μάταια πράγματα! Γύρισε καὶ κῦτταξε καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸ σου, νὰ δροσισθῇ ἡ ψυχὴ σου μὲ τὴν εὐλογημένη καλωσύνη, ποὺ τὴν ξεράνανε τὰ τσιμέντα, οἱ ψεύτικες κουβέντες, οἱ συμφεροντολογικὲς παρέες, οἱ συνοφρυωμένες ἀξιοπρέπειες. Ἄν δὲν μπορεῖς νὰ κάνης θυσίες, τουλάχιστον νὰ συχαθῇς τὴν ἀδικία. Μὴν ἀδικεῖς. Ἡ ἀδικία εἶναι σιχαμερὴ στρίγγλα, χωρίστρα τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀνθρωποκτονία σὰν τὸν πατέρα τὸν σατανᾶ.



Τὶ θὰ δίνανε πολλοὶ ἀπ' αὐτούς, ποὺ κερδίσανε τὸν κόσμον καὶ χάσανε τὴν ψυχὴ τους, γιὰ νὰ νοιώσουνε ὅ,τι νοιώθουνε οἱ ἄλλοι ποὺ δὲν χάσανε τὴν ψυχὴ τους! Ἄν τύχει νὰ ξεκόψη κανένας τέτοιος ἀπὸ ψεύτικη παρέα του καὶ βρεθεῖ στὴ συντροφιά τῶν ἀπλῶν, τῶν ἀχάλαστων, νοιώθει πὼς ζεῖ ἀληθινὰ καὶ σὰν ἀπογευθεῖ τὰ ἀγνὰ αἰσθήματα ὕστερα ἀπὸ τὴ ψευτιά, καταλαβαίνει τέτοια χαρά, ποὺ κάνει σὰν τὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ ξαναγεννήθηκε, σὰν τυφλὸς ποὺ εἶδε τὸ φῶς του. Κάτι τέτοιοι δὲν ξεκολλᾶνε πιά οἱ κακόμοιροι ἀπὸ τὴ συντροφιά τῶν ἀπλῶν, τῶν γκαρδιακῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ ξεμακρύνῃ ἀπὸ τὰ ψεύτικα πρέπει νάχη λίγη ψυχὴ. Ἀλλοιῶς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ζήσει χωρὶς ψευτιά. Ὁ ἄμμος τῆς Σαχάρας, ὅση βροχὴ κι' ἂν πέσει ἀπάνω του, δὲν φυτρώνει τίποτα.

Ἄν πεῖς πάλι σὲ ἓναν ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους, τοὺς φτωχοὺς, νὰ περάσῃ μισὴ ὥρα μὲ τὴν παρέα τῶν κοσμικῶν, καλύτερα ἔχει νὰ τὸ βάλῃ στὸ μπουντρούμι, παρὰ νὰ βλέπῃ καὶ ν' ἀκούγῃ ἐκεῖνα τὰ ψεύτικα κομπλιμέντα, τὶς ἀνάλατες συζητήσεις, τὰ κρύα χωρατά. Στὴ συναναστροφή ποὺ κάνουνε αὐτοὶ οἱ ψευτισμένοι, θαρρεῖς πὼς τοὺς χωρίζει ἓνας τοῖχος τὸν ἓναν ἀπὸ τὸν ἄλλον. Ἐνῶ οἱ ἄλλοι, ποὺ ζοῦνε μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμον, νοιώθουνε πὼς οἱ καρδιὲς τοὺς γίνονται ἓνα, πὼς ἀκουμπᾷ ὁ ἓνας ἀπάνω στὸν ἄλλον καὶ ξεκουράζεται. Ἀγαπᾷ καὶ ἀγαπιέται, χαίρεται καὶ δίνει χαρά. Ἀπὸ πάνω ἀπὸ τὴ συντροφιά τῶν σαρκικῶν ἀνθρώπων στέκεται ὁ διάβολος καὶ τοὺς κάνει νὰ μιλᾶνε ὀλοένα γιὰ λεφτὰ καὶ γιὰ τὰ ὅμοια, γιὰ νὰ μὴ γροικήσουνε οὔτε τὸ φαγὶ ποὺ τρῶνε. Ἀπὸ πάνω ἀπὸ τὴ συντροφιά τῶν ταπεινῶν στέκεται ὁ Θεός, κι' ὅλα εἶνε εὐλογημένα.

Πετάξετε ἀπὸ πάνω σας τὴν ψευτιά. Ἀνοίξετε τὰ πανιά, νὰ τὰ φουσκώσῃ ὁ καθαρὸς ἀγέρας τοῦ πελάγου. Νὰ δροσισθεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ σας, νὰ νοιώσετε πὼς ζητᾷ ἀληθινὰ κι' ὄχι ψεύτικα.



**Τ**ίποτα δὲν κάνει τόσο χαρούμενη τὴ ζωὴ μας, ὅσο ἡ εὐχαρίστηση ποὺ αισθανόμαστε στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Στὴν Ἐκκλησία συντηρεῖται ἡ χαρὰ τῶν χαρούμενων ἀνθρώπων, στὴν Ἐκκλησία βρίσκεται ἡ εὐθυμία τῶν στενοχωρημένων, ἡ εὐχαρίστηση τῶν λυπημένων, ἡ ἀνακούφιση τῶν ταλαιπωρημένων, ἡ ἀνάπαυση τῶν κουρασμένων.

Ἐλᾶτε κοντά μου, λέει ὁ Κύριος, ὅλοι οἱ κουρασμένοι καὶ ἀποκαμωμένοι καὶ ἐγὼ θὰ σᾶς ἀναπαύσω. Τὶ πιὸ ἀγαπητό, ἀπ' αὐτὴ τὴ φωνή, θὰ μπορούσε νὰ ὑπάρξῃ; Τὶ γλυκύτερο ἀπ' αὐτὴ τὴν πρόσκληση; Ὁ Κύριος σὲ προσκαλεῖ στὴν Ἐκκλησία γιὰ τρυφὴ πνευματικὴ. Σὲ προτρέπει γιὰ κατάπαυση καὶ ὄχι γιὰ κόπους. Σὲ μεταφέρει ἀπὸ τὰ βάσανα στὴν ἀνάπαυση, σηκώνοντας τὸ βάρος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν σου. Ἡ πνευματικὴ τρυφὴ θεραπεύει τὴν ἀθυμία καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη γιатρεύει τὴν λύπη.

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος**  
(«Πρὸς Εὐτρόπιον», P.G. 56, 98)

## Ὁ Γέροντας Παῖσιος καὶ οἱ Παπικοί

*Ἀπὸ ἓνα Ἑλληνορθόδοξο φυλλάδιο.*

Πῆγαν στοῦ Γέροντος Παΐσιου τὸ κελλί, ὅσο ζοῦσε, κάποιοι παπικοί.

«Δὲν ὑπάρχουν», τοῦ εἶπαν, «μεταξύ μας διαφορές. Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ κάτι “ἀσήμαντες” παλιές. Ἐξαλείφονται σιγά-σιγά, μὲ τὰ συνέδρια τὰ ἐπανωτά. Διὰ τῶν συμπροσευχῶν δὲ πιὸ κοντὰ ἐρχόμαστε. Ἐπικοινωνοῦμε, ἀλληλογνωρίζομαστε.»

Ὁ Γέροντας τοὺς κοίταξε στὰ μάτια, δὲν προσέφυγε βεβαίως σὲ κιτάπια.

«Ἐχουμε μία μεγάλη διαφορά», τοὺς λέει, «τὴν ἐπεσήμαναν Πατέρες πολλοὶ σπουδαῖοι: Σὲ μας βρίσκονται ἀκόμη Ἅγιοι ζῶντες, σὲ σᾶς εἶναι ἀπὸ καιρὸ ἀπόντες. Σᾶς ἀγνοοῦν ἐπίσης καὶ οἱ κεκοιμημένοι, δὲν θαυματουργοῦν οἱ εὐλογημένοι. Τὰ ἱερὰ τοὺς λείψανα ἔπαυσαν νὰ εὐωδιάζουν, ὅσες προσευχὲς οἱ «παππάδες» σας κι' ἂν ἀραδιάζουν. Ἀφοῦ, ὡς γνωστόν, καὶ στὸν ἀγιασμό βάζετε μέσα συντηρητικό. Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματός σας ἐγκατέλειψε, ὁ Ἅγιος ἀπὸ τὴν «πολιτεία» σας ἔλειψε. Μείνате μὲ τὸ ‘Σύστημα’ καὶ τὰ «Κονγορδάτα» μοναχικοί, ὡς ‘ρολόι,’ τραβάτε τῆς ζωῆς τὴ στράτα.»

Ὑστερα ἄρχισε νὰ πλέκῃ τὸ κομποσχοῖνι ἀφήνοντας τοὺς δυτικούς στοῦ μυαλοῦ τους τὴν δίνη...



**Π**αλαιότερα τὸ λίγο κακὸ πνιγόταν στὸ πολὺ καλὸ. Σήμερα τὸ πολὺ κακὸ πνίγει τὸ λίγο καλὸ. Αὐτὸς ποὺ ἀνεβαίνει πνευματικὰ δὲν ὠφελεῖ μόνο τῶν ἐαυτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποὺ τὸν βλέπουν. Σήμερα ὁ Θεὸς μέσα στοὺς τόσους κινδύνους μᾶς φυλάει, ὅπως ἡ μάνα τὸ μικρό, ὅταν ἀρχίζει νὰ περπατᾷ. Φαρμάκι γευόμαστε ὅταν ζοῦμε μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν γλυκὺ Ἰησοῦ.

Ὅταν ἀγωνιζόμαστε σωστά, ἀλλὰ δὲν βλέπουμε καμιά πρόοδο, συμβαίνει μερικὲς φορές τὸ ἐξῆς: Ὁ δαίμονας, ἐπειδὴ τοῦ κηρύξαμε πόλεμο, ζήτησε τὴν ἐνίσχυση ἀπὸ τὸν σατανᾶ. Ἔτσι, ἐὰν πέρυσι πολέμουσαμε μὲ ἓναν δαίμονα, ἐφέτος πολεμᾶμε μὲ πενήντα, τοῦ χρόνου θὰ πολεμᾶμε μὲ περισσότερους κ.ο.κ. Αὐτὸ δὲν ἐπιτρέπει ὁ Θεὸς νὰ τὸ δοῦμε, γιὰ νὰ μὴν ὑπερηφανευθοῦμε. Χωρὶς ἐμεῖς νὰ τὸ καταλαβαίνουμε, ὁ Θεὸς ἐργάζεται στὴν ψυχὴ μας, ὅταν βλέπει καλὴ διάθεση!

**Γέρων Παῖσιος (+1994)**

## SAINT ARSENIOS HADJIEFENDIS THE CAPPADOCIAN

*By Elder Paisios the Athonite, from "St. Arsenios the Cappadocian," pp. 134-139.*

*St. Arsenios was the spiritual father of Elder Paisios' family, and he baptized Elder Paisios as an infant. Throughout his life, Elder Paisios had great love and reverence for the memory of St. Arsenios, and it was out of this love that he compiled the book from which the excerpts that follow have been taken.*



St. Arsenios the Cappadocian (1840–1924) proclaimed true Orthodoxy with his Orthodox life. He mortified his flesh in asceticism through his ardent love of God, and modified souls with the Grace of God. He believed deeply and healed many, both believers and non-believers. He had few words, but many miracles. He experienced much and kept it hidden; within his hard outer shell, he concealed his sweet, spiritual fruit. He was very harsh with himself, but was a very loving father to his children. He never beat them with the law. As minister of the Most High, he did not tread the earth, and as co-administrant of the sacraments he shone upon the world.

St. Arsenios pastored his flock amidst extremely difficult conditions. He lived with his people in the village of Farasa in Cappadocia, which after 1453 had fallen into the hands of the Muslim Turks. Under the harsh yoke of the Turks, the Greek people of Farasa formed an oasis of Orthodox Christianity. They sought refuge in the holy St. Arsenios, who was their teacher, their spiritual father, and the healer of their souls and bodies. In Farasa and in the whole region there was no doctor to be found, except St. Arsenios, who was a teacher and a doctor of souls and bodies. He did not, of course, give medical prescriptions to the sick, but read an appropriate prayer over them and they recovered. God glorified him because, with his holy life, he was continuously glorifying the name of God, to Whom belongs all glory unto the ages of ages.

In the Life of Blessed Arsenios, the miracles he worked through the Grace of our Lord are endless; if you visited any citizen of Farasa you would need a new a blank notebook to write them all down. For this reason I have confined myself to some of the most important ones. Since I saw, however, that three or four events in St. Arsenios' life were rather unique and different from any of those I had written about, I thought it wise to mention them, as supplementary material, because these stories may help us in the difficult years we are living through.

To begin with, this information was sent to me by some devout women from Yiannitsa, in the form of a cassette recording from a ninety year-old Farasiote lady called Agathi who had settled in Yiannitsa. I thus went to visit her myself in 1982. This visit helped me a great deal in remembering much of what I had heard as a child, and, after I had been in touch with some of the other, serious-minded elderly folk from Farasa, I sat down and wrote out what I had been told.

### The Atheist

St. Arsenios went once with some people from the village to celebrate liturgy at the Chapel of Archangel Michael. This Chapel was about an hour and a half away from the village. Many Farasiotes had property there and, in fact, lived on such property throughout the whole summer, until the harvest season was over. So when St. Arsenios had finished the Divine Liturgy, he took the holy water and sprinkled the fields. Some pilgrims accompanied him, while others sat outside of the church, under the shade of a tree.

This tree had more threads of clothing and pieces of rags tied to its branches by various ill people than it had leaves. That is to say, when the people who were staying at neighboring properties fell ill, since it was not easy to go to "Hadjiefendis" (St. Arsenios) in Farasa, and since the chapel was not always open (it was private and was kept locked so that the Turks would not desecrate it) they went and prayed outside of Archangel Michael's Chapel. They would cut a thread off the piece of clothing which was touching the afflicted part of their body, or a bit of rag, and would then tie it to the tree and say: "Saint, take away the pain from me; you're a saint and you can." And time after time, Archangel Michael (through the intercessions of St. Arsenios) immediately healed the suffering believers.

Among the pilgrims who were sitting under the shade of this tree was a rich man from Farasa, who lived in Batumi and was visiting his home village for the first time in many years. His long absence from his homeland had also, unfortunately, estranged him from God, and he spoke in a shameless manner against Christ and our Church. Apart from his ridiculous theories, through which he did great damage to his simple-minded fellow-villagers, he also told a young man to cut down this tree, while calling the people backward and other things. The young man lost no time in starting to cut down the tree, but was stopped by the others.

In the meantime, St. Arsenios also returned from blessing the fields, and was very upset at the harm which this atheist was doing to the souls of the faithful, so he said to him in a severe tone: "I'm sending you back where you came from, Anastasis." And Hadjiefendis withdrew and prayed. Suddenly a powerful whirlwind blew up and enveloped Anastasis, who disappeared. His relatives were worried and deeply troubled, but St. Arsenios calmed them down: "Don't you worry. Anastasis is all right in his shop."

Many years passed from that time, without any word from him, because the man himself was too ashamed to get in touch with his fellow-villagers. But one time, through pure coincidence, two Farasiotes were going through Tokat (near Sebasteia), and they saw a sign over a shop, saying "Anastasios Vartopoulos." They were astonished because they remembered the words of Hadjiefendis and took time to visit with him. After this encounter, Anastasios Vartopoulos' nephew, Panayiotis, began to miss Farasa and returned with his compatriots. Unfortunately, however, he too had been influenced by his uncle and did not believe. He, also, began to do damage with his atheistic theories.

One time, in fact, as St. Arsenios was crossing the centre of the village and everyone stood up reverently to receive his blessing, he not only refrained from standing, but made fun of the others, saying they were like old women, running after priests, and other things like that. St. Arsenios gave him a pained look and went to pray to God that He would act for the good of the man's soul.

Soon afterwards, Panayiotis began rolling around on the ground. At first the other villagers did not understand what was going on; they thought he was mocking those who make prostrations and told him: "Get up, Panayiotis. What are you doing misbehaving like a small child and getting your clothes all dirty?" Later, however, they realized that the Grace of God had abandoned him because of his shameless behavior and he had become possessed. They at once went to Hadjiefendis and reported this to him, and he told them: "Bring me his clothes and I'll read a prayer over them, so that he won't tear you apart. And you'd better know that in the future he'll be half-mad, but he won't do anything harmful or bad. In the future, he'll go to his field to plough and he'll sleep there with the intention of continuing on with some more work. That same night thieves will come by and kill him. That way his soul will be saved."

And, indeed, some years later, things turned out exactly as St. Arsenios had said they would.

### **The Woman in Despair**

One time, a Farasiote woman had fallen into despair, because her husband had died a few years after their marriage; she did not want to have anything to do with either her village or with its people. She had also been partially responsible for his death and, having abandoned it all, she was living in caves, eating wild plants to survive.

After about three years, unrecognizable because of her life-style and what she had been going through, she visited St. Arsenios and said to him: "Hadjiefendis, your blessing. You are able to literally turn this world upside down. Can't you bring back my Vasilakis? Is it difficult for you?"

St. Arsenios answered her: "My child, You've had a very hard time with your mourning. If you want, I give you my blessing to get married."

She said: "No, what I want is to see my Vasilakis. Won't you be upset if I kill myself?"

St. Arsenios was deeply pained and begged her: "Don't do that, child. Don't give your soul to the demons."

But she was in a terrible state and kept saying that she would. Through great efforts, St. Arsenios calmed her down and told her to go back to the cave where she was living and that Vasilakis would appear to her there, so she could see him and be reconciled. And he continuously prayed, with grievous pain in his heart.

She had barely made it back to the cave when Vasilakis appeared to her in a vision and said to her: "You villain, have you come here as well? But I know who sent you. Hadjiefendis, who has great boldness towards God." His repentant wife then begged his forgiveness, and when she had been given it, Vasilakis disappeared once more and she returned peacefully to the village where she returned to a normal life style, spending the rest of her days quietly and in repentance.

The evil one, who had played a great part in making her partially responsible for her husband's death, is the same one who brought her to great despair so that she would commit suicide. The Good Lord, however, did not allow her soul to perish, through His faithful servant Arsenios.



### **LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN (4TH CENTURY)**

**O Lord and Master of my life,  
take from me the spirit of sloth, despondency,  
lust of power, and idle talk.**

*(prostration...)*

**But grant rather the spirit of chastity,  
humility, patience, and love  
to thy servant.**

*(prostration...)*

**Yea, O Lord and King,  
grant me to see my own transgressions,  
and not to judge my brother;  
for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages.**

*(prostration...)*

**O Lord cleanse me a sinner. (12 times)**



## PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

*A guide to all so that we may properly prepare for the Holy Sacrament of Confessions, as the Great Lent approaches.*

**I**n a sinful soul, confess to our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, all of my evil acts which I have done, said or thought, from baptism even unto this present day.

### First Torment: Idle Speech

Have you spoken without thinking? Or spoken too much? Or spoken anything that is impure? Or shameless? Or without need or order? Or unreasonable? Or unclean? Have you thought or said angry words or foul words? Have you participated with or sung worldly shameless songs in word or thought? Have you laughed unnecessarily or excessively? Or laughed about things that you shouldn't have laughed about or found funny? Have you acted too silly?

### Second Torment: Lying

Have you kept the vows of your baptism? Have you failed to keep oaths or promises to God? Have pronounced the name of God without reverence? Have you falsely confessed your sins? Or was insincere about, belittled, justified, or kept silent about your sins during confession? Have you lied? Have you been sly or secretly mischievous? Or have you been deceptive or hypocritical? Have you honestly obeyed laws? Have been argumentative or stubborn?

### Third Torment: Spoke Evil of Others

Have you spread rumors or gossiped in thought or in word? Have you slandered anyone wanting to or intending to injure the reputation of another? Have you given bad ideas or words to people? Have you laughed at other's deficiencies or misfortunes? Have you maligned treated anyone with malice or shown hatred toward or abused or wronged or injured anyone? Have you condemned anyone? Or declared others unfit? Have you made fun of people in thought, word, or action? Or mocked in a harmful way? Have you reproached anyone or reflected on anyone abusively? Have you taunted, teased, or tempted anyone? Have you insulted anyone?

### Fourth Torment: Gluttony

Have you eaten before you made the sign of the cross? Have you eaten when you were not hungry? Have you eaten too much at one time or became too full during the fasts? Have you eaten without having thankfulness to God? Have you eaten like a slob or out of control stuffing food in your mouth? Have you consumed too many alcoholic beverages to the point of being drunk? Have you respected the feasts and fasts as much as you should? Have you broken the fasts? Have you not looked forward to the fasts taking in mind the true meaning and purpose of them? Have you eaten too many sweet foods for the enjoyment of them or had a love of sweets? Have you had gluttonous fantasies?

### Fifth Torment: Sloth

Have you taken efforts to remember and extensively learn the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Holy Fathers by reading spiritual things? Have you kept your physical and spiritual passions in check all the time? Or had a general

carelessness about doing things having to do with the salvation of your soul? Have you devoted yourself to the comforts of life? Have you lacked endurance towards your illnesses and sorrows by not struggling against your passions as much as you should? Have you been idle? Or not worked as hard as you could have? Or fallen asleep at work? Or not wanted to get out of bed? Have you complained about having to work or attend long services or say long prayers? Have you cared to praise and thank God as much as you could or should have throughout the day? Have you failed to keep in continual prayer, trying always to keep your mind on serving God? Have you dwelled upon your previous sins? Have you fallen into despondency? Or given up hope or not having faith in God that He can and will change you? Have you forgotten to pray at certain times during the day? Have you rushed through or not said your morning and evening prayers whole-heartedly? Have you attended the services completely? Have you been fully prepared to go to Church to worship? Or have you gone to Church only half-heartedly, lazily, and carelessly? Have you conversed during the services about things not having to do with the service? Have you paid complete attention during the services? Have you let your mind wander or daydream or think other ungodly thoughts during prayer or services? Have you left the Church before the dismissal and blessing? Have you forced yourself to do good at all times? Have you had a weak will?

### Sixth Torment: Stealing

Have you stolen anything or thought seriously about stealing something?

### Seventh Torment: Avarice and Love of Money

Have you loved riches? Have you been content with what God gave you? Have you wished in your mind that you had more money than you do already? Have you acquired unnecessary things? Or had an immoderate attachment to material things? Have you been too concerned or caught up with material things? Have you been too concerned with things having to do with the flesh? Have you bought things in exchange for proper tithing? Have you been greedy or selfish? Have you worried about money or financial circumstances instead of putting your trust in God? Have you had fantasies about material wealth or having riches?

### Eighth Torment: Usury

Have you gained riches by exploiting people? Have you accepted bribes? Have you acquired something that belonged to another?

### Ninth Torment: Injustice

Have you judged anyone? Have you acquitted the guilty and condemned the innocent all for the sake of gain? Have you been unjust in anyway? Have you accused an innocent person of committing an act that they did not do?

### Tenth Torment: Envy

Have you envied anyone? Or been jealous?

### Eleventh Torment: Pride

Have you been prideful? Have you thought yourself better than anybody else? Have you considered yourself worthy while

considering others unworthy? Have you had a high opinion of yourself in any way? Have you talked down to anyone? Have you compared or measured yourself up to anyone? Have you looked out for other people's faults rather than your own? Have you avoided or purposefully neglected to conceal the shortcomings of others while trying to conceal your virtues? Have you been critical of other people or criticized anyone? Have you been arrogant, vain, or conceited? Have you relied completely on yourself rather than God? Have you bragged or boasted of things that you have accomplished? Have you loved praise and honors? Have you put on airs? Have you been prideful of the good deeds that you have done? Have you failed to give proper honor or obey your parents or superiors appointed by God? Have you been disobedient? Have you thought yourself self-important? Have you been self-willed instead of trying always to do the will of God? Have you been self-righteous? Have you self-justified your sins? Have you disregarded the counseling of your conscience? Have you failed to confess any of your sins through negligence or false pride? Have you been impatient or anxious about anything in which you shouldn't be that way about? Have you been prejudice towards anyone for any reason? Have you had prideful fantasies of power, fame, or glory?

#### **Twelfth Torment: Anger and Ruthlessness**

Have you felt anger? Have you said anything unfeeling towards anyone? Have you harmed or hurt anyone's feelings in any way? Have you carried on arguments with anyone about anything in your head?

#### **Thirteenth Torment: Bearing Grudges**

Have you nurtured evil thoughts against anyone? Have you returned evil for evil? Have you remembered wrongs anyone did to you in the past? Have you bore any grudges instead of understanding, loving, and forgiving? Have you kept in mind when anyone made offences towards you? Have you imagined ways you could have revenge on anyone?

#### **Fourteenth Torment: Murder**

Have you wounded anyone in some way? Have you had any violent or destructive thoughts? Have you had any harmful thoughts aimed towards anyone? Have you wished evil upon anyone? Have you been angry with people without a just cause?

#### **Fifteenth Torment: Magic, Sorcery, Poisoning, and Incantations**

Have you thought about your past interest in magic and things relating to magic? Have you imaged Holy things having some sort of magical properties?

#### **Sixteenth Torment: Fornication**

Have you had any sensual or lustful thoughts? Carnal thoughts? Have you daydreamed about amorous and lustful things and found them sweet? Have you made impure glances? Have you touched yourself in a lustful or passionate way that was pleasing or arousing? Have you had blasphemously lustful thoughts about saints and holy people? Have you been unchaste in thought, word, or deed? Have you awakened from lustful bad dreams and found them pleasing to think about? Have you had fantasies of lust or fornication?

#### **Seventeenth Torment: Adultery**

Have you had any adulterous thoughts concerning married people?

#### **Eighteenth Torment: Sodom Sins**

Have you sinned against your nature?

#### **Nineteenth Torment: Heresies**

Have you received Holy Communion having as much humility or the fear of God as you should? Have you loved and feared the Lord always? Have you turned away from the Orthodox confession of faith by apostatizing and agreeing with false doctrines or beliefs? Have you lacked faith? Have you doubted or had misconceptions about the faith? Have you denied holy things or had a negative attitude towards them? Have you been grateful for all of God's great and unceasing gifts, His mercy, His long-suffering, and His providence? Have you fulfilled the Holy Commandments of God, the canons, and the rules of the Church? Have you blasphemed or swore in thought or word? Have you thought curse words when you pray? Have you turned words of prayer into profane words or filthy concepts? Have you feared man instead of God? Have you been too attached to parents, relatives, and friends? Have you answered the telephone during prayer?

#### **Twentieth Torment: Lack of Compassion and Cruelty of the Heart**

Have you lacked mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and love for anyone? Have you felt hatred toward anyone? Or any other manifestation of hatred? Have you been unfriendly to anyone? Or been cruel? Have you ridiculed anyone? Have you rejoiced at the misfortunes of others? Have you had abusive or violent thoughts? Have you been polite and friendly while driving on the roads and highways?

O Lord, I have sinned in deed, word, and thought, voluntarily and involuntarily, knowingly and unknowingly, in knowledge and in ignorance, willingly and unwillingly, thoughtfully and thoughtlessly, by day and by night, and it is impossible to enumerate all of my sins because of their multitude. But I truly repent of these and all others not mentioned by me because of my forgetfulness and I ask that they be forgiven through the abundance of the mercy of God.



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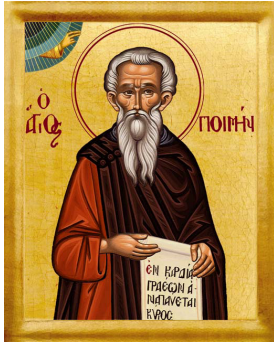
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## A PARABLE ON OUR HOLY ORTHODOXY

*From "Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition," chapter 15.*

There was once a great city, in the centre of which stood a very tall building, whose top was lost in the sky. It was said that everyone who reached the top was very, very happy. You would have thought that everybody would have wanted to get to the top. But such was not the case.

There were some who lived in parts of that city who had never even seen the tall building. Still others had seen it, but did not know what was inside. Yet others, though they had heard about how pleasant it was at the top, either did not believe it or else simply refused to go and look, saying that they preferred to stay where they had always been.

Nevertheless there were great crowds milling about the building. Many tried to enter it, yet somehow never managed to, even though the doors were wide open. They said the doors were too narrow. Some of them would try to enter through a window or look for other doors. They never succeeded. Some would peer in through the doors out of curiosity, others would actually go in, but quickly come out again, saying that they did not like the look of the ground floor.

Inside, on that ground floor, there were throngs of people scurrying about, very busily. Some of them were looking for the lifts that had been installed to replace an ancient staircase,

the remains of which could be seen in the panelling of the lifts. Many people found the lifts and got in; however the lifts were out of order and did not go very far. Some realized this and got out of the lifts in disgust. Certain people got out and began looking to see if there was not somewhere another ancient staircase.

To their surprise, there, not far away for those who bothered to look, there was indeed another staircase, and there were many people who were already going up. Unfortunately there were those who, having found the staircase, did not go up it. Some of them simply stood there, admiring the carpet; others stood looking at the woodwork, comparing it to that in the lifts. Still others just stood there at the bottom writing books about what it was like at the top—though they had never been there. What imagination!

Of those who started going up the staircase, a certain number kept looking around and would then come back down. Of these some would complain that it was too hard to go up. Then there were others who complained about other people who were going up the stairs, many of whom, apparently, did not speak English.

And yet there were others who went up the stairs and did not come back down, and there were many who went right up to the top. I know, because a cloud of witnesses has told me so. And although I am still at the bottom of these stairs, I am determined to start going up and not look back.

And how about you, will you come with me?

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

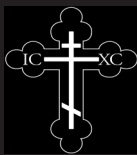
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## In This Issue:

- Looking into the Depth of Our Souls (p. 3)
- Gleanings from Papa-Dimitri's Writings (p. 5)
- Ecumenism and Our Duty (p. 6)
- Ascent from Prostitution to Sanctity (p. 11)
- True Fast (p. 12)
- The Room (p.14)



- Ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ Πνευματικὴ Ἀντίσταση ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας (σελ. 7)
- Περὶ Ἐλεημοσύνης (σελ. 9)



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## THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

By St. Proklos, Patriarch of Constantinople.

On March 25th we gather in honor of the Most Holy Virgin. This gathering inspires me, brethren, to say of Her a word of praise, of benefit also for all those who come unto this churchly solemnity. It comprises a praise of women, a glorying of their gender; this glory is brought forth by Her, She Who is at one same time both Mother, and Virgin.

O desired and wondrous gathering! Celebrate, O nature, of the honor that has been rendered to Woman! Rejoice, O human race, that the Virgin is being glorified. For *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound* (Rom 5:20). The Holy Mother of God and Virgin Mary has gathered us all here, She, the pure treasure of virginity, the intended paradise of Second Adam—the locus, wherein was accomplished the co-uniting of natures, wherein was affirmed the Counsel of salvific reconciliation.

Who is it that ever saw or heard that within a womb, our Limitless God would make habitation, Whom the Heavens cannot circumscribe and Whom the womb of a Virgin limiteth not?

He was born of woman and is not only God and at the same time He is not only Man: This One born made woman, being the ancient gateway of sin, into the gateway of salvation: where evil poured forth its poison, bringing on disobedience, there the Word made for Himself a living temple, bringing in obedience; from whence the arch-sinner

Cain sprang forth, there without seed was born Christ the Redeemer of the human race.

The Lover-of-Mankind did not disdain to be born of woman, since this bestowed His life. He was not subject to impurity, being settled within the womb, which He Himself arrayed free from all harm. If this Mother did not remain a Virgin, then that born of Her might be a mere man, and the birth would be no wise miraculous; but since she after birth remained a Virgin, then how is He Who is born indeed—not God? It is an inexplicable mystery, since in an inexplicable manner was born He Who without hindrance went through doors when they were locked. When confessing in Him the co-uniting of two natures, Thomas cried out: *My Lord, and my God!* (Jn 20:28).

The Apostle Paul says that *Christ is to the Jews indeed scandal, and to the Gentiles yet folly* (1 Cor 1:23); they did not perceive the power of the mystery, since it was

incomprehensible to the mind: *for had they understood, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory* (1 Cor 2:8). If the Word had not settled within the womb, then the flesh would not have ascended with Him onto the Divine Throne; if for God it were disdainful to enter into the womb, which He created, then the Angels too would have disdained service to mankind. That One, Who by His nature was not subject to sufferings, through His love for us subjected Himself to many a suffering.

We believe, that Christ not through some gradual ascent towards the Divine nature was made God, but being God, through His mercy He was made Man.



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We do not say: “a man-made God”; but we confess that God was incarnated and made Man. His Servant was chosen for Himself as Mother by that One Who, in His essence did not have mother, and Who, through Divine foresight having appeared upon the earth in the image of man, does not have here father. How one and the same is He *both without father, and without mother*, in accord with the words of the Apostle (Heb 7:3)? If He—be only a man, then He cannot be without mother—but actually He had a Mother. If He—be God only, then He cannot be without Father—but in fact He has the Father. And yet as **God the Creator He has not mother, and as Man He has not father.**

We can be persuaded in this by the very name of the Archangel, making annunciation to Mary: his name—is Gabriel. What does this name mean?—it means: “God and man.” Since That One about Whom he announced is God and Man, then his very name points beforehand to this miracle, so that with faith be accepted the deed of the Divine dispensation.

To save people would be impossible for a mere man, since every man has need in the Saviour: *for all*,—says Saint Paul,—*have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God* (Rom 3:23). Since sin subjects the sinner to the power of the devil, and the devil subjects him to death, then our condition did become extremely hapless: there was no way to be delivered from death.

There were sent physicians, i.e. the prophets, but they could only the more clearly point out the malady. What did they do? When they saw, that the illness was beyond human skill, they summoned from Heaven the Physician; one of them said *Lord, bend the heavens, and come down* (Ps 143:5); others cried out: *Heal me, O Lord, and I shalt be healed* (Jer 17:14); *restore Thine power, and come yet to save us* (Ps 79:3). And yet others: *For if God truly be settled with man upon the earth* (1

Kg 8:27); *speedily send before Thine tender mercy, O Lord, for we are brought very low* (Ps 78:8).

Others said: *O woe to me, my soul! For the pious art perished from the earth, and of the upright amongst men there is none* (Mich 7:2). *O God, in help attend to me, O Lord, shield me with Thine help* (Ps 69:1). *If there be delay, endure it, for He that cometh shalt come, and not tarry* (Hab 2:3). *Perishing like a lost sheep: seek out Thine servant, who doth hope on Thee* (Ps 118:176). *For God wilt come, our God, and wilt not keep silence* (Ps. 49:3).

That One, Who by nature is Lord, did not disdain human nature, enslaved by the sinister power of the devil, the merciful God would not accede for it to be forever under the power of the devil, the Ever-Existing One came and gave in ransom His Blood; He gave up His Body, which He had accepted of the Virgin, for the redemption of the race of man from death. He delivered the world from the curse of the law, annihilating death by His death. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*—exclaims Saint Paul (Gal 3:13).

Thus know, my brethren, that our Redeemer is not simply a mere man, since all the human race was enslaved to sin. But He likewise is not God only, non-partaking of human nature. He had body, since if He had not clothed Himself in me, He then likewise should not have saved me. But, having settled within the womb of the Virgin, He clothed Himself in my fate, and within this womb He perfected a miraculous change: He bestowed the Spirit and received a body, from the dwelling of the Virgin, and was born of Her. And the Prophet David points it out for us in these words: *Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord* (Ps 117:26).

But tell us even more clearly, O prophet, Who is He? The Lord is the God of Hosts, says the prophet: *God is the Lord, and hath revealed Himself unto us* (Ps 117:27). *The Word was*



*made flesh* (Jn 1:14): there were co-united the two natures, and the union remained without mingling. He came to save, but had also to suffer. What has the one in common with the other? A mere man cannot save; and God in only His nature cannot suffer. By what means were done the one and the other? Wherein that He, Emmanuel, being God, was made also Man; what He was, He saved by—and what He was made, He suffered as. Wherefore, when the Church beheld that the Jewish throng had crowned Him with thorns, bewailing the violence of the throng, it said: *Daughters of Zion, go forth and behold the crown, of which is crowned He of His mother* (Sng 3:11).

He wore the crown of thorns and destroyed the judgement to suffering from the thorns. He Only is That One both in the bosom of the Father and in the womb of the Virgin; He Only is That One—in the arms of His Mother and in the wings of the winds (Ps. 103:3); He, to Whom the Angels bowed down in worship, at that same time reclined at table with publicans. Upon Him the Seraphim dared not to gaze, and at the same time Pilate pronounced sentence upon Him. He is That One and Same, Whom the servant did smite and before whom did tremble all creation. He was nailed to the Cross and ascended to the Throne of Glory—*He was placed in the tomb and He stretched out the heavens like a skin* (Ps. 103:2)—He was numbered amidst the dead and He emptied hell; here upon the earth, they cursed at Him as a transgressor—there in Heaven, they exclaimed Him glory as the All-Holy.

What an incomprehensible mystery! I see the miracles, and I confess, that He is God. I see the sufferings, and I cannot deny, that He is Man. Emmanuel opened up the doors of nature, as man, and preserved unharmed the seal of virginity, as God: He emerged from the womb thus as He entered through the announcing; the same wondrously was He both born and conceived: without passion He entered, and without impairment He emerged.

As the Prophet Ezekiel proclaims: *He returned me back the way of the gates of the outer sanctuaries, looking upon the east: and these had been shut. And saith the Lord to me: son of man, these gates shalt be closed, and not open, and no one go through them: for the Lord God of Israel, He Only, shalt enter and come forth, and they wilt be shut* (Ez 44:1-2). Here he clearly indicates the Holy Virgin and Mother of God Mary the Theotokos!

Let cease all contention, and let the Holy Scripture enlighten our reason, so that we too receive the Heavenly Kingdom unto all eternity. Amen.



Live in constant glorification of, and thanksgiving towards, God; for the greatest sin is ingratitude, and the worst sinner is the ungrateful person.

**Elder Paisios the Athonite (+1994)**

## LOOKING INTO THE DEPTH OF OUR SOULS

Source: From the book “With Elder Porphyrios,” by Constantine Yiannitsiotis, pp. 38-42.



At the beginning of my relationship with the Elder, I was impressed by the great ease with which he showed me truths about myself; these were truths that only I knew. He revealed to me so many things which had been kept as the deep secrets of my soul. It was impossible to get information about them from anywhere else but from God, for He is the only One that knows the depths of our hearts. The Elder had a perfect knowledge about the conscious part of my soul. However, the more time passed and such revelations were repeated, they gradually became, in some way, routine. Now, the thing that impressed me was that the Elder, with the same ease, revealed truths to me that even I did not know. It was obvious that he went down into the subconscious part of my soul, like a deep-sea diver. With the gifts given to him, he would light up the aspects of my soul never seen before, like a flash of lightening in the dark; aspects so definitive in the shaping of my life.

His revelations at Kallisia, by that ruined building, were just a foretaste. I cannot see that I gained satisfactory self-knowledge with this depth sounding. The patristic expression “Give blood to receive spirit” held true, but without doubt, it helped me make some tentative steps toward it; tentative, because I was frightened by the depth of its darkness and its repeated painful surprise.

I suffered one such surprise when I visited him in the apartment of a large building. He was going through a period of convalescence after a dangerous heart attack (myocardial infarction) and was staying there as a guest of a spiritual daughter of his. He only saw a few visitors, and then only after a complicated telephone connection to find out where he was staying. In my impatience to see the Elder, I managed to note down the street name and the number of the apartment building, but not the floor that it was on. So, when I arrived, I looked at the names of the residents at the building entrance, but strangely the name of the hostess was not there.

I was saddened but not dismayed. I sought help from God, through the prayers of the Elder, and I started to read the names of the residents, floor by floor, from the ground floor to the seventh and back again. I didn’t find the name I was looking for. I noticed that plenty of apartments were unlabelled, but I didn’t want to cause a disturbance by asking strangers who lived there.

Tired and unsuccessful, I began to feel discouraged and I headed for the exit. “It seems that the Elder doesn’t want my visit,” I thought, but at that very moment, an unexplainable

internal impulse made me turn back. A strange, irrational desire suddenly arose within me to go up the stairs to the seventh floor, without looking at the names anymore I climbed up slowly, step-by-step, to the first floor, and then the second and when I reached the third floor I saw the Elder in front of me, standing in the doorway of an apartment. He was waiting for me with a smile, saying: "Come, come...come on in" (When I left I noticed that there was no name outside the apartment.)

This was all so natural that when I realized how the event was beyond reason, I whispered: "Wondrous is God in his saints." I went in, setting down a box of sweets as a gift, and sat down jubilantly in front of the Elder, who was alone in the apartment at that moment. It was a very warm summer day and a rotating fan had been placed on the table. It annoyed the Elder every time it turned towards him, as he was already covered in perspiration. "Please make it stand still, or I will catch a cold, and I shouldn't." I tried to find the right button but I could not manage it. The Elder came up to me and said, with charming simplicity, "Let me stop it, I know its tricks." As soon as he stopped it, he went and sat on his bed and continued with what he was doing: cutting out Byzantine icons from some calendars using scissors. "I like cutting out paper icons a lot," he said, "and then gluing them to wood. They become like real ones. They are beautiful." He then added, "What would you like to tell me?"

I started telling him about my various personal problems that I had noted down on a piece of paper, and waited for his answers. Towards the end, in an attempt to surpass myself, I assured him, while I did all the talking, that in the depths of my soul what I wanted to do, consciously, was to lay all my selfish problems, to live the higher life of self-offering to Christ and to my fellow citizens. And I praised the advantages of the life of Divine Eros heavily.

Throughout this period of my rhetorical sanctity, the Elder's head was bowed and he became silent, absorbed in the cutting out of icons. He reminded me of a child, devoted to his toys, indifferent to what the adults around him are saying. I had the impression that I had unfolded the problem by myself and had also found the solution by myself. I confess this did not fill me with enthusiasm. And if that was not enough, at one point the Elder stopped his handiwork, to look at me with a smile and say: "Good, well you had better be good, well you had better be going." I got up and kissed his hand, rather disappointed by the results of my whole expedition and somewhat bitter, because the Elder had not honored my deep self-analysis with the attention it deserved. But I did not say anything to him and headed for the door, while the Elder saw me off.

I had not yet managed to get into the elevator, when the lady of the house could be seen climbing the stairs. As soon as she saw me, she asked if I had some coffee. I thanked her and said it was not necessary. I opened the door of the elevator. At that

moment I heard the Elder's voice behind me saying, "Hey, come back now to have the coffee." I grabbed at the excuse, not being one who needed much asking to be near the Elder, and went back for coffee.

In a short while, sitting in the chair, with the coffee next to me, I listened to the Elder who had now put the scissors down, saying to me: "Well all the time you were sitting here and talking to me telling me all the holy stuff you wanted to do (he mentioned it all briefly), do you know what I saw from all that?" "What did you see, Elder?" I asked full of curiosity.

The Elder abruptly replied, "The opposite. I also saw some other things, but I won't tell you about it." I froze in my seat and looked at him with embarrassment, like an actor who had assumed the role of a king and then had his purple robes suddenly taken away. "You'll forgive me," he continued, "for telling you this so abruptly, but you must think a lot deeper, look right down into your soul, isn't what I told you true?" I prayed silently, I tried to be more honest with myself, with the Elder and with God. I asked myself who I really am and confessed: "Elder, you are right. Those things that I said I wanted can be found on the shiny surface of my soul, but what I feel emerging from the depths, is all dark, sinful and it terrifies me."

The Elder added, "I saw all of that clearly, as I was cutting out the icons, but I chose not to tell you so that I wouldn't upset you. But when you left and the lady of the house met you and you came back for coffee, I thought that God had done it so that I should tell you. And I told you." He saw my worried expression and finished up by saying, "Don't worry; however, it needs a lot of work."

After my first encounter with the Elder, I said to my friends, "I heard them telling me about Christ for thirty years and I thought I knew something. However, after meeting the Elder I felt like a graduate of kindergarten." Following this latest meeting with him, I told them, "Now, I feel like an infant, who has just applied to join the kindergarten of Christian life."



The Commandment of the Lord is not to remain silent in times when the faith is in danger. 'Speak, he said, and do not remain silent.' And, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38). And, *if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out* (Lk. 19:40). Thus, when it is a matter of faith, one should not say: 'Who am I, a priest or a leader of the people?' In no case should one remain silent.

**St. Theodore the Studite**

## GLEANINGS FROM PAPA-DIMITRI'S WRITINGS

Source: From the book "Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis," by Orthodox Kypseli Publications, pp. 101-105.

### Monasticism

Monasticism is Christ's army and Satan's enemy. The monasteries are the outposts of the Church. Without outposts, the enemy will capture us. Prayer in monasteries reaches God like a bullet. As a foreign army fears the aircraft and hides, so also Satan fears the prayers of the monastics and goes away.

I am glad for you and I envy you that you were made worthy to forsake everything for Christ and enjoy the heavenly goods. I was not made worthy to receive this gift. It seems that I was not worthy to keep it; therefore, I beg you remember in your prayers even a sinful and last clergyman, a refuse of the earth, as I unworthily serve the Lord for forty-two years...

In that place [Monastery of Saint John the Theologian in Patmos] one can even turn a godless into a Christian.

It seems that all the old monasteries of Trikala will be restored. It must be God's will. "Wherever sin abounds, God's grace overflows" (Rom. 5:20)...

Once a week I call up all monasteries of Trikala in order to receive their blessings and get updated on how the spiritual work is going. I may pester them, but some divine zeal urges me in the depth of my soul. I wasn't worthy to receive the monastic schema, but I want to communicate with the monasteries all the time. I ask them to forgive my bothering – I am unlearned and they must not misunderstand me...

I thank God many times that He made worthy also to offer a gift [his daughter] to the Most Holy Theotokos to serve Her. She has fulfilled my desire, she has left the world and will have nothing to do with it anymore. She has clung to the work of prayer which is the superior of all.

### Heresies

When the dignitaries of the foreign churches came to Trikala, I went at first to see them, but then I said to myself: "Papa-Dimitri, get out of here fast and don't even look back..." We must not accept them. I've been following this principle many years now. It was somewhat rude of me. But better be on good terms with God, rather than with people...

I want to know what those clergymen who collaborate with the Pope and the heretics believe, who everyday work in the Sanctuary of the Lord; Do they work nominally? It's beyond my mind...

We've been encircled by Freemasonry and many fight our Church, but I believe that they try in vain, as the chief of the Church is Christ Himself, and she's not going to perish.

We must all pray, both old and young, that God and the Most Holy Theotokos enlighten the high-ranking men of the Church so that they may love one another and work for the Church which is under attack by the foreign heresies.

### Truth

I think I've grieved them a little, but truth is bitter and must be revealed for the benefit and salvation of their souls.

### Youth

The young, male and female, have taken the way downhill and they will neither see nor hear, while no one goes out there to stop them. But how could they, anyway, as the adults are worse?...

Today's youth, for the most part, have abandoned God. Satan has entered their hearts and minds and both men and women are being fooled with temporal pleasures such as sex, particularly the young.

### Marriage – Celibacy

Concerning the problem of finding the right person to marry, this belongs to God's will and it is He who takes care of the people's needs – what's needful for each person – after supplication. I've told you in the past that it's not possible for you to remain single, as the evil one sets many traps to throw man into sin. You have to do one of the following: Either put on the cassock and work more as a priest-monk, or come into a lawful marriage with a devout person, according to the proper order, because marriage also is blessed by God. See then for yourself what you can do. If you become a monk and keep the virtue of virginity till the end of your life, you'll receive a great wreath from God and will be ranked among the Order of the Angels, which is superior of all... On the other hand, some who don't keep their monastic vows become worse.

### Daily Life Problems

I never worried anxiously about anything. I cared for my children without weariness and anxiety. God Who gave them to me also took care of everything.

It's a terrible thing. The people here have forsaken the Church and go to work in their fields on Sundays – pick cotton... The fields are full, and the churches are empty. They are after 'chrysos' (gold) and not 'Christos' (Christ). I mentioned this situation to the high authorities, but what can I do, the little one?

You ask me to join you in the excursion. The issue is whether it will be all pilgrims or tourists and spectators – in which case "the last state will be worse than the first" (Matt. 12:45)... Women smoking cigarettes, with painted lips, etc.

...With such I don't go.

The one who runs to magicians and fortune-tellers is called a rascal and loses protection even from God.

The school district inspector visited a village during Great Lent, and the village priest roasted a lamb in order to please him. This is how we bring down the Church. He said "Give thanks and eat!" May God have mercy on us...

I wrote to the doctor, but he didn't reply. Indeed, the great of the world won't deign to write to a simple village priest. If it were for the Patriarch, they would respond by telegram... How much do men err!



I've been trying to make a spiritual man of him, but, unfortunately, I can't. Everyone's telling me: "How can you keep company with such a person?" Neither is he able to draw me away, nor I him. I told him a few words in a monastery that we happened to visit together. If you [being so far away] have heard anything, so has he...

#### **Self-Appraisal**

I don't remember anything from this life; only the heavy load of my sins.

If you learn that I left this world, don't get sad, but rather be happy because the Church will have gotten rid of the most sinful and unlearned priest of the era.

#### **Prayers Composed by Papa-Dimitri**

##### *Prayer of a Priest*

Jesus, the good Shepherd, I thank You, because you gave even to me, the small and weak one, the same command that You gave to Your apostle, when You told him: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

Never would I dare, O Lord, to accept such a heavy mission, if I didn't believe that Your grace remedies what is weak and makes up for what is lacking.

Therefore, in this moment, in which I feel my shortcomings so intensely, I, Your priest, Your sacrificer, the small shepherd of Your flock, implore You.

Uphold me, O Lord, keep my heart pure, whole, free from money and attached to Your commandments.

Take away from Your servant selfishness, ostentation and wordliness.

Keep him from anger, rancor, envy and jealousy.

Make me a man of prayer, so that not only with my lips, but also with my heart I may praise and glorify Your Holy Name.

Help me not forget the holy feelings of my first liturgy, and by them to chase away germ of habit, which every so often comes into me.

Help Your priest, O Lord, be always an angel of comfort for the afflicted, a source of spiritual invigoration for the disheartened, a guide towards Your peace, and a source of joy for the wounded.

Help me, my Savior, combine in my life and work tenderness with firmness, tact with strength, sensitivity with strictness.

Reduce my faults, so that no one may fall because of my weaknesses.

Teach me, Lord, how to instruct the children, inspire the youth, advise the adults, turn back the sinners, encourage those who are about to die.

Teach me, O Lord who knows the hearts of men, how to perform the Mysteries of Your Church and especially the Mystery of Holy Confession. During that time, make me be a perfect psychologist and an affectionate father.

Help me be in my parish an inspiration of good works and a leader in God-pleasing endeavors, so that all may be won over for their own happiness and for the glory of Your Name. Amen.

#### *Daily Prayer*

O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of those far off in the sea, the Good Shepherd, Who gave

Your soul as ransom for Your rational sheep, Who do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he may turn back and live, the Forbearing, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate, Who gave us repentance for the remission of sins, Who are full of mercy and love for mankind, forgive all our sins that we have committed since childhood, in words, in ignorance, in mind, voluntarily and involuntarily; forgive also all sinners and blasphemers and give to us, to those, and to all men, true repentance, pure and sincere one, to enlighten, guide, instruct, uphold, strengthen and confirm us on the unshakeable rock of the Faith, the rock of Your divine commandments, so that having put off the old man of sin and put on the new man in Christ, we may live the remaining time of our life in chastity, holiness, justice, piety and in a God-pleasing manner and be made worthy of Your Heavenly Kingdom; may that we all attain this through the prayers of Your most pure Mother and of all Your saints. Amen.



#### **ECUMENISM AND OUR DUTY**

We are undoubtedly living in a period of cosmic change. Events, seemingly directed, race forward at a frantic pace. Ecumenism is evolving within the destructive, leveling viewpoint of Globalism, which is being pushed by powerful economic-political organizations. No one any longer takes serious the viewpoint that Ecumenism can offer a visible and viable solution to the problem of Christian unity.

As Orthodox Christians, we should neither retreat to our ivory-tower nor relax our vigilance. If we truly value and respect the life of people, if we truly have pain of heart for the people of the Western world who are tormented by dead end religious traditions, as well as those in Eastern world, who caught up in demonic delusions, we have an obligation to remain devoted to our Holy Church. We must keep the traditional faith of our fathers pure and unadulterated, and to live it authentically within our daily struggle for our own personal holiness and theosis. The right faith and a strict and precise life will make us capable of witnessing to Orthodoxy, but also – and why not? – unto martyrdom, if and when the times demand it.

Adherence to Orthodoxy, that is, to the genuineness of life, and perseverance in the truth that frees and saves, is not egoism, fanaticism or intolerance. Rather, it expresses the ecumenical (universal) dimension, the love and philanthropy of the Orthodox Church. It constitutes the last possibility for a radical spiritual change in the West, but also for a way out for the East from its captivity to false gods.

[from the pamphlet "Ecumenism,"  
by the Holy Monastery of the Paraklete, Oropos, Greece]

## Ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ Πνευματικὴ Ἀντίσταση ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας

*Τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Χολέβα, Πολιτικοῦ Ἐπιστήμονος.*

**Κ**ατὰ τὴν διάρκεια τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας ὁ ὑπόδουλος Ἑλληνισμός, ἡ πονεμένη Ρωμηοσύνη, ὅπως τὴν χαρακτηρίζει ὁ Φώτης Κόντογλου, ἀντιστάθηκε καὶ μὲ τὸ ντουφέκι καὶ μὲ τὸ φιλότιμο. Στὴν πρώτη μορφή ἀντιστάσεως, τὶς ἐνοπλες ἐξεγέρσεις, πρωτοστατοῦσαν οἱ κλεφταρματολοί, ἀλλὰ σημαντικὸς ἦταν καὶ ὁ ρόλος τῶν Ἐπισκόπων καὶ τῶν ἀπλῶν ἱερέων. Στὴν δευτέρη μορφή ἀντιστάσεως, τὴν πνευματικὴ καὶ ἠθικὴ, ἡ Ἐκκλησία ὑπῆρξε ὁ ἀδιαμφισβήτητος ἡγέτης καὶ καθοδηγητής. Τοῦτο ὁμολογοῦν καὶ οἱ ἀγωνιστὲς τοῦ 1821 ποὺ ἐξήσαν τὰ γεγονότα ἀπὸ κοντά. Χαρακτηριστικὰ ὁ Δυτικομακεδὼν ὀπλαρχηγὸς Νικόλαος Κασομούλης γράφει στὰ «Ἐνθυμήματα Στρατιωτικά» καὶ τὰ ἐξῆς ἐνδιαφέροντα: «Ἀπὸ τὰ διάφορα ἱστορικὰ καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικὰ συγγράμματα καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα γνωρίζοντες ὅτι ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα, ὁ χαρακτήρ καὶ τὰ ἔθιμα τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ, μετὰ τὴν πτῶσιν τοῦ Βασιλείου μας, ἐδιατηρήθησαν ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπαγρύπνησιν τοῦ Κλήρου μας καὶ τῶν διαφόρων πεπαιδευμένων τοῦ ἔθνους μας, καὶ διὰ τῆς κοινῆς εὐλαβείας πρὸς τὴν ἁγίαν ἡμῶν Θρησκείαν...». Ἀλλὰ καὶ ὁ ἐντιμὸς Βρεταννὸς Βυζαντινολόγος, ὁ προσφάτως ἀποθανὼν Στῆβεν Ράνσιμαν, στὸν Ἐπίλογον τοῦ βιβλίου του «Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν Αἰχμαλωσίᾳ» ἐπισημαίνει: «Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία ἦταν ἡ δύναμις ποὺ διετήρησε τὸν Ἑλληνισμὸ κατὰ τὴν διάρκεια τῶν σκοτεινῶν αἰώνων...».

Ἡ πνευματικὴ αὐτὴ ἀντίσταση τοῦ Γένους καὶ ὁ ἔθναρχικὸς ρόλος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας κατὰ τὴν περίοδο ἐκείνη ἀναδεικνύονται κυρίως στοὺς ἐξῆς τομεῖς:

### **Ἡ Διαφύλαξη τῆς Πίστεως καὶ τῆς Ἑθνικῆς Συνειδήσεως**

Κατὰ τὴν διάρκεια τῆς δουλείας οἱ ἔθνοιες Ὁρθόδοξοι καὶ Ρωμηὸς ἦσαν σχεδὸν ταυτόσημοι. Ἐθναρχῆς (Μιλλέτ-Μπασί) ὄλων τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων τῆς Ὁθωμανικῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας ἦταν ὁ Πατριάρχης, ἡ δὲ ἀπώλεια τῆς θρησκευτικῆς ταυτότητος σήμαινε αὐτομάτως καὶ τὴν ἀπώλεια τῆς ἐθνικῆς ταυτότητος. Ὅποιος ἄλλαζε τὴν Πίστην του, εἴτε ἀκουσίως εἴτε ἐκουσίως, τούρκευε ἢ φράγκευε, χανόταν γιὰ τὸν Ἑλληνισμὸ. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἀγωνίσθηκε γιὰ νὰ σταματήσουν οἱ προσχωρήσεις Ὁρθοδόξων στὸ Ἰσλάμ. Ὁ Νεκτάριος Τέρπος καὶ ὁ Ἅγιος Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτωλὸς εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὰ παραδείγματα μοναχῶν ποὺ ἔδωσαν τὴν πνευματικὴ μάχη γιὰ νὰ ἀποτρέψουν τὸν ἐξισλαμισμό τῶν ταλαιπώρων Ρωμηῶν καὶ γιὰ νὰ διατηρήσουν τὴν Ἑλληνικότητα τῆς γλώσσας καὶ τῆς ἐθνικῆς συνειδήσεως.

Πρέπει νὰ τονισθῇ ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία διεφύλαξε τὴν ἐθνικὴ συνείδηση ἀκόμη καὶ σὲ ἐκείνους τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ποὺ ἔχαναν τὴν γλῶσσα. Οἱ τουρκόφωνοι Καππαδόκες στὴν Μικρὰ Ἀσία κράτησαν τὴν ἐθνικὴ τους ταυτότητα, διότι παρέμειναν πιστὰ μέλη τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἀντιθέτως, οἱ Βαλαάδες τῆς Δυτικῆς Μακεδονίας, κράτησαν τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα, ἀλλὰ προσεχώρησαν στὸ Ἰσλάμ γιὰ νὰ ἀποκτήσουν προνόμια. Γρήγορα τούρκεψε ἡ συνειδήσή τους καὶ χάθηκαν γιὰ τὸν Ἑλληνισμό. Μιὰ ἄλλη ὁμάδα Χριστιανῶν ποὺ ἐξισλαμίσθηκε βιαίως τὸν 17<sup>ο</sup> αἰῶνα εἶναι οἱ Τσάμηδες στὴν Θεσπρωτία. Ἡ ἀλλαγὴ τῆς Πίστεως ὀδήγησε σὲ ἀπότομη ἀλλαγὴ τῆς ἐθνικῆς συνειδήσεώς τους. Ἔγιναν φανατικοὶ τουρκαλβανοὶ καὶ διώκτες τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ μέχρι καὶ τὴν περίοδο τοῦ Β' Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου!

Οἱ μεγαλύτεροι ἀντιστασιακοὶ κατὰ τοῦ κατακτητῆ εἶναι οἱ Ἑλληνες Νεομάρτυρες. Τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς αὐτοθυσίας τους στερέωνε τὴν Πίστη τῶν ὑποδούλων καὶ περιορίζε τοὺς ἐξισλαμισμούς. Ὁ π. Γεώργιος Μεταλληνὸς στὸ βιβλίο του «Τουρκοκρατία» γράφει χαρακτηριστικὰ: «Τὸ μαρτύριο τῶν Νεομαρτύρων δείχνει καὶ τὴν συμμετοχὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας στὴν ἀντίσταση καὶ τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ Γένους ἔναντι τοῦ τυράννου. Στὴν ἐπιστροφὴ καὶ ὁμολογία τῶν Νεομαρτύρων συνέβαλλαν ἀποφασιστικὰ οἱ Γέροντες—Πνευματικοὶ τους. Σ' αὐτοὺς κατέφευγαν, κυρίως στὰ ἀγιορείτικα μοναστήρια, γιὰ νὰ μετανοήσουν καὶ νὰ εἰσαχθοῦν στὴν πνευματικὴ ζωὴ. Τὰ ἀσκητήρια ἔγιναν ἔτσι προμαχῶνες μπροστὰ στὰ κύματα τοῦ μουσουλμανισμοῦ...».

### **Ἡ Παιδεία, Κρυφὴ καὶ Φανερὴ**

Πολλοὶ διερωτῶνται σήμερα: Ἦσαν οἱ Ὁθωμανοὶ ἀνεκτικοὶ ἢ καταπιεστικοὶ στὸ ζήτημα τῆς Παιδείας τῶν ὑποδούλων; Τὴν ἀπάντησιν μᾶς δίδει χωρὶς προκαταλήψεις ὁ προαναφερθεὶς Στῆβεν Ράνσιμαν στὸ περισπούδαστο ἔργο του «Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ ἐν Αἰχμαλωσίᾳ». Ἐκεῖ ἐξηγεῖ ὅτι ὁ Σουλτάνος στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν δὲν εἶχε ἐκδώσει ποτέ φερμάνι ποὺ νὰ ἀπαγορεύῃ τὴν ἐκπαίδευση τῶν Ρωμηῶν, ἀλλὰ οἱ τοπικοὶ Ὁθωμανοὶ ἡγεμόνες ἦσαν ἀνεξέλεγκτοι στὸ θέμα αὐτὸ καὶ πολλάκις αὐθαίρετοῦσαν κατὰ τῶν ὑποδούλων. Ὅταν οἱ Ρωμηοὶ κατόρθωναν νὰ φιλοδωρήσουν τὸν τοπικὸ μπέη τότε λειτουργοῦσε σχολεῖο ἐλευθερο, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸ γιὰ λίγα χρόνια. Στὴν συνέχεια ἐδημεύετο τὸ κτίριο καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ ἐστέλλοντο στὸ σπῆτι τους. Καὶ καταλήγει ὁ Ράνσιμαν: «Γιὰ τοὺς πιὸ πολλοὺς Τούρκους ἢ Παιδεῖα τῶν ὑποδούλων φυλῶν ἦταν κάτι τελείως ἀνεπιθύμητο». Γι' αὐτὲς, λοιπόν, τὶς δύσκολες περιπτώσεις, καὶ ἰδίως γιὰ τοὺς δύο πρώτους καὶ ὑπέρ-σκοτεινοὺς αἰῶνες τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας χρειάσθηκε νὰ λειτουργήσουν καὶ τὰ Κρυφὰ Σχολεῖα. Ὁ παπᾶς ἢ ὁ καλόγερος, λαμβάνοντας τὶς κατάλληλες προφυλάξεις, δίδασκαν στὰ παιδιὰ τοῦ χωριοῦ τὰ «κολλυβογράμματα» μὲ διδακτικὰ ἐγχειρίδια τὸ Ψαλτήρι καὶ τὴν Ὁκτώηχο.

Στὴν ἐποχὴ μας ἐμφανίσθηκαν ὀρισμένοι ἐρευνητές, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἀμφισβήτησαν τὴν ὑπαρξὴ Κρυφοῦ Σχολεῖου. Ἀφοῦ λειτούργησαν ὀνομαστὰ Ἑλληνικὰ Σχολεῖα ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας, λένε, τί ἀνάγκη ὑπῆρχε γιὰ κρυφὴ ἐκπαίδευση; Προφανῶς λησμονοῦν τὴν παρατήρησιν τοῦ Ράνσιμαν, ὅπως ἐπίσης θέλουν νὰ ἀγνοοῦν τὸ γεγονὸς ὅτι τὰ γνωστὰ σχολεῖα τοῦ Γένους λειτούργησαν κυρίως μετὰ τὸ 1650. Στοὺς δύο πρώτους αἰῶνες τί γινόταν; Τοὺς διαμνέουν ἐπίσης τὰ ἀάπολλα τοπωνύμια σὲ διάφορα

μέρη τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ ποὺ ἀναφέρονται στὸ Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο. Στὰ Γιάννενα, στὴν Ἀρκαδία, στὴ Μάνη, στὴν Ἰο, στὴν Κρήτη, στὴν Βοιωτία καὶ ἄλλου, ἀκόμη καὶ σήμερα δείχνουν οἱ ντόπιοι μοναστήρια ἢ σπηλιές μὲ τὸ ὄνομα Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο. Τὶ συνέβη ἄραγε; Ἐπαθαν ὁμαδικὴ παράκρουση οἱ κάτοικοι ὧλων αὐτῶν τῶν τόπων καὶ προσεχώρησαν σέ ἓνα «μῦθο» ποὺ καλλιιεργεῖ ἡ Ἐκκλησία; Ἀλλὰ τὴν πιὸ ἀποστομωτικὴ ἀπάντηση στοὺς ἀρνητὲς τοῦ Κρυφοῦ Σχολεῖοῦ δίδει ὁ Γάλλος δημοσιογράφος Ρενέ Πυὼ στὸ βιβλίο του «Δυστυχημένη Βόρειος Ἡπειρος». Ὁ Πυὼ ἐπεσκέφθη τὸ Ἀργυρόκαστρο τὸ 1913, μόλις εἶχε ἐλευθερωθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν Ἑλληνικὸ Στρατό. Ἐκεῖ λοιπὸν γνῶρισε δεκάδες Ἑλληνόπουλα, τὰ ὁποῖα τοῦ ὁμολόγησαν ὅτι ἔκαναν κρυφὰ μαθήματα ἐπειδὴ οἱ Τοῦρκοι ἀπηγόρευαν τὴν διδασκαλίαν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἱστορίας! Τοῦτο γινόταν στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 20οῦ αἰῶνος. Σκεφθῆτε τί γινόταν σέ πολὺ πιὸ δύσκολα χρόνια.

Ἄλλωστε ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ «κατασκευασμένους μῦθους» γιὰ νὰ τονίσῃ τὴν προσφορά της στὴν Παιδείαν τοῦ ὑποδούλου Γένους, διότι καὶ σέ ὅσα φανερά καὶ δημόσια σχολεῖα λειτουργοῦσαν ἡ παρουσία της ἦταν ἐμφανὴς καὶ καθοδηγητικὴ. Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Βακαλόπουλος στὸ βιβλίο του «Νέα Ἑλληνικὴ Ἱστορία 1204 -1985» παρατηρεῖ: «Ἐνα ὁρόσημο στὴν ἱστορία τῆς παιδείας ἐπὶ τουρκοκρατίας ἀποτελεῖ ἡ ἵδρυση τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς, τῆς γνωστῆς ἀργότερα Πατριαρχικῆς Ἀκαδημίας ἢ Μεγάλης τοῦ Γένους Σχολῆς, ἀπὸ τὸν πρῶτο Πατριάρχη μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωση, τὸν Γεννάδιο, στὰ 1454». Πρέπει νὰ θυμίσουμε ἐπίσης τὴν δράση τοῦ Ἁγίου Κοσμά τοῦ Αἰτωλοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἰδρύσεως Ἑλληνικῶν σχολείων καθὼς καὶ τὴν ἵδρυση τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Σχολῆς στὴν Κύπρο, στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 19ου αἰῶνος ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀρχιεπίσκοπο καὶ μετέπειτα Ἐθνομάρτυρα Κυπριανό. Πρόκειται γιὰ τὸ σημερινὸ Παγκύπριο Γυμνάσιο. Ἀλλὰ καὶ μόνο ἡ παρακολούθηση τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας ἀπὸ τοὺς πιστοὺς ἦταν ἓνα συνεχὲς μάθημα Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσας, ἐνῶ τὰ κηρύγματα τῶν κληρικῶν μετέδιδαν μῆνυμα ἐλπίδας καὶ Ἀναστάσεως. Ἡ ρίζα τῆς Μεγάλης Ἰδέας δὲν βρίσκεται μόνον στὰ δημοτικὰ ἄσματα, στοὺς θρύλους καὶ στὶς παραδόσεις. Βρίσκεται καὶ στὴν εὐχὴ «Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη, ἡ Ἑλλὰς Ἀνέστη» ποὺ ἀκουγόταν ὅταν γιόρταζαν τὸ Πάσχα οἱ ὑπόδουλοι Ἕλληνες.

### **Τὸ Κοινοτικὸ Σύστημα**

Στὴν διάρκεια τῆς τουρκοκρατίας οἱ αὐτοδιοικούμενες κοινότητες τῶν Ρωμηῶν ἀπετέλεσαν τὸν αὐτοφυῆ πολιτικὸ θεσμὸ τοῦ Γένους, καλλιέργησαν τὸ δημοκρατικὸ φρόνημα, καὶ βοήθησαν τοὺς ὑποδούλους νὰ ἀποφύγουν τὴν μεγάλη ἀνάμιξη τῶν Ὀθωμανῶν στὰ ἐσωτερικά τους. Ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἔβαλε ἔντονη τὴν σφραγίδα της στὸν θεσμό. Στὴν πράξιν ἡ κοινότητα ἀποτελεῖ συνέχεια καὶ προέκταση τῆς Ἑνορίας. Μετὰ τὴν Θεία Λειτουργία τῆς Κυριακῆς οἱ Χριστιανοί, ἔχοντας ἐπικεφαλῆς τὸν Ἐπίσκοπο ἢ τὸν ἱερέα, συγκεντρώνονται στὸν αὐλόγυρο τοῦ Ναοῦ καὶ συζητοῦν, ἀποφασίζουν, ψηφίζουν. Οἱ κοινότητες ἐκφράζουν τὴν

δημοκρατικὴ παράδοση τῆς ἀρχαίας Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Δήμου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ Συνοδικοῦ συστήματος, τὸ ὁποῖο τηρεῖ ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία. Ἡδη, ὑπὸ τὴν ἐπίδραση τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας ἀρχίζει ἡ ἀποκέντρωση μὲ θεσμοὺς τοπικῆς αὐτοδιοικήσεως (μητροκομμία) στὰ χρόνια τῆς Ρωμανίας/Βυζαντίου, ὅπως φαίνεται καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ νομοθεσία τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Πορφυρογεννήτου. Τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸ βρίσκει ἐφαρμογὴ στὶς κοινότητες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ στὶς συντεχνίες ποὺ ἄνθησαν κατὰ τὴν περίοδο ἐκείνη. Εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὸ ὅτι στὸ καταστατικὸ τῆς συντεχνίας τῶν Ἀμπελακίων Θεσσαλίας ὑπάρχουν συνεχεῖς ἀναφορὲς στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, ἐνῶ ὡς συντάκτης ὑπογράφει ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος Πλαταμῶνος καὶ Λυκοστομίου Διονύσιος.

Καὶ σέ αὐτὸ τὸ θέμα κάποιον ἀμφισβητῆτες προσπάθησαν νὰ μειώσουν τὸν ρόλο τῆς Ὀρθόδοξου Ἐκκλησίας καὶ παραδόσεως. Ἰσχυρίζονται ὅτι ὁ κοινοτικὸς θεσμὸς εἶναι ἔμπνευση τῶν Ὀθωμανῶν Τούρκων γιὰ νὰ συλλέγουν εὐκολώτερα τοὺς φόρους. Τότε, ὅμως, πῶς ἐξηγεῖται ἡ ἐπιτυχὴς λειτουργία τοῦ θεσμοῦ στοὺς Ἀποδήμιους Ἕλληνες τῆς Δυτικῆς καὶ Ἀνατολικῆς Εὐρώπης; Ἐκεῖ δὲν ὑπῆρχαν Τοῦρκοι γιὰ νὰ ζητοῦν φόρους. Κι ὅμως οἱ κοινότητες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἄνθησαν μὲ ἐπικέντρο πάντα τὸν Ὀρθόδοξο Ναὸ καὶ τὸν ἱερέα. Στὴν Βιέννη, στὴν Βενετία, στὴν Τεργέστη, στὸ Λιβόρνο, στὴν Ὀδησσό, στὴν Νίζνα Οὐκρανίας, στὸ τότε αὐστριακὸ Σεμλίνο-Ζέμουν (σήμερα προάστιο τοῦ Βελιγραδίου) καὶ σέ πολλὰ ἄλλα μέρη τῆς ξενιτιάς οἱ Ἕλληνες λόγιοι καὶ πραματευτάδες συγκεντρώνονται γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τους, ἰδρύουν κοινοτικούς θεσμοὺς ὅπως καὶ οἱ ὑπόδουλοι ἀδελφοὶ τους, διαβάζουν πατριωτικὰ κείμενα καὶ προετοιμάζουν μὲ τὸν τρόπο τους τὴν Ἀνάστασιν τοῦ Γένους.

Καθ' ὅλην τὴν διάρκεια τῆς δουλείας ὑπὸ τοὺς Ὀθωμανοὺς Τούρκους ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ὑπῆρξε ἓνα μεγάλο καὶ διαρκὲς σχολεῖο ἐλπίδας, ὑπομονῆς, πνευματικῆς ἀντιστάσεως, ἠθικῆς ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἐθνικῆς ἀφυπνίσεως. Μόνον ἔτσι μποροῦσε νὰ ἐπιτευχθῇ ἡ Παλιγγενεσία, καὶ μόνον ἔτσι ἐξηγεῖται ἡ βαθεὶα Πίστις τῶν πρωταγωνιστῶν τοῦ 1821. «Μάχου ὑπὲρ Πίστεως καὶ Πατρίδος» ξεκινᾷ ἡ προκήρυξη τοῦ Ἀλ. Ὑψηλάντη τὸν Φεβρουάριον τοῦ 1821. «Ὅταν πήραμε τὰ ὅπλα εἴπαμε πρῶτα ὑπὲρ Πίστεως καὶ ὕστερα ὑπὲρ Πατρίδος» βροντοφώναξε ὁ Γέρος τοῦ Μωριά, ὁ Θεόδωρος Κολοκοτρώνης, στοὺς μαθητὲς τοῦ πρώτου Γυμνασίου τῆς ἀπελευθερωμένης Ἀθήνας. Ἡ δὲ προκήρυξη τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Σαλῶνων Ἡσαΐα καὶ τοῦ Ἀθανασίου Διάκου ἔγραφε ὅτι ἀγωνίζονται «γιὰ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ γιὰ τὸν Λεωνίδα»! Ἐπὶ τέσσερις ἢ καὶ πέντε αἰῶνες ἡ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία ἦταν γιὰ τοὺς ὑποδούλους «τὸ πνευματικὸ πλαίσιο μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο ἐκφραζόταν ἡ ἐθνικὴ τους συνείδηση, ὁλόκληρος ὁ κόσμος τους, ποὺ ἔκλεινε μέσα του τὸ ἐνδοξο παρελθόν καὶ τίς ἐλπίδες ἀπολυτρώσεως» γράφει ὁ Ἀπ. Βακαλόπουλος.

Γι' αὐτὰ βασανίσθηκαν καὶ γι' αὐτὰ ἀγωνίσθηκαν οἱ πρόγονοί μας. Ἐμεῖς οἱ νεώτεροι ὀφείλουμε νὰ μὴν τοὺς διαψεύσουμε.



## Περὶ Ἐλεημοσύνης

Ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο, «Χαρίσματα καὶ Χαρισματοῦχου», ἐκδόσεις Ἱ. Μονῆς Παρακλήτου.

### Ὁ Ἅγιος Μαρτίνος καὶ ὁ Φτωχὸς

Ὁ χειμώνας τοῦ 334 ὑπῆρξε ἰδιαίτερα δριμύς στὴν Ἀμιένη τῆς Βορείου Γαλλίας. Μιὰ πολὺ ψυχρὴ μέρα ὁ ἅγιος Μαρτίνος (316-397) συνάντησε ἕνα φτωχὸ γυμνὸ στὴν πύλη τῆς πόλεως.

Τὶ νὰ κάνῃ ὁμῶς; Φοροῦσε μόνο τὴ στρατιωτικὴ ἐξάρτηση καὶ τὸν Μανδύα του. Παίρνει λοιπὸν τὸ ξίφος του, σχίζει τὸν μανδύα, δίνει ἕνα κομμάτι στὸ φτωχὸ καὶ ἀρκεῖται ὁ ἴδιος στὸ ὑπόλοιπο.

Στὸ δρόμο τὸν περιγελοῦν γιὰ τὴν κολοβή του ἀμφίεση.

Τὴ νύχτα ὁμῶς βλέπει στὸν ὕπνο του τὸν Χριστό, ντυμένο μὲ τὸ κομμάτι τοῦ μανδύα ποὺ εἶχε δωρίσει, νὰ λέει στοὺς ἀγγέλους ποὺ τὸν ἀκολουθοῦσαν:

- Ὁ Μαρτίνος μὲ ἔντυσε μ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἔνδυμα...

Ὁ Ἐλεήμων Πατριάρχης

Ἄν ζητοῦσε κανεὶς στὴν παράδοση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας ἕναν ἅγιο ποὺ νὰ ἐνσαρκώνει κατὰ τὸν καλύτερο τρόπο τὸν «ἰλαρὸν δότην» ποὺ «ἀγαπᾷ ὁ Θεός», θὰ σταματοῦσε σ' ἕναν ἱεράρχη, ποὺ γι' αὐτὴν ἀκριβῶς τὴ ιδιότητα ὀνομάστηκε Ἰωάννης ὁ Ἐλεήμων (†619). Θὰ μπορούσαμε νὰ ἰσχυρισθοῦμε χωρὶς ὑπερβολὴ πὼς ὁλόκληρος ὁ βίος του ἦταν μιὰ διαρκὴς ἐλεημοσύνη.

Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης γεννήθηκε στὴν Κύπρο. Ἦταν πολὺ εὐκατάστατος. Ἡ ἀγάπη ποὺ τοῦ ἐνέπνεε ὁ Χριστὸς γιὰ τοὺς συνανθρώπους του, ἔβρισκε τὴν εὐκαιρία νὰ ἐκδηλωθῇ πλουσιοπάροχα. Καὶ ὅσο μοίραζε στοὺς φτωχοὺς, τόσο ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ ἔδινε περισσότερα ἀγαθά.

Τὰ καλὰ ἔργα του τὸν ἔκαναν γνωστὸ σὲ ὅλη τὴν Κύπρο. Ἡ φήμη του ἔφθασε μέχρι τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη! Καὶ ὅταν ἐκοιμήθη ὁ πατριάρχης Ἀλεξανδρείας, ἡ σκέψη ὅλων στράφηκε στὸν Ἰωάννη. Ἀλλὰ ἐκεῖνος μὲ κανένα τρόπο δὲν ἤθελε νὰ δεχτῇ ν' ἀναλάβῃ τὴν πατριαρχία. Ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ ὁμῶς Ἡράκλειος ἐπέμεινε. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ ὁ λαός. Ἔτσι ὁ Ἰωάννης ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ὑποχωρήσῃ.

Μόλις ἔγινε πατριάρχης, ἀμέσως κάλεσε στὸ γραφεῖο του τοὺς ἱερεῖς τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας ποὺ εἶχαν τὴν φροντίδα τῶν φτωχῶν, καὶ τοὺς εἶπε:

- Πηγαίνετε στὴν πόλη καὶ μάθετε πόσοι εἶναι οἱ κύριοί μου.

Ἐκεῖνοι τὸν κοίταξαν ἐκπληκτοί! Δὲν κατάλαβαν τί ἐννοοῦσε. Τοὺς ἐξήγησε λοιπὸν:

- Ἐννοῶ αὐτοὺς ποὺ συνήθως οἱ ἄνθρωποι τοὺς ὀνομάζουν φτωχοὺς. Αὐτοὶ εἶναι οἱ δικοί μου κύριοι.

Σὲ λίγες μέρες οἱ ἱερεῖς τοῦ ἔφεραν ἐπτάμισυ χιλιάδες ὀνόματα φτωχῶν ποὺ εἶχαν ἀπόλυτη ἀνάγκη βοήθειας. Ὅλους αὐτοὺς φρόντισε μὲ κάθε τρόπο νὰ τοὺς βοηθήσῃ.

Ἀγαποῦσε τόσο πολὺ τοὺς ἄλλους, ὥστε λησμονοῦσε τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἑαυτό του. Ζοῦσε φτωχικά, Δὲν μπορούσε νὰ ἡσυχάσῃ ὅταν σκεφτόταν ὅτι αὐτὸς τὰ εἶχε ὅλα, ἐνῶ ἄλλοι μπορεῖ νὰ μὴν εἶχαν οὔτε ἕνα κομμάτι ψωμί. Γι' αὐτὸ

ἔδινε, ἔδινε μέχρι τοῦ σημείου νὰ μὴν ἔχει τίποτε ὁ ἴδιος. Τὸ ράσο του ἦταν παλιὸ καὶ τριμμένο. Καὶ τὸ δωμάτιό του σχεδὸν ἄδειο.

Κάποτε ἕνας ἄρχοντας ἔτυχε νὰ δῇ σὲ τὴ φτωχικὴ στρωμὴ ἀναπαυόταν ὁ πατριάρχης. Ἀγόρασε λοιπὸν ἕνα ἀκριβὸ πάπλωμα καὶ τοῦ τὸ χάρισε. Ἐκεῖνος τὸ δέχτηκε. Τὸ βράδυ ξάπλωσε καὶ σκεπάσθηκε μὲ τὸ πολυτελὲς πάπλωμα. Μὰ τοῦ ἦταν ἀδύνατο νὰ κλείσῃ μάτι! Στὸ νοῦ του ἐρχόταν ἡ εἰκόνα τῶν φτωχῶν ἀνθρώπων ποὺ θὰ ἔτρεμαν ἀπὸ τὸ κρύο. Τὴν ἄλλη μέρα, πρωὶ-πρωὶ, ἔστειλε καὶ πούλησε τὸ πάπλωμα καὶ μὲ τὰ χρήματα ποὺ πῆρε ἔντυσε πολλοὺς φτωχοὺς, ὅπως γράφει ὁ βιογράφος του Λεόντιος. Τὶ συνέβη ὁμῶς; Συμπτωματικὰ τὸ βλέπει ὁ ἄρχοντας ποὺ τοῦ τὸ εἶχε χαρίσει, τὸ ἀγοράζει πάλι καὶ τὸ ξαναστέλνει στὸν πατριάρχη. Ἀλλὰ ὁ ἅγιος τὸ ξαναπούλησε καὶ ἔντυσε ἄλλους φτωχοὺς! Αὐτὸ ἔγινε καὶ ξανάγινε, ὥσπου κάποτε συναντήθηκαν ὁ πατριάρχης καὶ ὁ δωρητής. Ὁ ἅγιος χαμογέλασε καὶ τοῦ εἶπε:

- Γιὰ νὰ δοῦμε ποιὸς ἀπὸ τοὺς δυὸ θὰ κουραστῇ πρῶτος, ἐγὼ νὰ πουλῶ τὸ πάπλωμα ἢ ἐσὺ νὰ τὸ ἀγοράζῃς;

Τότε ὁ ἄρχοντας ἀποκρίθηκε:

- Ὑπάρχει κίνδυνος νὰ κρυολογήσετε, καὶ τί θὰ γίνουν τόσες χιλιάδες φτωχοί;

- Σ' εὐχαριστῶ πολὺ γιὰ τὸ εἰλικρινές σου ἐνδιαφέρον, ἀπάντησε ὁ πατριάρχης, ἀλλὰ πῶς μπορούσα νὰ ἡσυχάσω ἐγὼ καὶ νὰ κοιμηθῶ, ὅταν γύρω μου τόσα παιδιὰ μου ὑποφέρουν; Μπορεῖ ποτὲ νὰ καλοπερνᾷ ὁ πατέρας, ὅταν στεροῦνται καὶ δεινοπαθοῦν τὰ παιδιὰ του;

Ὁ ἄρχοντας κατάλαβε ὅτι εἶχε δίκιο ὁ ἅγιος καὶ δὲν ξαναμίλησε.

Κάποτε ὁ ἅγιος ἔμαθε πὼς ἕνας φτωχὸς ἦταν σὲ πολὺ μεγάλη στενοχώρια, μὰ ντρεπόταν νὰ ζητήσῃ χρήματα μπρὸς στοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Πάει λοιπὸν ὁ πατριάρχης κρυφὰ τὴ νύχτα μοναχὸς του καὶ τοῦ δίνει ἕνα μεγάλο χρηματικὸ ποσό. Ὁ φτωχὸς γονάτισε καὶ τοῦ φίλησε τὰ πόδια κλαίγοντας.

- Σταμάτα, τοῦ ἀποκρίνεται ἐκεῖνος. Ἀκόμα δὲν σταυρώθηκε, οὔτε ἔχυσα τὸ αἷμα μου γιὰ σένα, ὅπως ἔκανε ὁ Χριστὸς γιὰ ὅλους μας...

Ἡ πολὺτιμη στολή

Ὁ ἅγιος πρεσβύτερος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Μαρκιανὸς στολιζόταν μὲ πολλές ἀρετές, ἰδιαίτερα μὲ τὴν ἀκτημοσύνη καὶ τὴν ἐλεημοσύνη. Παράδοξος συνδυασμός! Ἐνῶ ἦταν ἀκτῆμων, ἔλεοῦσε!...

Καθὼς στεκόταν ψηλότερα ἀπὸ κάθε γήινο ἀγαθὸ, ὁ ἅγιος Μαρκιανὸς δὲν ἀπέκτησε ποτὲ πρᾶγμα δικό του, ποὺ νὰ ἔχῃ κάποια ἀξία, οὔτε δεῦτερο ἔνδυμα! Ὅταν οἱ γνωστοί του τοῦ χάριζαν κάτι, τὸ ἔδινε παρευθὺς στὸν πρῶτο φτωχὸ ποὺ θὰ συναντοῦσε στὸ δρόμο του.

Τὴν ἡμέρα τῶν ἐγκαινίων τοῦ ναοῦ τῆς ἁγίας Ἀναστασίας, ἔφυγε ξημερώματα ἀπὸ τὴ φτωχὴ καμαρούλα του γιὰ νὰ ἐτοιμάσῃ τὸ Ἅγιο Βῆμα. Θὰ ἐρχόταν ὁ πατριάρχης μὲ πολλοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ θὰ ἐρχόταν καὶ ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ μὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἄρχοντες.

Όταν έφθασε στο μεγαλοπρεπέστατο ναό, πού ο ίδιος με την απaráμιλλη δραστηριότητά του είχε ανακαινίσει, τον πλησίασε ένας δυστυχισμένος άνθρωπος, γυμνός μελανιασμένος από το κρύο. Έδειχνε να υποφέρει πολύ. Άπλωσε διστακτικά το χέρι να του γυρέψει έλεημοσύνη. Ο άγιος Μαρκιανός έψαξε τις τσέπες του. Άλλά, συνηθισμένο πράγμα σ' αυτόν, δεν βρήκε καθόλου χρήματα. Έπρεπε όμως να δώσει κάτι σε κείνον τον δυστυχή. Του ράγισε την καρδιά ή γύμνια του, το τρεμουλιασμά του.

Ο φιλόανθρωπος ιερέας πήρε την απόφασή του. Θα του έδινε τα δικά του ρούχα! Δεύτερα δεν είχε, άλλ' αυτό δεν πείραζε. Τώρα θα φορούσε τα ιερατικά του, αφού θα έπαιρνε μέρος στη Θ. Λειτουργία. Πήγε λοιπόν στο σκευοφυλάκιο, φόρεσε τα άμφιά του, και όλα του τα ρούχα τα έδωσε στο φτωχό. Εκείνος έμεινε με το στόμα άνοικτό μπροστά σε τόσο καλωσύνη!

Ήρθαν στο μεταξύ και οι άλλοι κληρικοί με τον πατριάρχη και άρχισε ή Θεία Λειτουργία. Μά κάτι παράδοξο συνέβαινε εκείνη τη μέρα. Τα βλέμματα του έκκλησιάζματος, από τον αυτοκράτορα μέχρι τον τελευταίο πιστό, είχαν καρφωθή πάνω στον Μαρκιανό. Το ίδιο και των κληρικών μέσα στο Ίερό. Δύο μάλιστα από αυτούς είχαν άρχισει να ψιθυρίζουν τις έπικρίσεις τους.

- Πού βρήκε άραγε τη χρυσοϋφαντη στολή; Αυτός δεν έχει ποτέ του χρήματα. Έτσι τουλάχιστον έδειχνε...

- Κοίταξε, με διαμάντια κεντημένη! Έ, αυτό πια καταντᾶ σκάνδαλο.

Όταν στο τέλος της Θ. Λειτουργίας βγήκε με το Άγιο Ποτήριο να κοινωνήση τον κόσμο, ένας ψίθυρος θαυμασμού άκούστηκε από όλα τα χείλη. Ο ναός άστραψε από το φεγγοβόλημα των άμφίων του.

Ένας άνώτερος κληρικός πλησίασε τότε τον πατριάρχη με φανερή αγανάκτηση και του είπε:

- Δεν πρέπει ή άγιωσύνη σου, δέσποτα, να παραλείψει να συστήση κάποια μετριότητα σ' αυτόν τον άσημο κληρικό. Τέτοια στολή ταιριάζει μόνο στο βασιλιά.

Ο άγαθός πατριάρχης άρχισε να στενοχωριέται με τις διαμαρτυρίες του ιερατείου του. Είχε φυσικά και ο ίδιος άπορήσει με την πρωτοφανή πολυτέλεια των άμφίων που φόρεσε—έτσι τουλάχιστον νόμιζε—για την πανήγυρη ο άγιος Μαρκιανός. Τον γνώριζε όμως πολύ καλά και γι' αυτό δεν μπορούσε να τον χαρακτηρίση ματαιόδοξο. Ωστόσο αποφάσισε να του πη κάτι. Μετά την άπόλυση τον κάλεσε στο σκευοφυλάκιο.

- Πού βρήκες τη στολή αυτή, Μαρκιανέ; Θα έλεγε κανείς πώς πήρες την απόφαση να συναγωνιστής σε πολυτέλεια τον αυτοκράτορα! Ο ιερέας πρέπει να είναι μέτριος στην εμφάνισή του, για να μη σκανδαλίζει τον λαό και μάλιστα τις φτωχότερες τάξεις.

Έκείνος έριξε πρώτα ένα φευγαλέο βλέμμα στα φτωχά του άμφια, τα μοναδικά που είχε για να ιεουργή. Έπειτα κοίταξε με άπορία τον πατριάρχη.

- Για ποιά στολή όμιλει ή άγιωσύνη σου, δέσποτα; Άν πρόκειται γι' αυτή που φορά, είναι ή ίδια που πήρα

από τα χέρια σου, όταν πριν από είκοσι πέντε χρόνια με χειροτόνησες πρεσβύτερο!

Ο πατριάρχης συνοφρυώθηκε. Έ, ήταν πάρα πολύ να προσπαθή να τον ξεγελάσει μπροστά στα μάτια του...

- Και αυτή έδω; του φώναξε, παίρνοντας στα χέρια του το φελόνι.

Τότε όμως παρατήρησε πώς κάτω από τα άμφιά του ήταν γυμνός, κι εκείνη ή πολύτιμη στολή που είχε προκαλέσει τόσο θαυμασμό και θόρυβο, δεν ήταν άλλη από τη συνηθισμένη, με την όποια τόσα χρόνια τώρα τον έβλεπε να λειτουργή.

- Ποιός σε γύμνωσε, Μαρκιανέ; ρώτησε έκπληκτος ο πατριάρχης.

Ο άγιος πήρε τότε στα χέρια του το Εύαγγέλιο, πού μόλις πρό όλίγου είχε τοποθετήσει στη θήκη του, και το έδειξε στον άρχιερέα.

- Αυτό με γύμνωσε, άγιε δέσποτα!

Κατασυγινημένος ο πατριάρχης τον έσφιξε στην άγκαλιά του και φιλώντας τον πατρικά του είπε:

- Ώ, αν όλοι οι ιερείς σου έμοιαζαν, δεν θα είχαμε ανάγκη από ιεροκήρυκες. Θα κήρυττε το φωτεινό τους παράδειγμα!



## Όρκος της Φιλικής Έταιρείας

Τέλος πάντων, όρκίζομαι εις Σέ, ω Ίερά πλην τρισαθλία Πατρίς! Όρκίζομαι εις τας πολυχρονίους βασάνους Σου, όρκίζομαι εις τα πικρά δάκρυα, τα όποια τόσους αιώνας έχυσαν και χύνουν τα ταλαιπωρα τέκνα Σου, εις τα ίδια μου τα δάκρυα, χυνόμενα κατά ταύτην την στιγμήν και εις την μέλλουσαν έλευθερίαν των όμογενών μου, ότι άφιερώνομαι όλως εις Σέ. Εις το έξής Σὺ θέλεις είσαι ή αίτία και ό σκοπός των διαλογισμών μου. Το όνομά Σου ό οδηγός των πράξεών μου και ή εύτυχία Σου ή άνταμοιβή των κόπων μου. Η Θεία δικαιοσύνη άς έξαντλήσει επάνω εις την κεφαλήν μου όλους τους κεραυνούς της, το όνομά μου να είναι εις άποστροφήν, και το υποκείμενόν μου το άντικείμενο της κατάρας και του αναθέματος των όμογενών μου, αν ίσως λησμονήσω εις μίαν στιγμήν τας δυστυχίας των και δεν έκπληρώσω το χρέος μου. Τέλος, ό θάνατός μου άς είναι ή άφευκτος τιμωρία του άμαρτήματός μου, διά να μη μολύνω την άγνότητα της έταιρείας με την συμμετοχήν μου.

## ASCENT FROM PROSTITUTION TO SANCTITY

*From "Harlots of the Desert," by Sr. Benedicta Ward, pp. 27, 29-32.*



With the on-going season of fasting (Great Lent), our thoughts ought to be turned toward repentance and one of the best examples of repentance for us is that of St. Mary of Egypt. In the usual versions of St. Mary's life, she is a repentant prostitute who spends most of her life in the desert, living alone in repentance. There is another,

lesser known, version of her life, though, which is also worth reading and was commonly known among the ancient Desert Fathers. Both versions are instructive, and do not necessarily contradict each other.

**First**, the more commonly-known version:

In her youth, Mary chose to live a dissolute life in Alexandria until, one day, drawn by curiosity, she joined some pilgrims going by ship to Jerusalem. On the way she seduced many of her companions, and continued to live in this way in Jerusalem. On the day appointed for the veneration of the Holy Cross (September 14), Mary went with the others to the door of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where the relic of the True Cross was to be displayed. She went forward to enter the church with the other pilgrims, but on the threshold an invisible force seemed to prevent her from entering. At once sudden contrition filled her heart and she began to weep, praying to Mary the Mother of God to help her. Next morning she found she could enter the church and venerate the cross. At once she left the city and crossed over Jordan, taking only a little bread which she had bought with some coins a pilgrim had given her. In the desert she lived for forty seven years until a priest, Zossima, found her by accident, heard her story, gave her communion and eventually returned in time to bury her, a lion helping him to dig her grave.

In the **second** version of her life, St. Mary did not immediately leave Jerusalem after consecrating herself to God, but instead stayed on at the Holy Sepulchre as a nun where she again fell into sin:

An anchorite told this story to the brothers: "When I was living in the desert on the slopes of Arnona, one day a weakness of soul came upon me and my thoughts said to me, 'Go for a walk in the desert.'

I came to a dried up stream; it was an advanced hour in the evening and by the light of the moon I fixed my eyes on a distant object and I saw that it was sitting on a rock. Then I reflected that even if it was indeed a lion, I ought not to be afraid but to entrust myself to the grace of Christ. So I approached the rock, and by the side of it there was a narrow opening. At once the being I had seen afar off hid itself in

this cave. When I reached the top of the rock, I found there a basket full of bread and a jar of water which showed me that it must be a human being. I called to him, 'Servant of God, be so kind as to come out so that I may be blessed by you.' He was silent but when I had renewed my appeal several times, he answered me thus: 'Excuse me, father, but I cannot come out.' When I asked why, he said, 'You must know that I am a woman and that I am naked.'

At these words I rolled up the cloak that I was carrying, and threw it into the opening in the rock, saying to her, 'Here, cover yourself and come out' and she did so. When she had come out, we offered a prayer to God and we sat down. Then I asked her, 'My mother, of your kindness, tell me what has happened to you. How long have you been here? Why did you undertake this journey? And how did you find this cave?'

She began to tell me about herself thus: 'Once I was a consecrated virgin living in the Holy Sepulchre. One of the monks who had his cell at the gate got to know me. I used to meet him so often that it reached the point where we fell into sin. I would go to his house and he would come to mine. One day, as I was going to his cell as usual, I heard him weeping before God and making his confession to Him. I knocked on the door, but he, because of what he had done with me, did not open it to me at all. He went on weeping and confessing.

Seeing this, I said to myself, 'He is repenting of his sins but I do not repent of mine. He is lamenting his faults; shall I not also afflict myself?' Re-entering my cell alone, I dressed myself poorly and filled this basket with loaves and this jar with water, and then I went into the Holy Sepulchre. There I prayed asking that the great God, the wonderful, who came to save those who were lost and to raise up those that are fallen, He who hears all those who address themselves to Him in truth, that He would show mercy towards me, a sinful woman; and if He should find the repentance and transformation of my soul acceptable, that He would bless these loaves and this water so that they would last me to the end of my life, so that no necessity of the flesh or needs of hunger should give me a pretext for interrupting perpetual praise.'

'After that I went into Holy Golgotha where I offered the same prayer and touching the top of the Holy Stone, there I invoked the holy Name of God. Then having reached Jericho and crossed over Jordan, I journeyed the length of the Dead Sea, for at that time the water was not very high. I crossed the mountains and wandered in the desert and I had the good fortune to find this dried up stream. When I climbed this rock, I found this cave here and when I went into it its narrowness pleased me greatly, for it made me think that the good God had offered it to me as a place of refuge.

'I have been here thirty years without having seen anyone except you at this hour. The basket of loaves and the jar of water have sufficed for my needs until now without failing me. After a time my clothes wore out but my hair had grown



and I was covered with it in such a way that neither heat nor cold made me suffer by the grace of Christ.'

After these words, she invited me to take some of the loaves, for she sensed that I was very hungry. We ate and drank equally. Once, I looked into the basket and saw that the loaves remained as they had been and also the water had not diminished and I praised God. I wanted to leave her my old robe but she would not have it. She said, 'You will bring me new clothing,' which pleased me very much and I begged her to wait for me just there. We offered a prayer to God and I went away, marking all the way my path for my return.

I went back to the church of the nearby village and told the priest about the matter. He told the faithful that certain of the saints were living naked and that those who had too many clothes should offer them to them. The friends of Christ gave many clothes diligently and I took what was necessary and went off joyously in the hope of seeing again this spiritual mother. But I could not find the cave again although I wore myself out seeking it. And when at last by chance I saw it, the woman inspired by God was no longer to be found there; her absence affected me deeply.

Some days later some anchorites came to visit me, and they told this story: 'When we came to the edge of the sea, we saw by night in the desert an anchorite whose hair covered him; when we begged him to bless us, he fled quickly, entering a little cave which we found nearby. We wanted to go in but he implored us, saying, 'Oh servants of Christ, do not disturb me! Lo, on top of the rock is a basket of loaves and a jar of water; please be good enough to serve yourselves.'

'He offered a prayer for us to God, and when we reached the top we found things as he had said. We sat down and although we ate, the bread did not diminish, and although we drank of the water in the jar it remained the same. For the rest of the night we were silent. At dawn we got up to be blessed by the anchorite and we found him asleep in the Lord. Also, we discovered that he was a woman who had been naked and who had covered herself with her hair. We received a blessing from her body and rolled a stone to the entry, to the cave. Then, having offered a prayer to God, we came away.'

Then I understood that he spoke of the holy mother, the former consecrated virgin, and I told them what I had learned from her. Together we glorified God to Whom be glory to ages of ages. Amen."



Spread your cloak over the man who is falling and cover him. And if you cannot take upon yourself his sins and receive his chastisement in his stead, then at least patiently suffer his shame and do not disgrace him.

**St. Isaac the Syrian, Homilies**

## TRUE FAST

*By Archbishop Averky.*



The Lenten spring has shone forth. Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast.

The majority of today's Christians understand neither the cause for rejoicing, nor the meaning of a true fast. Many people of this day and age regard the essence of the fast to consist solely in the prohibition of certain foods: meat, milk, cheese, eggs; and they do not understand the purpose of such a prohibition. Some who enjoy eating go so far as to become indignant at the Church

for having established this tradition. "There is no reason for it; it's unnecessary," they say. "It makes no difference what you eat." And in practice they ignore the fast and make no effort to keep it.

It is rare nowadays to find anyone who rejoices at the approach of Lent and who keeps the fast, especially one who keeps it as prescribed by the Church typicon. Most people simply disregard the fast, or they think up various excuses and justifications for not fasting; some even say that it is impossible to find and to prepare Lenten foods. We are not speaking here of those who, on account of frail health or illness, are unable to fast; such people are excused from fasting both by the canons of the church and by the Holy Fathers.

It is important to know and to remember that a true fast does not consist in bodily abstinence alone. It is a gross error to think that the essence of Lent lies simply in not eating certain foods. This was never the teaching of the Church. On the contrary, it always taught that with the fast of the body it is indispensable to join a spiritual fast—which is at the heart of the matter and the very reason the Church instituted fasting.

The week preceding Lent we address our souls: *You abstain from meat, Oh my soul, and do not cleanse yourself of the passions; in vain do you rejoice in not eating; if the fast does not serve for your amendment, it will be false and despised by God, and you will only be likened to the evil spirits who abstain from food altogether.*

The fast of the body—for those who are able to keep it strictly—is exceedingly important, beneficial and necessary, but only as a powerful, secondary means which supports what is of primary importance, the spiritual fast. The aim of the fast is to bridle the flesh where sin finds root, and also to bring oneself into humble obedience to the Church. Our life's task is to uproot the sinful passions: gluttony, avarice, pride—from which stem all the other numerous passions able to stir up an eagerness for sin. These serve the cause of evil in the world

and bring countless misfortunes upon man. Already in this life these passions can create a foretaste of hell and ultimately lead a man to death, even *spiritual death*—which is the *reward for sin* (Rom. 6:23).

In the profoundly edifying hymns of the first week of Lent the Church sings: *While fasting with the body, brethren, let us also fast in spirit...* How are we to fast “in spirit”? We are told: *Let us loose every bond of iniquity; let us undo the knots of every contract made by violence; let us tear up all unjust agreements; let us give bread to the hungry and welcome to our house the poor who have no roof to cover them; that we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.* (Wednesday vesper stichera) Even more clearly is this expressed in the stichera for Monday’s vespers: *Let us observe a fast acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. True fasting is to put away evil, to control the tongue, to forbear from anger, to abstain from lust, slander, falsehood, and perjury. If we renounce these things, then is our fasting true and acceptable to God.*

What further explanation is needed to understand what a true fast, a spiritual fast is? It is the withdrawal of the soul from all evil. Of course, this is what each and every true Christian must always be doing, but in the frenzy of worldly life it is too often forgotten; many spend their energies in serving the very passions they should be struggling to uproot. With Great Lent the Church makes a special effort to impress upon us the need for spiritual labor; it calls us to repentance, to the battle against evil which springs from our sinful passions.

If you are honestly unable, if you haven’t the strength to keep the fast of the flesh, then at least keep the spiritual fast; this everyone can do. And you will be a “faster” such as the Church desires to behold. *Let us keep the Fast not only refraining from food but by becoming strangers to all the bodily passions.* (Tuesday Vespers stichera)

Then there are those who keep a very strict fast, eating almost nothing, while at the same time they make no effort to war against evil thoughts and feelings; they freely allow their tongues to malign their neighbor and engage in idle talk, up-setting and tempting others, instigating them to evil actions; they become irritated, angry with their neighbor to the point of working themselves into a perfect rage; they give themselves over to gluttony, drunkenness and fornication; they slander and accuse the innocent; they lie, they violate oaths.

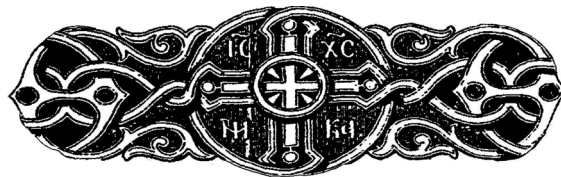
The fasting of such people is not only vain; it is a pharisaic hypocrisy. How often nowadays do we meet those who either avoid fasting or who keep only the bodily fast, while priding themselves before those who do not fast as strictly; they exalt themselves as being righteous, seeking praise and accepting it to the satisfaction of their vain-glory. These earn for themselves the incriminating words of the Lord which He directed towards the Pharisees: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly*

*appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* (Mt 23:27-28)

It is not good to be like the Pharisees; on the other hand it is also not good to violate the fast out of fear of being branded a Pharisee—as indeed happens in this age of light-mindedness and unbelief. Such accusations are widespread; even where there is genuine piety and an honest effort to live according to the commandments of God and the ordinances of the Church.

To avoid becoming infected with Phariseism, in any of its forms, we must always have in mind the parable concerning the publican and the Pharisee. Here the Lord teaches that one must not think highly of oneself, judging and belittling others. On the contrary, one must constantly humble oneself in one’s thoughts, judging oneself, not others. There exists no worse, nor more pernicious mania than this self-exaltation which leads to the very depths of hell. *For I say...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.* (Rom. 12:3)

What is then our aim? Let us flee from the proud-speaking of the Pharisee and let us learn the noble humility of the Publican, crying out with repentance, as the Publican prayed, **O God, be merciful to me a sinner.** With such an inward disposition, *Let us set out with joy upon the season of the fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat. Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh; and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit may we persevere with love, and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and with great spiritual gladness to behold His holy Passover.* (Forgiveness Sunday Vespers)



## PARADISE LOST

Why did Adam and Eve lose Paradise, why did they fall into sin and death? Was it not because of one evil? Let us attentively consider why we do not care about the salvation of our soul, which cost the Son of God so dearly. Why do we compound sin upon sin, fall endlessly into opposing God, into a life of vanity? Is it not because of a passion for earthly things and especially for earthly pleasures?

What makes our hearts become crude? Why do we become flesh and not spirit, perverting our moral nature? Is it not because of a passion for food, drink, and other earthly comforts? How after this can one say that it does not matter whether you eat non-Lenten food during Lent? The fact that we talk this way is in fact pride, idle thought, disobedience, refusal to submit to God, and separation from Him.

**St. John of Kronstadt**

## THE ROOM

By Joshua Harris.

*While the author of this article is not Orthodox, he never the less presents our youth with a compelling basis for participating in the Holy Sacrament of Confession.*

In that place between wakefulness and dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for the one wall covered with small index-card files. They were the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endless in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read “Girls I Have Liked.” I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.

And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn’t match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their contents. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching. A file named “Friends” was next to one marked “Friends I Have Betrayed.”

The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. “Books I Have Read,” “Lies I Have Told,” “Comfort I Have Given,” “Jokes I Have Laughed At.” Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: “Things I’ve Yelled at My Brothers.” Others I couldn’t laugh at: “Things I Have Done in Anger,” “Things I Have Muttered under My Breath at My Parents.” I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes there were fewer than I hoped.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my twenty years to write each of these thousands, possibly millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature. When I pulled out the file marked “Songs I Have Listened To,” I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly and yet after two or three yards, I hadn’t found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to a file marked “Lustful Thoughts,” I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed contents. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded.

Suddenly I felt an almost animal rage. One thought dominated my mind: “No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!” In an instant frenzy, I yanked the file out. Its size didn’t matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took the file at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it.

Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore “People I Have Shared my Faith With”. The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand.

And then the tears came. I began to weep. Sobs so deep that the hurt started in my stomach and shook through me. I fell on my knees and cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever, ever know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key.

But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but my Lord, Jesus Christ.

I watched helplessly as He began to open the files and read the cards. I couldn’t bear to watch His response. And in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemed to intuitively go the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally He turned and looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. But this was a pity that didn’t anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and began to cry again. He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn’t say a word. He just cried with me.

Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.

“No!” I shouted, rushing to Him. All I could find to say was “No, no,” as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn’t be on these cards. But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood.

He gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile and continued to sign the cards. I don’t think I’ll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but the next instant it seemed I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder and said, “It is finished.”

I stood up, and He led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written...

*But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1:9]*



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## THE HAND OF HOPE

By George Karras, "Orthodox Heritage" Editor.

The picture in this page was taken in 2000 and is of a 21-week fetus hand, reaching up through an incision in its mother's uterus, to grab the finger of the surgeon who had just performed a life-saving procedure. It should be "The Picture of the Decade," or perhaps, "The Picture of the Century." Yet it is so unknown to most of us...

The 21-week-old unborn baby is named Samuel Alexander Armas and is seven-years old today. He was being operated on by a surgeon named Joseph Bruner. The fetus was diagnosed with spina bifida and would not survive if removed from the mother's womb. Dr. Joseph Bruner is known for his work in fetal surgery, especially on babies with spina bifida (a condition in which the spine does not close properly during development). Little Samuel's mother, Julie Armas, is an obstetrics nurse in Atlanta. She knew of Dr. Bruner's remarkable surgical procedure. Practicing at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, he performs these special operations while the baby is still in the womb. In the procedure, a C-section removes the uterus and the doctor makes a small incision to operate on the baby.

During the surgery on little Samuel, the little guy reached his tiny but fully developed hand through the incision and firmly grasped the surgeon's finger. The photograph captured this amazing event with perfect clarity. The original story editors titled the

picture, "Hand of Hope." Michael Clancy, the photographer who took the picture says that out of the corner of his eye he saw the uterus shake and the baby's hand pop out of the surgical opening on its own. Clancy says that when the doctor put his finger into the baby's hand, the baby squeezed the finger and held on. You can read Clancy's description of the experience and more about the picture at his website at [www.michaelclancy.com](http://www.michaelclancy.com). The text explaining the picture begins, "The tiny hand of 21-week-old fetus Samuel Alexander Armas emerges from the mother's uterus to grasp the finger of Dr. Joseph Bruner as if thanking the doctor for the gift of life."



That picture should be shown on every television newscast and run in every newspaper in America. It is a graphic reminder that growing in the womb of his or her mother is a baby. It is not a "glob of tissue," or "product of conception." That pre-born baby is a human being with all the emotions, will and personality of any human being. That picture says it in a way that a thousand words cannot.

Little Samuel's mother said they "wept for days" when they saw the picture. She said, "The photo reminds us my pregnancy isn't about disability or illness, it's about a little person." That's what it's always been about. That's what the liberal elite have tried to get us to forget. May this image jog our memories so that we will never forget that a fetus is a human being, created in the image of our Lord, and has the same "right to life" as every other human being in this or any other society...

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So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

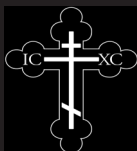
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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

## In This Issue:

- **Perverse Thoughts Separate Man from God (p. 2)**
- **Fool's Water (p. 4)**
- **Physical Illness and Healing (p. 5)**
- **On Abortion (p. 6)**
- **Miraculous Intercessions of St. John Maximovitch (p. 11)**
- **What Has the Feast of Pascha Left in Our Souls (p. 13)**
- **On Antidoron (p. 14)**



- **Περὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ (σελ. 7)**
- **Ὑποκρισία: τὸ Κέφυλος τοῦ Θανάτου (σελ. 9)**
- **Ἡ Πίστις τοῦ Λαοῦ μας κατὰ τὴν Μ. Ἑβδομάδα (σελ. 10)**



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## THE FEAST OF FEASTS

*A past Paschal Epistle by Metropolitan Philaret (of blessed memory).*

We greet the right reverend archpastors, the right honorable pastors and our beloved flock on the great and splendid feast of which the Holy Church says is the *feast of feasts and solemnity of solemnities*.

Our Orthodox divine services are a most rich spiritual treasure, an inexhaustible wellspring of spiritual edification and liturgical beauty. Yet if this can be said in general of all the Church's prayer services and hymnography—the crown and shining summit of them all is the short and terse troparion of the Resurrection of Christ, the principal hymn, the song of triumph, of our Faith. *Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, upon those in the tombs bestowing life!*

It is not without purpose that throughout the paschal services on the radiant night of Pascha and on the days of the paschal season, this troparion is constantly repeated persistently, triumphantly, as no other troparion or hymn of the Church is chanted or exclaimed. We know from the holy Gospel that, eight days prior to His Resurrection, Christ the Saviour worked a great, tremendous and awesome miracle: He resurrected from the dead Lazarus who had been four days in the tomb. And in the Gospel it says that before this miracle He said to Martha, the sister of the dead Lazarus: *I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.* (Jn 11:25-26)

What marvelous words! What a wonderful promise! In them one is given to understand that, for the believer, death itself, which is so horrible for others,

ceases to be dreadful, for after it, there is a again life! In these joyous words so much is said that man's soul, which trembles before the dread spectra of death, seeks confirmation, seeks proof that what is said in these words is the truth! And behold! In His own glorious Resurrection from the dead the Lord has given mankind just such proof of the truth of His promises. Who could verify His words if He Himself was a victim of death and lay in the tomb? But He rose from the dead in glory, and thereby He assured His faithful of the truth of His words, that He is the resurrection, and the life!

It is for just this reason that the Church, on Holy Pascha, signs so triumphantly that He is risen from the dead and by death has trampled death underfoot. It chants this, and repeats it over and over, and thus insistently and joyfully summons her children to this joy, the joy of the victory of life over death.

Rejoice, O Christian soul! We live in a difficult time. Never in the history of mankind have evil and opposition to the righteousness of God appeared so brazenly, so shamelessly, so provocatively as in our sorry days. Life is literally overflowing with evil, filth and falsehood! Yet can we fall into despondency and despair if we have faith in Him Who, warning His disciples, said to them: *In the world ye shall have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:39) And He has given His faithful a share in this victory, as His apostle says: *For whoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* (I Jn 5:4)

And the principal celebration of this victory is the great and radiant feast, the *feast of feasts and solemnity of solemnities....!*

**Christ is Risen!**

Metropolitan Philaret



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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His truth be brought forth.

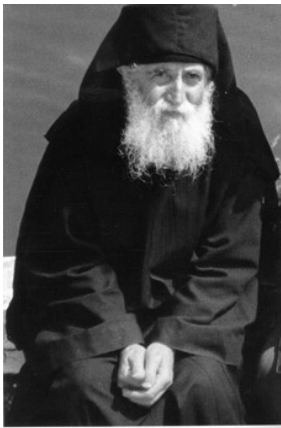
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## "FOR PERVERSE THOUGHTS SEPARATE MEN FROM GOD" (WIS 1:3)

Source: "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain, pp. 29-34.



Elder Paisios always urged us to think positively. Our positive thinking, however, should not be our ultimate aim; eventually our soul must be cleansed from our positive thoughts as well, and be left bare having as its sole vestment divine grace granted to us through Holy Baptism. "This is our aim," he used to say, "to totally submit our mind to the grace of God. The only thing Christ is asking from us is our humility. The rest is taken

care of by His grace. In the beginning, we should willingly try to develop positive thoughts, which will gradually lead us towards the perfect goodness which is God, and to whom belongs every glory, honor and worship; on the other hand, to us belongs only the humility of our conceited attitude."

"We must always be careful and constantly question the nature of our thoughts. When someone is preoccupied and trusts his own way of thinking, he becomes vulnerable to the devil, who is capable of transforming us into sly persons, even when we are honest by nature. The older fathers never trusted their own thoughts. Even for minor problems to which they had to give answers, they prayed to God, or fasted, as a way to 'force' divine grace to reveal the answers according to God's

will; and after they got the 'information,' they gave the answer. In our days, when someone has a serious problem and asks for advice, we tend to interrupt him and provide an answer without letting him finish his question first. In this case, we do not only avoid seeking the assistance of divine grace, but we also misuse our logic, which was granted to us by God. We are ruled by our own thoughts and unhesitatingly rely on them, very often having to face the disastrous results of our acts."

"Almost all of us consider our thoughts to be simple and natural, therefore, we spontaneously rely on them. On the contrary, we should neither trust, nor accept them. We must not have any thoughts in our mind or heart, neither positive ones, nor negative ones, for this space inside us belongs to the grace of God. We are obliged to keep it clean, not only of our various thoughts but also of the slightest and most elusive slip of the mind. We can only achieve this, if we fervently love Christ and unhesitatingly trust Him. As a result, we humble ourselves, and divine grace, naturally, will be revived inside us, for it is only granted to the humble ones; *God opposes the proud, but gives Grace to the humble.* (1Pet 5:5).

"If we must, then we should have only positive thoughts; otherwise none of the spiritual fathers—not even the Saints—can help us. When Jesus was on the Cross and all the terrible events were taking place, two thieves were also being crucified with him. *And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* (Mk 15:33) ... *And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs, after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.* (Mt 27:51-53). Each one of them had a different attitude towards Him, even

though they were both placed next to the same God; a God who had never been blamed for, or accused by anyone for the slightest sin. On the contrary, many people were benefited by Him: some had been cured of a specific disease, others had been resurrected and all these miracles took place in public. Now, even nature was reacting against the injustice done to Him.”

“The thief placed on the left cross had created inside his mind a ‘factory,’ which produced only negative thoughts. ... *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.’* (Lk 23:39). Although he could see what was going on around him, he never questioned himself about it. The one on the right, who had a positive way of thinking, reacted as follows: *But the other rebuked him saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*’ (Lk 23:40-42). Both thieves had the same almighty God placed between them who could help them. The negative thinking of the one on the left prevented God from helping him, whereas the one on the right—who had committed terrible crimes and was legitimately being punished—was able to ‘move’ Jesus with his positive attitude. And He said to him: *Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.* (Lk 23:43).

“We should keep in mind that God ‘cannot’ help us, even if He really wants to, unless we acquire a positive way of thinking. Concerning the spiritual progress of a disciple monk, it is more important for him to develop good thoughts than to be guided by a spiritual father who is considered a living saint...”

Looking at this subject from a different point of view, Elder Paisios stressed and greatly emphasized the specific characteristics of love, that is, that *love is not irritable or resentful* (1Cor 13:4). He used to say that “we should never, even under the worst circumstances, allow a negative thought to penetrate our soul. The person, who, under all circumstances, is inclined to have positive thoughts, will always be a winner; his life will be a constant festivity, since it is constantly based on his positive thinking. Our acts depend on and are determined by the ‘machine’ we digest, or the environment we live in. I will give you an example, so you can better understand what I am trying to say: If one has a machine that produces bullets and feeds it with the highest quality material, let’s say gold, the machine will still convert gold into bullets, golden but destructive bullets; if he feeds it with silver, then it will produce silver bullets; if he feeds it with iron, it will produce iron bullets, or if he feed it with clay, it will produce clay bullets. In other words, no matter what material he feeds his machine, it still produces bullets, because it was made to manufacture these destructive products. If someone converts the machine into

one that produces holy chalices instead of bullets, then whatever material he feeds it, it will always produce holy chalices. If he puts in the machine clay or iron, it will manufacture clay or iron chalices respectively.”

“I will now tell you a story regarding a very old father from Kapsala. The old father’s ‘machine’ was the kind that produced only positive thoughts. He only saw the good things in life and he was blind to every evil. Once, a group of people visited him and brought him a small radio as a present. The old father took it in his hands and examined it with lots of admiration. He asked where it was manufactured and the visitors told him in Japan. As he was looking at it, suddenly he was filled with joy and started kissing the radio saying: ‘Glory to God!’ The visitors asked him why he was glorifying God and he explained to them: ‘You see, I am very pleased that the Japanese Christians put the sign of the Holy Cross on the products they manufacture.’ ”

“The old father had noticed the positive and negative pole (+, -) of the batteries and thought it was the sign of the Cross. His mind produced a simplistic and positive thought for the radio the visitors brought him. Considering he was an ascetic, he could have developed negative thoughts and got angry at them for bringing him such an unsuitable present. Someone asked the same old father why he was making the sign of the Cross when he saw an airplane. And he simply answered: “Don’t you see, my child that its shape looks like the sign of our Holy Cross? The old father ignored the negative thoughts associated with the sight of an airplane, such as wars and bombing. His mind was attracted by the similarity of its shape to the sign of the Holy Cross; the sight and noise of the airplane made him think of the crucifixion of Christ.”

“A few years ago, I went to Athens for business and I stayed at the house of a fellow Christian. The area was very noisy as the house was located near a central road. My friend told me that he had trouble sleeping at night due to the noise, so he ended up taking sleeping pills. After we had dinner, they took me to my room and told me:

-Elder, this is your room and I hope you will be able to sleep, despite the noise and the traffic.

Next morning, when I got out of my room, my friend said:

-I couldn’t sleep all night due to the terrible noise. How about you?

-I have never slept so well, not even on Mount Athos.

-How is this possible, Father Paisios?

Then I told him what had happened since the moment I entered into my room. (At the time, the Vietnam War was taking place, and everyday we heard sad stories in the news and I used to pray to God to help the people in Vietnam). ”

“When I went into my room, I knelt in front of the bed. I put my head and hands on the bed and started praying for all the soldiers who were fighting and getting killed in Vietnam.

I could hear the noise of the traffic, but as my mind was concentrated on the Vietnam War, I converted the traffic noise into the noise of the war tanks that were destroying buildings and killing people. Once in a while, a motorcycle was passing by making a very loud noise that made the windows creak; I immediately associated this noise with the one of the airplanes bombing Vietnam, and I could see helpless children and old people getting killed. I felt a sweet grief inside me, and I was crying for the situation in Vietnam, and I despised myself for enjoying the luxury of a nice meal and a clean room and for not having any problems. As I was crying, I was filled with a peaceful spiritual calmness, and finally fell asleep kneeling in front of my bed. The traffic noise did not interrupt my sleep at all, as my thoughts were directed to those suffering in Vietnam."

"You can do the same thing: Think about wars, the people who are being killed or dying of hunger, the houses that are being bombed; and also think about yourself living in a luxurious home, eating plenty of food, having a job, being safe and sound. Then, the association of the traffic noise with the noise of the war will become a very good reason for you to glorify God and will prevent you from taking sleeping pills. There is only one solution: to have positive thoughts."



Without repentance and admittance into the True Church of Christ, it is unthinkable and unnatural to speak of the unification of the "churches," about the dialogue of love, about intercommunion...

The contemporary "dialogue of love," which takes the form of naked sentimentality, is in reality a denial of the salutary sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the *truth* (II Thess 2:13), that is to say, the unique salutary *love of truth* (II Thess 2:10). The essence of love is truth—love lives and thrives as truth...

There can be no "dialogue of love" without the dialogue of truth. Otherwise, this dialogue is not true and is not natural. Accordingly, the commandment of the Apostle asks that *love be genuine* (Rom. 12:9). The heretico-humanistic separation of—and detachment of—love from truth is a sign of the lack of theanthropic faith, and a loss of theanthropic balance and common sense. At any rate, it was never—nor is it—the way of the Fathers ...

St. Justin Popovich (+1979)

## FOOL'S WATER

*An eastern tale by the Theologian & Iconographer Photios Kontoglu.*

Once upon a time there was a Sultan who was good and just. This Sultan had a Vizier (chief adviser) who was also good and just. The Vizier also happened to be an astrologer. One day the Vizier said to the Sultan he had seen a sign in the heavens which said that it was going to rain fool's water, and whosoever drinks from that water will become foolish. All the people in the land will drink from that water and will lose their reasoning, they will no longer have a good sense of anything, they will not be able to tell right from wrong, nor truth from falsehood, nor sweet from sour, not even justice from injustice.

When the Sultan heard this he turned to the Vizier and said: "Since everybody will lose their minds we must take care not to lose ours, for otherwise how will we make just judgments?" The Vizier told him that he was quite right and that he should order that the good water they now drank was collected and kept in special reservoirs, so that they wouldn't drink from the ruined water and make foolish and unjust judgments, but rather just ones, as they were obliged to. That is what happened.

A little while later it really did rain, and the rain that came down really was fool's water, and the people really did become fools. The poor things no longer had any idea of what was happening to them. They thought that falsehood was truth, good was bad, and injustice was justice. However, the Sultan and his Vizier drank from the good water which they had stored away and so did not lose their reasoning, but rather judged everybody with justice and righteousness. However everybody took this the wrong way, and they were not pleased with the Sultan's and the Vizier's judgments and governmental decisions. They shouted that they had been wronged, they nearly caused a revolution.

Some time later, when they had seen more than enough, the Sultan and the Vizier lost their courage, and the Sultan said to the Vizier: "Those poor fellows really have lost their minds, and they see everything the wrong way around. If we carry on like this they will kill us because we want to judge them correctly with justice. Therefore my dear Vizier, let's throw away the good water and let us also drink the fool's water. We will become like them and then they'll understand us and they'll love us again." That's what happened. They also drank from the fool's water, they lost their minds and started to make foolish and unjust judgments, and all the people were happy and congratulated the Sultan for his wisdom.

Kontoglu also commented "Let us not throw away the small amount of water that we have still kept in the reservoir of tradition. Let us rather drink from this good water, and let us call others to drink from it... Let them drink and be refreshed by the water that flows from the rock, from our good and immortal water, from the 'water of life.' "



## PHYSICAL ILLNESS & HEALING

*From "Obedience is Life, Elder Ephraim of Katounakia", pp. 143--147.*

*... my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor 12:9)*

Elder Ephraim had an allergic inflammation stemming from his childhood. He once showed us one of his legs—it was visibly irritated. When he was fatigued, the inflammation increased and the symptoms would spread to the rest of his body. Whenever our brotherhood suffered afflictions that caused us fear or discouragement, whether from some illness or other causes, he would comfort us with one of his own stories that not only strengthened our morale but also increased our earnestness.

"Once, this inflammation suddenly increased because of the physical labors—I was taking care of two elders—and my body became covered with irritating and itching rash. Even my eyes were inflamed, and almost my entire face was disfigured. Ever so slowly, I made my way to our little chapel, and setting forth my grievance, I began to cry before the icon of our Panagia. 'My Panagia, I'm reminding you now of your words when you were consoling us, that you would be and always remain our guardian, our nurturer, and our healer. Where am I, the lowly one, now to take refuge in my condition in order to find consolation?' Immediately, I felt calmness in my soul, a relief, and my entire body felt lighter and limber. I began to move and walk with ease! It was as simple as that. My health was restored as was my disposition and I was thus able to continue my service on behalf of my two elders."

How much strength we received from his living accounts of the manifestation of Grace when one invokes it with faith! Elder Ephraim loved our Panagia exceedingly. "What can I do?" he would say, "Many times when I'm celebrating the Liturgy, I can't even say her name. When I do call upon her, I feel a fiery glow within my heart."

"One time, a good chanter came to our hut from the brotherhood of the Danieleoi. It happened to be the time for Liturgy. 'If you would, Fr. Daniel, please chant the hymn, It is Truly Meet (Axion Esti)' and he did so. Do you know what I said within me during the hymn? 'You, Fr. Daniel, chant pleasing hymns to God, glorifying Him with a beautiful voice. I don't have anything to offer God except the pain I feel in my leg. If God will show me mercy, He will show me mercy because of my pain.'"

We asked him, "Elder, what trials have you gone through?" And he replied, "I'll tell you my life's one big secret. The ecze-

ma—this strong rush I have on my legs—I've had it since the age of fifteen. I've tried various medicines. Nothing worked. As I've grown older it has become worse. Lying on my bed of pain—that's what I call it—I have the leg raised, and I find a bit of relief. From sitting, a cyst has developed here on my tailbone. When you think about it, it's the most terrible thing. It causes a lot of pain. No matter how you sit, you're in pain. Your back side hurts you. It forewarns you that a wound is going to open up. Patience, patience. It continued this way until one time, I couldn't bear it and fell into despair. Just thinking about the word 'despair' makes you shudder. It is a taste of hell, a taste of Gehenna. It lasted maybe six or seven minutes. In my pain, within the hopelessness in which I found myself, I didn't say anything to my brotherhood. Then I heard a voice like a gentle breeze. 'This is God's will for you.' With this, I took a deep breath. 'Hmm, may it be blessed, since that's how God wants it. But give me patience then, because

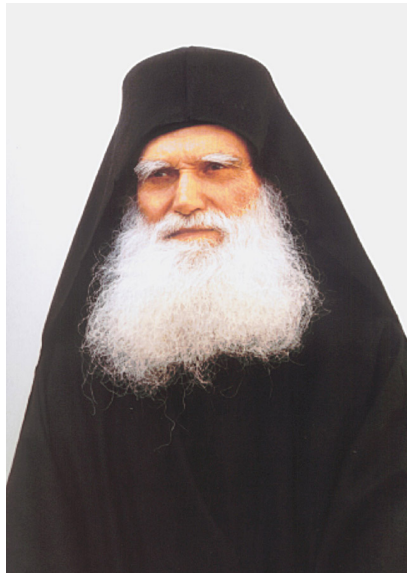
I can't endure it.' So, what do I do now? Go out and have an operation? Everyone's telling you to have an operation. How do I get out there though?"

He continued, "I got up in my hopeless state and went over to the oil lamp in front of the Panagia. And an oil lamp before an icon of the Theotokos is wonderworking. I took a little cotton and smeared the area of the tailbone cyst with the oil, and then both sides of the back side. I did this for three days. On the third day the pain vanished. Our Panagia worked a miracle. The patristic advice worked in practice: 'patience in afflictions.'"

His advice and counsel on Panagia's intercessions were always insightful. "The protection of the Panagia is always present,

but we don't see it. When we are about to fall into chaos, into the abyss, then we see it. Then she draws us up out of the cesspool. And not only that; let's mention the main thing. When the pains had left, a joy flowed within me as an assurance that God, in His greatness, revealed His infinite love by giving me this serious rush on my leg. And I wasn't able to get enough of glorifying, of hymning, of thanking God Who gave me that wound. This is why the afflictions are good; the torments are good; the sorrows are good. God knows why He allows them. We draw closer to God through our afflictions. 'Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.' (Ps 4:1), and according to the patristic texts, 'one who flees an advantageous trial, flees eternal life.'"

He often reminded us: "This is why a person must not lose hope, must not despair over a single failure. Failure can be transformed into success, because through it you can learn



what the will of God is. The will of God is not always sweet. It's also bitter! *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* (Jn 18:11). By means of the Cross came the Resurrection. St. John Chrysostom praises Job not because of his previous life where he was merciful, compassionate, hospitable, and prayerful, but for his patience in the illness that God accorded him. *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* (Jas 5:11). We're not going to get to Heaven with nonchalance and ease. We will give blood and in turn receive spirit. I remember when I went to Jerusalem, an elderly nun approached me and wanted to tell me about a vision she'd seen. 'Elder, I saw the three Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the midst of Paradise. I told them that I want to come there as well. They asked me by which road? They then showed me a path six inches wide, with thorn bushes on the edge. I answered them that if I come from that path, I'll tear my clothing. Their response was: Sister, that is the path through which we ourselves had to pass through—this is the way we came from.'

And Elder Ephraim ended by telling us: "We won't get to Paradise on sweets. There are some bitter medicines! With these, however, the soul is purified."



## A COMMENTARY ON ABORTION

By Valerie Protopapas, from "The Orthodox Christians for Life ProLife Handbook: The Basics."

Who has not seen the pictures of children suffering the ravages of war, disease and famine? Whose heart does not go out to these dying and dead—limbs blown off, faces mutilated, skeletal bodies covered with flies and dung? Who complains that such sights "offend" when they appear in newspapers and magazines or on television?

These grisly images are expressly intended to shock as part of a calculated effort to elicit a strong emotional response. Why? Obviously so that the viewer is incited to "help" either by donating money or pressuring politicians to intervene to "stop the slaughter." In other words, pictures of suffering and dead infants and children are premeditatedly used as propaganda objects to further a desired social/political cause. Everyone knows this is so, but no one objects because the cause involved is usually considered worthy and just.

However, there is one cause where the pictures are not shown—in fact, they are forbidden, censored and banned.

Whenever that cause is the subject of debate, those who champion these dying and dead children are specifically instructed, "no pictures!" But how can this be when the utilization of such pictures is a routine part of so many social/political causes? Simply put, it is because this cause—the campaign against abortion—is not "politically correct" and those who advocate abortion rights greatly fear that the pictures of aborted babies would elicit that same strong emotional response from the public that arises out of other similar displays. And as the media is irredeemably pro-abortion, Americans have been in the past and continue to be in the present, denied the truth about what abortion actually does as indisputably manifested, confirmed and illustrated by the pictures.

Oh, there are excuses given for this blatant censorship: the pictures of aborted babies are obscene (the babies are naked; they are also decapitated, dismembered and burned); they are "offensive" (it is the reality that they represent, not they, that offends). Children would be shocked (it is adults who would be shocked and that is what abortion advocates fear) and, of course, the most ridiculous excuse, television is not allowed(?) to show such obscene, offensive and shocking pictures.

Apologists for the murder of the unborn declare that abortion is and must continue to be a matter of "free choice." Yet, they deliberately interfere with that choice by censoring from the public forum one side of the issue because they fear exposure of abortion through the publication of the pictures of its victims. As long as those victims remain a mere intellectual concept—that is, they remain silent and invisible—the debate over abortion will remain just that, a debate. The commitment on either side will remain numerically with abortion supporters who know of its evil but support it anyway for financial or ideological reasons. If, however, the American public actually sees the truth about abortion through the wide-spread distribution of the pictures of its victims, their propaganda about the benign nature and the benefits of the procedure will be revealed as the frightful lie that it is. That is why they must censor the pictures.

Americans must demand, in the name of truth and justice that the mass media show the pictures!



Sin will, inevitably, pass beyond the boundaries of the sinner's individual life, to burden all humanity and thus affect the fate of the whole world. The sin of our forefather Adam was not the only sin of cosmic significance. Every sin, manifest or secret, committed by each one of us affects the rest of the universe.

Fr. Sophrony (Sakharov) of Essex

## Περὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ

*Τοῦ ἐν Ἁγίοις Πατρὸς ἡμῶν Συμεῶν τοῦ Νέου Θεολόγου.*

*Ὁ λόγος αὐτὸς ἀναφέρεται ἐπὶ τοῦ πῶς εἶναι ἢ πῶς γίνεται μέσα μας ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ μετὰ αὐτὴν ἡ ἀνάσταση τῆς ψυχῆς. Ἐπίσης ποιὸ εἶναι τὸ μυστήριον αὐτῆς τῆς ἀναστάσεως. Λέχθηκε ἀπὸ τὸν ἅγιον πατέρα μετὰ τὸ Πάσχα, τὴν Δευτέρα τῆς δευτέρας ἐβδομάδος τοῦ Πάσχα.*

**Ἀ**δελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες, τὸ Πάσχα, ἡ χαρμόσυνη αὐτὴ ἡμέρα, ποὺ προκαλεῖ κάθε εὐφροσύνη καὶ εὐτυχία, καθὼς ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἔρχεται τὴν ἴδια ἐποχὴ τοῦ χρόνου πάντοτε· ἢ καλύτερα, γίνεται κάθε ἡμέρα καὶ συνεχῶς μέσα σ' αὐτοὺς ποὺ γνωρίζουν τὸ μυστήριόν της, ἀφοῦ γέμισε τίς καρδιές μας ἀπὸ κάθε χαρὰ καὶ ἀνεκλάλητη ἀγαλλίαση (Λουκ. 1:14), ἀφοῦ ἔλυσε μαζί καὶ τὸν κόπο ἀπὸ τὴν πάνσεπτη νηστεία ἢ, γιὰ νὰ πῶ καλύτερα, ἀφοῦ τελειοποίησε καὶ συγχρόνως παρηγόρησε τίς ψυχές μας, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ μᾶς προσκάλεσε ὅλους μαζί τοὺς πιστοὺς, ὅπως βλέπετε, σὲ ἀνάπαυση καὶ εὐχαριστία. Ἄς εὐχαριστήσουμε λοιπὸν τὸν Κύριο, ποὺ μᾶς διαπέρασε ἀπὸ τὸ πέλαγος (Σοφ. Σολ. 10:18) τῆς νηστείας καὶ μᾶς ὁδήγησε μετ' εὐθυμίας στὸν λιμένα τῆς ἀναστάσεώς Του. Ἄς τὸν εὐχαριστήσουμε καὶ ὅσοι περάσαμε τὸ δρόμο τῆς νηστείας μετ' θερμὴ πρόθεση καὶ ἀγῶνες ἀρετῆς, καὶ ὅσοι ἀσθένησαν στὸ μεταξύ ἀπὸ ἀδιαφορία καὶ ἀσθένεια ψυχῆς, ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἴδιος εἶναι ποὺ δίνει μετὰ τὸ παραπάνω τὰ στεφάνια καὶ τοὺς ἄξιους μισθοὺς τῶν ἔργων τους σ' ἐκείνους ποὺ ἀγωνίζονται, καὶ πάλι αὐτὸς εἶναι ποὺ ἀπονέμει τὴ συγγνώμη στοὺς ἀσθενέστερους ὡς ἐλεήμων καὶ φιλόανθρωπος. Διότι βλέπει πολὺ περισσότερο τίς διαθέσεις τῶν ψυχῶν μας καὶ τίς προαιρέσεις, παρὰ τοὺς κόπους τοῦ σώματος, μετὰ τοὺς ὁποίους γυμνάζομε τοὺς ἑαυτοὺς μας στὴν ἀρετὴ, ἢ ἐπαυξάνοντας τὴν ἄσκηση λόγῳ τῆς προθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἢ ἐλαττώνοντας αὐτὴν ἀπὸ τὰ σπουδαῖα ἐξ αἰτίας τοῦ σώματος, καὶ σύμφωνα μετὰ τίς προθέσεις μας ἀνταποδίδει τὰ βραβεῖα καὶ τὰ χαρίσματα τοῦ Πνεύματος στὸν καθένα, κάμνοντας κάποιον ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀγωνιζόμενους περίφημο καὶ ἐνδοξο ἢ ἀφήνοντάς τον ταπεινὸ καὶ ἔχοντα ἀκόμη ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ κοπιαστικότερη κάθαρση.

Ἄλλὰ ἂς δοῦμε, ἐὰν νομίζετε, καὶ ἂς ἐξετάσουμε καλῶς, ποιὸ εἶναι τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ μας, τὸ ὁποῖο γίνεται μυστικῶς πάντοτε σὲ ἐμᾶς ποὺ θέλομε, καὶ πῶς μέσα μας ὁ Χριστὸς θάπτεται σὰν σὲ μνήμα, καὶ πῶς ἀφοῦ ἐνωθεῖ μετὰ τίς ψυχές, πάλι ἀνασταίνεται, συνανασταίνοντας μαζί του καὶ ἐμᾶς. Αὐτὸς εἶναι καὶ ὁ σκοπὸς τοῦ λόγου.

Ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ Θεὸς μας, ἀφοῦ ὑψώθηκε στὸ σταυρὸ καὶ κάρφωσε (Κολ. 2:14) σ' αὐτὸν τὴν ἁμαρτία τοῦ κόσμου (Ἰω. 1:25) καὶ γεύτηκε τὸ θάνατο (Ἑβρ. 2:9), κατῆλθε στὰ κατώτατα μέρη τοῦ ᾄδη (Εφ. 4:9, Ψαλ. 85:13). Ὅπως λοιπὸν ὅταν ἀνῆλθε πάλι ἀπὸ τὸν ᾄδη εἰσῆλθε στὸ ἄχραντό Του

σῶμα, ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο ὅταν κατῆλθε ἐκεῖ δὲν χωρίσθηκε καθόλου, καὶ ἀμέσως ἀναστήθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ μετὰ ἀπ' αὐτὸ ἀνῆλθε στοὺς οὐρανοὺς μετὰ δόξα πολλή καὶ δύναμη (Ματθ. 24:30, Λουκ. 21:27), ἔτσι καὶ τώρα, ὅταν ἐξερχόμαστε ἐμεῖς ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμον καὶ εἰσερχόμαστε μετὰ τὴν ἐξομοίωση (Ρωμ. 6:5, Β' Κορ. 1:5, Φιλ. 3:10) τῶν παθημάτων τοῦ Κυρίου στὸ μνήμα τῆς μετάνοιας καὶ ταπεινώσεως, αὐτὸς ὁ ἴδιος, κατερχόμενος ἀπὸ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, εἰσέρχεται σὰν σὲ τάφο μέσα στὸ σῶμα μας καί, ἐνούμενος μετὰ τίς δικές μας ψυχές, τίς ἀνασταίνει, ἀφοῦ αὐτὲς ἦταν ὁμολογουμένως νεκρές, καὶ τότε δίνει τὴ δυνατότητα, σ' αὐτὸν ποὺ ἀναστήθηκε ἔτσι μαζί μετὰ τὸν Χριστό, νὰ βλέπῃ τὴ δόξα τῆς μυστικῆς τοῦ ἀναστάσεως.

Ἀνάσταση λοιπὸν τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι ἡ δική μας ἀνάσταση, ποὺ βρισκόμαστε κάτω πεσμένοι. Διότι Ἐκεῖνος, ἀφοῦ ποτὲ δὲν ἔπεσε στὴν ἁμαρτία (Ἰω. 8:46, Ἑβρ. 4:15), ὅπως ἔχει γραφεῖ, οὔτε ἀλλοιώθηκε καθόλου ἡ δόξα Του, πῶς θ' ἀναστήθῃ ποτὲ ἢ θὰ δοξασθῇ, Αὐτὸς ποὺ εἶναι πάντοτε ὑπερδοξασμένος καὶ ποὺ διαμένει ἐπίσης πάνω ἀπὸ κάθε ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐξουσία (Εφ. 1:21); Ἀνάσταση καὶ δόξα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι, ὅπως ἔχει λεχθεῖ, ἡ δική μας δόξα, ποὺ γίνεται μέσα μας μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασή Του, καὶ δείχνεται καὶ ὁράται ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς. Διότι ἀπὸ τὴ στιγμή ποὺ ἔκανε δικά του τὰ δικά μας, ὅσα κάμνει μέσα μας Αὐτός, αὐτὰ ἀναγράφονται σ' Αὐτόν. Ἀνάσταση λοιπὸν τῆς ψυχῆς εἶναι ἡ ἔνωση τῆς ζωῆς. Διότι, ὅπως τὸ νεκρὸ σῶμα οὔτε λέγεται ὅτι ζεῖ οὔτε μπορεῖ νὰ ζῇ, ἐὰν δὲν δεχθῇ μέσα του τὴ ζωντανὴ ψυχὴ καὶ ἐνωθεῖ μετ' αὐτὴν χωρὶς νὰ συγχέεται, ἔτσι οὔτε ἡ ψυχὴ μόνη της καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὴν μπορεῖ νὰ ζῇ, ἐὰν δὲν ἐνωθεῖ μυστικῶς καὶ ἀσυγχύτως μετὰ τὸν Θεό, ποὺ εἶναι ἡ πραγματικὰ αἰώνια ζωὴ (Α' Ἰω. 5:20). Διότι πρὶν ἀπὸ αὐτὴ τὴν ἔνωση ὡς πρὸς τὴ γνώση καὶ ὄραση καὶ αἴσθηση εἶναι νεκρή, ἂν καὶ νοερὰ ὑπάρχει καὶ εἶναι ὡς πρὸς τὴ φύση ἀθάνατη. Διότι δὲν ὑπάρχει γνώση χωρὶς ὄραση, οὔτε ὄραση δίχως αἴσθηση.

Αὐτὸ ποὺ λέγω σημαίνει τὸ ἐξῆς: Ἡ ὄραση καὶ μέσω τῆς ὁράσεως ἡ γνώση καὶ ἡ αἴσθηση (αὐτὸ τὸ ἀναφέρω γιὰ τὰ πνευματικὰ, διότι στὰ σωματικὰ καὶ χωρὶς ὄραση ὑπάρχει αἴσθηση). Τί θέλω νὰ πῶ; Ὁ τυφλὸς ὅταν χτυπᾷ τὸ πόδι του σὲ λίθον αἰσθάνεται, ἐνῶ ὁ νεκρὸς ὄχι. Στὰ πνευματικὰ ὁμως, ἐὰν δὲν φθάσῃ ὁ νοῦς σὲ θεωρία τῶν ὧσων ὑπάρχουν πάνω ἀπὸ τὴν ἔννοια, δὲν αἰσθάνεται τὴ μυστικὴ ἐνέργεια. Αὐτὸς λοιπὸν ποὺ λέγει, ὅτι αἰσθάνεται στὰ πνευματικὰ πρὶν φθάσῃ σὲ θεωρία αὐτῶν ποὺ εἶναι ἐπάνω ἀπὸ τὸ νοῦ καὶ τὸ λόγο καὶ τὴν ἔννοια, μοιάζει μετὰ τὸν τυφλὸν στὰ μάτια, ὁ ὁποῖος αἰσθάνεται βέβαια τὰ ὅσα ἀγαθὰ ἢ κακὰ παθαίνει, ἀγνοεῖ ὁμως τὰ ὅσα γίνονται στὰ πόδια ἢ στὰ χέρια του καθὼς καὶ τὰ αἰτία ζωῆς ἢ θανάτου του. Διότι τὰ ὅσα κακὰ ἢ ἀγαθὰ τοῦ συμβαίνουν δὲν τὰ ἀντιλαμβάνεται καθόλου, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι στερημένος ἀπὸ τὴν ὀπτικὴ δύναμη καὶ αἴσθηση, γι' αὐτό, ὅταν πολλὰς φορὲς σηκώνει τὴν ράβδον του ν' ἀμυνθῇ ἀπὸ τὸν ἐχθρό, ἀντὶ ἐκεῖνον μερικὲς φορὲς χτυπᾷ μᾶλλον τὸν φίλον του, ἐνῶ ὁ ἐχθρὸς στέκεται



μπροστά στὰ μάτια του καὶ τὸν περιγεῖλᾷ.

Οἱ περισσότεροι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πιστεύουν στὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅμως πολὺ λίγοι εἶναι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ καὶ τὴν βλέπουν καθαρά, καὶ αὐτοὶ βέβαια ποὺ δὲν τὴν εἶδαν οὔτε νὰ προσκυνήσουν μποροῦν τὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστὸ ὡς ἅγιο καὶ Κύριο. Διότι λέγει, «κανένας δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ πῇ Κύριο τὸν Ἰησοῦ, παρὰ μόνο μὲ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιο» (Α΄ Κορ. 12:3)· καὶ ἄλλοι «Πνεῦμα εἶναι ὁ Θεὸς καὶ αὐτοὶ ποὺ τὸν προσκυνοῦν πρέπει νὰ τὸν προσκυνοῦν πνευματικὰ καὶ ἀληθινὰ» (Ιω. 4:24). Καὶ ἀκόμη τὸ ἱερώτατο λόγιο, ποὺ τὸ προφέρομε κάθε ἡμέρα, δὲν λέγει «Ἀνάσταση Χριστοῦ πιστεύσαντες», ἀλλὰ τι λέγει; «Ἀνάσταση Χριστοῦ θεασάμενοι, ὡς προσκυνήσαμε ἅγιο Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, ποὺ εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀναμάρτητος».

Πῶς λοιπὸν μᾶς προτρέπει τώρα τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο νὰ λέμε (σὰν νὰ εἶδαμε αὐτὴν ποὺ δὲν εἶδαμε) «Ἀνάσταση Χριστοῦ θεασάμενοι», ἐνῶ ἀναστήθηκε ὁ Χριστὸς μιὰ φορὰ πρὶν ἀπὸ χίλια ἔτη καὶ οὔτε τότε τὸν εἶδε κανένας νὰ ἀνασταίνεται (Ὁ Συμεὼν ὁ Νέος Θεολόγος ἐξῆσε τέλη 10ου καὶ ἀρχὲς 11ου αἰῶνος, δηλ. χίλια χρόνια περίπου μετὰ τὴν Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου); Ἄραγε μήπως ἡ Θεία Γραφή θέλει νὰ ψευδόμεστε; Μακριὰ μιὰ τέτοια σκέψη· ἀντίθετα συνιστᾷ μᾶλλον νὰ λέμε τὴν ἀλήθεια, ὅτι δηλαδὴ μέσα στὸ καθένα ἀπὸ μᾶς τοὺς πιστοὺς γίνεται ἡ ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ αὐτὸ ὄχι μιὰ φορὰ, ἀλλὰ κάθε ὥρα, ὅπως θὰ ἔλεγε κανεὶς, ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Δεσπότης Χριστὸς ἀνασταίνεται μέσα μας, λαμπροφωρῶντας καὶ ἀπαστράπτωντας τὶς ἀστραπὲς τῆς ἀφθαρσίας καὶ τῆς θεότητος. Διότι ἡ φωτοφόρα παρουσία τοῦ Πνεύματος μᾶς ὑποδεικνύει τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Δεσπότη, ποὺ ἐγίνε τὸ πρῶτ (Ιω. 21:4), ἡ καλύτερα μᾶς ἐπιτρέπει νὰ βλέπομε τὸν ἴδιο ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀναστάντα. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ λέμε. «Θεὸς εἶναι ὁ Κύριος καὶ φανερώθηκε σὲ μᾶς» (Ψαλμ. 117:27), καὶ ὑποδηλώνοντας τὴ Δευτέρα παρουσία του λέμε συμπληρωματικὰ τὰ ἐξῆς. «εὐλογημένος εἶναι αὐτὸς ποὺ ἔρχεται στὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου» (Ψαλμ. 117:26)· σὲ ὁποιοὺς λοιπὸν θὰ φανερωθῇ ὁ ἀναστημένος Χριστός, ὅπως δὴποτε φανερόνεται πνευματικῶς στὰ πνευματικὰ τοὺς μάτια. Διότι, ὅταν ἔλθει μέσα μας διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος, μᾶς ἀνασταίνει ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ μᾶς ζωοποιεῖ καὶ μᾶς ἐπιτρέπει νὰ τὸν βλέπομε μέσα μας αὐτὸν τὸν ἴδιο ὅλον ζωντανό, αὐτὸν τὸν ἀθάνατο καὶ ἀφθαρτο, καὶ ὄχι μόνον αὐτό, ἀλλὰ καὶ μᾶς δίνει τὴ χάρη νὰ γνωρίζομε εὐκρινῶς ὅτι συνανασταίνεται (Εφ. 2:6) καὶ συνδοξάζει (Ρωμ. 8:17) καὶ ἐμᾶς μαζί του, ὅπως μαρτυρεῖ ὅλη ἡ Θεία Γραφή.

Αὐτὰ λοιπὸν εἶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῶν Χριστιανῶν, αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ κρυμμένη μέσα τους δύναμη τῆς Πίστεώς μας, τὴν ὁποία οἱ ἄπιστοι ἢ δύσπιστοι, ἢ καλύτερα νὰ πῶ ἡμίπιστοι, δὲν βλέπουν, οὔτε βέβαια μποροῦν καθόλου νὰ τὴ δοῦν· καὶ ἄπιστοι, δύσπιστοι καὶ ἡμίπιστοι εἶναι αὐτοὶ ποὺ δὲν φανερώνουν τὴν πίστη μὲ τὰ ἔργα (Ιάκ. 2:18). Διότι χωρὶς ἔργα πιστεύουν καὶ οἱ δαίμονες (Ιάκ. 2:19) καὶ ὁμολογοῦν ὅτι εἶναι Θεὸς ὁ Δεσπότης Χριστός. «Σὲ γνωρίζομε» (Μάρκ. 1:24, Λουκ. 4:34), λένε, «ἐσένα τὸν Υἱὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ» (Ματθ.

8:29). Καὶ ἄλλοι: «Αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι δοῦλοι τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ Ὑψίστου» (Πραξ. 16:17). Ἀλλ' ὅμως οὔτε τοὺς δαίμονες οὔτε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους αὐτοὺς θὰ τοὺς ὠφελήσῃ τέτοια πίστη. Διότι δὲν ὑπάρχει κανένα ὄφελος ἀπὸ τέτοια πίστη, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι νεκρὴ κατὰ τὸν θεῖο ἀπόστολο. Διότι λέγει, «ἡ πίστη χωρὶς τὰ ἔργα εἶναι νεκρή» (Ιάκ. 2:26), ὅπως καὶ τὰ ἔργα χωρὶς τὴν πίστη. Πῶς εἶναι νεκρή; Ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἔχει μέσα της τὸν Θεὸ ποὺ τὴ ζωογονεῖ (Α΄ Τιμ. 6:13), ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἀπέκτησε μέσα της ἐκεῖνον ποὺ εἶπε. «αὐτὸς ποὺ μὲ ἀγαπᾷ θὰ τηρήσῃ τὶς ἐντολές μου» (Ιω. 14:21-23), «καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ Πατέρας μου θὰ ἔλθομε καὶ θὰ κατοικήσωμε μέσα του» (Ιω. 14:23), γιὰ νὰ ἐξαναστήσῃ μὲ τὴν παρουσία του ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτὸν ποὺ τὴν κατέχει καὶ νὰ τὸν ζωοποιήσῃ καὶ νὰ τοῦ ἐπιτρέψει νὰ διῇ μέσα του καὶ αὐτὸν ποὺ ἀναστήθηκε καὶ αὐτὸν ποὺ ἀνέστησε.

Ἐξ αἰτίας αὐτοῦ λοιπὸν εἶναι νεκρὴ ἡ τέτοια πίστη, ἡ καλύτερα νεκροὶ εἶναι αὐτοὶ ποὺ τὴν κατέχουν χωρὶς ἔργα. Διότι ἡ πίστη στὸν Θεὸ πάντα ζεῖ καὶ ἐπειδὴ εἶναι ζῶσα ζωοποιεῖ αὐτοὺς ποὺ προσέρχονται ἀπὸ ἀγαθὴ πρόθεση καὶ τὴν ἀποδέχονται, ἢ ὅποια καὶ ἔφερε πολλοὺς ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατο στὴ ζωὴ καὶ πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἐργασία τῶν ἐντολῶν καὶ τοὺς ὑπέδειξε τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ Θεό. Καὶ θὰ ἦταν δυνατό, ἐὰν ἔμεναν πιστοὶ σὲς ἐντολές του καὶ τὶς φύλαγαν μέχρι θανάτου (Φιλ. 2:8), νὰ διαφυλαχθοῦν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀπ' αὐτές, ὅπως δηλαδὴ ἐγιναν ἀπὸ μόνη τὴν πίστη. Ἐπειδὴ ὅμως μεταστράφηκαν, ὅπως τὸ στραβὸ τόξο (Ψαλμ. 77:57), καὶ ἀκολούθησαν τὶς προηγούμενες πράξεις τους, εὐλογοῦν ἀμέσως βρέθηκαν νὰ ἔχουν ναυαγήσῃ ὡς πρὸς τὴν πίστη (Α΄ Τιμ. 1:19) καὶ δυστυχῶς στέρησαν τοὺς ἑαυτοὺς τοὺς ἀπὸ τὸν ἀληθινὸ πλοῦτο, ποὺ εἶναι ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός.

Γιὰ νὰ μὴ πάθομε λοιπὸν καὶ ἐμεῖς αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα, ζητῶ νὰ τηρήσωμε μὲ ὅση δύναμη ἔχομε τὶς ἐντολές τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰ ν' ἀπολαύσωμε καὶ τὰ παρόντα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα ἀγαθὰ, ἐννοῶ δηλαδὴ αὐτὴν τὴν ἴδια τὴν θεὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν ὁποία εἶθε νὰ ἐπιτύχομε ὅλοι μας μὲ τὴ χάρη τοῦ Κυρίου μας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, στὸν ὁποῖο ἀνήκει ἡ δόξα στοὺς αἰῶνες. Γένοιτο!



**Ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα,  
καὶ λαμπρυνθῶμεν τῇ πανηγύρει  
καὶ ἀλλήλους περιπτυσώμεθα.  
Εἴπωμεν, ἀδελφοί, καὶ τοῖς μισοῦσιν ἡμᾶς·  
συγχωρήσωμεν πάντα τῇ ἀναστάσει·  
καὶ οὕτω βοήσωμεν·  
Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν,  
θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας  
καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι ζῶην χαρισάμενος.**

## Υποκρισία: τὸ Κέλυφος τοῦ Θανάτου

Τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Νικολάου Βελμίροβιτς.

**Π**όσο ὁμορφα οἱ λαοί μας στὰ Βαλκάνια διακοσμοῦν αὐγά! Τόσο πιὸ ὁμορφα γιὰ νὰ στολίσῃ τὸ Πάσχα, γιὰ νὰ αὐξήσῃ τὴν χαρὰ τοῦ Πάσχα, γιὰ νὰ κἀνῃ τοὺς φιλοξενουμένους του πιὸ εὐτυχεῖς. Κάποτε μάλιστα τὰ βαμμένα αὐγά ἀποτελοῦν πραγματικὰ ἔργα τέχνης. Ἄν τὰ βαμμένα αὐγά διατηρηθοῦν πάρα πολύ, σαπίζουν ἐσωτερικὰ καὶ ἀναδίδουν μιὰ ἀνυπόφορη δυσοσμία ἢ στὸ τέλος στεγνώνουν ἐντελῶς. Τότε εἶναι πὺ τὸ χρωματισμένο κέλυφος διατηρεῖ μέσα του τὸν θάνατο.

Πιὸ φοβερὴ εἶναι ἡ εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ γιὰ τοὺς ὑποκριτές, οἱ ὁποῖοι εἶναι ὅμοιοι «τάφοις κεκονιαμένοις, οἵτινες ἐξωθεν μὲν φαίνονται ὡραῖοι, ἐξωθεν δὲ γέμουσιν ὀστέων νεκρῶν καὶ πάσης ἀκαθαρσίας» (Ματθ. 23: 27). «Προσέχετε τὴν ἐλεημοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἐμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θαυθῆναι αὐτοῖς. εἰ δὲ μήγε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς» (Ματθ. 6:1).

Ἡ δικαιοσύνη πὺ εἶναι εὐάρεστη στὸν Θεό, ὅπως ἀπεκαλύφθη ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰησοῦ στὸ Ὅρος τῶν Μακαρισμῶν, εἶναι ἡ ἀκόλουθη: ἔλεος, προσευχή, ἐμπιστοσύνη καὶ πίστι στὸν Θεὸ ὡς τὸν μόνο Κύριο, ἔλλειψις στενοχωρίας γιὰ τὴν αὐρίο, ἀναζήτησις πρὶν ἀπὸ ὅ,τιδήποτε ἄλλο τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὑπαρξίς πίστεως πὺ νὰ λαμβάνῃ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ ὅ,τι θέλει, νὰ βρίσκῃ ὅ,τι ζητᾷ, νὰ ἀνοίγῃ μιὰ κλειστὴ θύρα. καὶ ἐπίσης: νὰ μὴ κρίνῃς αὐστηρά, νὰ μὴ μετράς μὲ ψεύτικο μέτρο, ὥστε νὰ μὴ σοῦ συμβῇ παρομοίως, νὰ μὴ κοιτᾷς τὸ κάρφος στὸ μάτι τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, ἐνῶ ὑποκριτικὰ κρύβεις τὸ δοκάρι στὸ δικό σου μάτι. νὰ κἀνῃς στὸν συνάνθρωπό σου ὅ,τι θὰ ἤθελες νὰ σοῦ κάνουν. ὅχι φόβος τῆς στενῆς, ἀλλὰ καθαρῆς καὶ ἀγίας ὁδοῦ, ἡ ὁποία ὁδηγεῖ στὴν ζωὴ, καὶ ἀποφυγὴ τῆς ἀνετης καὶ εὐκολῆς καὶ πλατειᾶς ὁδοῦ, ἡ ὁποία ὁδηγεῖ στὸν θάνατο· ἀπόδοσις ἀγαθῶν καρπῶν στὸν Θεὸ τὸν Οἰκοκύριον, ὁ Ὅποιος σὲ φύτευσε σὰν καλὸ δένδρον· ὅχι ὑπερηφάνια γιὰ τὰ μεγάλα σου ἔργα, ἀλλὰ ἐπιτέλεσις τοῦ κάθε πράγματος σύμφωνα μὲ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς ἡμῶν τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἐκπλήρωσις στὴν πρᾶξι ὅλων τῶν παραγγελιῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ μὲ τὸν τρόπο τοῦτο ἀνέγερσις τοῦ οἴκου τῆς αἰωνιότητός σου, ὅπως ἓνας σοφὸς ἄνθρωπος, ὁ ὁποῖος κτίζει τὸ σπῖτι του ὅχι στὴν ἄμμο, ἀλλὰ στὸν βράχο, ὥστε οὔτε οἱ καταιγίδες, οὔτε οἱ ἄνεμοι, οὔτε οἱ βροχεῖς νὰ μποροῦν νὰ τὸ βλάψουν (βλ. Ματθ. 7:24-25).

Οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, οἱ Γραμματεῖς καὶ ὑποκριτές, κάνουν καθετὶ ἀντίθετο ἀπὸ τοὺς Λόγους καὶ τὴν σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅταν ἐλεοῦν, τὸ κάνουν στὰ κεντρικὰ μέρη καὶ στίς ὁδοὺς καὶ δὲν τὸ κάνουν αὐτὸ γιὰ τὴν δόξα τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὔτε γιὰ νὰ βοηθήσουν τοὺς πτωχοὺς, ἀλλὰ μόνον γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ἰδοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. Ὅταν προσεύχωνται στὸν Θεό, προσεύχονται στοὺς δρόμους, μόνον γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ἰδοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. Ὅταν νηστεύουν, κάνουν τὰ πρόσωπα τους νὰ φαίνωνται ἄσχημα καὶ ἀτημέλητα καὶ χλωμά, ὥστε καὶ πάλι νὰ τοὺς ἰδοῦν οἱ

ἄνθρωποι. Ἀλλοίμονον! Κάνουν τὰ πάντα μόνον γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ἰδοῦν οἱ ἄλλοι, ὅτι εἶναι δῆθεν ἐλεήμονες, προσευχητικοὶ καὶ μεγάλοι νηστευτές.

Τὰ κάνουν ὅλα αὐτὰ καὶ τὰ κάνουν καὶ σήμερα γιὰ δύο λόγους: γιὰ νὰ λάβουν ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δόξα καὶ χρήματα. Ὅσο γιὰ τὸν Θεό, δὲν τὸν ὑπολογίζουν καθόλου, σὰν νὰ μὴν ὑπάρχῃ. στὴν πραγματικότητα, οἱ ὑποκριτές εἶναι οἱ πιὸ ἐντελῶς ἄθεοι ἄνθρωποι. Ἐξαπατώντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, λαμβάνουν αὐτὸ πὺ θέλουν, καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι ἡ τελικὴ πληρωμὴ τους. Ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ δὲν ἔχουν νὰ περιμένουν τίποτε, ἐπεὶδὴ δὲν τὸν χρέωσαν μὲ καμμιὰ ἀπὸ τίς πράξεις τους, ἀλλὰ ἐπέσυραν μόνον τὴν ὀργὴν Του. Γι' αὐτοὺς εἶπε ὁ Κύριος: «ἐγγίξει μοι ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τοῖς χεῖλεσιν αὐτῶν τιμῶσί με, ἡ δὲ καρδία αὐτῶν πόρρω ἀπέχει ἀπ' ἐμοῦ» (Ἠσ. 29:13).

Ἐφ' ὅσον δὲν τηροῦν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς, τηροῦν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ψεύδους. Ὁ πατέρας ὅλων τῶν ψευδῶν, ὁ διάβολος, τοὺς διδάσκει ὅτι εἶναι κανονικὸ, φυσικὸ καὶ λογικὸ νὰ κάνουν ἔτσι, καὶ ὅτι καὶ ἄλλοι πρὶν ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς ἔκαναν ὁμοίως καὶ ἔζησαν θαυμάσια, κερδίζοντας ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους δόξα καὶ πλοῦτη. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ καταστροφικὴ ὁδὸς τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ ὅμως αὐτοὶ δὲν τὴν ἐγκαταλείπουν, χάριν τοῦ κόσμου. Αὐτοὶ, ἄθλιοι καθὼς εἶναι, δὲν αἰσθάνονται πόσο πολὺ ὁ σατανᾶς τοὺς ἔχει ἐξαπατήσει μὲ τέτοια ψεῦδη καὶ πόσο πολὺ ἔχει μολύνει καὶ ἀποξηράνει τίς καρδιές τους, πὺ ἀκόμη καὶ οἱ Ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ γυρίζουν μὲ ἀποστροφή τὰ πρόσωπά τους ἀπὸ τὴν δυσωδία τῶν ψυχῶν τους.

Ὁλόκληρη ἡ ἐξωτερικὴ τους, περιποιημένη ἐμφάνισις, εἶναι μόνον τὸ χρωματισμένο κέλυφος τοῦ θανάτου, ἓνας ἀσβεστωμένος τάφος. Ὅταν τοὺς βρῇ αὐτὸ πὺ λέμε θάνατος, ἀλλοίμονον! Αὐτὸ πὺ θὰ τοὺς ἔλθῃ τότε εἶναι ἡ βεβαίωσις καὶ ἡ σφραγίδα τῆς ἡδὴ ἀπὸ μακροῦ νεκρωμένης τους ψυχῆς.

Ἀλλὰ σεῖς, μὴν εἴσθε ὅπως οἱ ὑποκριτές, διδάσκει ὁ Χριστὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Μὴν εἴσθε σὰν τοὺς ὑποκριτές, ὅταν ἀγαθοεργήτε. «σοῦ δὲ ποιοῦντος ἐλεημοσύνην μὴ γνῶτω ἡ ἀριστερά σου τί ποιεῖ ἡ δεξιὰ σου» (Ματθ. 6:3). Μὴν εἴσθε ὑποκριτές, ὅταν προσεύχεσθε στὸν Θεό: «σύ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχῃ, εἰσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμιεῖόν σου, καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ» (Ματθ. 6:6).

Μὴν εἴσθε σὰν τοὺς ὑποκριτές, ὅταν νηστεύετε: «σύ δὲ νηστεύων ἄλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίναι, ὅπως μὴ φανῇς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων, ἀλλὰ τῷ πατρὶ σου ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ» (Ματθ. 6:18). «οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶ κρυπτὸν ὃ ἐὰν μὴ φανερωθῇ, οὐδὲ ἐγένετο ἀπόκρυφον ἀλλ' ἵνα ἔλθῃ εἰς φανερόν» (Μάρκ. 4' 22). Ὁ Θεὸς θὰ σοῦ ἀποκαλύψῃ μεγάλα μυστικά, τότε πὺ ἐσύ δὲν θὰ τὸ περιμένης. Οἱ Προφῆτες καὶ οἱ Δίκαιοι τὸ ἤξεραν αὐτό,



ἀλλὰ οἱ Γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι δὲν τὸ ἤξεραν, καὶ οὐτε τὸ ξέρουν ἀκόμη καὶ σήμερα.

Οἱ Προφῆτες καὶ οἱ Δίκαιοι ἐφοβοῦντο τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἀγαποῦσαν τὸν λαὸ τους, ἐνῶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ Γραμματεῖς, οἱ ὑποκριτές, δὲν φοβοῦνται τὸν Θεὸ καὶ μισοῦν τὸν λαὸ τους. Ὁ Ἰησοῦς εὐσπλαγχνίζετο μέχρι δακρύων τὸν λαόν Του (βλ. Ματθ. 15:32, Μάρκ. 8:2), τὸν ὅποιον οἱ Ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Ἀρχοντες ἐξαπατοῦσαν, ὕβριζαν καὶ ἐκδικοῦνταν χωρὶς ἔλεος. σὲ προηγούμενὸ Του κήρυγμα, ὁ Χριστὸς κήρυξε ἀνοικτὰ πόλεμο κατὰ τῆς ὑποκρισίας τους.

Καθὼς ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἦταν μεταξύ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ὁ καιρὸς περνοῦσε, αὐξανε τὸν πόλεμό Του κατὰ τῆς ὑποκρισίας ἐξευτελίζοντάς την, καὶ τῆς ὑποκρισίας τῶν θρησκευτικῶν ἀρχηγῶν τοῦ καιροῦ ἐκείνου, ἐξευτελίζοντάς τους ἐνώπιόν τους καὶ ἐνώπιον ὅλου τοῦ λαοῦ Του. Ποτὲ δὲν ἐξευτέλισε ὅποιουσδήποτε ἁμαρτωλοὺς τόσο πολὺ, ὅσο ἐξευτέλισε τοὺς ὑποκριτές. Τελικά, ὁ ἐξευτελισμὸς τῆς ὑποκρισίας ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰησοῦ, κοντὰ στὸ τέλος πλεὸν τῆς ἐπιγείου παραμονῆς Του, μετεβλήθη σὲ φοβερὴ βροντή, ἡ ὁποία κυριολεκτικὰ ἄστραψε καὶ βρόντηξε. δὲν πρέπει νὰ ξαφνιαῖ τούτο αὐτοὺς ποὺ γνωρίζουν, ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς δὲν ἀπευθύνθηκε μόνον σὲ μιὰ γενιὰ ἀνθρώπων, αὐτὴν τῆς ἐποχῆς Του, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ὅλες τὶς γενεές ἕως τέλους τοῦ κόσμου. Καθὼς ἐξευτέλιζε τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ὑποκριτὲς πρόσωπο πρὸς πρόσωπο, ἐξευτέλιζε ὅλους τοὺς ὑποκριτὲς ὅλων τῶν ἐποχῶν ὅλων τῶν γενεῶν.

Γιατὶ ἄραγε ὁ Ἰησοῦς κτύπησε τόσο σκληρὰ καὶ ἀνελέητα εἰδικὰ τὴν ὑποκρισία; Διότι, ἡ ὑποκρισία εἶναι ἓνα σατανικὸ ψέμα, ἡ ὑποκρισία εἶναι σατανικὴ ἐξ ἀρχῆς· εἶναι τὸ ζιζάνιο ποὺ ἔσπειρε ὁ σατανᾶς σὲ ὅλες τὶς σοδεῖες τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν γῆ: στὴν καρδιά τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, στὸ σπίτι του, στὸν γάμο του, στὴν παρέα τῶν φίλων του, στὸν λαὸ του καὶ στὸ ἔθνος, στὴν πολιτικὴ καὶ στὸ ἐμπόριο, στὴν λύπη καὶ στὴν χαρά, παντοῦ, σὲ ὅλες τὶς ἐποχές καὶ τοὺς πολιτισμούς. Κανένας πολιτισμὸς δὲν κατάφερε νὰ ξεριζώσῃ τὸ ζιζάνιο τῆς ὑποκρισίας, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ κατῴρθωσε νὰ ἀφανίσῃ πολλοὺς ἀπὸ αὐτούς. Ἄν ἓνας πολιτισμὸς ἔλαμπε μὲ ἐξωτερικὴ αἴγλη, ὅπως ὁ Εὐρωπαϊκὸς καὶ ὁ Ἰαπωνικὸς, αὐτὸ δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι εἶχε καταστρέψῃ τὴν ὑποκρισία, παρὰ ὅτι τὴν εἶχε ἀποκρύψει πῶς ἐπιδέξια κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ κέλυφός του, ποὺ δὲν εἶχε γραμμμένο πάνω τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅπως συμβαίνει μὲ τὰ Πασχαλινὰ αὐγὰ στὰ Βαλκάνια. Μᾶλλον, ἔγραφε στὸ δικό του κέλυφος: εὐγένεια, τρόποι, σοφιστεία, λόγους δηλαδὴ ποὺ οἱ δαίμονες δὲν φοβοῦνται, καὶ ἔτσι τὸ ζιζάνιο τῆς ὑποκρισίας, ἀνεμπόδιστο, βλάστανε ὀργιαστικά.

Ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, ὁ ἐνσαρκωμένος Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, διεκήρυξε ἐξ ἀρχῆς δύο πολέμους: κατὰ τοῦ σατανᾶ καὶ κατὰ τῆς ὑποκρισίας. Οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὸν ἀγαποῦσαν καὶ τὸν τιμοῦσαν μὲ τεράστιο θεοφοβούμενο σεβασμό, ὡς Σωτῆρα. «Ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς» (Ματθ. 7: 29).

## Ἡ Πίστη τοῦ Λαοῦ μας κατὰ τὴν Μ. Ἑβδομάδα

Τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου.

Ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἀπλοῖκοι ἄνθρωποι, ἐκεῖνα τὰ ἀγράμματα γεροντάκια καὶ οἱ γριούλες, ποὺ τὴν Σαρακοστὴ καὶ τὴν Μεγάλῃ Βδομάδῃ βρίσκονται ὅλη μέρα στὴν ἐκκλησία, ζήσανε ἀπὸ τὰ μικρά τους χρόνια ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νοουθεσίᾳ Κυρίου καὶ καταλάβανε αὐτὸ τὸ χαροποιὸν πένθος, ποὺ δὲν τὸ καταλάβανε, ἀλοίμονο, οἱ σπουδασμένοι μας, ποὺ θέλουνε νὰ τοὺς διδάξουνε, ἀντὶ νὰ διδαχθοῦνε ἀπ' αὐτοὺς.

Τώρα τὶς μέρες τῆς Σαρακοστῆς, τῆς Μεγάλῃς Βδομάδῃς καὶ τοῦ Πάσχα πορεύονται μαζί μὲ τὸν Χριστό, ἀκολουθᾶνε ὁλοένα ἀπὸ πίσω του, ἀληθινὰ, ὄχι φανταστικά, ἀκούγοντάς Τον νὰ λέγῃ: «Ἴδου ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ παραδοθήσεται ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ». Μαζί του βρίσκονται στὸν Μυστικὸ Δεῖπνο καὶ δακρύζουν ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια Του, μαζί Του πᾶνε στὸ πραιτώριο καὶ στὸν Πιλάτο, μαζί Του ραπίζονται, μαζί Του μαστιγώνονται, μαζί Του ἐμπαίζονται, μαζί Του σταυρώνονται, μαζί Του θάβονται, μαζί Του ἀνασταίνονται. Τὰ μάτια τους γίνονται βρῦσες καὶ τρέχουνε, μὰ αὐτὰ τὰ δάκρυα δὲν εἶναι δάκρυα τῆς ἀπελπισίας, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλπίδας καὶ τῆς βεβαιότητος πὼς μ' αὐτὰ ποτίζεται τὸ ὁλόδροσο κι ἀμάραντο δέντρο τῆς ἀληθινῆς χαρᾶς, τῆς χαρᾶς τῆς Ἀναστάσεως.

Αὐτὸ γίνεται κάθε χρόνο. ὦ! Πόσο ἀληθινὰ πίστη εἶναι ἡ ὀρθόδοξη πίστη τοῦ λαοῦ μας!



### Διὰ Προσευχὴν (ἀπὸ τὴν Κ. Διαθήκην)

**Βλέπετε, ἀγρυπνεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε· οὐκ οἴδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ καιρὸς ἔστιν. (Μαρκ. 13: 33)**

**Ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, ἐν παντὶ εὐχαριστεῖτε. (Α΄ Θεσ. 5: 17)**

**Σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχῃ, εἰσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ. (Ματθ. 6: 6)**

**Αἰτεῖτε, καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν· ζητεῖτε, καὶ εὕρησεται· κρούετε, καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν. Πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὕρισκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγήσεται. (Ματθ. 7: 7-8)**

**Γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν. (Ματθ. 26: 41)**

**Ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐκκακεῖν. (Λουκ. 18: 1)**

**Ὅταν στήκετε προσευχόμενοι, ἀφίετε εἴ τι ἔχετε κατὰ τινος, ἵνα καὶ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφῇ ὑμῖν τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν. (Μαρκ. 11: 25)**

**Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός, καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν. (Ἰωαν. 4: 24)**



## MIRACULOUS INTERCESSIONS OF ST. JOHN MAXIMOVITCH, BISHOP OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO

Source: "Blessed John the Wonderworker", pp. 256-261.

### Troparion, Tone 6

*Glorious apostle to an age of coldness and unbelief, invested with the grace-filled power of the saints of old, divinely-illuminated seer of heavenly mysteries, feeder of orphans, hope of the hopeless, thou didst enkindle on earth the fire of love for Christ upon the dark eve of the day of judgment; pray now that this sacred flame may also rise from our hearts."*



St. John (Maximovitch), The Wonderworker of San Francisco (1896-1966), is considered a great saint who was loved for his sanctity that has spread to all of Europe, the Holy Land, and to North and South America. St. John was loved by and respected by even the civil authorities of many countries. He was a well known theologian and for many a Fool-for-Christ. A zealous missionary

hierarchy of the Eastern Orthodox Church, St. John is still well remembered with great spiritual love in China, in the Philippines, and in N. and S. America.

St. John was also a great Archpastor, when ever a member of his flock was ill he was at his or her door way, and at their bed side, no matter what time of the day, and often in the middle of the night. Still today, St. John appears in the hospitals among those who are ill, and in many cases he just appears! The holy oil that can be obtained at his tomb has cured many faithful (note the photo on the next page), and has helped many to become well once again.

St. John is also known to have special love for children, and the children would flock around him with affection and with love. Any young altar boy who had served in the holy altar remembers well Vladika John. All of his fellow hierarchs had a sincere respect for Vladika John, and his priest, his deacons, sub-deacons, and readers loved to serve with him and have been spiritually enriched until this day. Any child that was poor or an orphan remembers well Vladika John. Even the homeless from the streets of San Francisco, remembers Vladika John. The title that the faithful called Archbishop John was "Vladika," a title that was expressed with affection, which also carries a sense of endearment, respect and with love for a Bishop. Truly we should give thanks to our God, for sending us poor sinners in America this holy man named Vladika John.

The stories that follow are an extremely small account of his many intercessions on behalf of Orthodox faithful all over the world.

### Hope for Departed Non-Orthodox

*Editor's Note: The following incident is from an American convert whose mother died without becoming Orthodox. He was in sorrow and uncertain how to pray for her when he received his answer from Vladika John, which he also interpreted as a sign "that we should be missionaries and show love and concern for the non-orthodox around us."*

I was reading in the afternoon from "The Orthodox Word" of May-June, 1974. First I looked at the photo of Vladika John's Sepulcher. As I did I read again the troparion for him and on finishing was moved to kiss his Sepulcher and said to him how sorry I was that I had not visited it more often in San Francisco when I had been there. I then glanced at a picture of my mother and asked him once again to pray for her, and I felt sure that he was praying for her. Then my eyes began to become heavy, and they closed and I entered into a kind of reverie, during which I saw my mother with her apron on, talking much as she did in the last years of her life. Then suddenly I sensed that Vladika was praying for her. I then saw her again, but this time down on her knees, crying and saying how sorry she was for her sins. She cried so loudly and so bitterly that I could almost hear her actual voice in the room. I was impressed to join Vladika in prayer and not to open my eyes. I began to pray simply but fervently to God to have mercy on her, and I was conscious of Vladika's presence very strongly, though I did not see him as I did my mother. She continued to cry with great sorrow and finally disappeared. Soon I saw Vladika John, but only from the back. I could not see his face, only the veil of his kamilavka and the side of his beard, then the top of his Episcopal staff and the sleeve of his rasson. He began to slowly walk away, and I noticed clearly that he wore a plain black monk's mantle rather than an Episcopal one. He then slowly exited with dignity and I never saw his face, but I was sure it was he. I then opened my eyes, arose, and again recited his troparion aloud, facing East, and kissed the photo of his sepulcher.

I do not know the full meaning of what I experienced... One thing I noted is that Vladika said nothing and made no promises. I was simply assured of his prayers and of the need of my own and others'. I also note that he wore a monk's mantle and staff. This would indicate to me that he did what he did in a private capacity rather than as a bishop in official capacity, which would mean that he affirms the Church's prohibition of offering public prayers for the departed non-orthodox, but also affirms the teaching that private prayers for them are of great value and should be encouraged.

*Joseph McKean, Youngstown, OH (Sept. 6, 1974)*

### Reminder to Pray for the Dead

Here is something I have not yet related to you, but about the deeds of saints one must inform the whole world. Several years ago, when I was in great sorrow, the late Vladika John (Maximovitch) appeared to me in a dream. I saw in the

middle of our church a coffin, and in it Vladika John lying in his mantle. Vladika crossed himself, got up, and said to me: "Pray for the slave of God Basil (who had died several years before) and for ..." (someone whose name I could not make out, but later I figured out that this was our roomer Eugene who had died).

*Alexander Pernitz, San Francisco, CA (Dec. 14, 1975)*

#### Healing of an Ulcer

My mother has an ulcer that cannot be operated on, and has had trouble for the past three years. In 1975 she was hospitalized three times. She would become violently ill at night, and the next day would be in the hospital. She would then lie in bed and take feeding by arm; in a few days she would come home.

But in November of 1975 she was hit by another attack, and this time she had a fever of about 102 degrees or so (she is a small person and her normal temperature is 96). They said she could come home when the fever broke. My mother does not believe in God and his mercy, but this time she asked me to pray for her, and I said I would. She had lain in bed for seven days, and the doctors said they couldn't bring it down. So I received a piece of Vladika's mantle from a friend who knew the blessed Archpastor. She told me to give my mother a piece of artos and holy water, and then to place a piece of mantle on her forehead and ask for Vladika to pray for us. I left her in the late afternoon and she then fell asleep, and the next day she was without fever. In a day she was released and has been in good health ever since. The faithful all rejoiced in the miracle.

*Peter Herrin, Burlingame, CA (Feb. 2, 1976)*

#### Help in Stopping Bleeding

In the night into January 1, n.s., after praying to blessed Vladika John Maximovitch and applying some oil from the lamp burning in his Sepulcher, on arising from sleep on January 1st I found that the bleeding which I had been experiencing for two days had stopped. Our Lord is glorified in His Saints!

*Marina Prokopchuk, NJ (Jan. 1976)*

#### Prayer for the Sick

This past Monday evening I had a dream about Blessed Vladika John of San Francisco, which I shall never forget so long as I shall live. It was the sort of dream that I wished would not end, and I awoke with such joy and happiness, and felt so unworthy that he should come to me in a dream.

Blessed Vladika had on his cassock and his Panagia. He was bent over looking at me sort of sideways, his hair was black with streaks of grey hair, and he had taken off his glasses and said that he was happy for my ordination as a Deacon, and also he said: "I am very happy also that you often pray for the

sick during the services. Do not forget the sick, always pray for them, and visit them." And I said, "Yes Vladika, I will." Then T., our parishioner, said to him, "Would you please tell me about some of the lives of the Saints from Ireland?"—for it pleased T. that Vladika in his earlier days had brought to attention the pre-schism Saints of the West. So Vladika and T. began to talk. And that was the end of the dream.

Never in my life has anything more joyous ever happened to me. Before the dream I had been unemployed for over nine weeks, but the day after the dream I was hired... It is so neces-

sary to pray to these blessed people who have loved Christ and His Church so much, and at the same time to do the things that they have done while they were on the earth (but I believe that in spirit they are still here). How often have we read about how Blessed Vladika John used to go and visit the sick, care for them and pray for them often.

*Fr. Dimitry Serfes, Endicott, NY  
(Jan. 9, 1976)*

#### St. John: Alive after Death

On July 2, 1966, during a Archpastoral visit to Seattle, Washington with the wonder-working Kursk icon of the Mother of God, Vladika John peacefully gave his soul to the Lord. After Vladika John served Holy Divine Liturgy, he had a light meal in the Church hall, and went to rest in a private room provided for him; suddenly, someone heard a noise from his room, and Vladika John was found on the floor before the holy

icon of the Mother of God of Kursk. Vladika John gave his sweet soul to the Lord to whom he served so faithfully during his earthly life.

His unembalmed body was flown to San Francisco, California where for six days it lay in the cathedral in an open coffin, it was said that His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret (reposed in the Lord, 21 November 1985), wanted to attend the funeral service in San Francisco, and Vladika Philaret was at the time in New York, due to the fact that Vladika Philaret had at the time heart problems, it was not suggested that he fly to San Francisco by plane, and so instead took a train, this of course delayed the funeral for the newly - reposed Vladika John. However this did not matter because even when Vladika Philaret arrived at the Joy of All Who Sorrow Russian Orthodox Cathedral in San Francisco, for the funeral, Vladika John had no sign of decay, and it was said that Vladika John looked pure, and that a sense of spiritual beauty was felt when anyone approached his coffin during his funeral at the Church.

Many years later, his incorrupt relics remain in the depicted tomb at the Cathedral of the *Joy of All Who Sorrow*, in San Francisco, CA, on Geary, Blvd. His holy Canonization took place on July 2, 1994.



**The holy Tomb of St. John (Maximovitch) at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of The Joy of All Who Sorrow**

## WHAT HAS THE FEAST OF PASCHA LEFT IN OUR SOULS?

*A Sermon by St. John of Kronstadt.*

And so, the Feast of Feasts has passed by us; and the Royal Gates in the Lord's temples are shut; and the service is no longer as triumphant as it was during Bright Week. What, then, brethren, has this feast left in our souls? Christian feast days, you see, do not pass before us, one after another, just to leave our souls idle, but in order to discharge us from the cares and affairs of life's concerns; to put it another way: the Lord provides us with feast days in order that we might temporarily put aside thinking about, concerning ourselves with, rejoicing at, grieving over, that which is worldly, earthly, quick to pass; but, instead, that we might meditate upon, concern ourselves with, rejoice at, that which is heavenly and eternal. It was precisely for this reason, as well, that the feast day just past was given to us.

The Lord made us worthy of beholding the all-radiant feast of Christ's Resurrection in order that we might decry in it the first-fruits of the universal resurrection of all mankind in that last day of the world: *Christ rose from the dead, being the first-fruits of those who had died*, (I Cor. 15, 20), says the Word of God. It was for us, you see, that the Lord suffered, died, was buried, and arose; and His death, burial and resurrection is, as it were, our own death, burial and resurrection. It is for this reason that we sang during Mattins of Bright Week: *Yesterday was I interred with Thee, O Christ; conjointly with Thee do I rise today* (Pasch. Can. Ode 3, Trop. 2). Yes, all of us, invariably, shall rise up; and we all look for, i.e., await, the resurrection of the dead. This is as certain as it is certain that there will be a day tomorrow. Has this ever entered your heads; have you given any thought to this during the feast day of Pascha? Yet it was necessary to think upon this, without fail. All the great feast days of the Church—and the Feast of Pascha, in particular—remind us of our redemption, through Jesus Christ, from the age to come.

But a person who believes in his resurrection from the dead, the same person prepares here for the future life; he attempts to live in accordance with the commandments of the Lord; he honours the feasts of the Lord; and takes care not to offend against their sanctity through deeds of carnal impurity. And what was done among us Orthodox Christians on this radiant Feast? It is shameful even to speak of it; but it is necessary to do so. Christians, to the great grief of Holy Mother the Church, turned the bright days of Pascha Week into dark days, days deserving of tears and lamentation. So very many celebrated not the feast of Christ's Resurrection, and our own resurrection from dead works, but a feast of demonic resurrection in their souls. The Great Fast was a defeat of, was death for, the devil; because he fled from many souls and died to them, as it were, after their sincere repentance and communion of the

Holy Mysteries; but on the feast of Pascha he rose again in not a few souls. How did he arise? Through gluttony, drunkenness, outrage and other vices that drunkenness gives rise to, and to which many Christians gave themselves over.

It is thus that Christians love Christ; it is thus that they celebrate the greatest feast day of the year! What benefit is there in such people calling themselves Christians? Many pagans live better lives than that and, without a doubt, are more worthy in God's eyes than are they. Those of other [non-Christian] faiths and those who are not Orthodox, who dwell in our city [Kronstadt] are astonished at such behaviour, and on such a great a feast day, and say: there are the Christians for you; there are the Orthodox, for you! They celebrate like real pagans, and on such a feast day, yet! That is what those of other faiths and those who are not Orthodox say of us. But what does the Lord Himself say of our feast days; or, more precisely, of our observance of them? *My soul hateth your festivals, and I cannot bear the great day, saith the Lord, I am surfeited; I will no more pardon your sins.* (Esaia 1, 14)

Brethren! Whom have we begun to resemble? to what extent have we given ourselves over to forgetfulness? And the word of Scripture is being fulfilled in us in all its force: and man, being in honour, understandeth not; he is compared to senseless cattle and hath become like unto them (Ps. 48(49); 13, 21). Christ the Lord hath honoured us with His name; He hath washed us with His blood; he hath made of us a chosen people, an holy nation (I Pet. 2, 9); while we insolently, madly, have despised God's mercy and dishonour ourselves by all means of dissolute acts. Do not flatter yourselves, brethren: neither thieves, nor murderers, nor fornicators, nor adulterers shall inherit the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6; 9, 10-). Yes, if you do not cease from behaving thus, especially on holy days which, according to the Lord's commandment, should be consecrated and sanctified, then ye will not see the Kingdom of God.

Brethren! it is extremely necessary for us to behave more wisely, and to attend more closely to ourselves during the feasts of the Lord. The Lord will call us strictly to account for our foolish revelry. It is not according to the flesh, as do those who worship idols; but, rather, according to the spirit, that we should celebrate our feast days. Although even bodily celebration, if it occurs together with the spiritual, is permitted and is not hateful to the Lord; but, in that case, it must never exceed the bounds of moderation. *God is spirit* (John 4, 24; II Cor. 3, 17); our soul, redeemed by the Saviour, is spirit: therefore should our feast days be more spiritual than fleshly. The person that celebrates only bodily, the same one celebrates not unto God, but unto his idol—the belly; or, which is all the same, to the demon of intemperance. God deliver everyone from such feasts!

The abundance of material viands is permitted to Christians on feast days to the glory of God, in order that we might eat and drink in moderation, thanking God Who, together with spiritual joy, sends us bodily consolation, also, in the variety



and sweetness of the viands and beverages, in order that our joy might not be wanting. But spiritual joy on a feast day must always surpass that of the body; while, with us—it is sadly the opposite.

It is said, in God's commandment: *remember the Sabbath day, and sanctify it* (Ex. 20, 8); in our language of the New Testament, this means: *remember the Day of Resurrection; do not forget its holiness and try to sanctify it yourself by your good deeds.*

O Lord! grant that we might always remember Thy commandment concerning how we are to celebrate holy days; that we might keep it holy and be well-pleasing unto Thee with spiritual celebration. Amen.



My child, always justify your brother and reproach yourself. Never justify your deeds. Learn to say, "Bless"—in other words, "Forgive me"—and humility will dwell within you. Have patience and overlook your brother's faults, remembering God's forbearance towards your own faults. Love as Jesus loves you and as you want others to love you. Hold on to silence, constant prayer, and self-reproach, and then you will see how much mourning and tears and joy you will feel. But if you fail to hold on to them, in other words, if you neglect to apply them, then coldness and dryness will replace the above graces.

Love the brethren. Your love will show when, despite all your brother's weaknesses, you count them as nothing and love him. Love will keep you from all sins. Think of nothing but your own sinfulness. Reproach yourself constantly—this is the best path.

Great is our honor—though unworthy—to have been called by God to serve in the work of saving souls as His tools, bearing in mind that if others (Apostles, etc.) had not sacrificed their souls for our sake, we would not be children of God and heirs of heavenly blessings. Therefore, let us do whatever we can; the work will be completed by Him who has the power to perfect it.

Think about how the first Christians struggled during the times of the catacombs; with what self-sacrifice, with what love they sacrificed things dear to them when Christian duty called. And in the end, their sacrifices brought them eternal glory.

Oh, we are unworthy, and unfortunately we lose everything because of our lack of faith, and I am the first amongst those of little faith. But we hope that the Lord's mercy will strengthen us, so that we, too, may humbly bear a small cross for our solace.

**From Counsels from the Holy Mountain  
(The Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim)**

## ON ANTIDORON

*By Fr. Haralambos Vasilopoulos.*

A colleague of mine from Greece is a pious deacon named Fr. Mark. When Jerome became Archbishop of Athens and introduced several "innovations" in the Church, modern and ecumenistic things, Fr. Mark doubted whether the Divine Grace was still in this Church. I told Fr. Mark what I deemed was necessary, but I could not convince him. God, however, convinced him with the following miracle.

Fr. Mark went with the abbot of Petraki Monastery to St. George Vrana in Marathon, and they celebrated liturgy. At the end, he took a lot of antidoron as he used to, blessed by the Orthodox priest for the week. But he also took with him a piece of the left over prosphoron, from which the antidoron had been cut. This antidoron had not been blessed by the Priest. He wrapped them both, brought them to Athens to his cell and placed them in a drawer. He forgot them, and in a few days, when he found them, he saw strangely, that the piece that had not been blessed by the Priest, was all green from mold, while the antidoron which had been blessed by the priest, was all clean with no mold. This incident convinced him that there is grace and blessing in the Church regardless of the Archbishop.

As regards the power of the antidoron I will also mention another incident which occurred with the antidoron. We have a Turkish saint, St. Ahmet. In one of his attacks, he took a Christian woman to his harem. She remained locked there. Her mother went to Church every week and would bring her antidoron.

Ahmet noticed that when he approached her, and she had eaten antidoron, she smelled fragrant.

"What perfume do you put on you?" he asked.

"No perfume," she responded.

"That's impossible. You will tell me," he insisted.

"I am fragrant," she was forced to tell him, "when I eat antidoron from my Church."

"I will go," he said, "to see what they do in the Church."

He went and stood in the narthex at the candle stand. At the time of the consecration, at the "Thine own of thine own," he saw the priest "butchering" a small child. He got angry and, at the end, told the priest.

"You criminal! Why did you butcher up that child?"

The Priest understood and responded.

"My child," he told him, "this happens each time we liturgize. Christ is sacrificed here.

Glorify God who opened your eyes so you could see it."

Then Ahmet ran out and shouted: "Christ is God and not Mohammed." The Turks captured him and killed him. And thus the unbaptized Turk became a saint! He was baptized in the blood of his martyrdom.

We must all take antidoron with great piety and without having eaten anything, so that we may be benefited.

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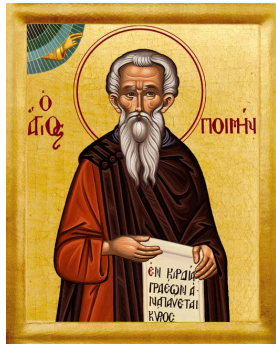
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## WE SIMPLY CAN NOT SERVE TWO MASTERS!

By Fr. Demetrios Carellas.

*The Lord demands that all of our heart, all of our soul, all of  
our life be offered to Him...*

New-Martyr Valentin

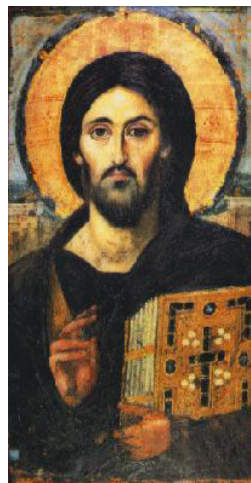
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

These words of the new-martyr Valentin were like a wake-up call to this wretch. Like our breath and our heartbeat, our pursuit of the spiritual life—the “narrow path”—must be constant. Fortunately for me, my heart and lungs do not depend on my directions in order to function. Nevertheless, I have experienced, albeit most briefly, the severe negative effects on my body and disposition when my breathing becomes difficult, or my heart begins to beat irregularly. Since I am not in constant pursuit of the “one thing needful,” my soul must be very sick. These words of the new-martyr provide a true diagnosis of the cause of my soul’s feeble condition:

*In order to embrace the spiritual life, one must inwardly  
resolve to commit oneself unreservedly—to the end. It is pre-  
cisely this resolution that frightens many, so that they feel*

*compelled to serve two masters; and thus it becomes the source  
of many sorrows.*

The Lord categorically states that *no one can serve two masters*, and yet that is what I am trying to do. While striving to apply the form of spiritual life to small portions of my day, I do not earnestly desire to embrace its essence. My Saviour tells me to deny myself, yet how often in any given day do I choose to deny Him instead—through my thoughts, words, and actions? He Who is the only Judge, tells me not to judge others; but I do.



He Who granted forgiveness to all His persecutors, tells me to forgive those who hurt me and *pray for those who spitefully use [me]*; but I do not. As the new-martyr Valentin notes, I remember well the Lord’s many wonderful promises—especially that He will give me all that I ask; but I always manage to forget its condition—my unconditional surrender to His will in all things.

Beloved friends! Are some of you also—knowingly or unknowingly—trying to serve two masters? If so, then join with me in begging our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to give us His grace so that, day-by-day, we too can *commit ourselves, each other, and all of our lives* to Him alone. His Bride, our Holy Orthodox Faith, through Her mystical / ascetical lifestyle, gives

us all the supplies and medication we need to discard “mam-mon’s” enslavement of our souls; so that we can cling tenaciously to Christ alone! But we must make the decision to embrace this sacred lifestyle. *He who has ears to hear let him hear!*



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

Vol. 05, Issue 05

May 2007

Brotherhood of St. Poimen

- **Abortion is Willful Murder (p. 3)**
- **Elder Porphyrios' Patorial Gift (p. 5)**
- **Negligence, the Unsleeping Danger for the Christian (p. 6)**
- **Purification of the Soul (p. 11)**
- **The Rule for Attending to Oneself—for Those Dwelling in the World (p. 12)**
- **Recalling St. John Maximovitch (p. 13)**



- **29η Μαΐου: Μνήμη Ἀλώσεως (σελ. 7)**
- **Παναγία ἡ Πορταΐτισσα (σελ. 8)**
- **«Ἐπεθύμησε Πόρνη...» (σελ. 10)**



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## ON THE LIFTING OF THE ANATHEMAS OF 1054

*A letter to Patriarch Athenagoras by Metropolitan Philaret (+1985), from "Selective Writings of His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret, Vol. III," compiled by Archimandrite Nektarios Serfes.*

*From the OH Editor: The letter below (written in 1965) is presented to our readers for both its valid points as well as its timeless truthfulness. Orthodox Christians of our days may benefit greatly by reading and comprehending the points presented by Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory.*

† † †

Your Holiness,

We have inherited a legacy from the Holy Fathers that everything in the Church should be done in a legal way, unanimously, and conforming to ancient Traditions. If any of the bishops and even primates of one of the autocephalous churches does something which is not in agreement with the teaching of the whole Church, every member of the Church may protest against it. The 15<sup>th</sup> Canon of the First and Second Council of Constantinople of the year 861 describes as *worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians* those bishops and clergymen who secede from communion, even with their patriarch, if he publicly preaches heresy and openly teaches it in church. In that way, we are all guardians of the truth of the Church, which was always protected through the care that nothing of general importance for the Church would be done without the consent of all.

Therefore, our attitude toward various schisms outside of the local limits of particular autocephalous churches was never determined otherwise than by the common consensus of these churches.

If in the beginning our separation from Rome was declared in Constantinople,

then later on it became a matter of concern to the whole Orthodox world. None of the autocephalous churches, and specifically not the highly esteemed Church of Constantinople from which our Russian Church has received the treasure of Orthodoxy, may change anything in this matter without the foregoing consent of everybody. Moreover we, the bishops ruling at present, may not make decisions with reference to the West which would disagree with the teaching of the Holy Fathers who lived before us, specifically the Saints Photios of Constantinople and Mark of Ephesus.

In the light of these principles, although being the youngest of the primates, as the head of the free autonomous part of the Church of Russia, we regard it our duty to state our categorical protest against the action of Your Holiness with reference to your simultaneous solemn declaration with the Pope of Rome in regard to the removal of the sentence of excommunication made by Patriarch Michael Cerularius in 1054.

We heard many expressions of perplexity when Your Holiness in the face of the whole world performed something quite new and uncommon to your predecessors as well as inconsistent with the 10<sup>th</sup> Canon of the Holy Apostles at your meeting with the Pope of Rome, Paul VI, in Jerusalem. We have heard that after that, many monasteries on the Holy Mount of Athos have refused to mention your name at religious services. Let us say frankly, the confusion was great. But now Your Holiness is going even further when, only by your own decision with the bishops of your Synod, you cancel the decision of Patriarch Michael Cerularius accepted by the whole Orthodox East. In that way Your Holiness is acting contrary to the attitude accepted by the whole of our Church in regard to Roman Catholicism. It is not a question of this or that evaluation of the behavior of Cardinal Humbert. It is

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not a matter of a personal controversy between the Pope and the Patriarch which could be easily remedied by their mutual Christian forgiveness; no, the essence of the problem is in the deviation from Orthodoxy which took root in the Roman Church during the centuries, beginning with the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope which was definitively formulated at the First Vatican Council. The declaration of Your Holiness and the Pope with good reason recognizes your gesture of "mutual pardon" as insufficient to end both old and more recent differences. But more than that, your gesture puts a sign of equality between error and truth. For centuries all the Orthodox Church believed with good reason that it has violated no doctrine of the Holy Ecumenical Councils; whereas the Church of Rome has introduced a number of innovations in its dogmatic teaching. The more such innovations were introduced, the deeper was to become the separation between the East and the West. The doctrinal deviations of Rome in the eleventh century did not yet contain the errors that were added later. Therefore, the cancellation of the mutual excommunication of 1054 could have been of meaning at that time; but now it is only an evidence of indifference in regard to the most important errors, namely new doctrines foreign to the ancient Church, of which some, having been exposed by St. Mark of Ephesus, were the reason why the Church rejected the union of Florence.

We declare firmly and categorically:

No union of the Roman Church with us is possible until it renounces its new doctrines, and no communion in prayer can be restored with it without a decision of all churches, which, however, can hardly be possible before the liberation of the Church of Russia which at present has to live in catacombs. The hierarchy which is now under Patriarch Alexis cannot express the true voice of the Russian Church because it is

under full control of the godless government. Primates of some other churches in countries dominated by communists also are not free.

Whereas the Vatican is not only a religious center but also a state, and whereas relations with it have also a political nature, as is evident from the visit of the Pope to the United Nations, one must reckon with the possibility of an influence in some sense of the godless authorities in the matter of the Church of Rome. History testifies to the fact that negotiations with the heterodox under pressure of political factors never brought the Church anything but confusion and schisms. Therefore we find it necessary to make a statement that our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia as well as, certainly, the Russian Church which is at present in the catacombs, will not consent to any "dialogues" with other confessions and beforehand rejects any compromise with them, finding union with them possible only if they accept the Orthodox Faith as it is maintained until now in the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. While this has not happened, the excommunication proclaimed by the Patriarch Michael Cerularius is still valid, and the canceling of it by Your Holiness is an act both illegal and void.

Certainly we are not opposed to benevolent relations with representatives of other confessions **as long as the truth of Orthodoxy is not betrayed**. Therefore our Church in due time accepted the invitation to send its observers to the Second Vatican Council, as well as it used to send observers to the Assemblies of the World Council of Churches, in order to have firsthand information in regard to the work of these assemblies without any participation in their deliberations.

We appreciate the kind reception of our observers, and we are studying with interest their reports showing that many changes are being introduced into the Roman Church. We will thank

God if these changes will serve the cause of bringing it closer to Orthodoxy. However, if Rome has much to change in order to return to the “expression of the Faith of the Apostles,” the Orthodox Church, which has maintained that Faith impeccable up to now and has nothing to change.

The Tradition of the Church and the example of the Holy Fathers teach us that the Church holds no dialogue with those who have separated themselves from Orthodoxy. Rather than that, the Church addresses to them a monologue inviting them to return to its fold through rejection of any dissenting doctrines.

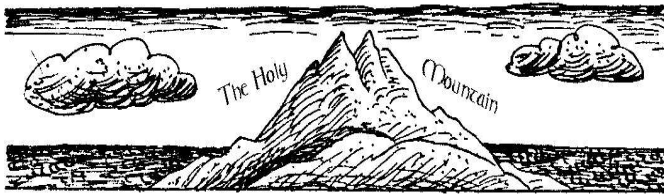
A true dialogue implies an exchange of views with a possibility of persuading the participants to attain an agreement. As one can perceive from the Encyclical “*Ecclesiam Suam*,” Pope Paul VI understands the dialogue as a plan for our union with Rome with the help of some formula which would, however, leave unaltered its doctrines, and particularly its dogmatic doctrine about the position of the Pope in the Church. However, any compromise with error is foreign to the history of the Orthodox Church and to the essence of the Church. It could not bring a harmony in the confessions of the Faith, but only an illusory outward unity similar to the conciliation of dissident Protestant communities in the ecumenical movement.

May such treason against Orthodoxy not enter between us.

We sincerely ask Your Holiness to put an end to the confusion, because the way you have chosen to follow, even if it would bring you to a union with the Roman Catholics, would provoke a schism in the Orthodox world. Surely even many of your spiritual children will prefer faithfulness to Orthodoxy instead of the idea of a compromising union with the heterodox without their full harmony with us in the truth.

Asking for your prayers, I am your Holiness’ humble servant,

+ Metropolitan PHILARET (December 2/15 1965)



Clerics and, in particular, celibate clerics must be chosen from those of a mature age, with excellent education, extreme piety, shining ethos, sterling character and complete spiritual formation. All those things that are acquired with labors and struggles, prayer and study, fasting and vigils, with voluntary poverty and hardships and through various deprivations. For asceticism is not the privilege or responsibility of monastics alone, but of all the faithful and particularly of clerics and especially of unmarried clerics. The Orthodox Church is deeply ascetic and those who don't love asceticism and who are friends of luxury and of comfort don't have a place within her.

Blessed Epiphanius of Athens

## ABORTION IS WILLFUL MURDER

By Fr. Dr. Photios W.

The Sixth Commandment: *Thou Shalt Not Kill.*

**Question:** What is the Orthodox position on abortion?

**Answer:** The Sixth Commandment prohibits **the taking of life** (emphasis supplied). This commandment, therefore, applies equally to the taking of one's own life (suicide), the taking of another's life (murder) and the taking of the life of the unborn (abortion).

The One Holy Catholic & Apostolic Church has never had a doubt about what abortion is. It is murder, not only just murder, but willful murder.

The 85 Canons of the Holy and Renowned Apostles, Concord: *Among willful (emphasis supplied) murders are those committed by women who give herbs to pregnant women in order to kill the embryos; and likewise (emphasis supplied) those who accept such herbs as is also decreed by the Sixth Council in its c. XVI and by the Council of Ancyra in its c. XXI and by St. Basil according to his cc. II and VIII.*

So both the abortionist and abortionist 'helper,' 'facilitator,' are guilty of willful murder in the eyes of the Church. A woman has no "right" to kill the human life within her. All life is created by God. He gives life to us for preservation and nurturing: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting (emphasis supplied) life.* (St. John 3:16)

Killing another person, even whilst in the womb, is a crime against that person and the Holy Spirit!

In The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles), the Apostles state a further commandment: *Do not murder; do not commit adultery... do not kill a fetus by abortion (emphasis supplied) or commit infanticide.* The Didache is very authoritative and probably written before the end of the first century.

In 258 A.D. at The Third Regional Council in Carthage, the assembled bishops passed the following canon regarding this matter:

Canon XXI: *Regarding women who become prostitutes and kill their babies, and who make it their business to concoct abortives, the former rule barred them for life from communion, and they are left without recourse. But, having found a more philanthropic alternative, we have fixed the penalty at ten years, in accordance with the fixed degrees.*

In *St. Basil the Great's Canons*, he puts it this way: *A woman who aborts deliberately (emphasis supplied) is liable to trial as a murderess. This is not a precise assertion of some figurative and inexpressible conception that passes current among us. For here there is involved the question of providing for the infants to be born, but also for the woman who has plotted against her own self. For in most cases the women die in the course of such operations. But besides this there is to be noted the fact that the*



*destruction of the embryo constitutes another (emphasis supplied) murder.... It behooves us, however, not to extend their confessions to the extreme limit of death, but to admit them at the end of the moderate period of ten years, without specifying a definite time, but adjusting the cure to the manner of penitence (emphasis supplied).*

The Sixth Ecumenical Council's Canon XCI reads: *As for women who furnish drugs for the purpose of procuring abortion, and those who take fetus-killing poisons, they are made subject to the penalty prescribed for murderers.*

There is no doubt about the Church's position. Abortion is pure and simple willful murder in God's eyes. Consider the wonderful miraculous communication going on between fetuses in wombs by reading the Gospel of St. Luke in relation to the yet unborn St. John the Baptist's leaping in his mother Elizabeth's womb when the Saviour approaches within the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary the Theotokos: *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.* (St. Luke 1: 39-45)

Blessed Theophylact in his Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Luke relays the Church's position that when Mary saluted Elizabeth, the voice of the Virgin is here the voice of God Who is taking on flesh within her. This is why the voice of salutation also gladdens the Forerunner in the womb, and causes him to prophesy. The words which Elizabeth speaks prophetically to Mary are **not** (emphasis supplied) her own words, but are the words of the babe within her who speaks through the mouth of Elizabeth, just as the Son of God in the womb speaks through the mouth of Mary. For the babe leaped within the womb, and then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

If the babe had not leaped, then Elizabeth would not have prophesied. In the same way it is said that prophets first undergo ecstasy and divine rapture, and then begin to prophesy, so too John first leaped, moved by this same excitation, and then prophesied through the mouth of his mother. What did

he prophesy? *Blessed art thou among women... and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...*

How can any spiritual person deny that there is a separate person within their respective wombs; one, the greatest of the prophets; the other, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Mary's voice is God's *Who is taking on flesh within her*; Elizabeth's is actually John the Forerunner prophesying through her. Had Elizabeth killed John the Baptist whilst he was in her womb, she would have committed willful murder! Naturally, she

would never have dreamt of such a hideous thing. The child within her was precious to her and to God as are all such children. They are not just "embryos" to be callously dealt with according to our selfish aims. All those with child are precious in God's sight, woman and child.

Children have always been precious to Christians. The woman should spiritually prepare herself for the birth of her son or daughter, indeed, the offspring of her husband and herself. The pregnant mother is a sight held in the highest esteem by the Lord. There is no way that Christ would countenance the slaughter of

even one child, much less millions, as a matter of secular convenience for selfish people who want to opt for an 'easy way out' of a 'situation'.

What about the child? What about its right to live? I am not talking about legal rights. I am speaking about its spiritual rights, its right to come into the world through God's grace and its opportunity to take up the Cross and follow Him toward the goal of salvation through repentance and good works from faith in Him.



The path of life you follow, married or unmarried, is the will of God. For many times people desire one thing, while the call of God is otherwise. The married state is good, as is the unmarried; the celibate state is better and higher, for the unmarried man is interested in how to please God, while the married man thinks of how to please his wife and the world. God doesn't force anyone, neither into the married nor into the unmarried state. On his own, man must choose one path or the other. If one hesitates as to which of the two paths to follow, let him pray fervently, with compunction and piety, that God might reveal it to him.

**Blessed Elder Philotheos of Paros**

**Titled as the "First Kiss of Twins," this photograph from within the womb of an expecting mother quietly appeared (and disappeared) in our media, with very little commentary from the reporting media.**



## ELDER PORHYRIOS' PASTORAL GIFT

Source: "With Elder Porphyrios" by K. Yiannitsiotis, pp. 234-239.

### You Can Become Holy Even in Omonia Square

*[Omonia Square is in central Athens. It is a very cosmopolitan place. Several main streets meet there, and it is noted for its traffic, pollution, and, perhaps a little shady street-life.]*

We went to see the Elder with a friend of ours who was a doctor. The doctor had exceptional spiritual virtues, but maintained a cautious stance with regard to true Christian life. On the way I discussed with him the immediate necessity of living a life in Christ from now, willingly and conscientiously, because that is of the greatest value and must also be our greatest interest. He agreed, in general, but insisted that it called for a minimum of spiritual requirements, that he himself did not have.

When we arrived the Elder received both of us in his cell, together. He told us some wonderful things that interested the doctor professionally. I was impressed because although it was the first time that he met my friend, he nevertheless quickly found the pulse of his soul from the very beginning. He spoke to him as if he had known him since childhood. The friend was impressed by the Elder's clairvoyance. He was unable to hide his joy.

At some point, I mentioned the matter we had discussed on the way and had disagreed upon. The Elder used the occasion to present us both with some most convincing arguments about the benefit of living the true Christian life, in all places and at all times. I remember that in his conclusive remarks, he addressed the doctor as follows: "Do you know, my dear friend, somebody who has true desire in his heart can become holy even in Omonia?"

In the end, the doctor was convinced after speaking with him for just five minutes, whereas I had not been able to manage it after talking to him for over an hour. How could he not convince him, since his final conclusion was not some theoretical invention of his? Rather, it was the fruit of his own personal experience, since he lived a holy life, for thirty whole years, as chaplain to the Chapel of St. Gerasimos, at the Polyclinic General Hospital, in Omonia Square? How could he not convince him, since his whole life was an upward journey to holiness?

When we returned to Athens, my friend asked that we visit the Elder again at the earliest opportunity. Then we said goodbye. I left for my house and he left for his office, which was close to Omonia square. When the Elder said to him, "Somebody, who wants to, can even become holy in Omonia." He meant it both metaphorically and in actuality. Naturally, this was without anybody having told him where the doctor worked.

### The Cheerful Climate in the Elder's Courtyard

The Elder's pastoral care functioned mystically, not only when he spoke to visitors in his cell, but also when they were simply

waiting in his courtyard to see him. Even from my first visit, I observed the cheerful climate that prevailed in the Elder's courtyard between people who met for the first time. I would call it a climate that exemplified the soul's resurrection. In the beginning, I thought that it was just my own personal impression. Later, I checked this with the impressions of many other visitors who had exactly the same feeling as I did and who expressed it in nearly the same words.

### When Separation is the Lesser Evil

The Elder sometimes guided his spiritual children in a painful manner, when he considered it spiritually necessary. He told one spiritual daughter whose husband had just died: "Now you must separate from your Mother-in-law. Since she has other children, let her go and live with one of her children. Because, if you live together I see that from her bitterness she'll turn your children against you. Therefore, she will sin greatly and put your soul and that of your children's in spiritual danger. In the end, you'll be obliged to throw her out through quarrelling, whereas now she can leave trouble-free. You'll both be a lot less upset. Help her from a distance, as much as you can both financially, but most of all, through prayer. We priests have a mission, to bring people together, but when this creates spiritual harm, separation is the lesser evil."

His spiritual daughter carried out his advice in time. His words were soon borne out by the events that followed. Of course, this was not a general piece of advice, but a particular piece of advice given to a particular person.

### Our Church's Love Covers Everything

Someone asked the Elder who they should vote for in the parliamentary elections. He answered with a parable: "The Orthodox Church is like a Mother Hen. Under her wings she covers white chicks, and black chicks, and yellow chicks and every color of chicks." The person asking the question got the right answer: The Orthodox Church is not politicized, even more so, it does not support one party or another. It covers everyone with love, without being identified with factions.

### Accused by Conscience

Once the Elder was traveling from Thessaloniki to Ierisso, on the way to the Holy Mountain. When he arrived at the bus station, a seat could not be found for him on the bus. He was obliged to travel standing, while some youths were sitting down by him, joking among themselves. An elderly gentleman admonished the youths, because they saw an aged hieromonk standing up, and they stayed in their seats, indifferently. He suggested that one of them give up his seat for the priest, they stayed in their seats unmoved, and motionless. Then the gentleman, full of rage, got up and offered his own seat to the Elder. The Elder thanked him, but did not take his seat. He traveled standing up all the way to Ierisso (A journey of 1 ½ - 2 hours). At the end of the journey the gentleman asked the Elder why he did not take up the seat he had offered him. The Elder said, "You didn't do the right

thing by telling the kids off. They acted badly: They left an elderly hieromonk standing and they didn't offer him their seat of their own accord, as they should have (in Greece it is not only expected that young people give up their seat to an older person, but even more so to a priest, when using public transport). Following that, if they had got up, after you had chastised them and I sat in their seat, or if I accepted the seat that you offered me, the kids would not have realized that they acted badly. On the contrary, they would feel justified. However, now having been standing up for so long, and seeing me in front of them, their own conscience has been awakened and accused them in silence for the way they acted. A person can only be saved like that, when he repents, not because someone has accused him externally, but because his conscience has accused him internally."

#### Now I've Given Up

A friend divulged his thoughts to the Elder. "Elder," he said, "I'm concerned about my old age, and I ask that God does not allow me to be a burden to relatives or other people." The Elder laughed saying, "You know, I said the same thing when I was young, but now I've given up and let God decide the right path for my ending years."



## NEGLIGENCE, THE UNSLEEPING DANGER FOR THE CHRISTIAN

*By Elder Joseph of the Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (Holy Mountain).*



Negligence is a terrible conspirator against our lives and has wronged me many times, and I never cease to regard it as our most implacable enemy. Elder Joseph's fervour in protecting us from it and his profound experience of the crafty and intricate ways in which it confuses and entangles its victims makes it imperative for us to say something about this enemy of ours.

In the language of the Fathers this is called listlessness (*acedia*) as well as negligence and sloth, which all mean the same thing—spiritual death. We shall not go into what the Fathers have said about this pestilence, except that it is included among the eight evil thoughts as a comprehensive vice. We shall simply give helpful extracts from the Elder's experience, which are of particular use in our own generation.

When we asked him about the chief cause of man's failure in his spiritual purpose, he would reply that it was negligence. On one occasion I asked him how it was that the Fathers give

self-esteem as the reason, and he replied, "Yes, that conspires against us too; but not all of us, only those it deceives. And again it affects only a few, because self-esteem corrupts treasures that have been amassed, while negligence does not even let you collect them.

"Negligence is like a drought in which nothing grows. Self-esteem damages those who have fruit, who have made some progress; whereas negligence harms everyone, because it impedes those who want to make a start, it stops those who have advanced, it does not allow the ignorant to learn, it prevents those who have gone astray from returning, it does not permit the fallen to get up—in general, negligence spells destruction for all those it holds captive."

"Using the pretext of physical needs and weariness from the struggle, this deceiver makes itself credible; and like a conductive material, listlessness transmits us and hands us over to self-love, the more general enemy. Only a courageous soul grounded in faith and hope in God can overthrow this conspiracy. Otherwise, it is difficult for someone inexperienced to escape from these nets. This is a great ordeal for those who live alone and for everyone who avoids a regulated life, **whereas it is unable to harm those who are under obedience and have tasks to perform.**"

"Listlessness begins with despondency and faintheartedness and the prolonged withdrawal of grace. It starts off with the application of economy towards some supposed infirmity or weakness, and ends in total disbelief and shamelessness and ingratitude. For those who live alone as hesychasts, it starts from neglect of the rule and order of their lives, and grows if not attended to in good time. But in those who live with others, it begins with idle talk and backbiting."

As a cure for negligence, the Elder recommended eschatological meditation in ascending and descending form: reward and punishment, the Kingdom of Heaven and hell; and also calling to mind the honorable memory of those who have taken part in the struggle. The means of grace against negligence are prayer, tears and faith. Again, the Elder would recount many examples from the lives of earlier spiritual warriors who happened to be led astray by negligence and lost the record of spiritual progress which they had gained through great fervour and ascetic labour. The Elder would say, "In my opinion, the other passions into which spiritual warriors are led astray are complications of indifference, because this erodes our attention and so opens the way to related and connected passions, and these take men captive."

To wake us up in the morning he would always shout to us, "Don't be negligent, boys, lest you fall into the hands of thieves." He even regarded a pointless occupation as negligence, because he believed that this too could lead to the same bondage. As David says, *Let not thy foot be moved, and He who keeps thee will not slumber* (Ps. 121:3); and again, *If Thy law had not been my meditation, I should have perished in my humiliation* (Ps. 119:92).



## 29η Μαΐου: Μνήμη Αλώσεως

*Τῆς Πολυξένης Βετσίκας, ἀπὸ τὸ μηνιαῖο περιοδικὸ «Πληροφόρηση» τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Δημητριάδος.*

**Τ**ὸ μήνα αὐτό, μέσα στὸ ροδοφῶς ποὺ ἀγκαλιάζει τὴν πλάση, ἡ μνήμη τῶν Πανελλήνων στρέφεται, πρέπει νὰ στρέφεται, στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη, στὴ Βασιλεύουσα τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας, τὴν κιβωτὸ τῆς Χριστιανοσύνης, τὸ λίκνο τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ψυχῆς, ποὺ πρὶν ἀπὸ 554 χρόνια ἔπεφτε στὰ χέρια τῶν Τούρκων, αὐτοὺς ποὺ ὁ Ἀμερικανὸς ποιητῆς George Horton ἀποκαλεῖ «ἡ τύφλα τῆς Ἀσίας» (the blight of Asia).

Μὲ ματωμένα γράμματα, ἄσβηστα στὰ κατεβατὰ τῆς ἀνάληπτης Ἱστορίας καὶ στίς φαρμακωμένες ἀνθρώπινες καρδιές, γράφτηκε ἡ φοβερὴ ἐκείνη ἡμέρα καὶ ὦρα, πρὶν ἀρχίσει ἡ καταστροφὴ τῆς πιὸ φημισμένης πολιτείας μέσα στὴν οἰκουμένη ὅλη.

«Ἡ Πόλις ἐάλω» τὴν 29η Μαΐου τοῦ 1453. «Ἀλίμονο, ὅμως, ἂν τὴν ἀφήσουμε νὰ ἀλωθῇ καὶ ἐντὸς μας» ἀναφώνησε σὲ ὁμιλία τοῦ κάποτε ὁ ἀείμνηστος καθηγητῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν Νικόλαος Τωμαδάκης. καὶ πρόσθεσε: «Μὴν ἀφήνετε νὰ σβήσῃ στὴν ψυχὴ τῶν νεωτέρων Ἑλλήνων ἡ ἀνάμνησις τῆς Βασιλίδος. Διατηρεῖτε τὸν πυρσὸν ἀναμμένον μέχρι συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. Τίποτε δὲ χάνεται ὀριστικῶς παρὰ μόνον ἐὰν δὲν ὑπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι νὰ ἐνθυμοῦνται». Λόγια σοφά, λόγια αἰωνίας ἀλήθειας.

Νὰ θυμοῦνται τὴ χιλιόχρονη δόξα, τὸ μεγαλεῖο τοῦ Βυζαντίου, ποὺ χίλια καὶ πλέον χρόνια ἔγινε προπύργιο τῆς Ἑλληνοχριστιανικῆς ιδέας, τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀξιῶν καὶ τῆς πολιτιστικῆς διαθήκης καὶ παρακαταθήκης. Νὰ θυμοῦνται τὴν Πόλιν τὴν ἐπτάλοφον, τὴ Βασιλεύουσα, καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ σειρᾶς αἰώνων πολικὸ ἀστέρα τοῦ γένους, τὴν Ἀγία-Σοφία.

Θὰ πρέπει νὰ διαθέτῃ κανεὶς ἰδιαίτερο χάρισμα, γιὰ νὰ μπορέσῃ νὰ ἀδειάσῃ τὴν λίμνη τῆς συγκίνησης, ποὺ πλημμυρίζει τὴν Ἑλληνίδα ψυχὴ του, ὅταν ἀγκιστρωθεῖ ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ καρδιά του ἀπὸ τὴ σαγήνη τῆς Βασιλεύουσας καὶ τῶν τραγικῶν τελευταίων στιγμῶν τῆς. Ἦταν τότε ποὺ ὁ ὑπερόπτης Σουλτάνος Μωάμεθ ὁ Β΄ ἔστειλε τὶς δελεαστικὲς του προτάσεις στὸ μάρτυρα αὐτοκράτορα τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ ἑλληνισμοῦ. Νὰ παραδώσῃ τὴν Πόλιν καὶ νὰ γλιτώσῃ καὶ αὐτὸς καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντά του καὶ ὁ λαὸς του καὶ ὅλος ὁ Μοριάς θὰ γινόταν φέουδὸ του.

Καὶ ἡ ἀπάντησις τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου, ἀντάξια βασιλέως χιλιόχρονης ἐνδοξης αὐτοκρατορίας, ἀποτελεῖ ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ ὠραιότερα κείμενα τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας: «... Τὸ δὲ τὴν πόλιν σοὶ δοῦναι οὐτ' ἐμὸν ἐστί οὐτ' ἄλλου τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν ταύτῃ· κοινὴ γὰρ γνώμη πάντες αὐτοπροαιρέτως ἀποθανοῦμεν καὶ οὐ φεισόμεθα τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν».

Τὰ ὄνειρα καὶ τὸ φρόνημά του ὁ Κωνσταντῖνος Παλαιολόγος δὲν τὰ πῆρε μαζί του στὸν τάφο. Ἐγιναν ὄνειρα καὶ φρόνημα τοῦ Γένους, κληρονομιά γιὰ τοὺς αὐριανούς

σκλάβους ποὺ τοὺς ἐξαγόραζε τὴ δουλεία. Ὁ θάνατός του στερνὴ λάμψη, ποὺ ὅμως μετατράπηκε σὲ δυνατό φῶς καὶ τὸ ἔθνος μὲ εὐλάβεια τὸ κράτησε ἄσβεστο ἐπὶ αἰῶνες. Ἡ ταπεινὴ θανὴ τοῦ ἔμοιασε μὲ νίκη, γιὰτὶ βοήθησε νὰ σταθεῖ τὸ μέγα ἔργο—ἡ ἐλευθερία μας.

Πρὶν σταματήσῃ ὁ ἀπόηχός του «ἡ Πόλις ἐάλω»... πρὶν προλάβουν νὰ βυθιστοῦν οἱ σκλάβοι στὸ ζοφερὸ ὕπνο τῆς δουλείας, πρὶν προφτάσουν οἱ θρῆνοι γύρω νὰ ἀπλωθοῦν καὶ νὰ μαράνουν τῆς ψυχῆς τὶς δυνάμεις, μιὰ ἄλλη κραυγὴ γίνεται θρύλος, νανούρισμα ἐλπίδας, ποὺ δὲν ἔπαψε νὰ συντροφεύει τὸ δουλωμένο Γένος σ' ὅλους τοὺς καιροὺς: «Πάλι μὲ χρόνους καὶ καιροὺς, πάλι δικὰ μας θὰ ἴναι». Γιατί «οὐκ ἐάλω ἡ βασιλεύουσα ψυχὴ τῶν Ἑλλήνων, οὐκ ἐάλω ἡ ρίζα, οὐκ ἐάλω τὸ φῶς».

Ἑλλήνα Ὁρθόδοξε, ποτὲ μὴ ξεχνᾷς: «Τὸ χτισμένο φῶς δὲν ξεχτίζεται...»

**ΠΑΛΙ ΜΕ ΧΡΟΝΟΥΣ  
ΚΑΙ ΚΑΙΡΟΥΣ,  
ΠΑΛΙ ΔΙΚΑ ΜΑΣ  
ΘΑ ἸΝΑΙ!**

**Γιατί ὁ Θεὸς δημιούργησε, ἂν καὶ γνώριζε  
ἐκ τῶν προτέρων, αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ  
ἀμαρτάνουν καὶ νὰ μὴ μετανοοῦν;**

*Ἀγίου Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ.*

**Ο** Θεὸς ἀπὸ ἀγαθότητα δημιουργεῖ ἐκ τοῦ μηδενὸς τὰ δημιουργήματά Του καὶ εἶναι Προγνώστης αὐτῶν ποὺ θὰ συμβοῦν. Ἀν βέβαια δὲν ἐπρόκειτο νὰ ὑπάρχουν, οὔτε θὰ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ εἶναι κακοὶ καὶ οὔτε θὰ τοὺς γνώριζε ἐκ τῶν προτέρων. Διότι ἡ γνώσις ἀναφέρεται σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ὑπάρχουν καὶ ἡ πρόγνωση ἀναφέρεται σ' αὐτὰ ποὺ ὁπωσδήποτε θὰ συμβοῦν, προηγεῖται δηλαδὴ ἡ ὑπαρξὴ καὶ μετὰ ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ καλὴ ἢ κακὴ ὑπαρξὴ. Ἀν ὅμως—παρ' ὅλο ποὺ ἐπρόκειτο νὰ δημιουργηθοῦν χάρη στὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ—τοὺς ἐμπόδιζε νὰ δημιουργηθοῦν τὸ ὅτι ἐπρόκειτο νὰ γίνουν κακοὶ ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς τους προαίρεσης, τότε τὸ κακὸ θὰ νικοῦσε τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ Θεὸς λοιπὸν τὰ δημιουργεῖ ἀγαθὰ ὅλα ὅσα δημιουργεῖ, γίνεται δὲ ὁ καθένας καλὸς ἢ κακὸς ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς του προαίρεσης. Λοιπὸν ἂν καὶ εἶπε ὁ Κύριος «καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ εἶ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος» (Μάτθ. 26:24) τὸ ἔλεγε ὄχι ἐπικρίνοντας τὴν δημιουργία Του, ἀλλὰ τὴν κακία ποὺ προστέθηκε στὸ δημιούργημά Του ἐξ αἰτίας τῆς δικῆς του προαίρεσης καὶ ἀπερισκεψίας. Διότι ἡ ἀπερισκεψία τῆς γνώμης του ἀχρήστευσε τὴν εὐεργεσία τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ, ὅπως ἀκριβῶς ἂν κάποιος, ἀφοῦ δεχτεῖ πλοῦτο καὶ ἐξουσία ἀπὸ ἓνα βασίλειο, θὰ καταδυναστεύσῃ τὸν εὐεργέτη του, αὐτὸν ὁ βασιλιάς, ἀφοῦ τὸν ὑποτάξει ὅπως τοῦ ἀξίζει, θὰ τὸν τιμωρήσῃ, ἂν τὸν δεῖ νὰ παραμῆνῃ μέχρι τέλους στὴν ἐξουσία τοῦ τυράννου.

## Παναγία ή Πορταίτισσα

Από το βιβλίο «Εμφανίσεις και Θαύματα της Παναγίας», της Τερᾶς Μονῆς Παρακλήτου.

**Η** θαυματουργή Πορταίτισσα, ή εξέχουσα μεταξύ των θεομητορικών εικόνων του Άθω, ήταν αρχικά φυλαγμένη, καθώς διασώζει ή παράδοση, στη μικρασιατική Νίκαια. Μιά ευσεβής γυναίκα με τον μοναχισμό της την είχαν τοποθετήσει μέσα στην ιδιόκτητη εκκλησία τους και την τιμούσαν.

Στά χρόνια της δεύτερης εικονομαχίας βασιλικοί κατάσκοποι ανακάλυψαν την εικόνα και απείλησαν τη γυναίκα πως θα τη σκοτώσουν αν δεν τους δωροδοκήσει. Εκείνη υποσχέθηκε ότι την επομένη θα τους έδινε τα χρήματα. Και την νύχτα, αφού προσευχήθηκε μπροστά στην εικόνα, τη σήκωσε με ευλάβεια, κατέβηκε στην παραλία και την έριξε στη θάλασσα λέγοντας:

— Δέσποινα Θεοτόκε, εσύ έχεις τη δύναμη κι εμάς να διασώξεις από τη όργη του βασιλιά, αλλά και την εικόνα σου από τον καταποντισμό.

Τότε πραγματικά έγινε κάτι θαυμαστό. Η θαυματουργή εικόνα στάθηκε όρθια στα κύματα και κατευθύνθηκε προς τη δύση. Συγκινημένη ή γυναίκα από το γεγονός γυρίζει στον γιό της και του λέει:

— Εγώ, παιδί μου, για την αγάπη της Παναγίας είμαι έτοιμη να πεθάνω. Εσύ να φύγεις και να πᾶς στην Ελλάδα.

Χωρίς άργοπορία το παιδί ετοιμάστηκε και ξεκίνησε για τη Θεσσαλονίκη, κι από κει για τον Άθωνα, όπου έμόνασε. Σαν μοναχός άσκητεψε στον τόπο που άργότερα ιδρύθηκε ή μονή των Ιβήρων.

Αυτό ήταν οικονομία Θεού, γιατί έτσι πληροφορήθηκαν οι άλλοι μοναχοί το ιστορικό της θαυματουργής εικόνας.

Πέρασε καιρός. Ο μοναχός από τη Νίκαια πέθανε, και το μοναστήρι των Ιβήρων ιδρύθηκε και ολοκληρώθηκε. Ήταν βράδυ, όταν οι μοναχοί αντίκρυσαν ένα παράξενο θέαμα: Ένα πύρινο στύλο που ξεκινούσε από τη θάλασσα κι έφθανε στον ουρανό.

Το όραμα αυτό συνεχίστηκε ήμέρες και νύχτες. Κατεβαίνουν οι άδελφοί στην παραλία και βλέπουν με θαυμασμό στη βάση του πύρινου στύλου μία εικόνα της Θεοτόκου. Όσο όμως την πλησίαζαν εκείνη απομακρυνόταν. Συγκεντρώθηκαν τότε στην εκκλησία και παρακάλεσαν με δάκρυα τον Κύριο να χαρίση στο μοναστήρι τους τον ανεκτίμητο αυτό θησαυρό.

Μεταξύ των μοναχών υπήρχε ένας ευλαβής άσκητης, που λεγόταν Γαβριήλ. Σ' αυτόν παρουσιάζεται ή Παναγία και του λέει:

— Να πῆς στον ήγούμενο και στους άδελφούς ότι θα σᾶς

παραδώσω την εικόνα μου, για να σᾶς προστατεύη. Θα μῆς κατόπιν στη θάλασσα, θα περπατήσης πάνω στα κύματα, κι έτσι θα καταλάβουν όλοι την εὔνοιά μου για το μοναστήρι σας.

Έτσι κι έγινε. Ο π. Γαβριήλ περπάτησε πάνω στη θάλασσα σαν σε στερεά γῆ, παρέλαβε με ευλάβεια τη θαυματουργή εικόνα, και επέστρεψε στην παραλία. Εκεί συγκεντρωμένοι όλοι οι μοναχοί της επιφύλαξαν τιμητική ύποδοχή. Έστερα την παρέλαβαν και την τοποθέτησαν στο ιερό βῆμα του καθολικού.

Όταν την επομένη ό εκκλησιαστικός πῆγε ν' ανάψη τὰ καντήλια, ή εικόνα έλειπε. Έρευνήσε παντού και την ανακάλυψε στο τείχος, πάνω από την πύλη της μονῆς. Την επανέφεραν στο καθολικό, αλλά ή εικόνα έφυγε και πάλι. Αυτό επαναλήφθηκε πολλές φορές. Τέλος ή Παναγία παρουσιάζεται στον γέροντα Γαβριήλ και του λέει:

— Να πῆς στους άδελφούς να μὴ μ' ένοχλοῦν. Δεν ἤλθα εδῶ για να φυλάγομαι από σᾶς, αλλά να σᾶς φυλάω. Όσοι ζείτε στο Όρος τουτο έναρετα, να έλπίζετε στην εὐσπλαχνία του Υιού μου. Γιατί, όσο υπάρχει ή εικόνα μου μέσα στη μονή σας, ή χάρη και το έλεός Του θα σᾶς επισκιάζουν πάντοτε.

Έστερα απ' αυτό οι μοναχοί έχτισαν παρεκκλήσι κοντά στην πύλη κι εκεί τοποθέτησαν την ιερή εικόνα. Πράγματι ή Πορταίτισσα, καθώς υποσχέθηκε, προστατεύει τη μονή και οίκοινομεϊ κάθε της ανάγκη.

### Η Θεραπεία της Πριγκίπισσας

Το 1651 οι 365 Ιβήριτες μοναχοί δοκίμαζαν οικονομική στενότητα, για αυτό ανέθεσαν στη Θεοτόκο να μεριμνήση

για τη συντήρησή τους. Άμέσως ή φιλόστοργη Μητέρα έτρεξε για έξεύρεση πόρων με το ακόλουθο χαριτωμένο θαῦμα.

Εκείνη την περίοδο ήταν βαριά άρρωστη ή κόρη του τσάρου της Ρωσίας Άλεξίου Μιχαήλοβιτς. Τα πόδια της ήταν παράλυτα και για τους γιατρούς άθεράπευτα. Τη θλίψη της πριγκίπισσας και των βασιλέων γονέων της έρχεται τώρα να μεταβάλη σε χαρά ή θαυματουργή Πορταίτισσα. Παρουσιάζεται μία νύχτα στον ύπνο της, κι αφού της έδωσε θάρρος και υποσχέθηκε να τη θεραπεύση, της λέει:

— Να πῆς στον πατέρα σου να φέρει από τη μονή των Ιβήρων την εικόνα μου την Πορταίτισσα.

Το πρωί ή άρρωστη διαβίβασε την έντολή, κι άμέσως ξεκίνησε έκτακτη άποστολή, για να μεταφέρει στους Ιβήριτες μοναχούς την επιθυμία του τσάρου. Εκείνοι φοβήθηκαν μήπως ή εικόνα δεν επιστραφεί, και αποφάσισαν να στείλουν ένα πιστό αντίγραφο με τιμητική συνοδεία τεσσάρων ιερομονάχων.





Μόλις μαθεύτηκε ὁ ἐρχομός τῆς σεπτῆς εἰκόνας στὴ Μόσχα, ἡ πόλη ἄδειασε. Ὅλοι, βασιλεῖς καὶ λαός, ἔτρεξαν νὰ τὴν προϋπαντήσουν. Στ' ἀνάκτορα ὅμως ἡ πριγκίπισσα ἦταν στὸ κρεβάτι, χωρὶς νὰ γνωρίζῃ τίποτε. Κάποια στιγμή ζήτησε τὴ μητέρα τῆς νὰ μάθῃ τί γίνεται, καὶ τότε πληροφορήθηκε τὸ μεγάλο γεγονός.

Τί; φώναξε. Ἔρχεται ἡ Παναγία, κι ἐμένα μὲ ἄφησαν ἐδῶ;

Πηδᾷ ἀμέσως ἀπὸ τὸ κρεβάτι, ντύνεται καὶ τρέχει νὰ ὑποδεχθεῖ κι ἐκεῖνη τὴν Παναγία. Ὁ κόσμος εἶδε τὴν παράλυτη πριγκίπισσα καὶ τὰ ἔχασε. Ἡ συγκίνηση κορυφώθηκε, ὅταν ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη μεριὰ ἔφθασε ἡ ἁγία εἰκόνα κι ἔγινε ἡ τελετὴ τῆς ὑποδοχῆς καὶ τῆς προσκυνήσεως.

– Μεγαλειότατε, εἶπαν οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι, προσφέρουμε τὴ σεπτὴ αὐτὴ εἰκόνα σὰν δῶρο στὸ εὐσεβές ρωσικὸ ἔθνος.

– Σᾶς εὐχαριστῶ, εἶπε συγκινημένος ὁ τσάρος. Σέ ἔνδειξη τῆς εὐγνωμοσύνης μου σᾶς παραχωρῶ μία ἀπὸ τίς καλύτερες μονές τῆς πρωτεύουσας, τὸν ἅγιο Νικόλαο. Ἐπίσης ἐτήσιο ἐπίδομα ἀπὸ 2.500 ρούβλια, ἀτέλεια σὲ ὅ,τι εἰσάγετε ἀπὸ τὴ χώρα μου, καθὼς καὶ δωρεὰν μετακίνηση τῶν ἀπεσταλμένων σας.

Τὸ μετόχι αὐτὸ παρέμεινε στὴν κυριότητα τῆς μονῆς Ἰβήρων μέχρι τὸ 1932 καὶ τῆς ἐξασφάλιζε τόσες προσόδους, ὥστε κάλυπτε ὅλες σχεδὸν τίς ὑλικές τῆς ἀνάγκες.

#### Ὁ Πεινασμένος Ὁδοιπóρος

Ἡ μονὴ τῶν Ἰβήρων εἶναι πολὺ φιλόξενο μοναστήρι. Αὐτὸ ἀποδίδεται καὶ στὸ ἀκόλουθο περιστατικὸ.

Ἕνας φτωχὸς ἐργάτης, κουρασμένος ἀπὸ τὸν δρόμο, ἔφθασε τὸ μεσημέρι πεινασμένος στὴν πύλη τῆς μονῆς. Ζήτησε μόνο λίγο ψωμί ἀπὸ τὸν πορτάρη, γιατί βιαζόταν νὰ συνεχίσῃ τὴν πορεία του.

Ὁ πορτάρης, ἄγνωστο γιατί, δὲν τοῦ ἔδωσε· ὁπότε ὁ φτωχὸς ἐργάτης ἀναστέναξε βαθιὰ κι ἔφυγε νησιτικός. Ἀνεβαίνοντας πρὸς τίς Καρυές, σταμάτησε γιὰ λίγο στὴ σκιὰ ἑνὸς δέντρου. Λυπημένος καὶ κουρασμένος καθὼς ἦταν, ξάπλωσε καταγῆς. Ξεφνικὰ ἀκούει βήματα νὰ πλησιάζουν. Ἀνασηκώνεται καὶ βλέπει κοντά του μιὰ γυναῖκα μ' ἕνα βρέφος στὴν ἀγκαλιά. Μὲ ὕφος συμπαθητικὸ καὶ φωνὴ γλυκεῖα τὸν ἐρωτᾷ:

– Τί ἔχεις; Μήπως εἶσαι ἄρρωστος;

– Ὅχι, ἀπάντησε ἐκεῖνος, ἀλλὰ πεινῶ. Παρακάλεσα τὸν θυρωρὸ τῆς μονῆς Ἰβήρων νὰ μοῦ δώσῃ ψωμί, ἀλλὰ δὲν μοῦ ἔδωσε.

– Ἄκου, παιδί μου. Δὲν πρέπει νὰ παραπονεῖσαι γιὰ τὸν θυρωρὸ. Θυρωρὸς τῆς μονῆς αὐτῆς εἶμαι ἐγώ. Νὰ ἐπιστρέψῃς ἀμέσως καὶ νὰ ζητήσῃς ψωμί ἐκ μέρους μου. Κι ἂν δὲν σοῦ δώσουν, πλήρωσέ το μ' αὐτὰ τὰ χρήματα. Σὲ περιμένω ἐδῶ.

Λέγοντας αὐτὰ ἔδωσε στὸν ἐργάτη τρία φλουριά. Ἐκεῖνος, ἀνύποπτος γιὰ ὅσα ἔβλεπε καὶ ἄκουγε, ξεκίνησε γιὰ τὸ μοναστήρι. Χτύπησε τὴν πύλη καὶ κρατώντας ἐπιδεικτικὰ

τὰ χρήματα ζήτησε καὶ πάλι ἀπὸ τὸν θυρωρὸ ψωμί, χωρὶς νὰ παραλείψῃ ν' ἀναφέρῃ τὴ συνομιλία μὲ τὴ γυναῖκα. Ὅταν ἄκουσε ὁ μοναχὸς γιὰ γυναῖκα καὶ εἶδε τὰ σπάνια νομίσματα, κατάλαβε ὅτι πρόκειται γιὰ θαῦμα. Χτύπησε τὴν καμπάνα, συγκεντρώθηκαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἄκουσαν μὲ θαυμασμὸ τὸ παράδοξο γεγονός. Διαπίστωσαν μάλιστα ὅτι τὰ νομίσματα ἐκεῖνα ἦταν ἀφιερωμένα πρὶν ἀπὸ πολλὰ χρόνια στὴ θαυματουργὴ εἰκόνα. Βλέποντας ὅμως ἡ Παναγία τὴν ἀνάγκη τοῦ φτωχοῦ, τὰ παρέλαβε καὶ τοῦ τὰ ἔδωσε μὲ μητρικὴ εὐσπλαχνία.

Οἱ μοναχοὶ μὲ φόβο καὶ εὐλάβεια τὰ ἐπανάφεραν στὴν ἁγία εἰκόνα τῆς Πορταῖτισσας, ἡ ὁποία μὲ τὸ θαῦμα αὐτὸ τοὺς δίδαξε γιὰ τὴ μεγάλη ἀρετὴ τῆς φιλοξενίας.



#### Ὕμνος εἰς τὴν Ἐλεούσα Θεοτόκον

«Τὴν Παναγίαν τοῦ Ἄξιον Ἑστὶ»

Μυροβλήτισσα Παρθένη Παναγία μου στοργικὴ,  
Μήτηρ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ Λόγου τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Λυτρωτῆ.

Μάνα ἀληθινὴ σὲ ἔχω καὶ σὲ σένανε προστρέχω  
Ὡ γλυκεῖά μου Παναγία τῶν πιστῶν ἡ σωτηρία.

Ἐλεεῖς καὶ προστατεύεις κάθε τέκνο σου πιστό,  
τὸ σκεπάζεις, τὸ φυλάττεις ἀπ' τὸν ὑπουλο ἐχθρό.

Στὴν εἰκόνα σου προστρέχω Παναγία μου καὶ κοιτῶ,  
πλημμυρίζω ἀπὸ δέος καὶ ἐσὲ παρακαλῶ.

Μάνα ἀληθινὴ σὲ ἔχω καὶ σὲ σένανε προστρέχω  
Ὡ γλυκεῖά μου Παναγία τῶν πιστῶν ἡ Σωτήρια.

Ποῦ νομίζετε ὅτι ἐλπίζω ὁ ταλαίπωρος ἐγώ,  
στὴν γλυκεῖα τὴν Παναγία ποῦ ἔχει Γιό της τὸν Χριστό.

Σὲ παρακαλοῦμε πάντες, γλυκυτάτη Παναγία,  
χαρίζε μας τὴν εἰρήνη καὶ ψυχῆς παρηγοριά.

Ὡ ἀγάπη τῆς ψυχῆς μου, ὦ ἐλπίδα μας γλυκεῖα,  
Ὡ φιλόστοργη Μαρία σὺ ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς.

Μάνα ἀληθινὴ σὲ ἔχω καὶ σὲ σένανε προστρέχω  
Ὡ γλυκεῖά μου Παναγία τῶν πιστῶν ἡ σωτηρία.



## « Ἐπεθύμησε Πόρνη... »

Ὁμιλία Ἀγ. Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου: « Ὅτε τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Ἐξω  
Εὐρεθεῖς Εὐτρόπιος ... »

**Π**όρνη ἐπιθυμοῦσε ὁ Θεός; Ναι πόρνη. Ἐννοῶ τὴ δική μας φύση. Ἦταν Τρανὸς καὶ αὐτὴ ταπεινὴ. Τρανὸς ὄχι στὴ θέση ἀλλὰ στὴ φύση. Πεντακάθαρος ἦταν, ἀκατάστρευτη ἢ Οὐσία Του, ἄφθαρτη ἢ φύση Του. Ἀχώρητος στὸ νοῦ, Ἀόρατος, Ἀπιαστος ἀπὸ τὴ σκέψη, ὑπάρχοντας παντοτεινά, μένοντας ἀπαράλλακτος. Πάνω ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἀγγέλους, ἀνώτερος ἀπὸ τὶς δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν. Νικώντας τὴ λογικὴ σκέψη, ξεπερνώντας τὴ δύναμη τοῦ μυαλοῦ, ἀδύνατο νὰ Τὸν δῆς, μόνο νὰ Τὸν πιστέψης ...

Ἔριχνε τὸ βλέμμα Του στὴ Γῆ καὶ τὴν ἔκανε νὰ τρέμη... Ποτάμια ἔβγαζε στὴν ἔρημο... Κι Αὐτὸς, ὁ τόσο Μέγας καὶ Τρανὸς, ἐπεθύμησε πόρνη. Γιατί; Γιὰ νὰ τὴν ἀναπλάσῃ ἀπὸ πόρνη σὲ παρθένα. Γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ ὁ Νυμφίος τῆς. Τί κάνει; Δὲν τῆς στέλνει κάποιον ἀπὸ τοὺς δούλους Του, δὲν στέλνει Ἀγγελο στὴν πόρνη, δὲν στέλνει Ἀρχάγγελο, δὲν στέλνει τὰ Χερουβείμ, δὲν στέλνει τὰ Σεραφεῖμ. Ἀλλὰ καταφθάνει Αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰδιος, ὁ Ἐρωτευμένος.

Ἐπεθύμησε πόρνη. Καὶ τί κάνει; Ἐπειδὴ δὲνμποροῦσε νὰ ἀνέβει ἐκεῖνὴ στὰ ψηλά, κατέβηκε στὰ χαμηλά. Ἔρχεται στὴν καλύβα τῆς. Τὴ βλέπει μεθυσμένη. Καὶ μὲ ποῖο τρόπο ἔρχεται; Ὅχι μὲ ὀλοφάνερη τὴ Θεότητά Του, ἀλλὰ γίνεται ἐντελῶς Ἰδιος μαζί τῆς, μήπως βλέποντάς Τον τρομοκρατηθεῖ, μήπως λαχταρήσῃ καὶ Τοῦ φύγει. Τὴ βρίσκει καταπληγωμένη, ἐξαγριωμένη, ἀπὸ δαίμονες κυριευμένη. Καὶ τί κάνει; Τὴν παίρνει καὶ τὴν κάνει γυναῖκα Του. Καὶ τί δῶρα τῆς χαρίζει; Δαχτυλίδι. Ποιὸ δαχτυλίδι; Τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα.

Ἐπειτα λέγει:

- Δὲν σὲ φύτεψα στὸν Παράδεισο;

- Τοῦ λέγει, ναι.

- Καὶ πῶς ξέπεσες ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ;

- Ἦλθε καὶ μὲ πῆρε ὁ Διάβολος ἀπὸ τὸν Παράδεισο.

- Φυτεύτηκες στὸν Παράδεισο καὶ σὲ ἔβγαλε ἔξω. Νά, σὲ φυτεύω μέσα Μου. Δὲν τολμᾷ νὰ Μὲ πλησιάσῃ Ἐμένα. Ὁ Ποιμένας σὲ κρατᾷ καὶ ὁ λύκος δὲν ἔρχεται πιά.

- Ἀλλὰ εἶμαι, λέγει, ἁμαρτωλὴ καὶ βρώμικη.

- Μὴ Μοῦ σκοτιζέσαι, εἶμαι Γιατρός.

Δῶσε μεγάλην προσοχή. Κοίταξε τί κάνει. Ἦλθε νὰ πάρῃ τὴν πόρνη, ὅπως αὐτὴ—τὸ τονίζω—ἦταν βουτηγμένη στὴ βρῶμα. Γιὰ νὰ μάθῃς τὸν ἔρωτα Τοῦ Νυμφίου. Αὐτὸ χαρακτηρίζει τὸν ἐρωτευμένο: Τὸ νὰ μὴ ζητᾷ εὐθύνες γιὰ ἁμαρτήματα, ἀλλὰ νὰ συγχωρῇ λάθη καὶ παραπατήματα.

Πιὸ πρὶν ἦταν κόρη τῶν δαιμόνων, κόρη τῆς Γῆς, ἀνάξια γιὰ τὴ Γῆ. Καὶ τώρα ἔγινε κόρη Τοῦ Βασιλιά. Καὶ αὐτὸ γιατί ἔτσι θέλησε ὁ Ἐρωτευμένος μαζί τῆς. Γιατί ὁ Ἐρωτευμένος δὲν πολυνοιάζεται γιὰ τὴ συμπεριφορὰ Του.

Ὁ ἔρωτας δὲν βλέπει ἀσχήμια. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὀνομάζεται ἔρωτας, ἐπειδὴ πολλές φορές ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὴν ἄσχημη. Ἔτσι ἔκανε καὶ ὁ Χριστός. Ἀσχημὴ εἶδε καὶ τὴν ἐρωτεύτηκε καὶ τὴν ἀνακαινίζει.

Τὴν πῆρε ὡς γυναῖκα, καὶ ὡς κόρη Του τὴν ἀγαπᾷ, καὶ ὡς δούλα Του τὴν φροντίζει, καὶ ὡς παρθένα τὴν προστατεύει, καὶ ὡς Παράδεισο τὴν τειχίζει, καὶ ὡς μέλος τοῦ Σώματός Του τὴν περιποιεῖται. Τὴ φροντίζει ὡς Κεφαλὴ τῆς ποῦ εἶναι, τὴ φυτεύει ὡς ρίζα, τὴν ποιμαίνει ὡς Ποιμένας. Ὡς Νυμφίος τὴν παίρνει γυναῖκα Του, καὶ ὡς Ἐξιλαστήριο Θῦμα τὴν συγχωρεῖ, ὡς Πρόβατο θυσιάζεται, ὡς Νυμφίος τὴ διατηρεῖ μέσα στὴν ὁμορφιά, Ὡς Σύζυγος φροντίζει νὰ μὴν τῆς λείψῃ τίποτα.

Ὡ, Σὺ Νυμφίε, ποῦ ὁμορφαίνεις τὴν ἀσχήμια τῆς νύφης!



## Περὶ Προσευχῆς

**Τ**ὸ ὅτι πρέπει νὰ θεωρεῖται ἀπὸ κάθε θάνατο χειρότερο τὸ νὰ στερηθοῦμε τὴν προσευχή μας διδάσκει ὁ προφήτης Δανιήλ, ὁ μέγας προφήτης, ὁ ὁποῖος προτίμησε νὰ πεθάνῃ παρὰ νὰ στερηθῇ τρεῖς μόνο ἡμέρες τὴν προσευχή. Διότι δὲν διέταξε σὲ αὐτὸν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Περσῶν νὰ ἀσεβήσῃ, ἀλλὰ τρεῖς μόνο ἡμέρες νὰ προσπαθήσῃ νὰ τὸ κάμῃ αὐτό. Χωρὶς τὴν θεῖα ἐπενέργεια δὲν εἶναι δυνατό νὰ ἔλθῃ κανένα ἀγαθὸ στὶς δικές μας ψυχές. Ἡ ἐπενέργεια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγγίζει τοὺς πόνους μας καὶ τοὺς ἐλαφρύνει, ἂν δὴ ὅτι ἀγαπᾷμε τὴν προσευχή.

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος**

**Σ**ὰς παρακαλῶ ὅλοι νὰ ζήσετε βίον ἅγιον, νὰ βαδίζετε σὲ γραμμὲς ἁγίες γιὰ νὰ βοηθήσετε τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας. Οἱ καρδιές σας νὰ γίνουν θυμιατήρια, ποῦ θὰ ἀνεβαίνει ἡ προσευχή σας στὸ θρόνο τοῦ Θεοῦ.

**Γέροντας Ἀμφιλόχιος Μάκρης**

**Ὅ**ποιος ἀγαπάει τὸν Κύριο, σκέφτεται πάντα Ἐκεῖνον. Ἡ θύμησις τοῦ Θεοῦ γεννᾷ τὴν προσευχή. Ἄν δὲν θυμᾷσαι τὸν Κύριο, τότε καὶ δὲν θὰ προσεύχῃσαι καὶ χωρὶς τὴν προσευχή, δὲν θὰ παραμείνῃ ἡ ψυχὴ στὴν ἀγάπῃ τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιατί ἡ χάρις τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἔρχεται μὲ τὴν προσευχή.

**Ἅγιος Σιλουανὸς ὁ Ἀθωνίτης**

**Ἡ**σπουδὴ τίκτει τὴν προσευχή, ἡ προσευχὴ τὴν ἡσυχία, ἡ ἡσυχία τίκτει τὴν θεωρία, ἡ θεωρία τὴν γνώση, ἡ γνώση τὴ τῶν μυστηρίων κατάληψη. Τέλος δὲ τῶν μυστηρίων ἡ θεολογία.

**Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Σιναΐτης**

## THE PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

*From "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain," pp. 53-56.*

*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor 6:16-18, 7:1).*

† † †

The Elder often emphasized to us: "You must look after the purification of your soul on a daily basis. Do your spiritual work and say the Jesus prayer. Your thoughts, will and desires are where your mind is. The submission of our spirit is the most important thing. In order to acquire a virtue, we must be humble and careful, so we can detect its opposite evil, and then pray to Christ to help us get rid of it. We don't need to try too hard or be concerned how, when and in what way our heart will be able to acquire this virtue."

Our question to him then was: "Father, when we read the writings of the Fathers of the Church, we notice the following phenomenon: some saints say that praying is of utmost importance, and others talk about obedience or voluntary poverty. It is hard for someone to understand exactly what Christ is asking from us. When we think we must apply all these virtues at the same time, then we despair, as it is impossible to struggle for all of them at once. Our endeavor becomes a lot easier, when we realize that the acquisition of these virtues is the result of a single struggle. Could you please help us understand what exactly I should do in order to find the way leading to Christ?"

The Elder then told us the following: "Purification, divine justice, humility, love, obedience, voluntary poverty, and all virtues are one and the same. Christ wants us to eliminate our will to zero. If you obtain a single one of these virtues, bear in mind that the rest are found in the one you just acquired; the same thing applies to our passions; one passion includes all others. Purification requires the soul to be pure and clean from our own will; divine justice is the abandonment of our own will to the will of God; humility is to humble our will and elevate God's will; obedience means not to have a will and thus obey other people; prayer means to take our mind off our wishes and desires and to concentrate on God."

"So, you see, whichever virtue you apply, you are led to the same result, that is, to the elimination and purification of your own will. Man will spiritually progress and be benefited only when he manages to eliminate his will to zero. When the Americans want to send a missile to space, they do the same

thing; they count from ten to zero. When they reach zero, then the missile is fired. The same applies to our soul; when our wills are eliminated to zero and our soul is cleansed, then it is elevated towards God!"

"The grace of God entered our soul through Holy Baptism; it is a gift granted to all of us. Sometimes, we think that God gave to a saint more gifts than others; this is wrong. Christ loves all of His children the same; it is we, however, who do not value and appreciate God's gift to the same degree. When someone is grateful and believes that the grace of Christ, which he received through Holy Baptism, is inside his soul, he humbles his own will and purifies himself in order to allow divine grace to function. When divine grace functions inside a soul, it makes us think that God favored this person with more gifts. However, the truth is that this person loves Christ more, and through his humility, permits God to act on his behalf."

"We are in no way inferior to the Apostles. The Apostles were physically close to Christ, who helped them; however, we, too, have Him inside our soul since a very young age, through the grace of Holy Baptism. We should unload our soul from our passions and let divine grace dwell inside us. The more we purify ourselves, the more we allow for divine grace to function. When a soul is completely clean from its will and is totally humbled, then it can experience the grace of Christ and the fulfillment of all His promises."

Since the term "purification of the soul" was in a way unknown to me, I frequently asked the Elder to analyze it in detail. He suggested I read some sections of the Holy Bible, which would make it possible for me to turn inwards and face the ugliness of my soul, and thus gradually begin its purification. Following are some of those texts:

**2 Tim 2:20-21** *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

**2 Cor 7:1** *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

**2 Cor 10:3-5** *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

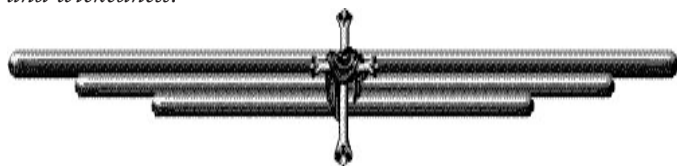
**Phil 2:5-9** *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.*

**Matt 5:8** *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

**Matt 23:26** *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

**Lk 11:39** *Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.*



## THE RULE FOR ATTENDING TO ONESELF—FOR THOSE DWELLING IN THE WORLD

WRITTEN FOR A CERTAIN LAYMAN AS A RESULT OF HIS DESIRE TO LIVE A VIGILANT LIFE IN THE WORLD.

*Excerpted from The Writings of Bishop Ignatii Brianchaninov: Ascetic Essays, Volume I, pp. 185-187 (in Russian); translated into English from the Russian by G. Spruksts.*

The soul of all practices in the Lord is vigilance. Without vigilance, all these practices are fruitless. He who is desirous of saving himself must so establish himself that he might remain continuously vigilant toward himself, not only in solitude, but also under conditions of distraction, into which he is sometimes unwillingly drawn by circumstances.

Let the fear of God outweigh all other sensations upon the scales of your heart; and then will it be convenient for you to be vigilant toward yourself, both in the silence of your kellia (cells) and in the midst of the noise that surrounds you from all sides.

A well-reasoned moderation in foods and delicacies, diminishing the passionate heat of your blood, tends greatly to facilitate your being able to attend to yourself; while the impassioning of your blood, stemming, as it does, from an excessive consumption of foods and delicacies, from extreme and intensified bodily movements, from the inflammation of wrath, from being heady with vanity, and by reason of other causes, gives rise to a multitude of thoughts and reveries—in other words, to distraction.

The Holy Fathers (in the Philokalia), first of all, ascribe to such a one as is desirous of attending to himself a moderate, evenly-measured, constant abstention from food. Upon awakening from sleep—an image of the awakening from the dead, which awaits all men—directs your thoughts to God, offering up to Him the first-thoughts of your mind, which has not yet become imprinted with any vain impressions whatsoever.

Having carefully fulfilled all the needs of the flesh upon arising from sleep, quietly read your customary rule of prayer, taking care not so much for the quantity of your prayerful expression, as for the quality of it; i.e., do it attentively, so that, by reason of your attention, your heart might be enlightened and enlivened through prayerful feeling and consolation.

Upon concluding your rule of prayer, do you again direct all your strength to the attentive reading of the New Testament, primarily the Gospels. In the course of this reading, intently take note of all the instructions and commandments of Christ, so that you might direct all your actions—both manifest and veiled—in accordance with them.

The quantity of the reading is determined by one's strength and by one's circumstances. It is unnecessary to weight-down one's mind with an excessive reading of prayers and Scripture; likewise, is it unnecessary to neglect one's needs in order to practice immoderate prayer and reading. Just as the excessive use of foodstuffs disorders and weakens the belly, so too does the immoderate use of spiritual food weaken the mind and create in it a revulsion to pious practices, leading it to despair.

For the beginner, the Holy Fathers suggest frequent—but brief—prayers. When one's mind matures with spiritual age, becoming stronger and manlier, then shall one be in proper condition to pray without ceasing. It is to such Christians as have attained to maturity in the Lord that the words of the Apostle Paul pertain: I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8), i.e., dispassionately, and without any distraction or inconstancy. For that which is natural to the man is not yet natural to the infant.

Enlightened, through prayer and reading, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, one may then go forth to carry out the affairs of one's daily course, vigilantly taking care that in all one's deeds and words, in one's entire being, the All-holy will of God might prevail, as it was revealed and explained to men in the Commandments of the Gospel.

Should there be any free moments during the course of the day, use them to read attentively some chosen prayers, or some chosen portions of Scripture; and, by means of these, fortify the powers of your soul, which have become exhausted through activity in the midst of a world of vanities. Should there not be any such golden moments, it is necessary to regret their loss, as though it were the loss of a valuable treasure. What is wasted today should not be lost on the day following, because our heart conveniently gives itself up to negligence and forgetfulness, which lead to that dismal ignorance, so ruinous of Divine activity, of the activity of man's salvation.

Should you chance to say or to do something that is contrary to God's commandments, immediately treat your fault with repentance; and, by means of sincere contrition, return to the Way of God, from which you stepped aside through your violation of God's will. Do not linger outside the Way



of God! Respond with faith and humility to sinful thoughts, reveries and sensations by opposing to them the Gospel commandments, and saying, along with the holy patriarch Joseph: *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* (Gen. 39:9).

In the evening, departing into slumber—which, in relation to the day just past, is death—examine your actions during the course of that day. Such self-examination is not difficult, since, in leading an attentive life, that forgetfulness which is so natural to a distracted man is destroyed through vigilance toward oneself. And so, having recollected all your sins, whether through act, or word, or thought, or sensation, offer your repentance to God for them, with both the disposition and the heart-felt pledge of self-amendment. Later, having read the rule of prayer, conclude the day which was begun by meditating upon God by meditating, once again, upon God.

Whither do they depart—all the thoughts and feelings of a sleeping man? What mysterious state of being is this sleep, during which the soul and body are both alive and yet not alive, being alienated from the awareness of their life, as though dead? Sleep is as incomprehensible as death. In the course of it, one's soul reposes, forgetting the most-cruel earthly afflictions and calamities that have beset it, while it images its eternal repose; while one's body ... if it rises from sleep will also arise, inevitably, from the dead. The great Agafon said: "It is impossible to succeed in virtue without exerting vigilance toward oneself." Amen.



If you have upbraided, or passed judgment on, or vexed your brother, your peace is lost. If you have been boastful, or have exalted yourself above your fellow, you have lost grace. If you did not drive away forthwith with wanton thought that came to you, your soul will lose love for God and boldness in prayer. If you are fond of power, or money, you will never know the love of God. If you have followed your own will, then you are vanquished by the enemy and despondency will come upon your soul. If you detest your brother, it means that you have fallen away from God, and an evil spirit has taken possession of you.

But if you will do good unto your brother, you will gain quiet for your conscience. If you subdue your own will, your enemies will be driven off and you will receive peace in your soul. If you forgive your brother the affronts he puts upon you, and love your enemies, then you will receive forgiveness for your sins, and the Lord will give you to know the love of the Holy Spirit. And when you have entirely humbled yourself, you will find perfect rest in God.

**St. Silouan the Athonite**

## RECALLING ST. JOHN MAXIMOVITCH

Source: "Blessed John the Wonderworker", pp. 303-310.

I am sharing with great joy my personal reminiscences about the Bishop John (Maximovitch), remembering the following words of St. Nestor the Chronicler and praying his prayer: *I implore you, my beloved brethren, do not condemn me for my crudeness if, being so filled with love for the saint, I have decided to tell everything I know concerning him, for I feared that our Lord's words with regard to the wicked and slothful slave might be applied to me... But first of all I turn to God with a prayer: 'My Lord Omnipotent, giver of grace, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, help me. Illumine my heart, that I may understand Thy commandments and open my mouth for the proclaiming of Thy miracles and the glory of Thy God-pleaser.'*

I am also "filled with love for the Saint," but I fear my crudeness, my incapability in transmitting "the glory of this God-pleaser." And I don't know where to begin, how to relate in coherent order the huge multitude of deep, grace-filled impressions of this great Righteous One, which have been cut into my heart forever.

The bishop began his archpastoral service in Shanghai in 1934—the year of my birth—in this large international trade port of China. My family owned a house just three blocks away from the great cathedral dedicated to the Most Holy Mother of God's icon "Surety of Sinners"; and my parents would walk with us, their children, to this cathedral on Sundays and Holy Days. My brother and I stayed in Shanghai from 1939 until our departure for Tubabao, in January 1949. We attended the Catholic "College de Sainte Jeanne d'Arc," which was located right next to the cathedral. I remember faintly the solemn occasion of Bishop John blessing the huge golden crosses and the raising of them upon the five domes on top of the beautiful completed cathedral. Next to the cathedral there was a rectory which was several stories high and over the center of which was a bell tower. I recall that behind this rectory there was an empty lot for the unfinished second church; and it was here that Blessed John always celebrated the rite of the Great Agiasmos, the blessing of the water on Epiphany. During summers, when the school was closed, my brother and I would often go to play on the rather large church lot.

I was about eight or nine years old when, on a hot summer day, I went into the huge, always cool cathedral, in order to rest from the heat. It was a weekday, about 7:00 pm, and outside it was still quite light. The evening service was in progress, and the cathedral was almost empty. Bishop John stood at his regular spot, near the massive cathedral column, between the main altar and the right side-altar, before his analogion that had all of the church service books. Later I learned that Blessed John unfailingly attended all nine services (including Liturgy) in the daily cycle of the Orthodox Church, and that he communed every day. After the service I came up to him to receive his blessing. He asked me what my name was and

invited me to visit with him “for a chat.” I shall never forget that he, before leaving the temple, made many prostrations to the ground in front of every icon in the cathedral, as if bidding farewell for a time to his close friends, the saints. I followed him, holding his staff in my hands. My young soul at once was drawn to this extraordinary man, subconsciously feeling that deeply Christian love which the good bishop nurtured in people, and especially children.

For the first time in my life I entered his large study on the second floor of the rectory. The entire right side of his office, from the ceiling down to the level of the analogion in the corner, was filled with a multitude of icons of various sizes. For some reason I assumed it was quite natural that when entering his office, he would at once begin to make prostrations before the icons and again pray for a long time. Finally he sat at his desk, which was literally packed with papers, and had a long talk with me. Just like he was to do later on, he talked about the church, about the lives of the ascetics and saints, about martyrs, about Church Feasts. I did not want to go home and leave this unusual man.

It was already dark by the time Bishop John blessed me and ordered me to go home. After Liturgy on weekdays, he would consume the Holy Gifts himself, remaining in deep prayer in the Holy Altar, long after the departure of the serving priest. And again, as always, he would venerate all the icons in the cathedral before leaving for his quarters. While talking to me in his office, Blessed John would sometimes doze off for several seconds. I later on found out that he would never go to sleep in a bed but would instead allow himself only short naps in a chair or on his knees before his beloved icons, where his secretary, a certain Mr. Kantov, would often find him.

I witnessed an incredible incident of this conscious sleep of his. One evening, during a talk with me in his study, the telephone rang on his table and he answered it. I don't know with whom he talked, but I shall never forget how, continuing the conversation on the telephone, he dropped the telephone receiver and fell asleep. The receiver laid on his cassock by his knees, and he continued while asleep and for the longest time to hear and speak with the person who had called him. It was of course unnatural and completely “impossible” for either the bishop to hear the one who called him or for that person to hear what Blessed John was telling him. However, judging from the length and content of what the hierarch was saying, it was very apparent to me that in this miraculous manner the conversation did indeed continue.

One time, while I was in his office, they brought him his dinner; I clearly recall that it was a bowl of borsht and a cup

of kisel (fruit pudding). He was alone as I was in the adjacent room, where they also brought to me this modest meal. And through the open door, I observed how Blessed John poured the sweet kisel into the bowl of borsht and began to eat this un-tasty mixture. As a child at that time, such things seemed to me absolutely natural for a bishop to do... All the children and altar boys loved the bishop, in spite of his strictness. His strictness was exemplified when once he ordered the priest, Fr. Michael, to whip some guilty ones for their mischief.

Blessed John became my role model and I decided to imitate him in everything. Once, during Great Lent, I stopped sleeping on my bed and would lie down to sleep on the floor; among other things, I ceased having dinners with my family as I normally would do, and would eat only bread and

water. My parents were quite upset and brought me to the good bishop. After hearing what they had to say, he ordered his deacon to go to the store and bring back some bologna. To my tearful pleas that “after all it is Great Lent now,” the wise Archpastor ordered me to eat up the bologna that was brought and to always remember that obedience to parents is more important than self-imposed fasting. “How should I continue, then, Vladiko?” I asked, still wishing in some “special manner” to continue my podvig (ascetic exploit). To this he answered: “Continue attending church as you do, but at home do what your parents tell you.” I remember how I became resentful that he did not designate for me some “special” ascetic podvig.

I remember still another remarkable occurrence, or rather an incident in the life

of Blessed John during which I was personally present. It was an usual weekday and the Liturgy was being celebrated by one of the Shanghai cathedral priests. Blessed John was standing on his usual spot and I was apparently serving in the altar—I am not very certain. But I remember well how that priest during his sermon was scolding the bishop, pointing his finger at him and resorting to such words as these: “a snake, a scorpion, a toad, a hypocrite,” etc. The bishop continued to stand in his place, showing no reaction to these irrational attacks of his priest, but proceeding to read from some book before him on his analogion. Later my father told me how he and many others were indignant at such unacceptable behavior on the part of the priest towards his bishop, and how they asked that the latter punish the scoundrel. The bishop, however, took no measures, stating that it was a personal matter. What saintly lack of malice! And in general, no one ever heard a single word of condemnation towards anybody coming from the lips of this Righteous Bishop. The late archpriest Seraphim Slobodsky told me how he once asked Blessed John a question: “Who



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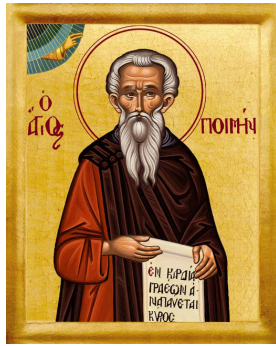
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is at fault in that sad quarrel that was raging in connection with the cathedral building in San Francisco?" And the Blessed One very simply answered with one word: "the devil."

The term that could best describe the essential impulse that motivated the whole life and activity of this most righteous and greatest man of prayer is "Care for the human soul." I humbly believe that his greatness may be compared with that of any of our Church's saints. Otherwise, how can one explain all that I was a living witness of? I saw how, for example, his face would at times literally become transfigured during Liturgies on great Feast days, shining with unearthly light; and how his eyes, always full of divine love, clearly reflected unutterable joy—unattainable for us sinners—from the presence of the Holy Spirit. I beheld how on the Paschal night he would fly, as if carried by angels, around the whole of the newly built Shanghai cathedral, exclaiming with a fullness of joy the victory-bearing words: "Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen!" There was no limit, it seemed, to his genuine exultation: his whole being was immersed in the Divine Joy of Christ, Whom he truly and completely loved.

That which was most astonishing was his gift of seeing through the human heart and attracting it to Christ. After all, if it were not for this righteous Archpriest, I would have never thought of ever serving the Church as part of Her clergy. And how amazing was his prediction of what happened to us! In his letter of October 23/November 7, 1949 to my brother and me—we were only thirteen and fifteen years old then—he forewarned us (we had just arrived in Australia from the Philippine Islands and we were already rarely going to church): "When we abandon God's

ways, we can enjoy our bodies only for a short time; then we will feel the bitterness of the evil, which first appears sweet." Even today I cannot read these prophetic words without bitter tears of gratitude, some thirty-five years later!

He knew that I would write to him on May 19/June 1, 1969: "Oh, how I wish I could talk to you personally, Vladiko! So much has happened to me since I arrived in the Philippines that I now do not recognize myself. The spiritual striving of my childhood has departed and I have sunk into my sinful, materialistic surroundings." But the great saint saw that not all of my spiritual strivings were "sunken," and he continued to call me to serve the Church, advising me "to receive a theological education and for this purpose to enroll in Holy Trinity Seminary. May the Lord help you and may He bless you on that path" (letter of January 18/31, 1961).

Of course, I have no adequate words to express my gratitude to and love for the saintly Archpastor. During the earthly life of a bishop we liturgically exclaim: *Through the holy prayers of our master, O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.* But since *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living* (Matt 22:32), according to the truthful words of our Savior Himself, I even today continue to call for the help of Saint John with that same prayer. I thus constantly thank God for vouchsafing me to be a witness of His great saint, through whose prayers I have not sunken entirely into the vanity of this world; I have no doubt that the day will come when the earthly Church will also canonize Archbishop John as one of those *of whom the world was not worthy* (Heb. 11:38)—and we shall all thank God, Who is wondrous in His saints.

Fr. George Larin

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

## In This Issue:

- “Union” of the Churches Is the Best Way to Eliminate Christianity (p. 4)
- The Humility of Elder Porphyrios (p. 5)
- The Place of Holy Relics in the Orthodox Church (p.11)
- Should We Cease the Commemoration? (p. 14)



- Περὶ Παίδων Ἀγωγῆς (σελ. 7)
- Προφητικὸν Ἀνάγνωσμα (σελ. 8)
- Φωνὴ Βοῶσα ἐκ τῆς Ἐρήμου (σελ. 9)
- Τὸ Θαῦμα μὲ τὸ Καντήλι (σελ. 10)
- Ἡ Σκέπη τῆς Θεοτόκου (σελ. 10)



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## TRUE CHRISTIANITY

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos, from “Orthodox Psychotherapy.”

Many people interpreting the character of Christianity see it as one of the numerous philosophies and religions known from antiquity. Certainly Christianity is not a philosophy in the sense that prevails today. Philosophy sets up a system of thought which in most cases bears no relationship to life. The main difference between Christianity and philosophy is that the latter is human thinking, while Christianity is the revelation of God; it is not a mere discovery by man but the revelation by God Himself to man. It is impossible for human logic to find the truths of Christianity. Where the human word is powerless, there comes the divine-human Word, or Christ the God-Man, the Word of God. This divine revelation was formulated in the philosophical terms of the time, but again it must be emphasized that it is not a philosophy; it is the garments of the divine-human Word that are taken from the philosophy of that time.

St. John Chrysostom, interpreting Isaiah 3:1-3, *Behold the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah ... the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner...*, observes: “He seems here to be calling ‘diviner’ a person who is capable of conjecturing the future through profound intelligence and experience of things. Divining and prophesying are indeed two different things: the prophet, setting self aside, speaks under divine inspiration; the ‘diviner’ for his part starts from what has already happened, puts his own intelligence to work and foresees many future events, as an intelligent person normally does. But the difference between them is great: it is the distance that separates human intelligence from divine grace.” So, speculation (or philosophy) is one thing, and

prophecy, or the word of the prophet who theologizes, is another. The former is a human activity while the latter is a revelation of the Holy Spirit.

In the patristic writings, and especially in the teaching of St. Maximus, philosophy is referred to as the beginning of the spiritual life. However, he used the term “practical philosophy” to mean cleansing the heart from passions, which really is the first stage of the soul’s journey towards God.

Yet Christianity cannot be regarded as a religion, at least not as religion presents itself today. Religion usually visualizes God as dwelling in Heaven and directing human history from there; He is extremely exacting, seeking satisfaction from man, who has fallen to earth in his sickness and weakness. There is a wall of separation between God and man. This has to be surmounted by man, and religion becomes a very effective help. Thus, various religious rites are employed for this purpose. According to another view, man feels powerless in the universe and needs a mighty God to help him in his weakness. In this view God does not create man, but man creates God. Again, religion is conceived as man’s relationship to the Absolute God, that is to say, the “relationship of the ‘I’ to the Absolute Thou.” Yet again, many regard religion as a means whereby the people are deluded into transferring their hopes to the future life. In this way strong powers put pressure on the people by means of religion.

But true Christianity is something higher than any of these interpretations and theories; it cannot be contained within the usual conception and definition of religion given to the “natural” religions. God is not the Absolute Thou, but a living Person, Who is in organic communion with man. Moreover, Christianity does not simply transfer the problem to the future or await the delight of the kingdom of Heaven after history and

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after the end of time. In Christianity, the future is lived in the present and the kingdom of God begins in this life. According to the patristic interpretation, the kingdom of God is the grace of the Triune God; it is vision of the Uncreated Light.

We Orthodox are not waiting for the end of history and the end of time, but through living in Christ we are running to meet the end of history and thus already living the life expected after the Second Coming. St. Symeon the New Theologian says that he who has seen the Uncreated Light and united with God is not awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord but living it. So, the eternal embraces us at every moment of time. Therefore, past, present, and future are essentially lived in one unbroken unity. This is so-called condensed time. Thus, Orthodoxy cannot be characterized as the "opium of the people," precisely because it does not postpone the problem. It offers life, transforms biological life, sanctifies, and transforms societies. Where Orthodoxy is lived in the right way and in the Holy Spirit, it is a communion of God and men, of Heavenly and earthly, of the living and the dead. In this communion, all the problems which present themselves in our life are truly resolved.

However, since the membership of the Church includes sick people and beginners, it is to be expected that some of them understand Christianity as religion in the sense referred to above. Moreover, the spiritual life is a dynamic journey. It begins with baptism, which is purification of the "image," and continues through ascetic living aimed at attaining "likeness," which is to say communion with God. Anyway, it must be made clear that even when we still speak of Christianity as a religion we must do it with certain necessary presuppositions.

The first is that Christianity is mainly a Church. "Church" means "Body of Christ." There are many places in the New Testament where Christianity is called the Church. We shall only mention Christ's words: *You are Peter, and on this rock*

*I will build my church* (Mt 16:18), and the words of St. Paul to the Colossians: *And he is the head of the body, the church* (Col 1:18) and to his disciple Timothy: *...so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth* (1Tim 3:15). This means that Christ does not simply dwell in Heaven and direct history and the lives of men from there, but He is united with us. He assumed human nature and deified it; thus, in Christ deified human nature is at the right hand of the Father. So Christ is our life and we are "members of Christ."

The second presupposition is that the aim of the Christian is to attain the blessed state of deification. Deification is identical with "likeness," that is, to be like God. However, in order to reach the likeness, to attain the vision of God, and for this vision not to be a consuming fire but a life-giving light, purification must have taken place. This purification and healing is the Church's work. When the Christian participates in worship without undergoing life-giving purification, then he is not really living within the Church. Christianity without purification is utopia. So when we are being purified, especially when we are seeing to our healing, we can speak of religion. And this accords with the words of the Lord's brother James: "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jam 1:26-27). This abstinence gives us the right to claim that Christianity is neither philosophy nor "natural" religion, but mainly healing. It is the healing of a person's passions so that he may attain communion and union with God.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Lord showed us several truths. As soon as the Samaritan saw the man who



had fallen among thieves who had wounded him and left him half dead, he *had compassion on him and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him* (Lk 10:33-34). Christ treated the wounded man and brought him to the inn, to the Hospital which is the Church. Here Christ is presented as a Physician Who heals man's illnesses, and the Church as a Hospital.

It is very characteristic that in analyzing this parable, St. John Chrysostom presents the truths which we have just emphasized. Man went down "from the heavenly state to the state of the devil's deception, and he fell among thieves, that is, the devil and the hostile powers." The wounds which he sustained are the various sins. As David says, *My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness* (Ps 38:5). For "every sin brings bruises and wounds." The Samaritan is Christ Himself, Who came down from Heaven to earth to heal wounded man. He used wine and oil for the wounds; that is to say, "by mixing the Holy Spirit with His blood, he brought life to man."

According to another interpretation, "oil brings the comforting word; wine provides the astringent lotion, the instruction which brings concentration to the scattered mind." He set him upon his own animal: "Taking flesh upon his own divine shoulders, he lifted it towards the Father in Heaven." Thereupon the Good Samaritan, Christ, led the man "into the wonderful and spacious inn, this universal Church." He gave him to the innkeeper, who is the Apostle Paul, and "through Paul to the high priests and teachers and ministers of each church," saying: "Take care of the people, of the Gentiles whom I have given to you in the Church. Since men are sick, wounded by sin, heal them, putting on them a stone plaster, that is, the prophetic sayings and the gospel teachings, making them whole through the admonitions and exhortations of the Old and New Testaments." So according to St. John Chrysostom, Paul is the one who upholds the churches of God "and heals all men through spiritual admonitions, distributing the bread of offering to each one..."

In St. John Chrysostom's interpretation of this parable it is clearly evident that the Church is a Hospital which heals those sick with sin, while the bishops and priests, like the Apostle Paul, are the healers of the people of God. These truths also appear in many other places in the New Testament. The Lord said: *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick* (Mt 9:12). Likewise Christ, as a physician of souls and bodies, was *...healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people ... and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them* (Mt 4:23-24). St. Paul is well aware that the conscience of men, especially of simple ones, is weak: *When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ* (1Cor 8:12). The Book of Revelation says that John the Evangelist saw a river of the water of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. *...and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner*

*of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations* (Rev 22:2). Thus, the work of the Church is therapeutic. It seeks to heal men's sicknesses, mainly those of the soul, which torment them. This is the basic teaching of the New Testament and of the Fathers of the Church.

Here again the indispensability of the Church must be emphasized. I am very grateful to the priest and professor John Romanides for laying stress on this in his writings. I am convinced that he is very well read in the neptic Fathers—especially in the writings contained in the Philokalia—and has therefore grasped the real meaning of Christianity. I believe that this is his great contribution. For in this era when Christianity is being presented as a philosophy or intellectual theology or a culture and popular tradition—customs and manners—he presents this teaching about a therapeutic discipline and treatment. Concretely, he says: "Having faith in Christ without undergoing healing in Christ is not faith at all. Here is the same contradiction that we find when a sick person who has great confidence in his doctor never carries out the treatment which he recommends. If Judaism and its successor, Christianity, had appeared in the twentieth century for the first time, they would most likely have been characterized not as religions but as medical sciences related to psychiatry. They would have a wide influence on society owing to their considerable successes in healing the ills of the partially functioning personality. In no way can prophetic Judaism and Christianity be construed as religions that use various magical methods and beliefs to promise escape from a supposed world of matter and evil or hypocrisy into a supposed spiritual world of security and success."

In another work the same professor says: "The patristic tradition is neither a social philosophy nor an ethical system, nor is it religious dogmatism: it is a therapeutic treatment. In this respect it closely resembles medicine, especially psychiatry. The spiritual energy of the soul that prays unceasingly in the heart is a physiological instrument which everyone has and which requires healing. Neither philosophy nor any of the known positive or social sciences is capable of healing this instrument. That can only be done through the Fathers' neptic and ascetic teaching. Therefore, those who are not healed usually do not even know of the existence of this instrument."

So in the Church we are divided into the sick, those undergoing therapeutic treatment, and those—saints—who have already been healed. The Fathers do not categorize people as moral and immoral or good and bad on the basis of moral laws. This division is superficial. At depth humanity is differentiated into the sick in soul, those being healed and those healed. All who are not in a state of illumination are sick in soul. It is not only good will, good resolve, moral practice and devotion to the Orthodox Tradition which make an Orthodox, but also purification, illumination and deification. These stages of healing are the purpose of the mystical life of the Church, as the liturgical texts bear witness.

## “UNION” OF THE CHURCHES IS THE BEST WAY TO ELIMINATE CHRISTIANITY

*By Alexander Kalomirois, from his book “Against False Union,” (edited for length).*

If injustice, hatred, and falsehood had ceased to exist, then peace would have been the consummation of human happiness. Unity would have been a natural and not an artificial result. But something totally different is noticeable. Today, when everyone is speaking of peace and unity, self-love and hatred, injustice and falsehood, ambition and greed, are at their zenith. All—everyone in his own way—speak of love for man, of love for humanity. But there has never existed a greater hypocrisy than that so-called love. Because love towards something theoretical, for something imaginary, such as the concept «humanity», is equally theoretical and imaginary. It has no relation to love for the particular man we have before us. This love for a particular person, when it exists, is the only real love. It is the love for our neighbor that Christ asked.

This particular man with his imperfections and weaknesses, instead of being loved, has been hated in our time more than in any other age. Not only has he been hated, but he has been scorned and humiliated; he has been regarded as a «thing» without any particular value, a means for the attainment of «high goals», a particle of the mass. Those who speak the most of love towards man and humanity, of peace and union, are precisely those who hate the most their neighbor, their acquaintance. They love man the creation of their own imagination; they do not love man the reality. This worship of the idol «man» is in reality narcissism; it is the worship of the ego.

It would be naïveté, therefore, if one were to believe that the pacifist disposition that characterizes humanity today proceeds from love. These words about love are hypocrisy and self-deception. This desire for peace proceeds from loss of ideals, from fear, and from love of comfort. It is the desire to be left in peace to enjoy the good things of this earth. It is the conventional co-operation for acquisition of goods which each person separately would not be able to acquire. It is a universal understanding upon something which has become the passion of the whole earth: sensualism and materialism. It is a product of necessity.

The peace of which the world speaks is an unconditional capitulation of everything good and sacred and great, and the dominance of pettiness, mediocrity, and lukewarmness. It is the blotting out of the personality of individuals and of peoples. It is a marmalade of compromises and calculations, a sea of hypocrisy, indifference for truth, betrayal of everything holy and sacred.

War is a terrible thing, a result of the fall of man, and no one is about to praise it. But the peace for which the world

is haggling is something infinitely more fearful. A fever is a very unpleasant thing, but it shows at least that the organism is reacting against something bad which has entered it. The peace which they wish to bring is not, unfortunately, that which comes from the victory over evil, but that which comes from defeat. It is the feverlessness of a corpse. ...

So-called Christians play a significant role in the world's effort for peace. With the slogan «Christians unite», they set out for the bazaar where truth will be sold out.

Once, Christians had faith and were ready to die for their Faith. Today their zeal for truth has cooled. They have begun to consider it as something secondary. They find the differences between churches, for which in former times Martyrs eagerly sacrificed themselves, the Fathers were exiled, and the faithful mutilated, as unimportant and unworthy of mention.

Most of them are sickly and incorrigible sentimentalists who think that the religion of Christ is an ethical system concerning human relations. Others pursue political purposes and dark interests. All of them together are building the city of Antichrist. They seek union, being indifferent to truth; they seek an external rapprochement, ignoring internal dissensions; they seek the letter, being indifferent to the spirit.

How is it possible for them to hope that what failed in the first centuries of the schism shall be accomplished now that the differences in dogma and mentality have, with the passage of centuries, widened from breaches to gulfs? ...

How will the Westerners be taught that the Orthodox Church is the One and True Church when they see her consorting with the false «churches» as an equal among equals? Will they not think, therefore, that Orthodoxy is also like the others - relative and partial? ...

They are only flattering the Orthodox in order to draw them over to their side. If they had a genuine nostalgia to know Orthodoxy, they would have no need for councils and conferences. They would have gone to drink from her sources, from her Fathers and Saints. ...

Why are our Christians so easily moved by sermons about the union of the churches? And instead of being filled with zeal for the transmission of the truth to this world which lacks it so much, they suck on the caramel of peace, weighing to see which are more, the things which separate or those which unite Christians.

It is because they themselves lack knowledge of the truth. Most of them being members of social-Christian organizations and brotherhoods, were catechized from their earliest years in an ethico-philosophical system with a Christian veneer which led them to believe that the purpose of Christianity is to achieve the peaceful coexistence of men in the spirit of love. Eternity and the vision of God are things very distant for these Christians, and often of no interest. Most of them, being extroverts, are men of action who came to Christianity to find an organized and directed *modus vivendi*, a way of living as

good and honorable citizens upon this earth. For such people, God is the Great Servant of their personal interests, and eternal life is a good but, fortunately, distant hope of restoration. ...

But Christ did not become man in order to save this world which abides in wickedness. Rather, He came to save His own from the world, to pull them away from the ranks of evil, to unite them to Himself and to deify them by Grace, and with them to save the entire groaning creation. The world is walking the way of death. It is following the ruler of this world, the enemy of God. *I do not pray for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me* (Jn 17:9).

But such people take the part of the world and sacrifice the jewels of Christian faith and life for that diabolical party which will never be saved. It is not Christ Who asks for the so-called union of the churches, but the world. Christ does not ask for the union of falsehood with truth, but it is the world that seeks to adulterate the truth, to make it relative and partial. This is why, when a discussion arises about the union of the churches, one sees that it is supported enthusiastically by people who were never previously interested in matters of religion. Union is the best way of neutralizing Christianity that the devil's party has discovered. It is the beginning of the [final] dissolution of Christianity and its submission to the whims of politics; it is the conversion of Christianity into a servant of the interests of the world.

With union, Christianity may acquire greater world power, but it will lose all its spiritual strength, exactly what troubles the world. Has it not already happened to the Roman Catholic "Church?" The Papists' thirst for world power has made them descend to the well-worn path of political machinations, from which they have emerged as tools of the great political trends.



**P**atience, forgiveness and joy are the three greatest characteristics of divine love. They are characteristics of all real love—if there is such a thing as real love outside divine love. Without these three characteristics, love is not love. If you give the name 'love' to anything else, it is as though you were giving the name 'sheep' to a goat or a pig.

St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *Homilies*, Vol. I  
(On the Prodigal Son)



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## THE HUMILITY OF ELDER PORPHYRIOS

Source: "With Elder Porphyrios" by K. Yiannitsiotis, pp. 275-279.



**T**he Elder did not pretend to be humble, he was humble. He did not put on an outward display of humility, since he was deeply aware of man's insignificance compared with God's magnificence. Once a High School principal, who was a theologian, visited him with a periodical in his hand. He opened it up full of joy and said, "Elder, listen to what the

magazine says." Then he started to read him an article that sung the praises of the Holy Fathers and spoke about living saints. It also mentioned that all one had to do in order to be convinced was to visit a new monastery by Milesi, Oropos. It mentioned everything except the name of Fr. Porphyrios. As soon as the Elder heard him, he interrupted him angrily. "What, man, is all that it says? Who told him to write such things? If you are going to come and read such things to me don't ever come again!" Following this chastisement, the principal did not dare speak to him about praise again.

Secular people and lukewarm Christians shine with joy and enthusiasm when you praise them. Even when they realize that, the praises are mere flattery. They scowl in bitterness and annoyance when you reprove them, even when they see that the reproof reveals some truths. The exact opposite occurred with Fr. Porphyrios; even if he realized that, the praises were justified, in the consciousness of those praising him, at least. He was glad and thankful when reproved, even if he was aware that the reproofs were unjustified.

Knowing this spiritual stance of the Elder's and reacting to his admonition, "Don't write it down, kid, don't talk about it." One day I said to him, in a somewhat crude manner: "Elder, don't think that when I talk to friends about you that I am praising you personally. Do you want to know, how I see you, what I feel about you fundamentally, in reality?"

"Yes, go on, I'm listening," the Elder replied, with great interest. "I see you like an ordinary person, like most of us. Not only that, but I see you as a weak person, and if God's grace was to leave you, even for a short while, you are capable of committing the gravest of sins. Whatever good you do now is not yours but God's, because you do it with God's enlightenment and strength and not with your own. Please forgive me for mentioning it like this." The Elder was enthusiastic and said to me, "Yes, you blessed thing, you've found it. That's the



truth. That's the way things are, just as you described them." I was embarrassed, because I spoke so unsubtly. At the same time, I was satisfied because I saw him shining with the joy of humility. I really was envious of him at that moment. If only I could feel just a tiny bit of that rare and priceless joy.

Some time later I heard disparaging comments about the Elder from some "intellectual" circles and I was embittered. On a visit to the Elder, on impulse, I started to tell him about it, but I regretted it immediately and stopped. The Elder took a lively interest and said, "Continue, continue, tell me what they are saying about me. I want to learn. Not out of curiosity, I want to see where I'm going wrong so that I can correct myself." I realized, from his words, that it was not a case of being personally offended. That is to say, it was not a matter of pride. It was merely a matter of humble highlighting possible mistakes of his, in order to correct them, for the benefit of others, to the glory of God. For this reason, the disparaging remarks about him were welcomed. Regarding the detractors themselves, the Elder's answer was an open embrace. He said in relation to this, "You know different people came to me, both from "Zoe" and from "Sotir" and from "Stavros" and other Christian Organizations (Translator: The Elder is referring to various fraternities of theologians that exist in Greece), but also secular people, and religiously indifferent people as well as atheists. I don't make any distinctions among them. I look upon all of them the same way, and I love them all just the same." The Elder opposed his detractors not with personal debates, but with humble Christian love.

#### The Rug and the Bugs

One day I found the Elder lying upon his bed. On top of the blankets covering him, he had an old rug, full of holes. I was struck by it. The Elder realized that without telling me anything about it. He said to me, "You're looking at this old rug and asking why I've thrown it over me? Well, I love this rug a lot. It has quite a history. My Elder's grandmother gave it to him, from her dowry. The Elder gave it to me, as a blessing, when I was his young disciple. I have not been separated from it since. When I was on the Holy Mountain I laid it out over the earth floor in my cell and laid down and slept on it. However, since it was cold at night, scorpions used to come and hide under the rug, because they found warmth underneath my body. When I woke up in the morning, I picked up the rug carefully. I took a broom, and gently removed the scorpions from my cell, without harming them. The next evening the scorpions would come back to keep warm again."

I was amazed and shuddered at the episode, imagining the Elder blissfully sleeping on scorpions. I contained my horror supposing that perhaps the scorpions were small and harmless. The Elder soon got up from his bed, and suggested that I accompany him for a walk amongst the trees outside. Surprisingly, there were no visitors there at the time and so I had the rare privilege of being in the exclusive company of the Elder.

As we were walking along silently, I searched my thoughts to find the most urgent matter I had for discussion. However, the Elder interrupted my thoughts by saying, "And don't think those scorpions I told you about were tiny. They were proper ones, large." I did not know what to be most amazed at: The extent of the Elder's spiritual perception, that "caught" my most hidden thoughts, or the extent of the scorpions? At that moment I remembered a relevant phrase from the Gospel and I said, "Elder, Christ's words were fulfilled by you: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:19)." The Elder reacted in anger, "No, kid, don't say such things. Christ said that about His seventy apostles, he didn't say it about me." Then, instead of his spiritual perception, or the scorpions, I was even more amazed by the extent of his humility.

#### Humility and Grace

I was talking to the Elder about a friend, who had the shortcoming of excessive pride, due to which many problems had been created. "Elder," I said, "if God's grace comes can't my friend change?" The Elder answered, "If God's grace comes everybody and everything changes, but then, in order for it to come, humility is needed first?" That is, a person has to do what little he can first and then grace will complete the work.



All faith in the triumph of Life over death, every presentiment of the Resurrection, are implicit belief in Christ: for only the power of Christ raises, and will raise the dead. Since the victory of Christ over death, the Resurrection has become Universal Law for creation; and not only for humanity, but also for the beasts, the plants and the stones, for the whole cosmos in which each one of us is the head. We are baptized in the death of Christ, shrouded in water to rise again with Him. And for the soul lustrated in the baptismal waters of tears, and ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection is not only hope but present reality. The parousia [the Second Coming] begins in the souls of the saints, and St. Symeon the New Theologian can thus write: "For those who became children of the light and sons of the day to come, for those who always walk in the light, the Day of the Lord will never come, for they are already with God and in God." An infinite ocean of light flows from the Risen Body of the Lord.

V. N. Lossky

"Orthodox Theology: An Introduction"

## Περὶ Παίδων Ἀγωγῆς

Γέροντος Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀγιορείτου.

**Ο** διακριτικὸς καὶ διορατικὸς Γέροντας Παΐσιος, πὺν τὸν τίμησε καὶ ἀγάπησε ἕνα πλῆθος εὐσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ μάλιστα νέων στὴν ἡλικία ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιστημόνων, καὶ πὺν προσέφερε ὅσο εὐρίσκετο στὴ γῆ τὸν ἀπέραντο σεβασμὸ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τώρα πὺν ἀνήκει στὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ θριαμβεύουσα Ἐκκλησία, ἦταν ἔτοιμος πάντα νὰ προσφέρῃ λόγο πνευματικῆς οἰκοδομῆς καὶ παρηγοριᾶς στὸν καθένα πὺν ἔτρεχε κοντά του. Φωτισμένος ἀπὸ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα, μιλοῦσε σὰν εἰδικὸς γιὰ ὅλα τὰ θέματα. Ἐνα ἀπλό δεῖγμα αὐτῆς τῆς κατὰ τὸ Θεὸν σοφίας του, εἶναι καὶ ἡ καταχωριζομένη συνομιλία του μὲ πνευματικὸ παιδί του γιὰ θέμα ἰδιαίτερης σημασίας, ὅπως εἶναι ἡ ἀγωγή τῶν παιδιῶν καὶ μάλιστα στὴν ἐποχή μας.

† † †

- Πολλοὶ οἱ πειρασμοὶ καὶ οἱ κίνδυνοι γιὰ τοὺς νέους σήμερα, Γέροντα. Ἀνησυχοῦμε, παρ' ὅλο πὺν φροντίζουμε νὰ ἔχουμε τὰ παιδιά μας μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία.

- Τὰ παιδιά πὺν ἔχουν ποτιστεῖ ἀπὸ μικρά στὴν εὐσέβεια, μὴν τὰ φοβᾶστε. Καὶ νὰ ξεφύγουν, λίγο, λόγω ἡλικίας, λόγω πειρασμῶν, θὰ ἐπανέλθουν. Εἶναι σὰν τὰ κουφώματα πὺν τὰ περνᾶμε μὲ τὸ λάδι καὶ δὲν τὰ πιάνει ἡ σαπίλα.

- Ἀπὸ ποιά ἡλικία πιστεύεις, Γέροντα, ὅτι ἀρχίζουν τὰ παιδιά νὰ γίνονται δέκτες, καὶ μὲ ποιὸ τρόπο πρέπει νὰ ἐνεργοῦμε πάνω τοὺς σὰν γονεῖς, χωρὶς νὰ ὑπάρχη κίνδυνος νὰ τὰ βλάψουμε ἀπὸ τυχὸν ὑπερβολές;

- Πρῶτα – πρῶτα τὰ παιδιά ἀντιγράφουν ἐμᾶς καὶ μάλιστα ἀπὸ μωρά. Ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ καὶ πέρα θὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐνεργοῦμε ἐπάνω τοὺς ὅπως στὰ ρολόγια. Ὅσο παίρνει τὸ ἐλατήριό τους, τὰ κουρδίζουμε γρήγορα. Μετὰ σιγά – σιγά, προσέχοντας νὰ μὴ σπάσουμε τὸ ἐλατήριό τους μὲ τὸ ζόρισμα.

- Πολλές φορές, Γέροντα, τὰ παιδιά ἀντιδροῦν σὲ διάφορα θέματα εὐσέβειας.

- Ὅταν κάτι δὲν πάει καλά, πάντα κάτι φταίει. Μήπως φταίει τὸ δικό σας παράδειγμα; Μήπως φταίνει τίποτε κακὰ θέματα, ἢ τίποτε ἄσχημες πράξεις, ἢ ἄσχημα λόγια πὺν λέγοντε μέσα στὸ σπῖτι σας; Πάντως τὴν εὐσέβεια τὴ δίνουμε στὰ παιδιά μὲ τὸ γάλα καὶ ὄχι μὲ τὴν ξηρὰ τροφή. Ποτὲ μὲ πίεση καὶ προσταγή. Καὶ προπαντὸς μὲ τὸ παράδειγμά μας.

- Στὶς περιπτώσεις τῶν κακῶν πράξεων τὸ ξύλο φέρνει ἀποτέλεσμα;

- Νὰ τὸ ἀποφεύγουμε ὅσο μπορούμε. Οὔτε ἐκεῖνα τὰ μὴ – μὴ συνέχεια. Τοῦ παιδιοῦ νὰ τοῦ δίνουμε νὰ καταλαβαίνει. Νὰ ξέρη πότε κάνουμε κάτι καὶ πότε δὲν τὸ κάνουμε. Μόνο τότε τὸ φέρνουμε σὲ λογαριασμὸ.

- Γέροντα, παρ' ὅλο πὺν τὰ ἀκολουθοῦμε ὅλα αὐτά, ἐκεῖνα γίνονται ἀτίθασα. Μερικὲς φορές ξεπερνᾶνε κάθε ὅριο. Δὲν ξέρουμε τί νὰ κάνουμε.

- Ἀς δίνουμε καμιά φορὰ τὸ κατσαβίδι καὶ στὸ Χριστὸ γιὰ

νὰ ρυθμίξῃ τὰ πράγματα σφίγγοντας μερικὲς βίδες. Μὴν περιμένουμε νὰ τὰ κάνουμε ὅλα μόνοι μας.

- Ὅταν, Γέροντα, τὸ παιδί εἶναι μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἀπὸ κάποια ἡλικία ἀρχίζει ν' ἀλλάξῃ συμπεριφορά, νὰ ξεφεύγῃ, πῶς πρέπει νὰ ἐνεργοῦμε;

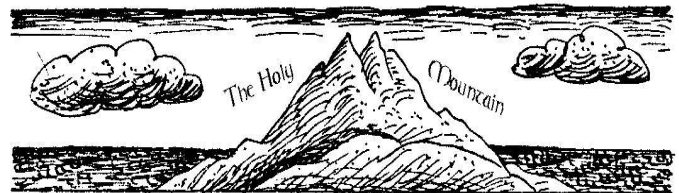
- Μὲ ἡρεμία. Ἄν εἶναι κάτι πολὺ σοβαρὸ νὰ ἐπεμβαίνουμε. Νὰ παραβλέπουμε καὶ τίποτε γιὰ νὰ μὴ θυμῶνῃ καὶ γίνεται χειρότερο.

- Ὅταν ἕνα παιδί μπλέξῃ μὲ κακὲς παρέες καὶ ἐγκαταλείψει τὸ σπῖτι του, ἐνῶ δὲν ἔχει πάρει πολὺ Χριστὸ μαζί του, ὑπάρχουν ἐλπίδες νὰ ἐπανέλθῃ;

- Ἀγάπη πῆρε μέσα του; Ὅταν μέσα στὸ σπῖτι ὑπάρχει ἀγάπη καὶ τὸ ἴδιο τὸ παιδί τὸ περιβάλλουμε μὲ ἀγάπη καὶ φύγει καὶ νὰ μπλέξῃ μὲ παρέες καὶ μὲ γλέντια, θὰ δῇ κάποια στιγμή ὅτι ἐξῶ δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀγάπη. Θὰ δῇ ὅτι ὑπάρχει παντοῦ ὑποκρισία καὶ θὰ γυρίσῃ στὸ σπῖτι. Ἐνῶ ἂν θυμᾶται ἐχθρότητα καὶ μίσος, δὲ θὰ τοῦ κἀνῃ καρδιά νὰ ἀρῇ τὴ στράτα τοῦ γυρισμοῦ.

- Ὅταν γνωρίσουμε τὸ Χριστὸ ἀργά, δηλαδὴ ἐνῶ τὰ παιδιά μας ἔχουν ἤδη μεγαλώσει, τί πρέπει νὰ κάνουμε γιὰ νὰ τὰ βάλουμε στὸ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ;

- Ἐδῶ μόνο ἡ προσευχὴ φέρνει ἀποτέλεσμα. Πρέπει νὰ ζητήσουμε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ μὲ πολλὴ πίστη ἔλεος γι' αὐτὰ τὰ παιδιά, πὺν δὲν εὐθύνονται γιὰ τὴν ἀπιστία τους. Νὰ ἀναγνωρίσουμε ὅτι ἡ εὐθύνη εἶναι μόνο δική μας, νὰ ταπεινωθοῦμε καὶ νὰ μετανοήσουμε εἰλικρινὰ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς θὰ τὰ βοηθήσῃ. Ἐχει Ἐκεῖνος τὸν τρόπο του. Ὅλο καὶ κάποιο σωσίβιο θὰ τοὺς ρίξῃ γιὰ νὰ σωθοῦν.



**Ο** φυσικὸς σαρκικὸς πόλεμος ὑποχωρεῖ μόνο μὲ τὴν νηστεία, ἀγρυπνία, καὶ προσευχή, ὅταν δὲν ὑπάρχει ὑπερηφάνεια. Οἱ βλάσφημοι λογισμοὶ εἶναι ὅλοι τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ ὄχι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Μὲ βλάσφημους λογισμοὺς βασανίζει ὁ διάβολος συνήθως τοὺς εὐαίσθητους ἀνθρώπους, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς θλίβῃ καὶ νὰ τοὺς φέρνῃ σὲ ἀπόγνωση.

**Κ**αλὸ εἶναι τὸ νὰ διαβάξῃ κανεὶς βιβλία πνευματικά, ἀλλὰ καλύτερα εἶναι τὸ νὰ τὰ ἐφαρμόξῃ, νὰ ζῇ πνευματικά.

**Ο**ταν ἀδικεῖσαι νὰ μὴ λὲς : «Νὰ τὸ βρῇ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό», γιατί τότε καταριέσαι μὲ εὐγένεια...

**Θ**έλεις ἡ προσευχὴ σου νὰ γίνῃ καρδιακή, γιὰ νὰ εἶναι ἔτσι εὐπρόσδεκτη στὸ Θεό; Κάνε τὸν πόνο τοῦ συνανθρώπου σου δικό σου πόνο. Καὶ μόνο ἕνας καρδιακὸς ἀναστεναγμὸς γιὰ τὸν πλησίον σου φέρνει θετικὰ ἀποτελέσματα!

Γέρων Παΐσιος ὁ Ἀθωνίτης

## Προφητικὸν Ἀνάγνωσμα

Ἀπὸ τὸ «Ἄξιον Ἑστὶ» τοῦ τελευταίου ἐθνικοῦ ποιητῆ μας Ὀδυσσεά Ἐλύτη, ἀνάγνωσμα ἔκτο.

**Χ**ρόνους πολλοὺς μετὰ τὴν Ἀμαρτία ποὺ τὴν εἶπαν Ἄρετὴ μέσα στὶς ἐκκλησίες καὶ τὴν εὐλόγησαν. Λεῖψανα παλιῶν ἄστρον καὶ γωνιῆς ἀραχνιασμένες τ' οὐρανοῦ σαρώνοντας ἢ καταιγίδα ποὺ θὰ γεννήσῃ ὁ νοῦς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων Κυβερνητῶν τὰ ἔργα πληρώνοντας ἢ Χτίσις, θὰ φρίξῃ. Ταραχὴ θὰ πέσῃ στὸν Ἄδη, καὶ τὸ σανίδωμα θὰ ὑποχωρήσῃ ἀπὸ τὴν πίεση τῆ μεγάλης του ἡλίου. Ποὺ πρῶτα θὰ κρατήσῃ τὶς ἀχτίδες του, σημάδι ὅτι καιρὸς νὰ λάβουνε τὰ ὄνειρα ἐκδίκηση. Καὶ μετὰ θὰ μιλήσῃ, νὰ πῇ: ἐξόριστε Ποιητῆ, στὸν αἰῶνα σου, λέγε, τί βλέπεις;

- Βλέπω τὰ ἔθνη, ἄλλοτε ἀλαζονικά, παραδομένα στὴ σφήκα καὶ στὸ ξινόχορτο.

- Βλέπω τὰ πελέκια στὸν ἀέρα σκίζοντας προτομὲς Αὐτοκρατόρων καὶ Στρατηγῶν.

- Βλέπω τοὺς ἐμπόρους νὰ εἰσπράττουν σκύβοντας τὸ κέρδος τῶν δικῶν τους πτωμάτων.

- Βλέπω τὴν ἀλληλουχία τῶν κρυφῶν νοημάτων.

Χρόνους πολλοὺς μετὰ τὴν Ἀμαρτία ποὺ τὴν εἶπαν Ἄρετὴ μέσα στὶς ἐκκλησίες καὶ τὴν εὐλόγησαν. Ἀλλὰ πρὶν, ἰδοὺ θὰ γίνουν οἱ ὥραιοι ποὺ ναρκισσεύτηκαν στὶς τριόδους Φίλιπποι καὶ Ροβέρτοι. Θὰ φορέσουν ἀνάποδα τὸ δαχτυλίδι τους, καὶ μὲ καρφὶ θὰ χτενίσουνε τὸ μαλλί τους, καὶ μὲ νεκροκεφαλὰς θὰ στολίσουνε τὸ στήθος τους, γιὰ νὰ δελεάσουν τὰ γύναια. Καὶ τὰ γύναια θὰ καταπλαγοῦν καὶ θὰ στέρξουν. Γιὰ νὰ ἐβγῇ ἀληθινὸς ὁ λόγος, ὅτι σιμὰ ἢ μέρα ὅπου τὸ κάλλος θὰ παραδοθῇ στὶς μύγες τῆς Ἀγορᾶς. Καὶ θὰ ἀγαναχήσῃ τὸ κορμὶ τῆς πόρνης μὴν ἔχοντας ἄλλο τί νὰ ζηλέψῃ. Καὶ θὰ γίνῃ κατήγορος ἢ πόρνη σοφῶν καὶ μεγιστάνων, τὸ σπέρμα ποὺ ὑπηρετήσε πιστά, σὲ μαρτυρία φέρνοντας. Καὶ θὰ τινάξῃ πάνουθ' ἐκ τῆς τὴν κατάρρα, κατὰ τὴν Ἀνατολὴ τὸ χέρι τεντώνοντας καὶ φωνάζοντας: ἐξόριστε Ποιητῆ, στὸν αἰῶνα σου, λέγε, τί βλέπεις;

- Βλέπω τὰ χρώματα τοῦ Ὑμηττοῦ στὴ βάση τὴν ἱερὴ τοῦ Νέου Ἀστικοῦ μας Κώδικα.

- Βλέπω τὴ μικρὴ Μυρτώ, τὴν πόρνη ἀπὸ τὴ Σίκινο, στημένη πέτρινο ἄγαλμα στὴν πλατεία τῆς Ἀγορᾶς μὲ τὶς Κρῆνες καὶ τὰ ὀρθὰ Λεοντάρια.

- Βλέπω τοὺς ἔφηβους καὶ βλέπω τὰ κορίτσια στὴν ἐτήσια Κλήρωση τῶν Ζευγαριῶν.

- Βλέπω ψηλά, μὲς στοὺς αἰθέρες, τὸ Ἐρέχθειο τῶν Πουλιῶν.

Λεῖψανα παλιῶν ἄστρον καὶ γωνιῆς ἀραχνιασμένες τ' οὐρανοῦ σαρώνοντας ἢ καταιγίδα ποὺ θὰ γεννήσῃ ὁ νοῦς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἀλλὰ πρὶν, ἰδοὺ θὰ περάσουν γενεὲς τὸ ἀλέτρι τοὺς πάνω στὴ στέρφα γῆς. Καὶ κρυφὰ θὰ μετρήσουν τὴν ἀνθρώπινηπραμάτεια τοὺς οἱ Κυβερνήτες, κηρύσσοντας πολέμους. Ὅπου θὰ χορτασθοῦν ὁ Χωροφύλακας καὶ ὁ

Στρατοδίκης. Ἀφήνοντας τὸ χρυσάφι στοὺς ἀφανεῖς, νὰ εἰσπράξουν αὐτοὶ τὸν μιστὸ τῆς ὕβρης καὶ τοῦ μαρτυρίου. Καὶ μεγάλα πλοῖα θ' ἀνεβάσουν σημαῖες, ἐμβατήρια θὰ πάρουν τοὺς δρόμους, οἱ ἐξῶστες νὰ ράνουν μὲ ἄνθη τὸ Νικητῆ. Ποὺ θὰ ζῇ στὴν ὁσμὴ τῶν πτωμάτων. Καὶ τοῦ λάκκου σιμὰ του τὸ στόμα, τὸ σκοτάδι θ' ἀνοίγῃ στὰ μέτρα του, κρίζοντας: ἐξόριστε Ποιητῆ, στὸν αἰῶνα σου, λέγε, τί βλέπεις;

- Βλέπω τοὺς Στρατοδίκες νὰ καῖνε σὰν κεριά, στὸ μεγάλο τραπέζι τῆς Ἀναστάσεως.

- Βλέπω τοὺς Χωροφυλάκους νὰ προσφέρουν τὸ αἷμα τους, θυσία στὴν καθαρότητα τῶν οὐρανῶν.

- Βλέπω τὴ διαρκὴ ἐπανάσταση φυτῶν καὶ λουλουδιῶν.

- Βλέπω τὶς κανονιοφόρους τοῦ Ἑρωτα.

Καὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων Κυβερνητῶν τὰ ἔργα πληρώνοντας ἢ Χτίσις, θὰ φρίξῃ. Ταραχὴ θὰ πέσῃ στὸν Ἄδη, καὶ τὸ σανίδωμα θὰ ὑποχωρήσῃ ἀπὸ τὴν πίεση τῆ μεγάλης τοῦ ἡλίου. Ἀλλὰ πρὶν, ἰδοὺ θὰ στενάξουν οἱ νέοι καὶ τὸ αἷμα τοὺς ἀναίτια θὰ γεράσῃ. Κουρεμένοι κατάδικοι θὰ χτυπήσουν τὴν караβάνα τους πάνω στὰ κάγκελα. Καὶ θὰ ἀδειάσουν ὅλα τὰ ἐργοστάσια, καὶ μετὰ πάλι μὲ τὴν ἐπίταξη θὰ γεμίσουν, γιὰ νὰ βγάλουνε ὄνειρα συντηρημένα σὲ κουτιά μυριάδες, καὶ χιλιάδων λογίων ἐμφιαλωμένη φύση. Καὶ θὰ ῥθουν χρόνια χλωμὰ καὶ ἀδύναμα μέσα στὴ γάζα. Καὶ θὰ ᾗ καθένας τὰ λίγα γραμμάρια τῆς εὐτυχίας. Καὶ θὰ ᾗ νὰ τὰ πράγματα μέσα του κιόλας ὥραϊα ἐρείπια. Τότε, μὴν ἔχοντας ἄλλη ἐξορία, ποὺ νὰ θρηνήσῃ ὁ Ποιητῆς, τὴν ὑγεία τῆς καταιγίδας ἀπὸ τ' ἀνοιχτὰ στήθη του ἀδειάζοντας, θὰ γυρίσῃ γιὰ νὰ σταθῇ στὰ ὥραϊα μέσα ἐρείπια. Καὶ τὸν πρῶτο λόγο Του ὁ Στερνὸς τῶν ἀνθρώπων θὰ πῇ, ν' ἀψηλώσουν τὰ χόρτα, ἢ γυναῖκα στὸ πλάϊ του σὰν ἀχτίδα τοῦ ἡλίου νὰ βγῇ. Καὶ πάλι θὰ λατρέψῃ τὴ γυναῖκα καὶ θὰ τὴν πλαγιάσῃ πάνου στὰ χόρτα καθὼς ποὺ ἐτάχθη. Καὶ θὰ λάβουνε τὰ ὄνειρα ἐκδίκηση, καὶ θὰ σπεύρουνε γενεὲς στοὺς αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων...



**Ο**ἱ ἀρετὲς τῆς ἡσυχίας εἶναι τρεῖς, καὶ πρέπει νὰ τὶς τηροῦμε μὲ ἀκρίβεια καὶ νὰ ἐξετάζουμε κάθε στιγμή ἂν βαδίζουμε διαρκῶς στὴ γραμμὴ τους, μὴν τυχὸν παρασυρόμαστε ἀπὸ τὴν λησμοσύνη καὶ βαδίζουμε ἔξω ἀπ' αὐτὲς. Καὶ εἶναι οἱ ἐξῆς: ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ σιωπὴ, καὶ ἡ αὐτομεμψία, δηλαδὴ ἡ ταπεινὴ ὁμολογία. Εἶναι περιεκτικὲς ἀρετὲς καὶ ὑποστηρίζουν ἢ μία τὴν ἄλλη, κι ἀπὸ αὐτὲς γεννιέται ἡ προσευχὴ καὶ ὁλοένα αὐξάνει.

Ἁγ. Γρηγόριος ὁ Σιναΐτης  
«Φιλοκαλία», Δ' τόμος, (σελ. 238)



## Φωνή Βούσα ἐκ τῆς Ἑρήμου

### Διαμαρτυρία ἐπὶ τῶν Ἑσχάτως Συμβάντων ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου Οἰκουμενισμοῦ

ΠΗΓΗ: Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 16/3/2007, σελ. 1.

Ἐπιθυμοῦμεν διὰ τοῦ παρόντος νὰ ἐκφράσωμεν τὸν βαθύτατον πόνον, τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν ἀγωνίαν μας δι' ὅσα ἐσχάτως συμβαίνουν εἰς βάρος τῆς ἀμολύντου φιλάτης Ὁρθοδοξίας ἀπὸ τὰ ὄργανα τῆς παναιρέσεως τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου Οἰκουμενισμοῦ.

Ἀναγκάζομεθα νὰ λύσωμεν τὴν ἐρημητικὴν σιωπὴν καὶ ὑψώνομεν τὴν ταπεινὴν μας φωνὴν μὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἐναπομείναντας ἀγωνιζομένους Ὁρθοδόξους Ἱεράρχας, ἱερεῖς, μοναχοὺς, μοναχὰς καὶ λαϊκοὺς ἀδελφούς. «Στῶμεν καλῶς, στῶμεν μετὰ φόβου». Ἡ Χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ μᾶς ἀξίωσε νὰ ἔχωμεν προστάτας καὶ ὁδηγοὺς εἰς τὸν μοναχικὸν μας βίον τὸν ἐκ βρέφους Ἁγιασμένον Ὅσιον Σάββαν καὶ τὸν Ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Δαμασκηνόν, πρωτοστάτας εἰς τὸν ἀγῶνα κατὰ τῶν Μονοφυσιτῶν καὶ Εἰκονομάχων. Τὰ ὅσα διαδραματίζονται εἰς τὰ συμπόσια καὶ συλλείτουργα τῶν ἁθῶν Οἰκουμενιστῶν μὲ ὑποκινήτας δυστυχῶς «Ὁρθοδόξους» Πατριάρχας καὶ Ἀρχιερεῖς εἶναι πρὸ πολλοῦ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὰ ὅρια τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ ὑπομονῆς μας. Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία μας ἐμπαίζεται, καταπατεῖται καὶ διαστρέφεται ἐκ τῶν ἔσω, καὶ δυστυχῶς οἱ περισσότεροι σιωποῦν.

Οἱ προαναφερθέντες Ἅγιοι Πατέρες μας, τῶν ὁποίων βιώνουμε καθημερινῶς τὴν χαριτόβρυτον παρουσίαν, μᾶς καλοῦν τώρα παρὰ ποτὲ νὰ βαδίσουμε ἀκλινῶς καὶ ἀνδρείως «ἐπὶ τὰ ἴχνη αὐτῶν», ἄγρυπνοι φρουροὶ τῆς πίστεως εἰς τὴν ἐπὶ 1500 καὶ πλέον ἔτη Θεόκτιστον ταύτην ἑπαλξιν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Ἡ Ἱερὰ καὶ Σεβασμία Λαύρα τοῦ Ἁγίου Σάββα καυχᾶται ἐν Κυρίῳ, διότι ἀποτελεῖ λίκνον τοῦ Μοναχισμοῦ καὶ εἶναι μητέρα καὶ τροφὸς πλήθους Ὁσιομαρτύρων, Ὁμολογητῶν καὶ Ἱεραρχῶν ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ὅλοι οἱ Ἅγιοί μας, παλαιοὶ καὶ σύγχρονοι, οἱ καλῶς τὸν ἀγῶνα τελέσαντες καὶ τὴν πίστιν τηρήσαντες, δὲν ὑπῆρξαν, ὅπως βλασφημῶς ἐγράφη, «ἀτυχή θύματα τοῦ ἀρχεκάκου ὀφεως!», ἀλλὰ πλήρεις Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, ζῶντες καὶ μετὰ θάνατον, ὅπως τὸ διαλαλεῖ σιωπηλὰ τὸ ἄφθορον σκῆνωμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Σάββα. Ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς ἐμάθαμεν ὅτι τὸν αἰρετικὸν Πάπαν καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς δυσσεβεῖς καὶ ἀμετανοήτους αἰρετικούς οὔτε τοὺς λιβανίζομεν, οὔτε τοὺς πολυχρονίζομεν, οὔτε τοὺς τιμῶμεν, τούναντίον βδελυττόμεθα καὶ καταδικάζομεν τὰς φρενοβλαβεῖς αὐτῶν δοξασίας. Θὰ ἀρκοῦσε καὶ μόνον ἡ ἐπίσκεψις εἰς τοὺς Ἁγίους Τόπους τῆς Παλαιστίνης, γιὰ νὰ διαπιστώσουν, ἰδίοις ὄμμασι, οἱ ὑπέρμαχοι τῆς ψευδενώσεως, μετὰ τῶν Λατίνων καὶ τοῦ ἀδιακρίτου ἀγαπητισμοῦ, τὸ ὕπουλον, δόλιον καὶ ἀδιάλλακτον τοῦ πλήθους τῶν Οὐνιτῶν καὶ λοιπῶν κατ' ὄνομα Χριστιανῶν, μὲ τοὺς ὁποίους, ὅπως ὑποστηρίζουν, εἴμεθα ἓνα καὶ τὸ αὐτό.

Ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς πνεῦμα δειλίας, ἀλλὰ δυνάμεως (Β' Τιμ. α' 7). Ὁ καιρὸς μᾶς καλεῖ εἰς μετάνοιαν καὶ πεπαρησιασμένην ὁμολογίαν πίστεως.

Κανεῖς ἂς μὴ φανῇ λιποτάκτης καὶ προδότης. Γίνωμεν πιστοὶ καὶ παραμείνωμεν Ὁρθόδοξοι ἄχρι θανάτου, ἵνα λάβωμεν τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς *ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο ὁ Κύριος τοῖς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ ἀγαπῶσιν Αὐτόν.*

Μετὰ θερμῶν ἀγωνιστικῶν χαιρετισμῶν καὶ ἐγκαρδίων ἐν Κυρίῳ εὐχῶν,

Ἀρχιμ. Εὐδόκιμος

Πνευματικὸς τῆς Ἱερᾶς Λαύρας Σάββα τοῦ Ἁγιασμένου καὶ ἅπαντες οἱ Σαββαῖται Πατέρες.



Ἄν πραγματικὰ ἐξευτελίζεις τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου, τότε ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιτρέπει σὲ ὅλα τὰ κτίσματά του νὰ σὲ ἐπαινέσουν.

Ἀββᾶς Ἰσαάκ: Εὐεργετινὸς  
Τόμος Α' (σελ. 32)

Πῖνε πρόθυμα τὸν ἐξευτελισμὸ ἀπὸ κάθε ἄνθρωπο σὺν νὰ εἶναι «ὕδωρ ζωῆς»... Διότι τότε θὰ προβάλλῃ στήν ψυχὴ σου ἀγνότητα ἀναφαίρετη καὶ τὸ φῶς τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν θὰ λείψῃ ἀπὸ τὴν καρδιά σου.

Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης τῆς Κλίμακος  
Λόγος Δ' 79 (σελ. 100)



**Ἡ ἀδελφότης «ΟΣΙΟΣ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ», μὲ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴν συμπαράσταση διαφόρων Ἑλληνορθοδόξων, διαθέτει ΛΩΡΕΑΝ πρὸς ὅλους τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας Χριστιανούς ὁλοκληρὴ τὴν σειρὰ τῶν ὁμιλιῶν τοῦ μακαριστοῦ πατρὸς Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μυτιληναίου.**

**Ἡ σειρὰ αὕτῃ (σὲ 7 DVDs) περιεχει 1.650 ὁμιλίες ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ διαφορῶν θεμάτων· εἶναι ἓνας πνευματικὸς θησαυρὸς ἀλλὰ καὶ ἓνα ἀναγκαῖο πνευματικὸ ὄπλο τῶν καιρῶν μας γιὰ κάθε Ἑλληνορθόδοξο Χριστιανό. Οἱ ἐνδιαφέροντες δύνανται νὰ τὴν παραγγείλουν ἀναφερόμενοι στὸ δελτίο παραγγελιῶν τῆς 15<sup>ης</sup> σελίδος.**

**Οἱ ὁμιλίες εἶναι σὲ τύπο mp3. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε DVD player ποὺ νὰ παίζει mp3 files (σὺν μερικὰ mini-DVD players ἢ DVD home theater systems), ἢ ἓνα ἠλεκτρονικὸ ὑπολογιστὴ μὲ Windows operating system, ἢ ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς mini mp3 players σὺν, π.χ., τὸ δημοφιλὲς iPod.**

## Τὸ Θαῦμα μὲ τὸ Καντήλι

ΠΗΓΗ: Από ένα Έλληνορθόδοξο φυλλάδιο.

**Θ**αυμαστό γεγονός συνέβη σὲ οἰκογένεια τὴν ἡμερομηνία τῆς ἑορτῆς τῆς Ἀγίας Παρασκευῆς στὸ Κορωπὶ Ἀττικῆς.

Ἡ μαρτυρία τῆς οἰκογένειας ἔχει ὥς ἑξῆς.

Ὑπάρχει στὸ Κορωπὶ ἓνα παντρεμένο ζευγάρι ὅπου ὁ ἄντρας εἶναι τὸ πιστὸ μέλος τῆς οἰκογενείας καὶ ἡ γυναίκα του εἶναι ἄπιστη καὶ εἰρωνας τῆς Πίστης.

Ὁ ἄντρας εἶχε πολὺ μεγάλη εὐσέβεια στὴν Ἀγία Παρασκευή. Πάντα στὴν παραμονὴ καὶ ἀνήμερα τῆς ἑορτῆς τῆς ἁναβε τὸ καντήλι στὸ σπῖτι του. Ἀντίθετα, ἡ σύζυγός του δὲν τὸ ἁναβε ποτέ.

Τὴν ἡμέρα λοιπὸν τῆς ἑορτῆς τῆς σηκώθηκε πρωί-πρωί καὶ ἀφοῦ ἄφησε τὴν γυναίκα του καὶ τὴν πεθερά του νὰ κοιμούνται, ντύθηκε καὶ μὲ προσοχή ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὸ σπῖτι γιὰ τὴν ἐκκλησία. Ἐκλείσε καὶ τὴν ἐξώπορτα καὶ τὴν κλείδωσε δυὸ φορές.

Πῆγε λοιπὸν στὴν ἐκκλησία καὶ ἀφοῦ λειτουργήθηκε γύρισε πίσω γιὰ τὸ σπῖτι.

Μόλις ἔφτασε βρῆκε τὶς δυὸ γυναῖκες τρομοκρατημένες καὶ πανικοβλημένες.

Τὶς ρώτησε τί εἶχε συμβεῖ καὶ αὐτὲς τὸν ρώταγαν ἐὰν τὸ πρωὶ ποὺ ἔφυγε κλείδωσε τὴν πόρτα τοῦ σπιτιοῦ. Ἡ ἀπάντηση τοῦ ἀνδρα ἦταν βεβαίως καὶ τὴν κλείδωσα ἀφοῦ ξέρουμε ἐδῶ στὸ Κορωπὶ τὴ πρόβλημα ἔχουμε μὲ τοὺς κλέφτες καὶ τοὺς κακοποιούς.

Γιατί εἶστε τόσο ἀνήσυχες ὁμως, τῆς ρώτησε ὁ σύζυγος.

Νὰ, τοῦ λένε, Μόλις ἔφυγες, μετὰ ἀπὸ λίγο ἀκούσαμε νὰ ξεκλειδώνετε ἡ πόρτα. Δυὸ φορές κράκ, κράκ. Κοκαλώσαμε!! Εἶδαμε τότε μπροστά μας μιὰ γυναίκα νὰ μπαίνει μέσα στὸ σπῖτι μὲ μαῦρα ροῦχα, ψιλὴ καὶ πολλὴ ὁμορφη, νὰ μᾶς κοίτα ἀμίλητη καὶ νὰ πηγαίνει στὸ δωμάτιο ποὺ εἶναι ἡ καντήλα. Πηγαίνει λοιπὸν ἐκεῖ παίρνει τὸ καντήλι πηγαίνει κατόπιν στὴν κουζίνα βάζει λαδί, βάζει λουμινάκι καὶ τὸ ἀνάβει. Τὸ παίρνει τὸ καντηλάκι καὶ τὸ τοποθετεῖ πάλι στὸ δωμάτιο. Τὶς κοιτᾷ μετὰ μὲ πολλὴ αὐστηρὸ τρόπο καὶ τὶς λέει ὅτι σήμερα εἶναι ἡ ἑορτὴ μου καὶ φεύγει πάλι ἀπὸ ὅπου ἦρθε.

Οἱ γυναῖκες ἦταν συγκλονισμένες καὶ δὲν μπορούσαν νὰ μιλήσουν καθόλου μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ θαυμαστὸ γεγονὸς ποὺ τοὺς συνέβη. Ὁ δὲ ἄντρας εἶχε συγκινηθεῖ ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ θαῦμα ποὺ ἔκανε ἡ Ἀγία Παρασκευὴ στὴν ἄπιστη γυναίκα του.

Ἀγία Παρασκευή, πρέσβευε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν.



**Ὅ**ταν ἡ καρδιά ἔχει τὴν ἀγία ταπείνωση, ὅλα τὰ βλέπει καλὰ καὶ ζεῖ στὴν ἐπίγεια Ἀκτιστὴ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπὸ τώρα.

Γέρων Πορφύριος

## Ἡ Σκέπη τῆς Θεοτόκου

ΠΗΓΗ: «Ἐμφανίσεις καὶ θαύματα τῆς Παναγίας», ἔκδοση τῆς Ἱ. Μ. Παρακλήτου.

**Ἡ** ἑορτὴ τῆς ἀγίας Σκέπης τῆς Θεοτόκου (1η καί, ἄργότερα, 28η Ὀκτωβρίου) ἀντλεῖ τὴν ὑπόθεσή της ἀπὸ τὸν βίο τοῦ ὁσίου Ἀνδρέα, τοῦ διὰ Χριστὸν σαλοῦ. Ἡ ἐμφάνιση τῆς Θεοτόκου στὸν ὁσιο ἔγινε ἀφορμὴ νὰ καθιερωθῇ ἡ ἑορτὴ αὐτή.

Τὸ περιστατικὸ συνέβη στὴ νότια πλευρὰ τοῦ ναοῦ τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, στὸ παρεκκλήσιο τῆς ἀγίας Σωροῦ, ὅπου φυλάσσονταν ἡ ἔσθητα, ὁ πέπλος καὶ μέρος τῆς ζώνης τῆς Θεοτόκου. Στὸ παρεκκλήσιο αὐτὸ γινόταν κάποτε ὁλονυκτία. Ἐκεῖ πῆγε νὰ προσευχηθῇ καὶ ὁ ὁσιος Ἀνδρέας μαζί μὲ τὸν μαθητὴ τοῦ ἁγιο Ἐπιφάνιο.

Ἦταν ἡ ὥρα περίπου 10 τὸ βράδυ, ὅποτε ὁ ὁσιος βλέπει τὴ Θεοτόκο νὰ προχωρεῖ ἀπὸ τὶς βασιλικὲς πύλες πρὸς τὸ ἅγιο θυσιαστήριο.

Φαινόταν πολὺ ψηλὴ καὶ εἶχε λαμπρὴ τιμητικὴ συνοδεία λευκοφόρων ἁγίων. Ἀνάμεσά τους ξεχώριζαν ὁ Τίμιος Πρόδρομος καὶ ὁ θεολόγος Ἰωάννης, οἱ ὁποῖοι βάδιζαν δεξιὰ καὶ ἀριστερά της. Ἀπὸ τοὺς λευκοφόρους, ἄλλοι προπορεύονταν καὶ ἄλλοι ἀκολουθοῦσαν ψάλλοντας ὕμνους καὶ ᾠσματα πνευματικά.

Ὅταν πλησίασαν στὸν ἄμβωνα, εἶπε ὁ ὁσιος Ἀνδρέας στὸν Ἐπιφάνιο:

- Βλέπεις, παιδί μου, τὴν Κυρία καὶ Δέσποινα τοῦ κόσμου;

- Ναί, τίμιε πάτερ, ἀποκρίθηκε ὁ νέος.

Ἡ Θεοτόκος τὴν ὥρα ἐκείνη γονάτισε καὶ προσευχήθηκε γιὰ πολλὴ ὥρα. Παρακαλοῦσε τὸν Υἱό της γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ἔβρεχε μὲ δάκρυα τὸ πρόσωπό της. Ὑστερα μπῆκε στὸ ἅγιο θυσιαστήριο καὶ προσευχήθηκε γιὰ τοὺς πιστοὺς ποὺ ἀγρυπνοῦσαν.

Ὅταν τελείωσε τὴ δέησή της, μὲ μία κίνηση χαριτωμένη καὶ σεμνὴ, ἔβγαλε ἀπὸ τὴν ἄχραντη κεφαλὴ της τὸ ἀστραφτερὸ μαφόριο, καὶ τ' ἄπλωσε σὰν σκέπη μὲ τὰ πανάγια χέρια της ἀνω στὸ ἐκκλησίασμα.

Ἔτσι ἀπλωμένο τὸ ἔβλεπαν καὶ οἱ δυὸ τους γιὰ πολλὴ ὥρα, νὰ ἐκπέμπῃ δόξα Θεϊκή. Ὅσο φαινόταν ἐκεῖ ἡ Θεοτόκος, φαινόταν καὶ τὸ ἱερὸ μαφόριο νὰ σκορπίζει τὴ χάρη του. Ὅταν ἐκείνη ἄρχισε ν' ἀνεβαίνει στὸν οὐρανό, ἄρχισε κι ἐκεῖνο νὰ συστέλλεται λίγο-λίγο καὶ νὰ χάνεται.

Ὑπεραγία Θεοτόκε, σῶσον ἡμᾶς.



**Ἡ** Παναγία εἶναι πάντοτε μαζί μας. Ἐμεῖς δὲν τὴ καταλαβαίνουμε. Δεν συμφέρει νὰ τὴν δοῦμε γιατί θὰ ὑπερφηανευτοῦμε.

Παπα-Ἐφραίμ Κατουνακιώτης

## THE PLACE OF HOLY RELICS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

By St. Justin Popovich, from "Orthodox Tradition," Vol. VII, No. 1, p. 9, translated from the Serbian by the Rev. Gregory Telepneff.

Without doubt, matter is represented in the human body in a manner which is most puzzling, most mysterious, and most complex. The brain: What wondrous mysteries pass between its physical and spiritual parts! How vast is the experience of the human race. In no manner can one ever fully comprehend or grasp these mysteries. Indeed, little of this is accessible to the human senses or intellectual investigation. So it is also with the heart of man, formed as it is entirely and solely from cosmic mysteries. So formed, too, are every cell, every molecule, every atom. Everyone and all are set on their mystical path toward God, toward the God-Man.

Inasmuch as it was created by God, the Logos, matter possesses this same theocentricity. Moreover, by His advent into our earthly world, by His all-embracing condescension as God and Man for the redemption of the world, the Lord Christ clearly demonstrated that not only the soul, but matter also was created by God and for God, and that He is God and Man; and for it, matter, He is all and everything in the same manner as for the soul. Being created by God, the Logos, matter is, in its innermost core, God-longing and Christ-longing.

The most obvious proof of this is the fact that *God the Word has become Incarnate*, has become man (Jn 1:14). By His Incarnation, matter has been magnified with Divine glory and has entered into the grace- and virtue-bestowing, ascetic aim of deification, or union with Christ. God has become flesh, has become human, so that the entire man, the entire body, might be filled with God and with His miracle-working forces and powers. In the God-Man, the Lord Christ, and His Body, all matter has been set on a path toward Christ—the path of deification, transfiguration, sanctification, resurrection, and ascent to an eternal glory surpassing that of the Cherubim. And all of this takes place and will continue to take place through the Divine and human Body of the Church, which is truly the God-Man Christ in the total fullness of His Divine and Human Person, the fullness that fills all in all (Eph 1:23). Through its Divine and human existence in the Church, the human body, as matter, as substance, is sanctified by the Holy Spirit and in this way participates in the life of the Trinity. Matter thus attains its transcendent, divine meaning and goal, its eternal blessedness and its immortal joy in the God-Man.

The holiness of the Saints—both the holiness of their souls and of their bodies—derives from their zealous grace- and virtue-bestowing lives in the Body of the Church of Christ, of the God-Man. In this sense, holiness completely envelopes the human person—the entire soul and body and all that enters into the mystical composition of the human body. The holiness of the Saints does not hold forth only in their souls,

but it necessarily extends to their bodies; so it is that both the body and the soul of a saint are sanctified. Thus we, in piously venerating the Saints, also venerate the entire person, in this manner not separating the holy soul from the holy body. Our pious veneration of the Saints' relics is a natural part of our pious respect for and prayerful entreaty to the Saints. All of this constitutes one indivisible ascetic act, just as the soul and body constitute the single, indivisible person of the Saint. Clearly, during his life on the earth, the Saint, by a continuous and singular grace- and virtue-bestowing synergy of soul and body, attains to the sanctification of his person, filling both the soul and body with the grace of the Holy Spirit and so transforming them into vessels of the holy mysteries and holy virtues. It is completely natural, again, to show pious reverence both to the former and to the latter, both to soul and body, both of them holy vessels of God's grace. When the charismatic power of Christ issues forth, it makes Grace-filled all the constituent parts of the human person and the person in his entirety. By unceasing enactment of the ascetic efforts set forth in the Gospels, Saints gradually fill themselves with the Holy Spirit, so that their sacred bodies, according to the word of the holy Apostle, become temples of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19; 3:17), Christ dwelling by faith in their hearts (Eph 3:17) and by fruitful love also fulfilling the commandments of God the Father. Establishing themselves in the Holy Spirit through grace-bestowing ascetic labors, the Saints participate in the life of the Trinity, becoming sons of the Holy Trinity, temples of the Living God (2Cor 6:16); their whole lives thus flow from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. By piously venerating the holy relics of the Saints, the Church reveres them as temples of the Holy Spirit, temples of the Living God, in which God dwells by Grace even after the earthly death of the Saints. And by His most wise and good Will, God creates miracles in and through these relics. Moreover, the miracles which derive from the holy relics witness also to the fact that their pious veneration by the people is pleasing to God.

The pious veneration of holy relics, based on their miraculous nature, originated from Divine Revelation. Even in the Old Testament God deigned to celebrate with miracles the holy relics of certain of those who were well-pleasing to Him. Thus, by the touch of the holy relics of the Prophet Elisea, a dead man was resurrected. The tomb and bones of this Prophet, who had prophesied to Jeroboam the destruction of idolatrous altars, were greatly revered in Judea. The Patriarch Joseph also left a testament to the sons of Israel to preserve his bones in Egypt and, during their exodus, to carry them to the promised land (Gen 50:25).

The New Testament raised the human body to the sublime and divine heights, endowing it with a glory which the Cherubim and Seraphim do not possess. The Good News of the New Testament concerning the body—the significance and goal of the human body—is that, together with the soul, it achieves and inherits immortal life in Divine eternity. The



Lord Christ has come to deify, to make Christ-like, the entire man, that is, the soul and body, and this by the resurrection, insuring thereby victory over death and eternal life. No one ever elevated the human body as did the Lord Christ by His bodily resurrection, the ascension of His body into heaven, and its eternal session at the right hand of God the Father. In this way, the Resurrected Christ extended the promise of resurrection to the nature of the human body—"having made for all flesh a path to eternal life." Thus man now knows that the body is created for eternity through union with the God-Man and that his divine work on earth is to struggle, with the soul, for eternal life; to struggle, with all those means that convey grace and virtue, to make himself grace-filled, fulfilled by Divine grace, and created anew as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the temple of the Living God.

Bearing in mind that this New Testamental notion of the human body has been achieved and realized in the persons of the Saints, Christians show a pious veneration for the bodies of the Saints, towards holy relics, the temples of the Holy Spirit, Who by God's grace abides within them. But Holy Revelation indicates that by God's immeasurable love for man, the Holy Spirit abides through His grace not only in the bodies of the Saints, but also in their clothing. So it is that the handkerchiefs of the holy apostle Paul healed the ill and expelled unclean spirits (Acts 19:12). With his mantle the Prophet Elias struck the water, separating the waters of the Jordan, and along the dry bed of the river crossed the Jordan with his disciple Elisea (2Kgs 2:8). The prophet Elisea did the very same thing, himself, with the same mantle, after the taking-up of Elias into heaven (2Kgs 2:14). All this has its verification and source in the Divine power that rested in the garments of the Savior, which encompassed His most pure and Divine body. Moreover, by His inexpressible love for man, the Divine Lord allows the servants of His Divinity to work miracles not only through their bodies and clothing, but even with the shadow of their bodies, which is evident in an occurrence with the holy apostle Peter: his shadow healed an ill man and expelled unclean spirits (Acts 5:15-16).

The eternal good news of Holy Revelation about sacred relics and their pious veneration is proved, and is continually being proved, by Holy Tradition from Apostolic times to the present day. Innumerable are the sacred relics of the holy Chosen Ones of God throughout the Orthodox world. Their miracles are innumerable. The pious veneration of these relics by Orthodox Christians is everywhere to be found. And without doubt this is because the holy relics, through their miracles, incite the Orthodox toward their pious veneration. From the very beginning, in Apostolic times, Christians piously preserved the honored relics of the Holy Forerunner and the holy Apostles, so that these could be preserved even for us. As well, during the times of persecution the sacred remains of the bodies of the holy Martyrs were taken away by Christians and hidden in their homes. From that time until now, the sacred relics of

the holy Chosen Ones of God have, by their miracles, poured forth the immortal joy of our faith into the hearts of Orthodox Christians. The proofs concerning this are countless. We shall cite only several.

The way that the holy relics of the Saints were translated and greeted is in a touching manner described by St. Chrysostom in a eulogy on St. Ignatios: "You, inhabitants of Antioch, have sent forth a bishop and received a martyr; you sent him forth with prayers, and received him back with crowns; and not only you, but all the cities which lay between. For how do you think that they behaved when they saw his remains being brought back? What pleasure was produced! How they rejoiced! With what laudations on all sides did they beset the crowned one! For as with a noble athlete, who has wrestled down all his antagonists, and who comes forth with radiant glory from the arena, the spectators receive him, and do not suffer him to tread the earth, bringing him home on their shoulders and according him countless praises. So also every city in turn received this Saint from Rome, and bearing him upon their shoulders as far as this city, escorted the crowned one with praises, hymning the champion.... At this time the holy Martyr bestows grace to the very same cities, establishing them in piety, and from that time to this day he enriches this city."

Speaking of the miraculous power of holy relics, Saint Ephraim the Syrian relates the following concerning the holy Martyrs: "Even after death they act as if alive, healing the sick, expelling demons, and by the power of the Lord rejecting every evil influence of the demons. This is because the miraculous grace of the Holy Spirit is always present in the holy relics."

During the finding of the relics of Saints Gervasius and Protasius, St. Ambrose, in speaking to his listeners, relates this with pious enthusiasm: "You know—indeed, you have yourselves seen—that many are cleansed from evil spirits, that very many also, having touched with their hands the robe of the Saints, are freed from those ailments which oppressed them. You see that the miracles of old times are renewed, when through the coming of the Lord Jesus grace was more abundantly shed forth upon the earth, and that many bodies are healed as it were by the shadow of the holy bodies. How many napkins are passed about! How many garments, laid upon the holy relics and endowed with the power of healing, are claimed! All are glad to touch even the outside thread, and whosoever touches it will be made whole."

Speaking of the miracles produced by holy relics, the blessed Augustine says: "To what do these miracles witness, but to this faith which preaches Christ risen in the flesh and ascended with the same flesh into heaven? For the martyrs themselves were martyrs, that is to say, were witnesses of this faith.... For this faith they gave their lives, and can now ask these benefits from the Lord in whose name they were slain. For this faith their extraordinary constancy was exercised, so that in these miracles great power was manifested as the result. For if the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life had not taken place

in Christ, and were not to be accomplished in His people, as predicted by Christ..., why do the martyrs who were slain for this faith which proclaims the resurrection possess such power? ...These miracles attest this faith which preaches the resurrection of the flesh unto eternal life."

Saint Damascene, summarizing the life-giving teaching of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition concerning the pious veneration of holy relics, preaches in a Cherubic manner from the altar of his God-bearing and Christ-like soul: "The Saints have become according to grace that which the Lord Christ is according to nature. That is, they have become gods according to grace: pure and living habitations of God. For God says: *I will dwell in them, walk in them, and I will be their God* (2Cor 6:16; Lev 16:12). The Holy Scriptures likewise say: *The souls of the righteous are in God's hand, and death cannot lay hold of them* (Wis 3:1). For death is rather the sleep of Saints than their death. Further: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints* (Pss 119:6). What, then, is more precious than to be in the hand of God? For God is life and light, and those who are in God's hand are in life and light. Further, that God dwells even in their bodies in a spiritual manner the all-divine Apostle attests: *Know ye not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you?* (1Cor 3:16). And, *the Lord is Spirit* (2Cor 3:17). Thus, the evangelical truth: *If anyone destroy the temple of God, him will God destroy—for the temple of God is holy, and ye are that temple* (1Cor 3:17). Surely, then, we must ascribe honor to the living temples of God, the living dwelling-places of God. These, while they lived, stood with boldness before God. The Lord Christ granted us the relics of the Saints to be fountains of salvation unto us, pouring forth manifold blessings and abounding in sweetly fragrant oil. Let no one disbelieve this! For if water burst in the desert from the steep and solid rock according to God's will (Exod 17:6), and from the jawbone of an ass to quench Samson's thirst (Judg 15:14-19), is it then unbelievable that fragrant oil should spring forth from relics of the holy Martyrs? By no means, at least to those who know the omnipotence of God and the honor which He accords to His Saints. According to the Old Testament law, everyone who touched a dead body was considered impure (Num 19:11). However, the Saints are not dead. For from the time when He Who is Himself Life and the Author of life was counted among the dead, we do not call those dead who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection and with faith in Him. For how could a dead body work miracles? And how, through the holy relics, are demons driven off, diseases dispelled, the sick made well, the blind restored to sight, lepers cleansed, temptations and tribulations overcome; and how does every good gift come down from the Father of lights (Jas 1:17) to those who pray with sure faith?"

The universal faith of the Church concerning the pious veneration of holy relics was confirmed by the God-bearing Fathers of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod in its decrees: "Our Lord Jesus Christ granted to us the relics of Saints as

a salvation-bearing source which pours forth varied benefits on the infirm. Consequently, those who presume to abandon the relics of the Martyrs: if they be hierarchs, let them be deposed; if however monastics or laymen, let them merely be excommunicated."

....That a pious veneration of the holy relics is a constituent part of the salvation rendered by the God-Man is also evidenced by the following facts: from the depths of sacred antiquity, churches were built on the graves and relics of Saints, and the holy Liturgy is performed only on antimensia, in which are placed parts of the holy relics. Moreover, the divine service books, especially the Menaion, are replete with prayers and hymns which refer to the pious veneration of holy relics....

All in all, the mystery of holy relics is at the heart of the universal mystery of the New Testament: the incarnation of God. The full mystery of the human body is explained by the incarnation, the embodiment of God in the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, then, the Gospel message concerning the body: *The body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body* (1Cor 6:13). And through a human body also the entire creation, all of matter, received its divine significance, the universal meaning of the God-Man. By man, who is sanctified in the Church by the holy mysteries and the holy virtues, the creation and even matter are sanctified, united to Christ. There accrues to this also a joy—the myrrh-streaming property of many relics. This wonder of myrrh has been given to the holy relics in order to indicate that Christians are truly *a sweet-savour of Christ unto God* (2Cor 2:15), sweet-smelling to God and to heaven. The truth of the Gospel is that the sin of man is a foul odor before God and every sin pleases the devil. Through the holy mysteries and holy virtues, Christians become "a sweet-savour of Christ unto God." For this reason, then, the holy relics of the Saints pour forth myrrh.



There is a close relationship between Orthodoxy, the Church and the Divine Eucharist. Orthodoxy is the true Faith of the Church, and the Divine Eucharist is the true act of the Church. If there is a Church without Orthodoxy and the Eucharist, it is not a Church. If there is Orthodoxy outside the Church and the Divine Eucharist, it is not Orthodoxy. Moreover, if there is Divine Eucharist without Orthodoxy and the Church, it is not the Divine Eucharist. This is why we maintain that outside the Orthodox Church there is no other Church, only heresies. Thus, the return of the heretics to the only true Church—the Orthodox Church—is needed.

**Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos**

## SHOULD WE CEASE THE COMMEMORATION?

By Georgios Zervos, "Orthodoxos Typos," February 16, 2007, translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.

The faithful people of our days are faced with a dual challenge: first, the aggressiveness of the panheresy of ecumenism and second the unconcealed homage and dedication thereto of the leading representatives of Greek Orthodoxy, and most specifically the Œcumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Athens.

The faithful have confronted the panheresy itself through spiritual warfare as well as various anti-heretic struggles. They are unable, however, to confront the homage and dedication to the evil of ecumenism by the leaders of Orthodoxy. This is because dynamic ecclesiastical figures have disappeared from the forefront; we simply lack the hierarchs who would have issued exposés, publicly condemned the apostasy and betrayal of the Faith, and given the battle cry for the world-wide opposition of the faithful people against those who hold the Sacred Canons in complete contempt.

There are, of course, powerful voices that express clear condemnation towards the Œcumenical Patriarch's disregard of the Sacred Canons (during the Pope's visit to the Phanar) and the subsequent agreements made by the Archbishop of Athens when he went to the Vatican. These voices stir, but do not rally. They are seeds of opposition, but lack any type of forceful opposition.

The Statement by the Sacred Community of the Holy Mountain and the reactions of the monasteries, hieromonks, theologians, ecclesiastical newspapers, brotherhoods, and of the faithful people are seeds of opposition. But all of these seeds together are unable to provoke the opposition that would have been provoked by any number of combative bishops in the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s.

The apostates and betrayers of the Sacred Canons use television for the attainment of their goals. The majority of Orthodox Christians, ignorant of the Mystical ecclesiastical life of the Church, are impressed by the joint prayers with the Papists and the joint ceremonies with the heterodox. And they consider those who react against these events to be exaggerating and fanatics.

The Faith is being directly betrayed by the Œcumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Athens. Patriarch Bartholomew transgressed the Sacred Canons during the visit of the Pope to the Phanar, while Archbishop Christodoulos has proclaimed that we are heading towards union on the basis of the cultural roots of the European nations, thereby throwing the Mystical life of the Church into the garbage dump of ecumenism. The Patriarch proclaims, by all of his actions at the Phanar,

that heresy does not exist, recognizing Papism as an official Church and thereby dispensing with the Truth of the Orthodox Church. The Archbishop has discovered the cultural sector; that, by the way, is the "argument" that has been utilized by the Vatican since 1972.

The Church demands the participation of all of its members in Her life. The Archbishop, however, tells us that the life of the cultural sector is preferable to ecclesiastical life...

We firmly believe that the destructive course of the Orthodox Church towards ecumenism and Papism is one of no return; it is so because there is simply no dynamic resistance in sight to all of those who are adulterating the Orthodox Faith and the Orthodox mentality. This is why steps need to be taken that will put a check on the "runaway" course towards ecumenism and Papism.

One such step would be to cease commemoration of the Œcumenical Patriarch. This step would intimidate the Archbishop of Athens and his "fellow-travelers." Cessation of the commemoration of the one would intimidate the other; let us not forget that it is the Archbishop who stresses, in all of his speeches on the subject, that the Œcumenical Patriarch is playing the coordinating role in the movement towards the heresy of ecumenism and that he is following in his lead.

We thus demand that it is time for the valiant clergymen, monks, and bishops to step forth and be counted!



Power and authority are divided into two. One is worldly: God entrusted this to secular rulers; the other is spiritual: God put this in the hands of bishops and stewards of souls. The pope, besides being a bishop, wants also to be a king—a mixture of things unmixable.

St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite

The fight against heresies represents the highest expression of love for the heretics [i.e., the non-Orthodox Christian churches]; while the tolerance and amnesty of heresy is a cruel form of love and over-masked hate. In the realm of false ecumenism (the Branch Theory) lurks the worse case of 'man-hatefulness.' Thus, it is not without purpose that St. Maximos the Confessor issued a statement condemning the tolerance of heretics: "I define this to be cruelty towards mankind and absence of divine love: to give authority to a false faith—aiding even more the destruction of those adhering to it."

Archimandrite Spyridon Bilalis



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## OUR AGE OF APOSTASY

By Dr. Alexander Kalomirois, from *"The River of Fire."*

There is no doubt that we are living in the age of apostasy predicted for the last days. In practice, most people are atheists, although many of them theoretically still believe. Indifference and the spirit of this world prevail everywhere.

What is the reason for this state?

The reason is the cooling of love. Love for God no more burns in human hearts, and in consequence, love between us is dead, too.

What is the cause of this waning of men's love for God? The answer, certainly, is sin. Sin is the dark cloud which does not permit God's light to reach our eyes.

But sin always did exist. So how did we arrive at the point of not simply ignoring God, but of actually hating Him? Man's attitude toward God today is not really ignorance, or really indifference. If you examine men carefully you will notice that their ignorance or indifference is tainted by a deep hate. But nobody hates anything that does not exist.

I have the suspicion that men today believe in God more than at any other time in human history. Men know the gospel, the teaching of the Church, and God's creation better than at any other time. They have a profound consciousness of His existence. Their atheism is not a real disbelief. It is rather an aversion toward somebody we know very well but whom we hate with all our heart, exactly as the demons do.

We hate God, that is why we ignore Him, overlooking Him as if we did not see Him, and pretending to be atheists. In reality we consider Him our enemy par excellence. Our negation is our vengeance, our atheism is our revenge.

But why do men hate God? They hate Him not only because their deeds are dark while God is light, but also because they consider Him as a menace, as an imminent and eternal danger, as an adversary in court, as an opponent at law, as a public prosecutor and an eternal persecutor. To them, God is no more the almighty physician who came to save them from illness and death, but rather a cruel judge and a vengeful inquisitor.

You see, the devil managed to make men believe that God does not really love us, that He really only loves Himself, and that He accepts us only if we behave as He wants us to behave; that He hates us if we do not behave as He ordered us to behave, and is offended by our insubordination to such a degree that we must pay for it by eternal tortures, created by Him for that purpose.

Who can love a torturer? Even those who try hard to save themselves from the wrath of God cannot really love Him. They love only themselves, trying to escape God's vengeance and to achieve eternal bliss by managing to please this fearsome and extremely dangerous Creator.

Do you perceive the devil's slander of our all-loving, all-kind, and absolutely good God? That is why in Greek the devil was given the name of diabolos, "the slanderer."

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So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

Vol. 05, Issue 07

July 2007

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## In This Issue:

- On Death (p. 4)
- The 1980 Announcement of the Holy Mountain Abbots (p. 5)
- Of Christian Life and of the End Times (p.11)
- The Jesus Prayer is Necessary for Clergy and Laity Who Live in the World (p. 12)
- The Unmercenary Saints & Physicians (p. 14)



- Διδαχὲς Ἁγίου Νεκταρίου - Μέρος 1<sup>ον</sup> (σελ. 7)
- Ὁ Γέροντας Παΐσιος γιὰ τὸν Οἰκουμενισμό (σελ. 9)



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## SUBDUING OUR THOUGHTS, FANTASIES, AND DISTRACTIONS

*From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain," the letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim.*

Fasting is not just abstention from food, but primarily strict abstinence of the senses. When the senses are fed by external things, they transmit a corresponding amount of poison to the nous and the heart, which kills the poor soul's life in God. Our watchful fathers have so much to tell us about the holy fasting of the senses. Their entire teaching is mainly directed at the purification of the nous from sinful fantasies and thoughts, and the purification of the heart from feelings that defile it. Furthermore, they teach that we must eradicate every evil in its beginning to keep the soul clean. As soon as any evil thought whatsoever approaches even slightly, it is absolutely necessary that we drive it away and say the Jesus prayer right away. And when in this manner we confront the thoughts coming from the senses and the devil, very soon we will feel the joy and the profit derived from the fasting of the senses. If Eve had restrained her sense of vision, she would not have poisoned the offspring of her womb, that is, all the people who were born from her. In short, abstinence with the senses saves man from hell.

I pray, my child, that you resist egoistic and proud thoughts, for from them and from similar passions all the other evil passions originate, and by them a poor soul is pushed over the cliff of destruction.

Pay no attention to passionate thoughts; disregard them completely, since the ugliness of evil is written all over their face. Disregarding the thoughts suggested by

the devil brings salvation. Humility is the best stratagem, for not engaging in a battle of rebuttal with them and fleeing for refuge in Christ through prayer is humility.

Passionate thoughts may also be expelled by means of rebuttal, but the fight is difficult and the soldier of Christ must be very experienced to get by without damage, because Satan is also an expert in the Scriptures and he cites arguments to trip up the soldier. Therefore, whatever he suggests to you through your thoughts—whether it is pride, vainglory, criticism, etc.—let it go in one ear and out the other. Since they are passionate thoughts, it is unnecessary to hold a conversation with them. Lock them out! Tell them, "I do not tolerate associating and speaking with heretical thoughts," and remain firm in your prayer.

Pay no attention to whatever the enemy says to you. As soon as he is about to whisper something in your ear, immediately say, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me," or "Save me," rapidly and without stopping, and soon you will see that the thought—or rather the pressure to accept the thought—has weakened, and you will not remember what exactly he was trying to say.

This method is simpler and more effective than rebuttal—that is, to contradict the thoughts suggested—because after the demon has left and finished everything he had to say, there is nothing left behind as a remnant or shadow. Whereas with rebuttal, when he is defeated and departs, he leaves behind remnants and shadows of whatever he suggested to the soul, this is, faint memories of what one fought against. The first method—i.e., to take refuge immediately in the prayer—is relaxing, and the soul is quickly calmed. On the other hand, the second method—re-



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buttal—is laborious, and if the soul does not succeed with rebuttal, one is likely to be wounded in proportion to the demon’s skill of persuasion.

**F**lee from sinful thoughts; cut off fantasies, the idol of provocativeness, because Satan—that “know-it-all”—wants to separate you from God your Creator. For when he makes a person guilty by means of sinful consent, the grace of the Holy Spirit leaves, just as a bee flies away from smoke, and then the soul is left without grace and joy, and full of despondency and sorrow. But when we oppose evil fantasies as soon as they first appear in the mind by destroying or repulsing them and immediately seize the sword of the spirit—the holy little prayer of our Jesus—with eagerness and zeal at once we shall see the knavish evil thought abandoning its post and conceding the victory to the governing mind, which the grace and mercy of God strengthened.

The cunning devil cannot tolerate seeing the holy guardian angel of our soul stand near us. This abysmal dragon strives to distance him in order to catch us bereft of a bodyguard and swoop down on us like a fearful tempest and devour us. And since he knows that only unchaste thoughts distance this angel, we see him rouse a multitude of filthy thoughts and fantasies of vain idols in order to defile the mind, heart, and body. But when the soldier of God realizes his malice, he seizes the weapon of Christ immediately and disperses his machinations.

**M**y child, be careful with your imagination. All sins Originate from the imagination; it is the root of sin. So be careful. As soon as a fantasy of a person or deed comes, of something you saw or heard, immediately drive it away from your mind with anger and the prayer. Say it rapidly and intensely, and at once entreat our Panagia mentally with

pain to help you, and I trust in God that you will obtain the victory.

You were proud, and this is why the devil started fighting you. Humble yourself now; abase yourself; insult yourself mentally, and God, seeing your humility, will help you. Just as you avoid fire so that you do not get burned, and a snake so that you do not get bitten, likewise—and even more so—you should avoid the devil’s fantasies! Be careful, I repeat, with filthy fantasies; because this is how great spiritual men have fallen and perished.

**B**e careful that your mind does not wander here and there, but affix it tightly to the name of Christ. Entreat Him as if He were in front of you by invoking His name with pain of soul, and then you will see how much benefit you will derive.

Drive evil thoughts away quickly—kick them out! Shout, “Get out of here, you tramps, out of the temple of God, out of my soul!” Do not leave them inside yourself, because you run the risk of being wounded, and then you will weep and sigh. Be patient, my child. Flee from thoughts as from a fire, for they ravage, chill, and deaden the soul! But if we drive them away with anger, with vigilance, and the prayer, they give rise to great benefit.

So struggle; do not be afraid. Call upon our ready Physician. Not many entreaties are needed; He does not ask for money; He is not disgusted by wounds; He accepts tears like a good Samaritan; He nurses and attends to a person wounded by the noetic thieves. Therefore let us hasten to Him.

**A**s for obscene thoughts, they spring from the imaginative part of the soul. That is, within the mind appear people, things, and deeds that the five senses of the body have gathered and transported into the storehouse of the imagination.

And in time, the devil will present to the imagination people or things or songs, etc., that the senses have stored up, and in order to create thoughts he incites the passions so that he may sack the city of God—the heart, that is—and defile it.

Therefore, the whole trick is to drive away fantasies, people, and so on, as soon as they are depicted in our mind. And if we accomplish this, by the grace of God, the evil temptation is eradicated in its beginning and we win with little effort. But if the thoughts persist, we should resist by invoking the name of Christ and confronting those thoughts with anger.

Furthermore, when we see people who scandalize us, we should try not to let the image of them be deposited within us, but we should drive them away at once, lest these images are taken into the imaginative part of our soul, and thus enable the devil to fight us by showing them to us again later.

Regarding your blasphemous thoughts, my child, which the devil is putting in your mind, do not fear. It is due to the jealousy of the evil sower. The devil tries to choke the Christian's soul with the idea that he himself is blaspheming, and in this way to poison his heart! Such thoughts should go in one ear and out the other. That is how much you should disregard them, because these thoughts are not yours.

I am telling you, my child, do not fear. I shall take the responsibility for them. When these thoughts come, say to Satan: "Bring whatever you want. From now on I couldn't care less for anything you say, since all these things are contrivances of your malice!"

Even though blasphemous thoughts are clearly from the devil, nevertheless we are also partly responsible for them. How? We are responsible because of the hidden pride of our mind that thinks that we are important: this is revealed by the blasphemous thoughts. They can also originate from our anger, wrath, hatred, etc. Therefore, along with disregarding them, we should take care to reproach ourselves inwardly and fight off every proud thought. Furthermore, we should be at peace with everyone, even if someone harms us.

Do not talk a lot. Stay away from back talk, quarreling, loquacity, and everything that issues from a careless tongue. Drive away evil thoughts and filthy fantasies from your mind as soon as they appear. For when they linger inside the mind and heart, they create a grave condition. Whereas when we are careful at the first appearance of the filthy fantasy and the filthy thought that follows, we remain in peace and enjoy the moral gratification of purity.

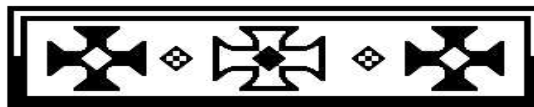
Therefore, my children, let us pay attention to ourselves every time various bad thoughts enter, because the same approach applies for every bad thought. Whatever kind it may be, when it finds the nous careless, it enters and creates—corresponding to the passion—the aforementioned unhealthy condition.

Therefore, since a monk is fought primarily by thoughts, the thing that saves him is watchfulness! Watchfulness (nepsis) is

derived from the verb "nefo," that is, to be careful, vigilant, alert, and on our guard. When we are careful, vigilant, alert, and on our guard, the house of our soul will be well-kept and we shall save our souls for which we struggle our whole life.

When a person is young, it is impossible not to be fought by filthy thoughts and fantasies. One must drive them away immediately and say the Jesus prayer, and they will leave. But once again they will return; once more he needs to drive them away through the prayer and watchfulness, that is, through the attention and vigilance of the nous.

One must be careful not to let the temptation form an image, because first a fantasy comes, then a thought, and then a filthy pleasure. So when through watchfulness we do not allow an evil fantasy to form and at the same time we say the prayer, we are delivered from the disturbance. In addition, we are crowned by God for our good intention and desire to please Him.



The grace of God has a difficult time trying to enter into the impure heart. Humble-mindedness, on the other hand, will greatly aid us into bringing forth all the virtues.

The Goodness of God is so rich in graces, that it seeks a cause to have mercy on a person. Every minute God forgives us, and we should thus forgive one another. This is the greatest virtue, if you say: My God forgive my brother for whatever he did to me.

Our Panagia is the salvation of the whole world, she is the only mother for all Christians... She has much love for the human race, especially for sinners... Let us all run to the Panagia in every circumstance to ask her, to have her as our aid.

My last counsel is: be careful! Don't neglect to strive for your immortal soul. Work without any murmuring and thus hand over your soul unpolluted into God's hands. Do not cease seeking working the virtues. Only the tears of repentance are able to cleanse the soul.

St. Anthimos of Chios (+1960)



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## ON DEATH

Source: Elder Philotheos Zervakos, *Autobiography, Homilies and Miracles*, pp. 171-175).

*What man will live and not see death?  
Who was born and did not see death?*

I am ninety-four years old now, and because I am growing old and death is approaching I thought I would leave you a few paternal requests.

Above all is love for God and one another, for where there is love there is God, where love is lacking there is the tempter. When you have love between you, you also love God. When, however, there is no love between you, you cannot love God; for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says: *He who loves me keeps my commandments*, and, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*. (Jn 14:21-23; I Jn 5:20).

You must be careful not to depart from loving God; do not leave Him, but love Him. Our Saviour and God-Man Jesus Christ gave us the commandment to love one another. He said unto the Holy Apostles a few days before departing bodily from this world: *A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another* (Jn 13:34), and, *These things I command you that ye love one another*." (Jn 15:17).

Therefore, strive to acquire the love that is genuine and not the love that is with words, with the tongue, or with the lips. Loving with the whole heart unites man with God and makes him a son of God by grace. St. Augustine tells us that a man comes to resemble that which he loves. If you love God you will become a god; not by nature but by grace. If you love the flesh and say that this is your life and existence, and think that it will save you; then you will become flesh ...and if again you love the devil, then you will become a devil. How does someone love the devil? By doing his works. When they have pride, and especially, when they have envy, jealousy, and hatred for their neighbor, then they become a devil. Therefore, for this reason strive to love God. As the Holy Fathers say in the doxastikon (Mt 25:12) of the Saints, where we chant: *You have loved God, preferring nothing to His love*, prefer nothing more than the love of God; so that when He comes in all His Glory, we may find rest with all the Saints. We must love God, so that we can find rest there where the Saints are.

Therefore, take care to have love and obedience, for he who is obedient imitates Christ, while he who is not obedient, but disobeys and contradicts, imitates the devil. Do not be contradictive unless it is because the presiding nun asks you to do something that will grieve God, then do not listen to her. If however she tells you to do something, which in your opinion is not good, then it is better to cut your will and do that which was indicated.

Our Lord Jesus Christ—who is God—cut His own will; *I came down from heaven*, He says, *not to do My own will but the will of Him that sent Me* (Jn 6:38). He became obedient

unto death; even death on the Cross. One should be obedient unto death, then he will become worthy of the Eternal Kingdom and of the Eternal Life. Never neglect your spiritual duties, because only with diligence you will be victorious, by God's grace, over all enemies. For this the Lord tells us: *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh, shall find watching*. (Lk 12:37). And the Church chants: *Behold the Bridegroom is coming in the night and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching, and unworthy is the one whom He shall find heedless*. Of the ten virgins: five were foolish, and the other five were prudent, having oil in their lamps. The lamps represent the soul. When the Bridegroom came (i.e., at the hour of death), they left and went together with the Lord to the Heavenly bridal chamber. The foolish virgins, however, remained outside the bridal chamber because they were neglectful; they did not have oil, nor did they have love, they were tired and slept, and they did not take care. When death came, they repented and knocked on the door that He would open it unto them, but the Lord said unto them, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not*. (Mt 25:12).

Therefore, we must not be neglectful, for negligence is dreadful and repentance is great. Struggle when you feel drowsy and sluggish. The body always wants rest, it wants sleep, and it wants good food. The soul, however, wants fasting, vigil, and prayer. Woe to the person who allows his soul to be subjected to the flesh, and who does the will of the flesh! The flesh wants comfort, and whenever possible to sleep, but we must resist this. The spirit must be victorious and subject the body; not allowing it to become that which the flesh seeks, but that which God desires, for the flesh desires to do the will of the devil. For this reason the Apostle James tells us: *Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. (Jas 4:7). We must resist him as much as we can; for only with labour and pain are the good things achieved.

The Saints did not make it to Paradise easily, but labored and struggled against the three enemies: the flesh, the world, and the ruler of the world (the devil). But, because they were eager and serious, they overcame the devil, the desires of the world, and the desires of the flesh. So, prayer and watchfulness are necessary. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. (Mt 26:41). The Apostle Peter, because he was not careful for just one moment, denied the Lord. But he repented and was saved. For this he wrote these beautiful words to make us and everyone careful: *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*. (1 Peter 5:8). Be vigilant, careful, and watchful. Do not stay at all idle, for the devil is prowling about, looking for someone to devour, but seek the aid of God, and God, when we approach Him will help us.

The devil many times uses hypocrisy, slyness, and wickedness to fool people. Many times he transforms himself as an angel of light; and he has deceived many because they accepted



him, obeyed him, and were not careful. Therefore, great care is needed. As I told you, go to a spiritual father for confession, and if he is not there, tell your thoughts to the Abbess and you will be greatly benefited.

Take care especially for love and humility, for where there is humility, the devil flees from there. *But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.* (Isa 66:2). Upon whom does He say He shall look? Upon him who is humble, upon him who is meek. For this reason, all the Saints were sanctified through humility; for humility gives birth to love and to all the virtues. The humble person is a dwelling place of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit: the humility of the Theotokos pleased God, *the Wholly Uncontainable*, to dwell in her womb. The Panagia boasting in the Lord, not in herself, says: *For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden...* (Lk 1:48).

If all virtues exist, but humility is lacking, they are insufficient, non beneficial and are most likely hazardous: Magdalene the nun was prideful; she became a dwelling place of the devil, doing whatever he told her to do. She forgot about the good things and did as the devil bid her. Because St. Nectarios did (and still does) miracles, she was envious and wrote a book: among her other blasphemies, she said that the Sacraments are not performed by the Holy Spirit, but by the Old Calendar, and that if they are not performed by the Holy Spirit on the Old Calendar then the Sacraments are invalid. She also said, that whoever considers St. Nectarios to be a Saint should have the curse of all the Ecumenical Synods, etc. She cursed God and the Saint without thinking about it, for God had made them Saints because of the humility, the faith, and the love they had. Be careful to hate pride, which the devil sows continually in the mind of man, whispering to him that he is something, that he does something, and he arrives at the point where he accuses others for not performing so well.

May the grace of our Lord, who for us men and our salvation became man and rose again, raise our souls unto new life, and grant us eternal life and the Heavenly Kingdom...

Love must take root in our hearts, and it will take root when we continuously remember God; whether walking or working, in bed resting or sleeping, the recollection of God and the short prayer never be absent. And in this way, God will always be here with us in this temporal life, and shall take us with Him to the Eternal one. Go with the Panagia's blessing, and may God always be with you. Amen.



A time is coming when people will go mad and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him, saying, "You are mad, you are not like us."

St. Anthony the Great

## THE 1980 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN ABBOTS

*Translation Source: "The Church Fathers On Love In Truth," by Constantine Zalalas, "Orthodox Kypseli" publications, Thessaloniki, GR.*

*From the OH Editor: In light of the ever increasing boldness of the ecumenical movement, OH is including this ageless, important announcement by the Athonite community. It was signed by all governing monastic communities on the Holy Mountain, and although it is 23 years old, its validity and applicability today appears to be of more relevance than when it was first written.*

† † †

The extraordinary Joint Conference of the Sacred Community on Mount Athos, April 9-22, 1980, noting that the issue of the relations of our Holy Orthodox Church with the heterodox has assumed a serious and resolute character, especially as it relates to the dialogue with Roman Catholics, has resolved publicly to state the opinion of the Athonite fathers on this subject for general consideration:

1. We believe that our Holy Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, which possesses the fullness of grace and truth and, in consequence thereof, unbroken apostolic succession.

On the contrary, the "churches" and "confessions" of the West, having in many ways perverted the Faith of the Gospel, the apostles and the fathers, are deprived of sanctifying grace, of real mysteries and apostolic succession. That this is correct, His Eminence, Metropolitan Maximos of Stavroupolis stresses—"Orthodoxy is not one of the churches, but The Church herself. She has preserved precisely and authentically the teaching of Christ in its pristine splendor and in all its purity. Over and above a simple, unbroken historical continuity and consistency there exists in her a spiritual and ontological authenticity. The same Faith, the same Spirit, the same life. It is this which constitutes the distinguishing feature of Orthodoxy and which justifies her claim that she is and remains The Church" (Episkepsis, #227, March 15, 1980).

2. Dialogue with the heterodox is not reprehensible from the Orthodox point of view if its goal is to inform them of the Orthodox Faith and, thus, make it possible for them thereby to return to Orthodoxy when they receive divine enlightenment and their eyes are opened.

3. Theological dialogue must not in any way be linked with prayer in common, or by joint participation in any liturgical or worship services whatsoever; or in other activities which might create impression that our Orthodox Church accepts, on the one hand, Roman Catholics as part of the fullness of the Church, or, on the other hand, the Pope as the canonical bishop of Rome. Activities such as these mislead both the fullness of the Orthodox people and the Roman Catholics themselves, fostering among them a mistaken notion as to what Orthodoxy thinks of their teaching.

The Holy Mountain is grievously disturbed by the tendencies of certain Orthodox hierarchs who have been invited to participate in Roman Catholic services, celebrations and processions, especially on the occasion of the return of holy relics. Conversely, we congratulate those hierarchs who have publicly expressed their alarm for the fullness of Orthodoxy.

4. We express our complete approval of what His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch said during the visit of the Pope to Constantinople, namely that there exist various impediments between Orthodox and Roman Catholics: "First of all, we have serious theological problems which concern fundamental principles of the Christian faith" (Episkepsis, #221, Dec. 1, 1979, p. 17). These divergences in the principles of Christian faith require that we do not advance to participation in common liturgies and worship services before oneness of faith is attained. The mystical character of the kiss of peace during the divine Eucharist always presupposes harmony of faith: "Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess..." We cannot pray together, especially during the Divine Liturgy, when we do not believe in the same faith and are separated by fundamental questions of faith. Only an indifference to the faith could permit us to do so.

Moreover, the Holy Mountain cannot accept the opinion, expressed in the joint statement of the Patriarch and the Pope, concerning the "cleansing of the historical memory of our Churches" and the partial opening, by means of a dialogue of love, of the road towards "new movements in theological work and a new attitude to the past which is common to both Churches" (Episkepsis, *ibid.*, p. 19). Actually, the heretics must cleanse their own historical memory of all their own historically acknowledged deviations in faith and practice from the true, evangelical Orthodox Faith. On the contrary, the historical memory of the Orthodox, which is based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and on the constant experience of the apostolic faith of the God-bearing Fathers, must be lived by all of us in repentance and humility, and must instruct us both in the present and in the future life if we do not wish to fall from that faith. As Orthodox, we must cleanse ourselves by means of the historical memory of the Church, but not "cleanse" her with an egotistical and anthropocentric spirit, setting ourselves up as judges of the Tradition of the Church.

5. The Holy Mountain is convinced, not without great anxiety, that although the Orthodox are making many concessions and compromises to the Roman Catholics, the latter antithetically continue to adhere to their own errors which have served as the cause of their schism from the Orthodox Church and later led to the Protestant split. Thus, the Pope during his visit to the center of Orthodoxy in the patriarchal cathedral, did not in the least hesitate to proclaim that he was coming to Constantinople as the successor of Peter, "who as the ultimate authority has the responsibility of superintending the unity of all, to guarantee the agreement of the Church of God in fidelity and in the 'faith which was once delivered unto the

saints' (Jude 3)" (Episkepsis, *ibid.*, p. 9). In other words, the Pope defended (papal) infallibility and primacy; and there are many other actions and manifestations which the Pope has effected on behalf of uniatism. We remember the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Greek government and the Vatican which, even though it may justify papism, is unjust and strikes out at the Mother and Nourisher of our (Greek) nation, the Orthodox Church.

6. The Holy Mountain also expresses its anxiety over the constituency of the commission for the dialogue. Uniates comprise a portion of the Roman Catholic delegation, a fact which is a provocation for the Orthodox. The sensibilities and dignity of the Orthodox delegation demand the immediate substitution of others in place of the uniates in the membership. No Orthodox whose manner of thinking corresponds to this faith can agree to participate in a commission which includes uniates. Likewise, the Holy Mountain is disturbed by the great weakness and insufficiency of the Orthodox delegation. The most remarkable Orthodox theologians are not participating. The Holy Mountain is also not represented, despite the fact that it is the sole monastic center which preserves the faith and the theology of the Fathers, and which is far removed from the influence of secularism and scholastic Western theology.

7. From the Orthodox point of view there is no justification for optimism in regard to the dialogue, and for this reason no haste should be exhibited concerning it. The Roman Catholics are pressing the dialogue, hoping to strengthen themselves by annexing Orthodoxy to themselves, for they are confronted by very powerful internal disturbances and crises, as is well known. The number of former Roman Catholics who have converted to Orthodoxy also disturbs them. But Orthodoxy has no reason to hasten towards dialogue since the papists remain so obdurate and immovable as regards infallibility, uniatism, and the rest of their pernicious teachings.

Hastening the dialogue under such conditions is equivalent to spiritual suicide for the Orthodox. Many facts give the impression that the Roman Catholics are preparing a union on the pattern of a *unia*. Can it be that the Orthodox who are hastening to the dialogue are conscious of this?

The Holy Mountain maintains that for it there can be no question of accepting a *fait accompli*, that, by the grace of God, it will remain faithful, as the Lord's Orthodox people, to the faith of the holy apostles and the holy Fathers, impelled to this also by love for the heterodox, to whom real help is given only when the Orthodox show them the vastness of their spiritual sickness and the means of its cure by maintaining a consistently Orthodox position.

The unsuccessful attempts in the past with regard to union must teach us that steadfast unity in the truth of the Church, in accordance with the will of God, presupposes a different preparation and a path distinct from that taken in the past and from that which, apparently, is now being taken.

## Διδαχές Αγίου Νεκταρίου (Μέρος 1ον)

Από τη σειρά των φυλλαδίων «Η ΦΩΝΗ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ» της Ιερᾶς Μονῆς Παρακλήτου Ξρωπού Ἀττικῆς.

**Ο** Άγιος Νεκτάριος Πενταπόλεως, ὁ θαυματουργός, ἀποτελεῖ, στίς πενήντες μέρες τοῦ εἰκοστοῦ αἰώνα, ἕνα δῶρο τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν κόσμος. Στὸ πρόσωπό του ἀνακαλύπτει κανεὶς ἕναν μεγάλο Πατέρα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὅπου ἡ ἀγιότητα τοῦ βίου συνδυάζεται μετὰ τὴ χάρι τῆς θαυματουργίας.

Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς ὁσιακῆς τοῦ βιοτῆς ἀποτελοῦν τὰ γραπτά του κείμενα. Παρουσιάζουμε ἕνα μικρὸ ἀπάνθισμα τῶν ἐπιστολῶν του, διασκευασμένο στὴ σημερινή μας γλωσσικὴ μορφή. Εἶναι μία συλλογὴ ἀπὸ σύντομες καὶ περιεκτικὲς διδαχὲς τοῦ ἁγίου, ποὺ ἀναφέρονται στὴν πνευματικὴ ζωὴ καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ.

### Ὁ Δρόμος τῆς Εὐτυχίας

Τίποτα δὲν εἶναι μεγαλύτερο ἀπὸ τὴν καθαρὴ καρδιά, γιατί μία τέτοια καρδιά γίνεται θρόνος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ τί εἶναι ἐνδοξότερο ἀπὸ τὸ θρόνο τοῦ Θεοῦ; Ἀσφαλῶς τίποτα. Λέει ὁ Θεὸς γι' αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἔχουν καθαρὴ καρδιά: «Θὰ κατοικήσω ἀνάμεσά τους καὶ θὰ πορεύομαι μαζί τους. Θὰ εἶμαι Θεὸς τους, κι αὐτοὶ θὰ εἶναι λαός μου». (Β' Κορ. 6:16).

Ποιοὶ λοιπὸν εἶναι εὐτυχέστεροι ἀπ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους; Καὶ ἀπὸ ποιοὺ ἀγαθὸ μπορεῖ νὰ μείνουν στερημένοι; Δὲν βρίσκονται ὅλα τ' ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ χαρίσματα τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος στίς μακάριες ψυχές τους; Τί περισσότερο χρειάζονται; Τίποτα, στ' ἀλήθεια, τίποτα! Γιατί ἔχουν στὴν καρδιά τους τὸ μεγαλύτερο ἀγαθόν: τὸν ἴδιο τὸ Θεόν!

Πόσο πλανιοῦνται οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ ἀναζητοῦν τὴν εὐτυχία μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτό τους, στίς ξένες χῶρες καὶ στὰ ταξίδια, στὸν πλοῦτο καὶ στὴ δόξα, στίς μεγάλες περιουσίες καὶ στίς ἀπολαύσεις, στίς ἡδονές καὶ σ' ὅλες τὶς χλιδές καὶ ματαιότητες, ποὺ κατάληξή τους ἔχουν τὴν πίκρα! Ἡ ἀνέγερση τοῦ πύργου τῆς εὐτυχίας ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν καρδιά μας, μοιάζει μετὰ οἰκοδόμησις κτιρίου σὲ ἔδαφος ποὺ σαλευέται ἀπὸ συνεχεῖς σεισμούς. Σύντομα ἕνα τέτοιο οἰκοδόμημα θὰ σωριασθῇ στὴ γῆ...

Ἀδελφοί μου! Ἡ εὐτυχία βρίσκεται μέσα στὸν ἴδιο σας ἑαυτό, καὶ μακάριος εἶναι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ τὸ κατάλαβε αὐτό. Ἐξετάστε τὴν καρδιά σας καὶ δεῖτε τὴν πνευματικὴ τῆς κατάστασις. Μήπως ἔχασε τὴν παρρησία τῆς πρὸς τὸ Θεόν; Μήπως ἡ συνείδησις διαμαρτύρεται γιὰ παράβασις τῶν ἐντολῶν Του; Μήπως σὰς κατηγορεῖ γιὰ ἀδικίες, γιὰ ψέματα, γιὰ παραμέλησις τῶν καθηκόντων πρὸς τὸ Θεόν καὶ τὸν πλησίον; Ἐρευνήστε μήπως κακίες καὶ πάθη γέμισαν τὴν καρδιά σας, μήπως γλίστρησε αὐτὴ σὲ δρόμους στραβούς καὶ δύσβατους...

Δυστυχῶς, ἐκεῖνος ποὺ παραμέλησε τὴν καρδιά του, στερήθηκε ὅλα τ' ἀγαθὰ κι ἔπεσε σὲ πλῆθος κακῶν. Ἐδιώξε τὴ χαρὰ καὶ γέμισε μετὰ πίκρα, θλίψη καὶ στενοχώρια. Ἐδιώξε

τὴν εἰρήνην καὶ ἀπόκτησε ἄγχος, ταραχὴ καὶ τρόμο. Ἐδιώξε τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ δέχτηκε τὸ μίσος. Ἐδιώξε, τέλος, ὅλα τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ τοὺς καρπούς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ποὺ δέχτηκε μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμα, καὶ οἰκειώθηκε ὅλες τὶς κακίες ἐκεῖνες, ποὺ κάνουν τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἐλεεινὸν καὶ τρισάθλιο.

Ἀδελφοί μου! Ὁ Πολυέλεος Θεὸς θέλει τὴν εὐτυχία ὅλων μας καὶ σ' αὐτὴ καὶ στὴν ἄλλη ζωὴ. Γι' αὐτὸ ἴδρυσεν τὴν ἁγία Του Ἐκκλησία. Γιὰ νὰ μᾶς καθαρῇ αὐτὴ ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία, νὰ μᾶς ἁγιάζη, νὰ μᾶς συμφιλῶνῃ μαζί Του, νὰ μᾶς χαρίσῃ τὶς εὐλογίες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἔχει ἀνοιχτὴ τὴν ἀγκαλιά της, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς ὑποδεχθῇ. Ἄς τρέξουμε γρήγορα ὅσοι ἔχουμε βαριά τὴ συνείδησις. Ἄς τρέξουμε καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι ἑτοιμὴ νὰ σηκώσῃ τὸ βαρὺ φορτίο μας, νὰ μᾶς χαρίσῃ τὴν παρρησία πρὸς τὸ Θεόν, νὰ γεμίσῃ τὴν καρδιά μας μετὰ εὐτυχία καὶ μακαριότητα...

### Τὸ Ἅγιο Βάπτισμα

«Ὅσοι βαπτισθήκατε στὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ντυθήκατε τὸ Χριστό» (Γαλ. 3:27). Πόσο μεγάλη ἀλήθεια μᾶς ἐπισημαίνει μ' αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος!

Οἱ βαπτισμένοι Χριστιανοὶ δὲν φοροῦν τὸν παλαιὸ ἄνθρωπο μετὰ τὰ πάθη καὶ τὶς ἁμαρτωλὲς ἐπιθυμίες του, ἀλλὰ εἶναι ντυμένοι τὸν καινούριο ἄνθρωπο. Ντύθηκαν τὸν ἴδιο τὸ Χριστό, ποὺ ζεῖ τώρα μέσα στίς καρδιές τους. Καὶ ἡ λέξις “ντύθηκαν” δὲν ἀναφέρεται σὲ κάποια ἀπλὴ καὶ ἐξωτερικὴ στολὴ, ἀλλὰ σὲ κάτι βαθύτερο, σὲ κάτι οὐσιαστικόν καὶ ἀναφαίρετο.

Μὲ τὴν πίστη μας στὸ Χριστό καὶ μετὰ τὴ βάπτισή μας ντυνόμαστε τὸν ἴδιο τὸ Χριστό καὶ γινόμαστε παιδιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, οἰκητῆρια τοῦ Παναγίου Πνεύματος, ναοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἅγιοι καὶ τέλειοι, Θεοὶ κατὰ χάριν.

Ὅστε λοιπὸν ρίξαμε ἀπὸ πάνω μας τὴ φθορὰ καὶ ντυθήκαμε τὴν ἀφθαρσία. Ξεντυθήκαμε τὸν ἄνθρωπο τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ ντυθήκαμε τὸν ἄνθρωπο τῆς δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς χάριτος. Διώξαμε τὸ θάνατο καὶ ντυθήκαμε τὴν ἀθανασία...

Συλλογιστήκαμε ὁμῶς καὶ τὶς μεγάλες ὑποχρεώσεις, ποὺ, μετὰ τὸ βάπτισμά μας, ἀναλάβαμε ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ; Συνειδητοποιήσαμε ὅτι ὀφείλουμε νὰ συμπεριφερόμαστε σὰν παιδιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σὰν ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ Κυρίου μας; Ὅτι ἔχουμε χρέος νὰ συνταγίσουμε τὸ δικό μας θέλημα μετὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ; Ὅτι πρέπει, σὰν παιδιὰ δικὰ Του, νὰ μένουμε ἐλεύθεροι ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία; Ὅτι ὀφείλουμε νὰ τὸν ἀγαπάμε μ' ὅλην μας τὴ δύναμιν, ἀπὸ τὰ βάθη τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς καρδιᾶς μας; Ὅτι ὀφείλουμε νὰ τὸν λατρεύουμε καὶ νὰ λαχταροῦμε τὴν ἔνωσιν μαζί Του γιὰ πάντα; Σκεφτήκαμε, ἄραγε, ὅτι ἡ καρδιά μας πρέπει νὰ ναι πλημμυρισμένη ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγάπην, ὥστε αὐτὴ νὰ ξεχύνεται καὶ στὸν πλησίον μας; Ἐχουμε τὴ συναίσθησιν ὅτι ὀφείλουμε νὰ γίνουμε ἅγιοι καὶ τέλειοι καὶ εἰκόνες τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ παιδιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ κληρονόμοι τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν;

Γιὰ ὅλ' αὐτὰ ἔχουμε χρέος ν' ἀγωνιστοῦμε, ὥστε νὰ μὴ φανοῦμε ἀνάξιοι στὸ κάλεσμα ποὺ μᾶς ἔκανε ὁ Θεὸς καὶ



ἀποδοκιμαστοῦμε... Naί, ἀδελφοί μου, ἅς παλέψουμε μὲ ζῆλο καὶ αὐταπάρνηση γιὰ νὰ νικήσουμε. Κανείς μας ἅς μὴ χάση τὸ θάρρος του, ἅς μὴν ἀμελήσῃ, ἅς μὴ δειλιάσῃ, ἅς μὴν πτοηθῇ μπροστὰ στὰ σκάμματα τοῦ πνευματικοῦ ἀγώνα. Γιατὶ ἔχουμε βοηθὸ τὸ Θεό, ποὺ μᾶς δυναμώνει στὸν δύσκολο δρόμο τῆς ἀρετῆς.

### Πνευματικὸς Ἀγώνας

Σκοπὸς τῆς ζωῆς μας εἶναι νὰ γίνουμε τέλειοι καὶ ἅγιοι. Νὰ ἀναδειχθοῦμε παιδιὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ κληρονόμοι τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν. Ἄς προσέξουμε μήπως, γιὰ χάρη τῆς παρούσας ζωῆς, στερηθοῦμε τὴ μέλλουσα, μήπως, ἀπὸ τὶς βιοτικὲς φροντίδες καὶ μέριμνες, ἀμελήσουμε τὸ σκοπὸ τῆς ζωῆς μας.

Ἡ νηστεία, ἡ ἀγρυπνία καὶ ἡ προσευχὴ ἀπὸ μόνες τους δὲν φέρνουν τοὺς ἐπιθυμητοὺς καρπούς, γιατί αὐτὲς δὲν εἶναι ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ζωῆς μας, ἀποτελοῦν τὰ μέσα γιὰ νὰ πετύχουμε τὸ σκοπὸ.

Στολίστε τὶς λαμπάδες σας μὲ ἀρετές. Ἀγωνιστεῖτε ν' ἀποβάλετε τὰ πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς. Καθαρίστε τὴν καρδιά σας ἀπὸ κάθε ρύπο καὶ διατηρήστε τὴν ἀγνή, γιὰ νὰ ἔρθῃ καὶ νὰ κατοικήσῃ μέσα σας ὁ Κύριος, γιὰ νὰ σᾶς πλημμυρίσῃ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα μὲ τὶς θεῖες δωρεές.

Παιδιὰ μου ἀγαπητά, ὅλη σας ἡ ἀσχολία καὶ ἡ φροντίδα σ' αὐτὰ νὰ εἶναι. Αὐτὰ ν' ἀποτελοῦν σκοπὸ καὶ πόθο σας ἀσταμάτητο. Γι' αὐτὰ νὰ προσεύχεστε στὸ Θεό.

Νὰ ζητᾶτε καθημερινὰ τὸν Κύριο, ἀλλὰ μέσα στὴν καρδιά σας καὶ ὄχι ἔξω ἀπὸ αὐτήν. Καὶ ὅταν τὸν βρεῖτε, σταθεῖτε μὲ φόβο καὶ τρόμο, ὅπως τὰ Χερουβείμ καὶ τὰ Σεραφεῖμ, γιατί ἡ καρδιά σας ἐγίνε θρόνος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ βρεῖτε τὸν Κύριο, ταπεινωθεῖτε μέχρι τὸ χῶμα, γιατί ὁ Κύριος βδελύσσεται τοὺς ὑπερήφανους, ἐνῶ ἀγαπάει καὶ ἐπισκέπτεται τοὺς ταπεινοὺς στὴν καρδιά.

Ἄν ἀγωνίζεσαι τὸν ἀγώνα τὸν καλὸ, ὁ Θεὸς θὰ σὲ ἐνισχύσῃ. Στὸν ἀγώνα ἐντοπίζουμε τὶς ἀδυναμίες, τὶς ἐλλείψεις καὶ τὰ ἐλαττώματά μας. Εἶναι ὁ καθρέφτης τῆς πνευματικῆς μας καταστάσεως. Ὅποιος δὲν ἀγωνίστηκε, δὲν γνώρισε τὸν ἑαυτό του.

Προσέχετε καὶ τὰ μικρὰ ἀκόμα παραπτώματα. Ἄν σᾶς συμβῇ ἀπὸ ἀπροσεξία κάποια ἁμαρτία, μὴν ἀπελπιστεῖτε, ἀλλὰ σηκωθείτε γρήγορα καὶ προσπέστε στὸ Θεό, ποὺ ἔχει τὴ δύναμη νὰ σᾶς ἀνορθώσῃ.

Μέσα μας ἔχουμε ἀδυναμίες καὶ πάθη καὶ ἐλαττώματα βαθιὰ ριζωμένα, πολλὰ εἶναι καὶ κληρονομικά. Ὅλα αὐτὰ δὲν κόβονται μὲ μία σπασμωδικὴ κίνηση οὔτε μὲ τὴν ἀδημονία καὶ τὴ βαρεὶά θλίψη, ἀλλὰ μὲ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἐπιμονή, μὲ καρτερίαν, μὲ φροντίδα καὶ προσοχή.

Ἡ ὑπερβολικὴ λύπη κρύβει μέσα της ὑπερηφάνεια. Γι' αὐτὸ εἶναι βλαβερὴ καὶ ἐπικίνδυνη, καὶ πολλὰς φορὲς παροξύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ διάβολο, γιὰ ν' ἀνακόψῃ τὴν πορεία τοῦ ἀγωνιστῆ.

Ὁ δρόμος ποὺ ὁδηγεῖ στὴν τελειότητα εἶναι μακρὺς. Εὐχεστε στὸ Θεὸ νὰ σᾶς δυναμώνῃ. Νὰ ἀντιμετωπίζετε μὲ ὑπομονὴ τὶς πτώσεις σας καί, ἀφοῦ γρήγορα σηκωθείτε, νὰ τρέχετε

καὶ νὰ μὴ στέκεστε, σὰν τὰ παιδιά, στὸν τόπο ποὺ πέσατε, κλαίγοντας καὶ θρηνώντας ἀπαρηγόρητα.

Ἀγρυπνεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεστε, γιὰ νὰ μὴν μπεῖτε σὲ πειρασμό. Μὴν ἀπελπίζετε, ἂν πέφτετε συνέχεια σὲ παλιὲς ἁμαρτίες. Πολλὲς ἀπ' αὐτὲς εἶναι καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ φύση τους ἰσχυρὲς καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ συνήθεια. Μὲ τὴν πάροδο τοῦ χρόνου, ὅμως, καὶ μὲ τὴν ἐπιμέλεια νικιοῦνται. Τίποτα νὰ μὴ σᾶς ἀπελπίζῃ.

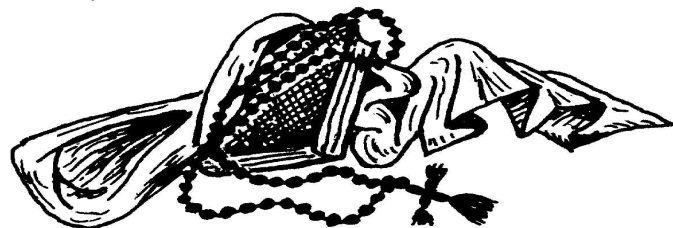
### Πειρασμοί

Οἱ πειρασμοὶ παραχωροῦνται γιὰ νὰ φανερωθοῦν τὰ κρυμμένα πάθη, νὰ καταπολεμηθοῦν κι ἔτσι νὰ θεραπευθῇ ἡ ψυχὴ. Εἶναι καὶ αὐτοὶ δαίμονες τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐλέους. Γι' αὐτὸ ἄφησε μὲ ἐμπιστοσύνη τὸν ἑαυτό σου στὰ χέρια τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ζήτησε τὴ βοήθειά Του, ὥστε νὰ σὲ δυναμώσῃ στὸν ἀγώνα σου. Ἡ ἐλπίδα στὸ Θεὸ δὲν ὁδηγεῖ ποτὲ στὴν ἀπελπισία. Οἱ πειρασμοὶ φέρνουν ταπεινοφροσύνη. Ὁ Θεὸς ξέρεي τὴν ἀντοχὴ τοῦ καθενὸς μας καὶ παραχωρεῖ τοὺς πειρασμοὺς κατὰ τὸ μέτρο τῶν δυνάμεών μας. Νὰ φροντίζουμε ὅμως κι ἐμεῖς νὰ εἴμαστε ἀγρυπνοὶ καὶ προσεκτικοί, γιὰ νὰ μὴ βάλουμε μόνοι μας τὸν ἑαυτό μας σὲ πειρασμό.

Ἐμπιστευτεῖτε στὸ Θεὸ τὸν Ἀγαθό, τὸν Ἰσχυρό, τὸν Ζῶντα, καὶ Αὐτὸς θὰ σᾶς ὁδηγήσῃ στὴν ἀνάπαυση. Μετὰ τὶς δοκιμασίες ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ πνευματικὴ χαρὰ. Ὁ Κύριος παρακολουθεῖ ὅσους ὑπομένουν τὶς δοκιμασίες καὶ τὶς θλίψεις γιὰ τὴ δική Του ἀγάπη. Μὴ λιποψυχεῖτε λοιπὸν καὶ μὴ δειλιάζετε.

Δὲν θέλω νὰ θλίβεστε καὶ νὰ συγχύζεστε γιὰ ὅσα συμβαίνουν ἀντίθετα στὴ θέλησή σας, ὅσο δίκαιη κι ἂν εἶναι αὐτή. Μία τέτοια θλίψη μαρτυρεῖ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ ἐγωισμοῦ. Προσέχετε τὸν ἐγωισμό, ποὺ κρύβεται κάτω ἀπὸ τὴ μορφὴ τοῦ δικαιώματος. Προσέχετε καὶ τὴν ἄκαιρη λύπη, δημιουργεῖται ὕστερ' ἀπὸ ἓναν δίκαιο ἔλεγχο. Ἡ ὑπερβολικὴ θλίψη γιὰ ὅλα αὐτὰ εἶναι τοῦ πειρασμοῦ. Μία εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ θλίψη. Αὐτὴ ποὺ δημιουργεῖται, ὅταν γνωρίσουμε καλὰ τὴν ἄθλια κατάστασι τῆς ψυχῆς μας. Ὅλες οἱ ἄλλες θλίψεις δὲν ἔχουν καμιὰ σχέση μὲ τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Φροντίζετε νὰ περιφρουρεῖτε στὴν καρδιά σας τὴ χάρα τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος καὶ νὰ μὴν ἐπιτρέπετε στὸν πονηρὸ νὰ χύνῃ τὸ φαρμάκι του. Προσέχετε! Προσέχετε, μήπως ὁ παράδεισος, ποὺ ὑπάρχει μέσα σας, μετατραπῇ σὲ κόλαση.



Τὸ νὰ εἶναι παραδομένος κανείς στὸν Θεὸ μὲ ἀπόλυτὴ ἐμπιστοσύνη, τὸ νὰ μὴν ἔχῃ περὶ πολλοῦ τὸν ἑαυτό του καὶ τὸ νὰ παραιτεῖται ἀπὸ τὸ θέλημά του, αὐτὰ εἶναι ἐργαλεῖα τῆς ψυχῆς.

**Ὁσιος Ποιμὴν ὁ Μέγας**

## Ὁ Γέροντας Παῖσιος γιὰ τὸν Οἰκουμενισμό

ΠΗΓΗ: Τὸ ἄρθρο αὐτὸ εἶναι μία ἐπιστολὴ πού ἐστάλθη ἀπὸ τὸν σεβάσιμο Γέροντα Παῖσιο πρὸς τὸν Ἀρχιμανδρίτη Χαράλαμπο Βασιλόπουλο, προηγούμενο τότε τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Πετράκη καὶ ἰδρυτὴ τοῦ «Ορθόδοξου Τύπου» ἀπ' ὅπου ἡ ἐπιστολὴ αὐτὴ ἀναδημοσιεύεται.

**Σ**εβαστὲ πάτερ Χαράλαμπε:

Ἐπειδὴ βλέπω τὸν μεγάλον σάλον πού γίνεται εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν μας, ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν διαφορῶν φιλενωτικῶν κινήσεων καὶ τῶν ἐπαφῶν τοῦ Πατριάρχου μετὰ τοῦ Πάπα, ἐπόνεσα κι ἐγὼ σὰν τέκνον Της καὶ ἐθεώρησα καλόν, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τίς προσευχές μου, νὰ στείλω κι ἓνα μικρὸ κομματάκι κλωστή (πού ἔχω σὰν φτωχὸς μοναχός), διὰ νὰ χρησιμοποιηθῇ κι αὐτό, ἔστω καὶ γιὰ μία βελονιά, διὰ τὸ πολυκομματιασμένο φόρεμα τῆς Μητέρας μας. Πιστεύω ὅτι θὰ κάμετε ἀγάπην καὶ θὰ τὸ χρησιμοποιήσετε διὰ μέσου τοῦ θρησκευτικοῦ σας φύλλου. Σᾶς εὐχαριστῶ.

Θὰ ἤθελα νὰ ζητήσω συγγνώμην ἐν πρώτοις ἀπ' ὅλους, πού τολμῶ νὰ γράφω κάτι, ἐνῶ δὲν εἶμαι οὔτε ἅγιος, οὔτε θεολόγος. Φαντάζομαι ὅτι θὰ με καταλάβουν ὅλοι, ὅτι τὰ γραφόμενά μου δὲν εἶναι τίποτε ἄλλο παρὰ ἓνας βαθὺς μου πόνος διὰ τὴν γραμμὴν καὶ κοσμικὴν ἀγάπην, δυστυχῶς, τοῦ πατέρα μας κ. Ἀθηναγόρα.

Ὅπως φαίνεται, ἀγάπησε μίαν ἄλλην γυναῖκα μοντέρνα, πού λέγεται Παπικὴ Ἐκκλησία, διότι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Μητέρα μας δὲν τοῦ κάμνει καμμίαν ἐντύπωσι, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι πολὺ σεμνὴ. Αὐτὴ ἡ ἀγάπη, πού ἀκούσθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν Πόλι, βρῆκε ἀπήχησι σὲ πολλὰ παιδιά του, πού ἐπίσης τὴν ζοῦν εἰς τὰς πόλεις. Ἄλλωστε αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας: ἡ οἰκογένεια νὰ χάσῃ τὸ ἱερὸ νόημά της ἀπὸ τέτοιου εἶδους ἀγάπες, πού ὡς σκοπὸν ἔχουν τὴν διάλυσιν καὶ ὄχι τὴν ἔνωσιν.

Μὲ μιὰ τέτοια περίπου κοσμικὴ ἀγάπη καὶ ὁ Πατριάρχης μας φθάνει στὴ Ρώμη. Ἐνῶ θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ δείξῃ ἀγάπη πρῶτα σὲ μᾶς, τὰ παιδιά του, καὶ στὴ Μητέρα μας Ἐκκλησία, αὐτὸς, δυστυχῶς, ἔστειλε τὴν ἀγάπη του πολὺ μακριά. Τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα ἦταν νὰ ἀναπαύσῃ μὲν ὅλα τὰ κοσμικὰ παιδιά, πού ἀγαποῦν τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἔχουν τὴν κοσμικὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην, νὰ κατασκandalίσῃ ὅμως ὅλους ἐμᾶς, τὰ τέκνα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα, πού ἔχουν φόβο Θεοῦ...

Μετὰ λύπης μου ἀπὸ ὅσους φιλενωτικὸς ἔχω γνωρίσει, δὲν εἶδα νὰ ἔχουν οὔτε ψίχα πνευματικῆς, ἀλλὰ οὔτε καὶ φλοιοῦ. Ξέρουν ὅμως, νὰ ὁμιλοῦν γιὰ ἀγάπη καὶ ἐνότητα, ἐνῶ οἱ ἴδιοι δὲν εἶναι ἐνωμένοι μετὰ τὸν Θεόν, διότι δὲν Τὸν ἔχουν ἀγαπήσει.

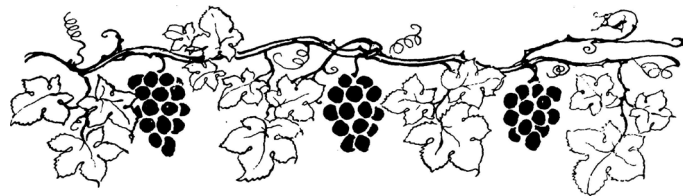
Θὰ ἤθελα νὰ παρακαλέσω θερμὰ ὅλους τοὺς φιλενωτικὸς ἀδελφούς μας: Ἐπειδὴ τὸ θέμα τῆς ἐνώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν εἶναι κάτι τὸ πνευματικόν καὶ ἀνάγκην ἔχουμε πνευματικῆς ἀγάπης, ἅς τὸ ἀφήσουμε σὲ αὐτοὺς πού ἀγαπήσανε πολὺ τὸν Θεόν καὶ εἶναι θεολόγοι, σὰν τοὺς Πατέρας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ ὄχι νομολόγοι: ἅς τὸ ἀφήσουμε σὲ αὐτοὺς

πού προσφέρανε καὶ προσφέρουν ὁλόκληρο τὸν ἑαυτὸν τοὺς εἰς τὴν διακονίαν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας (ἀντὶ μεγάλης λαμπάδας), τοὺς ὁποίους ἄναψε τὸ πῦρ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὄχι ὁ ἀναπτήρας τοῦ νεωκόρου.

Ἄς γνωρίζωμεν ἐπίσης ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχουν μόνον φυσικοὶ νόμοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πνευματικοί. Ἐπομένως, ἡ μέλλουσα ὁργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀντιμετωπισθῇ μὲ συνεταιρισμὸν ἁμαρτωλῶν (διότι διπλὴν ὁργὴν θὰ λάβωμεν), ἀλλὰ μετάνοιαν καὶ τήρησιν τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Κυρίου. Ἐπίσης, ἅς γνωρίσωμεν καλὰ ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία μας δὲν ἔχει καμμίαν ἑλλειψιν. Ἡ μόνη ἑλλειψις πού παρουσιάζεται, εἶναι ἡ ἑλλειψις σοβαρῶν Ἱεραρχῶν καὶ Ποιμένων με πατερικὲς ἀρχές.

Εἶναι ὀλίγοι οἱ ἐκλεκτοί: ὅμως αὐτὸ δὲν εἶναι ἀνησυχητικόν. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Αὐτὸς τὴν κυβερνάει. Δὲν εἶναι Ναός, πού κτίζεται ἀπὸ πέτρες, ἄμμο καὶ ἀσβέστη καὶ καταστρέφεται με φωτιά βαρβάρων, ἀλλὰ εἶναι ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός. «Διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀρθήσεται ἅψ' ὑμῶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δοθήσεται ἔθναι ποιοῦντι τοὺς καρποὺς αὐτῆς. Καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλαστήσεται· ἐψ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ λικμήσῃ αὐτόν. Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὰς παραβολὰς αὐτοῦ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγει. » (Ματθ. κα' 44-45).

Ὁ Κύριος, ὅταν θὰ πρέπη, θὰ παρουσιάσῃ τοὺς Μάρκους τοὺς Εὐγενικοὺς καὶ τοὺς Γρηγόριους Παλαμάδες, διὰ νὰ συγκεντρώσουν ὅλα τὰ κατασκandalισμένα ἀδέλφια μας, διὰ νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Πίστιν, νὰ στερεώσουν τὴν Παράδοσιν καὶ νὰ δώσουν χαρὰν μεγάλην εἰς τὴν



**Ἡ ἀδελφότης «ΟΣΙΟΣ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ», μετὰ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴν συμπαράστασιν διαφόρων Ἑλληνορθοδόξων, διαθέτει ΛΩΡΕΑΝ πρὸς ὅλους τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας Χριστιανούς ὁλοκληρὴ τὴν σειρὰ τῶν ὁμιλιῶν τοῦ μακαριστοῦ πατρὸς Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μυτιληναίου.**

**Ἡ σειρὰ αὐτὴ (σὲ 7 DVDs) περιεχεῖ 1.650 ὁμιλίες ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ διαφορῶν θεμάτων· εἶναι ἓνας πνευματικὸς θησαυρὸς ἀλλὰ καὶ ἓνα ἀναγκαῖο πνευματικὸ ὄπλο τῶν καιρῶν μας γιὰ κάθε Ἑλληνορθόδοξο Χριστιανό. Οἱ ἐνδιαφέροντες δύνανται νὰ τὴν παραγγείλουν ἀναφερόμενοι στὸ δελτίο παραγγελιῶν τῆς 15<sup>ης</sup> σελίδος.**

**Οἱ ὁμιλίες εἶναι σὲ τύπο mp3. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε DVD player πού νὰ παίζει mp3 files (σὰν μερικὰ mini-DVD players ἢ DVD home theater systems), ἢ ἓνα ἠλεκτρονικὸ ὑπολογιστὴ με Windows operating system, ἢ ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς mini mp3 players σάν, π.χ., τὸ δημοφιλὲς iPod.**



Μητέρα μας.

Εἰς τοὺς καιροὺς μας βλέπομεν ὅτι πολλὰ πιστὰ τέκνα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοί, ἔχουν, δυστυχῶς, ἀποσχισθῇ ἀπὸ αὐτήν, ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν φιλενωτικῶν. Ἐχῶ τὴν γνώμην ὅτι δὲν εἶναι καθόλου καλὸν νὰ ἀποχωρίζωμεθα ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν κάθε φορᾶν ποὺ θὰ παίῃ ὁ Πατριάρχης. Ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέσα, κοντὰ στὴν Μητέρα Ἐκκλησία ἔχει καθήκον καὶ ὑποχρέωσι ὁ καθένας ν' ἀγωνίζεται μὲ τὸν τρόπον του. Τὸ νὰ διακόψῃ τὸ μνημόσυνον τοῦ Πατριάρχου, νὰ ἀποσχισθῇ καὶ νὰ δημιουργήσῃ ἰδικὴν τοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν καὶ νὰ ἐξακολουθῇ νὰ ὁμιλῇ ὑβρίζοντας τὸν Πατριάρχην, αὐτὸ νομίζω, εἶναι παράλογον.

Ἐὰν διὰ τὴν ἄλφα ἢ τὴν βῆτα λοξοδρόμησι τῶν κατὰ καιροὺς Πατριαρχῶν χωρίζωμεθα καὶ κάνωμε δικές μας Ἐκκλησίες—Θεὸς φυλάξει!—θὰ ξεπεράσωμε καὶ τοὺς Προτεστάντες ἀκόμη. Εὐκόλα χωρίζει κανεὶς καὶ δύσκολα ἐπιστρέφει... Δυστυχῶς, ἔχουμε πολλὰς «ἐκκλησίες» στὴν ἐποχὴ μας. Δημιουργήθηκαν εἴτε ἀπὸ μεγάλες ὁμάδες ἢ καὶ ἀπὸ ἓνα ἄτομο ἀκόμη. Ἐπειδὴ συνέβη στὸ καλύβι τῶν νὰ ὑπάρχῃ καὶ ναὸς (ὁμῶς διὰ τὰ ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὅρει συμβαίνοντα), ἐνόμισαν ὅτι μποροῦν νὰ κάνουν καὶ δική τους ἀνεξάρτητη Ἐκκλησία.

Ἐὰν οἱ φιλενωτικοὶ δίνουν τὸ πρῶτο πληγμᾶ στὴν Ἐκκλησία, αὐτοί, οἱ ἀνωτέρω, δίνουν τὸ δεύτερο.

Ἄς εὐχηθοῦμε νὰ δώσῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὸν φωτισμόν Του σὲ ὅλους μας καὶ εἰς τὸν Πατριάρχην μας κ. Ἀθηνάγοραν διὰ νὰ γίνῃ πρῶτον ἢ ἔνσως αὐτῶν τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν», νὰ πραγματοποιηθῇ ἡ γαλήνη ἀνάμεσα στὸ σκανδαλισμένο Ὁρθόδοξο πλήρωμα, ἡ εἰρήνη καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη μεταξὺ τῶν Ὁρθόδοξων Ἀνατολικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν, καὶ κατόπιν ἂς γίνῃ σκέψις διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων «ὁμολογιῶν», ἐὰν καὶ ἔφ' ὅσον εἰλικρινῶς ἐπιθυμοῦν νὰ ἀσπασθοῦν τὸ Ὁρθόδοξον Δόγμα.

Θὰ ἤθελα ἀκόμη νὰ εἰπῶ, ὅτι ὑπάρχει καὶ μία τρίτη μερίδα μέσα εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν μας. Εἶναι ἐκεῖνοι οἱ ἀδελφοί, ποὺ παραμένουν μὲν πιστὰ τέκνα Αὐτῆς, δὲν ἔχουν ὅμως συμφωνίαν πνευματικὴν ἀναμεταξύ τους. Ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ τὴν κριτικὴν ὁ ἓνας τοῦ ἄλλου καὶ ὅχι διὰ τὸ γενικώτερον καλὸν τοῦ ἀγῶνος. Παρακολουθεῖ δὲ ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον (περισσότερον ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτὸν του) εἰς τὸ τί θὰ εἰπῇ ἢ τί θὰ γράψῃ διὰ νὰ τὸν κτυπήσῃ κατόπιν ἀλύπητα. Ἐνῶ ὁ ἴδιος ἂν ἔλεγε ἢ ἔγραφε τὸ ἴδιο πράγμα, θὰ τὸ ὑπεστήριζε καὶ μὲ πολλὰς μάλιστα μαρτυρίες τῆς Ἀγίας Γραφῆς καὶ τῶν Πατέρων.

Τὸ κακὸ ποὺ γίνεται εἶναι μεγάλο, διότι ἀφενὸς μὲν ἀδικεῖ τὸν πλησίον του, ἀφετέρου δὲ καὶ τὸν γκρεμίζει μπροστὰ στὰ μάτια τῶν ἄλλων πιστῶν. Πολλὰς φορὲς σπέρνει καὶ τὴν ἀπιστίαν στὶς ψυχὰς τῶν ἀδυνάτων, διότι τοὺς σκανδαλίζει. Δυστυχῶς, μερικοὶ ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς ἔχουμε παράλογες ἀπαιτήσεις ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους. Θέλουμε οἱ ἄλλοι νὰ ἔχουν τὸν ἴδιο μὲ ἐμᾶς πνευματικὸν χαρακτήρα. Ὅταν κάποιος ἄλλος δὲν συμφωνεῖ μὲ τὸν χαρακτήρα μας δηλαδὴ ἢ εἶναι ὀλίγον ἐπιεικὴς ἢ ὀλίγον ὀξύς, ἀμέσως βγάζομε τὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι δὲν εἶναι πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος.

Ὅλοι χρειάζονται εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ὅλοι οἱ Πατέρες προσέφεραν τὰς ὑπηρεσίας τῶν εἰς Αὐτήν. Καὶ οἱ ἡπιοὶ χαρακτήρες καὶ οἱ αὐστηροί. Ὅπως διὰ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἀπαραίτητα καὶ τὰ γλυκὰ καὶ τὰ ξινὰ καὶ τὰ πικρὰ ἀκόμη ραδίκια (τὸ καθένα ἔχει τὶς δικές του οὐσίες καὶ βιταμίνες), ἔτσι καὶ διὰ τὸ Σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ὅλοι εἶναι ἀπαραίτητοι. Ὁ ἓνας συμπληρώνει τὸν πνευματικὸν χαρακτήρα τοῦ ἄλλου καὶ ὅλοι εἴμεθα ὑποχρεωμένοι νὰ ἀνεχώμεθα ὅχι μόνον τὸν πνευματικὸν του χαρακτήρα, ἀλλὰ ἀκόμη καὶ τὶς ἀδυναμίες, ποὺ ἔχει σὰν ἄνθρωπος.

Καὶ πάλιν ἔρχομαι νὰ ζητήσω εἰλικρινῶς συγνώμην ἀπὸ ὅλους, διότι ἐτόλμησα νὰ γράψω. Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ἓνας ἀπλὸς μοναχὸς καὶ τὸ ἔργον μου εἶναι νὰ προσπαθῶ, ὅσο μπορῶ, νὰ ἀπεκδύωμαι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον καὶ νὰ βοηθῶ τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, μέσω τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τῆς προσευχῆς. Ἀλλὰ ἐπειδὴ ἔφθασαν μέχρι τὸ ἐρημητήριό μου θλιβερὲς εἰδήσεις διὰ τὴν Ἀγίαν Ὁρθοδοξίαν μας ἐπόνεσα πολὺ καὶ ἐθεώρησα καλὸ νὰ γράψω αὐτὰ ποὺ ἐνοιῶθα.

Ἄς εὐχηθοῦμε ὅλοι νὰ δώσῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὴν χάριν Του καὶ ὁ καθένας μας ἂς βοηθήσῃ μὲ τὸν τρόπον του διὰ τὴν δόξαν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Μὲ πολὺν σεβασμὸν πρὸς ὅλους.

Ἐν Ἀγίῳ Ὅρει τῇ 23ῃ Ἰανουαρίου 1969,

Παῖσιος μοναχὸς



Ὅταν ἡ μεγάλη Ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀγγίζει τὴν καρδιά καὶ τὸ νοῦ, τότε στὴ φλόγα αὐτῆς τῆς ἁγίας Ἀγάπης τὸ πνεῦμα μας ἀγκαλιάζει ὁλόκληρη τὴν πλάση μὲ Ἀγάπη μεγάλης εὐσπλαχνίας, καὶ ἡ αἴσθησις τῆς μετάβασης στὴν Θεία αἰωνιότητα ἀποκτᾷ ἀκατανίκητη δύναμη. Αὐτὸ τὸ γεγονός εἶναι τὸ πῶς μεγαλειῶδες ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ γεγονότα στὴν ἱστορία τοῦ ἔκπτωτου κόσμου: Ὁ Θεὸς ἐνώνεται μὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ γίνονται ἓνα.

Συγχωρέστε με, ἀλλὰ δὲν ἔχω τὴν ἱκανότητα νὰ ἐκφράσω μὲ λόγια τὴν «πληρότητα ζωῆς» ποὺ μας χαρίστηκε στὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Δὲν βλέπω, πῶς εἶναι δυνατόν νὰ προσεγγίσω ἐκεῖνο, ποὺ θὰ μπορούσε νὰ ἐκφράσῃ—παρὰ τὸ ὅτι εἶναι τόσο παράδοξο—τὸ θαυμαστὸ βάθος τῆς ζωῆς ποὺ γεμίζει τὴν καρδιά.

Ἰδοὺ, μισῶ τὸν ἑαυτό μου γι' αὐτὸ ποὺ εἶμαι. Ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτομίσος, ἡ προσευχὴ γίνεται κατὰ κάποιο τρόπο παράφρων, καταβροχθίζει τὰ πάντα καὶ μὲ ἀποσπᾷ ἀπὸ κάθε τι κτιστό. Μεταφέρει τὸ πνεῦμα μου σὲ φωτοφόρο ἀπειρότητα, σὲ ἀπερίγραπτη ἄβυσσος. Ἐκεῖ, ξεχνῶ τὴν πίκρα τοῦ τυραννικοῦ αὐτομίσους: Τὰ πάντα μεταβάλλονται σὲ ἀγάπη Θεοῦ, μέσα στὴν ὁλοκληρωτικὴ ἀπελευθέρωση ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτό. Μὲ τόσο παράδοξο τρόπο συνυφαίνεται τὸ αὐτομίσος μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν Θεό.

**Ἀρχ. Σωφρονίου Σαχάρωφ**  
«Περὶ Προσευχῆς»



## OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND OF THE END TIMES

*By Archbishop Theophan of Poltava the New Recluse.*

Born in 1873, the son of a village priest, Archbishop Theophan studied at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, where he remained to teach after graduating. Two years later he became a hieromonk, and in 1914 he was appointed director of the Academy.

He was of a highly spiritual cast of soul and a great man of prayer, for which he became widely known. He unfailingly fulfilled his monastic rule, often spending entire nights in prayer; he also attended all of the divine services which took place in the nearby cathedral. If for some reason he was unable to do this, he would read the daily cycle of services standing in the corner of his cell. This he did even while traveling, always carrying about with himself the necessary service books.

He was thoroughly steeped in the Patristic sources. When anyone came to him with a question, he tried to avoid saying anything of his own but always went straight to his bookshelves, to the writings of the Holy Fathers. There he invariably found a precise and fully satisfying answer. He was himself a walking encyclopedia of all the various branches of theology and in general, of whatever pertained to the inner spiritual life. His profound theological understanding was reflected in his sermons which spoke clearly of his close affinity with the Holy Fathers. The students loved and respected him greatly and it was a great loss when he was relieved of his post at the Academy to assume the duties of a ruling Archpastor.

At one time he became the spiritual advisor to the Imperial Family. Later, he would recall with emotion how he often celebrated the Liturgy at the Court church on weekdays and how the Empress herself and all four Grand duchesses chanted. The Revolution overtook Vladika as Archbishop of Poltava, from whence he immigrated with the White Army through Constantinople to Bulgaria, where he lived for many years.

Vladika Theophan suffered many severe assaults by the demonic powers who tried to frighten the man of prayer into ceasing his labors. Several of his cell attendants were witnesses to these attacks. One such witness was Bishop Seraphim, at that time in charge of the Russian church communities in Bulgaria. Once, he and Vladika Theophan were traveling together in the same compartment of an overnight train. Bishop Seraphim suddenly woke up and saw an enormous black cat with flaring eyes in the middle of the compartment, he heard the loud voice of Vladika Theophan: "In the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God get away from me unclean spirit." The cat hissed, sending a shower of sparks, and then vanished. This so terrified Bishop Seraphim that he refused to ride again in the same compartment with Vladika Theophan.

Vladika's temperament was unsuited to administrative demands. Like Bishop Theophan the Recluse, he asked to be relieved of his duties, and in 1931 he left for France to spend the rest of his life in solitude. There he settled as a hermit in

some caves, where he could give himself over entirely to a life of prayer. Truly, here was a desert-father of recent times whose unceasing warfare for the sake of the kingdom of heaven drew upon him the grace of God, endowing him with gifts of prophecy and clairvoyance witnessed by his spiritual children.

† † †

**For when they say: peace and security! Then will it befall them (i.e. people, devoid of love for truth—2 Thes 2:10) sudden perdition, like the anguish of birth befalls the one, having in her womb, and shall not escape.**

† † †

### First Letter

You ask, what is the difference between a naturally good life and a Christian life?

The difference is great. A Christian lives a life of grace, whereas a person who is just good by nature is without grace. We see how important this condition is by the fact that we are saved by God's grace, not by good deeds. Good deeds which are performed for the sake of Christ and in the spirit of His commandments make us able to receive the grace of God. Without God's grace, regardless of how good a person is, he cannot be saved. Cornelius the Centurion performed many good deeds, but it was revealed to him that he could be saved only when the Holy Spirit would descend upon him through the Apostle Peter. This concept is developed simply and in depth in St. Seraphim's well known dialogue with Motovilov: "On the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit." In essence, without God's grace there cannot be any truly good deeds. The same may be said in part about tears. While a person is imperfect his tears are imperfect. There are different types of tears. Sometimes they originate in sensitivity, sometimes out of grief, sometimes out of anger—these are not Christian tears. True tears come about only when one is grieving over one's sins or out of gratitude to our Lord for His goodness towards us and His mercies. To live a life full of grace one must avoid distractions and preserve peace of heart. It is therefore more beneficial for one desiring a life of grace to live a more secluded life, rather than to become absorbed in all sorts of worldly activities.

### Second Letter

Reverend friend, are you paying attention to what is happening in the world? All that the ministers of all countries are doing now is talking about peace in the world. The ministers of France and her allies are also insisting on guarantees of security, as of the most essential condition for that "peace." And the following words by Apostle Paul from his epistle to Thessalonians come to mind: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief at night. For when they say: peace and security! Then will it befall them (i.e., people devoid of love for truth—2 Thes 2:10) sudden perdition, like the anguish of birth befalls the one, having in her womb, and shall not escape".

It is necessary for all, who love the truth, not only to observe the signs of the times, but also to make appropriate conclusions from these observations. Regarding the Church life it is indicated to us by the Savior, as one of the most incredible

phenomena of last times, that then *the stars will fall from heavens*. (Mt 24:29). According to the explanation of Savior Himself, stars: are *Angels of Churches*, that is, Bishops (Rev 1:20). The religious and moral fall of Bishops appears, as it were, one of the most characteristic signs of the last times. Especially horrible is the fall of Bishops when they fall away from the dogmas of the faith or, as the Apostle puts it, when they *want to pervert the Gospel of Christ*. (Gal 1:7). To those the Apostle commands to proclaim *anathema: He who dares to preach not what we are preaching, he says, let him be anathema*. (Gal 1:9). And it is not right to procrastinate this either, he continues: *From a heretic, after the first and the second admonition, turn away, knowing that he's depraved and sinning unto his condemnation*. (Tit 3:10-11). Otherwise, that is, for indifference and apostasy from the truth, God's judgment may befall you: *Inasmuch as you're lukewarm and neither hot, nor cold, I shall spew you out of My mouth*. (Rev. 3:15-16). The dark clouds on the world horizon are thickening. Nearing is God's judgment of nations and hypocrite Christians, starting from heretical and lukewarm hierarchs...

### Third letter

What I say, I do not say on my own authority. But, rather, it is that which I heard from divinely-inspired startsy\*; that is what I have conveyed. The Lord will show His mercy to Russia, for the sake of the small number of true believers remaining in her.

In Russia, the startsy used to say, through the will of the people, the Monarchy and Autocratic rule will be restored. The Lord has forechosen a future Tsar. He will be a man of burning faith, of brilliant mind and of iron will. First of all, he will bring about order in the Orthodox Church, by removing all the false, heresy-preaching and lukewarm hierarchs. And very many indeed—almost all, with few exceptions—will be those removed by him; while new ones, true and steadfast hierarchs, will take their place. Through the female line, he will be from the lineage of the Romanovs. Russia will be a mighty state, but only for “a short time.” After that, the Antichrist will come into the world, with all the horrors of the end, as described in the Apocalypse.

(\*) *Plural of starets (a spiritual adviser, monk or religious hermit, an elder)*



**E**cumenism is the common name for the pseudo-Christianity... of Western Europe. Within it is the heart of European humanism, with Papism as its head. All of pseudo-Christianity, all of those pseudo-churches, are nothing more than one heresy after another. Their common evangelical name is Panheresy.

**Blessed Father Justin Popovich**

## THE JESUS PRAYER IS NECESSARY FOR CLERGY AND LAYMEN WHO LIVE IN THE WORLD

Source: “*A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain*,” by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, pp. 152-158.

**Y**ou must realize the necessity of purification from passions. You should not only want to make others well but you should believe that you, too, like all of us, are full of passions. Each passion is a hell. You should also know that, according to what we have said, the Jesus prayer is a remedy which cures the soul and purifies it. That does not mean that the Jesus prayer is a panacea but rather it is the means by which man is united with God, Who is the only one Who purifies and illumines the soul. He is the physician of our soul and body. He is *the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world*. (Jn 1:9). As eye salve cleanses the vision and enables already existing objects to be seen, similarly, each person must will to be purified and transformed and seek, through prayer, illumination which comes from God.

—Do you believe that we, who work in the world, can do what the monks do concerning this divine work of prayer?

—Even if you cannot do exactly what they do, still you can achieve many things. It must be made clear, however, that noetic prayer is one thing and praying the Jesus prayer another. Noetic prayer, as some hesychasts practice it, requires a life without distraction. It requires quietness and many other things, as we have already described. If you cannot practice noetic prayer in the world—and this is very difficult—you must pray with the Jesus prayer at set times or say it whenever you can. It will do you great good.

—Can you suggest to me some useful and practical ways?

—Apart from church services, you should also designate a certain hour for the practice of the Jesus prayer, for meditation on the name of Jesus. You should start the practice of the Jesus prayer gradually and proceed according to your thirst and the grace you feel. One can start by saying the prayer for half an hour in the morning before sunrise, and half an hour in the evening, after the compline, before sleep. It is necessary for there to be a fixed hour for prayer which should not be changed for any reason, not even for good works. It is possible, for example, that somebody may come for confession at that particular time. If he is not ill or if it is not very urgent you should not postpone the time you have set aside for the Jesus prayer. The same should happen concerning good works. A peaceful and quiet room where no noises are heard is also necessary for one to start the work of the Jesus prayer, in the way we mentioned before. That is, in the beginning we should warm our heart or read a book of the Fathers, which creates in us a feeling of compunction, and then we should say the Jesus prayer either with the lips, the mind or the heart, according to our spiritual progress. Little by little the time devoted to the

Jesus prayer will increase and it will sweeten our hearts, and we shall long for it. But, I repeat, in the beginning we need to force ourselves to say the prayer even for a short time. It will do us great good.

— Is it enough, this short period of time?

— It is not enough but when there is a good disposition and humility, God fills up what is lacking in prayer. Since God is so sympathetic to our downfalls, won't He be extremely merciful to us in the struggle for our transformation? He fills up whatever is lacking. He takes into account even the special circumstances of each one of us. It may be that one hour of your prayer will be more blessed than the many hours of a monk, because you are also busy with other works.

I admired the discretion of this Athonite monk, of this incarnate angel. He distinguishes all problems with admirable ability and puts everything in its proper perspective.

—You should know, however, he went on, that the devil will expose you to many temptations during prayer, as I said previously. Many incidents will come up to make you stop praying. But you should also know that God is testing you through these trials to determine if you really want to practice the Jesus prayer. In such a case, if you persevere, God will come to your aid and drive away all difficulties.

—But, Geronda, if, while praying, thoughts come to my mind of preparing a speech or a sermon; of doing something for the love of my brother, must I abandon them?

—Yes, you must abandon them. For, even when good thoughts come during prayer (I refer to the set times of prayer), the devil exploits them to obstruct us from prayer. If the devil realizes that we are ready to give up the Jesus prayer for such things, he will send us many thoughts of the same kind even at the restored set time. But in this case, neither do we pray, nor are we purified nor have our brethren really benefited. For the preparation of a sermon, which has replaced prayer, is without fruit. It won't benefit the brethren.

— It happens sometimes that we return to our cell exhausted, after having spent a lot of our strength, and then we cannot pray our usual rule. What should we do in these cases?

—We should not give up the Jesus prayer even then. St. Symeon recommends that serving our brothers should never be the cause for us to be deprived of the Jesus prayer, because we then lose many things. We should never find excuses to avoid prayer. "Labor in service according to your strength; and in your cell, persevere in prayer with contrition, vigilance and continuous tears; and do not have it in your mind; I have labored exceedingly today, let me diminish the time of prayer because of physical tiredness. For, I tell you that no matter how much you work beyond your strength in serving others, if you deprive yourself of prayer, be sure that you have lost something very great." Half an hour of the Jesus prayer is worth as much as three hours of deep sleep. The prolonged Jesus prayer rests and calms us. So, even from this point of view, it is an invigorating physiological remedy. My dear father, wrap up

all your works in the golden mantle of the Jesus prayer. It is because they work much with their brain and not with their heart, that many of the brethren have tribulations and are in anguish in their spiritual endeavor. They become tired by thinking what to say, whereas when they live in grace, then the thoughts come, they literally spring forth like a rushing river. It is because they do not have a good link with the Jesus prayer that the brethren quarrel among themselves, do not have peace, are afflicted by unjust attacks and do not rejoice over them, according to the commandment of Christ. St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, being guided by a long tradition of several centuries, suggests that the Bishop should be elected from the rank of the monks. Having monastic consciousness, he will not be troubled by persecutions, slander, accusations or the anger of men, since he himself is the first to recognize his own sinfulness and to accuse himself. Thus he acquires all the fruits we mentioned before—mainly love, which flows from much grace, and freedom from falling into sin, as the Fathers say.

—What do you mean, father, by monastic consciousness?

—I mean obedience, humility, self-condemnation and an insatiable thirst for the Jesus prayer—obedience to the Geronda and the spiritual father. The monk should be humble toward all people and his humility should be connected with the struggle for purification from passions. We should not undertake many works, because, unfortunately, we are influenced in this matter by other heresies. The greatest work is to acquire humility and holiness. Then we are truly rich. The Church is not a ministry of social services, but it is the treasury of divine grace. Priests are not social workers but those who guide the people of God. And this cannot be done unless they have humility and holiness. Without holiness and humility the greatest social work is soon obliterated, whereas when we have humility and holiness of life, even the smallest social work acquires extraordinary dimensions. Humility should be connected with self-condemnation, too, that is with self-accusation. We should be the first to accuse ourselves. We should attach the respect that the others show us to our priesthood and not to ourselves. We should attribute the accusations of others to our own sinful state and not to our priesthood. We will experience then peace and much grace from God, and will drive out every cause which makes us hate our brother. There must also be insatiable thirst for the Jesus prayer. We should not consider the Jesus prayer an opportunity, but we should consider it as life itself. We should move within prayer. Our theology and our preaching should be born within its holy atmosphere. We should also have our rule and do it every day. When we live in this way the world is then benefited beyond measure. Whoever one may be, either priest or bishop, he should always have one concern: not to lose his monastic consciousness. It is written in the "Sayings of the Desert Fathers": "It was related of Abba Netras, the disciple of Abba Sylvanus, that when he dwelt in his cell on Mount Sinai, he treated himself prudently, with



regard to the needs of his body, but when he became bishop at Pharan, he curbed himself with great austerities. His disciple said to him, "Abba, when we were in the desert, you did not practice such asceticism." "The old man said to him, "There in the desert I had interior peace and poverty and I wished to manage my body so as not to be ill and not to need what I did not have. But now I am in the world and among its cares, and even if I am ill here, there will be someone to look after me and so I do this in order not to destroy the monk in me." Those who have the consciousness of a monk feel the need to receive a blessing for whatever work they do. They entrust it to the Bishop and to an experienced spiritual father to check it and correct it during its course and at its end. They do not want praises for what they do, because he who is honored or praised more than he deserves loses much. Wherever you are, in the street, in the car you should say the Jesus prayer; "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" and "Most Holy Mother of God save me." We should often attend the Divine Liturgy with the proper preparation and participate in the undefiled Mysteries. All creation praises and glorifies God. A priest who does not offer the Divine Liturgy is in discord in this wonderful praise. It would be good to chant from time to time the Canon to our Lord Jesus Christ which is found in the Book of Hours. You should also chant the special prayers addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ and found at the end of the book: "The Unseen Warfare", composed by St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite. He urges us to evoke often, the most sweet, joy-producing and the cause of all good, saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only with our lips, but also with our heart and mind.

You should also pray for others, too, because God has entrusted his own people to you. Therefore it is your duty to withdraw and pray for peace and illumination of his people. As great Moses did...



## THE UNMERCENARY SAINTS & PHYSICIANS

*From an Orthodox pamphlet.*

Among the *nine orders of saints*, such as the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and Fathers of the Church, is found the class of the "unmercenary saint-physicians" (the holy Anargyroi, literally, the "silverless" saints).

The *Priest's Service Book* mentions several of these "wonder-working Unmercenararies:" Kosmas and Damianos, Kyros and Ioannes, Sampson and Diomedes, Mokius and Akinatus, Thalalaius, Hermolaus, and Panteleimon. All these saints

seem to have had some kind of medical training. One of the most popular was St. Panteleimon, martyred under Emperor Maximian about the year 305, according to tradition. It is believed that he was born in Nicomedeia, a city in the northern part of Asia Minor, near the Black Sea. As a youth he bore the name Pantoleon. His father, Eustorgius, was a pagan, while his mother, Euboula, was born into a Christian family. It was she who encouraged him to become a Christian, which he did under the tutelage of the priest Hermolaus.

Panteleimon had studied medicine under the well-known physician Euphrosynos and was well-known for the healing art when he was baptized. He quickly obtained the reputation of an "unmercenary healer," a man of philanthropy toward the poor.

The traditional story of the saint's martyrdom incorporates the healing dimension of his ministry. The saint is credited with healing a blind man, but when the healing comes to the attention of the emperor, he first kills the man who has been healed and then brings martyrdom to the saint by torturing him and finally having his head cut off. One of the hymns of his feast, held annually on *July 27th*, characteristically expresses the pious expectations of the faithful: *Streams of grace and healing freely flow forth as from a great fountain upon all that seek for the aid of Panteleimon, the godly-wise physician. Come, therefore, ye that thirst for strength and health, be ye filled.*

As a healer, he is *an imitator of the Merciful One*, but his powers are not his own, for he is *one who received from Him (Christ) the grace of healing.*

The physician-saints are readily available to heal those who suffer from illnesses. As with many classes of saints, their hymns have become formalized and repeat similar phrases; they give evidence of a coherent attitude. Those of Sts. Kosmas and Damianos, who are commemorated on *November 1* each year, serve as an example: *Living humbly on earth...you were granted great gifts! Going everywhere to heal the sick...heal now our sufferings. You kept the purity of your souls stainless, opposing material desires...you require no gold when healing the sick... With Christ always working within you...you work miracles in the world by healing the sick...receiving gifts from Christ our Savior, who grants us great mercy...freely you have received, freely give to us.*

We see here an undercurrent of opposition to the practitioners of rational medicine who refused to treat those unable to pay. In such situations the poor found that their only recourse was the unmercenary physician-saint. Many honored such saints, as witnessed by not only the many churches of St. Panteleimon, but most significantly, the richly endowed Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon on the Holy Mount Athos. Nevertheless, Christ was seen as the source of their healing powers, whether through medicine or prayers.

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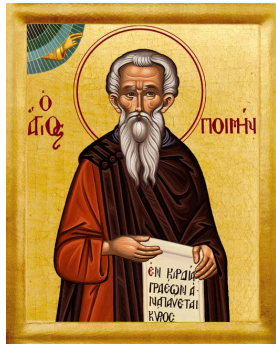
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## THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

A PROTEST AGAINST THE RECENT EVENTS OF GODLESS  
ECUMENISM

*Source: "Orthodoxos Typos," March 16, 2007 issue, p. 1, translated from the original Greek by the Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros (Thessaloniki), [www.impantokratoros.gr](http://www.impantokratoros.gr) (edited for syntax).*

With this article we would like to express our deepest pain, sorrow and concern for what is happening lately against the unblemished, beloved Orthodoxy by members of the anti-Christian heresy of ecumenism.

They make us forgo our hermitic stillness and raise our humble voice together with other Orthodox resisters; hierarchs, prelates, priests, monks, nuns and lay Orthodox members, "let us stand aright, let us stand with fear." The Grace of God made us worthy to have as patron saints and guides in our monastic life Righteous Savva the Sanctified and Saint John Damascene, the first-defenders in the battle against the Monophysites and Iconoclasts. Those things which have come to pass at the joint-conferences and liturgical co-celebrations of the godless ecumenists with, unfortunately, the support of "Orthodox" Patriarchs and Hierarchs, has overcome the limits of our charity and patience. Our Orthodox Faith is played with, trespassed and distorted from within and unfortunately the majority remains silent.

Our aforementioned Holy Fathers, whose graceful presence we experience daily, are calling us more than ever before to bravely

follow in their footsteps and become vigilant guardians of our over 1,500-year-old, "God-built", Orthodox Faith. The Sacred and Holy Lavra of Saint Savva boasts in the Lord because it is the cradle of monastics - the mother and sustenance of a multitude of Monk Martyrs, Confessors and Hierarchs throughout the ages. All our monastery's Saints, both ancient and contemporary, "finished the good fight, kept the faith" and were not, as it was blasphemously written, "unlucky victims of the evil snake" but, full of the Holy Spirit, living even after death as silently declared by the incorrupt relics of Saint Savva. From them, we have learned not to offer incense to, nor to chant the polychronium for, or honor the heretical Pope and the other impious, unrepentant heretics, but on the contrary to abhor and condemn their insane worship.

For starters, a simple visit to the Holy Lands of Palestine, would be enough for the champions of the false coalition of Latins to personally see with their own eyes and ascertain for themselves the underhanded, devious members of Uniates and other false Christians who maintain that we are all one and the same.

Brethren, "God did not give us a spirit of meekness but of power." The times call us to repentance and true confession of faith. Let nobody become a turncoat and traitor. We should be believers and remain Orthodox until our death, that we may win the crown of life "which our Lord promised to those who love Him".

With hearty, "fighting" greetings and cordial prayers in the Lord,

Archimandrite Evdokimos



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

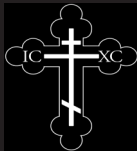
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## In This Issue:

- “Original Sin” and the Mother of God (p. 6)
- On the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Purifying Treasure (p. 7)
- How to Live According to the Faith (p.13)
- RFID Technology and Its Eschatological Implications (p. 15)
- Repentance: The Mystery that Grants the Beginning of Christian Life (p. 17)
- On the Use of Our Baptismal Name (p. 18)



- Ἐγκώμιον στὴ Κοίμησιν τῆς Θεοτόκου (σελ. 8)
- Διδαχὲς Ἀγ. Νεκταρίου - Μέρους 2<sup>ον</sup> (σελ. 10)
- Οἱ Ὑποστηρικταὶ τῆς Ἀλήθειας (σελ. 12)



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## THE PAPACY AND ITS UNHOLY STATE: A WORLDWIDE WAKE-UP CALL TO ORTHODOX LEADERS

By Raphael Masterjohn, from “The Light of Orthodoxy,” Vol. 1, No. 1 (07/15/2007).

On July 10, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI reasserted the “universal primacy” of his Roman Catholic church, approving a document released on Tuesday, July 10, 2007, proclaiming that Orthodox Churches are “defective.” This was the Pontiff’s latest manner of insulting Jesus Christ and His True Church.

For almost a thousand years since the great Apostasy of Rome, having separated from the true Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Papacy has falsely proclaimed itself the Catholic Church. Orthodox leaders of our times know that the Orthodox Church alone is the true Catholic Church, and we all confess this in our Holy Creed. These leaders have thought that dialogues with the Papists could bear fruit, hoping that Rome would renounce its errors and embrace the unchanging Orthodox faith. The Papacy will never budge a single inch away from its fundamental dogma: “the Pope is the only super-bishop ruling over all, to be questioned by no one, and the infallible representative of God on earth.”

The Pope says that the Orthodox Churches are indeed “churches” and that they enjoyed “many elements of sanctification and truth.” “But,” he said, “they lack something because they do not recognize the primacy of the Pope—and are defective causing them harm.”

The Pope insults the Lord Christ Himself, who is the Head of the Orthodox Church, His Body, for there is no sepa-

ration between Christ and Orthodox Christians who live in Christ and in whom Christ lives. The Pontiff thus insinuates that Christ is defective and wounded to His harm. For whatever is said about Christ’s body, the Church applies to the Head of the Body. Christ established this truth, saying: *And the King shall answer them, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.* (Mt 25:40). Insulting the Body of Christ necessarily redounds upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body.

### A Loud, Wake-Up Call to All Orthodox Leaders, Worldwide

*Be not deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that shall he reap.* (Gal 6:7).

Papal primacy, with its infamous and inane self-proclamation of infallibility, is the most damaging heresy ever to wage war against the true Church and Body of Christ, and it has been waging this war for over a thousand years. The Pope shamelessly proclaims to the world that the Papacy is the Church that Christ founded on earth. No wonder the name of Christ is blasphemed among the nations, for the Pope is not at all like Christ. Christ said of Himself, *Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and humble in my heart and you shall find rest for your souls.* (Mt 11:29). Christ descended into the world to offer Himself as a ransom, to be mocked and spat upon, to be struck and crowned with thorns, and be crucified. Then, as our Creed says: *On the third day He arose from the dead . . . and He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end.*

In 1870, the Papacy proclaimed the wretched idea of its own infallibility to all its followers and the whole world. Many Papal bishops protested vociferously but to no avail, for the travesty

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His truth be brought forth.

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was already accomplished. Their protests fell on deaf ears, and gradually the whole Papacy accepted the most unacceptable dogma of supreme arrogance—the infallible man! With an infallible man sitting in Rome, what need is there for the God-Man Christ? They assert that He is away up in heaven, but we have our own man-god sitting in Rome. All our hope is in him, for he can never lead us astray as he is protected with infallibility. The Pope, having the only keys to heaven, promises to open the pearly gates for those who honor him and pay him homage.

Poor deceived people, is your promise of salvation in the Pope or in Jesus Christ? Was the Pope incarnate and crucified for you? Christ is calling you to abandon the Papacy. *I am the light of the world, whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.* (Jn 8:12). The Pope is not the light of the world, and he knows it well. All the Vatican knows that the Roman Papacy was officially established on forged documents which supposedly gave him all religious and secular power in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, holding all the keys to everything. Open your Bibles and you will see that the Pope cannot bring you to heaven, for each one of us will stand before God alone and be judged for what we have done in this world. Christ does not call us to honor and pay homage to a particular Bishop, Patriarch or Pope. He does call us to abandon all sin, to pray with fasting and tears, to struggle, and as He commands: *Be holy for I am holy. Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.* (Mt 5:48).

### Deception, Slaughter and Forced Conversions

Billions have been deceived into believing that the Papacy, even after 1870 with the Pope now propelled to the utter pinnacle of haughtiness, is the same Church that Christ founded. But it is not the same for the Light of Orthodoxy, Christ, is the Good Shepherd, and arrogance and falsehood are foreign to the God-Man. For nearly a thousand years, since the great schism, or more properly, the

Great Apostasy, the Papacy has both openly and clandestinely waged war against Christ and His Orthodox Church, slaughtering countless martyrs and witnesses, who refused to become enslaved to the Pope of Rome, if only by commemorating his name. As recently as WWII, the Papist Archbishop Stepinac was behind the Ustashi's slaughter of almost a million Serbian Orthodox Christians. Many were offered a single opportunity to survive—to reject Holy Orthodoxy with Christ as their Head and Leader in faith and recognize the Supreme Pontiff and Pope of Rome as their head and leader

in faith. The bloody Stepinac, the war criminal who blessed the slaughter of Orthodox Serbs, was recently sainted by the Pope of Rome. As St. John of Kronstadt declared: *The Pope usurped the authority of Christ... a string of blood runs through their history.* (from "My Life in Christ"). Much of the blood spilled and blessed by Papal agents was that of Orthodox Christians, as history confirms.

Dialogue with this heretical enemy is forbidden by Holy Scripture. *A man that is a heretic, after the first and second*

In light of recent events, related to the self-declaration of the Latin Pope Benedict XVI and his reassertion of "universal primacy" for the Latins' church, Orthodox Heritage has expanded this month's issue to an additional four pages to accommodate this excellent article, written from the heart of an Orthodox layman. May our Lord reward him for his courageous stand and may all of our clergy, and especially our hierarchy, heed to this layman's wake-up call.

*admonishment, reject, knowing that such a man is subverted and sins being self-condemned.* (Tit 3:10-11). If some say that the Papacy is not heresy, St. John the Theologian and Holy Apostle advises: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have continued with us: but they went out that they may be seen, that they were not of us.* (1 Jn 2:19).

### **The Pope Does Not Desire Union**

The Pope has no desire for union, and this demonstrates the hypocritical intent of the Papacy. The dialogues that are taking place are a sham, for why are there dialogues when the Pope openly declares that he does not seek union. The Pope cannot possibly alter his concept of being the “true church.” He does not want to repent and join Orthodoxy, and for this reason, in his mania, he calls us “defective.” His statement assures us of these things. His only goal is absolute dominion and authority over the Orthodox Church of Christ. The Devil has tried this in the past and he will try again. The Pope’s desire is one: to seize us and place us under his dominion and authority and thus succeed in robbing us of our freedom in Christ. He has said that he will seek a new way to exercise his authority as a robber who tells you that he will find a new way to rob your house.

The Pope has always sought to spiritually plunder and rob Orthodox Christians of their true Faith. He has demonstrated this many times, especially during the Fourth Crusade, when the Papists sacked the City, raping and slaughtering its inhabitants. Later, his soldiers of fortune violated the Holy Mountain and massacred many monastics. What was the monastics’ crime? They refused to pray with the Papists and pay homage to their unholy leader, the Pope. The Pope went on to invent Unia, wherein Orthodox Christians receive significant material help from the Pope and keep all their traditions, but lose their Orthodoxy, for they were forced to commemorate “the (un)Holy Father, the Pope of Rome.” These ex-Orthodox traitors became known as “Uniates.” What is their goal since abandoning the true Faith? They join the Pope and wage war against the faithful Orthodox—a war that continues to this day. The instant they accepted this offer and fell into the trap, they lost the grace of the Holy Spirit as well as their eternal salvation, for they chose the Pope in preference to Jesus Christ. They are despised by Catholics and shunned by the Orthodox Christians; they have accordingly surrendered their eternal inheritance found only within the true Faith, the Orthodox Faith. This is what will happen to all Orthodox

Christians who join the Pope. It is spiritual suicide, for Christ will place them among the goats.

### **The Pope Provides Clarity of His True Position**

The Pope has indeed cleared the air. He has proclaimed all future discussions to be null and void, for he has made it perfectly clear that nothing expected will come of them, and the Papacy will never change. It is the duty of all Orthodox leaders to immediately cease the folly of wasteful and dangerous dialogue with the enemy of Orthodoxy. He has insulted Christ and His Body as defective, which includes the Theotokos, the Holy Apostles, Holy Orthodox Fathers, and millions of Saints, Martyrs and Confessors. For all of these constitute the Body of Christ..

### **The Theotokos Proclaims the Papists Enemies of Her Son and Herself**

When the Papists attacked Mt. Athos in the 13th century, the Theotokos warned a monk through her holy icon, as he was chanting to her, *Rejoice!* From her icon, she suddenly replied: *And you rejoice, holy elder; go and warn the Elder Thomas at the Monastery that my enemies and my Son’s enemies are coming.*

Indeed, the inimical Papists did come as the Virgin foretold, demanding that the monastics submit and commemorate the Roman Pontiff. They ruthlessly slaughtered monks with the sword, others they drowned or burned to death with fire. They were offering the monastics life in return for a single bow to their master, the tyrannical Pope. Let all of us from this day on, remember these words of the Theotokos: *My enemies and my Son’s enemies are coming.* Let us ignite a fire in our hearts to fight against the Papacy and all heresies, as our Forefathers fought against heresies in their days, preserv-

ing and passing down to us the Holy Orthodox Faith. The Holy Theotokos leaves no doubt that the Papacy is the arch-enemy of the Orthodox Church, and they continuously seek to deceive Orthodox Christians so that we abandon the true Faith and submit to this imposter.

### **Orthodox Leaders, Abandon This Enemy of our Faith**

Orthodox leaders, with the Orthodox blood of Jesus Christ coursing through your body and soul, it is your sacred duty to lead us to victory over heresy and to openly challenge the Papacy with all its false claims, false dogmas and false hope of salvation. Boldly proclaim to the whole world his insults and blasphemy against Christ and His Holy Church, purchased with His Blood. *If God be for us, who can be against us?* (Rom 8:31). Think of this: if one of us dared to claim for ourselves



**The Pillars of Orthodoxy: Sts. Photios of Constantinople, Gregory Palamas of Thessaloniki, & Mark, of Ephesus**



what the Pope claims for himself, who would tolerate or give attention to such a person? Most people would say that we have lost our sanity. But what does this say about the Pope? For the Pope claims supreme primacy and infallibility, seeking homage from the whole world and the honor and glory for which he thirsts.

Wherever he goes he longs repeatedly to hear the cry of the masses: "Viva il Papa." Great effort is made by thousands to draw near the Pope. However, not much effort is exerted to draw closer to Christ. Christ taught us to draw near Him, follow His example, and to fast and pray that our life may reflect Him with meekness, humility and the burning desire to suffer for the sake of Christ and Holy Orthodoxy. The Lord who came down from heaven desired no earthly glory, *My kingdom is not of this world.* (Jn 18:36). Indeed, for His desire was to undergo His voluntary Holy Passion and to be crucified in the flesh, in order to save and resurrect into eternal life all those who chose to honor and love Him. But the Pope does not seek the glory of God but his own glory before the whole world. He firmly demands that he be recognized as the one and only "super Bishop," rising high above all mankind and high above every other Bishop or Patriarch. He claims that he is the only authority in the Church. Every clergyman and layman must be subservient to him. The Pope asserts that he alone is Christ's Vicar, having been "appointed by the God-Man." Indeed, they do not believe that the God-Man is present in the Papacy. But, if Christ the God-Man is absent from the Papacy, the Holy Spirit is also absent, for wherever Christ is, there also are the Father and Holy Spirit. The Pope not only usurped Christ's authority but also the authority of the Holy Spirit, claiming to be the guide of the entire church.

Let us attend as Jesus Christ establishes who is the genuine Guide and Leader of His Church: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come.* (Jn 16:12-13). The Holy Spirit is the Comforter of Orthodox Christians and guides us into all truth.

### **The Imposter Pope Speaks**

The Popes theorizes: "Christ is not present but absent and invisible. Behold me! I have been appointed by Christ as your head. I am the visible Head of the Church, and only by unity with me are you in the church. Do not think that the Holy Spirit is your guide, for I am your guide and I will lead you into all truth, which I and only I will proclaim from Rome. For God has bestowed upon me alone, universal primacy and authority over the entire world. More than that, it is impossible for me to err in the faith for I alone am the reliable and infallible one! I alone possess the keys to heaven and hell. I stand before you as a humble and gentle man."

Indeed the Pope appears as a harmless and loving man, but the Papacy never ceases to plot and scheme so as to destroy the Orthodox Church which alone stands against his fraudulent empire from below and hampers his quest of absolute dominion over all Christians. For the Lord is the Master, Head and King of Orthodoxy and the Holy Spirit is our Comforter and divine Guide. Certainly the Pope's guide and mentor is not Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit, for Christ clearly says *My kingdom is not of this world.* (Jn 13:86).

### **Jesus Never Gave His Authority to One Man; Certainly He Did Not Confer This on St. Peter**

Jesus Christ has never abandoned His Church, nor did He establish the Pope as his vicar, nor did He give him authority over His Church; for Christ alone is above all men. Christ alone has the primacy in His Church. Christ the God-Man is our sinless and infallible Master, a characteristic that can never apply to any sinful man. Christ refutes Papal claims, as He spoke and gave His divine authority not to one man, not to the Pope or Peter, but to all of his Disciples: Jesus spoke to them, saying: *All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded to you, and lo, I am with you to the close of the age.* (Mt 28:18).

Behold, here is the authority of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church known as Orthodoxy. Jesus Christ never places His authority in the hands of one man, for He demands two or three witnesses in everything. The Papacy apostatized from the Church that Jesus Christ founded and established a strange and new system with tyrannical authority posing as Vicar of Christ. *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Mt 18:20). Christ taught us that He came in His Father's name: *I am come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.* (Jn 5:43). When the Bishop of Rome usurped authority over the whole Church of Christ, he went out in his own name, proclaiming his authority and worldly power, and the world received him and offered him homage.

For the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, for our Holy Faith preserved by Christ, for the rivers of blood shed by martyrs for two thousand years, for our Holy Mother, Orthodoxy, let all faithful and noble Orthodox leaders, worldwide, abandon the inane philo-papism which can only lead us further away from Christ. Let all Orthodox then rise up and with one voice solidly refute the papal mania, which causes the leader the Latins to imagine himself as a savior above all humanity, holding the keys to heaven and hell, and deciding who enters heaven and who is shut out. He is a man who fancies himself as the teacher of mankind, and as the only representative of God on earth. He forbids anyone to judge him for anything, yet claims

to be the absolute judge of everyone. Who would doubt that such egoistic ideas are the ravings of a maniac? How can any reasonable person believe that the meek and humble Christ would leave mankind in the hands of a haughty and arrogant man who claims to possess properties that belong exclusively and unequivocally to God alone?

### **The Pope Spits on Orthodox Christians, Declaring Them "Defective"**

With respect to our Holy Orthodox Faith, he spits out calling us "defective," the one and only Church that constitutes the genuine Body of Christ, and in spitting on us, he does the same to our Lord. Who can remain passive and asleep, upon hearing this clarion call to action? The Pontiff has thrown down the gauntlet. The supreme majestic and pompous Pontiff cries out: "I accuse all Orthodox Christians to be defective. You are harmfully wounded, unable to be saved without my supreme Majesty! If you will be perfect, come under my dominion. You are defective and sorely need me, the only one who can make you whole, for without me you can do nothing." O the audacity and pride!

#### **A Call to Action**

Arise Orthodox Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Bishops, Priests, Deacons and laymen! Let the whole Orthodox world arise for the sake of Holy Orthodoxy on which the wild beast in Rome is now attacking, insulting our Lord and His Body. I beg all of you, do not stand idly by while this apostate claims that he is the Church, that he is the Lord and Master of the Church, that he is the only Head and Guide of the Church. Never again meet with this enemy or communicate about sacred things with him. Will you dare to call the Papacy a sister church again? Will you dare to accuse the Holy Spirit of sanctifying their banalities, asserting their sacraments as valid? Will you again dare to call the pontiff a brother in Christ? Christ himself commands you and all of us to avoid the false teachers and preachers who claim that Christ is with them. *One is your Teacher, Christ, and you are all brothers.* (Mt 23:8). All of us who fail to speak out and separate from them, and challenge their apparent authority over the world, will certainly be condemned by Jesus Christ and cast out of the kingdom as worthless servants.

Renouncing the pseudo-Christ Pope, let us proclaim Christ and His true Church before men. To not confess the true Church and distinguish it from the false churches is the same as to deny Christ. *Whoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.* (Mt 10:32-33).

We, the Orthodox Christians throughout the world, have inherited the unsullied faith of Christ, the faith of the Apostles, the faith of the martyrs and saints, and this faith has been passed down to us, from generation to generation, for two thousand years. As stewards of this precious Faith, it is our sacred duty to defend our Holy Orthodoxy and refute

the Pope along with his insults as he proclaims that Christ and His Body are spiritually defective. As lovers of truth, we always have and always will reject all cries of the wolves to follow a pseudo-Christ, for Christ forewarns us to remain faithful to Him alone. We are His sheep and have no other Shepherd, and as sheep we know our Shepherd, and we will not follow a hireling.

*Then if any man shall say unto you, behold, Christ is here or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so much as to deceive even the chosen ones. Behold, I have told it to you before.* (Mt 24:23-24).

Arise O Lord, show your power and authority! Come and save us who are faithful to You, O Lord! Heap evils upon them, Lord, who are glorious on earth! Take the more humble and meek among them, who are in the enemy's clutches, out of the Papacy and into the bosom of Orthodoxy, granting them and us your great mercy and eternal life. Amen



### **A REFLECTION ON ST. MAKRINA**



One of the most beautiful adornments of a woman is her modesty; immodesty in a woman is the most unnatural and most repulsive spectacle in the world. A wonderful example of feminine modesty was shown by St. Makrina, the sister of Sts. Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Peter of Sebastea.

In her youth, a bitter wound opened up on her breast; even though her mother counseled her to show the wound to a doctor and seek a remedy, Makrina did not agree to it. She had completely dedicated herself to God and would not allow even the thought of exposing her body before men and not even before her own mother.

One evening Makrina earnestly prayed to God; from her eyes tears flowed, which fell to the dust before her. With unwavering confidence in her Lord, with her fingers she mixed the dust with her tears and with that anointed her wound. The next day she awakened healthy. When her mother, with great sorrow entered to see her daughter, Makrina did not want to reveal that the Lord healed her (out of humility, concealing the miracle which she herself performed through her prayer) but begged her mother saying: "I will be healed, my mother, if you place your right hand on my bosom and make the sign of the cross over the spot of the wound." The mother reached out her hand and made the sign of the cross over that spot but did not feel the wound anymore but only the scar of the healed wound.

Thus did St. Makrina conceal her body out of modesty and her miracle-working out of humility.

## “ORIGINAL SIN” AND THE MOTHER OF GOD

*By an Orthodox Priest.*

**F**irst: The use of the term “the stain of Original Sin” is exclusive Roman Catholic “church” terminology and is NOT Orthodox. It simply is one of the many heretical teachings of the Roman Catholics.

The Orthodox position is that we are all born into a sinful world made sinful by the Fall of Adam. No one is or ever has been conceived and born with any type of a “stain” resulting from Adam’s sin. In her lifetime, *the Blessed Virgin Mary did not sin by her own choice with the help of the Holy Spirit.*

Because Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that all people bear the stain and guilt of original sin from the moment of their conception in the womb, the Roman Catholics had to devise a “Doctrine of Immaculate Conception” to confirm that the Holy Mother was sinless because, the Vatican rationalized, our Lord could not be born of someone sinful. The immaculate conception doctrine makes her different from the rest of humankind; it makes her not fully human because she was not by her own choice *sinless* but by the *will of God*. If Mary were sinless by God’s choice, not hers, then by virtue of the fact that she was as fully human as all of humankind is and has been, then God could make us all sinless and take away the free will given to us by our being created in His image and likeness.

To better comprehend the Orthodox position and the heresy of the Latins, we will turn to one of the greatest saints of our days, St. John Maximovitch. The following is from the book *Life of the Virgin Mary, The Theotokos* by Blessed John Maximovitch, published by Holy Apostles Women’s Monastery, Buena Vista, CA:

### **The Heterodox Teaching of “Immaculate Conception” and “Original Sin”**

“Saint Ambrose (339-397), Bishop of Milan, comments that, ‘Of all those born of women, there is not a single one who is perfectly holy, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ...’

“The Orthodox Church teaches that the Virgin Mary was conceived by Joachim’s seed and the period of gestation was nine months. None of the ancient holy Fathers (ed.—*only the Roman Catholic Church*) say that God in miraculous fashion purified the Virgin Mary while yet in Anna’s womb. Only Jesus Christ is completely pure of every sin, while all

men, being born of Adam, have borne a flesh subject to the law of sin. Many have correctly indicated that the Virgin Mary, just as all men, endured a battle with sinfulness, but was victorious over temptations and was saved by her Divine Son.”

Blessed John Maximovitch (1896-1966) affirms that The Church teaches that “through the fall of Adam and Eve, all of the human race inherited death, becoming enslaved to the devil through the passions. The progeny of Adam and Eve are not guilty of their first parents’ tasting of the fruit; we are not being punished for this first sin or ‘original sin.’ If, for the sake of argument, we maintain the invalid heterodox teaching that the Theotokos was preserved from this ‘original sin,’ that would make God unmerciful and unjust. If God preserved her, why then does He not purify all men? But then that would have meant saving men before their

birth, apart from their will. This teaching would then deny all her virtues. After all, if Mary, even in the womb of Anna, when she could not even desire anything either good or evil, was preserved by God’s grace from every impurity, and then by that grace was preserved from sin even after her birth, then in what does her virtue consist? She would have been placed in the state of being unable to sin.”

“The Virgin, as a true daughter of Adam and Eve, also inherited death. She was not in a state of never being able to die. Thus, St. John of Damascus writes on the occasion of her Dormition, ‘O pure Virgin, sprung from mortal loins, thine end was conformable to nature.’ ”

Blessed Archbishop John continues to comment that the Virgin was not placed

in the state of being unable to sin, but continued to take care for her salvation and overcame all temptations. The righteousness and sanctity of the Virgin Mary was manifested in the fact that she, being “human with passions—like us,” so loved God and gave herself over to Him, that by her purity she was exalted above all other creatures. Mary was to become the Mother of God, the Theotokos, not because she was to give birth to divinity, but that through her the Word became true man, God-Man.

The last comment made by St. John is so important: “Mary was to become the Mother of God, the Theotokos, not because she was to give birth to divinity, but that through her the Word became true man, God-Man”.

If the Holy Virgin Mary’s human will was interfered with (ed.—*as in Roman Catholic doctrine*) she would not be totally human and therefore Jesus Christ would not be totally man (ed.—*human*) and totally God.”



**MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, SAVE US!**



## ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION, THE PURIFYING TREASURE

*A collection of related writings by St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain, from "Orthodox Life," Vol. 33, No. 5 (Sept-Oct. 1983), pp. 17-18.*

*With the fear of God, faith and love draw near.*

**W**e shall prove from scriptural and patristic witnesses that it is necessary for the faithful and Orthodox Christians to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord frequently throughout their lives, so long as there is no objection from their spiritual father, and that frequent Communion produces great benefits for the soul and body; while delaying this, on the contrary, produces many harmful and destructive results.

The commentary on the eighth and ninth Apostolic Canons emphasizes: *The commands of these canons are very strict and severe, for they excommunicate those who come to the Liturgy but do not remain until the end and take Communion. And other canons of the Councils command the same: namely, that it is wholly proper and appropriate to receive Communion.*

When the Christian communes, what mind could understand the gifts and graces he enjoys after the Divine Communion? How can our feeble tongue express it? Anyone who does not commune frequently is following the opposite way, for he is not sealed with the precious Blood of the Lord, as St. Gregory the Theologian states. And so, my brethren, if we do as our Holy Fathers direct and receive frequently, we have not only the cooperation and help of divine grace during this temporal life, we also have the assistance of the angels of God and of Him who is the Lord of the angels.

This Blood of the Lord is salvation for our souls; with it the soul rejoices, with it, it is beautified, it is warmed; this Blood makes the mind shine more brightly than the light; it makes the soul more beautiful than gold. Those who partake of this Body stand with the angels and archangels and the powers above; with it they are adorned with royal robes and the weapons of the Spirit. Those who receive Communion receive the very King Himself.

Do you see what graces you receive if you commune frequently? Do you see how the mind becomes radiant, thoughts shine, and all the powers of the soul are purified with frequent Communion? If you love mortifying the fleshly passions, commune frequently and you will delight. Without frequent Communion we will not be able to free ourselves from the passions nor raise ourselves to the heights of sobriety. And if we do not partake frequently, if possible, even daily, of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord, then we will not be able to escape the devil.

Many invent all kinds of virtues and think that just by doing these without frequent Communion, they will be saved, which is utterly impossible, since they do not wish to obey God's will

and commune frequently and to follow the Church's standard for every festal Liturgy. To be loved by Christ through frequent Communion of the holy Body and Blood, makes it impossible [for us] not to love everyone.

How can you love other good things, O Christian, and not frequently receive Communion? Would you like to enjoy each day? Would you like to have Pascha and rejoice with ineffable joy at the end of life? Then run frequently to the Mystery and receive it with proper preparation, so that you may rejoice.

It is the will of God that all of us who are Christians should receive His Body and Blood frequently, so that by means of frequent Communion in this present life, we shall be safeguarded from the snares and schemes of the devil and when our souls depart in the hour of death, they may fly like freed doves and without any hindrance from the aerial spirits. O the grandeur of the glory those Christians receive from frequent Communion, both in the present life and in that to come!

If it is necessary to confess and do penance in order to receive forgiveness of sins, Holy Communion is just as necessary for the remission of sins; as with a festering wound: first one removes worms, then cuts away putrid tissue, and last of all, applies ointment that it may heal; if you do this, you are restored to your former condition. Thus if you sin: with confession you remove the worms, and with penance you cut away what is putrid, and follow this with Holy Communion which becomes the ointment, and you are healed. For if he is not given Holy Communion, the wretched sinner will return to his former state and, in the end, will become someone who is *worse than before* (Mt 12:45).

I am astonished and amazed how contemporary Christians can celebrate Sundays and other feasts of the year with true spiritual joy, and yet not partake frequently of Holy Communion, which is the rationale and purpose of each of the feasts and festivals. It is most certain that those who do not commune frequently fall short, alas, of all the celestial and divine good things; and besides this, they violate the commandments of the Lord and the authoritative decisions of the apostles and the Councils and of all the saints. They are under the penalty of excommunication according to the holy apostles and the Council of Antioch. Such people give aid and opportunity to the devil through avoiding Communion, casting themselves into various sins and many other temptations.

O my brethren, let us see just once with the soul's noetic eyes of what heights and of what great, good things we fall short when we do not commune frequently; then indeed we will want to make ready all our faculties and commune in this manner, even daily. And if we have shown great negligence towards Holy Communion until now, then let us from now on, I beg you with brotherly love, let us awake from the deep sleep of indolence, and let us put forth eagerness and diligence.

## Ἐγκώμιον Στὴν Κοίμησιν Τῆς Θεοτόκου

Αγ. Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ.

**Τ**ὶ εἶναι αὐτὸ τὸ μυστήριον τὸ μέγα, ποὺ συντελεῖται γύρω ἀπὸ τὸ πρόσωπό σου, ἱερὴ Μητέρα καὶ Παρθένη; «Εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξὶ καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου». Ὅσο ὑπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι θὰ σὲ μακαρίζουν, γιατί μονάχα Σὺ εἶσαι ἄξια γιὰ μακαρισμὸ!

Καὶ νὰ ποὺ ὅλες οἱ γενιές Σὲ μακαρίζουν. Ἐσένα εἶδαν οἱ θυγατέρες τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ, δηλαδὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ σὲ μακάρισαν οἱ βασιλίσσες, δηλαδὴ οἱ ψυχές τῶν δικαίων, καὶ θὰ σὲ ὑμνοῦν αἰώνια. Γιατί Σὺ εἶσαι ὁ θρόνος ὁ βασιλικός, στὸν ὁποῖον παραστέκονται Ἄγγελοι, κοιτάζοντας τὸν Βασιλέα καὶ Δημιουργὸ νὰ κάθεται ἐπάνω του. Σὺ ἐγίνες

Ἐδὲμ νοητή, πιὸ ἱερὴ καὶ πιὸ θεϊκὴ ἀπὸ τὴν παλιά. Γιατί σ' ἐκείνη τὴν Ἐδὲμ ἔμεινε ὁ Ἀδὰμ ὁ γήινος, ἐνῶ σ' Ἐσένα ὁ Κύριος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ἐσένα προεικόνισε ἡ κιβωτός, γιατί Σὺ γέννησες τὸν Χριστό, τὴ σωτηρία τοῦ κόσμου, ποὺ καταπόντισε τὴν ἁμαρτία καὶ κατασίγασε τὰ κύματά της.

Ἐσένα προεικόνισε ἡ βάτος. Ἐσένα εἶχαν ἐπιγράψει προφητικῶς οἱ θεοχάρακτες πλάκες. Ἐσένα προζωγράφησε ἡ κιβωτός τοῦ Νόμου. Ἐσένα εἶχαν φανερὰ προτυπώσει ἡ στάμνα ἡ χρυσὴ καὶ ἡ λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ ράβδος τοῦ Ἀαρὼν ποὺ ἔχε βλαστήσει. Ἀπὸ Σένα προῆλθε ἡ φλόγα τῆς θεότητος, τὸ μέτρο καὶ ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Πατρὸς, τὸ γλυκύτατο καὶ οὐράνιο μάννα, τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἀπερίγραπτο καὶ πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα τὰ ὀνόματα, τὸ φῶς τὸ αἰώνιο καὶ ἀπρόσιτο, ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς ὁ οὐράνιος, ὁ καρπὸς ποὺ δὲν γεωργήθηκε, ἀλλὰ βλάστησε ἀπὸ Σένα μὲ σῶμα ἀνθρώπινο.

Ἐσένα δὲν προμηνούσε τὸ καμίνι ποὺ ἐβγαζε φωτιά καὶ ταυτόχρονα δρόσιζε ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔκαιγε κι ἦταν ἀντίτυπο τῆς θείας φωτιᾶς ποὺ μέσα Σου κατοίκησε; Παρὰ λίγο ὅμως θὰ ξεχνούσα τὴ σκάλα τοῦ Ἰακώβ. Τὶ δηλαδὴ; Δὲν εἶναι φανερό σὲ ὅλους ὅτι Ἐσένα προεικόνιζε κι ἦταν προτύπωσή Σου; Ὅπως ὁ Ἰακώβ εἶχε δεῖ τίς ἄκρες τῆς σκάλας νὰ ἐνώνουν τὸν οὐρανὸ μὲ τὴ γῆ καὶ νὰ ἀνεβοκατεβαίνουν σ' αὐτὴν ἄγγελοι, ἔτσι κι Ἐσὺ ἔνωσες αὐτὰ ποὺ ἦσαν πρὶν χωρισμένα, ἀφοῦ μπῆκες στὴ μέση Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων κι ἐγίνες σκάλα, γιὰ νὰ κατεβῇ σ' ἐμᾶς ὁ Θεός, ποὺ πῆρε τὸ ἀδύναμο προζύμι μας καὶ τὸ ἔνωσε μὲ τὸν ἑαυτὸ Του κι ἔκανε τὸν ἀνθρώπινο νοῦ νὰ βλέπει τὸν Θεό.

Ποῦ θὰ ἀποδώσουμε ἀκόμη τὰ κηρύγματα τῶν Προφητῶν; Σ' Ἐσένα, ἂν θέλουμε νὰ δείξουμε ὅτι εἶναι ἀληθινά! Γιατί, ποῖο εἶναι τὸ Δαυϊτικὸ μαλλὶ τοῦ προβάτου ποὺ πάνω του

ἔπεσε σὰν βροχὴ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ εἶναι συνάναρχος μὲ τὸν Πατέρα; Δὲν εἶσαι Σὺ ὀλοφάνερα; Ποιὰ εἶναι ἐπίσης ἡ παρθένος ποὺ ὁ Ἡσαΐας προορατικῶς προφήτευσε ὅτι θὰ συλλάβῃ καὶ θὰ γεννήσῃ Υἱόν, δηλαδὴ τὸν Θεὸ ποὺ εἶναι μαζί μας; Καὶ ποῖο εἶναι τὸ βουνὸ τοῦ Δανιὴλ, ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο κόπηκε πέτρα, ἀγκωνάρι, χωρὶς νὰ ὑποκύψῃ σὲ ἀνθρώπινο ἐργαλεῖο; Ἄς ἔρθει ὁ Ἰεζεκιὴλ ὁ θεϊκότατος κι ἂς δείξει τὴν κλειστὴ πύλη ποὺ πέρασε ἀπὸ μέσα της μόνο ὁ Κύριος καὶ παραμένει κλειστή.

Ἐσένα, λοιπόν, κηρύττουν οἱ Προφῆτες. Ἐσένα διακονοῦν οἱ Ἄγγελοι καὶ ὑπηρετοῦν οἱ Ἀπόστολοι. Ἐσένα σήμερα, καθὼς ἀναχωροῦσες πρὸς τὸν Υἱὸ Σου, περιτριγύριζαν ψυχές Δικαίων καὶ Πατριαρχῶν καὶ τὸ ἄπειρο πλῆθος τῶν θεοφόρων Πατέρων. Ὅλοι τους συγκεντρώθηκαν ἀπὸ τὰ

πέρατα τῆς γῆς, σὰν μέσα σὲ σύννεφο, ψάλλοντας ὕμνους ἱερούς σ' Ἐσένα, τὴν πηγὴ τοῦ ζωαρχικοῦ σώματος τοῦ Κυρίου, πλημμυρισμένοι ἀπὸ τὰ θεῖα συναισθήματα.

Ὡ, πῶς ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς μεταφέρεται πρὸς τὴν ζωὴ διὰ μέσου τοῦ θανάτου! Πῶς νὰ ὀνομάσουμε τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο ποὺ σχετίζεται μ' Ἐσένα; Θάνατος; Μά, ἂν καὶ ἡ πανίερη καὶ μακαρία ψυχὴ Σου χωρίζεται ἀπὸ τὸ ἀμίαντο σῶμα Σου καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα Σου παραδίδεται στὴν ταφὴ, ὅμως δὲν παραμένει στὸ θάνατο κι οὔτε διαλύεται ἀπὸ τὴ φθορά. Ὅπως ὁ ἥλιος, ὁ ὀλόλαμπρος καὶ πάντα φωτεινός, ὅταν σκεπαστεῖ γιὰ λίγο ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα τῆς σελήνης, φαίνεται σὰν νὰ χάνεται καὶ τὸ σκοτάδι νὰ παίρνει τὴ θέσιν τῆς λάμψεως του, μὰ αὐτὸς δὲν χάνει τὸ φῶς του, ἀλλὰ ἔχει μέσα του τὴν πηγὴ τοῦ φωτός. Ἔτσι

κι Ἐσὺ, ἂν καὶ καλύπτεσαι σωματικὰ ἀπὸ τὸν θάνατο γιὰ κάποιον χρονικὸ διάστημα, ἐντούτοις ἀναβλύζεις πλούσια, καθαρὰ κι ἀτελείωτα τὰ νάματα τοῦ θείου φωτός καὶ τῆς ἀθάνατης ζωῆς, ποταμοὺς χάριτος καὶ πηγές ἰαμάτων.

Ἐσὺ ἄνθισες σὰν δένδρο γλυκύτατο κι εἶναι ὁ καρπὸς Σου εὐλογία στὸ στόμα τῶν πιστῶν! Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ δὲν θὰ ὀνομάσω θάνατο τὴν ἱερὴ μετάστασή Σου, ἀλλὰ κοίμησιν ἢ αποδημία ἢ ἐνδημία, γιὰ νὰ ἐκφρασθῶ καλύτερα, ἀφοῦ, φεύγοντας ἀπὸ τὴν κατοικία τοῦ σώματος, πηγαίνεις νὰ κατοικήσεις στὰ καλύτερα, στὰ δεξιὰ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ Υἱοῦ Σου. Ἄγγελοι μαζί μὲ Ἀρχαγγέλους Σὲ μεταφέρουν ἀπὸ τὴ γῆ στοὺς οὐρανοὺς. Καθὼς περνᾷς εὐλογεῖται ὁ ἀέρας καὶ ὁ αἰθέρας καθαγιάζεται. Χαίροντας ὑποδέχεται ὁ οὐρανὸς τὴν ψυχὴ Σου. Σὲ προῦπαντοῦν οἱ οὐράνιες δυνάμεις μὲ ὕμνους ἱερούς καὶ τελετὴ χαρμόσυνη: «Τίς αὕτη ἡ ἀναβαίνουσα λευκανθισμένη, ἐγκύπτουσα ὡσεὶ ὄρθρος». Εἶσαι ωραία, λένε οἱ οὐράνιες δυνάμεις, σὰν τὸ φεγγάρι, κι ὅλα τὰ Χερουβείμ





ἐκπλήσσονται καὶ τὰ Σεραφεῖμ Σὲ δοξάζουν, Ἐσένα, ποὺ δὲν ἀνέβηκες μονάχα ὡς τὸν οὐρανὸν, σὰν τὸν προφήτη Ἡλία, οὔτε μονάχα μέχρι τὸν τρίτο οὐρανὸν, σὰν τὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο, ἀλλὰ ἔφτασες μέχρις αὐτὸν τὸν θρόνο τοῦ Υἱοῦ Σου καὶ στέκεις κοντά Του μὲ πολλή κι ἀνείπωτη παρρησία.

Ἔγινες λοιπὸν εὐλογία γιὰ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, ἁγιασμὸς γιὰ τὸ σύμπαν, ἄνεση γιὰ τοὺς κουρασμένους, παρηγοριά γιὰ τοὺς πενθοῦντες, θεραπεία γιὰ τοὺς ἀρρώστους, λιμάνι γιὰ τοὺς θαλασσοδαρμένους, συγχώρηση γιὰ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς, παρηγοριά γιὰ τοὺς λυπημένους, πρόθυμη βοήθεια γιὰ ὅλους ποὺ σὲ ἐπικαλοῦνται, ἀρχὴ καὶ μέση καὶ τέλος ὅλων τῶν ἀγαθῶν ποὺ ξεπερνοῦν τὸν νοῦν μας.

Πῶς ὑποδέχθηκε ὁ οὐρανὸς Αὐτὴν ποὺ ἔγινε πλατύτερη ἀπ' αὐτόν; Καὶ πῶς ὁ τάφος δέχθηκε Αὐτὴν ποὺ δέχθηκε μέσα Της τὸν Θεό; Ω, μνήμα ἱερὸ καὶ θαυμαστὸ καὶ σεβάσμιο καὶ προσκυνητό, ποὺ καὶ τώρα τὸ περιποιοῦνται Ἄγγελοι, παρευρισκόμενοι μὲ πολὺν σεβασμὸ καὶ φόβο, καὶ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ ἔρχονται σ' αὐτὸ μὲ πίστη, τιμώντας το, προσκυνώντας το, φιλώντας το μὲ μάτια καὶ χεῖλια καὶ μὲ πόθο ψυχῆς, ἀντλώντας πλοῦτο ἀγαθῶν.

Ἐμπρός, λοιπὸν, ἃς ταξιδέψουμε νοερά μακριὰ ἀπ' τὴ ζωὴ αὐτὴ μαζὶ μὲ τὴν Παρθένο ποὺ φεύγει ἀπ' τὴ γῆ αὐτή. Ἐλάτε ὅλοι μὲ πόθο καρδιακό, ἃς κατεβούμε στὸν τάφο μαζὶ μὲ τὴν Παρθένο ποὺ κατέρχεται σ' αὐτόν. Ἄς παρασταθοῦμε ὁλόγυρα στὸ ἱερότατο κρεβάτι της. Ἄς ψάλλουμε ὕμνους ἱερούς, τέτοια περίπου λέγοντας μελωδικὰ ᾠσματα: «*Χαῖρε Κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ. Χαῖρε ἀμνάς ποὺ γέννησες τὸν Ἀμνὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Χαῖρε Σὺ ποὺ εἶσαι πάνω ἀπὸ τίς ἀγγελικὲς δυνάμεις. Χαῖρε ἡ δούλη καὶ Μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ*». Ἀμήν.



**Ἡ ἀδελφότης «ΟΣΙΟΣ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ», μὲ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴ συμπαράσταση διαφόρων Ἑλληνορθοδόξων, διαθέτει ΔΩΡΕΑΝ πρὸς ὅλους τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας Χριστιανοὺς ὁλοκληρὴ τὴν σειρὰ τῶν ὁμιλιῶν τοῦ μακαριστοῦ πατρὸς Ἀθανασίου τοῦ Μυτιληναίου.**

**Ἡ σειρὰ αὐτὴ (σὲ 7 DVDs) περιεχει 1.650 ὁμιλίες ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ διαφορῶν θεμάτων· εἶναι ἓνας πνευματικὸς θησαυρὸς ἀλλὰ καὶ ἓνα ἀναγκαῖο πνευματικὸ ὄπλο τῶν καιρῶν μας γιὰ κάθε Ἑλληνορθόδοξο Χριστιανό. Οἱ ἐνδιαφέροντες δύνανται νὰ τὴν παραγγείλουν ἀναφερόμενοι στὸ δελτίο παραγγελιῶν τῆς 15<sup>ης</sup> σελίδος.**

**Οἱ ὁμιλίες εἶναι σὲ τύπο mp3. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε DVD player ποὺ νὰ παίζει mp3 files (σὰν μερικὰ mini-DVD players ἢ DVD home theater systems), ἢ ἓνα ἠλεκτρονικὸ ὑπολογιστὴ μὲ Windows operating system, ἢ ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς mini mp3 players σὰν, π.χ. τὸ δημοφιλὲς iPod.**

## Ἡ Κυρά τῶν Θαλασσῶν

Γιάννης Ἀνδρικόπουλος, Αἴγιο 2004.

**Π**ανύμνητη Κυρά, τοῦ Δεκαπενταύγουστου, ξυπόλητη Κυρά ποὺ βηματίζει τίς νύχτες στὶς φιλέρημες ἀκρογιαλιές...

Κυρά τῶν θαλασσινῶν ξωκλησιῶν βάζεις ἓναν σκανδαλιάρη πουνέντε νὰ κρούσει τὰ σήμαντρά τους, σηματοφορεῖς τὰ καμπαναριά τους, μὲ χαμόγελα παιδικῆς ἀθωότητος...

Κυρά τῶν ἐρημικῶν βράχων, ὀριοθετεῖς τὴν ὀρθρινὴ ἐξοδο τῶν ἀγγελικῶν ταγμάτων καὶ τὰ στένεις βιγλάτορες στὰ ψηλὰ κατάρτια τῆς ἔγνοιας Σου...

Κυρά τῆς λιοπερίχυτης θάλασσας εὐλογεῖς τὰ πιστρόφια τῆς μνήμης, στή γῆ τῆς ρίγανης καὶ τῆς λυγαριάς, φωτίζεις τ' ἀλαφροπάτημα τῶν ἄστρων πάνω ἀπὸ τὴν ἐπέλαση τοῦ σκότους, σκορπίζεις τοὺς βέβηλους βρυχηθμούς μὲ ἰσοκρατήματα τραμουντάνας καὶ πλάγιους ἤχους γκρεκολεβάντε...

Κυρά τῶν κοχυλιῶν καὶ τῆς ἀλμύρας ἀποθέτουμε στὸ κατώφλι σου τίς ἄχρηστες πανοπλίες τῆς ἐπαρσης, γιομίζουμε τὴν πλατιά σου ἀγκαλιά μὲ τὸν πλοῦτο τῆς μετάνοιας καὶ τὴν πενία τῆς ψυχῆς μας...

Κυρά τῆς ἀντρειωμένης ἀπαντοχῆς στάσου ξάγρυπνη στοὺς βράχους, γιὰ νὰ ἐποπτεύεις τὸ ταξίδι μας στὸν ἀφιλόξενο ὠκεανό, τὸν σπαρμένο μὲ τέρατα τῆς Ἀποκάλυψης...

Κυρά τῆς μετανοιωμένης ἁμαρτίας καθάρισέ μας μὲ τὴ δρόσο τῆς φωτοσυρμῆς τῶν ματιῶν Σου, ὅσῃ παρηγοριᾶ στήν πανανθρώπινη ἔρημο...

Κυρά τῶν σιγανῶν κυμάτων ξέπλυνε μὲ ὕσσωπο εὐσπλαγχνίας τὰ καυτὰ σημάδια τοῦ Κάιν ἀπὸ τίς χοῦφτες καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ μας...

Κυρά τῶν φιλόξενων κάβων ἀδαπάνητη νίκη Δικαιοσύνης, ἀκλόνητη πυξίδα τῶν ἀπελπισμένων, ἀγάπησε τὴ σκουριά τοῦ παραλογισμοῦ ποὺ τρώει τοὺς ἄρμούς τῆς πίστεως μας...

**ΥΠΕΡΑΓΙΑ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΕ,  
ΩΣΩΝ ΗΜΑΣ  
ΤΟΥΣ ΑΜΑΡΤΩΛΟΥΣ**



## Διδαχές Αγίου Νεκταρίου (Μέρος 2ον)

Από τη σειρά των φυλλαδίων «Η ΦΩΝΗ ΤΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ»  
της Ιερᾶς Μονῆς Παρακλήτου Ωρωπού Ἀττικῆς.

### Προσευχή

Τὸ κύριο ἔργο τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι ἡ προσευχή. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πλάστηκε γιὰ νὰ ὑμνῇ τὸ Θεό. Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ ἔργο ποὺ τοῦ ἀρμόζει. Αὐτὸ μόνο ἐξηγεῖ τὴν πνευματικὴ του ὑπόσταση. Αὐτὸ μόνο δικαιώνει τὴν ἐξέχουσα θέση του μέσα στὴ δημιουργία. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πλάστηκε γιὰ νὰ λατρεύῃ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ νὰ μετέχῃ στὴ θεία Του ἀγαθότητα καὶ μακαριότητα. Ὡς εἰκόνα τοῦ Θεοῦ ποὺ εἶναι, λαχταράει γιὰ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ τρέχει μὲ πόθο νὰ ἀνυψωθῇ πρὸς Αὐτόν. Μὲ τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ τὴν ὑμνωδία εὐφραίνεται. Τὸ πνεῦμα του ἀγάλλεται καὶ ἡ καρδιά τοῦ σκιρτάει. Ὅσο περισσότερο προσεύχεται, τόσο ἡ ψυχὴ του ἀπογυμνώνεται ἀπὸ τὶς κοσμικὲς ἐπιθυμίες καὶ γεμίζει ἀπὸ τὰ οὐράνια ἀγαθὰ. Καὶ ὅσο ἀποχωρίζεται τὰ γήινα καὶ τὶς ἡδονὲς τοῦ βίου, τόσο περισσότερο ἀπολαμβάνει τὴν οὐράνια εὐφροσύνη. Ἡ δοκιμὴ καὶ ἡ πείρα μᾶς ἐπιβεβαιώνουν τὴν ἀλήθεια αὐτή.

Ὁ Θεὸς εὐαρεστεῖται στὶς προσευχὲς ἐκεῖνες ποὺ προσφέρονται μὲ τὸν πρέποντα τρόπο, δηλαδὴ μὲ συναίσθηση τῆς ἀτέλειας καὶ τῆς ἀναξιοτήτος μας. Γιὰ νὰ ὑπάρξῃ ὁμοῦς τέτοια συναίσθηση, ἀπαιτεῖται τέλεια αὐταπάρνηση τοῦ κακοῦ μας ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ὑποταγὴ στὶς ἐντολὲς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀπαιτεῖται ταπείνωση καὶ ἀδιάλειπτη πνευματικὴ ἐργασία. Ἀναθέστε ὅλες τὶς φροντίδες σας στὸ Θεό. Ἐκεῖνος προνοεῖ γιὰ σᾶς. Μὴ γίνεστε ὀλιγόψυχοι καὶ μὴν ταραζέστε. Αὐτὸς ποὺ ἐξετάζει τὰ ἀπόκρυφα βάθη τῆς ψυχῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, γνωρίζει καὶ τὶς δικές σας ἐπιθυμίες καὶ ἔχει τὴ δύναμη νὰ τὶς ἐκπληρώσῃ ὅπως Αὐτὸς γνωρίζει. Ἔσεῖς νὰ ζητᾶτε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ νὰ μὴ χάνετε τὸ θάρρος σᾶς. Μὴ νομίζετε ὅτι, ἐπειδὴ ὁ πόθος σας εἶναι ἅγιος, ἔχετε δικαίωμα νὰ παραπονιέστε, ὅταν οἱ προσευχὲς σας δὲν εἰσακούονται. Ὁ Θεὸς ἐκπληρώνει τοὺς πόθους σας μὲ τρόπο ποὺ ἐσεῖς δὲν γνωρίζετε. Νὰ εἰρηνεύετε λοιπὸν καὶ νὰ ἐπικαλεῖστε τὸ Θεό.

Οἱ προσευχὲς καὶ οἱ δεήσεις ἀπὸ μόνες τους δὲν μᾶς ὁδηγοῦν στὴν τελειότητα. Στὴν τελείωση ὁδηγεῖ ὁ Κύριος, ποὺ ἔρχεται καὶ κατοικεῖ μέσα μας, ὅταν ἐμεῖς ἐκτελοῦμε τὶς ἐντολές Του. Καὶ μία ἀπὸ τὶς πρῶτες ἐντολές εἶναι νὰ γίνεται στὴ ζωὴ μας τὸ θέλημα ὅχι τὸ δικό μας, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ νὰ γίνεται μὲ τὴν ἀκρίβεια ποὺ γίνεται στὸν οὐρανὸ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀγγέλους. Γιὰ νὰ μπορούμε κι ἐμεῖς νὰ λέμε: «Κύριε, ὅχι ὅπως ἐγὼ θέλω, ἀλλ' ὅπως Ἐσύ, “γεννηθῆτω τὸ θέλημά Σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς”». Χωρὶς λοιπὸν τὸ Χριστὸ μέσα μας, οἱ προσευχὲς καὶ οἱ δεήσεις ὁδηγοῦν στὴν πλάνη.

### Εἰρήνη

Ἡ εἰρήνη εἶναι θεῖο δῶρο, ποὺ χορηγεῖται πλουσιοπάροχα σ' ὅσους συμφιλιώνονται μὲ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ἐκτελοῦν τὰ θεῖα Του προστάγματα. Ἡ εἰρήνη εἶναι φῶς καὶ φεύγει ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία, ποὺ εἶναι σκοτάδι. Ἕνας ἁμαρτωλὸς ποτὲ δὲν εἰρηνεύει.

Νὰ ἀγωνίζεστε ἐναντίον τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ νὰ μὴ σᾶς ταραξῇ ἡ ἐξέγερση τῶν παθῶν μέσα σας. Γιατὶ, ἂν στὴν πάλη μαζί τους νικήσετε, τὸ ξεσῆκωμα τῶν παθῶν ἔγινε γιὰ σᾶς ἀφορμὴ νέας χαρᾶς καὶ εἰρήνης. «Νὰ ἐπιδιώκετε τὴν εἰρήνην μὲ ὅλους, ἐπιδιώκετε καὶ τὴν ἀγιότητα, χωρὶς τὴν ὁποία κανεῖς δὲν θ' ἀντικρύσει τὸν Κύριο» (Εβρ.12:14).

Ἡ εἰρήνη καὶ ὁ ἁγιασμὸς εἶναι δυὸ ἀναγκαῖες προϋποθέσεις γιὰ ὅποιον ζητάει μὲ πόθο νὰ δῇ τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ εἰρήνη εἶναι τὸ θεμέλιο στὸ ὁποῖο στηρίζεται ὁ ἁγιασμός. Ὁ ἁγιασμὸς δὲν παραμένει σὲ ταραγμένη καὶ ὀργισμένη καρδιά. Ἡ ὀργή, ὅταν χρονίζει στὴν ψυχὴ, δημιουργεῖ τὴν ἐχθρα καὶ τὸ μῖσος ἐναντίον τοῦ πλησίον. Γι' αὐτὸ ἐπιβάλλεται ἡ γρήγορη συμφιλίωση μὲ τὸν ἀδελφὸ μας, ὥστε νὰ μὴ στερηθοῦμε τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ ποὺ ἀγιάζει τὴν καρδιά μας. Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ εἰρηνεύει μὲ τὸν ἑαυτὸ του, εἰρηνεύει καὶ μὲ τὸν πλησίον του, εἰρηνεύει καὶ μὲ τὸ Θεό. Ἕνας τέτοιος ἄνθρωπος εἶναι ἁγιασμένος, γιατί ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Θεὸς κατοικεῖ μέσα του.

### Ἀγάπη

Ἐπιδιώκετε τὴν ἀγάπη. Ζητᾶτε καθημερινὰ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ τὴν ἀγάπη. Μαζί μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη ἔρχεται καὶ ὅλο τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν. Ἀγαπᾶτε, γιὰ ν' ἀγαπιέστε κι ἐσεῖς ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους. Δώστε στὸ Θεὸ ὅλη σας τὴν καρδιά, ὥστε νὰ μένετε στὴν ἀγάπη. «Ὁποῖος ζεῖ μέσα στὴν ἀγάπη, ζεῖ μέσα στὸ Θεό, κι ὁ Θεὸς μέσα σ' αὐτόν» (Α' Ἰω. 4:16). Ὁφείλετε νὰ ἔχετε πολλὴ προσοχὴ στὶς μεταξὺ σας σχέσεις καὶ νὰ σέβεστε ὁ ἕνας τὸν ἄλλον ὡς πρόσωπα ἱερά, ὡς εἰκόνες τοῦ Θεοῦ. Νὰ μὴν ἀποβλέπετε ποτὲ στὸ σῶμα ἢ στὴν ὁμορφιά, ἀλλὰ στὴν ψυχὴ. Προσέχετε τὸ αἶσθημα τῆς ἀγάπης, γιατί, ὅταν ἡ καρδιά δὲν θερμαίνεται ἀπὸ τὴν καθαρὴν προσευχὴ, ἡ ἀγάπη κινδυνεύει νὰ γίνῃ σαρκικὴ καὶ ἀφύσικη, κινδυνεύει νὰ σκοτίσῃ τὸ νοῦ καὶ νὰ κατακάψῃ τὴν καρδιά.

Πρέπει νὰ ἐξετάζουμε καθημερινὰ, μήπως ἡ ἀγάπη μας δὲν ἀπορρέει ἀπὸ τὸ σύνδεσμο τῆς κοινῆς μας ἀγάπης πρὸς τὸ Χριστό, μήπως δὲν πηγάζει ἀπὸ τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς ἀγάπης μας πρὸς τὸν Κύριο. Αὐτὸς ποὺ ἀγρυπνεῖ νὰ διατηρήσῃ ἀγνὴ τὴν ἀγάπη, θὰ φυλαχθῇ ἀπὸ τὶς παγίδες τοῦ πονηροῦ, ποὺ προσπαθεῖ σιγά-σιγά νὰ μετατρέψῃ τὴν Χριστιανικὴ ἀγάπη σὲ ἀγάπη κοινὴ καὶ συναισθηματικὴ.

### Διάκριση

Σὰς συνιστῶ νὰ ἔχετε σὲ ὅλα διάκριση καὶ φρόνηση. Ν' ἀποφεύγετε τὰ ἄκρα. Οἱ αὐστηρότητες συμβαδίζουν μὲ τὰ μέτρα τῆς ἀρετῆς. Αὐτὸς ποὺ δὲν ἔχει μεγάλες ἀρετὲς καὶ συναγωνίζεται μὲ τοὺς τέλειους, θέλοντας νὰ ζῇ μὲ αὐστηρότητα, ὅπως οἱ ἅγιοι ἄσκητές, αὐτὸς κινδυνεύει νὰ ὑπερηφανευθῇ καὶ νὰ πέσῃ. Γι' αὐτὸ νὰ πορεύεσθε μὲ διάκριση καὶ νὰ μὴν ἐξαντλεῖτε τὸ σῶμα μὲ ὑπέρμετρος κόπους. Νὰ θυμᾶστε πὼς ἡ ἄσκηση τοῦ σώματος ἀπλῶς βοηθεῖ τὴν ψυχὴ νὰ φτάσῃ στὴν τελειότητα, ἡ τελειότητα κατορθώνεται κυρίως μὲ τὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς ψυχῆς.

Μὴν τεντώνετε περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὸ μέτρο τὴ χορδή. Νὰ ξέρετε ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς δὲν ἐκβιάζεται στὶς δωρεές Του· δίνει, ὅταν αὐτὸς θέλει. Ὅ,τι παίρνουμε, τὸ παίρνουμε

δωρεάν από τὸ θεῖο ἔλεος. Μὴ ζητᾶτε νὰ φτάσετε ψηλὰ μὲ μεγάλες ἀσκήσεις χωρὶς νὰ ἔχετε ἀρετές, γιατί κινδυνεύετε νὰ πέσετε σὲ πλάνη γιὰ τὴν ἐπαρση καὶ τὴν τόλμη σας. Ὅποιος ἐπιζητεῖ θεῖα χαρίσματα καὶ ὑψηλὲς θεωρίες, ἐνῶ εἶναι ἀκόμα φορτωμένος μὲ πάθη, αὐτός, σὰν ἀνόητος καὶ ὑπερήφανος, πλανιέται. Πρῶτα ἀπ' ὅλα ὀφείλει ν' ἀγωνιστῇ γιὰ τὴν κάθαρσίν του. Ἡ θεία χάρις στέλνει τὰ χαρίσματα σὰν ἀμοιβή σ' ὅσους ἔχουν καθαριστεῖ ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη. Τοὺς ἐπισκέπτεται χωρὶς θόρυβο καὶ σὲ ὥρα ποὺ δὲν γνωρίζουν.

### Ὑπερηφάνεια

Ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ νοῦ εἶναι ἡ σατανικὴ ὑπερηφάνεια, ἡ ὁποία ἀρνεῖται τὸ Θεὸ καὶ βλασφημεῖ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ πολὺ δύσκολα θεραπεύεται. Εἶναι ἓνα βαθὺ σκοτάδι, τὸ ὁποῖο ἐμποδίζει τὰ μάτια τῆς ψυχῆς νὰ δοῦν τὸ φῶς ποὺ ὑπάρχει μέσα της καὶ ποὺ ὁδηγεῖ στὸ Θεό, στὴν ταπείνωση, στὴν ἐπιθυμία τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ.

Ἀντίθετα, ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια τῆς καρδιᾶς δὲν εἶναι γέννημα τῆς σατανικῆς ὑπερηφάνειας, ἀλλὰ δημιουργεῖται ἀπὸ διάφορες καταστάσεις καὶ γεγονότα: πλοῦτο, δόξα, τιμές, πνευματικὰ ἢ σωματικὰ χαρίσματα (εὐφυΐα, ὁμορφιά, δύναμη, δεξιότητες κ.λ.π.). Ὅλα αὐτὰ σηκώνουν ψηλὰ τὰ μυαλὰ τῶν ἀνόητων ἀνθρώπων, ποὺ γίνονται ἔτσι ματαιόφρονες, χωρὶς ὅμως νὰ εἶναι καὶ ἄθεοι... Αὐτοὶ πολλὰς φορὲς ἐλεοῦνται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, παιδαγωγοῦνται καὶ σωφρονίζονται. Ἡ καρδιά τους συντρίβεται, παύει νὰ ἐπιζητῇ δόξες καὶ ματαιότητες, κι ἔτσι θεραπεύονται.

Ἡ πνευματικὴ σας ἐργασία νὰ εἶναι ἡ ἐξέταση τῆς καρδιᾶς σας. Μήπως φωλιάζει σ' αὐτὴν σὰν φαρμακερὸ φίδι ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια, τὸ πάθος ποὺ γεννᾷ πολλὰ κακά, ποὺ ἀπονεκρῶνει κάθε ἀρετὴ, ποὺ δηλητηριάζει τὰ πάντα; Σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἐξωφορικὴ κακία πρέπει νὰ στραφῇ ὅλη σας ἡ φροντίδα. Μέρα καὶ νύχτα νὰ σᾶς γίνῃ ἔργο ἀδιάλειπτο ἡ ἔρευνά της.

Θὰ εἶναι ἀλήθεια, νομίζω, ἂν πῶ ὅτι ὅλη ἡ πνευματικὴ μας φροντίδα συνίσταται στὴν ἀναζήτηση καὶ ἐξόντωση τῆς ὑπερηφάνειας καὶ τῶν παιδιῶν της. Ἄν ἀπαλλαγοῦμε ἀπ' αὐτὴν καὶ θρονιασοῦμε στὴν καρδιά μας τὴν ταπεινοφροσύνη, τότε ἔχουμε τὸ πᾶν. Γιατί ὅπου βρίσκεται ἡ ἀληθινὴ κατὰ Χριστὸν ταπείνωση, ἐκεῖ βρίσκονται μαζεμένες καὶ ὅλες οἱ ἄλλες ἀρετές, ποὺ μᾶς ὑψώνουν ὡς τὸ Θεό.

### Χριστιανικὴ Εὐγένεια

Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ ἔχουν χρέος, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ἐντολὴ τοῦ Κυρίου, νὰ γίνουν ἅγιοι καὶ τέλειοι. Ἡ τελειότητα καὶ ἡ ἀγιότητα χαράσσονται πρῶτα βαθιὰ στὴν ψυχὴ τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ, καὶ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ τυπώνονται καὶ στὶς σκέψεις του, στὶς ἐπιθυμίες του, στὰ λόγια του, στὶς πράξεις του. Ἐτσι, ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ ὑπάρχει στὴν ψυχὴ, ξεχύνεται καὶ σ' ὅλο τὸν ἐξωτερικὸ χαρακτήρα. Ὁ Χριστιανὸς ὀφείλει νὰ εἶναι εὐγενικός με ὅλους. Τὰ λόγια καὶ τὰ ἔργα του νὰ ἀποπνέουν τὴ χάρις τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ποὺ κατοικεῖ στὴν ψυχὴ του, ὥστε νὰ μαρτυρεῖται ἡ Χριστιανικὴ του πολιτεία

καὶ νὰ δοξάζεται τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὅποιος εἶναι μετρημένος στὰ λόγια, εἶναι μετρημένος καὶ στὰ ἔργα. Ὅποιος ἐξετάζει τὰ λόγια ποὺ πρόκειται νὰ πῇ, ἐξετάζει καὶ τὶς πράξεις ποὺ πρόκειται νὰ ἐκτελέσῃ, καὶ ποτὲ του δὲν θὰ ὑπερβῇ τὰ ὅρια τῆς καλῆς καὶ ἐνάρετης συμπεριφορᾶς. Τὰ χαριτωμένα λόγια τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ χαρακτηρίζονται ἀπὸ λεπτότητα καὶ εὐγένεια. Αὐτὰ εἶναι ποὺ γεννοῦν τὴν ἀγάπη, φέρνουν τὴν εἰρήνη καὶ τὴ χαρὰ. Ἀντίθετα, ἡ ἀργολογία γεννᾷ μίση, ἔχθρες, θλίψεις, φιλονικίες, ταραχές καὶ πολέμους.

Ἄς εἴμαστε λοιπὸν πάντοτε εὐγενικοί. Ποτὲ ἀπὸ τὰ χεῖλη μας νὰ μὴ βγῇ λόγος κακός, λόγος ποὺ δὲν εἶναι ἀλατισμένος μὲ τὴ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ πάντοτε λόγοι χαριτωμένοι, λόγοι ἀγαθοί, λόγοι ποὺ μαρτυροῦν τὴν κατὰ Χριστὸν εὐγένεια καὶ τὴν ψυχικὴ μας καλλιέργεια.

### Δοξολογία

Ὁ Χριστιανὸς ὀφείλει νὰ δοξάζῃ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ μὲ τὸ σῶμα του καὶ μὲ τὸ πνεῦμα του. Ἄλλωστε, καὶ τὰ δυὸ ἀνήκουν στὸ Θεὸ καί, ἐπομένως, δὲν ἔχει ἐξουσία νὰ τὰ ἀτιμάζῃ ἢ νὰ τὰ διαφθείρῃ, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἅγια καὶ ἱερὰ πρέπει νὰ τὰ χρησιμοποιῇ μὲ πολλὴ εὐχαριστία. Ὅποιος θυμᾶται ὅτι τὸ σῶμα του καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα του ἀνήκουν στὸ Θεό, ἔχει μία εὐλάβεια κι ἓνα μυστικὸ φόβο γι' αὐτά, καὶ τοῦτο συντελεῖ στὸ νὰ τὰ διατηρῇ ἁγνὰ καὶ καθαρὰ ἀπὸ κάθε ρύπο, σὲ ἀδιάλειπτη ἐπικοινωνία μ' Ἐκεῖνον, ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποῖο ἀγιάζονται καὶ ἐνισχύονται.

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος δοξάζει τὸ Θεὸ μὲ τὸ σῶμα του καὶ μὲ τὸ πνεῦμα του, πρῶτα, ὅταν θυμᾶται ὅτι ἀγιάστηκε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ἐνώθηκε μαζί του, καὶ ὕστερα, ὅταν ἐνώνει τὴ θέλησή του μὲ τὴ θέληση τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὥστε νὰ ἐκτελῇ πάντοτε τὸ ἀγαθὸ καὶ εὐάρεστο καὶ τέλειο θέλημά Του. Ἐνας τέτοιος ἄνθρωπος δὲν ζεῖ γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ του, ἀλλὰ γιὰ τὸ Θεό. Ἐργάζεται γιὰ τὴ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴ γῆ. Δοξάζει σὲ ὅλα τὸ Θεό, μὲ λόγια καὶ μὲ ἔργα. Οἱ πράξεις του, ποὺ γίνονται γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τῶν συνανθρώπων του, δίνουν ἀφορμὴ δοξολογίας τοῦ θείου ὀνόματος. Ἡ ζωὴ του, καταναζόμενη ἀπὸ τὸ θεῖο φῶς, λάμπει σὰν φῶς δυνατό. Ἐτσι ἡ πολιτεία του γίνεται ὁδηγὸς πρὸς τὸ Θεὸ γιὰ ὅσους ἀκόμα δὲν Τὸν γνώρισαν.



Ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι ἀμαρτημάτων ἱλασμός καὶ συγχώρεση, γέφυρα ποὺ ἐλευθερώνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπὸ πολλοὺς πειρασμοὺς καὶ κινδύνους. Μεσότοιχο, ποὺ ἐμποδίζει τὶς θλίψεις τῶν παθῶν, τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν δαιμόνων, ἔργο οὐράνιο, δακρύων μητέρα καὶ θυγατέρα, τροφὴ τῶν Ἀγγέλων καὶ τῶν Ἀγίων, ἀγαλλίαση καὶ χαρὰ τῶν δικαίων, πηγὴ κάθε καλοῦ, πρόξενος ὅλων τῶν χαρισμάτων, προκοπὴ τῆς καρδιᾶς ἀόρατος, φωτισμός τοῦ νοῦ ἀδιάκοπος, φλόγα οὐράνια, ἀπόδειξη τῆς ἐλπίδος πρὸς τὸν Θεό, ἀντιφάρμακο καὶ λύση τῆς λύπης, θυρίδα ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποία εἰσέρχεται οὐράνιο φῶς καὶ ἀποκαλύπτει τὰ ἀπόκρυφα μυστήρια τοῦ Θεοῦ.

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης**



## Οἱ Ὑποστηρικταὶ τῆς Ἀλήθειας

Πρεσβ. Διονυσίου Τάτση, ἀπὸ τὸν «Ορθόδοξο Τύπο», 18 Μαΐου, 2007.

Στὴν ἐποχὴ μας παγιώθηκε ἡ τακτικὴ νὰ μὴ λέγονται τὰ πράγματα μὲ τὸ ὄνομά τους. Σχεδὸν κανένας δὲν κάνει καθαρὴ κριτικὴ γιὰ πρόσωπα καὶ γεγονότα. Ὅλοι κάποιοις ὑπηρετοῦν, κάπου στοχεύουν. Δυστυχῶς, δὲν ὑπάρχουν πιά πολλοὶ ὑποστηρικταὶ τῆς ἀλήθειας. Εἶναι ἐλάχιστοι ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ διαφοροποιοῦνται καὶ δείχνουν τὸ δρόμο.

Γιὰ νὰ διατυπώσῃ κάποιοις τὴν ἀλήθεια, χρειάζεται νὰ ἔχῃ ἦθος καὶ θάρρος. Νὰ εἶναι ἀποφασισμένος νὰ δεχτῇ ἀντιδράσεις καὶ διώξεις. Ἡ ἀλήθεια, ἐπειδὴ ἀποκαλύπτει τὴ διαφθορὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, σχίζοντας τὸ ὑποκριτικὸ ἐνδύμα ποὺ φορᾶνε, δέχεται ἐπιθέσεις. Γίνεται στόχος. Εἶναι μύρια τὰ βέλη τῆς συκοφαντίας ποὺ τὴν πλήττουν. Ὁδηγεῖται καὶ στὰ δικαστήρια γιὰ νὰ φιμωθῇ.

Ὅμως, οἱ ἄθωοι ἄνθρωποι τοῦ λαοῦ ἔχουν σ' ἐκτίμησιν τοὺς ὑπερασπιστὰς τῆς ἀλήθειας. Θέλουν νὰ τοὺς ἀκοῦν γιατί μόνο αὐτοὶ μποροῦν νὰ συμβάλλουν στὴ βελτίωσιν τῶν κακῶς κειμένων τῆς κοινωνίας. Καὶ τοὺς συμπαρίστανται, ὅσο φυσικὰ μποροῦν. Βέβαια, σὲ μερικοὺς ὑπάρχει μία ἐπιφύλαξι γιὰ τὸ πῶς πρέπει νὰ λέγεται ἡ ἀλήθεια. Ἄν, δηλαδή, πρέπει νὰ λέγεται ἀκριβῶς, ὅπως εἶναι, χωρὶς συγκαλύψεις καὶ μετριοπαθεῖς ἐκφράσεις, ἢ ἂν πρέπει νὰ λέγεται μὲ τρόπο ἥπιον καὶ μυστικόν, γιὰ νὰ μὴ δημιουργοῦνται ἀντιδράσεις. Στὴ δευτέρῃ περιπτώσει δὲν ἐπιτυγχάνεται τίποτα, γιατί οἱ ἔνοχοι δὲν θὰ ἐνοχληθοῦν καὶ πολὺ, ἀφοῦ δὲν θὰ δημιουργοῦν δυσμενεῖς ἐντυπώσεις στὸ λαὸ εἰς βάρος τους.

Εἶναι παρατηρημένο ὅτι οἱ ἄνθρωποι ποὺ δὲν ἔχουν ἦθος, δὲν θέλουν τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν πράξεών τους. Φοβοῦνται τὸ φῶς τῆς δημοσιότητας. Ἐπιμελῶς φροντίζουν νὰ ἐμφανίζονται διαφορετικοὶ ἀπ' ὅτι εἶναι, νὰ τηροῦν τὰ τυπικὰ στὶς κοινωνικὰς θέσεις, καὶ ν' ἀποφεύγουν τὶς προκλήσεις. Τὴν ἴδια ὥρα, ὅμως, συνεχίζουν νὰ δουλεύουν στὸ σκοτάδι, γιὰ νὰ πετύχουν τὰ ἄνομα σχέδιά τους, καὶ νὰ ἐξυπηρετήσουν τὰ συμφέροντά τους. Ἄν, ὅμως, βρεθεῖ κάποιος καὶ μιλήσῃ γιὰ τὴν κρυφὴ τους ἀθλιότητα καὶ ἀμφισβητήσῃ τὶς δραστηριότητές τους καὶ τὸ ἦθος τους, οἱ ἀντιδράσεις θὰ εἶναι ἐντονότατες.

Ὅστόσο, ὁ φίλος τῆς ἀλήθειας πρέπει νὰ συνεχίζει νὰ μιλάει μέχρι νὰ διορθωθοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. Ὁ ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος, στοὺς περίφημους λόγους του, δὲν δίσταζε νὰ κρίνῃ πρόσωπα καὶ γεγονότα, ἀδιαφορώντας γιὰ τὶς τυχόν ἀντιδράσεις. Χρησιμοποιοῦσε ὅξεῖς χαρακτηρισμούς, γιατί πίστευε ὅτι μόνο ἔτσι μποροῦν νὰ ξυπνήσουν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῆς κοσμικῆς ἐξουσίας. Δικαιολογοῦσε μάλιστα ὡς ἐξῆς αὐτὴ τὴν τακτικὴ: «Ἄς ἀναλάβουμε λοιπὸν τὸν ἀγῶνα πρὸς τοὺς ἄπιστους Ἀνόμοιους (αἱρετικοὶ ποὺ δὲν ἀποδέχονταν τὴν θεότητα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Καὶ ἂν ἀγανακτοῦν ἀπ' τὴν προσηγορία

“Ἀπῖστοι”, ἃς ἀποφύγουν αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπιστία κι ἐγὼ θ' ἀφήσω τὸ περιφρονητικὸ ὄνομα. Ἀφοῦ, ὅμως, αὐτοὶ δὲν παύουν ν' ἀτιμάζουν τὴν πίστιν καὶ καταισχύνουν τὸν ἑαυτὸ τους μὲ ἔργα, γιατί δυσαρεστοῦνται ἐναντίον μου, ὁ ὁποῖος κατηγορῶ μὲ λόγια ὅσα αὐτοὶ ἐπιδεικνύουν μὲ ἔργα;».

Οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὲν δέχονται τὴν κριτικὴ γιὰ πράξεις τους, ποὺ καταδικάζει ἡ κοινωνία. Ἄν μιλήσῃς γιὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν τοῦ ἄπιστου, γιὰ τὴν βλασφημία τοῦ βλάσφημου, γιὰ τὴν ἀδικία τοῦ ἄδικου, γιὰ τὴν κλοπὴ τοῦ κλέφτη, γιὰ τὴν δολοφονία τοῦ δολοφόνου, γιὰ τὸ κακούργημα τῆς ἐκτρώσεως ἐνὸς ἀθώου βρέφους καὶ πολλὰ ἄλλα, σίγουρα θὰ κινδυνέψῃς. Τὸ ἴδιο θὰ συμβῇ ἂν μιλήσῃς γιὰ τὴν ἀνηθικότητα ἐνὸς κληρικοῦ, γιὰ τὴν φιλαργυρία ἐνὸς ἐπισκόπου, καὶ γιὰ τὴν δολιότητα ἐνὸς ἀρχιεπισκόπου. Παντοῦ ὑπάρχει ἀπειλή. Ἡ ἀλήθεια βρίσκεται ἐν συνεχεῖ διωγμῷ.

Εἶναι ὥρα καὶ εὐγενικὸ νὰ εἶσαι ἐργάτης τῆς ἀλήθειας. Εἶναι καὶ θεάρεστο, κάτι ποὺ πολλοὶ ἔχουν δυστυχῶς ξεχάσει...



Τὸ σῶμα εἶναι δοῦλος, ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι κυρίαρχος. Ὅταν τὸ σῶμα κατατρυχέται ἀπὸ ἀσθένεια, αὐτὸ ὀφείλεται στὴ Θεία Πρόνοια. Γιατί μ' αὐτὸ τὸ τρόπο τὰ πάθη ἐξασθενοῦν καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος συνέρχεται. Μερικὲς φορές, ὅμως, ἡ σωματικὴ ἀσθένεια προκαλεῖται ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη. Ἀπομάκρυνε τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ οἱ ἀρρώστειες θὰ ἐξαφανιστοῦν. Γιατί, ὅπως βεβαιώνει ὁ Ἅγιος Βασίλειος ὁ Μέγας, αὐτὰ συμβαίνουν σὲ μᾶς λόγω τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Ἀπὸ ποῦ προέρχονται οἱ ἀσθένειες; Ἀπὸ ποῦ προέρχονται οἱ σωματικὲς πληγές; Ὁ Κύριος δημιούργησε τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ ὄχι τὴν ἀρρώστια. Τὴν ψυχὴ, ἀλλὰ ὄχι τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Τὶ εἶναι περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅλα πρὸ χρήσιμο καὶ πιὸ ἀπαραίτητο; Ἡ ἐνωση μὲ τὸ Θεὸ καὶ ἡ ἐπικοινωνία μαζί Του μὲ τὴν ἀγάπην. Ἄν χάσουμε αὐτὴ τὴν ἀγάπην ἀπομακρυνόμεστε ἀπὸ Ἐκεῖνον, παθαίνουμε διάφορες καὶ ποικίλες ἀρρώστειες. Ὁ πονοκέφαλος πολλὰς φορές μπορεῖ νὰ προκληθῇ καὶ ἀπὸ μία περίπλοκη καὶ ὑπερβολικὰ πιεστικὴ διανοητικὴ ἐργασία.

Ἄν πρέπει νὰ δεχόμεστε τὶς πονηρὰς σκέψεις ποὺ μᾶς ὑποβάλλει ὁ διάβολος. Τὸ ἀκάθαρτο πνεῦμα ἔχει δυνατὴ ἐπιρροὴ μόνο στὸν ἐμπαθεῖ, ἐνῶ ἐκεῖνους ποὺ ἔχουν ἐξαγνιστεῖ ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη τοὺς προσβάλλει μόνο ἀπὸ τὰ πλάγια ἢ ἐξωτερικὰ. Εἶναι δυνατό σ' ἓνα ἄνθρωπο, ὅταν εἶναι νέος καὶ ἐμπαθής, νὰ φλέγεται ἀπὸ τὶς σαρκικὰς σκέψεις καὶ νὰ μὴν ταράζεται; Θὰ πρέπει κανεὶς νὰ προσευχηθῇ στὸν Κύριον καὶ Θεόν, ὥστε ὁ σπινθήρας τῶν ἀκαθάρτων παθῶν νὰ ἐξαφανιστῇ ἀπὸ τὴ γένεσίν του. Τότε μόνο ἡ φλόγα τῶν παθῶν θὰ κατασιγάσῃ.

Ἅγιος Σεραφεῖμ τοῦ Σαρώφ



## HOW TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE FAITH

By Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (+1867), from "Orthodox Life," No. 10, 1952.



*Metropolitan Philaret is one of the most outstanding hierarchs of the Russian Church in any century. He was born Basil Drozdov, the son of a priest. Although small in stature, he stood out among his fellow students at the St. Sergius Holy Trinity Seminary through his lively intelligence and genuine piety. His early talent for preaching brought him to the*

*attention of Metropolitan Platon of Moscow, who said of him, "I give sermons like a man, but he speaks like an angel."*

*In 1808 he received the monastic tonsure with the name Philaret, after St. Philaret the Almsgiver. After being ordained to the diaconate, he taught Greek, Hebrew, and rhetoric at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, where he prevailed upon the authorities to have courses taught in Russian rather than in Latin. This concern to make the understanding of Orthodoxy as accessible as possible motivated many of his subsequent undertakings in the course of his fifty years in the episcopal rank. He was responsible for having the Holy Scripture translated into Russian, and he himself wrote a Catechism course text, which has remained a standard text of the Russian Church ever since its initial publication in 1823.*

*As Metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret succeeded in having restored some measure of independence from the State, which the Church had lost in the 'reforms' of Peter I. He labored to improve the caliber of seminaries and theological schools, and he gave crucial support to the spiritual revival generated by St. Paisius Velichkovsky and his monastic followers, at a time when many hierarchs and clergy looked askance at the institution of eldership, or "starchestvo" and the practice of unceasing prayer which this revival prompted. Metropolitan Philaret's own spiritual father was a close disciple of Saint Seraphim of Sarov, and although Philaret kept concealed his inner life, its excellence is manifest in the various miracles wrought by his prayers: a girl dumb for thirteen years began to speak, a merchant was spared the necessity of having his arm amputated, an eight-year-old paralyzed girl began to walk...*

*Metropolitan Philaret reposed 19 November 1867, being forewarned of the date two months earlier by his father in a dream. In his theological writings, Metropolitan Philaret often focused on the life of grace that is opened to believers in Christ. It is clear that he himself experienced this grace while still in this temporal world, and certain that he now enjoys it in the fullest measure in the company of the saints.*

† † †

**F**aith in Christ has existed on earth for almost 2,000 years now, and is in no way overcome. Hundreds of thousands

of people have joyously borne terrible torments out of love for Christ, for faith in Him. And if in present times there have appeared *men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith* (II Tim 3:8) and stood against the Faith and the Church of Christ, all their efforts are in vain: the Lord said that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against [His Church]* (Mt 6:18). Let us look at ourselves. Is there among us firm faith and love for Christ? Do we not stifle it with our passions, laziness, doubts?

Ah, friends, without faith in the Lord Christ there is no salvation! We must by all means kindle in ourselves the spirit of faith, that is, stimulate it, feed it with prayer, the Word of God, patience, sincere remembrance of the Saviour Who suffered for us. All of this can be done every day.

### What to Do in the Morning

When you wake up, first of all let your soul and heart say *Glory to Thee, O Lord, Who has preserved us this night! Glory to Thee, Who has shown us the light! Lord, bless this day for us!* In doing this, think about how God gives you the day which you could not give to yourself, and devote the first hour, or perhaps the first quarter hour of the day given you and offer it as a sacrifice to God, in grateful, supplicatory prayer. The more zealously you do this, the more you will sanctify your day, the more strongly you will protect yourself from the temptations that we meet every day.

### The Dwelling and Clothing of the Christian

From the start of the morning and throughout the day, make the thought about Christ the soul of your life, the moving force of your actions. So, for example, if you glance over your dwelling, remember Christ in the manger, in swaddling clothes, lying on straw, all this life not having a place to lay His head, finally imprisoned, nailed to the Cross, and thank God for your house, your shelter, however humble and poor it may be. Do not envy magnificently decorated mansions: the mansion of Christ is a pure heart!

As you dress in your simple clothing, remember Christ stripped naked and then robed in the clothing of mockery. Do not dwell on apparel; do not follow slavishly the whims of fashion, but try to garb yourself in goodness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, gazing mentally on the meek and humble heart of Jesus.

If you are eating a meal, remember the vinegar and gall that Christ tasted, and do not demand plentiful, luxurious food and drink: the heavenly Guest loves to enter not the house of feasting, but always to the one that opens the door of his heart to Him. Place in your heart Christ suffering and dying on the Cross, and in His unseen presence mortify your passions and lusts.

### Contact with People

Later, when you deal with people, both relatives and others, before saying a word, think about what will be its effect, and think even more seriously before you do something in their presence, for actions speak louder than words.

### Worldly Affairs

If you are undertaking anything, before asking any other adviser, ask the advice of faith. Appeal in the words of the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?* (Acts 9:6). Is what I would undertake pleasing to Thee, Lord? If it is pleasing, bless it; if not, do not let me do what is displeasing to Thee. And then listen to what the Lord tells you in your conscience, in your reason, in the counsels of pious and wise people and, having begun the course that you select, pray in your heart, *O Lord, make haste to help me* (Ps 69:1).

### Absences

If you are going anywhere, go with God, as our pious for-bearer said as a farewell, *walk before me* as the Lord Himself demanded (Gen 17:1); always see Him before you, *for He is at thy right hand* (Ps 15:8). As much as possible keep in your thoughts and in your heart that God sees you, so that you may be both ashamed and afraid to attempt anything unworthy before the eyes of God.

### Word and Feelings

If you enter the company of people, behave with extreme caution. If you hear a word of praise for yourself there, be careful: praises frequently conceal flattery and can arouse in you self-satisfaction and neglect of your further improvement. If you hear an insulting or humiliating word, take care not to become inflamed with *anger which worketh not the righteousness of God* (Jas 1:20). Answer the one who insults you either with silence or a meek word of truth. If you hear a word that accuses a neighbor, be careful that you not take part in the sin of someone else's tongue. Do not join in words that are more harmful to the one who judges than to the one being judged. If you hear a word that saddens one with bad news, be careful lest your sorrow become stronger than your common sense; dissolve it with hope in God's mercy and with the warm prayer: *O my Rejoicing, deliver me from them which have encircled me* (Ps 31:7). Endure without complaint sorrows and misfortunes.

Sorrows are inescapable on the path leading to the Kingdom of God! Many are the sorrows of the righteous! Christ Himself endured them; the Mother of God endured them as well. Without sorrows we will not be saved, but even in the depth of sorrow believe that the Lord loves you truly, and is only testing you. Remember: you sometimes return home from afar by a bad road, in a storm, in frost, or in terrible heat, but you go patiently, willingly; likewise patiently go by the difficult and sorrowful path to the heavenly home, the Kingdom of God.

### Caution Regarding Harmful Books

If you see in a letter or a book a word of unbelief, irreverence, or indecency, turn your eyes away from it quickly, do not entice yourself with the thought of reading it out of curiosity or for amusement. Do not touch filth. Do not play with fire. Do not desire to experience the taste of poison.

In general, in your relations with people be peaceable, just, compassionate, do good even to your enemies, imitating Him Who shines His sun on both the evil and the good. If you will live and act in this manner, then, when you pray, nothing will obstruct your prayer's path to heaven.

### Attending Church

When the time comes, and especially the time put aside for God and His temple, a feast day or the hour of Divine Services, hurry to tear yourself away from business and worldly cares and voluntarily and zealously offer yourself to God in His church. When you enter the church bring to mind the promise of the Lord to those that gather in His name: *there am I in the midst of them* (Mt 18:20), and stand reverently in church, as before the very face of Christ, and pray to Him that He sanctify you by His holiness, animate you by His prayer, and enlighten you with the word of the Gospel and the Grace of the Mysteries. Take note of this, too: in the church, angels serve with us and guard the holiness dwelling there.

Once, in the Lavra of Saint Theodosius near Jerusalem, Abba Leontius, coming one Sunday to church to receive the Holy Mysteries, saw an angel standing on the right side of the Holy Table, and when the elder, being afraid, turned to run to his cell, the voice of the angel called to him: *From the time this Holy Table was consecrated, I have been charged to stay by it.* Remember this, beloved, and stand reverently. And, if you feel that only your body is standing in church, while your mind thinks of home, or the market, or a place of merriment, collect yourself. Hurry to bring back your mind that has strayed, join it to God in your heart, force it to strive towards God, Who looks upon you. When you hear the word of God, open up not only your bodily ears, but your spiritual ones as well, open your heart, receive this heavenly Bread and with it nourish not only your memory, but also your life and work.

### On Communion

When you are preparing to be a communicant of the Body and Blood of Christ, or are simply present at this Mystery, cleave in mind and heart to the Cross and the Tomb of the Lord, to the Body of Christ, suffering, dying, buried, risen, glorified and believe that your faith's touching Him will be more substantial than the touching of His garment by the woman with an issue of blood, and Christ's *power [will] go out* (Lk 8:46) to purify and elevate your powers of soul and body.

### How to Celebrate Feastdays

Having left church and returned home, do not rush to worldly business on days dedicated to God: business that you illicitly conduct in festal times will bring you no benefit. Realize most of all that if you do not come to thank and glorify God in His church, then you can be sure that He will not send down His blessing on your business outside the church (Hag 1:9). And if sometimes you decide to excuse yourself from attending the church, be in fear lest you suddenly be overtaken by death and

lest it be said of you: *Remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things... but now (in eternity) thou art tormented* (Lk 16:25). God preserve you from this fate.

Never forget that your soul is also God's temple, and if at any time an impure thought and evil desire draws near to your soul, and will draw your body as well towards sin, hasten to protect yourself with the words said to the first Christians, and consequently to you: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (I Cor 3:16). Then say to yourself: how can I dare to ruin the temple of God, by sin and iniquity! How can I be so bold as to insult and alienate the Holy Spirit!

#### What to Do in the Evening

Now the day has ended—you are going off to sleep. Ponder the thought that God gives you rest from labors, and take the first fruits of the time of your rest and dedicate it to God with pure and humble prayer. Its fragrance will draw an angel close to preserve your rest. While preparing for sleep, remember death, of which sleep is an image and threshold, and with a prayer of faith surrender yourself to Him that is the *Resurrection and the Life* (Jn 11:25). But when you can conquer sleep, or when it does not conquer you, *remember [the Lord's] name in the night* (Ps 118:55). Such should be the constant disposition and activity of the believer that he may gradually draw near to that state of soul in which the holy Apostle Paul says of himself: I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me... *Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal 2:20)!



The condition for the union of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western, Roman Church are such that they render the union impossible... Because each Church asks of the other neither more nor less than the negation of itself, the negation of the fundamental principles on which the whole structure on the primacy of the Pope, while the Eastern Church rests on the Oecumenical Synods.

St. Nektarios of Aegina

The Oecumenical Patriarch should reflect well and not deceive himself into thinking that true Orthodox Christians will follow him in a false union.

Blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos



We ask those of our readers who wish to receive our publication via e-mail (*in the form of a pdf file, of approximately 1.5 MB size*) to let us know. It allows us to make available printed issues of "Orthodox Heritage" to more of our fellow Orthodox who are unable to financially support our effort.

## RFID TECHNOLOGY AND ITS ESCHATOLOGICAL \* IMPLICATIONS

By George Karras, "Orthodox Heritage" Editor.

(\* Eschatology is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world and mankind; more specifically, Christian doctrines concerning the Last Days, Antichrist, the Second Coming of our Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgment.

† † †

*And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.* (Apocalypse—Revelations 13:16-18)

Many Christians of our days argue and debate the way that the prophecies of the Apocalypse should be interpreted; more specifically, there exists significant pre-occupation with the End Times, the identification (exact name) of the Antichrist, and the mark of the beast. On-going world events and the continuing degradation of social morals and values lead us to conclude that as time passes, we are living under the increasing domination of the Antichrist's spirit. To what extent the End Times are upon us is a mystery; *but of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only* (Mt 24:36). It is thus not the intent of this article to inform our readers that the Antichrist is among us or that the mark of the beast is upon us but that rather (and in the words of our Lord) all of us must take heed that no man deceive us. *For many shall come in His name, saying, 'I am Christ'; and shall deceive many* (Mt 24:4-5). After all, it will be with cunning and modern deception that the evil one will introduce the mark of the beast upon mankind.

It is hard to ignore technological advances that appear to clearly carry eschatological implications. Specifically, many of us have heard about RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tags. Not too long ago, the world's smallest and thinnest RFID chips were introduced by Hitachi. These chips are tiny "miracles" of miniaturization, measuring just 0.05 x 0.05 millimeters, and can be encapsulated in tiny packages that can then be used in many ways. RFID is a technology somewhat analogous to UPC barcodes but with a very intriguing twist. It does not require physical scanning but rather transmits identifying information using radio signal waves (hence the name). Passive RFID tags actually operate without any external power source—astonishingly, their minimum power requirements are so low that they can actually be powered by the radio signal itself.

RFID tags come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Animal tracking tags, inserted beneath the skin, can be as small as a



pencil lead in diameter and one-half inch in length. Tags can be screw-shaped to identify trees or wooden items, or credit-card shaped for use in access applications. The anti-theft hard plastic tags attached to merchandise in stores are RFID tags. In addition, heavy-duty 5- by 4- by 2-inch rectangular transponders (another type of RFID tag) are used to track shipping containers, or to track and plan maintenance of heavy machinery, trucks, and railroad cars.

Is this technology taking hold? Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, has mandated that all of its suppliers provide RFID tags on their shipping containers. If a supplier refuses to tag their items using RFID technology then they'll lose Wal-Mart as their customer. That is quite an incentive to participate...

A U.S. company, Applied Digital Solutions (ADS), has also created a chip they refer to as a "sub-dermal credit card." Touted as "being chipped," an encapsulated chip as small as a grain of rice can be injected into the right arm between the elbow and the shoulder. ADS foresees a day when ATM cards and credit cards will be replaced by these new devices, and is actively seeking partnerships with banking and credit companies to develop commercial applications using the chip. No longer would a person need to swipe a card to buy or sell goods but would rather simply agree to the business deal and let the RFID technology complete the transaction. The technology is proven in real world use too—RFID chipping has been used to tag animals, cattle and household pets for over 10 years, and Exxon is currently using RFID technology attached to key-rings to provide wireless gas station transaction processing.

So the technology is here, but how could it possibly be forced upon people? The pressure to comply may be enough of an impetus for some (driver's licenses are not required but practically everyone has one since it's needed to drive and to conduct various transactions). Or will it simply be aggressively marketed (using scare tactics, for example) to encourage adoption? Many have begun debating just such a plan. They point out that by requiring every citizen to accept this digital, embedded method of payment we could eradicate all commerce in illegal activities. Consider this, they say: with every payment definitively tied to your person and digitally recorded so that the transaction is traceable, how could prostitution, buying and selling of stolen goods, or purchase of illegal drugs be conducted? Additionally, theft of credit cards and identity theft would be impossible (of course, the thief could take your entire arm, embedded chip and all). The externally portrayed idea is that just such a plan would be perfect to "better our economic methods" and to "make the world a better place to live in".

There is little doubt among many Orthodox circles that the RFID technology (or, perhaps, a subsequent, even more advanced chip technology) is directly related to the eschatological events associated with the mark of the beast, as

described within St. John the Theologian's Apocalypse and the related writings of the Holy Fathers. Within this area, however, there exist two schools of thought; one school clearly considers the microchip technology to be directly related to the mark of the beast, and the other school believes that it may be a distraction. Thus, when we examine the RFID technology and its technological relatives, it becomes rather easy to deduce that the seal of the Antichrist could easily be something similar to an electronic chip implanted under the skin. Others, however, believe that this scientific development may be designed to distract mankind's attention from the real mark of Antichrist. At a time when people's suspicions and anxieties are fixed upon some innovation of progress, the real seal of Antichrist might be imprinted quietly, without any particular commotion.

In a spiritual sense, this satanic mystery—the imprinting of the mark of Antichrist—will be the antithesis of the Christian Mystery of Chrismation (which is the placing of the seal of the Holy Spirit), while imitating its external form. Just as in the Mystery of Chrismation the priest anoints the newly-illuminated on the forehead and hands, so, too, in the placing of the mark of Antichrist, his servants may well anoint people with some kind of "sacred" oil, which will symbolize the voluntary acceptance of Antichrist and his religion. It is for this reason that we ought to be more pre-occupied with a life within the bosom of Holy Orthodoxy and less with the technological interpretations (albeit quite likely) of on-going events. This does not negate the need to maintain an awareness of our world; rather, it means that we ought to follow the advice "Live in the world, but be not of the world!"

Orthodox Christians of our days must learn to live a life of constant prayer, modesty, and piety, partaking often of the Holy sacraments of Confession and Communion; this life must be lived according to the teachings of the Church and Her Holy Fathers. We must focus on our Lord and beg for His mercy and help in the on-going spiritual warfare. In addition, we must seek out a skilled spiritual father who is actively living the mystical-ascetical life in Christ. Thus, irrespective of the method by which the beast chooses to serve his satanic mark, we will be able, through the guidance and prayers of our spiritual father, to recognize and avoid it, heeding the warning of the holy Apostle John the Theologian: *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.* (Apocalypse 14:9-11).

## REPENTANCE: THE MYSTERY THAT GRANTS THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

*By St. Theofan the Recluse, from "The Path to Salvation."*

The grace-filled Christian life is supposed to begin in baptism. But those who preserve this grace are rare; the majority of Christians lose it. We see some people who are more or less depraved in their present lives, because they had poor beginnings which were allowed to develop and take root in them. Others perhaps had good beginnings, but during the early years of their youth, whether by personal inclination or through temptation from others, forgot these beginnings and acquired evil habits. Such people no longer lead a true Christian life. Our holy faith offers the Mystery of Repentance for this. We have *an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous* (1 Jn 2:1). If you have sinned, acknowledge the sin and repent. God will forgive the sin and once again *give you a new heart...and a new spirit* (Ez. 36:26). There is no other way: Either do not sin, or repent. Judging by the number of those who have fallen away from Baptism, one could even say that repentance has become for us the only source of true Christian life.

It is necessary to know that in the Mystery of Repentance some merely have to be cleansed, and the gift of the grace-filled life, previously assimilated and operating within them, will be rekindled. For others, the beginning of this life has just been established within them, or it is being given and accepted anew.

### Turning away from Sin to God

With regard to the second item we have mentioned, it is a decisive change for the better, a breaking of the will, a turning away from sin and a turning to God, or a kindling of the fire of zeal for exclusively God-pleasing things, with renunciation of the self and everything else. It is above all characterized by an extreme breaking of the will. If a person has acquired evil habits, he must now rend himself. If he has offended God, he must now grieve in the fire of just judgment. A repentant person experiences the pain of a woman giving birth, and, in the feelings of the heart, he encounters, as it were, the tortures of hell. To the lamenting Jeremiah, the Lord commanded destroy and build and plant (Jer. 1:10). The lamenting spirit of repentance is sent by the Lord to the earth so that when it passes into those who accept it, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (Heb. 4:12), it destroys the old man and lays the foundation for the creation of the new. Within the repentant person there is first fear, then the lightness of hope; sorrow, then comfort; terror to the point of despair, then the breath of the consolation of mercy. One thing replaces another, and this supplies or keeps a person who

is in a state of corruption or parting with life in the hope, however, of receiving new life.

It is something painful, but it saves. It is therefore inevitable that whoever has not experienced such a painful break has not yet begun to live through repentance. It is impossible for a person to begin cleansing himself in everything without having gone through this crucible. Decisive and active resistance to sin comes only from hatred of it. Hatred of sin comes only from a sense of evil from it; the sense of evil from it is experienced in all its force in this painful break within repentance. Only here does a person sense with his whole heart what a great evil sin is; afterward he will run from it as he would from the fire of Gehenna. Without this painful experience, even if he begins cleansing himself in some other way, he will be able to cleanse himself only slightly, more outwardly than inwardly, more in actions than in disposition. That is why his heart will remain unclean, like unsmelted ore.

Such change is brought about in the human heart by divine grace. This alone can inspire a man to raise his hand to himself and bring himself to God in sacrifice. No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him (Jn. 6:44). God Himself gives a new heart and spirit (cf. Ez. 36:26). Man grieves for himself. Having been fused with flesh and sin, he became one with them. Only an outside, higher force can separate him and arm him against himself.

Thus, grace produces change in the sinner, but this does not come about without free assent. In Baptism, grace is given to us at the moment the mystery is performed upon us; however, free will comes later and assimilates to itself what has been given. In repentance, then, free assent must participate in the very act of change.

### The Combining of Freedom with Grace

Change for the better and turning to God must seemingly be instantaneous or sudden, and so does it happen. In preparation, however, change undergoes several stages signifying the combining of freedom with grace, where grace gains mastery of the freedom and freedom is subordinated to grace. These stages are necessary for everyone. For some, the stages go by quickly, while for others, the process continues for many years. Who can keep track of everything that is going on here, especially when the ways of action of grace within us are so varied, and the conditions of people in whom they begin to act are infinite in number? It is necessary, however, to expect that, with all this variation, there is one general aspect of change that no one can escape. Every repenting man is a man who lives in sin, and every such man is recreated by grace. Therefore, it is on the basis of an understanding of the sinner's condition in general, and the basis of the relationship of freedom with grace that we are able to depict this process and characterize it through principles.

## ON THE USE OF OUR BAPTISMAL NAME

*A sermon by Bishop Avgoustinos of Florina (Greece).*

*Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. (Acts 9:36-41).*

† † †

One fine girl who lived in a Judean city then called Joppa (today's Jaffa), a harbor of the Hebrew nation, had the name Dorcas, or Tabitha in Hebrew, which means gazelle. Dorcas, the young girl of Joppa, was a beloved person in her community. She was not the daughter of some rich or prominent family; no, she was a simple, poor girl; a seamstress, who lived through the income brought by her hands and her needle. However, this poor girl was a noble person and held a great spiritual treasure within her heart. That spiritual treasure, which has nothing to do with any worldly treasures, was her virtues. From the moment she believed in Christ and was baptized, Dorcas proved that she didn't simply want to be called a Christian but wanted to live according to the commandments of our Lord. The most important commandment that Christ brought into the world is the commandment of true love: *Love one another* (Jn 13:34). In her life, Dorcas applied this commandment to an absolute degree.

Dorcas was not rich; she did not have enough money to give any monetary alms to the poor. Many believe that only the rich can give alms. "What can we give?" they say. "We need to be helped, not help others." However, Dorcas, this fine girl from Joppa, teaches us all that those who have true love in their hearts can do a lot for others, even if they have no money. Dorcas offered her professional abilities as a seamstress to the poor. She sewed clothes for orphans and widows without receiving any type of compensation. She performed many other kindnesses as well, which the book of Acts does not specifically mention but only says that this woman was full of good works. Dorcas was best characterized as portraying a glass full of the refreshing water of love. With it she watered and refreshed people who were thirsty for love, for help, and for benevolence.

Dorcas was full of works of love and charity. What a blessed girl! While rich women and girls who lived in Joppa spent their time in vain amusement, paying absolutely no attention to the poor, the orphans, and the widows, Dorcas became a fountain of love—a fountain that flowed and gave charity to the world, in spite of her poverty. When she became sick and died, all the poor, all the orphans, and all the widows who had found consolation and protection near her mourned. She had been an affectionate mother to this suffering world.

The Christians of Joppa, the orphans and widows that Dorcas cared for, believed that whatever God does is done for the best. They were only expressing with tears the pain they felt at her death. They didn't want Dorcas to die but to live many more years and to be with them. That is why, as soon as Dorcas fell sick and they saw that day by day the illness was becoming worse and she was in danger of dying, they sent for the Apostle Peter, who was at a nearby city. But by the time Peter arrived, Dorcas had died. Seeing the sorrow Dorcas' death brought upon them, Peter kneeled, prayed, and then said to the dead girl, *Tabitha, arise*, and the miracle happened. The dead girl opened her eyes, sat up, and started speaking! The miracle became known throughout the whole district immediately, and the people believed in Christ.

Dorcas, this exemplary girl from Joppa, teaches us a lot. But pay close attention to a detail—the name of this fine girl. She was called Dorcas, and she proved herself to be a Dorcas. That is to say, just as the gazelle is an agile animal that runs everywhere and traverses great distances until it finds pure water, in the same way this daughter of Joppa ran and did not rest until she drank the water and was refreshed, or, to put it another way, until she could do good to other people. Doing good to others was like being refreshed herself. And just as the gazelle looks to the left and to the right so as not to fall into the trap of the hunters, this daughter of Joppa did the same thing. She was a very attentive disciple of Christ. Spreading good works both to the left and to the right, she was careful not to fall into the traps of the Devil; she kept her body clean and freed from the sins of pride and vanity. Thus she lived up to the name that had been given to her. She was Dorcas not only in name, but also in deed.

We, beloved, have names greater than the name of this virtuous young woman. We have names that the saints had, the great heroes of our Orthodox faith. These names were given to us at our baptism, to always remind us that we must live as the saints did. What a shame to live contrary to the lives of our patron saints. It is an insult and a dishonor to their sacred memories. Even worse is to blaspheme and dishonor another name, which is above all other names—the name Christian. Our names call to us: **O Orthodox Christians, either change your name or change your behavior.**

May all of us who have Christian names realize our responsibility and live a perfect Christian life in accordance with the Bible so that there may be harmony between our names and our lives.



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† † †

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## KEEP ASKING AND KEEP READING!

*By Fr. Demetrios Cavellas.*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

During my 32+ years in the priesthood, I cannot tell how many times people have shared with me this concern regarding their spiritual life: They feel like they are gaining very little, if anything, by seeking regular guidance from their spiritual fathers, as well as the guidance offered them by reading Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Holy Church Fathers, and the Lives of the Saints.

The main complaint seems to be something like this: "I receive good advice for the healing of my soul from my Spiritual Father and the readings which he tells me to study, but I rarely, if ever, put them into practice; or, I apply them to my life for a short time and then I forget about them. I am embarrassed to keep telling him that I am not doing what he is instructing me to do, and that I keep falling into the same sins. Furthermore, with regards to my readings, especially the Holy Scriptures, I often do not understand what I am reading. I am a hopeless case, and nothing of what I am receiving as guidance is being retained. Why, then, should I keep asking for guidance, since I do nothing and do not understand?"

**What is Orthodoxy? Orthodoxy is the correct practice (the Way), correct dogma (the Truth), correct knowledge of God (eternal life), the Word of God, the Word delivered, the Word transmitted; the Transmitter, the Tradition... Christ Himself.**

**Archimandrite Parthenios  
St. Paul's Monastery (Holy Mountain)**

In the writings of the Desert Fathers, there is a story which provides us with the correct answer: "A brother asked an Elder, 'Abba, I beseech the Elders and they teach me about my soul; but I apply nothing of their words. To what end, therefore, should I keep asking them, since I do nothing? I am totally filthy.' Close by there were two empty vessels. After the Elder had listened to the monk, he said to him, 'Go, take one of the vessels and put oil in it; afterwards wash it, turn it over and put it back in its place.' Indeed, the brother did what the Elder had suggested—washing the vessel once and even a second time. The vessel having been cleansed of oil, the brother put it back where it had previously been. After this, the Elder said to him, 'Now bring me the two together and take care to see which is the cleaner.' The brother, after inspecting them, said, 'The one in which I just put the oil is cleaner.'"

"Then, in conclusion, the Elder advised him, 'The same thing happens with the soul: even if nothing is retained and nothing of what is said [or read] is understood (something which I don't believe, anyway), it is cleansed much more than the soul of one who asks [or reads] nothing at all.'"

Beloved! Do not lose hope! Even if your mind is lacking understanding, and your efforts to apply spiritual advice to your daily life are weak, SOMETHING of benefit is taking place in your soul! So, **keep asking and keep reading!**

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## In This Issue:

- All Religions are NOT the Same (p. 3)
- Piety in Today's World (p. 4)
- The Inclusive Wisdom of the Church's Founder (p. 5)
- The Principal Characteristic of Western Theology (p. 6)
- An Honorable Marriage, a Bed Undeiled (p. 11)
- The Holy Angels (p. 13)



- Ὁ Δεκάλογος τοῦ Ἱεροψάλτη (σελ. 7)
- Ἑλληνορθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, Γρηγορεῖτε! (σελ. 7)
- Τὸ Μαρτύριο τῆς Ἁγίας Εὐφημίας (σελ. 8)
- Ἐκτροπή: Μιὰ Πραγματικὴ Ἱστορία καὶ Μερινὲς Ἀλήθειες (σελ. 10)



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## MAN'S UNION WITH GOD: GUIDING THE NOUS IN THEORIA

THE PRAYER STOPS, THE BODILY MEMBERS CEASE TO MOVE, AND ONLY THE NOUS IS IN THEORIA WITHIN AN EXTRAORDINARY LIGHT...

*Source: An excerpt taken from the letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast, from "Monastic Wisdom," thirty-fifth letter (Florence, Arizona, St Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, 1988).*

My beloved little child and all the sisters in Christ according to rank, rejoice and be healthy in the Lord. I begin once more to speak into ears which desire and seek to hear. *Ask, says our sweet Jesus, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you!* (Mt 7:7). I honor your good intentions; I praise your zeal; I appreciate your love, and I emulate you.

So, listen to me once more.

First of all, the method of beginning your prayer that you mention, my child, is very good. With such thoughts you are able to keep your mind from wandering by thinking that the prayers of the elder and the eldress ascend like a pillar of fire and that they converse noetically with God. When the nous thinks and believes such things, it stops for a moment, the prayer is sweetened, and tears start to trickle. Then that grace which is found in beginners, which you mentioned, approaches and like a mother teaches her young how to walk. When she goes away and leaves them, they seek her. They cry, shout, and look for her. After a little while she comes back, only to withdraw once more. Again they cry and shout; again she returns. Until she rears us, there is no way for her to stay with us because our passions prevent her.

The passions are a hard material. Ural mountains! Thousands of feet high! Grace is like the sun. The sun rises, but the shadow of the mountains does not allow it to warm the entire noetic man. As soon as a beam finds him, he is immediately set on fire with joy. The rest of his soul, though, is still beneath the shadow of the passions, and the demons are able to act as soon as grace retracts. Many times they obstruct it as clouds obstruct the sun's light, for the shadow of the passions raises steam that obscures the little beam of light just dawning. This steam is the thoughts of despair you wrote about. Cowardice, fear, impudence, profanities, and other such things wither the soul and deprive it of its boldness towards God.

Every thought that brings despair and heavy sorrow is from the devil. It is the steam of the passions, and you must expel it at once with hope in God, with confession to the eldress, and with the prayers of those older than you, by thinking that they are praying and entreating God for you.

A small sorrow mixed with joy, tears, and consolation in the soul is from the grace of God throughout our life, it guides us towards repentance whenever we err. A sin drives away boldness towards God, but repentance brings it back at once. Grace does not bring despair, but it continually brings to repentance a person who has fallen. On the other hand, the words of the demons bring despair at once; they blight him like hail falling upon delicate little leaves that have just sprouted.

Now pay attention to this little lesson of *praxis*: When you see grace acting and your soul rejoicing and tears falling effortlessly (because of the mercies that God has given you), if you are praying, be still. If you are standing, don't move. If you are sitting, remain seated. If you are saying the prayer, keep saying it with-



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out any childish thoughts, and accept the *rain* of the Spirit for as long as it comes upon you. For even if it comes while you are working, if you get up to pray, it stops. It wants you to remain wherever it found you, so that you do not become its master. It wants to teach you never to trust in yourself, as long as you are in this life. The rainfall of grace of a single day provides enough water for the things planted in the soul for the entire period that grace leaves.

The grace of the priesthood is one thing, the grace of the great schema is another, the grace of the *Mysteries* is different, and the action of grace in asceticism is also different. They all spring from the same source, but each one differs from the other in eminence and glory. The grace of repentance, which acts in those who struggle, is a patristic inheritance. It is a divine transaction and exchange in which we give dust and receive heaven. We exchange matter for the Spirit. Every drop of sweat, every pain, every asceticism for God is an exchange: a loss of blood, and an influx of the Spirit. The magnitude of this grace depends on how much a person can contain, in proportion to how much his own vessel can hold. This grace of *praxis* is also called purifying grace.

Now then, *illumination* follows *praxis*. Illuminating grace is the second stage. That is, once a struggler has been trained well with the grace of *praxis* and has fallen and risen countless times, he is given the enlightenment of knowledge and clarity of the nous, which perceives the truth. He sees things as they are, without artifices and methods and human syllogisms. Everything stands naturally in its true state. However, many trials and painful changes are encountered before arriving at this point. But here he finds peace in his thoughts and rest from the temptations.

*Illumination* is followed by interruptions in the prayer and frequent *theorias*, rapture of the nous, cessation of the senses,

stillness, profound silence of the bodily members, and union of God and man into one. This is the divine exchange in which, if one endures temptations and does not stop struggling along the way, one *exchanges the material for the immaterial*. Therefore, *run behind the heavenly Bridegroom*, deers of my Jesus. (cf Song of Solomon 1:4). Smell the noetic myrrh. Make your life, soul and body fragrant with chastity and virginity. I do not know of anything else that pleases our sweet Jesus and His All-pure Mother more than chastity and virginity. Whoever desires to enjoy their great love should see to it that he makes his soul and body pure and chaste. Thus will he receive every heavenly good.

Now, let me explain what the phrase *interruption of the prayer* means, when grace abounds in a person. The grace of *praxis* is likened to the radiance of the stars; whereas the grace of *illumination* is like the full moon; but the perfecting grace of *theoria* is like the midday sun traversing over the horizon; for the Fathers have divided the spiritual life into three categories.

So when grace abounds in a person and he knows all that we have written, he attains great simplicity; his *nous* expands and has great capacity. Just as you tasted that drop of grace when much joy and exultation came upon you, it comes again in the same manner when the *nous* remains in prayer. But much more comes, like a *subtle breeze*, like a *mighty gust* (Acts 2:2) of fragrant wind. It overflows throughout, the prayer, it stops; the bodily members cease to move, and only the *nous* is in *theoria* within an extraordinary light. A union of God and man occurs. Man is unable to distinguish himself. It is just like iron: before it is thrown into the fire it is called iron, but once it ignites and becomes red-hot, it is one with the fire. It is also like wax which melts when it approaches fire; it cannot remain in its natural state.

Only when the *theoria* has passed does he return to his former state. Whereas during *theoria*, he is not functioning in this world. He is totally united with God. He thinks that he has neither a body nor a hut. He is entirely rapt. Without a body he ascends to heaven! Truly great is this mystery, for one sees things that a human tongue cannot express.

When this *theoria* has passed, he has such a deep humility that he cries like a small child, wondering why the Lord gives him such blessings, since he himself does nothing. He then obtains so much awareness of who he is that if you were to ask him, he would say that he considers himself destitute and unworthy to exist in this life. And the more he thinks like this, the more he is given.

"It is enough!" he cries out to God, and grace abounds even more. He becomes the son of the King. And if you were to ask: "Whose are these things you like wearing?"

"My Lord's," he answers. "And the bread and food you eat?"

"My Lord's," he again answers. "The money you carry?"

"My Lord's," he says. "What do you have of your own?"

"Nothing. I am dirt, I am mud, I am dust. If you lift me up, I stand. If you throw me down, I fall. If you take me up, I fly. If you toss me, I hit myself on the ground. My nature is nothing."

He never has enough of saying this. And what is this *nothing*? It is what existed before God created the heaven and the earth: *nothing*. This is the beginning of our existence. We come from clay; this is the raw material we are made of. And our power? It is the divine inbreathing, the breath of God.

So receive, o God, Lover of good desires and Creator of every good thing, receive the divine inbreathing which You breathed into our face, giving us thus a living spirit, and we shall decompose into clay once more.

*Therefore, what hast you, o proud man, that you did not receive? Now if you received it, why do thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?* (1Cor 4:7). Acknowledge, lowly soul, your Benefactor and be careful not to usurp things belonging to others, things of God, as your own accomplishments. Realize, wretched soul, your existence, be aware of your ancestry. Don't forget that you are a foreigner here and that everything is foreign! Now, if God the sweet Benefactor gave you something, render it with a clear conscience, *Your own from Your own*.

If you have ascended to the heavens and seen the natures of the angels and heard the voices of the divine Powers, if you theologize and teach, if you have defeated the wiles of the demons, if you write and speak and do things, all are a gift of God.

So say to your Lord, "Receive, o my sweet zephyr, my Jesus, *Your own from Your own!*" And then oh, then, my soul! What things you will see when the treasures of God open and He says to You, *Receive everything, my son, for you proved to be a faithful and good ruler!* (Mt 25:21).

## ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOT THE SAME

*An excerpt from the book "The Life of Elder Paisios" by Elder Isaac, published by Uncut Mountain Press.*

George, a young man of 16 or 17, came to Mount Athos and went around to the monasteries. From the age of three, his parents put him in a Buddhist monastery in Tibet. He progressed far in yoga, became a perfect magician, could call whatever demon he wished. He had a black belt and knew karate perfectly. With the power of Satan, he gave exhibitions that made a great impression. He hit large rocks with his hand and they shattered like walnuts. He could read closed books. He broke hazelnuts in his palm, tossed away the shells, and the nuts remained stuck in his hand.

Some monks brought George to the elder so he could help him. He asked the elder what powers he had and what he could do. He answered that he himself had no power at all and that all power is of God.

George, wanting to demonstrate his power, concentrated his gaze on a large rock that was in the distance and the rock shattered. Then the elder made the sign of the cross over a small rock and told him to shatter that as well. He concentrated, did his magic, but he didn't succeed in shattering it. Then he began to tremble, and the satanic powers, which he thought he controlled, being unable to shatter the rock, turned against him and hurled him to the other bank of the river. The elder picked him up in a miserable state.

"Another time," recounted the elder, "while we were talking, suddenly he stood up, grabbed me by the hands and turned me around backwards. 'If he can, let Hatzifendis come and free you,' he said to me. I felt it was like blasphemy. I moved my hands a little like this and he was jerked back. Then in response, he jumped up high and went to kick me with his foot, but his foot stopped near my face as if it hit an invisible barrier! God protected me.

"At night, I kept him and he slept in my cell. The demons dragged him down into the pit and thrashed him for his failure. In the morning, in a bad state, traumatized, full of thorns and dirt, he confessed: 'Satan thrashed me because I couldn't beat you.'"

He convinced George to bring him his magic books and he burned them.

The elder kept him near him for a little while and helped him, as long as he obeyed. He wanted to learn if he is baptized and, in fact, he found out what church he had been baptized in. George, shaken by the power and the grace of the elder, desired to become a monk, but he could not.

The elder used George's case to show how large is the delusion of those who think that all religions are the same, all believe in the same God, and that there is no difference between Tibetan monks and Orthodox monks.

## PIETY IN TODAY'S WORLD

*From an Orthodox Pamphlet.*

To be pious is to practice virtues and combat vices. It is nothing other than that which God expects of us all as creatures made in his image; it is the return to our true selves, and it can only be done by allowing the Holy Spirit to take up residence in his temple, that is, in us—our bodies and souls.

In the consciousness of the modern western world, the traditional understanding of universal ethics has been reduced to one or two virtues, love and kindness, while any mention of vices are seen as an indication of an unforgiving spirit. But it has always been understood that teaching is not judging; in order to have a chance to combat sin, one needs to not be afraid of stating without lack of clarity what the face of evil looks like. Without a map, the journey to the Kingdom becomes even more difficult than it already is, which serves no one but the enemies of God.

It is important to make sure that knowledge of proper morals is not used to judge others, but only to better oneself. In fact, to not realize that one is every bit as great a sinner as the next guy is an example of pride, the greatest sin.

First, let us be reminded of the seven grievous **vices**: greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth and pride. To know what the sins are is as important as to know what the virtues are. A Christian life starts with fighting our sins, repenting from them, and avoiding repetition. To replace the inclination to sin with virtuous behavior is where it all starts.

**Greed** keeps us from doing God's will by striving for more money or power, or resources than we need for our survival. The Church does not teach that money or fortune is evil, but allowing it to take over one's life is.

**Lust** means that we capitulate control over our desires and actions to evil forces. It teaches us to seek what is destructive rather than constructive, it teaches us to seek pleasure for the sake of pleasure, rather than to seek God and find pleasure in communion with Him.

**Anger** is a display of lack of control that allows Satan to enter into our minds when we are the most defenseless and makes us tools of his. It is also unbecoming someone who is created in the likeness of God.

**Gluttony**, like lust, seeks pleasure in food and drink for the sake of pleasure; like greed, it has us seeking more resources than we need for our survival.

**Envy** keeps us from the greatest virtue of them all: Love. To envy someone is to deny him or her the right to be happy, to have what he or she has, or be who he or she is.

**Sloth** will keep us from doing good, to help our fellow man and from doing our duty to God. As God put Man in charge of his creation, he expected Man to take care of it with diligence and hard work. Sloth leads to the unfair distribution of this responsibility to others.

**Pride**, which is the greatest sin of them all, the very origin of all evil. Pride is what keeps us from opening our hearts to God's Spirit; pride is what keeps the door to our salvation closed. Pride is what robs us of the humility we need when we stand before God's Judgment, and is ultimately rooted in our thinking that we don't need God.

The **virtues**, on the other hand, are: faith, hope, knowledge, wisdom, honesty, humility, obedience, patience, courage, faithfulness, self-control, kindness, gratitude, love.

**Faith** is the very foundation of all human Virtue. Without faith in the ability to do good, no good can be done. Faith is the combination of belief and trust, it is ultimately confidence in the abilities of man and the power of God.

**Hope** is the confidence, that despite all the sin of the world, despite all the doom and gloom, despite all the nay-sayers, God loves us and will forgive us what we cannot ourselves accomplish. It is the fuel that keeps spiritual house built on the foundation of faith warm; it is the walls that keep the stormy wind from chilling the house; it is the roof that keeps the rain out.

**Wisdom**. The wise man is the one who sees clearly the will of God, who understands both God and man. The wise man can enlighten others, helping them move closer to their true selves.

**Honesty**. Honesty is not just about telling the truth, it's also about avoiding false pretenses, about being truthful with oneself and about not being a hypocrite. Jesus despised the hypocrites, as many parables and stories from the Gospels clearly indicate. God gave man the ability to speak, to communicate, to glorify Him. This Divine gift has been appropriated by man for other purposes, to disdain God, to teach false religion, to do the works of the devil.

**Humility** is not the same as self-degradation. In fact, to display exaggerated humility is to be dishonest. Humility is to see things about oneself with God's eyes, to realize how sinful one is, and to understand that nothing that is good is beneath one's station in life. To be humble is to be the servant of others, to be willing to be the least of God's people.

**Obedience**, a natural consequence of true humility. If faith is the foundation of virtue, obedience is the mortar that holds the bricks together. **There is no spiritual life without obedience.** First, obedience to the Word of God, to the Church, to parents, to the law. To be obedient to God and God's will is the most dignified thing a person can do.

**Patience**, the ability to let things take their time without giving up hope or losing faith. Just as the farmer waits for his crop to grow before harvesting, so are we called to be patient for the Kingdom.

**Courage**, to not be afraid, is required for patience to be effective. Courage is does not merely mean to endure persecution or suffering, but also ridicule and insult. To have the courage



means to face every challenge with strength, ever expecting the support of the Holy Spirit.

**Faithfulness** is the virtue of “sticking with it” through thick and thin, through trial and tribulation, regardless of what happens. It requires patience and courage to remain faithful. The Desert Fathers described the value of faithfulness: “As a tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted, no more can any person that is often changing his mind and moving from place to place.”

**Self-control** is the giving up of all passions, it is freeing oneself from the slavery of sin. It does not mean giving up natural drives to do things like eat, sleep, laugh, weep, admire beauty, but it does mean controlling them and giving up those passions that are not natural to man. It is very black-or-white: Either you are in control of your passions, or your passions control you.

**Kindness** is sometimes easier to practice with strangers, due to the strictures of society, than with those that are familiar to us. The Church calls us to be kind to all, in particular our children. Kindness is not to “be nice” to everybody, kindness is to forgive sins, not to overlook them. Kindness is not “anything goes;” on the contrary, the truly kind person will correct others when necessary for their own good, but in doing so will act in a manner that isn’t hurtful or cruel.

**Gratitude.** The virtuous person knows that he has earned nothing, that all that he has is a gift from God. He is grateful for everything, and knows that to be anything else is to let pride and greed take control.

**Love** is the greatest of all virtues. Love is the reason God created the world, it is what binds Him to His creation, it is what made Him send His only-begotten Son into the world to destroy death. Love is the action of goodness for the sake of the other (Greek ‘agape’); it is the erotic love (Greek ‘eros’) that seeks union between God and Man; it is the friendship (Greek ‘phila’) between God and Man, as well as the friendship between human beings.



**We wish to remind our readers to not neglect sending us their annual contribution to help us cover the costs associated with our humble publication. In addition, we kindly request of those who have the financial ability, that they consider sending us an amount over the requested annual contribution of \$24 to assist us with our educational and philanthropic activities.**

## THE INCLUSIVE WISDOM OF THE CHURCH’S FOUNDER

*By St. Nikolaj Velimirovic (+1956), from “Agony of the Church.”*

**B**y His birth, He included and bound together the lowest and the highest, the natural and the supernatural: stable, manger, straw, sheep and shepherds on the one hand; stars, angels, magi and Davidic royal origin on the other.

By His life He included the austerity of the Indian monks, of John the Baptist and the Nazarenes on the one hand; and on the other, the Confucian moderate feasting in the houses of friends, at the marriage feast and on other solemn occasions.

His life-drama was interwoven into the lives of all classes of people: men, women and children, Judaists and heathen, King Herod and the proconsul Pilate, priests and soldiers, merchants and beggars, learned sophists and ignorant fools, the sick and the healthy, the righteous and the sinful, Jews and Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, and all others who could be met in Palestine, the very market of races and creeds.

He was by no means a party man like the Pharisees and the doctors of law. He called both the Pharisees and their enemies to follow Him. He went to the temple to pray, but He also prayed alone in the desert. He kept the Sabbath and He broke the Sabbath by healing the sick and doing good on this sacred day. He came not to destroy the Law, but He brought something which was higher than the Law and even included the law itself, i.e., love and mercy.

He rebuked people who used to pray and say, *Lord, Lord!* And yet He prayed very often Himself. He rebuked those who were fasting, and yet He used to fast Himself. What He really looked for was neither prayer nor fasting, but the spirit in which one prayed or fasted.

He commanded the people to *give to Caesar things which were Caesar’s, and to God that which was God’s*. He did not criticise this or that form of government, nor did He accentuate Monarchism, Republicanism, or Socialism as one form preferable to another. Under His scheme all forms of government were included as equally good or evil according to what place they reserved for God, what gifts they duly gave to God, and by what spirit they were inspired.

He followed the customs of His nation, and did not break them or evade them purposely. He took food according to the Law, and washed hands according to the Law, and went to the Holy City and took part in worship in the temple (though He was *greater than the temple*), according to the Law. It seems that He excluded no form of worship or social life, though He despised the unclean and petty spirit with which the hypocrites filled these forms. And when it came to a dispute He, the Messenger of a new spirit, naturally tried to save rather the pure spirit even without a form than a form filled with an impure spirit. Therefore He felt bound to say: *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, or*

*to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man, or thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, etc.*

Even so, too, He embraced all nationalities and races. Nothing was for Him unclean that God had created, nothing but unclean spirits. When the Roman centurion asked help from Him, He gave it. And when the people beyond the Israelitish boundaries, from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, cried after Him, He did not listen to the exclusivistic warnings of His disciples, but He distributed even there His divine mercy. He was mindful even of the people of Nineveh. And when He sent His disciples, He sent them *to all nations*.

Finally, He included the natural and the supernatural. He talked with spirits. He saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. He stood amongst Peter, John and James on one side, and Moses and Elias on the other. All the people saw lilies in the field and sparrows upon the roof, but He saw more, He saw how His Father clothed the lilies and how He fed the sparrows. He united the natural and the supernatural in His teaching.

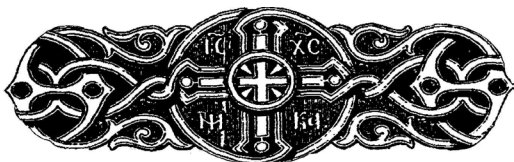
*Love those who love thee* was a natural teaching. But He added: *and those who hate and persecute thee*, which was supernatural.

*Give to them who give to thee* was a natural teaching. But He added: *and to them who do not give to thee*, which was supernatural.

*Bless those who bless thee*. But He added: *and those who curse thee*, which was supernatural.

And He united the natural and supernatural in His death. He suffered and died in agony. He rose from the dead, descended to Hell and ascended to Heaven. For Him there was as little boundary between heaven and earth, between nature and supernature, as between Israel and Canaan, or as between man and man, or form and form.

His wisdom was inclusive from the beginning to the end. What did He ever exclude—save unclean spirits? His disciples were as exclusive as anybody could be, exclusive when judging and acting according to natural wisdom. But when they looked at Him, they were reconciled. He was the Holy Wisdom, in which everyone could find a mansion for himself, every disciple, every nation, every form of worship, everything—but the unclean spirit.



There are three ages in the history of the Church: the Golden Age, when the Church was opposed to political governments; the Iron Age, when she was politically directing Europe's kingdoms; and the Stone Age, when she has been subdued to the service of political governments. What a humiliation for the present generation to live in the Stone Age of Christianity!

St. Nikolaj Velimirovic (+1956)

## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTIC OF WESTERN THEOLOGY

*By Alexander Kalomirov, from "River of Fire."*

The principal characteristic of Western theology is that it considers God as the real cause of all evil. What is evil? Is it not the estrangement from God Who is Life? Is it not death? And what does Western theology teach about death? All Roman Catholics and most Protestants consider death as a punishment from God. God considered all men guilty of Adam's sin and punished them by death, that is by cutting them away from Himself; depriving them of His live-giving energy, and so killing them spiritually at first and later bodily, by some sort of spiritual starvation. Some Westerners consider death not as a punishment but as something natural. But is not God the creator of all natural things? So in both cases, God—for them—is the real cause of death.

This is true not only for the death of the body. It is equally true for the death of the soul. Do not Western theologians consider hell, the eternal spiritual death of man, as a punishment from God? And do they not consider the devil as a minister of God for the eternal punishment of men in hell? The "God" of the West is an offended and angry God, full of wrath for the disobedience of men, who desires in His destructive passion to torment all humanity unto eternity for their sins, unless He receives an infinite satisfaction for His offended pride.

And on their dogma of salvation, did not God kill God in order to satisfy His pride, which the Westerners euphemistically call justice? And is it not by this infinite satisfaction that He deigns to accept the salvation of some of us? What is salvation for Western theology? Is it not salvation from the wrath of God? Do you see, then, that Western theology teaches that our real danger and our real enemy is our Creator and God? Salvation, for Westerners, is to be saved from the hands of God! How can one love such a God? How can we have faith in someone we detest? Faith in its deeper essence is a product of love, therefore, it would be our desire that one who threatens us not even exist, especially when this threat is eternal.

Even if there exists a means of escaping the eternal wrath of this omnipotent but wicked Being (the death of His Son in our stead), it would be much better if this Being did not exist. Even eternal Paradise would be abhorrent with such a cruel God. Thus was atheism born, and this is why the West was its birthplace. Atheism was unknown in Eastern Christianity until Western theology was introduced there, too. Atheism is the consequence of Western theology. Atheism is the denial, the negation of an evil God. Men became atheists in order to be saved from God, hiding their head and closing their eyes like an ostrich. Atheism, my brothers, is the negation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant God. Atheism is not our real enemy. The real enemy is that falsified and distorted "Christianity."

## Ὁ Δεκάλογος τοῦ Ἱεροψάλτη

Ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίον «Τὸ Ἄγραφο Τυπικὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας», τοῦ Ἱεροψάλτου κ. Ἰωάννου Χ. Δαμαρλάκη.

- Ο** Δεκάλογος τοῦ Ἱεροψάλτη εἶναι ὡς ἀκολούθως:
1. Νὰ στέκεται κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τῶν Ἱερῶν Ἀκολουθιῶν σὲ στάση ΗΓΕΜΟΝΙΚΩΣ ΤΑΠΕΙΝΗ χωρὶς περιττὲς κινήσεις, μορφασμούς, κ.λ.π.
  2. Νὰ φορᾷ πάντοτε τὸ ἱερὸ ράσσο καὶ νὰ προσπαθῇ καὶ οἱ βοηθοὶ του νὰ εἶναι ρασοφορεμένοι. Προσδίδει ἱεροπρέπεια.
  3. Νὰ ψάλλῃ πάντοτε μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ βιβλία τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Ἐκκλησιαστικῆς Μουσικῆς μας, σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν κανόνα τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου «ἀπὸ διφθέρας ψάλλειν».
  4. Νὰ ψάλλῃ πάντα τὸ ἴδιο, εἴτε εἶναι μόνος του στὴν Ἐκκλησία εἴτε ὑπάρχει πληρὴς ἐκκλησίασμα γιατί σὲ ὅλες τὶς περιπτώσεις τὸν πανταχοῦ παρόντα Θεὸς ὑμνεῖ.
  5. Νὰ συνδυάζῃ τὸν τρόπο τῆς ψαλμωδίας μὲ τὸ νόημα τοῦ ὕμνου π.χ. ἁλλιῶς ἐκφράζεται ὁ διατονικὸς ἦχος τῆς Μ. Πέμπτης καὶ ἁλλιῶς ὁ διατονικὸς ἦχος τοῦ Πάσχα. Πρέπει δηλαδὴ νὰ ψάλλῃ «χρωματισμένα καὶ ὄχι ἄσπρα».
  6. Νὰ σέβεται τοὺς Λειτουργοὺς Ἱερεῖς καὶ τοὺς συναδέλφους καὶ νὰ συνεργάζεται ἁρμονικὰ μαζί τους.
  7. Ἀπὸ τὴν στιγμή πού περιβάλλεται τὸ ἱερὸ ράσσο καὶ ἀρχίζει νὰ ἐκτελῇ τὰ ἱερά του καθήκοντα πρέπει «πᾶσαν τὴν βιωτικὴν μέριμναν» νὰ ἀποχωρίζεται.
  8. Νὰ ἀπαγγέλλῃ τὰ ἀναγνώσματα καὶ νὰ ψάλλῃ τὰ μέλη εὐάρθρως καὶ ἐννοιολογικὰ ὥστε οἱ πιστοὶ νὰ κατανοοῦν καὶ νὰ συμμετέχουν.
  9. Νὰ γνωρίζῃ ὅτι κάθε ὑπερβολὴ κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τοῦ ψάλλειν βλάπτει ἀνεπανόρθωτα.
  10. Νὰ συμμετέχῃ στὰ διαδραματιζόμενα τῶν Ἱερῶν Ἀκολουθιῶν ἵνα μὴ ἐπαληθεύεται τὸ τροπάριον «πολλάκις τὴν ὕμνωδιαν ἐκτελὼν εὐρέθην τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκπληρῶν».
- Ὁ Ἱεροψάλτης ὡς κατώτερος κληρικὸς πρέπει νὰ συμπεριφέρεται ἀνάλογα. Ἡ μορφή του γενικά (ἐνδυμασία, κόμη κ.ἄ.), πρέπει νὰ «δείχνουν» πάντα τὸ ὑπόβρυχμά του. Εἶναι κατ' ἐξοχὴν καὶ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν «Ἀνὴρ Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς». Καὶ γιὰ νὰ ἐπιτύχῃ στὸ ἔργο του πρέπει νὰ διάγῃ βίον ἐνάρετο, «ἐν μελέτῃ, ἐν ἀκοῇ, ἐν πίστει, ἐν νηστείᾳ, ἐν ὑπομονῇ καὶ ὑπακοῇ».
- Οἱ χοροὶ εἶναι δύο, ὁ δεξιὸς καὶ ὁ ἀριστερός. Ἐκ τούτων ὁ δεξιὸς σήμερον θεωρεῖται ὁ πρῶτος χορὸς, καὶ ὁ ἀριστερός ὁ δεύτερος. Εἰς παλαιότεραν ἐποχὴν τὰ πρωτεῖα εἶχον ἐναλλάξ οἱ χοροὶ ἀνὰ μίαν ἐβδομάδα ἕκαστος, ὁ δεξιὸς τὴν μίαν ἐβδομάδα, καὶ ὁ ἀριστερός τὴν ἐπομένην. Λείψανον τῆς τάξεως ταύτης ἀπέμεινε σήμερον τὸ ἐν τῷ μικρῷ ἑσπερινῷ γινόμενον, ἐν ᾧ ἔχει τὰ πρωτεῖα ὁ ἀριστερός χορὸς, ἐν δὲ τῷ μεγάλῳ ἑσπερινῷ ὁ δεξιός.

## Ἕλληνες Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, Γρηγορεῖτε!

Περιοδικὸ «ΑΓΙΑ ΛΥΔΙΑ», Φεβρουάριος 1992.



**Ο**ρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς εἶναι αὐτὸς πού στέκεται ὀρθῶς, κρατώντας ὑψηλὰ τὸ λάβαρο τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου πίστεως, θαρραλέος καὶ ἀτρόμητος, χωρὶς νὰ φοβάται τὴν θύελλα τοῦ κακοῦ καὶ τὰ μανιασμένα κύματα τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τῆς ἀθεΐας.

Ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς εἶναι ὁ ἀθλητὴς τοῦ πνεύματος, πού δὲν ἀρέσκεται στὶς κερκίδες τῶν θεατῶν, ἀλλὰ προτιμᾷ τὸ στίβο τοῦ ἀθλητοῦ καὶ ἀγωνίζεται τὸν καλὸν ἀγώνα τῆς ζωῆς. Ἀθλεῖται νομίμως καὶ στεφανοῦται

δικαίως μὲ τὸ ἀμαράντινο στεφάνι τοῦ νικητοῦ.

Ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς ἀγωνίζεται, δὲν ἀλλοιώνει τὸ Ὁρθόδοξο φρόνημα, δὲν ἀνταλλάσσει τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο πίστη μὲ τὰ χαλκευμένα ψεῦδη τῶν αἰρετικῶν, οἱ ὅποιοι ἐπὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν μας ὀργιάζουν στὴν Ὁρθόδοξο πατρίδα μας, τὴν ἀγαπημένη μας Ἑλλάδα.

Ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς φροντίζει μὲ τὰ μύρα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας νὰ μυρώνει τὴν καρδιά του, τὸ περιβάλλον του, τὴν οἰκογένειά του, τὴν συντροφιά του.

Ὅλοι οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοὶ ἐργαζόμεστε γιὰ ἓνα καλύτερο κόσμον, γιὰ μία ὁμορφὴ ζωὴ, γιὰ μία καλύτερη κοινωνία, δίχως πάθη καὶ μίση, δίχως κλοπὲς καὶ ληστείες, δίχως δολοφονίες καὶ αὐτοκτονίες, δίχως πορνείες καὶ μοιχεῖες, δίχως χωρισμένα ἀνδρόγυνα καὶ παιδιὰ πεταμένα στοὺς δρόμους, δίχως μητροκτονίες, πατροκτονίες, παιδοκτονίες καὶ ἀδελφοκτονίες. Δίχως βλασφημίες καὶ βωμολοχίες, δίχως βιασμούς καὶ σκάνδαλα καὶ παντὸς εἶδους ἀνομήματα.

Ἕλληνες Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί! Οἱ καιροὶ εἶναι χαλεποί. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος πίστη μας βάλλεται πανταχόθεν. Τὸ πλῆθος τῶν αἱρέσεων ὀργιάζει, ὁ παπισμὸς ὕψωσε θρασυτάτα τὴν κεφαλὴ του καὶ ἀπροκάλυπτα ἀπλώνει τὰ πλοκάμια του νὰ πνίξῃ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξία. Ὁ σατανισμὸς ὡς καταγιγίδα εἰσβάλλει σὲ κάθε Ὁρθόδοξον γωνιά καὶ ἰδιαίτερα στὴν πολυβασανισμένη Πατρίδα μας. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ οἱ ἀνατολικὲς θρησκείες, μὲ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἀνοησιῶν των, προσπαθοῦν νὰ ἐπισύρουν τὴν νεολαία στὰ βρωμερὰ τους νερά. Ὁ ἀθεϊσμὸς καὶ ἡ ἀπιστία ὡς λαίλαπα γκρεμίζει ὅ,τι ἐναπόμεινε ἀκόμη ὀρθῶς. Ὁ ἐωσφόρος ὡς λυσσασμένος λέων ἐπιτίθεται στὴν ποίμνη τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας. Καὶ ἐμεῖς τί κάνουμε;

Ἀδελφοί! Γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε. Οἱ κίνδυνοι πολλοί. Τὸ μήνυμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀπευθύνεται σὲ ὅλους μας. Ὅλοι στὸν ἀγώνα γιὰ νὰ κερδίσουμε τὴν μάχη γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξία καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας.



## Τὸ Μαρτύριο τῆς Ἀγίας Εὐφημίας

Ἀπὸ ἑνα Ἑλληνόρθοδοξο φυλλάδιο.



Ἀμέτρητοι Χριστιανοὶ δολοφονήθηκαν ἀπὸ τὴν εἰδωλολατρικὴν θηριωδίαν ἢ ὁποῖα διαμορφώνει τοὺς πιστοὺς τῆς ὁμοιότητος μετὰ αὐτοὺς: ψεῖτες, ἄνθρωποκτόνους καὶ μισανθρώπους. Ἐνα θύμα τῆς θηριωδίας αὐτῆς εἶναι καὶ ἡ Ἁγία Εὐφημία, τῇ μνήμῃ τῆς ὁποίας ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας ἐορτάζει τὴν

16<sup>ην</sup> Σεπτεμβρίου.

Ἡ Ἁγία Εὐφημία ἔζησε στοὺς χρόνους τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Διοκλητιανοῦ ( 284-305 μ.Χ.) καὶ καταγόταν ἀπὸ τὴ Χαλκηδόνα. Ὁ πατέρας τῆς ὀνομαζόταν Φιλόφρων καὶ ἦταν πλούσιος συγκλητικός, ἡ δὲ μητέρα τῆς ὀνομαζόταν Θεοδωρησιανὴ καὶ ἦταν γυναίκα εὐσεβὴς καὶ φιλόανθρωπος.

Ἐκείνῃ τὴν ἐποχὴν ὁ Διοκλητιανὸς κίνησε μεγάλο διωγμὸν ἐναντίον τῶν Χριστιανῶν. Στὰ μέρη τῆς Ἀνατολῆς ἦταν ἡγέμονας τότε ὁ Πρίσκος μετὰ συνάρχοντα τὸν φιλόσοφο Ἀπελλιανόν, ποὺ ἦταν καὶ ἱερέας τοῦ θεοῦ Ἄρη. Ὅταν ἐφθασε ἡ γιορτὴ τοῦ θεοῦ τοὺς, ἔστειλαν γράμματα καὶ κήρυκες σ' ὅλην τὴν ἐπαρχίαν τῆς Χαλκηδόνας, προσκαλώντας ὅλους νὰ γιορτάσουν. Ὅσοι δὲν θὰ πῆγαιναν στὴ Χαλκηδόνα, ὅπου ἦταν ὁ ναὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, θὰ τιμωροῦνταν μετὰ θάνατο.

Τότε ὅσοι ἦσαν Χριστιανοὶ συγκεντρώνονταν καὶ κλείνονταν σὲ σπῖτια ἢ κατάφρουα στὴν ἔρημο, γιὰ νὰ ἀποφύγουν τὴν εἰδωλολατρικὴν γιορτὴ. Σὲ μιὰ ὁμάδα Χριστιανῶν ὁδηγὸς ἦταν ἡ Εὐφημία. Ὁ Ἀπελλιανὸς παρατήρησε τὴν ἀποχὴ τῶν Χριστιανῶν καὶ παρακίνησε τὸν ἡγέμονα νὰ συλλάβῃ ὅσους ἦταν δυνατό, μεταξὺ δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐνδοξὴν Εὐφημία. Ὅλη ἡ συντροφιά τῆς Εὐφημίας ἦταν σαράντα ἐννέα ἄτομα, ξεχώριζε δὲ ἡ κόρη ἀπὸ τὸ ἄνθος τῆς ἡλικίας καὶ τὴν εὐγένειαν τῆς καταγωγῆς τῆς.

Ὁδηγήθηκαν, λοιπόν, στὸν ἡγέμονα, ποὺ τοὺς μίλησε μετὰ προσποιητῇ πραότητι λέγοντας:

- Ἐγὼ βλέπω τὴν πολλὴν σας σύνεση. Ἐλπίζω, ὅτι θὰ θυσιάσετε στὸν μεγάλο Ἄρη καὶ δὲ θὰ προτιμήσετε ἀντὶ τῆς δόξας καὶ τῆς τιμῆς τὸν πικρὸ καὶ ἐπώδυνο θάνατο.

Σ' αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια τοῦ ἀπάντησαν οἱ Ἅγιοι μετὰ ἀνδρεία καὶ θάρρος:

- Μὴ χάνεις τὰ λόγια σου, ἄρχοντα. Ἐμεῖς τὸ ἔχουμε μεγάλην ντροπὴν, ἐνῶ εἴμαστε λογικὰ ὄντα νὰ προσκυνούμε ἀνόητους θεοὺς, καὶ ν' ἀφῆνουμε τὸν ἀληθινὸν Θεόν. Ὅσο γιὰ τὰ μαρτύρια μετὰ τὰ ὁποῖα μᾶς ἀπειλεῖς μάθε, ὅτι φοβούμεστε μήπως εἶναι ἐλαφρὶα καὶ δὲν εἶναι ἀρκετὰ γιὰ τέλειον μαρτύριο. Δοκίμασε νὰ μᾶς βασανίσῃς καὶ θὰ δῇς τὴ δύναμιν τοῦ Θεοῦ μας.

### Ἀρχὴ τῶν Βασανιστηρίων

Ἡ ἀπάντησις ἦταν ἀπρόσμενη γιὰ τὸν ἡγέμονα ποὺ ὀργισμένος διέταξε νὰ τοὺς κτυποῦν καθημερινὰ γιὰ εἴκοσι μέρες. Τὴν εἰκοστὴ μέρα τοὺς ἔφερε πάλι μπροστὰ τοῦ καὶ τοὺς εἶπε:

- Τώρα ποὺ εἶδατε στὴν πράξιν τὸν πρόλογο τῆς δυστυχίας σας, πεισθίητε καὶ θυσιάστε.

- Μὴ κουράζεσαι ἄδικα, ἀπάντησε μετὰ μιὰ φωνὴ ὁ γενναῖος χορὸς. Εἶναι ἀδύνατο νὰ σ' ἀκούσουμε καὶ νὰ θυσιάσουμε στὰ εἰδωλα.

Ὁ ἡγέμονας τοὺς ἀντιμετώπισε πάλιν κτυπώντας τοὺς μέχρι ποὺ ἔπεσαν μισοπεθαμένοι. Μετὰ συμβουλὴν τοῦ Ἀπελλιανοῦ τοὺς φυλάκισε ὅλους, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς στεῖλῃ στὸν Διοκλητιανόν, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὴν Εὐφημίαν, ποὺ τὴν κάλεσε κοντὰ τοῦ καὶ προσπάθησε νὰ τὴν πλανήσῃ μετὰ κολακείας. Ἐκείνῃ τοῦ ἔλεγε:

- Ἡ δύναμιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι ἀκατανίκητη. Μὴ νομίζεις ὅτι θὰ με νικήσῃς ἐπειδὴ με βλέπεις γυναίκα.

Τότε ὁ τύρραννος πρόσταξε νὰ τὴ γυρίσουν στοὺς τροχοὺς μετὰ ταχύτητα. Τὰ μέλη τῆς Μάρτυρος κακοποιοῦντο καὶ πονοῦσε φοβερὰ, ἀλλὰ ὁ νοῦς τῆς δὲν ἐφενεγε ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστό. Ὑψωνε τὰ μάτια στὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἔλεγε: «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ποὺ σώζεις ὅσους ἐλπίζουν σ' Ἐσένα, βοήθησέ με. Δεῖξε, ὅτι ἐσὺ εἶσαι Θεὸς ἀληθινός».

Ὁ Θεὸς ἀπάντησε στὴν προσευχὴ τῆς. Ἀμέσως τὴν ἔλυσε ἀπὸ τὸν τροχὸν καὶ θεράπευσε τὸ σῶμα τῆς. Ἀλλὰ ὁ Πρίσκος, πῶς τυφλὸς καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς θεοὺς τοῦ, δὲν ἐννοοῦσε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ φοβέριζε πῶς θὰ τὴν κάψει ζωντανή. Ἡ Εὐφημία χωρὶς νὰ φοβηθῇ ἀπὸ τὴν ἀπειλὴν ἀποκρίθηκε:

- Ἐγὼ τύρρανε, αὐτὴ τὴν πρόσκαιρην φωτιά δὲν τὴν φοβάμαι. Τρέμω γιὰ τὴν αἰώνιον φωτιά, ποὺ καίει, ὅσους ἀρνοῦνται τὸν Χριστό.

### Στὸ Καμίνι τῆς Φωτιᾶς

Ὁ τύρραννος πρόσταξε καὶ ἄναψαν καμίνιν. Ἐνῶ λοιπὸν ἐπρόκειτο νὰ τὴν ρίξουν μέσα, ἤλθαν οἱ πρωτοῦπηρέτες Σωσθένης καὶ Βίκτωρ λέγοντας:

- Ἐμεῖς, ὅπως βλέπεις, εἴμαστε πρόθυμοι νὰ κάμουμε ὅτι μας διατάξεις. Ὅμως δὲν μπορούμε ν' ἀγγίξουμε τὸ σῶμα τῆς παρθένου γιατί βλέπουμε ἄνδρες μετὰ φοβερὴν ὄψιν, ποὺ στέκονται κοντὰ τῆς καὶ μᾶς ἀπειλοῦν.

Ὁ Πρίσκος σ' αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ἀπάντησε μετὰ μιὰ διαταγὴν, νὰ τοὺς φυλακίσουν, ἐπειδὴ ἐγίναν Χριστιανοί. Καὶ ἐνῶ γίνονταν αὐτὰ, ἡ Ἁγία προσευχόταν λέγοντας: «Ὁ Θεός, ποὺ βλέπεις τὰ πάντα, Σὺ, ποὺ ἔσωσες τοὺς Τρεῖς Παῖδας στὴ Βαβυλώνα, ἔλα Βοηθὸς καὶ στὴ δούλῃ Σου, ποὺ ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ τὴν δόξαν Σου».

Τελικὰ ὁ ἡγέμονας ἔστειλε δυὸ κακοὺς ὑπηρέτες, τὸν Καῖσαρα καὶ τὸν Βάριο, ποὺ ἦσαν ἀδίστακτοι καὶ δὲν εἶχαν φόβον Θεοῦ, γιὰ νὰ ρίξουν τὴν Εὐφημίαν στὴ φωτιά. Ἀλλὰ μέσα στὸ καμίνιν ἡ Ἁγία δὲν ἔπαθε τίποτα. Ἡ φωτιά χύθηκε ἔξω καὶ διεσκόρπισε τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς. Ἡ δὲ Εὐφημία βγῆκε χωρὶς νὰ ἔχουν πάθῃ τίποτε οὔτε τὰ ρούχα τῆς. Πάλιν φυλακίστηκε, καὶ οἱ δυὸ πρωτοῦπηρέτες Σωσθένης καὶ Βίκτωρ διατάχθησαν νὰ θυσιάσουν στὰ εἰδωλα. Τότε μετὰ γενναῖον φρόνημα εἶπαν:

- Ἐμεῖς ἀνθύπατε, πρωτότερα ἡμασταν ὑποδουλωμένοι σὲ μεγάλην πλάνην, ὅπως εἶσαι καὶ σὺ ἀκόμη. Τώρα, ὁμως, ἀξιώθηκαμε διὰ μέσου αὐτῆς τῆς παρθένου νὰ γνωρίσουμε τὴν ἀλήθειαν. Μάθε λοιπόν, ὅτι δὲν θὰ θυσιάσουμε σὲ ἄψυχους Θεοὺς.

Μετά ἅπ' αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια τοὺς παραδόθηκαν ἀπὸ τὸν ἡγέμονα στὰ θηρία. Τὰ θηρία ὁμῶς σεβάσθηκαν τὰ σώματάς τοὺς καὶ δὲν κατάφαγαν τὶς σάρκες, ἀλλὰ ἤπιαν μόνο τὸ αἷμα. Τὰ σώματα τοὺς οἱ πιστοὶ τὰ ἔθαψαν μὲ ψαλμοὺς καὶ ὕμνους.

### Στὴ Δεξαμενὴ μὲ τὰ Θηρία

Τὴν ἄλλη μέρα ἔφεραν πάλι τὴν Ἀγία στὸν ἡγέμονα, κι αὐτὸς ἄρχισε νὰ τὴ φοβερίζῃ λέγοντας:

- Μέχρι πότε θὰ ταλαιπωρῇς τὸν ἑαυτό σου; Μέχρι πότε θὰ λυπῇς τοὺς θεοὺς καὶ θὰ ὀργίζῃς τὸν βασιλιά; Καλὸ εἶναι νὰ θυσιάσῃς.

- Βασιλιά, ὑπάρχει ἄλλο φρονιμότερο ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ μὴ πιστεύῃ κανεὶς σὲ λιθάρια ἄνυχα καὶ ἀνόητα;

Ὁ Πρίσκο, τρελλὸς ἀπὸ ὀργή, διέταξε καὶ κατασκεύασαν στὴ μέση τοῦ σταδίου μεγάλη δεξαμενὴ. Ἀφοῦ τὴ γέμισε νερὸ ἔβαλε μέσα ὅλα τὰ σαρκοφάγα θηρία τῆς θάλασσας καὶ ἔρριξε τὴν Ἀγία. Ἐκείνῃ προσευχόταν μὲ δάκρυα καὶ ἔλεγε: «Ἰησοῦ, τὸ φῶς μου, γίνε Βοηθὸς τῆς ἀδυναμίας μου, Σὺ ποὺ ἔκανες τὴν κοιλιά τοῦ θηρίου καλὸ θάλαμο γιὰ τὸν Ἰωάν. Σῶσε μὲ τώρα γιὰ νὰ δοξασθοῦν ὅσοι Σὲ προσκυνοῦν καὶ καταισχνυθοῦν ὅσοι Σὲ ἄρνοῦνται.»

Μὲ τὸ σημεῖο τοῦ σταυροῦ μπῆκε στὸ νερὸ ἡ Ἀγία. Τὰ θηρία ὄρμησαν, ἀλλὰ μόλις πλησίασαν στὸ μαρτυρικό της σῶμα, λησμόνησαν τὴν τροφή. Κράτησαν τὴν Ἀγία πάνω τους, σὰν νὰ φοβοῦνταν μήπως πάθει κακὸ στὸ νερό. Ὁ Πρίσκος μπροστὰ σ' αὐτὸ τὸ θέαμα ἀποροῦσε κι ἔλεγε:

- Πῶς ἀπὸ μιὰ γυναῖκα νικῆθηκε ἡ φωτιά, οἱ πληγές, τὰ θηρία;

Ὁ Ἀπελλιανὸς τυφλὸς ἀπὸ φανατισμὸ τοῦ ἀπάντησε:

- Ὅλα τὰ κάνει μὲ μάγια.

- Ἀλλὰ γιατί οἱ Θεοὶ ποὺ μισοῦν τὰ πονηρὰ ἔργα δὲν τὴν τιμωροῦν;...

### Στὸ Λάκκο μὲ τὰ Καρφιὰ

Ἐπειτα ἐτοίμασαν ἄλλο λάκκο στρωμένο μὲ καρφιὰ καὶ σκεπασμένο ἀπὸ πάνω μὲ λίγο χῶμα. Ἡ Ἀγία ὁμῶς πέρασε χωρὶς νὰ πάθῃ τὸ παραμικρό. Μερικοὶ ἄλλοι ποὺ προσπάθησαν νὰ περάσουν, ἔπεσαν στὰ κοφτερὰ ὄργανα καὶ θανατώθηκαν.

Ἡ Ἀγία στὸ μεταξὺ εὐχαριστοῦσε τὸ Θεό, ποὺ τὴν ἔσωσε κι ἔλεγε: «Ποιὸς θὰ λαλῇ τὴν δύναμη τῶν ἔργων Σου καὶ θὰ κάνει ξακουστὲς τὶς εὐχαριστίες γιὰ Σένα, Κύριε; Μὲ φύλαξες ἀπὸ πληγές καὶ μαστιγώσεις, ἀπὸ φωτιά καὶ θηρία, ἀπὸ νερὸ καὶ λάκκο. Τώρα σῶσε τὴν ψυχὴ μου ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια τοῦ ἐχθροῦ της ἀνθρώπινης φύσης.»

### Τὸ Τέλος τῆς Ἀγίας

Τώρα ὁ Πρίσκο ἐπινοεῖ ἄλλο τρόπο γιὰ νὰ ξεκάμῃ τὴν Ἀγία. Τὴν καλεῖ καὶ μὲ προσποιητὴ εὐγένεια τῆς λέει:

- Ἐσύ, σὰν γυναῖκα, πλανήθηκες. Ἐμεῖς δὲν πρέπει νὰ δείξουμε τόσο θυμὸ ἐναντίον σου. Συγχώρησέ μας καὶ θυσιάσε στὸν Ἄρη. Ἄν θυσιάσῃς, θὰ ζήσῃς μὲ εὐτυχία, ὅπως σοῦ πρέπει, γιατί καὶ ὁμορφὴ εἶσαι καὶ ἀπὸ εὐγενικὴ οἰκογένεια κατάγεται.

- Σταμάτησε ἄρχοντα, τὶς φλυαρίες. Ἐγὼ νὰ θυσιάσω στοὺς δαίμονες ἔπειτα ἀπὸ τόσες εὐεργεσίες ποὺ ἔτυχα

ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριό μου; Ἄφησε, δυστυχισμένε, τὴν ὑποκρισία καὶ κάμε ὅτι σου λέει ὁ διάβολος ποὺ σὲ συμβουλεύει.

Στὴ συνέχεια ὑποβλήθηκε σὲ ἄλλα βασανιστήρια, ἀλλὰ τὸ σῶμα της ἐξακολουθοῦσε νὰ μένῃ ἀνέπαφο. Τὴν ἔφεραν πάλι στὸ στάδιο γιὰ ν' ἀντιμετωπίσῃ θηρία. Ἡ Ἀγία λυπόταν γιατί δὲν ἀξίωνόταν νὰ φύγῃ πρὸς τὸ Νυμφίο της καὶ ἔλεγε αὐτὰ προσευχομένη: «Κύριέ μου ἔδειξες τὴν ἀνίκητὴ δύναμή Σου, μὲ ἑκαμὲς δυνατὴ στίς πληγές καὶ στὰ βασανιστήρια. Καθὼς δέχτηκες τὴ θυσία καὶ τὰ αἵματα τῶν μαρτύρων Σου ποὺ μαρτύρισαν πρὶν ἀπὸ ἐμένα, δέξου καὶ τὴ δική μου θυσία καὶ παράλαβε τὴν ψυχὴ μου.»

Ἐνῶ τέτοια ζητοῦσε μὲ τὴν προσευχή της, ἄφησαν ἐναντίον τῆς τέσσερα λιοντάρια καὶ τρεῖς ἄρκουδες. Τὰ θηρία, ἀφοῦ πλησίασαν ἄρχισαν νὰ φιλοῦν μὲ εὐλάβεια τὰ πόδια τῆς Μάρτυρος. Μιὰ ἀπὸ τὶς ἄρκουδες δάγκωσε τὴν Ἀγία χωρὶς νὰ προξενήσῃ πληγὴ, ἔγινε ὁμῶς ἀφορμὴ νὰ φύγῃ ἡ Εὐφημία πρὸς τὸν οὐρανό. Ἦταν τότε ἡ 16ῃ Σεπτεμβρίου, κατὰ τὴν ἐπικρατέστερη γνώμη, τοῦ 303 μ.Χ. Μόλις ξεψύχησε φωνὴ ἀκούστηκε ἀπὸ τὸν οὐρανό, ποὺ ἔλεγε:

- Ἔλα πρὸς τὸν Κύριο, σὺ ποὺ ἀγωνίστηκες τὸν καλὸ ἀγώνα γιὰ νὰ λάβῃς τοὺς μισθοὺς γιὰ τὰ μαρτύρια, ποὺ ὑπέστης.

Μαζί μὲ τὴ φωνὴ ἔγινε μεγάλος σεισμὸς ποὺ προξένησε τὸν πανικὸ στοὺς κατοίκους. Ὅταν βρῆκαν εὐκαιρία κατὰλληλη, οἱ γονεῖς τῆς Ἀγίας πῆραν τὸ πολύτιμο ἐκεῖνο σῶμα καὶ τὸ ἔθαψαν κοντὰ στὴ Χαλκιδόνα. Δὲν ἔκλαιγαν, ἀλλὰ ἐχαίροντο, ποὺ ἀξιώθηκαν νὰ γίνουν γονεῖς μιᾶς τέτοιας κόρης.

Τὸ τίμιο λείψανό της ἔγινε αἶτιο πολλῶν θεραπειῶν καὶ θαυμάτων. Τὸ Πατριαρχεῖο μετέφερε μαζί του, στὸν ναὸ τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου στὸ Φανάρι, τὸ ἱερὸ λείψανο τῆς Ἀγίας Εὐφημίας, ὅπου στὸ δεξιὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ τοῦ ναοῦ ἔγινε παρεκκλήσι τῆς Ἀγίας Εὐφημίας τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Γρηγορίου.

Ἀγία Εὐφημία, πρέσβευε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν!



**Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἔκδοση τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οἰκονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἃς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντάς κατὰ περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμὴν».**



## Ἐκτρωσις: Μιά Πραγματική Ἱστορία καὶ Μερικὲς Ἀλήθειες

*Ἀπὸ ἓνα Ἑλληνορθόδοξο φυλλάδιο.*

Ήταν μία οἰκογένεια μὲ δυὸ παιδιά ποὺ τὰ μεγάλωναν ἡλιτὰ μὲ τὰ ἀπολύτως ἀπαραίτητα. Τὰ πάντα στὸ σπίτι τους ἦταν μετρημένα γιατί ἡ οἰκονομικὴ κατάσταση τοῦ τότε καιροῦ δὲν ἐπέτρεπε πολυτέλειες ἀλλὰ οὔτε καὶ περίσσια.

Ἡ μητέρα ἀνακάλυψε ὅτι ἦταν ἔγκυος, καὶ ἀφοῦ τὸ συζήτησε μὲ τὸν ἄνδρα της, τὴν ἀδελφή της, καὶ μία φίλη (ὅπως γίνετε συνήθως) ἀποφάσισαν νὰ μὴν γεννηθῇ αὐτὸ τὸ παιδί γιατί ἦταν ἀδύνατο νὰ τὸ συντηρήσουν. Προχώρησαν στὴν φοβερὴ «ἐπέμβαση—δολοφονία»· μετὰ ἀπὸ λίγες ὥρες γύρισε στὸ σπίτι της, αἰσθανόταν ἀπαίσια καὶ ἔνοχη ἀλλὰ ἦταν ἡ «μόνη λύση» γιὰ τὰ τότε δεδομένα. Δὲν κοινώνησε γιὰ πολλὰ χρόνια καὶ πολλὰς φορές ὅταν ἐρχόταν στὸ μυαλό της ἡ πράξη της ἐκλαιγε.

Πέρασαν πολλὰ χρόνια, ξεχάστηκε τὸ γεγονὸς ὥσπου ἓνα πρωινὸ μετὰ ἀπὸ πολλὰ χρόνια... Ἐκεῖνο τὸ πρωινὸ ἦταν νὰ παρουσιαστῇ σὰν φαντάρος ὁ γιὸς της σὲ ἓνα στρατόπεδο πεζοναυτῶν. Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἔπινε τὸν καφέ του νὰ φύγουν ὅλοι μαζί νὰ τὸν συνοδεύουν τῆς λέει:

- Βρὲ μητέρα, εἶδα ἓνα ὄνειρο σήμερα καὶ εἶμαι κάπως, παρότι ποὺ δὲν τὰ πιστεύω, φοβισμένος... Μπήκε στὸ σπίτι μας ἓνας νεαρός, 2-3 χρόνια μικρότερος ἀπὸ ἐμένα, καὶ μοῦ εἶπε ὅτι «ἐμένα ἡ μητέρα μας δὲν μὲ ἄφησε νὰ εἶμαι μαζί σου σήμερα ... δὲν μὲ ἄφησε νὰ παίξω ποτὲ μαζί σας, νὰ γελάσω, καὶ νὰ κλάψω ...»

- Τοῦ ἀπάντησα ὅτι ἐγὼ δὲν ἔχω ἀδελφός, μία ἀδελφή μόνο, δυὸ χρόνια μεγαλύτερη, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸς ἐπέμενε νὰ σὲ ρωτήσω, τί ἔκανες κάποιο πρωινὸ τοῦ Μάρτη, καὶ νὰ σοῦ πῶ ὅτι ὅπως μεγαλώσαμε ἐμεῖς, ἔτσι θὰ μεγάλωνε καὶ αὐτός.

Ἡ μητέρα του ὅταν ἄκουσε αὐτὰ λιποθύμησε... Φυσικὰ ὅταν συνήλθε εἶπε στὰ παιδιά της τί ἔκανε ἐκεῖνο τὸ πρωινὸ καὶ μὲ καυτὰ δάκρυα ἔτρεξε στὸν παπὰ τῆς ἐνορίας της γιὰ νὰ ἐξομολογηθῇ...

### Τὰ «Κρυφὰ» Μυστικὰ ἐπὶ τῶν Ἐκτρώσεων

Ἡ γυναίκα ἡ ὁποία ἔχει κάνει ἔκτρωση δὲν θὰ σβῆση τὸ γεγονὸς ποτὲ ἀπὸ τὸ μυαλό της. Τὰ ἔμβρυο τὸ ὁποῖο ἀφαίρεσε ὁ μαιευτῆρας δὲν ἀφαιρέθηκε ποτὲ ἀπὸ τὸ μυαλό της.

Μερικὲς γυναῖκες βλέπουν ὅτι ἐμποδίζοντας τὴν ἔκτρωση εἶναι σὰ νὰ τις σκοτώνῃς! Ἄν δὲν κάνουν τὴν ἔκτρωση θὰ μείνουν περιθωριοποιημένες, ἀπελπισμένες καὶ θὰ κινδυνεύουν ἐφόρου ζωῆς. Αὐτὴ ἡ ἀντίληψη ἐπιβάλλεται εἴτε ἀπὸ τὸν περίγυρο, εἴτε ἀπὸ τὸν «φίλο» της, εἴτε τὸ φαντάζονται. Γιὰ αὐτὲς δὲν εἶναι τὸ θέμα τῆς ἐπιπολαιότητος, ἀλλὰ γιὰ τὸ πῶς θὰ ρυθμίσουν τὴ ζωὴ τους ἂν κρατήσουν τὸ παιδί.

Εἶναι θέμα ζωῆς! Αὐτὸ τὸ ἐπιχείρημα ἀφορᾷ καὶ τοὺς ἄνδρες. Οἱ ἄνδρες δὲν μποροῦν νὰ καταλάβουν πῶς ἓνα ἔκτρωμένο ἔμβρυο μπορεῖ νὰ σημαίνει τόσο πολλὰ γιὰ μία γυναίκα! Τὸ μόνο ποὺ καταλαβαίνουν εἶναι πόσο πολὺ ἀγαποῦν τις κόρες τους ὅταν γίνουν μπαμπάδες ἢ πόσο

πολὺ ἀγαποῦν τις γυναῖκες ἢ τις μαμάδες τους στὴ ζωὴ τους. Πιστεύουν ὅμως ὅτι εἶναι ἡ καλύτερη ἐπιλογὴ καὶ ἡ πιὸ ἀσφαλής. Κατὰ βάθος ξέρουν, ὅμως, ὅτι ὁ προβληματισμὸς τῆς γυναίκας εἶναι πολὺ βαθύτερος.

Ἀρκετὲς φορές, μετὰ τὴν ἔκτρωση, ἔχουμε καὶ χωρισμὸ τῶν ζευγαριῶν. Παρόλα αὐτά, παίρνουν ὑποτίθεται τὴν εὐθύνη πάνω τους, νομίζοντας ὅτι κάνουν τὴ σωστὴ ἐπιλογὴ, κουβαλώντας ὅμως ἔτσι μιὰ ζωὴ τὸ φόβο καὶ τὸν ἔλεγχο τῆς συνειδήσεως! Ἡ στάση μας ἀρκετὲς φορές εἶναι πολὺ ὑποκριτικὴ! Προτάσσουμε σὰν δικαιολογία τις οἰκονομικὲς δυσκολίες. Ἀρκετὲς φορές, ἡ κρυφὴ μας σκέψη εἶναι ὅτι εἶναι προτιμότερο νὰ ἀπαλλαχθῶ τώρα μὲ μερικὰ εὐρὼ τὸ ἀνεπιθύμητο παιδί ἢ τὴν/τὸν ἀνεπιθύμητη/ο σύζυγο παρὰ νὰ πληρώνουμε μιὰ ζωὴ καὶ γιὰ τοὺς δυὸ!

Ἡ ἀλήθεια, ὅμως, εἶναι μία: Θυσιάζουμε τὸ παιδί μας γιὰ νὰ μὴν χάσουμε τὴν καλοπέρασή μας καὶ τὴν οἰκονομικὴ μας ἄνεση! Ἄν σκεφτόταν ἔτσι οἱ γονεῖς μας δὲν θὰ εἶχαμε ἔλθει σὲ αὐτὸν τὸ κόσμο. Ἀναρωτηθεῖτε ἂν ἐμεῖς ὡς ἄτομα ἀξίζαμε ἢ ὄχι νὰ ἔχουμε ἔλθει στὸν κόσμο.

Τὰ ἀδέλφια πολλὰς φορές εἶναι οἱ ὑπερασπιστὲς τῆς ζωῆς. Προτάσσουν ἀρκετὲς φορές τὰ στήθη τους γιὰ νὰ σώσουν ἓνα παιδί. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη πλευρά, συνήθως γυναῖκες οἱ ὁποῖες ἦταν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμβλώσεων, ἐὰν προχωρήσουν σὲ ἀμβλωση, παραμένουν ὑπὲρ καὶ μετὰ τὴν δικιὰ τους ἐμπειρία. Λίγες ἐξαιρέσεις ὑπάρχουν ὅπως αὐτῆς τῆς Ὀριάννα Φαλάτσι, ἡ ὁποία μετὰ τὴν δικιὰ της ἀμβλωση, ἡ ὁποία τὴν ἀνάγκασε σὲ ἀτεκνία, μετατράπηκε σὲ ὑπέρμαχο τῆς ζωῆς καὶ φανατικὴ κατὰ τῶν ἐκτρώσεων.

Ἄν μία γυναίκα σας συμβουλευεῖ νὰ κάνετε ἀμβλωση, τὸ πιὸ πιθανὸ εἶναι νὰ ἔχη κάνει καὶ ἡ ἴδια ἔκτρωση. Εἶναι πιθανὸν μετὰ ἀπὸ μιὰ ἔκτρωση νὰ χάσῃ ὄχι μόνο τὸ παιδί, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ τεκνογονήσῃ ξανά! Αὐτὸ διότι ὑπάρχει ἓνα ποσοστὸ ἐπιπλοκῶν μετὰ ἀπὸ μιὰ ἔκτρωση. Τὸ σίγουρο πάντως εἶναι ὅτι μία γυναίκα ποὺ ἔχει κάνει ἔκτρωση ζεῖ τὸ υπόλοιπο τοῦ βίου της μὲ μιὰ λύπη καὶ μὲ ἓνα αἶσθημα ὅτι, ἡ λογικὴ ποὺ τῆς ὑπέδειξε ὅτι ἡ ἀμβλωση εἶναι ἡ ἀφαίρεση ἐνὸς ἐμβρύου ποὺ δὲν εἶχε ζωὴ, δὲν ἦταν καὶ τόσο στέρεη! Ἡ ἔκτρωση δὲν βοηθεῖ τις γυναῖκες, τις πληγώνει ἐφόρου ζωῆς!

Καὶ ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τις προγαμιαῖες σχέσεις, ποὺ συχνὰ εἶναι ἡ μαύρη πηγὴ πολλῶν ἀμβλώσεων, πρέπει νὰ κοινοποιήσουμε καὶ στὸν ἑαυτὸ μας ἀλλὰ καὶ σ' ὅλους τοὺς νέους καὶ νέες τῆς ἐποχῆς μας, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς θέλει τὴν ἐγκράτεια πρὶν τὸ γάμο. Ἡ ἐξομολόγησις σβῆνει τὴν ἁμαρτία τῶν προγαμιαίων σχέσεων. Παρόλη τὴν ἐξομολόγησις, ὅμως, θὰ ἔλθῃ μικρὴ ἀναμνηστικὴ τιμητικὴ παιδαγωγία—τιμωρία. Ἐνδεχομένως ἡ τιμωρία θὰ ἔλθῃ στὸ/ῇ σύζυγο ἢ στὰ παιδιά. Δὲν εἶναι τιμωρία ἀλλὰ εἶναι ἀνάμνησις. Αὐτὰ εἶναι ἀπὸ τὴν ἐμπειρία τῆς ἐξομολόγησις! Ἄν δὲν ἐξομολογηθῶμε ἐνδέχεται ἡ τιμωρία νὰ ἔλθῃ 100% καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι καὶ πολὺ βαριά. Πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ κάνουμε ἐγκράτεια γιὰ νὰ λάβουμε πολὺ Θεία Χάρη μέσα στὸ γάμο μας!

Ἡ γενετήσια ὁρμὴ τὴν ἔχει δώσει ὁ Θεὸς γιὰ νὰ δελεαστεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος νὰ διαιωνιστῇ τὸ εἶδος. Δὲν φταίει ὁ Θεὸς ἀλλὰ ἐμεῖς ποὺ κάνουμε κατάχρησι!



## AN HONORABLE MARRIAGE, A BED UNDEFILED

By Archpriest Gleb Kaleda.

*The life of Fr. Gleb Kaleda united the two vocations, priest and scientist. In school, Gleb became interested in geology and decided to become a scientist. The question of which path to take, the Church or geology, was easier to solve once his spiritual father, Archimandrite (afterwards Metropolitan) John (Vendland), wrote to him and gave his blessing for taking up science.*

*He wrote more than 170 works, worked in various institutes, spent time in geological expeditions, created a scientific school and brought up a host of worthy followers. For more than 40 years, he was a dedicated geologist, but always considered his scientific exploits a form of serving God. He loved Lomonosov's words that nature is another Gospel, proclaiming the glory of the Creator.*

*In the late 1950s, he starts writing a book called "The Bible and the Science on Creation". He compared scientific data with the first chapter of Genesis and showed that there was no discrepancy between science and the Holy Writ. In the early 1970s, Vladyka John, his spiritual father, suggested that he secretly become a priest. It was obvious that a prominent scientist risked his neck in connecting himself so closely to the Church in those days, but Gleb, after consulting his wife, decided to take this step.*

*The people who needed spiritual help came to his flat in the evening to talk and to confess. The first service was held in this study on Pascha, 1972. And afterwards, for 18 years, Father Gleb held a weekly Sunday liturgy there. The scientist's study, this temple of science, turned into a temple of the Lord.*

*According to his son, the altar was actually an easel that Fr. Gleb put together before the liturgy. This bedside table was the credence table. He would put his books there and cover them with towels and put icons on top, and this was the rood screen. When somebody came who was not supposed to see all this, the doors of the wardrobe were closed, father put away the little board that was his lectern, hid the photographs of his spiritual counselors and the room was a scientist's study once again.*

*Fr. Gleb could talk simply about complicated things and make people's hearts burn. He was a uniquely multifaceted but integral man; this can only be when true knowledge meets true faith.*



Sometimes, one encounters the opinion that any relations between the sexes are either sin or a forgivable, permissible weakness. A great deal has been superimposed [upon the understanding of the Church] in this matter by Platonism and monastic ascetic literature. There have been, in the history of the Church, heresies which rejected marriage, and those opinions are sometimes echoed in contemporary moral-theological literature. The Holy Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Which is in you, which ye have of God.... Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* (1Cor 6:19-20).

By His Incarnation, Christ sanctified the body, and by His personal presence, He sanctified marriage. It is noteworthy that Christ's first miracle was wrought at the marriage at Cana

of Galilee. Those who condemn marriage created the legend that the newlyweds at Cana of Galilee remained celibate, but by no means is that legend founded on Divine Scripture. St. Paul bluntly calls those who forbid entering into matrimony liars, *having their consciences seared* (see 1Tim 4:2-3).

The heretical rejection of marriage was condemned in the Canons of the Holy Apostles. The 51<sup>st</sup> Canon states: *If any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon, or anyone at all on the sacerdotal list, abstains from marriage, or meat, or wine, not as a matter of mortification, but out of an abhorrence thereof, forgetting that all things are exceedingly good, and that God made man male and female, and blasphemously misrepresenting God's work of creation, either let him mend his ways or let him be deposed from office and expelled from the church. Let a layman be treated similarly.* The 5<sup>th</sup> Canon proclaims: *No Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon shall put away his own wife under pretext of reverence. If, however, he put her away, let him be excommunicated; and if he persists in so doing, let him be deposed from office.*

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canon of the Council of Gangra states: *If anyone disparages marriage, or abominates or disparages a woman sleeping with her husband, notwithstanding that she is faithful and reverent, as though she could not enter the Kingdom, let him be anathema [i.e., declared outside the Church].* Further, in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Canons, *If any woman should abandon her husband and wish to depart, because she abominates marriage, let her be anathema and should a celibate exalt himself over one who is married, let him be anathema.*

According to the Fathers of the Council of Gangra, we Christians, *welcome continence with modesty and godliness... and anchoritic departures from mundane affairs with humility, and honor modest cohabitation of matrimony.* (Canon 21).

One could cite excerpts from many other, similar Canons, but those already cited demonstrate that the Church had always shown reverence for **honorable** marriage and defended its sanctity against the heretics and those who falsely assess [marriage], bringing stern canonical measures to bear against them. Citing the example of Aquila and Priscilla, St. John Chrysostom called for us *not to condemn marriage and not to consider as an obstacle or hindrance on the way to the virtue: having a wife, raising children, running the household, and following a craft.* (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 1 on the verse "Kiss Priscilla and Aquila and the Others," Talks on various points of Divine Scripture Vol. 2, p. 41). Aquila and Priscilla were a married couple who were self-employed craftsmen [tentmakers], but who showed far greater love of wisdom than many others who lived in monasteries.

According to Orthodox teaching, **only in marriage within the Church do two individuals actually unite, in soul, spirit and body.** It is only the relationship of the husband to the wife that is compared to that of *Christ to the Church* (Eph 5:23,25).

The sanctity of marriage, as defined in the Epistles of the Holy Apostles, also encompasses intimate relations between the husband and wife, individuals who complement and love one another: *And the two shall be one flesh* (Eph 5:31). This most secret of moments in the life of a married couple can be

holy, if it is the result and symbol of their complete spiritual and mental intimacy and physical accord. This is a special stage of interrelationship. Sometimes one can observe that the eyes of newlyweds shine with new bounds of love and happiness. For this, we may thank God, remembering that *all things are exceedingly good, and that God made man male and female*. (51<sup>st</sup> Canon of the Holy Apostles).

In the early Church, the newlyweds spent their first week of marriage as brother and sister, and wore church crowns. This was done so that the marriage might be chaste, so that a spiritual, prayerful foundation might reign within it, so that the young couple might intelligently and with consideration open up to one another. Only on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, following the removal of the crowns, would they turn to other forms of interrelation. This facilitated their placing a far deeper value on all of the steps of growing intimacy in married life and love.

Currently, the crowns are removed at the end of the rite of Holy Matrimony, with the reading of the prayers for the *removal of the crowns on the 8th day*, a prayer which has retained its ancient title. The newlyweds are no longer required to observe the rule of chastity during the first week of marriage. Conjugal relations demand patience and tenderness, enormous tact and mutual agreement. The woman should not be subjected to trauma; she should derive joy from the new revelation of her husband's person and character, of his love for her and her love for him.

To maintain one's chastity, if not for a week, then at least for two or three days following the Crowning, is to **make a deposit toward the chastity of the marriage**. It permits the couple to unhurriedly comprehend the Mystery taking place, and to see this new event as a stage in the development of their marriage union.

While there is no need to hurry in this matter, one also should not put it off until the threshold of an approaching fast, unless there is a special reason for such delay. It is better not to enter into marriage on the eve of a fast, on the last day on which the rite of Holy Matrimony is permitted, but rather to enter into marriage after the fast, or at the very least, two or three weeks before the beginning of the fast. This of course is not a decision of the Church, but only a recommendation, a wish for those preparing to enter into marriage. In general, one cannot give any overall, absolute directions with respect to intimate conjugal relations except for the one formulated by the Apostle Paul: *The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife*. (ICor 7:4). The husband must remember the second part of that formula, and not merely demand satisfaction of the first part. It is better at first to grant the initiative to the wife, rather than allow even the shadow of coercion in mind or body to be cast over her.

In blessing marriage and the marriage bed (*an honorable marriage and a bed undefiled, a bed undetested*—words pronounced during the great litany at the Betrothal Service), the Church teaches peace and temperance in conjugal relations. Before eating, an Orthodox Christian reads a prayer; if a priest

is present, the priest asks: *Bless, O Lord, the food and drink of Thy servants*. However, the Church condemns gluttony and drunkenness as sin. Likewise, while blessing marriage, the Church condemns a married couple's making sexual relations their exclusive focus of mutual interest. **When sex dominates a marriage, it becomes a hiding place for depravity**. When a husband who has argued with his wife demands her body, or when he only makes up with her in order to dominate it, sexual sin occurs within marriage as well.

Writing about Christian married couples, St. Clement of Alexandria states: *Man needs to abstain from sensuality [in these matters] there must be limits and moderation*. An absence of temperance, a state in which sensuality is substituted for love, prevents the couple from fully perceiving one another's makeup, i.e., the three parts comprising the individual. In marriage, temperance and moderation are essential. Of monastics, total abstinence is demanded. I am fortunate that, *all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*. (ICor 6:12).

A period of fasting teaches one to control his senses and his body; it requires temporary abstinence from conjugal intimacy. During this period, the Christian should be filled with *joy in God*, something to which all other forms of joy should defer.

Only moderation and temperance, a married couple's spiritual and emotional/physical intimacy, the all-encompassing nature of their love, renders sacred and joyous the moment of physical union, which becomes the expression and profound symbol of their mutual love and complete intimacy. The Holy Apostle Paul writes: *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency*. (ICor 7:5).

Esteeming *honorable marriage and a bed undefiled*, the Church condemns pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations, considering them to be a mortal sin. St. Basil the Great writes: *Fornication is not marriage, and not even the beginning of marriage*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Canonical Epistle, Rule 26). According to the Canons of the Church, one who has had pre-marital relations, **even with his own betrothed**, cannot become a priest. (Canon 68 of St. Basil the Great).

What is "acceptable" to a non-believer, does not fail to have consequences for a Christian: To whom much is given, of him will much be demanded. Those who cannot maintain their chastity before marriage ordinarily do not contain themselves within marriage either. A former heretic who becomes Orthodox can become a priest, but an Orthodox Christian who has once committed the sin of adultery or who has been married twice (even after the death of his first wife) cannot be ordained to the priestly dignity. (Canon 17 of the Holy Apostles, Canon 12 of St. Basil the Great).

Orthodox young people must block from their thoughts even the possibility of pre-marital relations. This applies as well to those preparing to enter into a second marriage. We emphatically reiterate: pre-marital relations, even with one's

future spouse, are comparable to attempting to serve the Liturgy without possessing the grace of the priesthood. The one is called fornication, the other, sacrilege. Such a comparison is apt, for the marriage union between a husband and wife is comparable to that of Christ and the Church. The comparison seems jarring to the ear only because we have become all too used to the fact of pre-marital relations, but have almost never encountered the above-mentioned sacrilege.

The maiden should, as her very nature demands, be watchful, and maintain the purity of her relationships prior to marriage. In this matter, there can be no "oikonomia" or "condescension."

We recognize the faithful and honorable marriage of non-believers, and, if they should come to the Faith and be drawn to the Church, we, with love, crown them with wedding crowns. If they have been true to one another, no sin is imputed to them. Our words are directed to those so-called members of the Orthodox Church who with their pre-marital relations reject the grace of God and fall into a double sin: the sin of fornication and of repudiation of the grace of God.

The New Testament, established by Jesus Christ, changed the relationship between God and man, and in so doing changed human interrelationships, first and foremost those between husband and wife. One must remember this detail when reading the Old Testament and when observing family life in the external world. **Our Christian marriage must be a New Testament one.** *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* (I Thess 5:23-24).

Be daring and be sober. Having entered into marriage, having united "in one flesh," "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," (I Peter 2: 5), be one double Temple of our God.

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## THE HOLY ANGELS

*From the "Minea of St. Dimitry of Rostov" and the booklet "Orthodox Teachings on the Holy Angels," compiled by Fr. Nektarios Serfes.*

Orthodox faithful know about Angels primarily from the writings of St. Dionysios the Aeropagite (whose memory we will celebrate on October 3<sup>rd</sup>). He wrote down what his teacher, the Holy Apostle Paul, told him of what he learned during his vision of the *third heaven* (2Cor 12:2).

The nine orders of the Angels are divided into three hierarchies, each of which is divided into three orders: the highest, the intermediate, the lower. The **first hierarchy**, the highest and closest to the Most Holy Trinity, consists of the **Seraphim**, **Cherubim**, and **Thrones**.

The God-loving six-winged **Seraphim** stand closer than all before their Creator and Maker, as the prophet Isaiah saw, say-

ing: *And the Seraphim stood around Him, each having six wings.* (Is 6:2). They are fire-like since they stand before That One of Whom it is written: *For our God is a consuming fire.* (Heb 12:29); *His throne was a flame of fire.* (Dan 7:9); *the appearance of the Lord was like a blazing fire.* (Ex 24:17). Standing before such glory, the Seraphim are fire-like, as it said: *Who maketh his Angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.* (Ps 103:4). They are aflame with love for God and kindle others to such love, as is shown by their very name, for "Seraphim" in the Hebrew language means "flaming."

After the Seraphim, before the All-knowing God, Who resides in inaccessible light, stand the many-eyed **Cherubim** in ineffable radiance. More than the other lower orders of Angels, they are always radiant with the light of the knowledge of God, with the knowledge of the mysteries of God and the depths of His Wisdom; being themselves enlightened, they enlighten others. Their name "Cherubim" in translation from the Hebrew language, means: "great understanding" or "effusion of wisdom," because through the Cherubim, wisdom is sent down to others and enlightenment of the spiritual eyes is given for the seeing of God and knowledge of God.

Thereafter stand the God-bearing **Thrones** (as St. Dionysios the Aeropagite calls them) before Him Who sits on the high and exulted throne, being named "Thrones" since on them, as on *intellectual thrones* (as writes St. Maximos the Confessor) God intellectually resides. They are not called *God bearing* according to essence, but according to grace and according to their office; the flesh of Jesus Christ (as St. Basil the Great writes) is called *God bearing* according to essence, since it was indivisibly united with God the Word Himself. The Thrones are then called *God bearing* not according to essence but according to grace, given for their service, which is mystically and incomprehensibly to bear God in themselves. Residing on them in an incomprehensible manner, God makes His righteous judgment, according to the word of David: *Thou hast sat upon a throne, O Thou that judgest righteousness.* (Ps 9:4). Therefore through them the justice of God is pre-eminently manifested; they serve His justice, glorifying it and pour out the power of justice onto the thrones of earthly judges, helping kings and masters to bring forth right judgment.

The **middle hierarchy** also consists of three orders of holy Angels: the **Dominions**, the **Virtues**, and the **Powers**.

The **Dominions** are so named because, being themselves free, they dominate over the rest of the Angels which follow behind them. Having abandoned servile fear, as St. Dionysios the Aeropagite says, they voluntarily and with joy serve God unceasingly. Also, they send down power for prudent governing and wise management to authorities on the earth set up by God. Further, they teach how to control the senses, how to subdue in oneself dissolute desires and passions, how to enslave the flesh to the spirit, and how to rule over one's will and be above all temptations.

The **Virtues**, filled with divine strength, quickly fulfill the will of the All-High and Omnipotent Lord, strong and pow-



erful. They both work very great miracles and send down the grace of miracle-working to God's saints, who are worthy of such grace, in order that these may work miracles, such as heal every sickness and foretell the future. The usual translation of the name of this order of Angels as "Virtues" is readily misleading if the old meaning of the word "virtue" as "power" or "force", especially as regards to divine beings (cf Oxford English Dictionary), is not remembered. The holy Virtues also help people laboring and those overburdened by the bearing of an obedience placed on them by someone—by which their names "Virtues" is explained—and they bear the infirmities of the weak. They also strengthen every man in patience, so that he does not faint away in affliction but rather bears all misfortune with a strong spirit, courageously, and with humility, giving thanks for everything to God, arranging all for our benefit.

The **Powers** are so called because they have power over the devil, in order to restrain the power of the demons, to repulse the temptations brought upon people by them, and to prevent the demons from harming anyone to the degree that they would wish. The Powers strengthen the good ascetics in spiritual struggles and labors, protecting them so that they may not be deprived of the spiritual kingdom. They help those wrestling with passions and vices to cast out evil thoughts and slanders of the enemy and to conquer the devil.

In the **lowest hierarchy** there are also three orders: the **Principalities**, the **Archangels**, and the **Angels**.

The **Principalities** are named thus because they have command over the lower Angels, directing them to the fulfillment of divine orders. The management of the universe and the keeping of all the kingdoms and princedoms, of lands and all peoples, races and nations, is also entrusted to them. Further, the service of this angelic order (according to the explanation of St. Gregory the Dialogist) consists in teaching the people to requite each person in authority according to his calling. Finally, the Angels of this order raise worthy people to various honorable offices and direct them so that they take power not for the sake of their own gain and benefit, nor for the sake of love of honor and vain renown, but for the sake of honor from God, for the sake of spreading and augmenting of His holy glory, and for the sake of the benefit of their neighbors—as serving the general needs of all their subordinates.

The **Archangels** are called the great heralds of good news, announcing the great and most glorious. Their service (as the great Dionysios the Aeropagite says) consists in revealing prophecies, knowledge, and understanding of God's will which they receive from the higher orders of Angels and announce to the lower order, i.e., the Angels, and through them, to men. St. Gregory the Dialogist says that the Archangels strengthen people in the holy faith, enlightening their mind with the light of knowledge of the holy Gospel and revealing the mysteries of devout faith. The seven highest Archangels (celebrated by the Orthodox Church) are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, Barachiel.

The **Angels** are the lowest of all the orders in the heavenly hierarchy and the closest to man. They announce the lesser mysteries and intentions of God and teach people to live virtuously and righteously before God. They are appointed to guard each of us who believe; they sustain virtuous people from fallen, and never leave us though we have sinned, but are always ready to help us, if only we ourselves want it.

All of the heavenly orders are also called by the common name "Angels." Although they have different names according to their situation and grace given by God (as Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones and the rest of the orders), yet all in general are called Angels, because the word "angel" is not a denomination of essence, but of service, as it is written: *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister?* (Heb 1:14). But their service is different and not identical. Each order has its own service; for the All-Wise Creator does not reveal the mystery of His design to all to the same degree, but from the one to the others, through the higher He enlightens the lower, revealing to them His will and commanding it to be, as in the book of the Prophet Zechariah. There it is said that one angel, after conversing with the prophet, met another angel who ordered him to go again to the prophet and reveal the future fate of Jerusalem: *And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man* (that is, the prophet Zachariah), *saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.* (Zech 2:3-5).

Deliberating about this, St. Gregory the Dialogist says: *When one angel says to the other: "Run, speak to this young man" there is no doubt that certain Angels send others, that the lower ones are sent, and that the higher send.* (St. Gregory the Dialogist, Interpretation of the Gospels, #4). We find exactly the same thing in the prophecy of Daniel, that one angel orders another to interpret the vision to the prophet. From this it is evident that Angels of higher orders reveal the divine will and intention of the Creator to Angels of the lower orders, that they enlighten them and send them to people.

The Orthodox Church militant, being in need of the help of the Angels, celebrates the Assembly of all the nine angelic orders with a special supplication, as is fitting, on the eighth day of the month of November, i.e., the ninth month, since all these nine orders of Angels will gather on the day of the Terrible Judgment of the Lord, which the divine teachers of the Church call the eighth day. For they say, at the end of seven thousand years will begin as if an eighth day, *When the Son of man shall in His glory, and all the holy Angels with Him* (as the Lord Himself foretold in the Gospel—Mt 25:31). *And he shall send his Angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds.* (Mt 24:31), i.e., from the East, West, North, and South.

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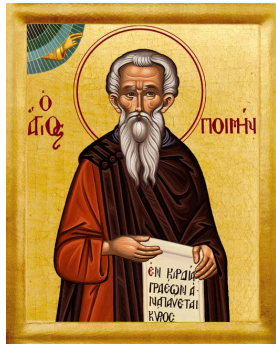
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## SOME TERMS THAT ALL ORTHODOX SHOULD KNOW

By George Karras, "Orthodox Heritage" Editor.

The terms discussed below appear often in patristic texts and present a significant challenge to the understanding of our worldly intellect. The definitions presented constitute a general and very elementary explanation. They are derived from various Orthodox books, primarily "Orthodox Psychotherapy" by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos (published by Birth of Theotokos Monastery, Greece, 2005). It is a book that is strongly recommended for all those seeking to attain a greater understanding of these key terms.

**Nous** is the eye of the soul, which some Fathers also call the heart; it is the center of man and is where true (spiritual) knowledge is validated. Man's soul is *intelligent and noetic*. God created man with a capacity to receive the Spirit and to attain knowledge of Himself; God did this by creating mankind with *intelligence and noetic facilities*.

Angels have *intelligence and nous*, whereas men have *reason, nous and sensory perception*. Furthermore, the soul of a man is created in the image of God. Since God is Trinitarian, mankind is *Nous, Word and Spirit*. The same is held true of the soul (or heart): it has *nous, word and spirit*. For those seeking to better understand this, a study of St. Gregory Palamas' teaching that man is a representation of the Trinitarian mystery should be pursued.

**Theoria** is *the vision of God* and takes on a number of meanings that pertain to union with God (*theo-*) and holiness, the quintessential goals of Christianity (see the *Philokalia*). Theoria is the experience of the highest or absolute truth when one is in complete union with God. It is the penetration of the divine darkness or cloud of unknowing, beyond rational understanding. St. Gregory the Theologian says that **theoria** and **praxis** (the practice of faith, especially worship and the deeds of a virtuous life) are beneficial because theoria guides him to the holy of holies and restores him to his original nature; whereas praxis receives and serves Christ and tests love with actions. Thus, theoria is the vision of God and praxis is whatever deeds it takes to lead to this love.

**Phronema** is the understanding of Christian faith that guides the follower of Christ. It is a mindset or outlook; it is the Orthodox mind. The attaining of phronema is a matter of practicing the correct faith (*orthodoxia*) in the correct manner (*orthopraxia*). Attaining phronema is regarded as the first step toward theosis which is the state of glorification.

**Theosis**, meaning *divinization* (or *deification*, or to make divine) is the call to man to become holy and seek union with God, beginning in this life and later consummated in the resurrection.

The Holy Orthodox Fathers teach us that *theoria is the source or means of growth toward union with God, praxis is the faith practiced along the way, and theosis is the overall path or journey*.



# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

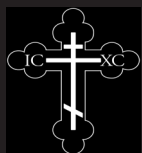
Vol. 05, Issue 10

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

## In This Issue:

- **How to Prepare for a Salvific Confession (p. 4)**
- **The Practice of Virtue Within the Family (p. 6)**
- **A Case Against Darwinism: How the Sheep Survived (p.11)**
- **A Tale of Falling and Repentance (p. 12)**
- **On Reading the Holy Orthodox Fathers (p. 14)**



- **Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ ὁ Τεκτονισμὸς (σελ. 7)**
- **Ἐπὶ τοῦ Πολυτονικοῦ Συστήματος (σελ. 8)**
- **Περὶ Ἐξομολογήσεως (σελ. 9)**



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## TRUE CHRISTIAN STRUGGLE

By Dr. John Kalomiros.

*Editor's Note: The journey for the attainment of spiritual growth prescribed within the subject article presumes the essential presence of an experienced spiritual father that will guide the believer accordingly.*

† † †

Our Holy Orthodox Faith is a living faith and, as such, it is transferred live from parent to child and from teacher to student. Everyone who encounters the faith, if he actually has a love for it, maintains it as something precious and, respecting the one who willed it to him, does not add to it or detract anything from it. This pattern of Tradition is holy and it is a wellspring of life in Christ, flowing into the Church.

An adherence to the elements of tradition must not, however, result in the conformity of Christian life into some kind of formal mold. Such a pathetic situation prevents one from entering into a content life and spiritual growth. Unfortunately, it often happens that the elements of Tradition in the Church are used as an excuse to form a conservative stagnation of life and draw it into a shell where every aspect of life is pre-determined and laid out in minute detail. Even some well-intentioned Christians sometimes make the mistake of using the Holy Scripture in order to set standards of life in conditions where life itself has been suffocating and spiritual struggle has lost its strength.

It is important for us, the Orthodox Christians of our era, to realize the difference between two opposing approaches to the Faith. The first is to practice the elements of tradition and teachings of the Holy Fathers in such a way that they are living, vital and illuminating to our lives. The second is the pursuit of a psychological security, an adherence to some individual certainties, a comfort to a conservative culture that often is false

Christianity. It is one thing to look for a light and compass in our life in order to go forward creatively. However, it is quite a different thing to refuse to follow a personal path of internal search and self-discovery, using the excuse that everything is already known and clear in the framework of our Holy Tradition. We all have fallen into this trap quite often and when we do, we see no progress in our spiritual struggle.

Many times we find that we are unable to make real changes to our lives. Even when we desire more spiritual fruit, even when stagnation burdens our life, we make neither a spiritual nor a practical effort. We are reluctant to move forward in a way that will bring about positive, radical changes for us. Our pursuits and efforts simply return, as if in bondage to determinism, to the point where they began. Our inactivity towards a creative examination, and toward real change where necessary, is deeply conservative and has nothing to do with Orthodoxy. Unfortunately, this stagnation pertains not only to some theoretical concepts, but to the whole view and way of life. It is a way of life that leads us to hold onto uncreative and stagnant clichés. These clichés are about codes of life, hard cast in communicating, in speaking and in attitude, and they often indelibly mark our lives and create wounds that are difficult to heal.

Too often, we cover up our own inability or unwillingness to take life upon ourselves and set our goals with a spiritual perspective, by claiming a full reliance and trust in God Who, we may claim, guides our lives. However, it often happens that behind this alibi there is an inability or unwillingness to take any personal, responsible initiatives. Let us look at an example. We say in our prayers "teach me the way in which I should go." We can repeat this prayer with two different attitudes. We can say it with a feeling that since God will actually guide

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us, there is no need to concern ourselves with responsibility for our lives. While it is an attitude that shows trust, but is likely also an indication of indifference. It does not result in any change in us or the undertaking of any painful effort.

Another way to say this prayer, is with real fervor of heart, with a sense of apprehension that we are not worthy of the guidance we ask for and with the fear that we may end up not following such guidance. In this second case, we are not content with a dry and brief prayer but we ourselves undertake the responsibility of self-examination, contemplation, redeeming of wrong situations and vigilance, hoping that God will be merciful to us. This same self-examination is also an avenue of inner change. If this struggle is real and sincere, it marks man with a deep-rooted imprint. After such a struggle, a man does not recognize himself any more, he can see that he is a new person and realizes that he was only an immature child before. This process entails real spiritual suffering, it is painful and, therefore, most people prefer to avoid it, sticking to the security of well known territory. This psychological adherence to already well known things is another definition of latent conservatism.

In both the above cases, a man prays to God. In one case he prays pathetically, unwilling to struggle and change himself. In the other, the man invokes God to lead him through an internal process, a journey into the unknown, a personal risk: leading him, and not simply revealing to him what to do through some miracle.

Let us look at another example. Someone, wondering about the real meaning of an issue or matter, asks God to enlighten him. He opens the Holy Scriptures, as a good Orthodox Christian would, and also locates relevant words of the Holy Fathers on the matter in question. He may think that, in these words themselves he has found the quintessence of life, the rule of Orthodoxy, the end of his personal quest. He does

not concern himself about the deeper meaning of the texts or about the experience which underlies them. Moreover, he is not attempting to examine what he reads under a prism of a total theological perspective. This man will exemplify a rigid frame of mind. He will probably never reflect on the disposition he has formed, for he believes that through his reading he has discerned everything about the truth. Such a person will then apply his incomplete, often isolated, ideas, void of the spirit in which the Holy Fathers spoke them or in which the passages of Scripture were written. He will become frozen into this mindset, and yet may think that he has the key to judging all issues.

There is another, better way for one to read the writings of the Holy Fathers. This reader will view them as examples of people who have lived a true life in Christ and have been illumined by God. In this case, the man is seeking the spirit of the Holy Fathers, not just single views and words. He is not in a hurry to form an opinion; rather he perseveres in studying, struggling and striving in order to gain a personal understanding and experience. His perception is developed day by day. Alas to people who do not follow such a dynamic process, but stagnate in adherence to "truths" which they think they have mastered by reading some isolated texts or listening to other people who have walked a genuine path.

Let us see another example of a latent conservatism that holds us back from following a spiritually abundant process. We often speak about our spiritual struggle as Orthodox Christians. We underline it and say that our salvation depends on it. What do we actually mean by saying "spiritual struggle?"

In the minds of many people, the spiritual struggle takes place in a "frozen" form of effort. They think that our spiritual effort is completed in an external practice of virtues and a simple participation in Church life through prayer, studying, fasting, participation in divine services, keeping Christ's

commandments, etc.; everything that surely we have to be careful about as Christians. However, it is the crystallization of our spiritual struggle into specific practices and our reliance on them that might be the reason for a fruitless effort. This is especially so if these practices have become the essence of our struggle.

Our struggle has to be in every way dynamic. "Dynamic" indicates an inner life and motivation in following these practices, which bears fruit through time and marks a "route" that transforms us while we mature. Wisdom and maturity, which occur with the passage of time, are blessed in the Holy Scriptures. Unfortunately, such maturing may be limited because of an adherence to conservative forms and limits. In the security of the forms themselves, we may often lack concern and daily vigilance toward everything that is truly essential. How is it possible to move forward when we do not feel, whether asleep or awake, a thirst and agony of heart to make our life meaningful? How is it possible to pray sincerely when our heart is not seeking? What is it that will impel us forward when everything seems to be ensured and provided?

If our effort is static and is simply "being practiced," then this means that when the forms are not being practiced, the struggle does not exist. In that case, we have a strange perception of what a spiritual struggle is. But, if man struggles with a true thirst for learning and wisdom, he will be led to a knowledge and revelation of God which is genuine and true; this is because it comes from man's participation within true life and is not only associated with abstract ideas and codes of life. For sincere Orthodox Christians, the participation in Church life opens windows of knowledge, perception and interpretation of the world that are not available to other people. One who walks honestly in such a path of inquiry, self-discovery and knowledge of the world and God and of that which is essential, is advancing in his salvation. This is a struggle similar to that of bees, which gather from every flower all that is really of worth, leaving the rest behind.

What is the criterion for this selection? The criterion for an honest pursuit should be our conscience. Our conscience is a constant remembrance ("alithia" in Greek is non-forgetfulness) of those things that achieve an actual victory and an essential profit. And what are those things? Everything that leads us, each one of us personally, Heavenward. We should not identify "conscience" with shapes, clichés and rules which have been imprinted in our minds, rather we must perceive it as a recollection of Heaven. This living and vital remembrance is the conscience. Everything else is nothing but forms which have been cultivated by culture, of any authoritative education. All these have an impact on the human heart but do not always help man to find his true way. We see that what saved the thief on his cross was a faint nostalgic consciousness of Heaven. This occurrence that took place during the crucifixion of Christ speaks about the essence of salvation. We also see that this nostalgia about true things is referred to as "repentance." That is to say, the repentance that saves us is the process of life based in our conscience that is based in the

remembrance of Paradise. This remembrance sustained Adam, the first teacher of repentance.

Many people identify repentance with the control that guilt exercises over our soul. This is a very slippery way of understanding the mystery of salvation. Guilt is mostly a matter of upbringing, of learned judgment, and has nothing to do with the essence of life and salvation. Rather it often serves to hold man back from walking a genuine path of gradual knowledge of God and the world.

All the above observations are not only for Orthodox Christians but for all people. However, people who ignore God can not go forward with awareness, but only intuitively. They do not have the same opportunities to experience an acquaintance with God and His Kingdom. These people will be judged according to whatever knowledge they do have.

But sometimes we, the Christians of the end times, do not even try to proceed toward a path of knowledge. We feel a sense of security in just applying some rules and avoiding any risk that take us beyond a well-worn path. We hide behind this illusion of security. We tend to subvert our minds to patterns of thought and attitudes which are forced on us from outside and are not the result of a living experience and freedom. We parrot our lives and lose even the primitive ability of common sense. We are afraid that if we deviate from "the program of our salvation", we shall "lose our soul." And we do not understand that this cast of life, this refusal to practice our freedom and our conscience, amount to a refusal to struggle.



### ONE MUST WORK IN ORDER TO EAT

A brother went to see Abba Silvanus on the mountain of Sinai. When he saw the brothers working hard, he said to the old man, "*Do not labor for the food which perishes* (Jn 6:27). Mary has chosen *the good portion* (Lk 10:42)."

The old man said to his disciple, "Zacharias, give the brother a book and put him in a cell without anything else." So, when the ninth hour came the visitor watched the door expecting someone would be sent to call him to the meal.

When no one called him he got up, went to find the old man and said to him, "Have the brothers not eaten today?" The old man replied that they had. Then he said, "Why did you not call me?" The old man said to him, "Because you are a spiritual man and do not need that kind of food. We, being carnal, want to eat, and that is why we work. But you have chosen the good portion and read the whole day long and you do not want to eat carnal food."

When he heard these words the brother made a prostration saying, "Forgive me, Abba." The old man said to him, "Mary needs Martha. It is really thanks to Martha that Mary is praised."

From *The Desert Christian*, by Benedicta Ward.



## HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SALVIFIC CONFESSION

*By St. Theophan the Recluse, from "The Path to Salvation."*

For a salvific confession, one must prepare himself sufficiently. Proceed with reverence and faith!

1) Firmly convinced of the necessity of this Sacrament, go to it—not as though it were some new part of your life or just a simple custom, but with complete faith that for you as a sinner, this is the only possible way to be saved. By skipping it, you will be numbered among the condemned, and, consequently, you will be outside of any mercy. By not entering this clinic, your spirit will not regain its health and you will remain as you were, sick and disturbed. You will not see the kingdom if you do not enter it through the door of repentance.

2) By these convictions engender the desire for this Sacrament. Go to it not as to the slaughter, but as to a fountain of blessings. Whoever vividly represents to himself the fruit born in us through Confession could not but long for it. A man goes to it all in wounds from head to toe, and he returns from it healthy in all his members, alive, strong, and with a feeling of safety from future infection. He goes there weighed down by a heavy yoke—the whole sum of past sins on him. It torments him and deprives him of all peace. He returns light, joyful, and with a consoling disposition of spirit that he has received a charter of complete forgiveness.

3) Shame and fear will come up—let them! That is why this Sacrament was created, to bring shame and fear upon us—and the more shame and fear, the more it will save us. Desiring this Sacrament, desire great shame and great trembling. If someone wants to be healed, does he not know how painful the treatment is? He knows, but resolving to be healed, he also determines to endure the attendant pain in the hope of recovering. And you, when you were tormented by the feelings of regret that came upon you and you rushed to come closer to God, did you not say: "I am ready to endure anything, only have mercy on me and forgive me!" Well, now it is happening according to your wish. Do not be upset over this shame and fear; they are bound up with this Sacrament for your own good. By having burned again in them, you will become morally stronger. You burned already more than once in the fire of repentance—burn some more. Then you burned alone before God and your conscience, but now burn before a witness appointed by God, in witness of the sincerity of that solitary burning, and perhaps to complete its lack. There will be a judgment, and at it will be shame and fear without hope. Shame and fear at confession pay for the shame and fear then. If you do not want the latter, go through with the former. Besides, it always happens that, according to the measure of the trembling that the penitent goes through, he overflows with consolation at the confession. This is where the Savior truly shows Himself to be the Comforter of the laboring and heavy laden! By sincerely repenting and confessing the heart learns this truth by experience, rather than by faith alone.

4) Then, again recalling all the sins you have committed and renewing the now ripened, inner commitment not to repeat them, rise up in the living faith that you stand before the Lord Himself Who receives your confession; and tell everything that burdens your conscience, without holding anything back. If you have approached it with the desire to shame yourself, you will not cover yourself, but will express as fully as possible your disgraceful weakness for sins. This will serve to satiate your humbled heart. You must be sure that every sin you have told is torn from the heart, for every hidden sin remains there even more to your condemnation, because the sinner stood with his wound near the Doctor that heals all things. By hiding the sin, he closed the wound without regretting that he torments and disrupts his soul. In the story of Blessed Theodora, who passed through the toll-houses, it is written that her evil accusers did not find in their scrolls those sins that she had confessed. The angels later explained to her that Confession wipes away sin from every place that it had been recorded. Neither in the book of the conscience, nor in the book of the living, nor with the evil destroyer is it attributed to that person—Confession wiped away these lines. Tear out all that burdens you without hiding anything.

The point to which you need to bring the revelation of your sins is so that the spiritual father has a precise understanding of you; so that he sees you as you are, and, in giving absolution he absolves you and not someone else; so that when he says: "Forgive and absolve this penitent for the sins he has committed," nothing remains in you that would come under this category. He does well who, having prepared for Confession for the first time after a long period of residing in sins, finds some opportunity to have a preliminary discussion with the spiritual father, and tells him the entire history of his sinful life. This will remove the danger of forgetting or omitting anything in confusion during the confession. Everyone must concern himself with a complete revelation of his sins. The Lord gave the authority to absolve sins not automatically, but under the condition that they be repented of and confessed. If something is left incomplete, then it could happen that when the spiritual father pronounces: "I forgive and absolve you," the Lord will say: "I condemn you."

5) Now the confession is over. The spiritual father lifts his epitrachelion, covers the head of the penitent with it, and keeping it in his hand, pronounces the absolution of all sins, making the sign of the Cross on the head. What occurs at this moment in the soul is well-known to everyone who sincerely repents. Streams of grace pour from the head into the heart and fill it with joy. This is not from human beings, not from the penitent, not from the absolver—this is the mystery of the Lord Healer and Comforter of souls. Sometimes it happens at this time that some hear clearly in their hearts a divine word to strengthen and inspire them for future works. This is a sort of spiritual weapon entrusted by Christ the Savior to the man who now enters the ranks of those warring in His name. Whoever has heard such a word, let him treasure

it later, to comfort and inspire him—comfort, because it is clear that the confession has been received when it has pleased the Lord to enter into a sort of discussion with the penitent; inspire, because in the hour of temptation all he has to do is remember it, and strength comes from somewhere to resist! With what do warriors in battle inspire themselves? With a word spoken by the commander that affected him powerfully. It is the same here.

6) With this everything is done. All that remains is to fall at God's feet with feelings of thankfulness for His unspeakable mercy, and kiss the Cross and Gospels as a sign of your vow. Go unwaveringly along the path shown to you in the Gospels, with the commitment to follow Christ the Saviour, as described in the Gospels, under His blessed yoke, only now taken upon yourself. Having completed this, go in peace, with the intention to intently act according to what you have promised, remembering that the judgment over you from now on will be from your own words. You have made a promise—keep it. It has been sealed by the Sacrament, and therefore you must be ever more faithful to it, so that you do not fall again into the ranks of those who have wasted grace.

7) If the spiritual father gives you a penance, accept it with joy. If the spiritual father does not give you one, then ask him to. This will be not only a send-off to you as you depart on your good path, but also a shield and protection from outside enemy attacks on your new way of life. Here is what the Patriarch of Constantinople wrote in answer to the Lutherans: "We accompany the absolution of sins with penances for many respectable reasons. First of all, so that through voluntary suffering the sinner will be freed here from onerous involuntary punishment there, in the next life, for the Lord grants mercy to nothing more than He does suffering, especially voluntary suffering. Therefore St. Gregory also says that God's love is granted for tears. Secondly, it is in order to destroy in the sinner those passionate desires of the flesh which give birth to sin, for we know that opposites cure. Thirdly, it is so that the penance would serve as a bond or bridle for the soul, and not allow it to again take up those same vices from which it is still being cleansed. Fourthly, in order to accustom it to labor and patience, for virtue is a matter of labor. Fifthly, it is so that we will see and know whether or not the penitent has truly come to hate sin."

Whoever finishes this course of spiritual treatment as given and, most importantly, confesses his sins without hiding anything, returns from the house of God the way criminals return from court who have received mercy and acquittal of their crimes instead of a death sentence. He returns with a deep feeling of thankfulness to the Savior of our souls, with the firm resolve to dedicate himself to Him and to the fulfillment of His commandments all the rest of his life, with extreme disgust for all of his former sins, and with an unrestrainable desire to wipe away all traces of his former error. The one who has received absolution feels within himself that he is not useless, that he has been visited by a special power. Divine grace, which has thus far only acted on him from without in helping him con-

quer himself, now with the words: "I forgive and absolve" has entered into him, mingled with his spirit and filled it with a burning and longing, with which he now proceeds into action until the evening of his life.



### ABBA POIMEN'S VIRTUES

A brother from Abba Poimen's neighborhood left to go to another country one day. There he met a hermit. The latter was very charitable and hospitable. The brother told him about Abba Poimen. When he heard of his virtue, the hermit wanted to see Abba Poimen. Some times afterwards when the brother had returned to Egypt the hermit went there to see the brother who had formerly paid him a visit. He had told him where he lived.

When he saw him, the brother was astonished and very pleased. The hermit said to him, "Please, will you be so kind as to take me to Abba Poimen?" So he brought him to the old man and presented him, saying, "This is a great man, full of charity, who is held in high estimation in his district. I have spoken to him about you, and he has come because he wants to see you." So Abba Poimen received him with joy. They greeted one another and sat down.

The visitor began to speak of the Scriptures, of spiritual and of heavenly things. But Abba Poimen turned his face away and answered nothing. Seeing that he did not speak to him, the other went away deeply grieved and said to the brother who had brought him, "I have made this long journey in vain. For I have come to see the old man, and he does not wish to speak to me."

Then the brother went inside to Abba Poimen and said to him, "Abba, this great man who has so great a reputation in his own country has come here because of you. Why did you not speak to him?" The old man said, "He is great and speaks of heavenly things and I am lowly and speak of earthly things. If he had spoken of the passions of the soul, I should have replied, but he speaks to me of spiritual things and I know nothing about that."

Then the brother came outside and said to the visitor, "The old man does not readily speak of the Scriptures, but if anyone consults him about the passions of the soul, he replies." Filled with compunction, the visitor returned to the old man and said to him, "What should I do, Abba, for the passions of the soul master me?"

The old man turned towards him and replied joyfully, "This time, you come as you should. Now open your mouth concerning this and I will fill it with good things." Greatly edified, the other said to him, "Truly, this is the right way!"

He returned to his own country giving thanks to God that he had been counted worthy to meet so great a saint.

*From The Desert Christian, by Benedicta Ward.*

## THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE WITHIN THE FAMILY

*From the Book: "Family Life" by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist - Souroti, Greece (2002), translated by Fr. Luke Hartung.*

**G**eronta, how can a husband become practiced in the virtues?

— God will give him opportunities. Many men, however, after asking God to give them opportunities to practice the virtues, grumble when they are faced with a certain difficulty. For example, sometimes the Good God, in His boundless love, and in order to provide practice in humility and patience, will take away his Grace from the wife, and she will begin acting outlandishly and treating the husband inconsiderately. Then the husband should not complain, but rather rejoice and thank God for the opportunity to struggle which He has given him. Or, a mother asks God to grant her patience. Her little child then comes in, and as soon as she has the table set for dinner, he pulls on the table cloth and everything spills on the floor. At such times it's as if the child is saying to his mother: "Mama, be patient!"

In general, the difficulties which exist today in the world force those who desire to live a little spiritual life to be watchful. Just as, may God protect us, in a war the people are in a watchful state, I see the same thing happening now with whomever strives to live spiritually. Look how tough the poor children have it who are close to the Church! But the war, which exists because of the terrible environment in which they live, helps them, in a way, to stay awake. You see, in times of peace, when there are no difficulties, the majority of people slack off. Instead, they should utilize such serenity for spiritual growth—to cut off their shortcomings and cultivate the virtues.

Silence greatly helps in spiritual life. It is good for one to practice silence for about an hour a day: to test himself, to acknowledge his passions and to fight in order to cut them off and purify his heart. It is very good if there is a quiet room in the house which gives him the feeling of a monastic cell. There, "in secret" [Mt 6:4], he is able to do his spiritual maintenance, to study, and to pray. A little spiritual study done before prayer helps greatly. The soul warms up and the mind is transported to the spiritual realm. That's why, when a person has many distractions during the day, he should rejoice if he has ten minutes for prayer, or even two minutes to read something, so as to drive away distractions.

**G**eronta, is this perhaps too difficult for someone living in the world?

— No, there are laymen who live very spiritually—even like ascetics—with their fasting, their services, their prayer ropes, their prostrations—even with children and grandchildren. On Sunday they go to church, receive Holy Communion, and then return home again to their "cell," just like the hermits who go to the Kyriakon\* on Sunday, and afterwards keep silence

in their cells. Glory to God! There are many such souls in the world. As a matter of fact, I know a certain family man who says the Jesus prayer unceasingly, wherever he is, and has continuous tears at prayer. His prayer has become self-activating, and his tears are sweet; they are tears of divine rejoicing. I also remember a certain worker on the Holy Mountain—Yanni was his name—who worked very hard, doing the work of two men. I had advised him to start saying the Jesus Prayer while working, and slowly but surely he grew accustomed to it. He came to me once and told me that he felt great joy when he said the prayer. "Dawn is breaking," I told him. Soon after I learned he had been killed by two drunks. How saddened I was! A few days later a certain monk was looking for a tool, but he couldn't find it because Yanni had put it somewhere. That evening Yanni appeared to him in his sleep and told him where he had left it. He had attained such a spiritual state that enabled him to help others from the life hereafter.

How simple spiritual life is! If one loves God, if he acknowledges His great Sacrifice and benefactions and if he forces himself with discernment in imitating the Saints, he will quickly become holy. He attains humility and an understanding of his own wretchedness and his tremendous ungratefulness to God.

† † †

[\*] *The main church of a Skete, in which the ascetics from nearby cells gather on Sunday and feast days for common services. The word "Kyriakon" is derived from the Greek word for Sunday, «Κυριακή» "Kyriaki".*



**I**n the hour in which we are tempted, we must be patient and pray. Temptation is a clever craftsman. He is able to make small things loom large. Temptation disquiets, saddens and creates external battles. He knows many arts. He brings man to doubt. For this reason, we have many shipwrecks. When we are beset by temptations, that is when the grace of God comes. When one undergoes temptation, he recognizes his weakness, is humbled and attracts the grace of God. Don't let the winds of temptations affect you. They can do you no harm.

**O**ften when someone throws a rock at a dog, rather than rushing at the person who threw the stone, the dog will run and bite the stone. We do the same thing. The tempter (i.e., the evil one) uses someone else to tempt us, either in word or deed, and - rather than deal with the tempter that threw the stone - we bite the rock --- our fellow man, that the hater of the good used against us.

**Blessed Elder Amphilochios of Patmos, (+1970)**



## Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία καὶ ὁ Τεκτονισμός

Τοῦ Πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Βασιλείου Γεωργόπουλου, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Στύλος Ὁρθοδοξίας», Ὀκτώβριος 2006.

**Β**ασικὴ τακτικὴ διαφόρων ομάδων, κινήσεων, ὁργανώσεων κ.ἄ., ὅπου ὁ χαρακτήρας τους, οἱ διδασκαλίες καὶ οἱ πρακτικὲς εἶναι ἀπολύτως ἀσυμβίβαστες μὲ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας, εἶναι ἡ προσπάθεια χειραγώγησης τῶν ἀνθρώπων μέσω τῆς παραπληροφόρησης. Τακτικὴ ἡ ὁποία κατ' ἐξοχὴν χρησιμοποιεῖται ἀπὸ τὸν Τεκτονισμὸ ἢ Μασωνία.

Μόνιμη ἐπωδὸς τῶν διαφόρων Τεκτόνων ἀποτελεῖ ὁ ἰσχυρισμὸς ὅτι ἀποτελοῦν ἀπλῶς φιλοσοφικὴ ὁργάνωση ποὺ ἀποβλέπει στὴν ἀναζήτησιν τῆς ἀλήθειας, στὴν κοινωνικὴ καὶ ἀτομικὴ πρόοδο, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχουν θρησκευτικὸ χαρακτήρα. Ἀποψη ποὺ προσπαθοῦν νὰ τὴ διαδώσουν μὲ κάθε πρόσφορο μέσο καὶ σὲ κάθε εὐκαιρία. Θεωροῦν μάλιστα ὅτι μπορεῖ κάποιος νὰ εἶναι ταυτοχρόνως καὶ Χριστιανὸς καὶ Τέκτονας. Ἰσχύει ὁμως κάτι τέτοιο; Εἶναι δυνατόν κάποιος νὰ εἶναι Χριστιανὸς Ὁρθόδοξος καὶ ταυτοχρόνως νὰ εἶναι καὶ Μασὼνας;

Γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας κάτι τέτοιο εἶναι ὄχι μόνον ἀδύνατο ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀδιανόητο. Ἐν προκειμένῳ εἶναι χρήσιμο νὰ θυμηθοῦμε ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας ἔχει κατ' ἐπανάληψιν τοποθετηθεῖ γιὰ τὸν Τεκτονισμὸ κατὰ τρόπο σαφῆ, ὑπεύθυνο καὶ συγκεκριμένο. Ὑπενθυμίζουμε χαρακτηριστικά:

(1) Ἡ Διορθόδοξος Ἐπιτροπὴ ποὺ συνεδρίασε στὴ Μονὴ Βατοπαιδίου ἀπὸ 8-23/6/1930 στὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος χαρακτηρίζει τὸν Τεκτονισμὸ « ὡς σύστημα ἀντιχριστιανικὸν καὶ πεπλανημένον ».

(2) Ἡ Ἱερὰ Σύνοδος τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπογραμρίζει ὅτι ὁ Τεκτονισμὸς « ὑπομιμνήσκει τὰς παλαιὰς ἐθνικὰς μυστηριακὰς θρησκείας ἢ λατρείας, ἀπὸ τῶν ὁποίων κατάγεται καὶ τῶν ὁποίων συνέχισαν καὶ ἀναβίωσιν ἀποτελεῖ » (Περιοδικὸν Ἐκκλησία, τεύχος 48, (1933), σ. 1).

(3) Ἡ Ἱερὰ Σύνοδος τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος τὸν Νοέμβριον τοῦ 1972 ἐπαναλαμβάνει « ὅτι ἡ Μασωνία εἶναι ἀποδεδειγμένως θρησκευτικὴ μυστηριακὴ, προέκτασις τῶν παλαιῶν εἰδωλολατρικῶν θρησκειῶν, ὅλως ξένῃ καὶ ἀντίθετος πρὸς τὴν ἐξ ἀποκαλύψεως σωτηριώδη ἀλήθειαν τῆς Ἀγίας ἡμῶν Ἐκκλησίας. Διαδηλοῖ κατηγορηματικῶς ὅτι ἡ ιδιότης τοῦ Μασώνου ὑπὸ οἰανδήποτε μορφήν εἶναι ἀσυμβίβαστος πρὸς τὴν ιδιότητα τοῦ χριστιανοῦ μέλους τοῦ Σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ » (Πέρ. Ἐκκλησία 50, (1973), σ. 17).

(4) Ἡ Ἱερὰ Σύνοδος τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος τὸν Ὀκτώβριον τοῦ 1996 τὴν θεωρεῖ « παγανιστικὴ θρησκεία » ἀσυμβίβαστη μὲ τὸ χριστιανισμὸ καὶ τὴν χαρακτηρίζει « ὡς ἀντίχριστον σύστημα » (Περιοδικὸν Ἐκκλησία, τεύχος 73 (1996), σσ. 673-674).

Διάφοροι τεκτονικοὶ κύκλοι ἰσχυρίζονται ὅτι αὐτὲς οἱ ἀδαμαντίνου διαύγειας Ὁρθόδοξες τοποθετήσεις εἶναι ἀνακριβείες, ἀστήρικτες θεωρητικὲς διακηρύξεις καὶ εἶναι, πάντα κατὰ τοὺς ἰσχυρισμοὺς τους, καρπὸς μίας ἰσχυρῆς

προκατάληψης. Ἰσχύει ὁμως κάτι τέτοιο; Ἀναμφιβόλως ὄχι. Ἀντιθέτως αὐτοὶ οἱ ἰσχυρισμοὶ ἀποτελοῦν μία ἀκόμα προσπάθεια μασωνικῆς παραπληροφόρησης. Καὶ τοῦτο γιατί ἀποδεικνύεται εὐκόλα καὶ ὁ παγανιστικὸς καὶ ὁ ἀποκρυφιστικὸς καὶ ὁ ἀντιχριστιανικὸς χαρακτήρας τοῦ Τεκτονισμοῦ ἀπὸ πλῆθος μασωνικῶν κειμένων – μαρτυριῶν.

Ὡς ἀποδείξεις θὰ παραθέσουμε ἐνδεικτικὰ θέσεις ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια τῆς Ἐλευθέρας Τεκτονικῆς, ἀφ' ἑνὸς μὲν γιατί ἀποτελεῖ ἔκδοσις τῆς Μασωνικῆς Στοᾶς Ὁμηρος, ἀφ' ἑτέρου δὲ γιατί ὁ συντάκτης τῶν διαφόρων λημμάτων παραθέτει καὶ ἀπόψεις καὶ ἄλλων Μασόνων Ἑλλήνων καὶ ξένων, ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ καθίσταται τὸ ἐν λόγῳ ἔργο πρὸ ἀντιπροσωπευτικὸ γιὰ τὸ χῶρον του.

(α') Ἡ Παρουσία Ἀποκρυφιστικῶν Στοιχείων στὸν Τεκτονισμὸ.

Διαβάζουμε στὴν ἐν λόγῳ Μασωνικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια σχετικὰ μὲ τοὺς ἀνώτερους βαθμοὺς τοῦ Τεκτονισμοῦ ὅτι: « Οἱ Ἀνώτεροι βαθμοὶ τοῦ οὐδὲν ἄλλο εἶναι ἡ συμπίκνωσις τῶν διαφόρων μορφῶν τοῦ “ἐσωτερισμοῦ” προσφέρουσα εἰς τὸν Τέκτονα εὐρὺ πεδίου ἐρεύνης εἰς τὴν σφαῖραν τοῦ υπεραίσθητου » (σ. 127).

Στὴν ἴδια σελίδα ἐπίσης ἀναφέρεται: « Παραμένει ἀναντίρρητον ὅτι ἡ ὅλη διάρθρωσις τῶν πέραν τοῦ 3 βαθμῶν τοῦ περικλείει μέγιστον μέρος τῆς Ἀποκρύφου ἐπιστήμης καὶ τοῦ μυστηρίου συγχρόνως. Ἄλλως θὰ ἦτο ἀδύνατον νὰ ἐρμηνευθοῦν καὶ νὰ κατανοηθῶσιν οἱ βαθμοὶ οὗτοι, τὰ σύμβολα καὶ αἱ ἀλληγορίαι των » (σ. 127. Πρβλ. καὶ σ. 103). Σταματοῦν ὁμως ἐδῶ οἱ μαρτυρίες; Ὁχι.

Θὰ ἀναφέρουμε μία ἀκόμη χαρακτηριστικὴ ἀπὸ τίς πολλές. Σ' αὐτὴ ὁμολογεῖται ἡ παρουσία στὸν Τεκτονισμὸ τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἀποκρυφιστικῆς παράδοσης τῆς Καββάλα. Ἀναφέρεται χαρακτηριστικά: « Εἰς πλείστους ἀνωτέρους Τεκτονικοὺς βαθμοὺς γίνεται χρήσις τῆς Καββάλα, ὁλόκληρα δὲ Τεκτονικὰ δόγματα ἔχουν στηριχθεῖ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν της » (σ. 507). Καὶ ἄλλοι: « Ἡ προσεκτικὴ μελέτη τῶν διαφόρων Τεκτονικῶν βαθμῶν ἀποδεικνύει τὴν ἀναμφισβήτητον ἐπίδρασιν τῆς καββαλιστικῆς παραδόσεως ἐπὶ τοῦ Τεκτονισμοῦ » (σ. 510).

(β') Ἡ Παρουσία Παγανιστικῶν Στοιχείων στὸν Τεκτονισμὸ

Χαρακτηριστικὲς εἶναι ἐπίσης καὶ οἱ μαρτυρίες ποὺ ὑπάρχουν στὴν ἐν λόγῳ Μασωνικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια γιὰ τὴν παρουσία τοῦ παγανιστικοῦ στοιχείου στὸν Τεκτονισμὸ. Ἀναφέρουμε ἐνδεικτικῶς δύο: « Οὐδεὶς ὁμως ἐξετάζων προσεκτικῶς τοὺς τρόπους, καθ' οὓς ἡ ἀνάστασις ἢ ἐπιστροφή εἰς τὴν ζωὴν ἐδιδάσκοντο διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τελετῶν εἰς τὰ Ἀρχαῖα μυστήρια καὶ διδάσκονται καὶ σήμερον εἰς τὴν τεκτονικὴν μύθισιν δύναται νὰ ἀρνηθῇ, ὅτι ὁ Τεκτονισμὸς ἀπέρρευσε ἐκ τῶν ἀρχαίων μυστηρίων » (σ. 93. Πρβλ. A.G.Mackey, An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry, Vol. 2, Chicago 1947, σ. 851).

Μὲ τὴν ἴδια ἐπίσης βεβαιότητα καὶ σαφήνεια ἄλλοι ὁμολογεῖται ὅτι « οἱ τρεῖς πρῶτοι συμβολικοὶ βαθμοὶ δὲν

εἶναι τί ἄλλο ἢ πιστὴ ἐπανάληψις τῶν περὶ “ἀθανασίας τῆς ψυχῆς” διδαγμάτων τῶν Αἰγυπτιακῶν, τῶν Διονυσιακῶν, τῶν Ὀρφικῶν, τῶν Ἐλευσίνιων καὶ τῶν Μιθραϊκῶν Μυστηρίων» (σ. 127. Βλ καὶ σσ. 151, 633).

(γ') Ἡ Παρουσία Ἀντιχριστιανικῶν Διδασκαλιῶν στὸν Τεκτονισμό

Ἀπὸ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πλανῶν ποὺ ἀποτελοῦν ἀντιλήψεις τοῦ Τεκτονισμοῦ θὰ σταθοῦμε ἐνδεικτικὰ μόνο σὲ μία περίπτωση, στὴν ἀντιχριστιανικὴ πλάνη τῆς μετενσάρκωσης. Ἐξόχως διαφωτιστικὰ εἶναι ὅσα ἀναφέρονται γιὰ αὐτὴν στὴν Μασωνικὴ ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια. Ἀναφέρονται, λοιπόν, τὰ ἑξῆς: «Ὁ Ἐλευθεροτεκτονικὸς ἐσωτερισμὸς πρεσβεύει ἐπίσης, ὡς εἶναι φυσικόν, τὸ δόγμα τῆς μετενσάρκωσης ἄνευ τοῦ ὁποίου δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ νοηθῇ καὶ στηριχθῇ ὁ περὶ ἐξελίξεως νόμος. (...) Ἀθανασία ψυχῆς ἄλλως τέ, ὡς τὴν πρεσβεύει ὁ Ἐλευθεροτεκτονισμὸς, δὲν θὰ ἦτο νοητὴ ἄνευ τῆς μετενσάρκωσης» (σ. 607).

Οἱ Μασωνικὲς μαρτυρίες ἀποδεικνύουν ὅτι οἱ θέσεις τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας γιὰ τὸν Τεκτονισμό ἐπιβεβαιώνονται ἀπὸ τὴν πραγματικότητα καὶ δὲν ἀποτελοῦν ἀστήρικτες κατηγορίες ποὺ εἶναι καρπὸς προκατάληψης, ὅπως ἰσχυρίζονται διάφοροι τεκτονικοὶ κύκλοι. Ταυτοχρόνως ὁμοῦ ἀποδεικνύουν καὶ τὴν ἀπόπειρα παραπληροφόρησης ποὺ ἐπιχειρεῖται ἀπὸ τὸν Τεκτονισμό σχετικὰ μὲ τὴ φύση καὶ τὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ τῆς ὁργάνωσής τους.

Εἶναι νομίζουμε αὐτονόητο ὅτι κάποιος ποὺ θέλει νὰ εἶναι συνειδητὸς Ὀρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι ταυτοχρόνως καὶ Τέκτονας. Ποιὰ σχέση μπορεῖ νὰ ἔχη τὸ φῶς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου μὲ τὴν ἀποκρυφιστικὴ καὶ παγανιστικὴ καταχνιά τοῦ Τεκτονισμοῦ; Ἀναμφιβόλως καμμία. Ἡ μύηση καὶ ἡ ἔνταξη κάποιου στὴ Μασωνία εἶναι ἐπιστροφή ἀπὸ τὸ χῶρο τῆς ζωῆς, ἀπὸ τὸ χῶρο τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν «καινῆς κτίσεως» (Β' Κορ. 5:17), ποὺ εἶναι ἡ Ἐκκλησία, στὸ χῶρο τῆς σκιάς καὶ τοῦ θανάτου (Ματθ. 4:16. Λουκ. 1:79).



**Ἡ ἀδελφότης «ΟΣΙΟΣ ΠΟΙΜΗΝ», μὲ τὴν πρόνοια τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴ συμπαράσταση διαφόρων Ἑλληνορθοδόξων, διαθέτει ΛΩΡΕΑΝ πρὸς ὅλους τοὺς ἐνδιαφέροντας Χριστιανούς τὴν σειρὰ τῶν ὁμιλιῶν τοῦ εὐγλωττοτάτου Μητροπολίτου Λεμεσοῦ Ἀθανασίου ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ διαφορῶν θεμάτων.**  
**Οἱ ὁμιλίες εἶναι σὲ τύπο mp3. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε DVD player ποὺ νὰ παίζει mp3 files (σὰν μερικὰ mini-DVD players ἢ DVD home theater systems), ἢ ἓνα ἠλεκτρονικὸ ὑπολογιστὴ μὲ Windows operating system, ἢ ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς mini mp3 players σὰν, π.χ., τὸ δημοφιλὲς iPod.**  
**(Δελτίον παραγγελίας στὴν σελ. 14)**

## Ἐπὶ τοῦ Πολυτονικοῦ Συστήματος

*Τοῦ Ἐθνικοῦ μας ποιητῆ Ὀδυσσεά Ἑλύτη (βραβεῖον Νομπελ Λογοτεχνίας, 1976).*

Ἐγὼ εἶμαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ «παλαιοῦ» συστήματος, ἐναντίον τοῦ μονοτονικοῦ καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς διδασκαλίας τῶν Ἀρχαίων Ἑλληνικῶν. Εἶναι ἡ βάση γιὰ νὰ ξέρεις τὴν ἐτυμολογία τῶν λέξεων. Ἡ σημερινὴ κακοποίηση τῆς γλώσσας μὲ ἐνοχλεῖ καὶ αἰσθητικά. Θέλω νὰ δῶ γραμμένον τὸ «καφενεῖον» κι ἂς μὴν προφέρουμε τὸ «ν». Τώρα, ὅλες οἱ λέξεις ἔχουν μιὰ τρύπα.

Μέσα σ' ἓνα τέτοιο πνεῦμα εἶχα κινηθεῖ ἄλλοτε, ὅταν ἔλεγα ὅτι ἓνα τοπίο δὲν εἶναι, ὅπως τὸ ἀντιλαμβάνονται μερικοί, κάποιο ἀπλῶς σύνολο γῆς, φυτῶν καὶ ὑδάτων. Εἶναι ἡ προβολὴ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐνὸς λαοῦ ἐπάνω στὴν ὕλη.

Θέλω νὰ πιστεῦω—καὶ ἡ πίστη μου αὐτὴ βγαίνει πάντοτε πρώτη στὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς μὲ τὴ γνώση—ὅτι, ὅπως καὶ νὰ τὸ ἐξετάσουμε, ἡ πολυαιώνια παρουσία τοῦ ἑλληνισμοῦ πάνω στὰ δῶθε ἢ ἐκεῖθε τοῦ Αἰγαίου χώματα ἔφτασε νὰ καθιερώσει μιὰν ὀρθογραφία, ὅπου τὸ κάθε ὠμέγα, τὸ κάθε ὕψιλον, ἢ κάθε ὀξεῖα, ἢ κάθε ὑπογεγραμμένη δὲν εἶναι παρὰ ἓνας κολπίσκος, μιὰ κατωφέρεια, μιὰ κάθετη βράχου πάνω σὲ μιὰ καμπύλη πρύμνας πλεούμενου, κυματιστοὶ ἀμπελώνες, ὑπέρθυρα ἐκκλησιῶν, ἀσπράκια ἢ κοκκινάκια, ἐδῶ ἢ ἐκεῖ, ἀπὸ περιστρεφόμενες καὶ γλάστρες μὲ γεράνια.

Εἶναι μία γλώσσα μὲ πολὺ αὐστηρὴ γραμματικὴ, ποὺ τὴν ἔφκιασε μόνος τοῦ ὁ λαός, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ ποὺ δὲν ἐπήγαινε ἀκόμη σχολεῖο. Καὶ τὴν τήρησε μὲ θρησκευτικὴ προσήλωση κι ἀντοχὴ ἀξιοθαύμαστη, μέσα στὶς πιὸ δυσμενεῖς ἑκατονταετίες. Ὅσπου ἦρθαμ' ἐμεῖς, μὲ τὰ διπλώματα καὶ τοὺς νόμους, νὰ τὸν βοηθήσουμε. Καὶ σχεδὸν τὴν ἀφανίσαμε. Ἀπὸ τὸ ἓνα μέρος τῆς φάγαμε τὰ κατάλοιπα τῆς γραφῆς τῆς καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ ἄλλο τῆς ροκανίσαμε τὴν ἴδια τῆς τὴν ὑπόστασι, τὴν κοινωνικοποιήσαμε, τὴν μεταβάλαμε σὲ ἓναν ἀκόμα μικροαστὸ, ποὺ μᾶς κοιτάζει ἀπορημένος ἀπὸ κάποιο παραθυράκι κάποιας πολυκατοικίας τοῦ Αἰγάλεω.

Δὲν ἀναφέρομαι σὲ καμμιὰ χαμένη γραφικότητα. Οὔτε θυμᾶμαι νὰ 'χω ζήσει σὲ καμμιὰ καλὴ ἐποχὴ γιὰ νὰ τὴ νοσταλγῶ. Ἀπλῶς, δὲν ἀνέχομαι τὶς ἀνορθογραφίες. Μὲ ταραίζουν. Νιώθω σὰν ν' ἀνακατώνονται τὰ γράμματα στὸ ἴδιο μου τὸ ἐπώνυμο, νὰ μὴν ξέρω ποιὸς εἶμαι, νὰ μὴν ἀνῆκω πουθενά. Τόσο πολὺ αἰσθάνομαι νὰ εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ μου συνυφασμένη μ' αὐτὴν τὴν «ὕδρόγεια λαλιά», ποὺ δὲν εἶναι παρὰ ἡ ὀπτικὴ φάση τῆς ἑλληνικῆς λαλιάς, τῆς ἱκανῆς μὲ τὴ διπλὴ τῆς ὑπόστασι καὶ ὁμιλεῖ καὶ νὰ ζωγραφίζει συνάμα. Καὶ ποὺ ἐξακολουθεῖ ἀθόρυβα ὅσο καὶ δραστικά, παρὰ τὶς ἄνωθεν ἐπεμβάσεις, νὰ εἰσχωρεῖ ὁλοένα μέσα στὴν ἱστορία καὶ μέσα στὴ φύση ποὺ τὴ γέννησαν, ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ μετατρέπει τεράστιες ποσότητες παρελθόντος χρόνου σὲ παρόν, καὶ νὰ μετατρέπεται ἀπὸ τὸ παρόν αὐτὸ σὲ ὄργανο προικισμένο μὲ τὴ δύναμη νὰ ὀδηγεῖ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ζωῆς μας στὴν πρωτογενὴ φυσικὴ τους ἀλήθεια.



## Περὶ Ἱερᾶς Ἐξομολογήσεως

Ἀρχιμ. Σαράντη Σαράντου, ἐφημερίου Ἱ. Ν. Κοιμήσεως Θεοτόκου Ἀμαρουσίου.

**Κ**ατὰ τὴν τελευταία ἐπίσκεψή μου στὸ ἀγιώνυμο Ὅρος, ἄκουσα ἀπὸ τοὺς μοναχοὺς μιὰ πολὺ σημαντικὴ ἐμπειρία ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγιορείτικη ζωὴ τους.

Μιλοῦσαν γιὰ τὸν ἱερομόναχο Ἀθανάσιο πού ἐξήσε στὴν Ἱ. Μ. τοῦ Ὁσίου Γρηγορίου, πολὺ ἀσκητικὰ καὶ πνευματικὰ. Ἡ ποιμαντικὴ του προσφορὰ στοὺς συγχρόνους του μοναχοὺς καὶ λαϊκοὺς ἦταν ποιοτικὰ ἀνάλογη τοῦ θεανθρωπίνου τρόπου τῆς προσωπικῆς του ζωῆς. Τελείωσε ὁσιακὰ τὴ ζωὴ του. Ὁ Γέροντάς του παρακαλοῦσε τὸ Θεὸ νὰ τοῦ ἀποκαλύψῃ κάτι ἀπὸ τὴ μετὰ θάνατο ζωὴ του. Πράγματι, ὅταν τελείωνε τὸ σαρανταλείτουργο πὺν ἔκανε ὁ Γέροντας «ὕπὲρ ἀναπαύσεως τῆς ψυχῆς» τοῦ ὑποτακτικοῦ ἱερομονάχου, παρουσιάστηκε ὁ ὑποτακτικὸς στὸν ὕπνο τοῦ Γέροντα, καὶ μὲ τρόπο ἀποκαλυπτικὸ ἔδωσε ἀναφορὰ. «Ὁ Θεός, Γέροντα, μοῦ ζήτησε λόγο», εἶπε. «Καὶ γιὰ μὲν τὰ μοναχικά μου καθήκοντα ἰσοφάρισα μὲ τὸ Θεό, σχετικὰ μὲ τὶς ποιμαντικὲς μου ὁμως ὑποχρεώσεις, ὁ Θεὸς ἦταν ἀδέκαστος, ἀνυποχώρητος καὶ ἀσυγκατάβατος».

Οἱ Ἀγιορεῖτες Πατέρες θεωροῦν τὸ ὄνειρο αὐτὸ «σημεῖο», γι' αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ ἀναφέρουν. Σημάδια σχετικὰ μὲ τὸ παραπάνω βρίσκουμε σκορπισμένα σ' ὅλη τὴν ἀσκητικὴ φιλολογία, πὺν ἐκφράζουν τὴ γρηγοροῦσα ποιμαντικὴ συνείδηση.

Ἄν σ' ἄλλες ἐποχὲς καὶ σ' ἄλλες γενιὲς ἡ ποιμαντικὴ προσφορὰ ἀντιμετώπιζε δυσκολίες, πολὺ περισσότερο σήμερα προσπαθοῦν νὰ τὴν ἀδρανοποιήσουν καὶ νὰ τὴν ἐξουδετερώσουν. Τὸ κοσμικὸ φρόνημα καὶ ὁ διάχυτος θεωρητικὸς καὶ πρακτικὸς ὕλισμός ἐπηρεάζουν βαθιὰ καὶ ὅλο βαθύτερα τὰ ἀστικά περιβάλλοντα καὶ τοὺς «ποιμένες» πὺν ζοῦν μέσα σ' αὐτό. Ποικίλες εἶναι οἱ δαιμονικὲς μεθοδεῖες πὺν ἀποσκοποῦν στὴν ἐκμηδένιση τοῦ ποιμαντικοῦ λειτουργήματος μέσα στὸ σύγχρονο κόσμο.

Ὅστόσο μὲ ἐκπληξὴ καὶ θαυμασμό παρατηροῦμε ὅτι ἀναδεικνύει ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Κύριος στὶς χαλεπὲς ἡμέρες μας, Ὁρθόδοξα ποιμαντικὰ ἀναστήματα προικισμένα μὲ τὰ ἀνάλογα χαρίσματα, γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Σήμερα, «δόξα τῷ ἐν Τριάδι Θεῷ», βρίσκονται πνευματικοὶ πατέρες πὺν ἀνταποκρίνονται πραγματικὰ στὶς ἀδυσώπητες ὑπαρξιακὲς ἀνάγκες τῶν ἀλλοτριωμένων ἀπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτία, ἀλλὰ ἐπιστρεφόντων στὴ Μία, Ἀγία, Καθολικὴ καὶ Ἀποστολικὴ Ἐκκλησία μας, ἀνθρώπων. Ἡ ποιμαντικὴ ἐργασία τῶν ἐστιάζεται στὸ μεγάλο Μυστήριό τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως, πὺν κατὰ τρόπο μοναδικὸ τελεῖται μέσα στοὺς κόλπους τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας.

Τὸ Ὁρθόδοξο βάπτισμα ἔχει ἀφάνταστη θεοδυναμικότητα! Δεμένο μὲ τὸ ἅγιο Μῦρο σπρώχνει ἀόρατα, μὰ ἐντελῶς ἐλεύθερα, τὸν «ξενιτεμένο» ἄνθρωπο στὸ χῶρο τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως γιὰ νὰ ἀνταμώσῃ κατὰ πρόσωπο καὶ νὰ ἐπικοινωνήσῃ ἅμεσα μὲ τὸν «ἐν Τριάδι» Θεό.

Ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος «πνευματικὸς πατήρ» δὲν εἶναι δὲν εἶναι ὁ ἀπόμακρος ἀντιπρόσωπος ἐνὸς ἐντολοδόχου καὶ αὐστηροῦ Θεοῦ, οὔτε ὁ δικανικὸς τηρητὴς διατάξεων ἢ νόμων ἢ ἀρχῶν πὺν ἔχει σπουδάσει καὶ προσπαθεῖ νὰ ἐφαρμόσῃ στὴ ζωὴ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Οἱ κανόνες, οἱ ἐντολές, οἱ συμβουλές, ὁ διάλογος, ἡ ἐνθάρρυνση, ἡ ἐπιτίμηση, ἡ σιωπὴ, ἡ μακροθυμία, ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ μύρια ἄλλα ποιμαντικὰ τεχνάσματα εἶναι οἱ ἀλοιφές, τὰ ἐμπλαστρα καὶ τὰ φάρμακα, πὺν λέγει ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης, γιὰ νὰ ἀναταχθῇ ἡ ἀσταμάτητη ἁμαρτωλὴ ροπὴ καὶ νὰ ἀνοιχθοῦν στὸν πεπτωκότα οἱ ὀρίζοντες τῆς θείας εὐσπλαχνίας.

Τὴν ὥρα τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως τελεσιουργεῖται τὸ παμμυστήριό τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἐξαιρετικὰ μέσα σ' αὐτὸ καταλαβαίνει, ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς ὅτι ἀξίζει ἀνυπολόγιστα. Ἀρχίζει νὰ αὐτοεκτιμᾶται σωστά. Γι' αὐτὸ ὅλα τὰ κομμάτια τῆς ζωῆς του τὰ θεωρεῖ ἀξίολογα. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἀρχίζει νὰ θέλῃ νὰ τὰ ἀξιοποιήσῃ, νὰ τὰ καθαρίσῃ ἀπὸ τοὺς μολυσμοὺς καὶ νὰ τὰ θεανθρωποποιήσῃ.

Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰσαάκ ὁ Σύρος γράφει στὰ Ἀσκητικά του: «Ἄν ἓνας ἄνθρωπος δὲν ἔχει ἀρετὲς, πὺν τοῦ πὺν τίς ἔχει. Μὲ τὴν ἐνθάρρυνση σπέρνεις στὴν ψυχὴ του τίς ἀρετὲς πὺν δὲν ἔχει». Ὁ σύγχρονος ἀρρωστημένος καὶ ἀπογοητευμένος ἄνθρωπος βρίσκει μέσα στὴν «ἐν πνεύματι Ἀγίῳ» θεανθρωπινὴ ἐπικοινωνία μὲ τὸν πνευματικὸ τοῦ ὅχι ἀπλῶς τίς ἀρετὲς, ἀλλὰ τὸν κτήτορά τους, τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Κύριο. Μέσα στὸ μυστήριό τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως ὁ σημερινὸς καταταλαιπωρημένος ἄνθρωπος ξεφεύγοντας ἀπὸ τοῖς ἀνθρωπομάζες νιώθει, ὅτι κάτι εἶναι, ὅτι κάποιος εἶναι καὶ ἀρχίζει νὰ ἀναδύεται ἀπὸ τὰ χάρη τῆς ἀνυπαρξίας πὺν τὸν ὀδήγησε ἡ ψυχοκτόνος ἁμαρτία.

Γίνεται, ναὶ πραγματικὰ γίνεται ἓνα παρατεινόμενο θαῦμα καὶ στὴν ἐποχὴ μας. Γίνεται αὐτὸ πὺν περιγράφει ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης: Ὁ πνευματικὸς πατήρ μὲ τὴν ἀκακία του, τὴν ἱερὴ ἀπάθεια, τίς εὐχές του πρὸς τὸν Ὑψιστὸ ἀνασπᾷ ἀπὸ τὴν ἄβυσσο τὸ ναυαγῆμένο καράβι καὶ τὸ κάνει ἱκανὸ νὰ πλὴν πάνω στὰ κύματα, χάριτι καὶ μόνο Θεοῦ. Μπροστὰ στὸ πετραχήλι τοῦ πνευματικοῦ ἀνοίγεται μὲ ἱερὸ ἄφοβο φόβο ἡ ἁμαρτωλὴ ψυχὴ. Ἄμαρτωλοι λογισμοί, ἁμαρτωλὰ συναισθήματα, αἰσchrές καὶ κακὲς πράξεις πὺν ἔρχονται στὸ φῶς τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως, πὺν ἀνακοινώνονται δηλαδὴ μὲ μετάνοια, νεκρώνονται, λέγουν οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας.

Δόξα τῷ ἐν Τριάδι Θεῷ πὺν θεσμοθέτησε αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο συγχωρήσεως τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἐντάξεώς τους στὴν ἁγία Ποίμνη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας. Δόξα τῷ ἐν Τριάδι Θεῷ πὺν ἔδειξε καὶ ἀδιάκοπα δείχνει τὸ ἄμετρο ἔλεός Του καὶ προετοιμάζει τὸ φθαρτὸ πλάσμα τοῦ στὴν αἰώνια προσωπικὴ ἐπικοινωνία μαζί Του, ξεκινώντας ἀπὸ τὸ λυτρωτικὸ διάλογο τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως. Ἄνθρωποι στιγμισμένοι μὲ ἠθικά, ψυχολογικά, νευρολογικά, κοινωνικά, συζυγικά καὶ οἰκογενειακά ἢ ἄλλα προσωπικά προβλήματα θεραπεύονται καὶ προοδευτικὰ ἐτοιμάζονται γιὰ νὰ συμμετάσχουν στὴ νέα ἀπέραντη οἰκογένεια τῆς Βασιλείας τῶν Οὐρανῶν.



Δέν υπάρχει τρανότερη απόδειξη της ανεκτίμητης αξίας, πού δείχνει η Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὸν ἄνθρωπο, ἀπὸ τὴν ἀπόδειξη τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολόγησος. Ὑπάρχει κάποια ἄλλη χριστιανικὴ ὁμολογία (ἢ κάποια ἄλλη θρησκεία!) πού νὰ ἔχη θεσμοθετημένο, ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ ἔχη σὲ λειτουργία ἓνα τέτοιο μυστήριο πού μοναδικὰ καὶ ἀνεπανάληπτα καταξιώνει τὴ διαπροσωπικὴ ἀνθρώπινη σχέση; Ποῦ ἄλλοῦ ἢ ἀνθρώπινη προσωπικότητα διασφαλίζεται, καλύπτεται καὶ σκεπάζεται μὲ τὸ ἀπόρητο, πού καὶ θεωρητικὰ καὶ στὴν πράξη τηρεῖται ἀπὸ τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους πνευματικούς;

Δικαιολογημένα ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος εὐσεβὴς λαὸς μας ἀποκαλεῖ τοὺς πνευματικούς, Πατέρες. Τοὺς αἰσθάνεται πολὺ κοντὰ του σὰν στοργικούς πατέρες πού ψυχικὰ καὶ πνευματικὰ μοιράζονται τὸν πνευματικὸ ἀγώνα τους καὶ συναγωνίζονται στὸν ἴδιο στίβο τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ πνευματικῆς τελειώσεως. Τοὺς αἰσθάνεται ὁ λαὸς μας σὰν πατέρες καρτερικούς πού ἔχουν μάθει νὰ περιμένουν καὶ νὰ ὑπομένουν τὶς δοκιμασίες, τὶς θλίψεις, τοὺς πειρασμούς καὶ τοὺς κανόνες πού ὁ Θεὸς ὀρίζει στοὺς δικούς του.

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας γεννᾷ «ἀενάως» τέτοιους ἄνδρες «τελείους», πού δοκιμάστηκαν σκληρὰ στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη ἄσκηση μέσα στὸ ἱερὸ Κοινόβιο τοῦ Μοναστηριοῦ, πού ἀνδρώθηκαν μέσα στὴν ὑπακοή, καὶ ἀφοῦ ταπεινώθηκαν, ἀπόκτησαν «νοῦν Χριστοῦ» καὶ συνεπῶς θεοδιακριτικότητα, γιὰ νὰ «οἰκονομοῦν» θεοφιλάνθρωπα κάθε ἄνθρωπο, χωρὶς νὰ ἀπορρίπτουν κανένα, μὰ κανένα ἀμαρτωλό.

Αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγωνίζονται πνευματικὰ νὰ φθάσουν «εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ». Ἀναγνωρίζονται λοιπὸν σὰν πνευματικοὶ πατέρες ἂν καὶ ἐσωτερικὰ ἐλεεινολογοῦν οἱ ἴδιοι τοὺς ἑαυτούς τους καὶ δὲν τολμοῦν νὰ βάλουν τὴν «αὐθεντία» τῆς λογικῆς τους καὶ τῶν ἀτομικῶν τους ἐκτιμήσεων πάνω ἀπὸ τὰ ἱερὰ δόγματα καὶ τοὺς ἱερὸς θεσμούς πού «εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν» ἔχουν θεσμοθετηθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ Σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ καταξιώνονται νὰ γίνουν ζωντανοὶ φορεῖς τῶν ζωντανῶν δογμάτων τῆς Μίας, Ἀγίας, Καθολικῆς καὶ Ἀποστολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας καὶ στὴ συνέχεια ὅλης τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου πίστεως καὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Εὐχαριστίας καὶ ἰσόβια λειτουργοῦν σὺν πᾶσι τοῖς Ἀγίοις. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ γνωρίζουν «ὡς διδάκτοί Θεοῦ» νὰ οἰκονομοῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ μὴν δίνουν «τὰ ἅγια τοῖς κυσί».

Εἶναι αὐτοὶ πού ἔχουν ἀποκτήσει τὸ χάρισμα νὰ κατέρχονται στὰ βάθη καὶ στὶς ἀβύσσους τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ψυχῆς, πού (ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ) ἔχουν ἀκριβῶς δίπλα τους. Δὲν ἔχουν πραγματικὰ διαπράξει τὶς ἀκατονόμαστες ἐγκληματικὲς πράξεις πού συχνὰ ἀκοῦνε στὴν ἐξομολόγηση. Γιατὶ πῶς θὰ εἶχαν χειροτονηθεῖ κληρικοί, ἀφοῦ οἱ ἱεροὶ κανόνες ἀπαγορεύουν ρητὰ τὴν ἱερωσύνη σ' αὐτοὺς πού ἔχουν πέσει σὲ σαρκικὰ ἀμαρτήματα καὶ σ' αὐτοὺς πού ἔστω καὶ ἀκούσια ἔχουν διαπράξει φόνο; Ἐκκλησεται, λοιπὸν, ὁ πνευματικὸς πατήρ γιὰ τὴν κατάντια τοῦ ἐξομολογουμένου.

Ἀπορεῖ καὶ ἐξίσταται γιὰ τὰ εἶδη καὶ τοὺς τρόπους τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων. Δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ χωρέσει ἡ σκέψη του τὸ ποῖόν τῶν ὀλισθημάτων, γιατί ὁ ἴδιος «ἐξ ὀρισμοῦ», «ἐκ τῆς χειροτονίας» εἶναι ἄπειρος τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων.

Ὅμως κρίνοντας ἀπὸ τὸν αἵματηρὸ προσωπικὸ τοῦ ἀγώνα γιὰ τὴν κατάκτηση τῶν ἀρετῶν, γίνεται συγκαταβατικὸς καὶ γιὰ τὸν ἀμαρτωλό. Στοχάζεται τὰ στάδια πού πέρασε καὶ ὁ ἴδιος μέχρι νὰ κόψει τὰ συγγνωστὰ πάθη του, καὶ γίνεται ἐπιεικὴς στὸν παρόμοια μετανοοῦντα ἀμαρτωλό. Ξέρει πολὺ καλὰ ὁ πνευματικὸς τὸ σκληρὸ πνευματικὸ ἀγώνα στὸ ὑπαρξιακὸ πεδίο. Ἐχει ἰδρῶσει καὶ ἔχει πονέσει γιὰ νὰ ἀπαρνηθῇ τὸ ἴδιο θέλημα. Γι' αὐτὸ συμπονεῖ, λυπᾶται, «πάσχει καὶ συνωδίνει» μὲ τὸ πνευματικὸ παιδί πού τοῦ στέλνει ὁ Θεὸς γιὰ νὰ οἰκονομήσει κατὰλληλα.

Τὸ ἴδιο κάνει καὶ ὁ ἐξομολογούμενος. Προσπαθεῖ νὰ καταλάβῃ τὸν πνευματικὸ του πατέρα. Νὰ ἐννοήσῃ τί ἀκριβῶς τοῦ λέγει. Παρεμβάλλεται τὸ σκληρὸ κάλυμμα τῆς ἀμαρτίας πού δυσχεραίνει τὴ συνεννόηση. Τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο ὅλο καὶ βοηθᾷ αὐτὴ τὴ συνεννόηση. Ὅλο καὶ τελειοποιεῖ αὐτὴ τὴν ἐπικοινωνία. Ὁ πνευματικὸς πατήρ μάχεται γιὰ νὰ «προσλάβῃ» ὅλο τὸν πνευματικὸ υἱὸ ἢ τὴν πνευματικὴ θυγατέρα. Γίνεται μιὰ ἀληθινὴ «ἀλληλοπεριχώρηση», ἀλληλοκατανόηση, ἀλληλοεπικοινωνία ἐν Ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι.

Ὅλην αὐτὴ τὴ μυσταγωγία τῆς μετανοίας τοῦ πνευματικοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ παιδιοῦ τὴν κατεργάζεται τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιο σ' αὐτοὺς πού ἐπιθυμοῦν τὴν κάθαρσίν τους καὶ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ τελείωσιν. Δὲν ὑπάρχει μεγαλύτερη χαρὰ στὴ μετανοοῦσα ψυχὴ ἀλλὰ καὶ στὸν πνευματικὸ πατέρα, ὅταν σχίζεται ὁ δερμάτινος χιτῶνας τῆς πωρώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀναισθησίας καὶ ἀρχίζει νὰ ἀνθῇ καὶ νὰ μεταλαμπαδεύεται ἡ νέα «ἐν Χριστῷ» ζωή.

Ὅλα τὰ παραπάνω, παρακαλῶ πολὺ, νὰ μὴ θεωρηθῇ ἀπὸ κανένα ἀδελφὸ ἀναγνώστη, ὅτι ἔχουν κάποια ἔμμεση ἔστω σχέση μὲ τὸ δικό μου πρόσωπο ὡς πνευματικοῦ. Ὅ,τι εὐτελὲς ἔχω ἀποτυπώσει ἀποτελεῖ προσωπικὴ ἐμπειρία μου ὡς ἐξομολογούμενου. Ἐπομένως τὰ γραφόμενα ἀπὸτελοῦν ἀδέξια ἀπόπειρα φόρου τιμῆς στοὺς ἀξιόους πνευματικούς πατέρες πού στὸ τέλος τοῦ εικοστοῦ αἰῶνα ἀφιερώνουν τὴ ζωὴ τους στὴν Ὑψιστὴ αὐτὴ ποιμαντικὴ θεανθρώπινη λειτουργία, σ' αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπέρλαμπρο ἔργο παραδοσιακῆς Ἀγωγῆς.



**Π**ιστεύω ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ἡ Ἀλήθεια, ἀλλὰ ἐὰν μὲ πείσει κανεὶς ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἶναι ἡ Ἀλήθεια, ἐγὼ θὰ προτιμοῦσα νὰ εἶμαι μὲ τὸ Χριστὸ παρὰ μὲ τὴν ἀλήθεια...  
Ντοστογιέφσκι

## A CASE AGAINST DARWINISM: HOW THE SHEEP SURVIVED

By St. Nikolai Velimirovich.

*For many years American schools have been brainwashing children with the so-called theory of evolution, which in reality is not a valid scientific theory at all, having no physical evidence, but is just as much a matter of faith as our belief that the world and everything in it has been created by God. As a reminder, Darwinism is usually summed in the phrase "survival of the fittest" a term which has been taken to be emblematic of Darwinism. The following delightful article was written by the Serbian Bishop and saint, St. Nikolai Velimirovich, one of the foremost theologians of our time, in rebuttal of the pseudo-theory of evolution. St. Nikolai's prolific and wonderful writings have earned for him the name of "the Serbian Chrysostom."*

† † †

When we think about Darwin's theory, we often wonder how the sheep managed to survive. Darwin maintains that in the "harsh struggle for survival" over long periods of time only those animals survived that were stronger and more agile than their neighbors, while the weaker and the less skillful disappeared. Having listened carefully to this theory, we ask ourselves: how did the sheep manage to survive? How did it happen that they were not completely exterminated by their mortal enemies—the wolves? After all, a she-wolf produces a litter of five or six cubs every year, while in the same period of time a ewe produces one single lamb. So every year there are five against one. Moreover, the wolf is endowed with strength; has claws and fangs, none of which the ewe has. In addition, is not the wolf faster than the ewe? So the ewe (female sheep, Ed.) cannot hope to survive by fleeing from her merciless persecutor. Furthermore, the wolf sees in the sheep his greatest delicacy and is able to devour a whole flock for a single meal. So, we ask, why were the sheep not exterminated over the years and eliminated from the earth altogether?

Man protected them! What man? Had not both wolves and sheep been created before man? Darwin agrees with the Bible in this respect: man appeared on earth after all the other animals, which means after both wolves and sheep.

What can be weaker, less aggressive, more defenseless, more unarmed than the sheep? The bee is smaller, but it has its sting. The microbe is invisible, but it attacks with poison. Compare the wolf to the sheep. The wolf is a fighter, daring, powerful, agile; the wolf has stamina and is well-armed. How, then, did the sheep manage to survive in close proximity to the wolves and without anyone's assistance? And how can we, faced with this obvious fact, accept as truth the statement that those who are stronger and more agile will survive, while those who are weaker and less agile will perish and disappear in the so-called "struggle for survival?"

Obviously we cannot. Our experience speaks against it. The case of the sheep speaks against it. And every scientific theory must be directed and corrected by experience.

So all we can do is to adhere to our good old belief, confirmed by experience, that Divine Providence rules the world, supporting the weaker, restraining the stronger, and all the while maintaining that wondrous harmony of life in which both the wolves are well-fed and all the sheep accounted for. The proof of this holy and loving Providence was given to us by our Lord Savior when He said that not a single sparrow would fall to the ground without our Father: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.* (Mt 10:29).



## WHEN SHALL THE DAY OF THE LORD COME?

By St. Symeon, the New Theologian

Woe to those who say, "When shall the day of the Lord come?" and they don't care to know and understand that day. For the Lord's presence in the faithful has already come, and is continuously coming, and to all those who wish for it, has arrived and is firm. Because, if He is indeed *the light of the world* (Jn 8:12) and to His Apostles has said, that *with us until the end of time will be* (Mt 28:20), how, with us being, will He come? For we are not sons of darkness and sons of night, in order for the light to overtake us, but sons of light and sons of the Lord's day, hence and *living in the Lord we are, and dying in Him and with Him will live*, as St. Paul says (Acts 17:28). About this also the Theologian thus speaks, Gregory: *This exactly that the sun is to sensible things, this is God to spiritual.*

For He will be the future age and the eternal day and kingdom of heavens, bridegroom and bed and earth of the peaceful and divine paradise and king and servant, as himself has thus spoke: *Blessed are those servants, their Lord will come and find awake. Verily I say to you, He will lie them in comfort and He will be prepared to serve them.* (Lk 12:37).



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## A TALE OF FALLING AND REPENTANCE

*By Abba John of Lycus (from "The Lausiak History," by St. Palladius).*

There was a monk who lived in the desert, conducting himself properly and scrupulously for many years. When he was already getting to be quite elderly, he was severely tested by the wiles of the demons. His usual practice consisted of passing his days in silence, with many prayers and psalms and periods of contemplation. He had clear insights into many divine visions, sometimes waking, and sometimes even when asleep, although he actually slept hardly at all, living a life apart from the body. He did not till the ground, he took no thought for the necessities of life, and he cultivated no garden to supply his bodily needs. Nor did he catch birds or hunt any other animal, but full of the faith in which he had abandoned human community, he cared nothing for whether or not his body would be nourished. Forgetful of all else, he was sustained solely by his desire for God, waiting for his call to depart from this world, feeding above all on these things which cannot be perceived with the senses.

Throughout all this time, his body did not waste or show any ill effects, nor was he gloomy in spirit, but he continued to appear his normal attractive self. And God truly honored him indeed, for after a due interval of time He supplied his table with bread for two or three days, not just apparently but actually, for him to use. He would go into his inner room when he felt the pangs of hunger and find this food there. And having praised God and taken some food, he would again sing psalms, persevering in prayers and contemplation, growing daily, giving himself to the pursuit of virtue in hope of the future. He went on progressing more and more, until he almost got to the stage of putting his trust in his own powers of improvement and thereby came to his downfall, almost perishing in the temptations which then came upon him.

His thoughts had arrived at such a pass that he was little by little imprudently beginning to think more of himself than anyone else, and that he possessed much more than other men, and for this reason he began to put his trust solely in himself. Not long after he first thought like this, his vigilance relaxed slightly, but so little that he did not even notice that there had been any relaxation. But his negligence grew until it progressed to the extent that he could not fail but notice it. He was late in waking up to sing psalms, his prayers became shorter, his psalm singing did not last so long, his soul said to him that he needed to rest (and his mind agreed with that), his thoughts wandered and scattered, his secret meditations were spiritless.

But the impetus of his earlier routine still motivated him, and kept him safe for a while, so that when he went in after his usual prayers of an evening, he still found the bread supplied

by God on his table and refreshed himself accordingly. But he still did not cut off his unworthy thoughts, he despised the idea that his soul was being damaged; he made no attempt to seek a remedy for these evils. Little by little he fell into omitting many of the things which he ought to have been doing. In thought he began to develop a desire for human company.

The next day he put a temporary restraint on himself, and returned to his usual exercises, but after he had prayed and sung his psalms, he went into the storeroom and found that the bread placed there was not so well baked or wholesome as usual, but was dirty and polluted. He wondered about this and was very sad about it, but nevertheless picked it up and ate it.

Came the third night and with it a third evil. For thoughts suddenly erupted in his mind, activating his memory so much that he imagined there was a woman lying with him. This image persisted in front of his eyes, and he actively encouraged it. But on this third day he went out to his work and his prayers and his psalms, although his mind was not clean anymore, and strayed frequently. He lifted up his eyes to the heavens, turning them this way and that, but the images in his memory prevented his work from being unspoiled. In the evening when he returned feeling hungry, he found that the bread looked as if it had been chewed by mice or dogs, and the scraps left over were dried up as if left outside.

He began to groan and weep, but not so much as to make him want to correct his faults. Having eaten less than he would have wished, he prepared himself for rest, but at once his thoughts went wild, dancing around in every direction, battling for possession of his mind, and taking it captive into uncleanness. He got up and began to walk towards the inhabited regions, walking through the desert by night. Daylight came and he was still a long way off from any habitation. He began to be overcome by the heat and felt very tired. He gazed around him in a complete circle, and saw at some distance what appeared to be a monastery where he might go in and get some refreshment. And so it was. He was accepted in by some good and faithful brothers, who treated him as a real father and washed his face and his feet. They prayed with him, put food before him, and invited him most kindly to partake of what they were offering him.

After he had eaten, the brothers asked him for a word of salvation, and what means there were of being able to be safe from the wiles of the devil, and how to overcome unclean thoughts. Like a father admonishing his sons, he urged them to be strong and constant in their labors in order to arrive quickly to a state of being at peace. He discussed many other aspects of their discipline with them and helped them greatly.

When he had finished he thought for a while and marveled at how he was giving advice to others without looking to himself and trying to amend. He acknowledged he was beaten and straightaway went back to the desert, weeping for himself, and saying, "*Unless the Lord had been my helper my soul had*



*remained in hell.* (Pss 94:17). I have almost been overcome by evil. They have brought me back to earth.” Thus were fulfilled in him the words, *A brother who is helped by a brother is like a city built up on high, whose wall cannot be breached.* (Prov 18:19). Whereas before he used to spend all his time without doing any physical work, now he was deprived of the bread provided by the Lord and labored for his daily bread. And when he had shut himself up in his inner room and covered himself in sackcloth and ashes, he did not get up from the ground or cease from weeping until he had heard the voice of the angel saying to him in a dream, The Lord has accepted your repentance and has had mercy on you. From now on live in such a way that you will not be deceived. The brothers you gave advice to will come to you and will show the high opinion they have of you. Accept them, live with them, and give thanks to God always.

I have told you these things, my sons, that you may always cultivate humility and be seen to do so in small things as in great. This was the first of the Savior’s precepts, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Mt 5:3). And do not be deceived by the demons, stirring you up with visions and fantasies. If anyone approaches you, whether brother, friend, woman, father, teacher, mother or sister, first lift up your hands in prayer. If they are fantasies, they will flee. And if either demons or human beings would deceive you by agreeing with you and flattering you, don’t listen to them or get carried away by them. For the demons would often try to deceive me at night also, preventing me from praying, disturbing my peace, presenting fantasies to me the whole night through, and mockingly prostrating themselves in the morning, saying, “Forgive us, abba, for giving you such hard work all night.” I just say to them, *Depart from me, all you who work evil, do not put the servant of the Lord to the test.* (Pss 6:8).

Do likewise, O my sons, seek peace. Direct your whole self always towards contemplation, begging God that your mind may be purified. Anyone practicing his faith in the world may also be a good workman, engaged in doing good, showing humanity and pity, hospitality and charity, giving alms, blessing those who come to him, helping those in difficulties and avoiding giving offence to anyone.

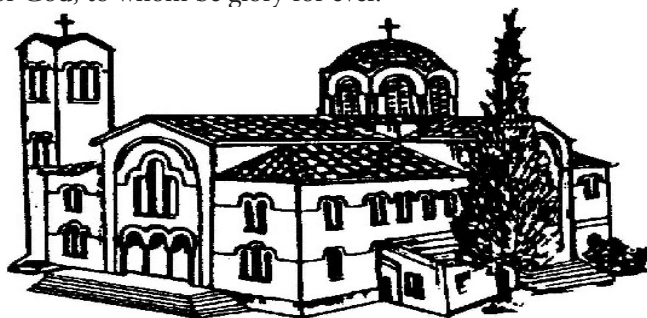
Such a person is to be commended, for he keeps the commandments and gets things done, even while busy with earthly affairs. But a greater and more excellent thing is to be turned towards contemplation, given not to action but to thought, leaving to others the production of material goods. Denying himself he will contemplate heavenly things, completely forgetful of self, standing before the God of all completely free and unencumbered, turning away for no other consideration whatsoever. Someone like this may not yet enjoy God yet turns always towards God in eager songs of praise.

I know someone in the desert who never tasted earthly food for a space of ten years. An angel fed him every third day with heavenly food, placing it directly into his mouth. To him it was

as good as food and drink. I know also that the demons came to this man in the form of fantasies, showing him heavenly armies, chariots of fire, a crowd of followers, as if some king were coming, and saying, “You have done all things well and virtuously, O Man. All you need now is to worship me and I will take you up like Elias.” But the monk replied, “Daily I worship my King and Savior, but if he were here now that is not a demand that he would make of me.” From the bottom of his heart he then cried, “God is my Lord and King whom I ever adore. My king you are not.” And the vision vanished immediately. Unlike some, he strove to keep secret his way of life and the things he did. It was the fathers with him who said that he had seen these things.

These and many other things the blessed John told us, nourishing our souls up to the ninth hour for three days. And as he blessed us, bidding us go in peace, he also gave us a prophecy. “It has been announced today in Alexandria,” he said, “that the most devout Theodosius has won a victory over the tyrant Eugenius, [in the year 394] who has died his own well-deserved death”, which came to pass exactly as he had said.

We were also aware of a great number of monks who were with him in the church, like a great choir of the righteous, dressed in white robes, glorifying God in fervent psalms. After we saw many other fathers some brothers came and told us that the blessed John had died a wonderful death. For he had given orders that no one should visit him for three days, during which he passed away as he knelt in prayer into the presence of God, to whom be glory for ever.



**Y**ou must flee from sensual things. Verily, every time a man comes close to a struggle with sensuality, he is like a man standing at the edge of a deep lake, and the Enemy throws him in whenever he likes. But if the man lives far from sensual things, he is like one who stands at a distance from the lake, so that even if the Enemy entices him in order to throw him to the bottom, God sends him help at the very moment that the Enemy is drawing him away and doing him violence.

**I**f you are silent, you will possess peace wherever you live.

**T**o throw yourself before God, to not measure your progress, to leave behind all self-will—these are the instruments for the work of the soul. Give not your heart to that which does not satisfy your heart.

**Abba Pimen the Great**

## ON READING THE HOLY ORTHODOX FATHERS

By St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, from "Living Orthodoxy" (Vol. XVII, No. 2, March-April 1995).



**St. Ignatius Brianchaninov**  
(1807-1867)

*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807-1867) is a saint in the Russian Orthodox Church and truly a modern Father who was deeply steeped in the teachings, traditions, and spirituality of the ancient Desert Fathers and clearly loved them deeply. He was born Dimitri Alexandrovich Brianchaninov, to a wealthy landowning family. He was educated at Pioneer Military School in St. Petersburg. Although successful in his studies, he was deeply unhappy there and turned to a life of prayer. In 1827 he fell seriously ill and left the army. He began pursuing a monastic vocation and in 1831 took vows and received the monastic name of Ignatius. Soon after he was ordained a priest. He rose rapidly to the rank of archimandrite and at the age of 26 was appointed superior of the St. Sergius monastery in St. Petersburg. In 1857, he was consecrated Bishop of the Caucasus and the Black Sea, but he retired only four years later to devote himself to writing. He wrote a very large amount of material, mostly about the spiritual life and prayer. Only a small portion of his writing has been translated into English.*

† † †

Conversation and association with one's neighbors very much affects a person. Conversation and acquaintance with a learned man communicates much knowledge; with a poet, many exalted thoughts and feelings; with a traveler, much information about countries, about the characters and customs of peoples. It is obvious that conversation and acquaintance with the saints communicates holiness. *With the holy man wilt thou be holy, and with the innocent man wilt thou be innocent. And with the elect man wilt thou be elect.* (Pss 17:25-26).

From henceforth, during the time of this short earthly life, a life which Scripture has not even called "life," but rather "journeying," let us become acquainted with the saints. Do you want to belong to their society in Heaven? Do you want to be a partaker of their blessedness? From henceforth enter into association with them. When you go forth from the house of the body, then *they will receive you to themselves as their own acquaintance, as their own friend.* (Lk 16:9).

There is no closer acquaintance, *there is no tighter bond, than the bond of oneness of thoughts, oneness of feelings, oneness of goal.* (1Cor 1:10). Where there is oneness of thoughts, there without fail is oneness of soul, there without fail is one goal, an identical success in the attaining of one's goal.

Appropriate to yourself the thoughts and the spirit of the Holy Fathers by reading their writings. The Holy Fathers attained the goal: salvation. And you will attain this goal by the natural course of things. As one who is of one thought and one soul with the Holy Fathers, you will be saved.

Heaven received into its blessed bosom the Holy Fathers. By this it has borne witness that the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the Holy Fathers are well-pleasing to it. The Holy Fathers set forth their thoughts, their heart, and the image of their activity in their writings. This means: what a true guidance to heaven, which is borne witness to by heaven itself, are the writings of the Fathers.

The writings of the Holy Fathers are all composed by the inspiration or under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Wondrous is the agreement among them, wondrous is the anointing! One who is guided by them has without any doubt whatsoever the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

All the waters of the earth flow together into the ocean, and it may be that the ocean serves as the beginning of all the waters of the earth. The writings of the fathers are all united in the Gospel; they all incline towards teaching us the exact fulfillment of the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ; of all of them both the source and the end is the holy Gospel.

The Holy Fathers teach how to approach the Gospel, how to read it, how to understand it correctly, what helps and what hinders in comprehending it. And therefore in the beginning occupy yourself with the reading of the Fathers. When they have taught you how to read the Gospel, then read the Gospel primarily. Do not consider it sufficient for yourself to read the Gospel alone, without the reading of the Holy Fathers! This is a proud, dangerous thought. Better, let the Holy Fathers lead you to the Gospel, as their beloved child who has received his preparatory upbringing and education by means of their writings.

Many people, all who have senselessly and presumptuously rejected the Holy Fathers, who have come without any intermediary, with a blind audacity, with an impure mind and heart to the Gospel, have fallen into fatal delusion. The Gospel has rejected them; it grants access to itself only to the humble.

The reading of the Fathers' writings is the father and the king of all virtues. From the reading of the Fathers' writings we learn the true understanding of Holy Scripture, right faith, the way of life in accord with the Gospel's com-

[cont'd on page 16—back page]

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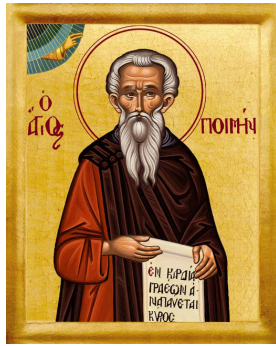
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## "ON READING THE HOLY ORTHODOX FATHERS" [cont'd from page 14]

mandments, the deep esteem which one should have toward the Gospel commandments—to say it in a word, one learns salvation and Christian perfection.

Because of the diminishing of Spirit-bearing instructors, the reading of the Fathers' writings has become the main guide for those who wish to be saved and even attain Christian perfection. (Rule of St. Nil Sorsky). The books of the Holy Fathers, as one of them has expressed it, are like a mirror; looking into them attentively and frequently, a soul can see all of its shortcomings. Again, these books are like a rich collection of medicinal means; in them the soul can seek for each of its illnesses a saving remedy.

St. Epiphanius of Cyprus said, *A mere glance at holy books arouses one towards the pious life.*

The reading of the Holy Fathers should be careful, attentive, and constant; our invisible enemy, who *hates the voice of confirmation* (Prov 11:15), hates especially when this voice comes forth from the Holy Fathers. This voice unmasks the wiles of our enemy, his evilness, reveals his snares, his way of working; and therefore the enemy arms himself against the reading of the Fathers by various proud and blasphemous thoughts, tries to cause the ascetic to fall into vain cares in order to distract him from this saving reading, fights with him by means of despondency, depression, forgetfulness. From this warfare against the reading of the Holy Fathers we should conclude how saving

(is) the weaponry for us, by the degree to which it is hated by the enemy. The enemy makes all efforts to wrest it out of our hands.

Let each personally choose for himself the reading from the Fathers which corresponds to his way of life. Let the hermit read the Fathers who wrote about the solitary life; let the monk who lives in the cenobitic life read the Fathers who wrote instructions for cenobitic monks; let the Christian who lives in the world read the Holy Fathers who pronounced their teachings for all Christianity in general. Let everyone, in whatsoever calling he be, draw forth abundant instruction in the writings of the Fathers.

It is absolutely necessary that the reading correspond to one's way of life. All faithful must pursue the correct reading of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Otherwise you will be filled with thoughts which, although holy, will be unfulfillable in the actual deed and will arouse you to fruitless activity in only the imagination and desire; the work of piety which does correspond to your way of life will slip out of your hands.

Not only will you become a fruitless dreamer—your thoughts, being in constant opposition to your sphere of activity, will without fail give birth to turmoil in your heart, and to uncertainty in your conduct, which are burdensome and harmful for you and for your neighbors. By an incorrect reading of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, one can easily deviate from the saving path into impassable thickets and deep abysses, which has happened with many.

# Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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## In This Issue:

- The Conversation of Saint Makarios with an Angel of the Lord (p. 2)
- An Abortion-Defying Miracle Baby (p. 5)
- The Heavenly Host (p. 6)
- Errors in Practicing the Jesus Prayer and How to Cope with Them (p. 10)
- On Holy Marriage (p. 21)
- The Core of Orthodox Spirituality (p. 23)
- Knowledge of God (p. 28)



- Ἡ Ἀναγκαιότητα τῆς Ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου (σελ. 13)
- Ὁ Ἐκ Λευκῶν Πάρου Πνευματικὸς Φωστὴρ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, Ἰωσήφ ὁ Ἡσυχαστής (σελ. 15)
- Ἐθισμένοι στὸ . . . «Shopping» (σελ. 17)



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## THE NATIVITY SERMON

By Saint John Chrysostom.



Behold a new and wondrous mystery!

My ears vividly resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly

hymn! The angels sing! The archangels blend their voices in harmony! The cherubim resound their joyful praise! The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth, and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice! Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed. He had the powers. He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God.

Today He Who Is, is born! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man-while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His... And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care,

nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; virgins, to the Son of the Virgin.

Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants; shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who has laid down His life for His sheep.

Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom; fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity; publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist; sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman.

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope! This is my life! This is my salvation! This is my pipe, my harp! And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

*Glory to God in the Highest! and on earth peace to men of good will!*

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## THE CONVERSATION OF SAINT MAKARIOS WITH AN ANGEL OF THE LORD

*From our coworkers in Christ at <http://www.pigizois.net/>.*

One day Abba Makarios was walking in the desert. Behind him walked an Angel of the Lord, who said to him: "Your blessing, holy Father."

Abba Makarios took him to be a desert ascetic and said: "May the Lord forgive you my child."

As they walked along together Abba Makarios noticed the figure and appearance of the monk and said to him:

"My child, I see you and marvel! What is this wonderful appearance and beauty of yours? I have never seen such beauty in a human face. Perhaps you are not a man? In the name of God of Heaven tell me the truth."

Then the angel bowed to the Elder and said:

"Bless me father, as you can see I am an angel and have come to teach you unknown mysteries which you desire to know."

The Elder bowed and said:

"Lord I thank you, because you have sent me a guide to teach me of things unknown, and mysteries which I desire to learn."

The angel again answered:

"Tell me what it is you desire to know."

The Elder said to him:

"Holy angel tell me, do people recognize one another in the life to come?"

And the angel replied:

"Just as in this life when people go to sleep, on waking up they still recognize the people they knew before going to sleep,

so it is in the life to come. People will recognize one another, and will communicate, and be joyous together. This is the case for the righteous but sinners are deprived of even this."

Then the Abba said:

"Tell me, what happens after the soul departs from the body, and why are memorial ceremonies held for the dead?"

The angel then replied:

"On the third day after the separation of the soul from the body, the holy angels take the soul of the departed and so begins the ascent to heaven, so that the soul can worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

Between the earth and heaven, there is a big ladder, and on each step is found a host of demons who act in a manner similar to that of toll keepers, or frontier guards. The demons hold a list of our bad deeds, and says thus: 'on a certain day you stole, fornicated, or you committed such and such a sin ...' Then the angels reveal the good deeds, such as prayer, charity, liturgies, fasting, and any other such actions that one has performed. The angels and demons then weigh one's deeds. If there is a surplus of good deeds, the angels take the soul and ascend to the next step.

This happens from one step to another as the soul ascends to heaven; each aerial tollhouse is responsible for a specific type of sin or misdeed. On each step, the demons are more and fiercer than the previous ones. Finally, there occurs a fierce battle and indescribable struggle for the possession of the miserable soul.

The demons reproach and terrorize the soul, saying: 'Where are you going? Was it not you who fornicated, and soiled Holy Baptism? Was it not you who soiled the monastic Angelic Schema? Where are you going now? Turn back. Return. Go to hell, which is the outer darkness, go back to the hellfire. Enter where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'



Then, if that soul is condemned the demons take it below the earth where darkness, anguish and woe await. Woe to the day that this man was born.

Who could relate to you, father, what the condemned souls suffer in that place. But if the soul is found clean it ascends to heaven with much joy, and is welcomed by the angels with candles and incense. They then escort the soul to the judgement throne, and worship our Lord Jesus Christ. It is then shown the Holy Disciples, Holy Martyrs, the ranks of the Holy Fathers, and the nine hierarchies of the Holy Angels."

Abba Makarios then asked about memorial ceremonies, why and how they are celebrated. The Angel then answered:

"Well listen, Holy Father. The first memorial service is held on the third day after death. As we have said, the soul does not ascend to worship the Lord until the third day. This memorial service is celebrated as an offering to the Lord, for the sake of the soul of the departed. After worshipping the Lord, the soul of the departed with its escorting angels then returns to this earthly realm. There it is shown the various places that it frequented during this earthly life. It is then reminded of its earthly deeds, both the good and the evil ones.

The angels then say : 'Here you stole, fornicated, masturbated, censured, murdered, committed perjury, loaned money at exorbitant rates of interest, became intoxicated, quarrelled and scandalized.'

Afterwards the good deeds are shown. 'Here you have given in charity, there fasted, repented, partook in the Divine Liturgy, prayed, held vigil, gave supplications, kneeled in humility, remained standing during church services, showed self-restraint.' So it continues, until the ninth day.

On the ninth day, they again ascend to heaven to worship, as during the third day. The memorial services held on the ninth day are to help secure the Lord's leniency towards this soul. It is for this reason that it has been written that these intercessions are of the utmost importance. Hence prayer, charity, liturgies, and memorial services aid the souls of the departed. These actions even have the ability of returning souls from hell.

After the soul has worshipped the Lord a second time, the angels again escort the soul back to the earthly realm. The angels then show the soul God's mercy, paradise, the rest of the righteous, 'God's tabernacle', 'the bosom of Abraham'. When it sees this unutterable happiness it is consoled and overjoyed, and it beseeches the angels, so that it also, may stay in this abode, together with the righteous.

It is then shown the hell of the wicked. The angels say: 'This is the river of hell-fire, the worm that does not die; this is the outer and inner darkness where one will gnash one's teeth'. It is then shown the torments of the sinners. There does not exist, Holy father, anything worse or more frightful than the torments of those who fornicate or steal, especially the fornication of a monk, nun, priest, or his wife.

When all this has been shown to the soul, it is again escorted on the fortieth day to worship the Lord. It is for this reason that

memorial services for the dead are held on the fortieth day. The most merciful God will on that day decide where the soul is to reside. This outcome is dependant on one's deeds and actions, whilst on earth. Thus the soul sets off, and will be established there until the general resurrection, so that the body also may be resurrected and so receive its just rewards."

Then the Elder sighed and wept bitterly saying:

"Woe to the day that this man was born!"

The Angel then said:

"Yes honourable Father, this applies for the sinner. For the righteous, it must be said, blessed is the day and hour he was born."

The Elder then asked:

"Can you please tell me this thing also? Is there any rest or end for the torments of the sinner?"

The Angel replied:

"No, Holy Father. Neither the kingdom of the righteous, nor that of the sinner has an end. If one were to remove a grain of sand every thousand years from the sea, one would have the hope of someday finishing. The hell of the wicked has no end."

The Elder then said:

"Please answer me also this. Which saints are more merciful towards a man, so that he can beseech them for his wretchedness!"

The Angel replied saying:

"All the saints are merciful towards man, and are of a good disposition. Man is thankless and ungrateful, and it makes them angry towards you. The holy angels also have great mercy towards man, because they have seen the extraordinary acts performed by God for the salvation of man. Apart from the saints and angels it is our All Holy and Blessed Lady, the Virgin Mary who takes care of the human race above all others. Everybody, Holy Father, should have her name on their lips constantly, and thus glorify her name. It is due to her interventions and supplications that man still exists. But the devil has deceived man, and made him ungrateful. Man has contempt for God and the saints, and so God and the saints show contempt for the fallen nature of man."

The Elder then asks:

"Tell me Holy Angel, which is the most sinful of all the evils?"

And the Angel replied:

"Every sin, worthy Elder, severs man from God. But resentment and blasphemy stand above all other sins. This is because these two have the ability to throw man into the depths of hell, into the internal depths of the earth and sea."

Then the Elder asked:

"Which sin does God despise above all other sins?"

The Angel replies:

"God despises above all other sins the vanity of self-conceit which is pride. This alone has destroyed all mankind. Adam the first man was exiled because of this from paradise. With this, the Pharisee lost the fruits of all his labour. When man

falls into this sin, it is very difficult for him to recover his senses.”

The Elder says:

“Which men are tormented more than the others?”

And the Angel said:

“I have told you the fornicator and the blasphemer. But I will tell you this also, below all of the other depths of hell there exists a level which is frightful, merciless and cruel, and is known as oblivion. It is there that priests and monastics that have committed fornication are punished. These perverse and wicked individuals will suffer great punishment and dishonor. For this reason honourable Elder, the order of angels that fell will be replaced by the good priests and monks, and they will be elevated to a position of great honour.

This also applies to priests who break the law of God. Such priests who accept bribery, or who are corrupt, thus allowing the deviation of God’s law, those who disdain the Holy Services, and their liturgical obligations for secular and worldly cares, even if only for a single liturgy. They will be obliged to give an account of their actions before God. What then can I say about those priests who allow themselves to become intoxicated? Woe to them because frightful punishments await them!”

Then the Elder said:

“Please can you also tell me of those who treat Sunday, the Lord’s day with contempt, have they any repose in the life to come?”

The Angel answers:

“Woe to them Holy Father, because there awaits them frightful punishment. Whoever treats Sunday, the holy day of our Lord with contempt, holds the Lord in contempt and the Lord will hold him in contempt. Sunday celebrates the day that our Lord was resurrected, and whoever honours this day honours our Lord.

Whoever honours and celebrates the saints days will find that saints will help them. The saints have great boldness before the Lord, and if they ask anything of Him, He will not refuse them.

Man has estranged himself from the fear of God and in doing so, neither has it God as its friend, nor any of the saints. They are preoccupied with worldly and secular pursuits, which are transitory and corruptible. Woe to them. Recognize, worthy Elder, that every person, be he a priest, or a monk, or a layman, if he does not honour Our Lords Day, Sunday, he will not see the face of the Lord, nor have hope of salvation.

Now Holy Father if you would like anything else of me please ask. For it is now time that I go to heaven, so as to present myself before the Lord and worship Him.”

The Elder sighed deeply as he wept bitterly saying:

“Woe to us! Behold the good servant of the Lord. Although he is an angel, sinless and immaterial, yet he cannot stay but must ascend to worship the Lord. And we who are so sinful and material do not attend to our salvation but show contempt towards it.”

He then asked the Angel:

“I beg you tell me, which prayer is most suitable for a monk or a lay person?”

The Angel answered:

“If he is educated, then the psalms of David, if not, the prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me a sinner’ will do! This prayer is the easiest, and most effective. Many learned people have renounced their knowledge, and by holding onto this prayer have been saved. It may be used by all. By those advanced in prayer, and also by those who are just beginning and inexperienced. Whoever wishes to be saved, should hold on to this prayer day and night, whether he is in his cell or home, or outside walking, it is this prayer which should be held onto with willingness and desire, because this prayer is capable of helping anyone who wishes to be saved.”

The Elder then said:

“As you have come to teach me a sinner, I beg you please tell me this also: If a man who is still a sinner teaches another, and in doing so frees him from sin and shows him the true path, has he any reward?”

And the Angel says:

“Whoever teaches another and removes him from sins by showing him the proper path saves him, and the other soul is removed from hell. In a similar fashion, whoever directs someone towards evil, does not only destroy the other person, but also hands his own soul over to the devil. There is no worse sin than to direct another person towards evil deeds. Similarly there is no better action than to direct someone towards good deeds.”

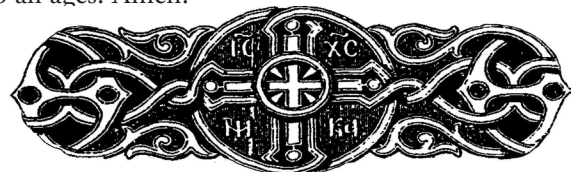
When the Angel had finished these words of counsel he lowered his head towards the Elder and said:

“Bless me Holy Father, and please forgive me.”

Then the Elder fell on his knees and venerated the Angel saying:

“Go in peace, and appear before the Holy Trinity and intercede for me.”

When the Angel left, ascending towards heaven, Abba Makarios gave thanks to God and went to his cell, where he related these events to a certain brother of good faith and a co-ascetic, thus glorifying and worshipping the Lord unto all ages. Amen.



Neither despair, nor cease praying, but approach (confession) even though you are sinful, so that you may glorify the Master and give Him the opportunity to show His own loving kindness when your sins are forgiven. Likewise, if you fear to approach, you have prevented his goodness and impeded His abundant kindness, which indeed belongs to you.

**St. Nektarios, “Repentance and Confession”**

## AN ABORTION-DEFYING MIRACLE BABY!

By Lucy Laing, from the British newspaper "Daily Mail" (11/03/07).

*Editor's Note: Even though this article is presented from a clearly non-religious point of view, it nevertheless presents vividly how our Lord's Divine Will and intercession overcame the mistaken efforts of men, even when such men believe that they operate in a "morally" correct manner. Note the complete absence of any reference to God. Let us pray that the murder-loving intellects of a certain sector of our society's pro-abortion "elite" take note of yet another miracle that spells out the evil within any abortion-like act. One thing is apparent: the doctors who claim to know what is right, they simply operate in a world of limited knowledge and assumed probabilities. This is a world that is devoid of any spirituality and part of a society that has lost its faith in the Creator's Divine Will.*

† † †

They say twins share a strong bond - but the one between Gabriel and Ieuan Jones was unbreakable.

When doctors found that Gabriel was weaker than his brother, with an enlarged heart, and believed he was going to die in the womb, his mother Rebecca Jones had to make a heartbreaking decision. Doctors told her his death could cause his twin brother to die too before they were born, and that it would be better to end Gabriel's suffering sooner rather than later. Mrs. Jones decided to let doctors operate to terminate Gabriel's life. [Ed. The decision was made by the doctors who then forced it upon the innocent mother]

Firstly they tried to sever his umbilical cord to cut off his blood supply, but the cord was too strong. They then cut Mrs. Jones's placenta in half so that when Gabriel died, it would not affect his twin brother. But after the operation which was meant to end his life, tiny Gabriel had other ideas.

Although he weighed less than a pound, he put up such a fight for survival that doctors called him Rocky. Astonishingly, he managed to carry on living in his mother's womb for another five weeks - until the babies were delivered by caesarean section. Now he and Ieuan are back at home in Stoke - and are so close they are always holding each other's hand.

Mrs. Jones, 35, a financial adviser whose husband Mark, 36, is a car salesman, said: "It really is a miracle. Doctors carried out an operation to let Gabriel die - yet he hung on.

"It was unbelievable. When I felt him kicking madly the morning after the operation, I suddenly knew that he was going to hang on. The doctors couldn't believe it when they could still hear his heartbeat the next morning."

Mrs. Jones learned she was expecting twins when she was ten weeks pregnant. She said:

"When they told us we were over the moon."

But at her 20-week scan, doctors had some devastating news. One of the boys was half the size of his brother. They didn't know what was causing it, but somehow he wasn't getting enough nutrients. Then doctors said his heart was three times normal size and it was likely he would have a heart attack or a stroke in the womb.

Mrs. Jones said:

"They told us that if he died, it could be life threatening for his brother. We had to decide whether to end his life and let his brother live, or risk them both. They said it would be impossible to keep him alive afterwards as he was doing so poorly. It would be kinder to let him die [Ed. Kill him] in the womb with his brother by his side than to die alone after being born. That made my mind up for me. I wanted the best thing for him."

At Birmingham Women's Hospital, when Mrs. Jones was 25 weeks pregnant, doctors tried to sever Gabriel's umbilical



cord to cut off his blood supply and allow him to die. But the cord was too thick, and they could not cut through it. As a last resort they divided Mrs. Jones's placenta so that when Gabriel died, it would allow Ieuan to survive. Mrs. Jones said:

"I put my hands on my stomach thinking of Gabriel. It was devastating. I had said my goodbyes."

But the next morning Mrs. Jones felt Gabriel kicking. A scan showed his heart was still beating. She said that no one could quite believe it. Gabriel

hung on, and his enlarged heart started to reduce in size. He also gained weight. Mrs. Jones said:

"They thought it may be because the placenta had been divided. Inadvertently, it had evened out the distribution of nutrition between them, allowing Gabriel to survive."

When Mrs. Jones reached 31 weeks doctors carried out a caesarian to deliver the twins. Ieuan weighed 3lb 8oz and Gabriel 1lb 15oz. Both were kept in hospital, but since going home they have thrived. At seven months, Ieuan weighs 15lb and Gabriel 12lb 6oz.

Mrs. Jones said:

"The boys (pictured above) are so healthy, they have huge appetites too. Ieuan is the noisy one, while Gabriel is always laughing, it's like he's just so happy to be here. There is such a strong bond between them. They are always holding hands and if one cries, the other reaches out to comfort him. Doctors tried to break their bond in the womb, but they just proved it couldn't be broken."



## THE HEAVENLY HOST AND OUR MODERN LIFE

*From "Orthodox Russia," Vol. 22, 1999.*

On November 8th the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Synaxis of the holy Archangel Michael and the entire Heavenly Host: Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, & Barachiel. This celebration has great significance not only for Orthodox Christians, but for all of mankind. How is that?

First of all, this celebration teaches us how to view correctly the question of equality and inequality. Mankind, especially from the beginning of the 20th century, is fervently searching for a certain equality which supposedly may be established on earth. Russia has become the primary victim of this idea, followed by other countries. The promised equality has never been established, of course, but traditional forms of government have been destroyed. Orthodox monarchy, which was the last mighty bulwark of universal Orthodoxy, was destroyed in Russia, and countless victims were sacrificed on the bloody altar of imaginary equality.

How does this tie in with the feast of the Heavenly Host? Very directly. If mankind were less attracted to transient earthly ideas, but instead, gazed upward more often, it would notice that even in heaven, among the holy angels, there does not exist the senseless equality over which the godless rave so madly. In the world of the angels, as everywhere in God's creation, there exists a definite hierarchy established by God. This hierarchical subordination and this blessed inequality cement the entire structure. If they were taken out, the structure would collapse.

In the case of the angels, such a partial destruction of their heavenly assembly occurred after the insurrection provoked by the highest and most powerful angel, Lucifer, who from that time on became the father of all those fighters for equality who actually fight against God.

If Lucifer had not fallen, then the Church would probably have established a feast in his honor, as it did in honor of the holy Archangel Michael. But Lucifer did not wish to subordinate himself to God. He dreamed of becoming equal to Him and lured away part of the angels to follow him in his

struggle against God. Thus the brightest angel became the blackest devil - Satan.

Against Satan's army there arose the Archangel Michael, one of the highest angels who had remained faithful to the Creator. Going into battle at the head of the bright angels, the Archangel cried out: "Who else but God?" - thereby denouncing proud Satan and all the godless of the future.

The angels of God vanquished the dark forces of the first rebels, and Satan, together with the other demons, fell like lightning into the netherworld.

From that time the Archangel Michael became the head of the entire heavenly host. For his zeal in working for God he is honored by the Church even to this day.

However, the demonic forces continue their battle against the followers of Christ. God allows this, in order for us to be able to exhibit spiritual steadfastness and fealty to the Trinity.

We are surrounded by danger everywhere. But in this daily and hourly struggle we are provided by God with great defenders and helpers - the holy angels, headed by the seven highest archangels; their

names are Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salaphiel, Jegudiel, Barachiel.

We have already spoken of the Archangel Michael. Archangel Gabriel has been entrusted with the service of being messenger to



**Archangel Michael**



**Synaxis of the Heavenly Host**



**Archangel Gabriel**

mankind. He came with the Lord's tidings of forthcoming miraculous events to the parents of St. John the Baptist, to the parents of the Holy Virgin Mary, and also to the Mother of God Herself and to the righteous Joseph. Archangel Gabriel is the messenger of God's Providence, the attendant of miracles and divine Mysteries. When we are overcome with doubts, when it seems to us that we have been abandoned by everyone and there is no help from anywhere, let us pray to Archangel Gabriel, that by his prayers the Lord would reveal to us His most holy will and would set our life upon the course of salvation.

Archangel Raphael is a merciful healer, sent by God to comfort the sick and the sorrowing. From the Holy Scripture we know that Archangel Raphael expelled demons from a woman. And how many people there are nowadays who are possessed by demons.... Alas, both they and their relatives often turn for help to sorcerers who nowadays hide behind the pseudo-scientific name of "extrasensories." But will sorcerers,

these servants of the devil, expel demons? Obviously not. The power to expel demons and heal those who are possessed by them belongs to the holy angels and particularly to Archangel Raphael. Let us ask him to intercede for us before the Lord, Giver of all good things.

The name of Archangel Uriel means the light or the fire of God. This archangel enlightens the minds and the hearts of the faithful with the light of divine truths and the fire of divine love. All those who embark upon the study of knowledge can and should pray to this archangel to enlighten their minds and hearts, in order to avoid a destructive chasm between knowledge and faith.

Archangel Salaphiel is the patron of prayer. He is even depicted so on icons: with eyes gazing downward, with hands crossed on his chest, with an air of humility and deep inner concentration. He is our primary teacher of prayer. Prayer is the most difficult thing to achieve, and one must be instructed in it. Unfortunately, some people assiduously study various worldly subjects, but disdain the study of the most important subject in the world - the Jesus prayer. Let us pray to Archangel Salaphiel for the Lord to grant us this gift of divine prayer.

Archangel Jegudiel is the patron, defender and helper of all those who toil. And we must all be such, for we have been commanded to eat our bread in the sweat of our faces. We toil not only physically, to earn our daily bread, but also spiritually, in order to perfect ourselves. Archangel Jegudiel is depicted on icons with a crown of victory in his hands. Such crowns will be earned by those of us who will endure to the very end, who will worthily bear the light yoke of Christ. We are faced with a complex task, so let us ask Archangel Jegudiel for help in our daily lives.

Archangel Barachiel is the angel of God's blessings. While asking God to bless all our good efforts, let us also appeal to Archangel Barachiel for help. However, we must accept the Lord's blessing not only for prosperity but also for our cross, i.e., the sorrows without which there is no salvation. And may Archangel Barachiel give us strength to carry our blessed crosses.

In celebrating the feast of the angelic Host, let us not forget the most important thing, and that is the faithfulness to God exhibited by the holy angels together with Archangel Michael. May the Lord help us, too, be ready to sacrifice ourselves for Christ.

Following the example of the angels' fealty, let us also remain faithful to true Orthodoxy. And nowadays this is more important than ever before, because Orthodoxy is attacked from all sides by the adherents of other religions and by the unfaithful, who demand that very same infamous equality, this time among all religions. We can never agree to such an equalization of Orthodoxy with religions which have distorted the true worship of God, because we

know that there is no salvation outside of Orthodoxy. Let us appreciate our Orthodox faith, which teaches us true knowledge and true worship of God, for which, eons ago, the archangel of God Michael and his entire heavenly host battled in the heavens.



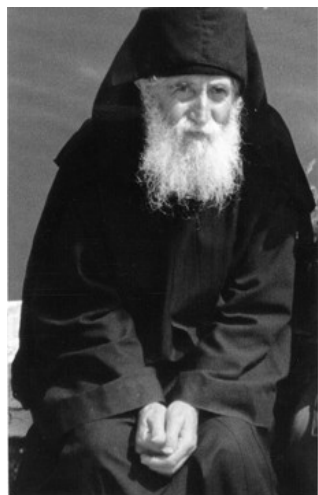
**B**elieve that the prayer even of one friend of God, especially a priest of God, who lives a holy life, can work wonders upon a considerable part of nature, as the prayers of the prophets Moses, Elias and others. Therefore, live in a manner pleasing to God, especially you who are priests of God; be holy, pure, meek, humble, merciful, temperate, laborious, patient, and your prayer shall always penetrate the heavens, and shall be heard and fulfilled. Always, pray with your whole heart, and, above all, with a pure heart. *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.* (Rev 8:3-4). And to you also, O Priest, this incense is given. The censer with the incense ought always to remind you of this – that is, of how easily your prayer for yourself, and *for the errors of the people* (Heb 9:7) and their iniquities, ascends to God and is accepted by Him.

**W**e must never forget that we are all one body, and that we should stimulate each other to love and good works. We priests should especially remember and do this. Yes, we should remember that if our own souls are serene, if we stand firm in faith and piety ourselves, then our flocks, too, will be firmer, more serene, and of pure life ... But if our souls are darkened by manifold passions, the darker, too, will become the body of the Church, our flock, because there is a close connection between the head and the members, between the priest and his flock ... Therefore, do not think that your flock does not feel the effects of your gluttony, your love of money; for they do ... If you stand firm in spiritual virtues, they are also firm; if you are fervent in prayer and pray fervently for them, they feel this too; if you are spiritually strengthened yourself, they too are strengthened; if you grow weak, they too become weak. Lord, have mercy upon us!

**St John of Kronstadt (+1908)**

## THE LIFE OF ELDER PAISIOS, ONE OF ORTHODOXY'S CONTEMPORARY HOLY ELDERS

*From "Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit: The Lives and Counsels of Contemporary Elders of Greece," by H. Middleton.*



On July 25, 1924, the future Elder Paisios (Eznepidis) was born to pious parents in the town of Farasa, Cappadocia of Asia Minor. The family's spiritual father, the priest-monk Arsenios (the now canonized St. Arsenios of Cappadocia), baptized the babe with his own name, prophesying his future profession as a monk. A week after the baptism (and barely a month after his birth) Arsenios was driven, along with his family, out of Asia Minor by the

Turks. St. Arsenios guided his flock along their four-hundred-mile trek to Greece. After a number of stops along the way, Arsenios' family finally ended up in the town of Konitsa in Epiros (north-western Greece). St. Arsenios had reposed, as he had prophesied, forty days after their establishment in Greece, and he left as his spiritual heir the infant Arsenios.

The young Arsenios was wholly given over to God and spent his free time in the silence of nature, where he would pray for hours on end. Having completed his elementary education, he learned the trade of carpentry. He worked as a carpenter until his mandatory military service. He served in the army during the dangerous days of the end of World War II. Arsenios was brave and self-sacrificing, always desiring to put his own life at risk so as to spare his brother. He was particularly concerned about his fellow soldiers who had left wives and children to serve.

Having completed his obligation to his country, Arsenios received his discharge in 1949 and greatly desired to begin his monastic life on the Holy Mountain. Before being able to settle there, however, he had to fulfil his responsibility to his family, to look after his sisters, who were as yet unmarried. Having provided for his sisters' future, he was free to begin his monastic vocation with a clean conscience. In 1950 he arrived on Mount Athos, where he learned his first lessons in the monastic way from the virtuous ascetic Fr. Kyril (the future abbot of Koutloumousiou Monastery); but he was unable to stay at his side as he had hoped, and so was sent to the Monastery of Esphigmenou. He was a novice there for four years, after which he was tonsured a monk in 1954 with the name Averkios. He was a conscientious monk, finding ways

to both complete his obedience's (which required contact with others) and to preserve his silence, so as to progress in the art of prayer. He was always selfless in helping his brethren, unwilling to rest while others worked (though he may have already completed his own obediences), as he loved his brothers greatly and without distinction. In addition to his ascetic struggles and the common life in the monastery, he was spiritually enriched through the reading of soul-profitable books. In particular, he read the Lives of the Saints, the Gerontikon, and especially the Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian.

Soon after his tonsure, Monk Averkios left Esphigmenou and joined the (then) idiorhythmic brotherhood of Philotheou Monastery, where his uncle was a monk. He put himself under obedience to the virtuous Elder Symeon, who gave him the Small Schema in 1956, with the new name Paisios. Fr. Paisios dwelt deeply on the thought that his own spiritual failures and lack of love were the cause of his neighbor's shortcomings, as well as of the world's ills. He harshly accused himself, pushing himself to greater self-denial and more fervent prayer for his soul and for the whole world. Furthermore, he cultivated the habit of always seeking the "good reason" for a potentially scandalous event and for people's actions, and in this way he preserved himself from judging others. For example, pilgrims to Mount Athos had been scandalized by the strange behavior and stories told by a certain monk, and, when they met Elder Paisios, they asked him what was wrong with the monk. He warned them not to judge others, and that this monk was actually virtuous and was simply pretending to be a fool when visitors would come, so as to preserve his silence.

In 1958 Elder Paisios was asked to spend some time in and around his home village of Konitsa so as to support the faithful against the proselytism of Protestant groups. He greatly encouraged the faithful there, helping many people. Afterwards, in 1962, he left to visit Sinai where he stayed for two years. During this time he became beloved of the Bedouins, who benefited both spiritually as well as materially from his presence. The Elder used the money he received from the sale of his carved wooden handicrafts to buy them food.

On his return to Mount Athos in 1964, Elder Paisios took up residence at the Skete of Iviron before moving to Katounakia at the southernmost tip of Mount Athos for a short stay in the desert there. The Elder's failing health may have been part of the reason for his departure from the desert. In 1966, he was operated on and had part of his lungs removed. It was during this time of hospitalization that his long friendship with the then young sisterhood of St. John the Theologian in Souroti, just outside of Thessalonica, began. During his operation he greatly needed blood and it was then that a group of novices from the monastery donated blood to save him. Elder Paisios was most grateful, and after his recovery did whatever he could, materially and spiritually, to help them build their monastery.



In 1968 he spent time at the Monastery of Stavronikita helping with its spiritual as well as material renovation. While there he had the blessing of being in contact with the ascetic Elder Tychon who lived in the hermitage of the Holy Cross, near Stavronikita. Elder Paisios stayed by his side until his repose, serving him selflessly as his disciple. It was during this time that Elder Tychon clothed Fr. Paisios in the Great Schema. According to the wishes of the Elder, Fr. Paisios remained in his hermitage after his repose. He stayed there until 1979, when he moved on to his final home on the Holy Mountain, the hermitage Panagouda, which belongs to the Monastery of Koutloumousiou.

It was here at Panagouda that Elder Paisios' fame as a God-bearing elder grew, drawing to him the sick and suffering people of God. He received them all day long, dedicating the night to God in prayer, vigil and spiritual struggle. His regime of prayer and asceticism left him with only two or three hours each night for rest. The self-abandon with which he served God and his fellow man, his strictness with himself, the austerity of his regime, and his sensitive nature made him increasingly prone to sickness. In addition to respiratory problems, in his later days he suffered from a serious hernia that made life very painful. When he was forced to leave the Holy Mountain for various reasons (often due to his illnesses), he would receive pilgrims for hours on end at the women's monastery at Souroti, and the physical effort which this entailed in his weakened state caused him such pain that he would turn pale. He bore his suffering with much grace, however, confident that, as God knows what is best for us, it could not be otherwise. He would say that God is greatly touched when someone who is in great suffering does not complain, but rather uses his energy to pray for others.

In addition to his other illnesses he suffered from hemorrhaging which left him very weak. In his final weeks before leaving the Holy Mountain, he would often fall unconscious. On October 5, 1993 the Elder left his beloved Holy Mountain for the last time. Though he had planned on being off the mountain for just a few days, while in Thessalonica he was diagnosed with cancer that needed immediate treatment. After the operation he spent some time recovering in the hospital and was then transferred to the monastery at Souroti. Despite his critical state he received people, listening to their sorrow and counselling them.

After his operation, Elder Paisios had his heart set on returning to Mount Athos. His attempts to do so, however, were hindered by his failing health. His last days were full of suffering, but also of the joy of the martyrs. On July 11, 1994, he received Holy Communion for the last time. The next day, Elder Paisios gave his soul into God's keeping. He was buried, according to his wishes, at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Souroti. Elder Paisios, perhaps more

than any other contemporary elder, has captured the minds and hearts of Greek people. Many books of his counsels have been published, and the monastery at Souroti has undertaken a great work, organizing the Elder's writings and counsels into impressive volumes befitting his memory. Thousands of pilgrims visit his grave each year, so as to receive his blessing.



## THE REAL STORY OF THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

[THANKSGIVING WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A FAST!]

*By Benjamin Franklin (1785)*

There is a tradition that in the planting of New England, the first settlers met with many difficulties and hardships, as is generally the case when a civiliz'd people attempt to establish themselves in a wilderness country. Being so piously dispos'd, they sought relief from heaven by laying their wants and distresses before the Lord in frequent set days of fasting and prayer. Constant meditation and discourse on these subjects kept their minds gloomy and discontented, and like the children of Israel there were many dispos'd to return to the Egypt which persecution had induc'd them to abandon.

At length, when it was proposed in the Assembly to proclaim another fast, a farmer of plain sense rose and remark'd that the inconveniences they suffer'd, and concerning which they had so often weary'd heaven with their complaints, were not so great as they might have expected, and were diminishing every day as the colony strengthen'd; that the earth began to reward their labour and furnish liberally for their subsistence; that their seas and rivers were full of fish, the air sweet, the climate healthy, and above all, they were in the full enjoyment of liberty, civil and religious.

He therefore thought that reflecting and conversing on these subjects would be more comfortable and lead more to make them contented with their situation; and that it would be more becoming the gratitude they ow'd to the divine being, if instead of a fast they should proclaim a thanksgiving. His advice was taken, and from that day to this, they have in every year observ'd circumstances of public felicity sufficient to furnish employment for a Thanksgiving Day, which is therefore constantly ordered and religiously observed.

## ERRORS IN PRACTICING THE JESUS PRAYER AND HOW WE COPE WITH THEM

*By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlahos, from "A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain" (edited for length).*

—Nobody can become a scientist of the Jesus prayer unless he struggles personally, unless he himself starts this work. The error starts with the thought that we must acquire grace in a short period of time. There are many people who are practicing the sacred work of the Jesus prayer and want to enter into the vision of Light in a short while. And they lose heart and get disappointed because this cannot happen immediately and to all. The athlete must accept that he must struggle many years. God does not force our will, because we are persons and have free will nor should we force God's freedom, because He is a Person, too. We should let Him come, whenever He thinks, whenever He wants.

He stopped for a while.

—Another error is to give great significance to psychotechnic methods. These methods (breathing in and out, beating of the heart) are simply helpful means so that we can concentrate our nous and free it from elements alien to its nature. These methods do not have a magical power, but they are useful to us in avoiding the distraction of the nous. When the nous is focused and maintained within itself easily, then all auxiliary means are unnecessary.

—On the subject of tears, he went on, there are also certain problems.

—What do you mean?

—We said earlier that when the Jesus prayer stays in the nous the eyes shed abundant tears. However, this is not always indispensable. Prayer can go well even if there are no tears. So, we should not get disappointed in the absence of tears, because they will come when God allows it. And even if we are flooded by them, we should not pay attention to them; neither should we describe these states to others. The ascetic experience says that when we talk about these states, then they cease immediately, and it takes a long time for them to return. Needless to say, although we know the stages of noetic prayer, we should avoid thinking about which stage we are in. We must proceed in humility. Besides, I think I told you a short while ago, that feeling pride in and during prayer is stupidity. It really is stupidity. Man is like a beggar who asks for a piece of bread and then he feels proud because he has obtained it. And this is stupidity and a sin!

—I can see that humility plays an important part here.

—Yes, it does—in all stages. St. Basil the Great says that humility is the treasury of all virtues. It conceals all virtues and finally it conceals itself. In general, we must diligently avoid pride in the spiritual life, especially when it comes as vainglory. And you know, of course, that vainglory appears in every

virtue; when we talk, when we keep silent, when we fast, when we keep vigil and even when we say the Jesus prayer, in hesychia and in forbearance. The Fathers say that vainglory is like a traitor who secretly opens the gates of the city so that the enemy can enter. In such a case, no matter how strong the city is and how good its defenses are, it is captured by the enemy. The same also happens in the spiritual life. No matter how many virtues we have and no matter how much strength we hold on to, vainglory hands us over to the devil. And the Fathers recommend that one must never undertake a work which will possibly lead him to vainglory.

—I did not understand this. Can you explain it further?

—Let me come to the subject of prayer. The faithful must not overdo it, as far as prayer is concerned, because it is certain, then, that he is being allured by the devil. In such a case, whatever he might do—even things beyond his strength—is achieved by the power of the devil. So, dragged by the devil, he is later abandoned by him at some time, then pushed backwards, and impelled to fall very low. He is actually destroyed.

—And how can one avoid this most heavy fall?

—The saving path is mourning and obedience. Prayer is very closely connected with mourning. When the devil sees somebody living in mourning, he does not remain there but flees, because he is afraid of the humility which is engendered by mourning. St. Gregory of Sinai tells us that the best defense for the athlete of prayer is to be in a state of mourning, so that the joy which comes in prayer may not lead him into pride, for the bright sadness keeps his soul unharmed. Mourning and the awareness of our sinfulness are indispensable in the course of pure prayer. The athlete "should keep his nous in hell and despair not." Moreover, the awareness of our sinfulness, of our nothingness, and the hope in the Merciful Jesus are characteristic of Orthodoxy and of all of our hymns. It should be stressed, though, that not all can live in deep mourning because great strength and an earlier taste of divine grace are needed so that they are not shaken. However, as far as it is possible, we should all live this blessed mourning. Indiscriminate obedience to a Geronda is also necessary. Everything, even the smallest things, should be done with his blessing and his wise guidance; even in the case of the uncreated Light.

—What does obedience to a Geronda have to do with the vision of the uncreated Light? I asked, astonished at what I had heard.

—When man walks alone, without the indispensable blessing, then he is pursued by the devil, as we said before. He experiences within himself the dissatisfied desire to see the uncreated Light. He believes that this is perfection and he wants to reach there quickly.

—Is this not right? I interrupted him.

—No, it is not. St. Diadochos recommends that the ascetic should not practice his ascetic life with the hope of seeing the uncreated Light, "so that the devil will not find his soul ready on that account to be carried off." One should start the work of the Jesus prayer with love towards God and obedience to His

holy Will. For, it is possible for the devil—who can disguise himself *as an angel of light* (2 Cor 11:14)—to take the form of an angel who will serve him. And, then, the poor man thinks that he has reached the height of perfection, since he lives with angels, without being aware that he is conversing with devils. It is also a temptation when the ascetic while praying accepts thoughts from the demons that he will soon see the uncreated Light. Much care is needed in this delicate and dangerous situation. He must stop praying and reprimand himself severely: “How dare you, so wretched and vile, desire to see the uncreated Light.” The greatest danger is to think oneself worthy of seeing the uncreated Light! He can even say: “Alas! The demons, my murderers are coming to destroy my soul!” Then, immediately, the enemy disappears. Many times the devil, in order to satisfy the ambition of the monk and captivate him even more, brings even light into his cell. It is not the uncreated Light, but the created one, that of the devil.

—And how can it be distinguished?

—There are many ways which help the monk to distinguish the two lights. The criteria are as follows: Firstly, if he has reached the vision of the uncreated Light through obedience. The path of perfect and indiscriminate obedience is the guarantee that the vision of Light is genuine. The ascetic must confide all matters concerning “vision” to a discerning, holy and dispassionate Geronda and ask him about them. The thought that he should not ask his guide is from the devil who aims at keeping him in darkness, error and slavery.

—Secondly, he continued, the Lord said about the false prophets: *You will know them by their fruits.* (Mt 7:16) The same holds true in this case, too. A clear distinction between the uncreated and created light is made by their fruits. The uncreated Light brings into the soul, calm, peace, humility and awareness of our wretchedness. When Abraham talked to God, he called himself dust and ashes: *Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I, who am but dust and ashes.* (Gen 18:27) The same happened with Job: *I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.* (Job 42:5) And Prophet Isaiah, when he saw the glory of God, exclaimed: *Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!* (Is 6:5). On the contrary, the vision of the light of the devil engenders pride, vainglory, the thought that we have acquired perfection. St. Gregory of Sinai says: “Know, then, that the energies of grace are obvious and the demon, even if he disguises himself, cannot administer them; he cannot give meekness, nor forbearance, nor humility nor hatred for the world, neither can he extinguish pleasures and passions—this is the work of grace; his activity is pride, haughtiness, cowardice, and every kind of evil.” Apart from pride, the vision of the light of the devil creates disturbance. The energy of the Holy Spirit bestows peace, boldness and calmness to both body and soul, whereas the activity of the devil gives vent to fear and

disturbance. St. Isaac says that every disturbance is a plague of the devil, because one transmits to others what he has in his nature. The Holy Spirit is by nature a spirit of peace and it transmits peace, whereas the devil is by nature a spirit of disturbance and fear and transmits disturbance and fear.

—Thirdly, the soul does not accept the light of the devil immediately, but it is reluctant at the beginning. The vision of the uncreated Light conveys certainty and acceptance at once. The uncreated Light comes unexpectedly and you do not doubt whether it is genuine or not.

—Fourthly, even in color there is also a difference between the two lights. The disciples witnessed on Mount Tabor, during the Transfiguration of Christ, that *his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light.* (Mt 17:2) On the contrary, the color of the devil’s light is reddish, according to the testimony of many Saints, who realized the difference.

—Fifthly, there is also a difference in shape between the two lights. Those who behold the uncreated Light “see no shape or form or image, but light without any form.” (St. Symeon the New Theologian) And if it should take any form, it would look like the disc of the sun. God appears like the “sun or like the disc of the sun, presenting Himself in the shape of a sphere, radiant, like a flame”, without any shape and form. The reverse happens with the vision of the created light of the devil. St. Gregory Palamas gives the following example. He writes that once Akindinos went to Mt. Athos. He stayed there for a few days and told St. Gregory that while he was trying to pray, he saw a light which was split, and a human face could be seen within it. The Saint asserted that the light was from the devil, because it had a shape. “And I declared to him that it was a terrible deceit and mockery and game of the devil, or rather a cunning trap.”

—The Fathers suggest, the experienced ascetic went on, that we should not immediately accept every incident that occurs during our prayer. Consider something as good after great testing. We must ask the Geronda about all of these matters and only after an intense and long struggle, according to the grace we acquire, are we able to distinguish error from truth. Vinegar and wine are the same in appearance, but they differ in taste. Similarly as years pass, the athlete of prayer acquires the ability to discern the difference. The Geronda was speaking unremittingly. His head was bent toward the ground. I was listening to him, literally charmed. I did not want to interrupt his Orthodox thoughts, which expressed the teachings of the Fathers. Peace and calmness filled my heart while he was speaking, and that was a sign that his teaching was true and sound.

—All of these factors I have just mentioned to you are clearly shown in a conversation that St. Symeon the New Theologian cites. You can see there that God appears as Light which brings sweetness. The disciple asks the discerning spiritual father, who has already seen God, and is assured that what he saw was God.



He took the book and started reading:

*"God is light, His vision is light When He reveals Himself, It is a light. The beholder marvels knowing not Who has appeared, daring not to ask the question 'Who art thou?' Daring not to lift the eyes to see His greatness, except in fear, in trembling, prostrate before Him, knowing only that someone has come, someone has appeared. If there is a person who has already spoken of these things, a person who has already seen God, to him, it can be said:*

*'I have seen.'*

*'What have you seen, child?'*

*'A light, Father, sweet, so sweet, to say what it was, is beyond me,' even as he speaks his heart is dancing on fire with love for Him Whom he saw. He says, weeping, 'the light, this light has come to me, father; my cell was engulfed the world fled away before His face: only I by myself and the light. Was I in the body, or out: I do not know. The joy which I had is with me still, unspeakable, except in tears which flow unceasingly as you see.'*

*He replied 'It is He, my child.'*

*At these words, He came again and gradually, little by little, purified, encouraged, I could ask 'my God, Thou art here?' 'Yes, I am here, Your God, Who became man for you, and now, you share my divinity, I make you god.'*

*When you devote yourself to tears, to contrition, to prostration, to humility, He brings you little by little to knowledge of God."*

The novice appeared then, whom I had begun to feel jealous of, because he had found such a wise and experienced guide and asked his Geronda.

—You told me to water one of the trees. I have done it. Shall I water the other one, now?

—Yes, water it.

And, turning to me, he said:

—This is the obedience which I was speaking of before, and he who practices it and asks his instructor about everything, makes spiritual progress. He achieves many things through obedience. Firstly, he does not let his imagination work out solutions. Thus, he purifies his mind, not only of the complex but also of the simple thoughts and concentrates more on the Jesus prayer. Secondly, he gets used to asking. Asking one's own spiritual father is salvation. Where obedience exists, there, too, exists humility, which is the foundation of obedience and the spirit of pride, the devil, can not penetrate. In general, obedience is absolutely necessary in the course of this holy work. We must not proceed without a guide. The Geronda shows us the way, regulates the program of our spiritual life, orders us to stop a task and tells us whether we are proceeding well and in the sight of God. The person of Geronda stands for God Himself. He is "in the place of Christ." The Geronda is for the monks whom he has under his care, what the bishop is for his diocese and the abbot for his holy monastery.

—Does asceticism give such a great importance to the existence of the Geronda?

—Yes, indeed, it does. No one can go on without a Geronda nor can he live within pure Orthodox tradition. As physical

life is imparted from generation to generation in the same way too is spiritual life imparted. The Geronda, being the possessor and bearer of this tradition, imparts it to his spiritual child and gives birth to him in Christ. The Geronda imparts the tradition to him who wants to obtain it. The meaning of obedience concerning salvation rests on this point. I am obedient so that I may be born. Obedience is also necessary because the danger of error lurks. That is why Abba Dorotheos writes: "No one is more wretched, no one is more vulnerable than he who walks the path of God without anyone to guide him." The same Father, interpreting the passage from the Proverbs: *Where there is no guidance, a people fall like leaves.* (Prov 11:14), says that the leaf is in the beginning green and fresh but then it fades and falls; it is despised and stepped upon. The same happens to the man who does not have a spiritual father. He soon withers and succumbs to his enemy. "In the beginning he is full of fervor concerning fasting, vigil, practicing hesychia, obedience, and other virtues; then his fervor fades away and, because he does not have a spiritual father who sustains, increases and excites this fervor, he withers away and falls and is subject to his enemies, who do whatever they want to him."

—Blessed are the monks, athletes of the spiritual life. Blessed are the birds which sing and enjoy the dewy spring time of God. We cannot live these ecstasies. We breathe the fumes of our impurities. We eat the dust of the earth, from which we are made.

—If you want to become true theologians you must pray because only then the Most Holy Spirit is present and acts. If you are a theologian you pray truly and if you pray truly you are a theologian. I will tell you something to help you to understand this. It is possible after committing a sin (primarily a carnal one) that a person can write theological treatises and be engaged in the analysis of the works of the Fathers, but, since he has lost grace by committing the sin, he cannot pray. Prayer ceases but work does not. Thus, a true theologian is he who lives in prayer.



### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

Please be advised that, commencing with the November issue, our publication is becoming a **bimonthly** publication. This change is necessary to realize some needed savings on the increased Post Office rates that have doubled our mailing costs for our hard copy readers (*hard copy readers constitute the great majority of our readers*).

Note, however, that the bimonthly issue is **double in size**, thus providing the same amount of spiritual articles as two separate issues.

Orthodox Heritage finds its way into many Orthodox homes, mostly through the generosity of various brethren throughout the world. **Please remember to not neglect the support of this ministry.**

## Ἡ Ἀναγκαιότητα τῆς Ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου

Τοῦ Λάμπρου Κ. Σκόντζου, Θεολόγου—Καθηγητοῦ.

**Ἡ** Ἐνανθρώπιση τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου εἶναι κορυφαία ἔκφραση τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὸ ἐπιστέγασμα τῆς ἐφαρμογῆς τοῦ θείου σχεδίου γιὰ τὴν σωτηρία τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους. Οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας στάθηκαν μὲ δέος μπροστὰ στὸ ἀπερινόητο αὐτὸ μυστήριο, καὶ μὲ γνώμονα τὶς ἁγίες Γραφές, συνέλαβαν ὕψιστες ἀλήθειες καὶ διατύπωσαν ὑψηλὴ θεολογία.

Σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν διδασκαλία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἡ σάρκωση τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπῆρξε ἀπαραίτητη. Ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ κόσμου θὰ ἦταν ἀδύνατη δι' ἄλλου τρόπου, διότι ὁλόκληρη ἡ δημιουργία, ζῶσα καὶ μὴ ζῶσα, ἦταν ὑποκείμενη στὴν πτώση. Οἱ δυὸ μεγάλες μοιραῖες πτώσεις, ἡ πρώτη τῶν αὐλῶν νοερῶν δυνάμεων καὶ ἡ δεύτερη τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἔφεραν ὄχι ἀπλᾶ ἀναστάτωση στὴν κτίση τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ εἰσήγαγαν σὲ αὐτὴ τὸ κακό, ὡς μόνιμη κατάσταση, ὡς ὀντολογικὴ ἀντίθεση στὸ πρόσωπο καὶ τὸ ἔργο τοῦ ἀπόλυτα ἀγαθοῦ Θεοῦ.

Σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο, ἐξαιτίας τῆς πτώσεως «*ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἔκουσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἶδαμεν γάρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν*» (Ρωμ 8:20-22). Αὐτὸ σημαίνει πὼς ὅλα τὰ ὄντα, ἀπὸ τοὺς αὐλοὺς ἀγγέλους ὡς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὴν ὑλικὴ κτίση, εἶναι ὑποκείμενα στὴν φθορὰ τῆς πτώσεως καὶ ἄρα χρειάζονται σωτηρία καὶ λύτρωση. «*Πάντες ἡμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ*» (Ρωμ 5:1). Κατὰ συνέπεια, κανένα κτιστὸ ὄν δὲν θὰ μπορούσε νὰ πάρῃ τὴ θέση τοῦ λυτρωτῆ. Αὐτὸς θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ προέρχεται ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν δημιουργία, ἀδιάφθορος καὶ ἀπόλυτα ἀμέτοχος τοῦ κακοῦ. Ἄρα μόνον θεῖο πρόσωπο θὰ μπορούσε νὰ καταστῇ λυτρωτὴς τοῦ κόσμου.

Ἡ θεία βουλὴ ἀποφάσισε νὰ καταστῇ λυτρωτὴς ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸ δεύτερο Πρόσωπο τῆς Ἁγίας Τριάδος. Γι' αὐτὸ ἀμέσως μετὰ τὴν πτώση ἄρχισε νὰ ὑλοποιεῖται τὸ θεῖο σχέδιο τῆς σωτηρίας. Αὐτὸ προέβλεπε νὰ ὑπάρξῃ μιὰ μακραίωνα προετοιμασία τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου γένους.

Ἡ πρόνοια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄρχισε νὰ διαμορφώῃ ἱστορικὲς συνθήκες κατάλληλες ὥστε νὰ ὀδηγήσουν τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα στὸ γεγονός τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀποκαταστάσεως καὶ σωτηρίας. Δόθηκε ὁ Νόμος στοὺς Ἰσραηλίτες ὡς παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστὸν (Γαλ 3:2), στάλθηκαν προφῆτες νὰ διαμηνύσουν

τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ (Ρωμ 1:2), ἀναδείχθηκαν σπουδαῖες προσωπικότητες (φιλόσοφοι, ἄρχοντες, νομοθέτες, κοινωνικοὶ ἀναμορφωτές, συγγραφεῖς, ποιητές, κλπ), οἱ ὅποιοι προήγαγαν τὸ ἀνθρώπινο πνεῦμα, ἐπесήμαναν τὴν κακοδαιμονία τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ ἔσπειραν τὸν σπὸρο τῆς ἀνάγκης γιὰ τὴν λύτρωσή του ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν κατάσταση. Εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὸ ὅτι μὲ τὸ πέρασμα τοῦ χρόνου διαμορφώθηκε μέσα στὶς διάφορες παραδόσεις τῶν λαῶν μιὰ μυστηριώδης καὶ ἰσχυρὴ τάση ἀναμονῆς μελλοντικοῦ λυτρωτῆ, ἡ ὁποία μὲ τὸ πέρασμα τοῦ χρόνου ὀλοένα καὶ μεγάλωνε, ὥστε στοὺς ἄμεσους προχριστιανικοὺς χρόνους νὰ ἔχουμε πιά παγκόσμια ἐναγώνια προσμονή.

Ὅταν ἦλθε τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, «*ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμῳ, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολαύωμεν*» (Γαλ 4:4). Ὁ αἰώνιος καὶ ὁ ἄπειρος Θεὸς συγκαταβαίνει καὶ γίνεται ἄνθρωπος τέλειος, χωρὶς νὰ ἀφήσῃ τὴν θεότητά του. Στὸ θεανδρικό Θεανθρώπινο Πρόσωπό Του συναντήθηκε καὶ ἐνώθηκε ἡ θεία μὲ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη φύση. Τὰ πρὶν διεστῶτα, ἐξαιτίας τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τώρα πιά ἐνώθηκαν μὲ ὀργανικὴ καὶ αἰώνια ἔνωση. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ γίνῃ ἡ ἔνωση αὐτή, προηγουμένως καθαρίστηκε, λυτρώθηκε καὶ ἁγιάστηκε ἡ ἀνθρώπινη φύση ἀπὸ τὸν Ἐνανθρωπήσαντα Λόγο, διότι δὲν ἦταν δυνατόν νὰ γίνῃ φύση τοῦ Θεανθρώπου πτωτικὴ φύση. Αὐτὸ σημαίνει ὅτι, ταυτόχρονα μὲ τὴν θεία Ἐνανθρώπιση, πραγματοποιήθηκε καὶ ἡ λύτρωση τῆς πεπτωκυίας φύσεώς μας.

Ἡ Ἐνανθρώπιση τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι προϊόν τῆς θείας ἀγάπης. Ὁ Κύριος εἶχε τονίσει πὼς «*οὕτω γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ' ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον*» (Ἰωάν 3:15), καὶ συμπλήρωσε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος πὼς ὁ Πατὴρ «*τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν*» (Ρωμ 8:32). Ἡ ἄμετρη αὐτὴ ἀγάπη ὀδήγησε τὸν Λόγο στὴν ἀσύλληπτη γιὰ τὸν πεπερασμένο ἀνθρώπινο νοῦ, θεία «κένωση». Ἀπὸ τὰ δυσθεώρητα ὕψη τῆς θείας δόξης καταδέχτηκε νὰ κατέλθῃ καὶ νὰ ἐνδυθῇ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη φύση, νὰ τὴν κἀνῃ στὸ ἐξῆς αἰώνιως μέρος τῆς Θεανθρώπινης ὑπόστασής Του. Ἡ περὶ θείας κενώσεως διδασκαλία ἀποτελεῖ θεμέλιο τῆς θεολογίας τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου. «*Τοῦτο φρονεῖσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἔγραφε, ὅς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμόν ἠήσαστο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ, ἀλλ' ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε μορφήν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος, καὶ σχήματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτόν, γενόμενος ὑπήκοος μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ*» (Φίλιπ 2:5-8). Ἡ θεία ταπείνωση λειτούργησε ὡς ἰσχυρὸ ἀντίδοτο κατὰ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ἑπαρσης, ἡ ὁποία εἶναι ἡ ρίζα





τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Ὁ Ἀδὰμ ἁμάρτησε καὶ ξέπεσε διότι ὑπερέβη τὰ ὅρια τῆς αὐτοσυνειδησίας του καὶ ἀκολουθώντας τὸν πατέρα τῆς ἀλαζονείας, τὸν διάβολο, ἔφτασε στὴν δική του ἀπατηλὴ αὐτάρκεια καὶ στὴν ἀνταρσία. Τὸ γεγονὸς αὐτὸ ὄχι μόνον τὸν ἀπομάκρυνε ἀπὸ τὴν πηγὴ τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς συνδιαλλαγῆς, τὸν Θεό, ἀλλὰ τὸν περιχαράκωσε μέσα στὰ ἀσφυκτικὰ πλαίσια τῆς νοσηρῆς ἐγωπάθειάς του, ὥστε νὰ μὴν μπορῇ πιά νὰ ἀπελευθερωθῇ καὶ νὰ ἀποκατασταθῇ. Ἡ θεία ταπείνωση λειτούργησε καταλυτικὰ κατὰ τῆς ἐωσφορικῆς ἐπαρσης.

Ἡ εἰσόδος τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου στὴν ἀνθρώπινη ἱστορία ἄλλαξε τὴ ροὴ τῆς σταθερᾶ καθοδικῆς πορείας τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἡ θεία Ἐνανθρώπησή Του εἶναι ἡ εὐλογημένη ἀρχὴ τῆς μεγαλύτερης ἐπανάστασης ὅλων τῶν ἐποχῶν. Ἡ ἀνατολὴ τοῦ νοητοῦ Ἡλίου τῆς Δικαιοσύνης στὴ γῆ διέλυσε τὰ πυκνὰ σκοτάδια τοῦ προχριστιανικοῦ παρελθόντος καὶ ἀποδυνάμωσε ὅλους τοὺς ἐργαζομένους τῶν σκοτεινῶν ἔργων. Τὰ ἀνθρώπινα γεγονότα καὶ ἡ ἱστορία ἔχουν πιά κατευθυντήρια φορὰ καὶ στόχο τὸ μοναδικὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Θεανθρώπου. Μπορεῖ, βεβαίως, ἡ πορεία τῆς ἀλλαγῆς τοῦ κόσμου νὰ εἶναι ἀργή καὶ οἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ κόσμου νὰ ἀντιστέκονται, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἐκβασὴ εἶναι προδιαγεγραμμένη, ὁ κόσμος τελικὰ θὰ χριστοποιηθῇ.

Τὸ μήνυμα τῆς Βηθλεέμ, τὸ ὁποῖο διαλαλήθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀγγέλους τῆς Γεννήσεως (Λουκ 2:14), εἶναι τὸ πιὸ χαρμόσυνο καὶ ἐλπιδοφόρο ἄγγελμα τῆς ἱστορίας. Ἦρθε Ἐκεῖνος, τὸν Ὅποιον ἐναγωνίως περίμενε ἡ ἀνθρωπότητα διὰ νὰ «σώσῃ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν» (Ματθ 1:21). Τὰ ἀποτελέσματα τοῦ ἔργου Του εἶναι φανερά. Ὁ μονόδρομος, ὁ ὁποῖος ὡδήγοῦσε ἀποκλειστικὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ ὀλόκληρὴ τὴν πλάση στὴν ἀπώλεια, ἔπαψε νὰ ὑπάρχῃ γιὰ τοὺς πιστοὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, διότι ἐγκαινίασε Αὐτὸς νέα ὁδὸ, ἡ ὁποία ὡδηγεῖ στὴν σωτηρία, στὸν Θεό, ποὺ εἶναι τὸ φυσικὸ πέρας τῆς πορείας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Τὴν μεγάλη καὶ ἐλπιδοφόρα αὐτὴ ἀλήθεια ἐκφράζει ἀπόλυτα καὶ χαρακτηριστικὰ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος ὡς ἐξῆς: «Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότηχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἐχθράν, ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασι καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν ἑαυτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην καὶ καταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἐχθράν ἐν αὐτῷ... ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ ἀρόικοι, ἀλλὰ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ Θεοῦ» (Εφεσ 2:14-19). Ἀκόμα «ὥσπερ ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ, οὕτω καὶ ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν» (Ρωμ 5:21).

Ἀς ἀκουσομε τὴν φωνὴ τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου ἀπὸ ἓνα μικρὸ ἀποσπασμα τῆς 38<sup>ης</sup> ὁμιλίας του: «Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, δοξάσατε· Χριστὸς ἐξ οὐρανῶν, ἀπαντήσατε· Χριστὸς ἐπὶ γῆς, ὑψώθητε. Ἄσατε τῷ Κυρίῳ πᾶσα ἡ γῆ καί, ἴν' ἀμφοτέρα συνελὼν εἴπω· Εὐφραινέσθωσαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ ἀγαλλιάσθω ἡ γῆ,

διὰ τὸν ἐπουράνιον, εἴτα ἐπίγειον. Κἀγὼ βοήσομαι τῆς ἡμέρας τὴν δύναμιν· Ὁ ἄσαρκος σαρκούται. Ὁ Λόγος παχύνεται. Ὁ ἀόρατος ὁράται. Ὁ ἀναφῆς ψηλαφᾶται. Ὁ ἄχρονος ἀρχεται. Ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου γίνεται, “Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς χθὲς καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας” (Εβρ. 13, 8)».

Καλὰ καὶ εὐλογημένα Χριστοῦγεννα!



## ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΙΑΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ

**Κ**ρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας, ἣν παρελάβομεν ἄδολον παρὰ τηλικούτων ἀνδρῶν, ἀποστραφόμενοι πάντα νεωτερισμόν, ὡς ὑπαγόρευμα τοῦ Διαβόλου. Ὁ δεχόμενος νεωτερισμόν, κατελέγει ἐλλειπὴ τὴν κεκηρηγμένην Ὁρθόδοξον πίστιν. Ἀλλ' αὕτη πεπληρωμένη ἡδὴ ἐσφράγισται, μὴ ἐπιδεχόμενη μήτε μείωσιν, μήτε αὐξησιν, μήτε ἀλλοίωσιν, ἣν τε ὁ νοὼν καὶ τολμῶν ἢ πράξει ἢ σύμβουλευσαι ἢ διανοηθῆναι τοῦτο, ἡδὴ ἡρνήθη τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡδὴ ἐκουσίως καθυπερβλήθη εἰς τὸ αἰώνιον ἀνάθεμα, διὰ τὸ βλασφημεῖν εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, ὡς τάχα μὴ ἀρτίως λαλήσαν ἐν ταῖς Γραφαῖς καὶ Οἰκουμενικαῖς Συνόδοις...

Ἄπαντες οὖν οἱ νεωτερίζοντες ἢ αἰρέσει ἢ σχίσματι ἐκουσίως ἐνεδύθησαν κατάραν ὡς ἱμάτιον, κἂν τε Πάπαι, κἂν τε Πατριάρχαι, κἂν τε κληρικοί, κἂν τε λαϊκοί, κἂν Ἄγγελος ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ.

+Ἀνθιμος ἐλέφ Θεοῦ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Νέας Ρώμης ἢ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης.

+Ἱερὸθέος ἐλέφ Θεοῦ Πάπας καὶ Πατριάρχης Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ πάσης Αἰγύπτου.

+Μεθόδιος ἐλέφ Θεοῦ Πατριάρχης Ἀντιοχείας.

+Κύριλλος ἐλέφ Θεοῦ Πατριάρχης Ἱερουσαλὴμ.

Καὶ αἱ περὶ αὐτοὺς Ἱεραὶ Συνόδοι.

Ἐν Κων/πόλει τὸ σωτήριον ἔτος 1848.



**Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοσὴ τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οἰκονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἃς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κατὰ περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμὴν».**



## Ὁ Ἐκ Λευκῶν Πάρου Πνευματικὸς Φωστήρ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, Ἰωσήφ ὁ Ἡσυχαστής

*Ἀπὸ τὸ Περιοδικὸ Παναγίας Ἑκατονταπυλιανῆς—Πάρος, Κυκλάδες, Ἀπρίλιος-Ἰούνιος 2003 (τὰ ἀποσπάσματα εἶναι ἀπὸ ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ Γέροντος Ἰωσήφ, ἀπὸ τὸ ἐξαιρετικὰ ὠφέλιμο βιβλίον μὲ τίτλο: «Γέρων Ἰωσήφ ὁ Ἡσυχαστής καὶ ἡ Πατερικὴ Παράδοσις», πού ἐξέδωσε ὁ Γέρων Ἰωσήφ ὁ Βατοπεδινός).*

Ἄγνωστος στὸν τόπο τῆς καταγωγῆς του, τὴν Πάρο, ἀλλὰ πολὺ γνωστὸς στοὺς συναγωνιστὲς του τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους, ὅπου νέος προσήλθε ἐπιθυμῶντας διακαῶς τὴν ἡσυχαστικὴ, ἀσκητικὴ ζωὴ, διῆλθε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα πού πέρασε ὁ Γέρων Ἰωσήφ ὁ Ἡσυχαστής, ἐπυνουμία πού τοῦ προσδόθηκε καὶ πού περιγράφει σὲ μιὰ μόνον λέξη τὴν ἔφεση τῆς καρδιάς του καὶ τὸν βίο πού ἀκολούθησε.

Διαβάζοντας λεπτομέρειες ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκρως ἀσκητικὴ καὶ σκληρὴ ζωὴ, πού μὲ τὸση αὐταπάρνηση ἐπέβαλε στὸν ἑαυτὸ του ἡδὴ ἀπὸ τὴ νεαρὴ του ἡλικία, αἰσθάνεται κανεὶς δέος καὶ ἀναλογίζεται τὴ δική του πνευματικὴ ἔνδεια, τὸ δικό του πνευματικὸ τίποτα, καθὼς κατανοεῖ ποιοὶ εἶναι οἱ «βιαστές» γιὰ τοὺς ὁποίους κάνει λόγο ὁ Κύριος στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ὅταν λέει: «Ἡ βασιλεία τῶν Οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασταὶ ἄρπάζουσιν αὐτήν ...» Αἰσθάνεται κενὸς ἀγάπης, ἀγάπης θείας πού ἔκανε τὸν Γέροντα Ἰωσήφ νὰ λησμονῇ τὴν ὕλη, τὸ σῶμα, καὶ νὰ ἔχει διὰ παντὸς τὴν καρδιά του προσηλωμένη στὰ οὐράνια, μὲ τὴν εὐχὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ συνεχῶς ἀναπεμπόμενη στὸν Ποθοῦμενο τῆς ψυχῆς του.

Ἡ φήμη τῆς ἀξιοθαύμαστης ὑψηλῆς ἀσκητικῆς του πολιτείας ἐξῆλθε τῶν ὁρίων τοῦ Ἁθῶ. Ἡ δὲ πνευματικὴ του σοφία καὶ ἀρετὴ ἀποτυπώνεται σὲ ἐπιστολὰς πού ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Γέροντας εἶχε γράψει, ὀρισμένες ἀπὸ τίς ὁποῖες ἐκδόθηκαν σ' ἓναν τόμο πρὸς ὠφέλεια ὅλων τῶν χριστιανῶν. Καὶ τὰ δύο αὐτὰ βιβλία συνιστοῦμε θερμὰ ἀπὸ τὴ στήλη αὐτή, καὶ ἰδιαίτερα στοὺς Παριανούς, πού ἔχουμε τὴν τιμὴ καὶ τὴν ἐν Κυρίῳ καύχηση, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὸν Ἀθανάσιον τὸν Πάριο, νὰ ἔχουμε κι ἄλλο δικό μας γόνον, αὐτὴ τὴ φορὰ στὴ χορεία τῶν ἀσκητῶν—ἡσυχαστῶν.

Σὲ ἓνα ταπεινὸ σπιτάκι τῶν Λευκῶν, τοῦ χωριοῦ πού ἀνέδειξε ὡς τώρα πολλὰς μεγάλες μορφές, μὲ πιὸ φωτεινὴ καὶ γνωστὴ σ' ἐμᾶς τοῦ ἀγωνιστῆ Ἱεράρχη Αὐγουστίνου Καντιώτη, γεννήθηκε ὁ Γέρων Ἰωσήφ, ὁ κατὰ κόσμον Φραγκῆσκος. Ἐδῶ ἔζησε τὰ παιδικὰ του χρόνια, φτωχικά, ἐργαζόμενος ἀπὸ μικρὴ ἡλικία, ὅπως καὶ τὰ ἀδελφία του, γιὰ τὰ πρὸς τὸ ζῆν. Νέος ἔφυγε ἀπὸ τὴν Πάρο γιὰ νὰ ἐργαστῇ στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ νὰ ἐκπληρώσῃ τὴ στρατιωτικὴ του θητεία.

Σὲ ἡλικία 23 ἐτῶν αἰσθάνθηκε ἔντονη τὴν κλίσιν γιὰ τὴ μοναχικὴ ζωὴ. Ἔτσι, μοίρασε σὲ ἐλεημοσύνη ὅλες του τίς οἰκονομίες, «κόσμῳ καὶ τοῖς ἐν κόσμῳ χαίρειν εἰπὼν», καὶ μετέβη στὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος, ἔχοντας ἐπιθυμία νὰ ἀγωνιστῇ στὰ πλέον ἀπόμακρα καὶ ἀσκητικὰ μέρη του. Δέν θὰ ἀναφερθοῦμε ἐδῶ στὰ τριάντα καὶ πλέον χρόνια τῆς μοναστικῆς του ζωῆς (κοιμήθηκε τὸ 1959), μιᾶς πορείας γεμάτης ἐκούσια στέρηση κάθε ἀνάπαυσης, νηστεία, ἐγκράτεια, ἀδιάλειπτη προσευχή, ἀλλὰ καὶ γεμάτης ἀπὸ τὴν παρουσία τῆς Θείας Χάριτος, πού ἔσκεπε τὸν φιλότιμο καὶ φιλόθεο ἀγωνιστῇ. Προτιμήσαμε νὰ μεταφέρουμε ἐδῶ λόγους δικούς του, μέσα ἀπὸ τίς ἐπιστολὰς του, στίς ὁποῖες διαφαίνεται ἡ ἀρετὴ, ἡ σοφία, ἡ πνευματικότητά του, ἀλλὰ καὶ μαντεύονται οἱ ἀσκητικοὶ του ἀγῶνες, ἀφοῦ ὁ ἴδιος εἶχε κατανοήσει βαθιὰ ὅτι ὅποιος δέν πράξει, δέν τοῦ δίδεται ὀφφίκιο νὰ διδάσκῃ τοὺς ἄλλους.

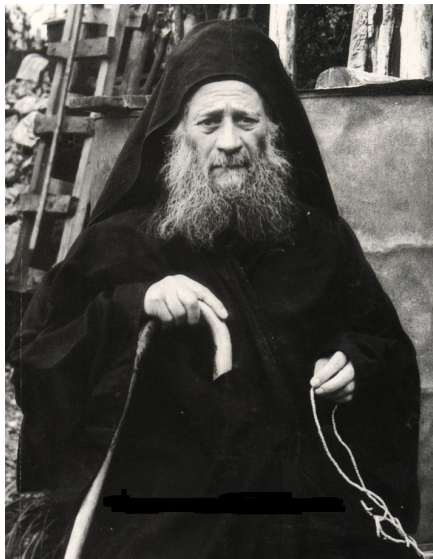
«Πρόσεχε μὴ καταφρονήσης ἓνα τῶν ἐλαχίστων, τῶν ἐξουθενωμένων καὶ ἀσθενῶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. Διότι ἡ

καταφρόνησις αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ προσβολὴ σου δέν σταματᾷ εἰς αὐτοὺς τοὺς δυστυχεῖς, ἀλλὰ ἀναβαίνει δι' αὐτῶν εἰς τοῦ Ποιητοῦ καὶ Πλάστου τὸ πρόσωπον, τοῦ ὁποίου φέρουν τὴν εἰκόνα· καὶ ἔχεις νὰ ἐκπλαγῇς περισσῶς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, ἐάν ἰδῇς νὰ ἀναπαύεται περισσότερον εἰς αὐτοὺς παρὰ εἰς τὴν ἰδικήν σου καρδίαν, τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον (...)

Γίνε πτῶμα νὰ σὲ πατᾶνε ὅλοι ἐπάνω. Γίνε χῶμα, δεῖρε τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου, μίσησον ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἄσπονδον. Τέλειον μῖσος εἰς τὰ πάθη τῆς ἀτιμίας. Ἀνδρίζου καὶ μὴ μικροψυχῇς. Σοῦ ἐνθυμίζω τοὺς λόγους τῶν πατέρων μας ὅπου λέγουν: Δὸς αἷμα νὰ λάβῃς Πνεῦμα!

Δέν λογίζεσαι ἄνθρωπος, ὅταν δὲ λάβῃς Χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ χωρὶς τὴν Θεῖαν Χάριν ματαίως ἐγεννήθημεν. Ζητεῖς Χάριν ἀπὸ τὸν Θεόν; Ἀντὶ Χάριτος σοῦ ἀφήνει πειρασμόν. Δέν ἀντέχεις τὸν πόλεμον, πίπτεις; Δέν σοῦ δίδεται προσθήκη τῆς Χάριτος. Πάλιν ζητεῖς; Πάλιν ὁ πειρασμός. Πάλιν ἦττα; Πάλιν ὑστέρησις· ἐφ' ὅρου ζωῆς. Πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ βγῇς νικητής.

Ἀντέχου τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἕως θανάτου. Πέσε πτῶμα στὴν μάχην, φωνάζων κάτω παράλυτος: Οὐ μὴ σὲ ἀνῶ, γλυκύτατε Ἰησοῦ! Οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σὲ ἐγκαταλίπω. Ἀχώριστος θὰ μείνω εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ δι' ἀγάπην σου ξεψυχῶ εἰς τὸ στάδιον. Καὶ αἵφνης παρίσταται εἰς τὸ στάδιον καὶ φωνεῖ διὰ λαίλαπος: Πάρεμι! Τότε πληροῦσαι θείας ἀγάπης. Καὶ φλέγεται ἡ ψυχὴ σου ὡσάν τοῦ Κλεόπα. Καὶ ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ δέν καταλείπεις πλέον τὴν σινδόνα, καὶ νὰ φύγῃς ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ, ἀλλὰ καρτερεῖς εἰς τὰς θλίψεις διαλογιζόμενος· καθὼς παρήλθεν ὁ ἓνας πειρασμός καὶ ὁ ἄλλος, ἔτσι θὰ παρέλθῃ καὶ ὁ σημερινός.



Ὅταν ὁμως ἀθυμῆς καὶ γογγύζης καὶ δὲν ὑπομένῃς τοὺς πειρασμούς, τότε, ἀντὶ νὰ νικᾷς πρέπει διαρκῶς νὰ μετανοῇς· διὰ τὰ σφάλματα τῆς ἡμέρας, διὰ τὴν ἀμέλειαν τῆς νυκτός. Καί, ἀντὶ νὰ λαμβάνῃς ἐπὶ Χάριτος Χάριν, μεγαλώνεις τὰς θλίψεις σου.»

«Πόσιν ἀξίαν, πόσον μεγαλεῖον, τί μέγα προορισμὸν ἔχει ὁ ἄνθρωπος—αὐτὴ ἡ πνοὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ! Ὅχι διὰ νὰ ζήσῃ ἐδῶ τὰς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας τῆς ἐξορίας του, ἀλλὰ νὰ ζήσῃ αἰῶνια μὲ τὸν Πλάστην του. Νὰ βλέπῃ τοὺς θείους Ἀγγέλους. Νὰ ἀκούῃ τὴν ἄρρητον μελωδίαν τους. Τί χαρά! Τί μεγαλεῖον! Μόλις λαμβάνει τέρμα αὐτὴ ἡ ζωὴ μας καὶ κλείνουν τοῦτοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, εὐθὺς ἀνοίγουν οἱ ἄλλοι καὶ ἀρχίζει ἡ νέα ζωὴ. Ἡ ὄντως χαρά, ὅπου πλέον τέλος δὲν ἔχει (...)

Αὐτὸς εἶναι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὁ προορισμὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· διὰ τοῦτο ἐπλάσθη, καὶ ὀφείλει νὰ ἔλθῃ ὅθεν ἐξῆλθε. Τοιαῦτα εἶναι αἱ θεωρίαι, ὅπου ἀδολεσχεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ πνευματικὸς καὶ ἀναμένει τὴν ὥραν ποὺ θὰ ἀφήσῃ τὸ σῶμα καὶ θὰ πετάξῃ ἡ ψυχὴ του στὰ οὐράνια.»

Συνεχίζοντας τὴν ἀναφορά μας στὸν Γέροντα Ἰωσήφ τὸν Ἑσυχαστὴ δανειζόμεστε τοὺς λόγους ἐνὸς σύγχρονου Ἀγιορείτου Μοναχοῦ, τοῦ Γέροντος Ἰωσήφ Βατοπαιδινοῦ, γνωστοῦ σ' ἐμᾶς ἀπὸ τὸ συγγραφικὸ του ἔργο: «...μποροῦμε νὰ ποῦμε ἀπερίφραστα, χωρὶς καμία συστολή, ὅτι ὁλόκληρη τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ἀνεστήλωσε, δυνάμωσε καὶ πρόβαλε (...). Ἐπανεφέρε πάλι σὲ ἰσορροπία τὸν Ἄθωνα».

Ἀλλὰ ἂς ἀφήσουμε πάλι τὸν ἴδιον νὰ μᾶς μιλήσῃ μέσα ἀπὸ μερικὰ ἀποσπάσματα ἀπὸ διάφορες ἐπιστολὲς σὲ πνευματικά του τέκνα:

«Θὰ κουρασθῇς πολὺ, ἔως νὰ ἐννοήσῃς ὅτι προσευχὴ χωρὶς προσοχὴν καὶ νῆψιν εἶναι ἀπώλεια χρόνου· κόπος χωρὶς πληρωμὴν. Πρέπει εἰς ὅλας τὰς αἰσθήσεις μέσα ἔξω νὰ στήσῃς ἄγρυπνον φύλακα τὴν προσοχήν· διότι χωρὶς αὐτῆς ὁ νοῦς καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς αἱ δυνάμεις διαχέονται στὰ μάταια καὶ συνήθη, ὡσάν τὸ ἄχρηστο νερὸ ποὺ τρέχει στοὺς δρόμους. Οὐδεὶς ποτὲ εὔρε προσευχὴν χωρὶς προσοχὴν καὶ νῆψιν. Οὐδεὶς ποτὲ ἠξιώθη νὰ ἀνεβῇ πρὸς τὰ ἄνω χωρὶς πρῶτον νὰ καταφρονήσῃ τὰ κάτω.»

Πρὸ παντὸς ἄλλου πράγματος, ὁ ζητῶν Χάριν παρὰ Κυρίου, ὀφείλει νὰ ὑπομένῃ τοὺς πειρασμούς καὶ τὰς θλίψεις, καθ' οἷονδήποτε τρόπο μᾶς ἔλθουν. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐν καιρῷ πειρασμοῦ δυσανασχετῇ καὶ δὲν δείξῃ ἀρκοῦσαν ὑπομονήν, μήτε ἡ Χάρις ἐπαρκοῦσα θὰ ἔλθῃ, μήτε ἡ ἀρετὴ τελειοῦται, μήτε χαρίσματα ἀξιοῦται. Ὅποιος ἔμαθε ποῖα εἶναι ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅτι εἶναι αἱ θλίψεις καὶ ἐν γένει ὅσα μᾶς προσξενοῦσι οἱ πειρασμοί, αὐτὸς εὐρῆκε κατὰ ἀλήθειαν τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τοὺς περιμένει νὰ ἔλθουν, ὅτι δι' αὐτῶν καθαρίζεται· ὑπομένων φωτίζεται, καθορᾷ τὸν Θεόν.

(...) Ὅταν αἰσθάνεσαι ὅτι εἶναι πλησίον σου ὁ Θεός, καὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ περιστρέφεται καὶ ὅ,τι κάμνεις τὸ βλέπει, καὶ προσέχῃς νὰ μὴν τὸν λυπήσῃς—διότι ἐντὸς καὶ ἐκτὸς ὅλα τὰ θεωρεῖ—τότε δὲν ἀμαρτάνεις διότι τὸν βλέπεις, τὸν ἀγαπᾷς, καὶ προσέχεις νὰ μὴν τὸν λυπήσῃς, ὅτι ἐκ δεξιῶν σου ἐστὶ.

(...) Ὁ ταπεινός, μυρίας φορὰς καὶ ἂν πέσῃ, πάλι ἐγείρεται καὶ νίκη ἢ πτώσις λογίζεται. Ὁ δὲ υπερήφανος, εὐθὺς μὲ τὴν πτῶσιν εἰς τὸ ἀμάρτημα, πίπτει καὶ εἰς τὴν ἀπόγνωσιν· καὶ σκληρύνων δὲν θέλει πλέον νὰ ἐγερθῇ. Ἡ ἀπόγνωσις εἶναι θανάσιμος ἀμαρτία· καὶ χαίρει ἐν αὐτῇ ὑπὲρ ἅπαντα ὁ διάβολος. Διαλύεται δὲ εὐθὺς μὲ τὴν ἐξαγόρευσιν.»

«Καὶ λοιπὸν, τέκνον μου, βιάζου εἰς πᾶν ἀγαθόν. Καὶ ἂν συνεργοῦντες εἰς τὸ καλόν, πίπτωμεν κάτω πολλάκις, ὁμως νὰ μὴ μένωμεν ἐν τῷ πτώματι· ἀλλὰ ἀνιστάμενοι νὰ ζητοῦμεν συγχώρησιν παρὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν. Ἐκεῖνος δέ, ἐφ' ὅσον εἶπεν εἰς τὸν μαθητὴν του νὰ συγχωρῇ τῷ πταίοντι ἐβδομηντακοντούτις ἐπτὰ τὴν ἡμέραν, πῶς ὁ ἴδιος νομοθέτης δὲν θὰ συγχωρήσῃ ἡμᾶς;

Ὅθεν μὴ φοβοῦ. Ἀλλ' ὅσάκις πίπτεις ἐγείραι καὶ ζητεῖ διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν συγχώρησιν. Καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς υπεράγαθος δὲν σοῦ κρατεῖ κακίαν, δὲν συντηρεῖ θυμόν· καθ' ὅσον ἀπέχουσιν ἀνατολαὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν ἐμάκρυνεν ἀφ' ἡμῶν τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν.

(...) Μὴν κρύπτῃς λύπην εἰς τὴν καρδίαν σου, διότι ἡ χαρὰ τοῦ πονηροῦ εἶναι ἡ λύπη, ἡ ἀθυμία, ἐξ ἧς γεννῶνται πολλὰ καὶ ἐξ ὧν γεμίζει πικρίαν ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἐχοντος ταῦτα. Ἐνῷ τοῦ μετανοοῦντος ἡ διάθεσις λέγει: Ἥμαρτον, συγχώρησον, πάτερ! Καὶ δίδωκε τὴν λύπην.»

Ἡ αὐταπάρνησις τοῦ Γέροντος στὸν ἀγῶνα ἐναντίον τῶν παθῶν, καὶ ἡ φιλοπονία του φαίνονται στὸ παρακάτω ἀπόσπασμα:

«Τὸ δὲ ξύλον εἶναι παντὸς πάθους ἀλεξητήριον. Ὅπου καὶ οἱ δαίμονες τὸ φοβοῦνται καὶ φρίττουν, βλέποντες τὸν ἄνθρωπον νὰ τιμωρῇται ὡς μάρτυς διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν ἀγάπην. Πότε καὶ πότε, ὅταν τὰ πάθη ἐγείρονται κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ θέλουν νὰ ρίξουν τὸν νοῦν, τὸν ἀναβάτην, ὅταν τὸ κάθε πάθος ἐγείρῃ κεφαλὴν, τοῦ δίδεις τὸ σύνθημα: Σιώπα, πεφίμωσο!, διότι θὰ δουλεύσῃ ἡ ράβδος!

Ἔρχεται, λόγου χάριν, ὁ λογισμὸς καὶ σὲ θλίβει στὴν Ἐκκλησίαν: Διατὶ νὰ ψάλλῃ πάλιν ὁ ἀδελφός σου καὶ ὄχι ἐσὺ, κατὰ σειράν; Σὺ τοῦ λέγεις: - Προτιμώτερον νὰ ἀναπαυθῇ ὁ ἀδελφός μου καὶ ὄχι ἐγώ. Ἐπιμένει ὁ λογισμός: - Μὰ διατὶ, ἀφοῦ εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον καὶ σωστόν; Σὺ πές του: - Διάβολε, ἄφες με! Καὶ βάλε τὸν νοῦν σου εἰς τὴν εὐχὴν. Ἐξεγείρεται ὁ πειράζων, πάει νὰ σκάσῃ: - Μὰ ὄχι, διατὶ; - Καλὰ, εἶπέ του, καλὰ! Περίμενε ὀλίγον νὰ σοῦ πῶ τὸ διατὶ!

Καὶ εὐθὺς προφασιζόμενος, ἔβγα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ σπεῦσον εἰς τὸ κελλί σου. Ἐκεῖ λάβε τὴν ράβδον καὶ εἶπέ μὲ θυμόν: Νὰ τὸ διατὶ σου, διάβολε! Αὐτὸ εἶναι. Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον, ὅπου μοῦ ζητεῖς. Λάβε το λοιπόν! Καί, ἀφοῦ τὸν πληγώσῃς εἰς τὸ σῶμα σου, τὸν καταγγέλλεις εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν ὡς αἴτιον τοῦ πόνου σου. Φεύγει φρίττων ὁ δαίμων, ἔρχεται ὁ Χριστός, γεμίζει παράκλησιν, ἐλαφρώνει τὸ πάθος καὶ μανθάνεις τὴν τέχνην πῶς νὰ νικᾷς.

Σὲ κυριεύει ὁ ὕπνος; Πάταξον τὴν ἀμέλειαν. Σὲ ταράσσει ὁ θυμός; Σύντριψον τὸν ἐγωισμόν. Σὲ πικραίνει ἡ μνησικακία, ὁ φθόνος; Τὰ ὅμοια. Δὲν σοῦ ἀρέσει τὸ φαγητόν; Ἐπίσης.



Ἐγείρεται ὁ πόλεμος τῆς σαρκός· Ἐξεγέρθητι ὡς δυνατὸς καὶ πολέμησον τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου. Καὶ ἐν γένει, ὅπου τὸ σῶμα καὶ ὁ λογισμὸς θὰ ζητήσουν τὸ δικαίωμα καὶ τὸ διατί, ἡ λύσις εἶναι ἡ ράβδος. Ἡ θὰ ζήσω μίαν ὥραν καθὼς θέλεις, Χριστέ μου, ἢ ἂς μὴ ὑπάρχω εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴν. Ἔτσι κλαίεις, θρηνεῖς, καὶ ἔρχεται τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Κυρίου. Ἦσυχάζουν τὰ πάθη καὶ εἰρηνεύεις μὲ τὸν ἑαυτὸν σου, μὲ τὸν Θεὸν καὶ μὲ ὅλην τὴν κτίσιν (...)

Καὶ ἐγώ, μέχρι νὰ πέση τὸ σῶμα μου, πολλὰ ξύλα ἔσπασα στοὺς μηρούς μου. Ὡσάν δῆμιος, ἐστεκόμην ἐπάνω τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μου. Ἔτρεμε ὅλον τὸ σῶμα μου, ὅταν ἐβλεπε ὅτι θὰ πάρω τὸ ξύλον. Οἱ δαίμονες ἔφευγον, τὰ πάθη ἡμέρευον, παράκλησις ἦρχετο, καὶ ἔχαιρεν ἡ ψυχὴ. Καθότι εἶναι νόμος Θεοῦ· πᾶν ὅ,τι προξενεῖ ἡδονὴν θεραπεύεται μὲ ὁδύνην.

Ἀρκεῖ λοιπὸν περὶ τούτου. Ἄν ζητῇς περισσότερα ἀνάγνωθι τοὺς βίους τῶν ἁγίων. Ἀνάγνωθι νὰ ἰδῇς πόσην κακοπάθειαν μετεχειρίσθησαν οἱ ἅγιοι ἔναντι τοῦ παλαίου τῶν ἀνθρώπων· πόσον ἐκουσίως—ἀκουσίως ἔθλιψαν ἑαυτούς, ἕως ὅτου ἐξανθήσῃ μέσα τους τὸ ἄνθος τῆς ἀγνότητος, τῆς ἀγιότητος ἢ εὐωδία. Διὰ τοῦτο εὐωδιάζουν καὶ μυροβλύζουν τὰ μαρτυρικὰ καὶ ὁσιακὰ αὐτῶν λείψανα καὶ ἡ ἐνδημοῦσα ἐπάνω αὐτῶν Θεία Χάρις θαυματουργεῖν.

Ἡ τελεῖα παράδοση τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ του στὰ χέρια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποκαλύπτεται συγκλονιστικὰ στὸ παρακάτω ἀπόσπασμα:

«Καὶ πιστευσόν μοι τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγοντι ὅτι ἀφότου ἔγινα μοναχός, ὡσάκις ἡσθένησα, παντάπασι δὲν ἐπεμελήθην τὸν ἑαυτὸν μου. Μῆτε ἄφησα κανένα νὰ φροντίσῃ διὰ τὴν σωματικὴν μου ὑγείαν, ἀλλὰ ὅλην μου τὴν ἐλπίδα ἄφησα εἰς τὸν ἄμισθον ἱατρὸν. Καὶ τόσον ἐδοκιμάσθην εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν, ὅπου ἐγέμισε μεγάλα ὡσάν λεμόνια σπυριὰ ὅλη ἡ ράχη μου μέχρι καὶ κάτω· καὶ ἔγινα ὡσάν ξύλινος, μὴ δυνάμενος νὰ λυγίσω. Καὶ ἐγὼ ἐμαχόμουν τὸ πάθος, χωρὶς νὰ ἀλλάξω ποσὼς μῆτε φανέλλα μῆτε ἕτερον ροῦχο. Ἀλλὰ ἐφορτώθηκα ἓνα τορβὰ εἰς τὴν ράχην καὶ ἐγύρισα ὅλον τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος. Ὡσότου ἔσπασαν ὅλα ἐκεῖνα καὶ ἔτρεχαν μόνον τοὺς μέχρι τὰ πόδια μου. Καὶ δὲν ἄλλαξα, ὅπως εἶπα, μαχόμενος καὶ δεινῶς ὑπομένων· καὶ ἔγιναν ἡ φανέλλα καὶ κάτω ἓνα δάκτυλο πάχος τὸ ροῦχο ἀπὸ τὴν ὕλην ποὺ ἔτρεξε. Καὶ εἰς τὰς τρύπες τῶν πληγῶν ἐχωροῦσε τὸ δάκτυλό μου καὶ δὲν ἔπαθα τίποτε. Καὶ μέχρι σήμερον ὅ,τι ἀρρώστεια μοῦ ἔρχεται μὲ πολλὴν χαρὰν τὴν ἐκδέχομαι, μήπως μὲ φέρῃ τὸν αἰώνιον ὕπνον· νὰ εὐρεθῶ εἰς τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα. Πάντως θὰ ἔλθῃ συντόμως».

Μὲ τέτοια ἀνδρεία καταφρονοῦσε ὁ Γέρων Ἰωσήφ τῆς σωματικῆς ἀσθενείας, καὶ μὲ αὐτὴ τὴ χαρὰ περίμενε τὴ μετάβασί του «ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν», τὴν ἀληθινὴν ζωὴν, τῆς ὁποίας εἶθε νὰ ἀζιωθοῦμε κι ἐμεῖς. Εὐχόμαστε δὲ οἱ πρεσβεῖες του νὰ σκεπάζουν τὸ νησί μας, τὴν εὐδαίμονα καὶ ἀλλοτριωμένην σήμερα Πάρο, ποὺ τὸν γέννησε καὶ τὸν ἀνέθρεψε μὲ τὰ χρηστά ἥθη της, ἐκείνης τῆς ἐποχῆς...

## Ἐθισμένοι στὸ «Shopping»

Τοῦ Νίκου Γ. Ξυδάκη, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐφημερίδα «Καθημερινή», 11 Δεκεμβρίου, 2005.

ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΣΥΝΤΑΚΤΗ: Παρατηρήσετε τὴν «ἄφθονη» καὶ ἄτυχη παρουσία πολλῶν ξένων λέξεων στὸ παρὸν κείμενο. Ἡ πύκτη καὶ τὸ λεξιλόγιο τοῦ παρόντος ἄρθρου εἶναι τυπικὸ τοῦ τί παρατηρεῖ ἓνας σημερινὸς ἀναγνώστης τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἐφημερίδων. Ἡ ξενομανία, ποὺ τόσο ἐβλαψε τὴν πατρίδα μας καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνορθόδοξη παράδοσή μας, συνεχίζει τὴν συνεχῶς ἀυξημένην παρουσίαν της στὸ καθημερινὸ λεξιλόγιο τῶν ἐν Ἑλλάδι συμπατριωτῶν μας. Ἡ ἀποφυγὴ τοῦ πλουσιοπάτου Ἑλληνικοῦ λεξιλογίου καὶ ἡ ἀντικατάστασή του μὲ λέξεις ἀπὸ γλῶσσες ποὺ οἱ προγονοὶ μας χαρακτήριζαν ὡς «βάρβαρες» ἀποτελεῖ ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ μέγιστα ἐγκλήματα τῆς παρούσας ἐποχῆς καὶ τῆς τάχα «προοδευμένης» πατρίδας μας.

\* \* \*

Λίγο προτοῦ φτάσουν οἱ γιορτές καὶ χωρὶς ἀκόμη τὸν 13<sup>ο</sup> μισθό, ἡ Ἀττικὴ ὑποδέχθηκε τὸ μεγαλύτερο ἐμπορικὸ κέντρο ὑπὸ τὸν ὑποβλητικὸ ἀμερικανοεξωτικὸ τίτλο The Mall, Athens—κατὰ τὸ Paris, Texas, ἢ τὸ Zephyri, Athens. Ἦδη μὲ τὴν ὀνομασία, ὁ βαριὰ ἐθισμένος Ἀθηναῖος, τὸ shopping animal, ρίγησε. Δὲν πρόκειται γιὰ ἓνα ἀκόμη ἐμπορικὸ κέντρο, ἀλλὰ γιὰ Μῶλ: Ἑκατοντάδες μαγαζιά, μούλτιπλεξ σινεμά, καφέ, ρεστωρὰν, περατζάδες, βιτρίνες, χιλιόμετρα γιὰ χάσι...

Στὰ χιλιάδες τετραγωνικά του τὸ «Μῶλ» ὑπόσχεται ἓναν ὀρισμένο παράδεισο γιὰ τὸν ἐξαρτημένο τοῦ shopping, μὲ λαμπρές εὐρωπαϊκὲς ἀτραξιόν, μὲ ὑπερέχουσα τὴν ἀγορὰ κουλτούρας, τὸ κομπὸ fnac, τὰ ὑπέρκομψα γκάτζετ. Ὁ ἰδανικὸς τόπος γιὰ νὰ ξεκοκκαλίσης τὸ χαρτζιλίκι καὶ νὰ τινάξεις στὰ κόκκινα τὶς πιστωτικὲς, γιὰ νὰ κορέσης πρόσκαιρα τὸ πάθος τοῦ ψωνίζειν καὶ νὰ συρθῇς ἄδειος στὸ πάρκινγκ σέρνοντας ξέχειλες σακούλες.

Ὁ πληθυσμὸς ἀνταποκρίθηκε. Ἔσπευσε νὰ προσκυνήσῃ στὰ θυρανοίξια, νὰ πεταρίσῃ γύρω ἀπὸ τὰ φῶτα σάν τὶς νυχτοπεταλοῦδες, νὰ ψωνίσῃ, νὰ καταναλώσῃ, νὰ ξεδιψάσῃ τὸ κάλεσμα τῆς βουλιμίας. Χιλιάδες. Καταναλωτές ἀπὸ περιέργεια, ἀπὸ ἐθισμό, ἀπὸ ἀδράνεια, ἐπειδὴ αὐτὴ εἶναι ἴσως ἡ μόνη γνωστὴ ἐναλλακτικὴ.

Ἴδου ἡ ὀλοκλήρωση τοῦ ἐκσυγχρονισμοῦ. Οἱ αὐτοκινητόδρομοι, τὸ μετρώ, ὁ προαστιακός, οἱ ὑποδομές, ὅλα πιά ὑπηρετοῦν αὐτὴν τὴν ὀλοκλήρωση: τῆς ἀγορᾶς. Τὸ Ἰκέα, τὸ Ντίξονς, τὸ Μεντια Μάρτ, τὸ Μῶλ, παρατάσσονται σαγηνευτικὰ στὴν Ἀττικὴ Ὀδό, σὲ πρώην ἐλαιῶνες καὶ μπαχτσέδες. Στὴ γῆ φυτρώνουν ὑπερφυσικὰ πάνελ ποὺ προσφέρουν ἀναδιπλούμενα κινητὰ καὶ φτηνὰ ἀεροπορικὰ ταξίδια. Στους παράδρομους φυτρώνουν μαγαζάρια. Πιο πέρα ἀνεβοκατεβαίνουν τζέτ. Στὸ βάθος σκυθρωπιάζει ὁ ἰοστεφής Ὑμηττός, τώρα καὶ κεραειοστεφής. Ὅλα στὰ μέτρα τῆς Ἀγίας Κατανάλωσης.



Στους όμοιόμορφα γκρίζους σταθμούς του μετρό και του προαστιακού, στο άεροδρόμιο, όλα σκεπάζονται από inox, γρανίτη, τσιμέντο και μέταλλο βαμμένα γκρι. Οί commuters σκαλίζουν τα κινητά, καλωδιώνονται με Μομπι και Βανδή, μαγνητίζονται από τα πάνελ και τις επιγραφές, σημαδεύουν τους τόπους με μαγαζιά: στο Ίκέα, στο Μώλ, στο Άττικά.

Οί κυρίες κανονίζουν πρωινές έξορμήσεις στα μαγαζιά, όχι όμως όπως παλιά. Δεν θα τριγυρίσουν στο Κολωνάκι ή την Έρμου, σε δρόμους και σοκάκια, προτού καταλήξουν για καφέ ή ούζο. Θα βγούν στους αυτοκινητόδρομους, θα πήξουν ελαφρώς στο τράφικ και θα ξεμπαρκάρουν στα μεγάλα λιμάνια. Θα επιστρέψουν απομεσήμερο, με γεμάτα πόρτ-μπαγκάζ. Με μία ταγγίλα στο στόμα.

Σημάδια μητρόπολης. Η κοινωνία ωριμάζει σαν αγορά. Οί πολίτες ωριμάζουν σαν καταναλωτές. Κερδίζουν, χωρίς να διεκδικούν, το δικαίωμα στο shopping και στην κατανάλωση. Κερδίζουν το δικαίωμα στη δανειοδότηση του shopping, στη δανειοδότηση των διακοπών, στη δανειοδότηση της μικρολιγούρας του Σαββατοκύριακου. Κερδίζουν το δικαίωμα να κυλάνε τα χρέη τους από τράπεζα σε τράπεζα. Κερδίζουν το δικαίωμα να μεταφέρουν τον αριθμό του κινητού από εταιρεία σε εταιρεία. Κερδίζουν το δικαίωμα να μεταφέρουν τις αγορασμένες μονάδες τους από μήνα σε μήνα. Κερδίζουν το δικαίωμα να προσφεύγουν σε κάποιον Συνήγορο ή Μη Κυβερνητική Όργάνωση για το κακό σέρβις και την έλλιπη έγγυση των προϊόντων. Κερδίζουν διαρκώς δικαιώματα, ακόμη κι όταν δεν τα ζητάνε. Άλλα έτσι γενναιόδωρη είναι ή ζωή: Θέλω, Έλευθερία, Περισσότερο—ιδού λέξεις σηματοδότες, που ακούγονται σαν συνθήματα του '68, ενώ είναι σλόγκαν καρτοκινητών.

Βλέπω τους έφηβους, τους εικοσάρηδες, τις τριαντάρες, στο άστυ. Είναι κομψοί, νοιάζονται για το στυλ σε κάθε λεπτομέρεια, νοιάζονται για την εικόνα. Και είναι τρυφεροί, εύθραυστοι, νευρικοί κάτω από την επιδερμίδα του cool. Τους αισθάνομαι άκόρεστους, διαρκώς διψασμένους, σε διαρκή μικροστέρηση, για κάτι να λείπη. Ναί. Όσο σωρεύεις, τόσο σου λείπει. Το shopping είναι σαν τα μοντέρνα αντικαταθλιπτικά: Άκίνδυνο και εύφορικό στην αρχή, βαρύνει και έθιστικό έν συνεχεία, σε βυθίζει στο Μώλ του Άνικανοποίητου. Η έκσταση της κατανάλωσης διαρκεί μόνο μια στιγμή: τη στιγμή της παρόρμησης. Σβήνει άκαριαά μόλις υπογράψεις το διπλότυπο της πιστωτικής. Τα φώτα του αυτοκινητόδρομου κεντάνε ματαιόδοξα το άνυπέρβλητο μενεξεδί της Άττικής. Η φυλή των ψωνιστών γυρνάει σπίτι μελαγχολικά, άκόρεστη. Οί γεμάτες σακούλες δεν κρύβουν καμιά έκπληξη, μόνο βάρος. Τα ψώνια θα σωριαστούν, θα τριφτούν, θα πεταχτούν. Τα Μώλ όμως θα γνέφουν...

...και ό Χριστός μας, ό Σωτήρας και Πανάγαθος Θεός μας, που τις μέρες αυτές «... *τίκτεται ως βρέφος υπό Μητρός Παρθένου*», θα εισέλθη άκόμα μια χρονιά σε θρήνος Πατρός, πριν άκόμη οί ψωνιστάι της Άθήνας, οί τάχα πιστοί Έλληνορθόδοξοι, ψάλλουν το «*Η Παρθένος σήμερα...*» Άραγε θα βάλουν το πόδι τους μέσα σε κάποια έκκλησία ή κάνανε τα Μώλ ναούς των σημερινών τους θεών, και τρέχοντας σ' αυτούς για καινούργιες πιστωτικές περιπέτειες, θα άρχίσουν τις προετοιμασίες για τα χαρτοπαίγνια της Πρωτοχρονιάς;



## Έπί Προσευχής

Η προσευχή ως προς την ποιότητά της είναι συνουσία και ένωση του ανθρώπου με τον Θεόν, και ως προς την ενέργειά της, σύστασις και διατήρησις του κόσμου, συμφιλίωσις με τον Θεόν, μητέρα των δακρύων, καθώς επίσης και θυγατέρα, συγχώρησις των άμαρτημάτων, γέφυρα που σώζει από τους πειρασμούς, τοίχος που μάς προστατεύει από τις θλίψεις, συντριβή των πολέμων, έργο των Άγγέλων, τροφή όλων των άσωμάτων, ή μελλοντική εύφροσύνη, εργασία που δεν τελειώνει, πηγή των άρετών, πρόξενος των χαρισμάτων, άφανής πρόοδος, τροφή της ψυχής, φωτισμός του νοῦ, πέλεκυς που χτυπά την άπόγνωση, άπόδειξις της έλπίδος, διάλυσις της λύπης, πλούτος των μοναχών, θυσαυρός των ήσυχαστών, μείωσις του θυμού, καθρέπτης της πνευματικής προόδου, φανέρωσις των μέτρων, δήλωση της πνευματικής καταστάσως, άποκάλυψις των μελλοντικών πραγμάτων, σημάδι της πνευματικής δόξης που έχει κανείς.

Άγιος Ίωάννης της Κλίμακος



Η Ρωμηοσύνη δεν άποδεικνύεται, περιγράφεται. Δεν χρειάζεται άπολογητάς. Είναι άπλως αυτό που είναι. Το δέχεται κανείς ή το άπορρίπτει. Διά τουτο τα παιδιά των Ρωμηών ή παραμένουν πιστοί και σκληροί Ρωμηοί ή φραγkevουν ή έκτουρkevουν!

Πρεσβ. Ίωάννης Σ. Ρωμανίδης (1927-2001)  
*Ό άνθωνοτικός και διαχθείς υπό των οίκουμεινιστών ψευδοποιμένον,  
 ό άναβιωτής της θεραπευτικής καθ' ήμās Ίερās Παραδόσεως,  
 ό μεγαλύτερος Έλληνας θεολόγος του 20<sup>ου</sup> αιώνος,  
 ό ιστορικός της Ρωμηοσύνης,  
 ό διά Χριστόν σαλός!*

## Ἡ Ἀγιορείτικη Οἰκουμενικότητα

Τοῦ Χρήστου Γιανναρά, ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸν «Ἄρδην», τεύχος 11, Δεκέμβριος 1997 - Ἰανουάριος 2008.

Ἡ μοναστική πολιτεία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους εἶναι ὡς ζωντανὸ ἀκόμα ἔρεισμα τῆς Ἑλληνορθόδοξης οἰκουμενικότητας. Κοινωνία-κοινότητα πολυεθνική, πολυφυλετική καὶ πολύγλωσση, μὲ ... καὶ ἐνοποιὸ ταυτότητα τὴν ἐλευθερία ἀπὸ τὴ φύση γιὰ χάρι τῆς σχέσης.

Νὰ ξεχωρίσουμε τίς σημασίες τῶν λέξεων: Ἡ ἀγιορείτικη οἰκουμενικότητα δὲν εἶναι «διεθνισμός» οὔτε «πλουραλισμός», οὔτε «ἀνοχή τῶν διαφορῶν». Αὐτοὶ οἱ ὅροι τῆς σύγχρονης γλώσσας σηματοδοτοῦν τὴ νοησιαρχικὴ ἀπαίτηση νὰ ἀντικαταστήσουμε τὴν Οἰκειότητα τῆς πατρίδας (τίς κοινὲς βιωματικές ρίζες ποὺ μᾶς συνέχουν, στὸν κεχωρισμένο τόπο τῆς) μὲ ὀρθολογικὲς κανονιστικὲς ἀρχὲς συμβίωσης: ἐξισορροπήσεις δικαιωμάτων, ἐνοποιήσεις συμφερόντων, νομικὴ κατασφάλιση ὅλων.

Καὶ ὁ ἀγιορείτης μοναχὸς ἀρνεῖται τὴ σιγουριά τῆς πατρίδας καὶ τῆς συγγένειας. Ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ πραγματώσῃ ἐκείνη τὴν ἐσχατὴ ἐλευθερία τῆς αὐταπάρνησης ποὺ ἀποτυπώνεται στὸν «σκανδαλωδέστατο» λόγο τοῦ Χριστοῦ: «Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς με καὶ οὐ μισεῖ τὸν πατέρα ἐαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὰ τέκνα καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφούς καὶ τὰς ἀδελφάς, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐαυτοῦ ψυχὴν, οὐ δύναται μοι μαθητὴς εἶναι.» (Λουκ. 14:26)

Αὐτὸ τὸ «μῖσος» εἶναι ρήξη μὲ τὴ φύση καὶ ἄρνηση τῆς φύσης γιὰ χάρι τῆς σχέσης. Ἡ φύση μας πλανεύει μὲ σχέσεις ριζωμένες στὴν ἀνάγκη. Τὸ «μῖσος» γιὰ τὴν ἀνάγκη ἐλευθερώνει τὴ σχέση, τὴ μεταμορφώνει σὲ κατακτημένη ἀγάπη. Ὁ μοναχὸς ἀναλαμβάνει νὰ πραγματώσῃ ὁρατὰ αὐτὸ ποὺ κάθε Χριστιανὸς ἐσωτερικεύει ὡς ἐπιδίωξη: Νὰ ἀντλή ὑπαρξὴ ὄχι ἀπὸ τὴ θνητὴ φύση, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ὑπαρκτικὰ ἀπεριόριστη σχέση. Νὰ ὑπάρχῃ στὸ ποσοστὸ ποὺ παραιτεῖται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀτομικὴ αὐθυπαρξία γιὰ χάρι τῆς ἀγαπητικῆς κοινωνίας.

Ἀκόμα καὶ στὴν πατρίδα ἢ στὴν συγγένεια ἐπενδύουμε ἀτομοκεντρικὲς ψυχολογικὲς θωρακίσεις: τὴν ἀνάγκη τῆς σιγουριάς τοῦ οἰκείου καὶ ἀσφαλοῦς ἀπέναντι στὸ ἀνοίκειο καὶ ἄγνωστο τοῦ θανάτου. Ὁ μοναχὸς «ἐξέρχεται ἐκ τῆς γῆς του καὶ τῆς συγγενείας του» ἀναζητώντας πατρίδα στὸ ἀπόλυτο κενὸ κάθε ψυχολογικῆς—φυσικῆς παρηγορίας. Ἐκεῖ ποὺ ἡ γίνεται σχέση ἢ ἴδια ἢ ὑπαρξὴ, ἢ ἡ ἀτομικότητα

συντρίβεται στὸν ἀπελπισμὸ καὶ μηδενίζεται.

Στὴν ἀγιορείτικη πολιτεία, ὁ ἐπισκέπτης ψηλαφεῖ αὐτὴ τὴ διαφορετικὴ «πατρίδα» ἀνθρώπων ἐλευθέρων ἀπὸ τὸν πανικὸ τοῦ θανάτου. «Πατρίδα» τοῦ οἰκουμενικοῦ καὶ δίχως σύνορα τρόπου τῆς ἐλευθερίας ἀπὸ τὴ φύση καὶ τὴν ψυχολογικὴ ἀνάγκη. Ἐκεῖ, πραγματικά, «οὐκ ἐν Ἑλλήνι καὶ Ἰουδαίῳ, βάρβαρῳ, Σκύθῃ δουλῷ, ἐλεύθερῳ» (Κολ. 3:11). Τοὺς «πολίτες» αὐτῆς τῆς πολιτείας τοὺς συνέχει μία καινούρια οἰκειότητα, ξεριζωμένη ἀπὸ τὴν ἐνστικτώδη ἀνάγκη καταφυγῆς στὴ συλλογικότητα καὶ φυτεμένη στὴν ἀπλοχωρία τῆς αὐτοπαραίτησης καὶ αὐτοπροσφοράς.

Ὡς πολιτικὸ κατόρθωμα ἡ ἀγιορείτικη πολιτεία θεμελιώνει τὴν κοσμοπολίτικη οἰκουμενικότητά της στὶς «συνταγματικές» προδιαγραφὲς τῆς ἄσκησης: Ἡ σκοπούμενη ἐλευθερία τῆς ἀγαπητικῆς κοινωνίας δὲν εἶναι ἰδεαλιστικὴ συναρπαγὴ σὲ ψυχολογικὲς ψευδαισθήσεις, ἀλλὰ πράξις καθημερινῆς ἄρνησης τοῦ «ἰδίου θελήματος» καὶ ἀντίστασης στὶς ἀναγκαιότητες τῆς φύσης. Ἡ ἀγιορείτικη ἐτερότητα παλεῖ γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν παραίτηση καὶ τὴν ἐμπρακτὴ ἀπέκδυση τῶν ἀπαιτήσεων ἐλευθερίας, δηλαδὴ μέσα ἀπὸ τὸ ἄθλημα τῆς ἐκούσιας ὑπακοῆς. Δὲν συμβιβάζεται μὲ τὴ χρηστικὴ ἠθικοπλαστικὴ «πειθαρχία» (κατάλληλη γιὰ τοὺς νηπίους ποὺ φοβοῦνται τὴν ἐνηλικίωση), ἀλλὰ θέλει κάθε στιγμὴ νὰ βεβαιώνῃ τὴν ἐλευθερία ὡς αὐτοπαραίτηση. Γιατί, ὅπως συνόψισε καίρια ὁ Ντοστογιέφσκι, «ἡ μόνη πραγματικὴ ἐλευθερία εἶναι νὰ ἐλευθερωθῇ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ τὸν ἐαυτό του».

Ὁ ρεαλισμὸς τῆς ἀγιορείτικης πείρας ξέρεי καλὰ νὰ ἀποκρυπτογραφῇ τίς καμουφλισμένες ἀντιστάσεις τῆς φύσης στὸ ἀσκητικὸ ἄθλημα τῆς ἀγαπητικῆς ἐλευθερίας. Τὴν ἀποκρυπτογράφηση αὐτὴ τὴ λένε στὴν ἀγιορείτικη γλώσσα διάκριση: Νὰ μπορῇ ὁ μοναχὸς νὰ ξεχωρίσῃ τὴν ὑπακοὴ ἀπὸ τὴν πειθαρχία, τὴν ἄσκηση ἀπὸ τὸν αὐτάρεσκο μαζοχισμό ἢ τὸν ἠθικιστικὸ πρωταθλητισμό, τελικὰ τῆς φύσης ἀπὸ τὴ χάρι, τὸ ἀτομικὸ κατόρθωμα ἀπὸ τὸ παρεχόμενο δῶρημα.

«Τὴν φύσιν ἐαυτοῦ νικῆσαι τινὰ τῶν οὐκ ἐνδεχομένων ἐστίν», βεβαιώνει ὁ οἰκουμενικὸς ἀθλητὴς τῆς ἐρήμου Ἰωάννης τῆς Κλίμακος. Ἀποκλείεται μὲ τίς δυνάμεις σου, δίχως τὴ χάρι τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ νικήσῃς τὴν φύση σου. Ἡ χάρι δὲν προγραμματίζεται, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ ἀγιορείτικος ρεαλισμὸς ἐπικεντρώνεται στὴν κάθαρση τῶν κριτηρίων τῆς διάκρισης, δὲν ἐμπιστεύεται τὴν αἰσιοδοξία γιὰ τὴ





χαρισματική εξασφάλιση. Η οργάνωση του βίου, οι δομές, οι θεσμοί, όριοθετούν τις προϋποθέσεις ελευθερίας της άσκησης (της οικουμενικότητας του αθλήματος) από τις επιβουλές της φύσης: τις αποκλίσεις σε έθνοκεντρικές ή ήθικιστικές προτεραιότητες, σε φυλετισμούς ή ζηλωτισμούς.

Είναι συναρπαστικές για τον μελετητή οι πρακτικές εκφάνσεις και καταστατικές διατυπώσεις της άμυνας που προβάλλει το Όρος για την προάσπιση του οικουμενικού χαρακτήρα του. Πώς αντιστάθηκε στις άρχες του αιώνα για να μην μετατραπεί σε έθνικιστικό προτεκτοράτο της ρωσικής υπερδύναμης, σε σλαβικό κράτος του Θεού. Πόσο συνετά άρνήθηκε ή άρνεϊται και τον έθνικιστικό έναγκαλισμό του από το Έλλαδικό κρατίδιο, τον έπαρχιωτικό εξελλαδισμό του. Πώς αντιδρά στη μουσειακή και τουριστική του διεθνοποίηση. Πόσο διακριτικά εξισορροπεί σήμερα την μέσα στους κόλπους του, λαίλαπα του ζηλωτισμού που θέλει να μετατρέψει τη ζωτική οικουμενικότητα του Όρους σε υπερεθνική είσαγγελία αστυνόμευσης της πιστότητας των Ορθοδόξων σε μία ιδεολογική, νομικίστικη «Ορθοδοξία».

Η άγιορείτικη πολιτεία είναι μάλλον το τελευταίο τοπικό έρεισμα και της Έλληνικής οικουμενικότητας. Της Έλληνικότητας που ζει ένεργητικά, δυναμικά και μεταμορφώνει την Ιστορία όταν υπερβαίνει τη φυλετική—έθνική της υπόσταση, για να υπάρξει στις διαστάσεις της πνευματικής της καθολικότητας. Η Ορθόδοξη λατρεία, οι αποφάσεις των Συνόδων, ή θεολογία των Πατέρων, ή τέχνη των Εικόνων είναι συγκεκριμένες φανερώσεις της Έλληνικής καθολικότητας. Αλλά αυτή ή Έλληνικότητα ενδιαφέρει πανανθρώπινα, ακριβώς έπειδή έχει σταυρικά αυθυπερβαθεί, έχει παραιτηθεί από κάθε έθνοφυλετική (άκόμα και γλωσσική) αποκλειστικότητα.

Ο τρόπος που οι Νεοέλληνες υποτάξαμε την οικουμενική δυναμική της Έλληνικότητάς μας στον έθνικιστικό έπαρχιωτισμό και στον μίζερο τοπικισμό, είναι από τα πιό έξωφρενικά ιστορικά παράδοξα που μπορεί να παραγάγει ή άλλοτρίωση και παρακμή μίας κοινωνίας. Στην πολιτική πρακτική μας λογαριάζουμε την εκκλησιαστική Ορθοδοξία σαν «έπικρατούσα θρησκεία» (τοπική έκφανση του θρησκευτικού «συναισθήματος») και το Άγιον Όρος σαν μουσειακό κατάλοιπο και άξιοθέατο έξωτικό απολίθωμα του θρησκευτικού μας παρελθόντος. Ούτε υποψία για την Ορθόδοξη και άγιορείτικη οικουμενικότητα, την πανανθρώπινη έμβέλεια και την δυναμική παγκοσμιότητα της Έλληνορθόδοξης πρότασης.

Όστόσο, κάποια «μαγιά» σώζεται ακόμα στο Άγιονόρος: Σε μιá ελάχιστη φλούδα γής σπέρμα άκαταμάχητης βλαστικής δύναμης... Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ!

## Γιὰ τοὺς Ἐχοντας Καταθλίψη, Ἄγχος, Φοβία, καὶ Ἀνασφάλεια

*Πρεσβυτέρου Ἀθανασίου Μηνᾶ.*

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος: «*Ἄρατε τὸν ζυγὸν μου ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς καὶ μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτος εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπανσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν.*» (Ματθ. 11:29) Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος που ζητάει ἀληθινά, πραγματικά νὰ ἀπαλλαγῇ ἀπὸ τὴν κατάθλιψη καὶ ὅλα τὰ ἄλλα που τυρρανοῦν τὴν ψυχὴ του, ὀφείλει νὰ συνάψῃ συγγενικὴ σχέση μετὸν Χριστὸν, ὥστε νὰ μάθει, νὰ διδαχθῇ αὐτὰ τὰ πολὺ ἀπλά λόγια. Δηλαδὴ ἀπόκτησι, γνώσι τῆς πραότητος καὶ ταπεινώσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Γιὰ τὸ πῶς μπορεῖ κάποιος νὰ συγγενέψῃ μετὸν Χριστὸν μᾶς τὸ λέει ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Κύριος. «*Ὅστις γὰρ ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, αὐτὸς μου ἀδελφός καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.*» (Ματθ. 12:50) Ἀς δοῦμε λοιπὸν τί μᾶς παραγγέλει ὁ Θεὸς Πατέρας τόσον στὸ Θαβώριον Ὅρος ὅσον καὶ στὸν Ἰορδάνη Ποταμό, ἤτοι στὴ Θεῖαν Μεταμόρφωσιν καὶ Ἀγίαν Βάπτισιν ἀντίστοιχα. «*Οὗτός οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε.*» (Ματθ. 17:5). Πῶς ἀρχίζει λοιπὸν ὁ Κύριός μας τὴν ἐπίγειον διδασκαλίαν Του; Μὲ τὰ ἴδια λόγια που καὶ ὁ Τίμιος Πρόδρομος ετοίμαζε τὴν ὁδὸν Του γιὰ νὰ περπατήσῃ ἀνάμεσά μας. «*Μετανοεῖτε· ἤγγικε γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.*» (Ματθ. 4:17), «*Μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.*» (Μάρκ. 1:15)

Αὐτὸ πρακτικὰ κατανοεῖται ὡς ἐξῆς: Ἀφοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος πιστεύει μετ’ ὅλην του τὴν καρδίαν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὡς μοναδικὸν Σωτῆρα καὶ Λυτρωτὴν καὶ γίνεαι μέλος τῆς Ἀγίας Του Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας διὰ τοῦ Ἀγίου Ὁρθοδόξου Βαπτίσματος καὶ Χρίσματος, τότε καθημερινὰ μετὰ πλήρη γνώσι καὶ ἀγία προσπάθεια τήρησης τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ Θεοῦ, χρησιμοποιοεῖ πυκνὰ συχνὰ (κυρίως στὴν ἀρχὴ) τὴν ἀγία Ἐξομολόγησι, χωρὶς τῆς ὁποίας δὲν ὑπάρχει ἀνάπαυσι. Ἔτσι μετὰ τὴν καθοδήγησι ἐμπειροῦ πνευματικοῦ πατέρα διὰ τῆς μετανοίας ἀπεκδύεται τὰ πάθη, ἀποκτᾷ σιγὰ-σιγὰ καθαρὰ καὶ ἀγνὴ ψυχὴ, ἀγνὸ καὶ παρθενικὸ σῶμα. Γίνεται κατὰ Χάριν ναὸς τοῦ Ἀγίου Πνεύματος.

Ἐπειδὴ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα εἶναι ὁ Παράκλητος καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς μας εἶναι φῶς ἐκ φωτός, ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἡ καρδιὰ τοῦ μετανοοῦντος γεμίζουν παράκλησι καὶ φῶς. Ποῦ νὰ βροῦν θέσι τότε λύπη, στεναγμός, ἀγωνία, θλίψι, κατάθλιψη, ἢ ἄλλοι λογισμοί, που ταλαιπωροῦν τὸν νοῦ καὶ τὸ σῶμα; Ἐξαφανίζονται χωρὶς καμμίαν ἄλλην προσπάθειαν, χωρὶς χάπια. Ἡ καρδιὰ γίνεται Παράδεισος καὶ ὅποιες ἐπιθέσεις μετὰ διαφορὰς φοβίες φέρνει ὁ Σατανᾶς ἀχρηστεύονται, γίνονται καταγέλαστες. Θεέ μου, εἶναι ὅλα τόσο ἀπλά, όταν Σε ἀγαπήσουμε ἀληθινὰ καὶ Σοῦ ἐμπιστευθοῦμε τὰ πάντα στὴν ζωὴ μας! Ἡ ἄγνοια ὁμως τῶν πολλῶν εἶναι αὐτὴ που δυσκολεύει καὶ πολλὰς φορὰς καταστρέφει τὴν χαρὰ, τὴν ἀνάπαυσή μας.



## ON HOLY MARRIAGE

By St. John Chrysostom (from Homily XX).

*Editor's Note: There exist many Bible verses that are often misinterpreted (unwillingly or not), leading the faithful into not only false understanding of our Lord's divine words but also towards incorrect life styles and behaviors, even within our homes. The New Testament verses that are the subject of this article fall along these line. The Brotherhood of St. Poimen considered it proper that we allow our Holy Faith's gold-mouthed saint to provide us the one and only correct explanation.*

† † †

*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.* [Eph 5:22-25]



St. John Chrysostom  
(+407)

made special provision for this union; and discoursing of the twain as one, He said thus, *male and female created he them* (Gen 1:27); and again, *there is neither male nor female.* (Gal 3:28) For there is no relationship between man and man so close as that between man and wife, if they be joined together as they should be.

And therefore a certain blessed man too, when he would express surpassing love, and was mourning for one that was dear to him, and of one soul with him, did not mention father, nor mother, nor child, nor brother, nor friend, but what? *Thy love to me was wonderful*, saith he, *passing the love of women.* (2 Sam 1:26) For indeed, in very deed, this love is more despotic than any despotism: for others indeed may be strong, but this passion is not only strong, but unfading. For there is a certain love deeply seated in our nature, which imperceptibly to ourselves knits together these bodies of ours. Thus even from the very beginning woman sprang from man, and afterwards from man

and woman sprang both man and woman. [Compare what Paul says in 1 Cor 8 & 12: *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. And For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman.*]

Do you perceive the close bond and connection? And how that God suffered not a different kind of nature to enter in from without? And mark, how many providential arrangements He made. He permitted the man to marry his own sister; or rather not his sister, but his daughter; nay, nor yet his daughter, but something more than his daughter, even his own flesh. [The author refers to Adam's marrying Eve.] And thus the whole He framed from one beginning, gathering all together, like stones in a building, into one. For neither on the one hand did He form her from without, and this was that the man might not feel towards her as towards an alien; nor again did He confine marriage to her, [that is, he did not confine marriage to woman with woman] that she might not, by contracting herself, and making all center in herself, be cut off from the rest. [There is another reading which applies these words to the man, as follows: *συστελλων ἑαυτὸν καὶ συνάγων*, *that he might not, by contracting himself and making all center in himself, be cut off from the rest*, instead of *συστελλουσα*, etc.]

Thus as in the case of plants, they are of all others the best, which have but a single stem, and spread out into a number of branches; so, I say, is the case here also. (Since we're all confined to the root alone, all would be to no purpose, whereas again had it a number of roots, the tree would be no longer worthy of admiration.) From one, namely Adam, He made the whole race to spring, preventing them by the strongest necessity from being ever torn asunder, or separated; and afterwards, making it more restricted, He no longer allowed sisters and daughters to be wives, lest we should on the other hand contract our love to one point, and thus in another manner be cut off from one another. Hence Christ said, *He which made them from the beginning, made them male and female.* (Mt 19:4)

For great evils are hence produced, and great benefits, both to families and to states. For there is nothing which so welds our life together as the love of man and wife. For this many will lay aside even their arms, for this they will give up life itself. And Paul would never without a reason and without an object have spent so much pains on this subject, as when he says here, *Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.* And why so? Because when they are in harmony, the children are well brought up, and the domestics are in good order, and neighbors, and friends, and relations enjoy the fragrance. But if it be otherwise, all is turned upside down, and thrown into confusion. And just as when the generals of an army are at peace one with another, all things are in due subordination, whereas on the other hand, if they are at variance,

everything is turned upside down; so, I say, it is also here. Wherefore, saith he, *Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*

Yet how strange! For how then is it, that it is said elsewhere, *If one bid not farewell both to wife and to husband, he cannot follow me?* (Lk 14:26) For if it is their duty to be in subjection *as unto the Lord*, how saith He that they must depart from them for the Lord's sake? Yet their duty indeed it is, their bounden duty. But the word "as" is not necessarily and universally expressive of exact equality. He either means this, "as" knowing that ye are servants to the Lord"; (which, by the way, is what he says elsewhere, that, even though they do it not for the husband's sake, yet must they primarily for the Lord's sake;) or else he means, *when thou obeyest thy husband, do so as serving the Lord.* [ὡς expresses the mode of view in which the wives are to regard their obedience towards their husbands, namely, 'as rendered to the Lord. In Lk 14:26 the absolute is put for the relative, as elsewhere often, and this explains our author's difficulty.] For if he who resisteth these external authorities, those of governments, I mean, *withstandeth the ordinance of God* (Rom 13:2), much more does she who submits not herself to her husband. Such was God's will from the beginning.

Let us take as our fundamental position then that the husband occupies the place of the "head," and the wife the place of the "body."

In verses 23-24, he proceeds with arguments and says that *the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church, being Himself the Saviour of the body. But as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything.* [This "but" is by no means easy of explanation, but probably is to be understood thus: He is the saviour of the body that man certainly is not, "but, nevertheless," as the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their husbands, etc.] Then after saying, *The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is of the Church*, he further adds, *and He is the Saviour of the body.* For indeed the head is the saving health of the body. He had already laid down beforehand for man and wife, the ground and provision of their love, assigning to each their proper place, to the one that of authority and forethought, to the other that of submission. As then *the Church*, that is, both husbands and wives, *is subject unto Christ, so also ye wives submit yourselves to your husbands, as unto God.*

In verse 25 he proclaims: *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church.* Thou hast heard how great the submission; thou hast extolled and marvelled at Paul, how, like an admirable and spiritual man, he welds together our whole life. Thou didst well. But now hear what he also requires at thy hands; for again he employs the same example. *Husbands*, saith he, *love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church.*

Thou hast seen the measure of obedience, hear also the measure of love. [If you put all the arguments of orators together, you will not persuade husband and wife to mutual affection as Paul does in this place.] Wouldest thou have thy wife obedient unto thee, as the Church is to Christ? Take then thyself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for thee to give thy life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever,—refuse it not. Though thou shouldest undergo all this, yet wilt thou not, no, not even then, have done anything like Christ. For thou indeed art doing it for one to whom thou art already knit; but He for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him.

In the same way then as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, and spurned, and disdained Him, not by menaces, nor by violence, nor by terror, nor by anything else of the kind, but by his unwearied affection; so also do thou behave thyself toward thy wife. Yea, though thou see her looking down upon thee, and disdaining, and scorning thee, yet by thy great thoughtfulness for her, by affection, by kindness, thou wilt be able to lay her at thy feet. For there is nothing more powerful to sway than these bonds, and especially for husband and wife. A servant, indeed, one will be able, perhaps, to bind down by fear; nay not even him, for he will soon start away and be gone. But the partner of one's life, the mother of one's children, the foundation of one's every joy, one ought never to chain down by fear and menaces, but with love and good temper.

For what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband? And what sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Yea, though thou shouldest suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this.



When malice against anyone is roused in your heart, then believe with your whole heart that it is the work of the Devil working in your heart: hate him and his brood, and malice will leave you. Do not acknowledge it as anything of your own, and do not sympathize with it. This is from experience.

St. John of Kronstadt, "My Life in Christ"

## THE CORE OF OUR HOLY FAITH'S SPIRITUALITY

*By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "Orthodox Spirituality: A Brief Introduction."*

In the Holy tradition of the Orthodox Church at the centre of Orthodox spirituality is the heart and the nous. It is this centre which needs to be treated so that man's complete psychosomatic constitution is cured. Moreover as the Lord said: Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (Mt 5:8) In order to see what the heart and nous are we must begin by examining the soul.

From the narration of Genesis in the Old Testament, we know that initially God created Adam's body and then He breathed into it and created his soul. By saying "He created the soul" it is made clear that the soul is not a particle of God, the spirit of God, as some people claim. But, as St. John Chrysostom says, since the in-breathing of God is the energy of the Holy Spirit, it is this energy of the Holy Spirit which created the soul, without itself being the soul. It is of vital importance to state this, for thus we understand well that the soul cannot be examined autonomously but only in connection with God.

Every man's soul is one and manifold, at the same time, as St. Gregory Palamas says. In another context St. Gregory Palamas teaches that as God is Trinity—Nous, Logos and Spirit—in a corresponding way man's soul has a trinitarian nature: there is the nous—the core of man's existence, the logos—begotten by the nous, and the spirit—"man's noetic love."

The soul is closely linked to man's body. It is not located in only one part of the body. According to Orthodox teaching, God governs the world through his uncreated energies. Just as God acts in nature, so the soul moves and activates each member of the body to perform its function, according to St. Gregory of Sinai. Therefore, just as God governs the world in the same way does the soul govern the body. As St. Gregory Palamas expresses it, the soul occupies the body with which it was created. It fills the entire body, giving life to the body. In other words, the soul is not enclosed by the body, but it occupies the body to which it is attached.

There is a strong bond between the soul and the body but also a clear distinction. A person is made up of body and soul, both of which coexist simultaneously without any confusion. Thus, it is not just the soul which is called man, neither is it solely the body which is called man, but both of them constitute man. The soul gives life to the whole body of man through its providential powers. However if the human body lacks one of its members, for example if a man has no eyes, this does not mean that the soul's providential powers are of a lesser degree. Moreover the soul is not in and of itself equiva-

lent to her providential powers but she uniquely encloses all the providential powers of the body.

St. Gregory of Nyssa states characteristically that the soul is not held by the body but it is she who contains the body. In other words, the body does not function as a vessel or a wine-skin containing the soul, but rather the body is within her. The soul acts throughout the whole of man's body.

What has been said about the soul may seem highly theoretical, although it is a distinct teaching of the Church, and as such indispensable to the reader's understanding of the matter of heart and nous, which is the centre of Orthodox spirituality. We are not able, otherwise, to comprehend where the Orthodox Church is headed and what she seeks to cure.

As God has essence and energy, so also does the soul—having been made in the image of God—have essence and energy. Essence and energy in God are of course uncreated, whereas the soul's essence and energy are created. Nothing exists without an energy. The sun's essence is beyond the atmosphere of the earth, yet its energy, which gives light, heat and causes burning etc.—reaches to earth and affords her with light, heat etc. The same happens with all objects. The soul's essence is found in the heart not like in a vessel but as if in an organ; its energy operates through the thoughts (logismoi—λογισμοί).

According to St. Gregory Palamas, the soul is called the nous as well. Yet, both the essence of the soul—the heart—and its energy—consisting of the thoughts—are called nous. However, although in the Biblical-Patristic tradition the terms are interchangeable, to avoid any confusion the soul is referred to as the spiritual element of man's existence; the heart, as the essence of the soul, and the nous as the energy of the soul. Thus, when the nous enters the heart and acts therein, there exists a unity between the nous (energy), the heart (essence) and the soul.

All asceticism in the Church aims at man's theosis (divinization), at his communion with God the Trinity. This is accomplished when the energy of the soul (nous) returns to its essence (heart) and ascends to God. For unity with God to be attained, the unity of the soul, through the grace of God, must precede it. Sin in fact is the dispersion of these powers; it is primarily the scattering of the soul's energy, i.e. of the nous, to things, and its separation from the heart.

Having made these clarifications it is important to examine more analytically what the heart and nous are in Orthodox tradition.

The heart is the centre of man's psychosomatic constitution, since, as we noted previously, there is an "unconfused" union between soul and body. The centre of this union is called heart.

The heart is the place which is discovered through ascetic practice in a state of grace; it is the place wherein God is revealed and made manifest. This definition may seem abstract, yet it is a matter of spiritual experience. No one can



fully show the place of the heart by rational and speculative definitions. In any case the heart is a centre and summation of the three faculties of the soul: of the intellect, the appetitive and the irascible. The fact is that when a person lives the inner life—when his nous returns within his inner world from its previous dispersion; when he experiences mourning and in the deepest sense, repentance—he is then conscious of the existence of this centre, i.e. the existence of the heart. He feels therein pain and spiritual sorrow; he experiences the grace of God; there also he even hears the voice of God.

According to patristic tradition, the essence of the soul, which is called heart, is found as if within an organ, not in a vessel where the physical organ of the heart is. This should be interpreted in reference to what it was said before, that the soul holds the body and gives life to it; it is not contained by the body but it contains the person's body. It is within this perspective that St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite speaks of the heart as a biophysical (natural) centre, since the blood is circulated to all parts of the body from there; as an affected (contrary to nature) centre, since the passions prevail therein, and as a supernatural centre since the grace of God operates there, as many passages of the Holy Scripture state:

*But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Mt 5:28)*

*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God. (Rom 2:5)*

*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. (Eph 3:17)*

*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Rom 5:5)*

The nous, on the other hand, is the energy of the soul. According to the Fathers, the nous is also called the eye of the soul. Its natural place is to be found within the heart; to be united with the essence of the soul and to experience the unceasing memory of God. Its movement goes contrary to nature when it is enslaved by the creatures of God and the passions. Orthodox tradition makes a distinction between nous and reason.

Reason is a function in the brain whereas the nous operates out of and is united with the heart in its natural state. In the Saintly person, who is the manifestation and bearer of Orthodox spirituality, reason works and is conscious of the surrounding world while the nous is within the heart, praying unceasingly. The separation of the nous from reason constitutes the state of a spiritually healthy person, and this is the goal of Orthodox spirituality.

Quite illustrative of the above theme are two passages from St. Basil the Great's writings. In one text he says that in the spiritual man—who has become a temple of God and of the Most Holy Spirit—reason and the nous exist and oper-

ate simultaneously. Reason is engaged in earthly cares and the nous is engaged in the unceasing remembrance of God. Moreover, because his nous is united with the heart and has communion with God, man is not disturbed by unexpected temptations, that is to say, by temptations caused by the decay and transiency of his nature.

In the other passage St. Basil refers to the return of the nous into the heart and its ascent to God. The nous which is scattered outwards and diffused through the senses into the world is sick, fallen, prodigal. It must return from its diffused state to its union with and in the heart, its natural state, and then be united with God. Illumined by the uncreated Light (the state of theosis), the nous neglects even its nature, and the soul is not preoccupied with clothing and shelter. This does not mean that man does not care about food, etc. But, because man has attained to the state of theoria (vision of God) and theosis, his bodily forces -not those of the soul—are in a state of suspension; in other words, the soul and nous are not subjugated by the influences of the world and material things. Man is, of course, concerned about them, yet he is not enslaved by them. Additionally, St. Basil the Great clearly states that by this movement of the nous' return within the heart, virtue as a whole is acquired: prudence, bravery, justice, wisdom along with all of the other virtues.

Fr. John Romanides says that all living creatures possess two known memory-systems. First, "there is the cell memory which determines the development and growth of the individual in relationship to itself". This is the known D.N.A. structure which is the genetic code that literally defines everything in the human constitution. Secondly, "there is the brain cell memory which determines the functions and relations of the individual towards himself and his environment." This is the operation of the brain which—being imprinted by all memories of the past as well as by human knowledge acquired through study and investigation—defines man's relations with his fellow-human beings. In addition though, according to Romanides, "there exists within every person a non-functioning or sub-functioning memory within the heart; and when activated through noetic prayer, it has perpetual memory of God, which contributes to the normalization of all of a person's other relations.

Consequently the Saint—a bearer of Orthodox spirituality—possesses all three of these memories, which act and function simultaneously without influencing one another. A Saint is the most "natural of men". He is conscious of the world, involved in various concerns, yet -because his nous has attained to its natural function- "he lives on earth but is a citizen of heaven".

Therefore, the centre of Orthodox spirituality is the heart, within which man's nous must inherently operate. The energy of the soul -the nous- must return within the soul's essence—in the heart; and thus by uniting these powers by

the grace of God acquire unity and communion with God the Trinity. Spirituality outside of this perspective is not orthodox but moralistic, pietistic, abstract and rationalistic.

† † †

### Notes

**Theoria:** Theoria is the vision of the glory of God. Theoria is identified with the vision of the uncreated Light, the uncreated energy of God, with the union of man with God, with man's theosis (see note below). Thus, theoria, vision and theosis are closely connected. Theoria has various degrees. There is illumination, vision of God, and constant vision (for hours, days, weeks, even months). Noetic prayer is the first stage of theoria. Theoretical man is one who is at this stage. In Patristic theology, the theoretical man is characterised as the shepherd of the sheep.

**Theosis-Divinization:** It is the participation in the uncreated grace of God. Theosis is identified and connected with the theoria (vision) of the uncreated Light (see note above). It is called theosis in grace because it is attained through the energy, of the divine grace. It is a co-operation of God with man, since God is He Who operates and man is he who co-operates.



### ON CONDEMNING THY NEIGHBOR

As soon as you condemn someone, say to yourself, Thou hypocrite, first remove the beam out of thine own eye (Mt. 7:5). The beam in the eye is pride. The Pharisee had all the virtues, but he was proud; but the Publican, however, had humility, and was better.

You should be attentive to your interior life, so as not to notice what is happening around you. Then you will not judge.

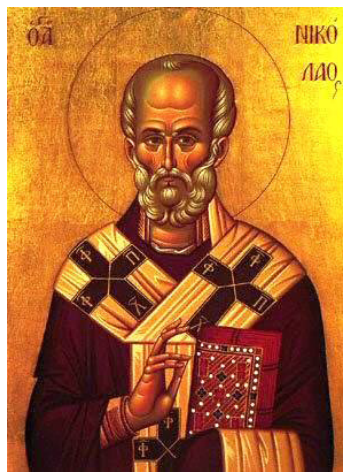
Do not start examining the deeds of people, do not judge, do not say: "Why is it this way? What is this for?" It is better to say to yourself, 'What does their work have to do with me? I will not answer for them at the Dread Judgment of God.' Divert every thought of yours from judging the deeds of people, and pray fervently to the Lord that He help you; because without the help of God, we can do nothing good. As the Lord Himself said, Without Me you can do nothing (Jn 15:5).

Say the Jesus Prayer against the temptations of the flesh. When angry, however, pray for the one who upsets you: "Save, O Lord, and have mercy on \_\_\_, and through his holy prayers, help me—accursed and sinful."

**St. Ambrose the Optina Elder (+1891)**

## ON VENERATION OF ICONS AND SANTA CLAUS

*By Hierodeacon Makarios.*



It's been snowing heavily since noon in Gardner; the roads were in terrible condition. Tired, physically and mentally (8 hours of teaching), I hardly could see the man at the roadside behind the pile of snow. I stopped; he was going to Heywood Hospital. Not far, but at such speed would take a while.

I turned the heat on full blast, and the man leaned forward, towards the flow of hot air. He looked neither young nor healthy. I wonder how long he'd been waiting for a ride.

"Are you Catholic?" he asked as he was looking at a tiny icon on the dashboard.

I was totally disinclined to a serious road conversation.

"No," I said simply, "I am Orthodox," although many Orthodox would say "Yes, Catholic, but not Roman-Catholic," which is quite accurate.

Then he started his story. It was a long and complicated one, about his relatives of different persuasion, what they would say, and how they would do something totally different, and how it all ended in nothing. I nodded and said "Yea," "Sure," "Unbelievable" at the right moments, but then the story came to the end, and it was clearly my turn to speak. I had no clue what to say, pretending to be fully involved in pushing through the piles of snow around the hospitals' entrance.

Finally I turned off the ignition. He was silent. I looked at the icon.

"Do you know Santa Claus?" I asked.

"Sure," he replied.

"No, not that clown who works for retail sales; the real one!"

"What do you mean, 'real'?"

"Yes, the real one. The one on this icon."

"Is this Santa Claus???"

"Yes. St. Nicholas, Sanctus Nicolaus, became Santa Claus. He was a bishop in a small town, in what is now land that is occupied by Turkey; he lived over fifteen hundred years ago. Never made a big deal of himself. But his secret kindness and generosity made him famous all over Christian Europe, and his name became linked with the charity to the poor and

gift giving. However, when it was about the defense of the Christian faith against imposters and 'reformers' of all sorts, he was totally different. Through the efforts and struggle of people like him, today we have the true, in-corrupt faith of Christ. That's why we remember them and stay in communion with them, like a good family does."

The man was looking at the icon. I turned the dome light on.

"May I look at it?" he asked hesitantly.

I took the icon off the dashboard.

"Take it," I said, "It's your gift, for Christmas."

He nodded thankfully, said good-bye and opened the door. It was dark outside, but I noticed him touching the icon with his lips before hiding it in the pocket.



### SAFEGUARD HOLY ORTHODOXY

An obvious fall from faith [through] pride is to either subtract something from what is written, or to introduce something new to the unwritten. ... Keep striving until the fire of heresy is put out, before it consumes the Church.

**St. Basil the Great**

Everyone who speaks contrary to what has been prescribed—even if he fasts, even if he is a virgin, even if he prophesies, even if he works miracles—you should see him as a wolf in sheep's clothing that is contriving the destruction of the sheep.

**St. Ignatios the 'God-bearer' of Antioch**

If someone believes evil about the faith [i.e., heretically], flee from him and have nothing to do with him—not only if he is a man, but even if he happens to be an angel from heaven. However, do not critique a person's lifestyle; because, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged," applies to all matters of the lifestyle, and not to matters of faith.

**St. John Chrysostom**

Be aware not to be corrupted from the love of the heretics; for this reason, do not accept any false belief (dogma) in the name of love.

**St. John Chrysostom**

People in our time speak of the divided Church and the urgent need of reuniting it. Father Florovsky remarks that "the Church is not divided, has not been divided, did not divide ... and is not divisible." What is divided is the Christian world. This "is in a state of descent, conflict and—is it not time to admit it?—in collapse. ..." We should not speak of "disunion in the Church," but of "disassociation from the Church."

**Dr. Constantine Carvanos**

[speaking on the blessed Fr. Georges Florovsky's teachings on Ecumenism]

## THE LORD HAS RISEN UP IN JUDGMENT

*By Saint Nikolai Velimirovich.*

*From 15 September 1944 to 8 May 1945, the great Serbian Orthodox theologian and contemporary Church Father, Bishop Nicholas (Velimirovich) of Zhicha, was imprisoned by the Nazis in the notorious concentration camp of Dachau. There he kept a diary of seventy-six chapters, "Through a Prison Window," in which he addressed himself to the Serbian people.*

*In it St. Nicholas the Serb, as many now call him, never mentioned his own sufferings, but rather expressed his profound grief at the spiritual and moral decadence of contemporary mankind, which he called, "Life without aim and death without hope." According to the Saint, it was this aimlessness and hopelessness which explained the European catastrophe of the twentieth century and its World Wars. Here follows the translation of one of those chapters within which the saint is still calling Europe to repentance.*

† † †



What could the Old Testament be called in contemporary language? It could be called the court records of the judgment of God and His people, at that time, the chosen people. The prophets literally say that God enters into judgment with His people (Isaiah 3, 13-14; Micah 6,2; Malachi 3,5).

In our own times we hear of so-called secret records and documents, some of which have been exposed and have even been published. These records are supposed to describe various schemes to subjugate the world. In them there is no God, no prophetic word, no testament, no heavenly holiness in its words, no heavenly imprint. This is because they are vain journalism. These contemporary secret records contain about one hundred pages. But the records of the judgment of God with the Jewish people over thousands of years constitute about a thousand pages. Reading these ancient court records—the Old Testament—each of us has two sincere feelings. The first is amazement at Divine faithfulness and longsuffering; the second—shame at the perfidiousness of the chosen people in their relation to God their Benefactor, at their resistance to Him, that can only be explained as satanic malice, disobedience to Him, a disobedience which even a mule or some other beast does not show to its master and the one who feeds it.

But we, who live in the twentieth century, no longer belong to the Old Testament but to the New Testament. What is



the difference? The difference is great. In the Old Testament God spoke to people through the mouths of prophets and angels, but in the New Testament, where He appeared as a man in the flesh, He speaks personally and directly. What can be said of those who flee the light of the Gospel for the darkness of Egypt and seek to enter into judgment with God with the same Jewish obstinacy of Old Testament times? We can only say that Christians who enter into judgment with God, who renounce Christ, show malice and disobedience to God Who is made manifest; such people are foolish and sinful, worse than the Old Testament Jews, who did not wish to hear the angels of God, the prophets and the righteous, for they were insolent to the servants of the Master, but the former are insolent to the Master Himself.

If the history of the last three centuries—the 18th, 19th and 20th—were to be given its true name, then there could not be found a more fitting name than “The Records of the Judgment between Europe and Christ;” for all the significant events in Europe of the last three centuries are connected to our Lord Jesus Christ.

In reality, at the judgment between Europe and Christ the following is happening.

Christ reminds Europe that it is baptized in His Name and must be faithful to Him and His Gospel. The defendant Europe replies:

- All denominations are equal. The French Encyclopedists told us this and it is wrong to force anyone to believe in any one of them. Europe shows tolerance to all denominations as national customs, as it wishes to keep its imperialistic interests, but Europe itself is not attached to any of them. But when it has achieved its political goals, then it will swiftly settle accounts with these vain folk beliefs.

Then Christ asks with sorrow:

- How can you people live solely for imperialistic, that is, materialistic interests, for the animal desire solely for bodily food? I wanted to make you gods and sons of God and you wish to make yourselves equal to beasts of burden.

But Europe replies to this:

- You are obsolete. Instead of your Gospel, we have discovered zoology and biology. Now we know that we are descendants of orangutans and gorillas—monkeys, we are not yours and not of your Heavenly Father. Now we are perfecting ourselves in order to become gods, for we do not recognize any gods other than ourselves.

Christ replies:

- You are more obstinate than the ancient Jews. I raised you up from the darkness of barbarianism to heavenly light, but once more you rush headlong towards the darkness, just as pigs rush headlong towards the mud. I shed my blood for you, I gave you My blood, when all the angels had turned away from you, for they could not bear your hellish stench. When you turned into darkness and stench, I alone rose up

for you in order to enlighten and cleanse you. Return to me, otherwise you will once more find yourself in an unbearable stench and darkness.

But Europe smiles mockingly:

- Leave us. We do not know you. Greek philosophy and Roman culture are closer to us. We want freedom. We have universities. Science is our guiding star. Our motto is freedom, equality, brotherhood. Our reason is the god of gods. You are Asian, we renounce you. You are a mere fairy-tale told by our grandfathers and grandmothers.

Christ says with tears in His eyes:

- So, I will go away, but you will see and understand that you fell away from the path of God and took the path of the devil. Blessing and joy are taken from you. Your life and your death are in My hands, for I gave Myself up to crucifixion for you. But it is not I Who will punish you; your sins and your falling away from Me, your Saviour, will punish you. I showed the love of the Father for all people and wanted to save you all through love.

But Europe replies to this:

- What love? Sobriety and courageous hatred for all, who do not agree with us, this is our program. Your love is a mere fable. We prefer nationalism and internationalism, the worship of science and culture, aesthetics, evolution and progress to your love. Our salvation is in these, but as for you, go away!

Oh my brothers, nowadays progress is complete. Christ has left Europe, as once before Christ left Gadara at the insistence of the Gadarenes. But as soon as He left, there started wars, misfortunes, horrors, destruction, and annihilation. Pre-Christian barbarianism has returned to Europe, that of the Avars, the Huns, the Lombards, the Vandals, only nightmarishly multiplied a hundredfold. Christ has taken up His Cross and His blessing and left. Darkness and stench have spilled forth. So decide who you want to be with: with the darkness and stench of Europe, or with Christ. Amen.



Every day continue to do your assigned duties and obedience, and try every possible way to reveal all of your deeds and all of your thoughts that come from the enemy of mankind—the devil. If you do this, and: strive to cut off your own will; in no way believe your own thoughts; stay far from doubting and judging others as from a deadly poison; and—with the cooperation of divine grace—struggle to correct yourself, then—I dare say—that the All-Merciful Savior will not only heal your wounds, but He will grant you the gifts of humility and discretion!

St. Leo the Optina Elder (+1841)

## THE DECALOGUE OF THE ORDAINED CHANTER

*From the book "The Unwritten Typikon of the Eastern Orthodox Church", by Reader Ioannis H. Damarlakis, translated by Fr. Luke Hartung.*

The Decalogue of the ordained chanter is as follows:

1. To stand at the hour of the Divine Services in a posture of regal humility without unnecessary movements, facial gestures, etc.
2. To always wear the holy rasso and to try to have his helpers also wear rassos. This gives solemnity.
3. To always chant from the books of our Byzantine Ecclesiastical Music, in accordance with the canon of the Œcumenical Synod of Laodicea "chanting from parchments".
4. To always chant the same — whether he is alone in the Church or whether the entire congregation is present—for in all occasions he chants to God, Who is everywhere present.
5. To unite the mood of the psalmody with the meaning of the hymn. For example, the diatonic tone is chanted one way on Holy Thursday and another on Pascha. Namely he should chant colorfully and not plainly.
6. To respect the liturgizing priests and his brethren and work peacefully with them.
7. From the moment in which he dons the holy rasso and begins to perform his holy duty, he should take leave of "every earthly care".
8. To pronounce the readings and chant the melodies pleasantly and meaningfully so that the faithful may understand and participate.
9. To know that every exaggeration during the time he chants causes irreparable damage.
10. He should participate in the things taking place in the divine services, so that the words of the troparion are not fulfilled in him that say: "Many times while chanting, I am found committing sin, [for with my tongue I pronounce songs of praise, yet in my soul I think unseemly things]" (from the Aposticha of the Praises, Third Tone, Monday morning)".

The ordained chanter as lower clergy must behave accordingly. His general appearance (attire, hair, etc.) should always "show" his office/ministry. He is first and foremost a "churchman" and to be successful in his work, he must live a life of virtue, "in study, in learning, in faith, in fasting, in patience and obedience".

There are two choirs, right and left. In today's understanding, the right is considered the first choir while the left the second. In older times the primacy switched between the two choirs each week; the right choir one week and the left choir the next. All that remains of this practice today is in the small vespers when the left choir has the primacy, while at great vespers it is the right.

## KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

*By Elder Sophrony Sakharov (+2001), from "His Life is Mine," Chapter 1: Knowledge of God, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.*

*O Thou Who art:*

*O God the Father, Almighty Master:*

*Who hast created us and brought us into this life:*

*Vouchsafe that we may know Thee,*

*The one true God.*

The human spirit hungers for knowledge—for entire, integral knowledge. Nothing can destroy our longing to know and, naturally, our ultimate craving is for knowledge of Primordial Being, of Whom or What actually exists. All down the ages man has paid instinctive homage to this First Principle. Our fathers and forefathers revered Him in different ways because they did not know him *as he is* (I Jn 3:2). Some (surely they were among the wisest) set up *an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD* (Acts 17:23). Even in our day we are continually made aware that reason per se cannot advance us over the threshold to the *Unknown*. God is our only means of access to this higher knowledge, if He will reveal Himself.

The problem of knowledge of God sends the mind searching back through the centuries for instances of God appearing to man through one or other of the prophets. There can be no doubt that for us, for the whole Christian world, one of the most important happenings recorded in the chronicles of time was God's manifestation on Mount Sinai where Moses received new knowledge of Divine Being: *I AM THAT I AM* (Exod 3:14)—*Jehovah*. From that moment, vast horizons opened out before mankind, and history took a new turn. A people's spiritual condition is the real cause of historical events: it is not the visible that is of primary importance but the invisible, the spiritual. Perceptions and ideas concerning being, and the meaning of life generally, seek expression and in so doing instigate the historical event.

Moses, possessed of the supreme culture of Egypt, did not question that the revelation that he was so miraculously given came from Him Who had indeed created the whole universe. In the Name of this God, I AM, he persuaded the Jewish people to follow him. Invested with extraordinary power from Above, he performed many wonders. To Moses belongs the undying glory of having brought mankind nearer to Eternal Truth. Convinced of the authenticity of his vision, he issued his injunctions as prescripts from on High. All things were affected in the Name and by the Name of the I AM Who had revealed Himself. Mighty is this Name in its strength and holiness—it is action proceeding from God. This Name was the first ingress into the living eternity; the dayspring of knowledge of the unoriginate Absolute as I AM.

In the Name of Jehovah, Moses led the still primitive Israelites out of their captivity in Egypt. During their wanderings

in the desert, however, he discovered that his people were far from ready, despite the many miracles they had witnessed, to receive the sublime revelation of the Eternal. This became particularly clear as they approached the borders of the Promised Land. Their faint-heartedness and lack of faith caused the Lord to declare that none of those impregnated with the spirit of Egypt should see the *good land* (Deut 1:32, 35, 38). They would leave their bones in the wilderness, and Moses would encourage and prepare a new generation more capable of apprehending God—Invisible but holding all things in the palm of His hand.

Moses was endowed with exceptional genius but we esteem him more especially because he realized that the revelation granted to him, for all its grandeur and validity, was not yet completed. He sensed that He Who had revealed Himself was *the first and the last* (Is 44:6); that there could be no one and nothing before Him or after Him. And he sang: *Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.* (Deut 32:1) At the same time he continued to pray for better knowledge of God, calling to Him out of the depths: *Shew me Thyself (as Thou art), that I may know thee.* (Exod 33:13; 1 Jn 3:2) God heard his prayer and revealed Himself in so far as Moses could apprehend, for Moses could not contain the whole revelation. *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee... (and) while my glory passeth by, I... will cover thee with my hand... And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.* (Exod 33:19, 22, 23)

That the revelation received by Moses was incomplete is shown in his testimony to the people *that the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee... unto him ye shall hearken.* Also: *And the Lord said unto me... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.* (Deut 18:15, 18). According to the Old Testament all Israel lived in expectation of the coming of the Prophet of whom *Moses wrote* (Jn 5:46), the Prophet par excellence, *THAT prophet* (Jn 1:21). The Jewish people looked for the coming of the Messiah who when he was come would tell them *all things*. (Jn 4:25) Come and live among us, that we may know Thee, was the constant cry of the ancient Hebrews. Hence the name *Emmanuel being interpreted is, God with us* (Is 7:14; Mt 1:23).

So for us Christians, the focal point of the universe and the ultimate meaning of the entire history of the world is the coming of Jesus Christ, Who did not repudiate the archetypes of the Old Testament but vindicated them, unfolding to us their real significance and bringing new dimensions to all things—infinite, eternal dimensions. Christ's new covenant announces the beginning of a fresh period in the history of mankind. Now the Divine sphere was reflected in the searchless grandeur of the love and humility of God, our Father. With the coming of

Christ all was changed: the new revelation affected the destiny of the whole created world.

It was given to Moses to know that Absolute Primordial Being is not some general entity, some impersonal cosmic process or supra-personal, all-transcending 'Non-Being'. It was proved to him that this Being had a personal character and was a living and life-giving God. Moses, however, did not receive a clear vision: he did not see God in light as the apostles saw Him on Mount Tabor—*Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.* (Exod 20:21) This can be interpreted variously but the stress lies on the incognisable character of God, though in what sense and in what connection we cannot be certain. Was Moses concerned with the impossibility of knowing the Essence of the Divine Being? Did he think that if God is Person, then He cannot be eternally single in Himself, for how could there be eternal metaphysical solitude? Here was this God ready to lead them but lead them where and for what purpose? What sort of immortality did He offer? Having reached the frontier of the Promised Land, Moses died.

And so He appeared, He to Whom the world owed its creation; and with rare exceptions *the world knew him not* (Jn 1:10). The event was immeasurably beyond the ordinary man's grasp. The first to recognize Him was John the Baptist, for which reason he was rightly termed the *greatest among them that are born of women and the last of the law and the prophets* (Mt 11:9-13).

Moses, as a man, needed obvious tokens of the power and authority bestowed on him, if he were to impress the Israelites, still prone to idol-worship, and compel them to heed his teaching. But it is impossible for us Christians to read the first books of the Old Testament without being appalled. In the Name of Jehovah all those who resisted Moses suffered fearful retribution and often death. Mount Sinai *burned with fire*, and the people were brought *unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, to the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which... they could not endure.* (Heb 12:18-20)

It is the opposite with Christ. He came in utter meekness, the poorest of the poor with nowhere to lay His head. He had no authority, neither in the State nor even in the Synagogue founded on revelation from on High. He did not fight those who spurned Him. And it has been given to us to identify Him as the Pantocrator precisely because *He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant* (Phil 2:7), submitting finally to duress and execution. As the Creator and true Master of all that exists, He had no need of force, no need to display the power to punish opposition. He came *to save the world* (Jn 12:47), to tell us of the One True God. He discovered to us the Name of Father. He gave us the word which He Himself had received from the Father. He revealed God to us as *Light in Whom is no darkness at all* (cf. 1 Jn 1:5).

The world continues to flounder in the vicious circle of its material problems—economic, class, nationalistic, and the



like—because people refuse to follow Christ. We have no wish to become like Him in all things: to become His brethren and through Him the beloved children of the Father and the chosen habitation of the Holy Spirit. In God's pre-eternal Providence for man we are meant to participate in His Being—to be like unto Him in all things. By its very essence this design on God's part for us excludes the slightest possibility of compulsion or predestination. And we as Christians must never renounce our goal lest we lose the inspiration to storm the kingdom of heaven. Experience shows all too clearly that once we Christians start reducing the scope of the revelation given to us by Christ and the Holy Spirit, we gradually cease to be attracted by the Light made manifest to us. If we are to preserve our saving hope, we must be bold. Christ said: *Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:33) He had overcome the world in this instance not so much as God but as Man for He did in truth become man.

Genuine Christian life is lived *in spirit and in truth* (Jn 4:23), and so can be continued in all places and at all times since the divine commandments of Christ possess an absolute character. In other words, there are and can be no circumstances anywhere on earth which could make observance of the commandments impossible.

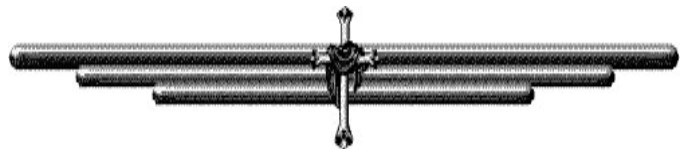
In its eternal essence Christian life is divine spirit and truth and therefore transcends all outward forms. But man comes into this world as *tabula rasa*, *to grow, wax strong in spirit, be filled with wisdom* (cf. Lk 2:40), and so the necessity arises for some kind of organization to discipline and co-ordinate the corporate life of human beings still far from perfect morally, intellectually and, more important, spiritually. Our fathers in the Church and the apostles who taught us to honor the true God were well aware that, though the life of the Divine Spirit excels all earthy institutions, this same Spirit still constructs for Himself a dwelling—place of a tangible nature to serve as a vessel for the preservation of His gifts. This habitation of the Holy Spirit is the Church, which through centuries of tempest and violence has watched over the precious treasure of Truth as revealed by God. (We need not be concerned at this point with zealots who value framework rather than content). *The Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty...Beholding...the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory* (2 Cor 3:17-18). The Church's function is to lead the faithful to the luminous sphere of Divine Being. The Church is the spiritual centre of our world, encompassing the whole history of man. Those who through long ascetic struggle to abide in the Gospel precepts have become conscious of their liberty as sons of God no longer feel impeded by formal traditions—they can take general customs and ordinances in their stride. They have the example of Christ Who kept His Father's commandments without transgressing the law of Moses with all its *burdens grievous to be borne*. (Lk 11:46)

In Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit God gave us the full and final revelation of Himself. His Being now for us is the

First Reality, incomparably more evident than all the transient phenomena of this world. We sense His divine presence both within us and without: in the supreme majesty of the universe, in the human face, in the lightning flash of thought. He opens our eyes that we may behold and delight in the beauty of His creation. He fills our souls with love towards all mankind. His indescribably gentle touch pierces our heart. And in the hours when His imperishable Light illumines our heart we know that we shall not die. We know this with knowledge impossible to prove in the ordinary way but which for us requires no proof, since the Spirit Himself bears witness within us.

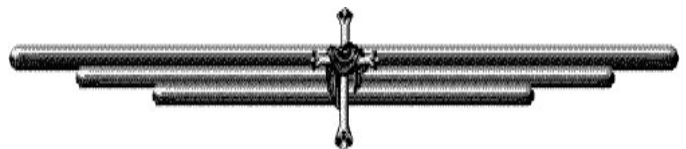
† † †

NOTE: The revelation of God as I AM THAT I AM proclaims the personal character of the Absolute God which is the core of His Life. To interpret this revelation the Fathers adopted the philosophical term hypostasis, which first and foremost conveys actuality and can be applied to things, to man or to God. In many instances it was used as a synonym for essence. In the second Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:17) hypostasis denotes sober reality and is translated into English as confidence or assurance. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the term describes the Person of the Father: *Who being...the express image of his person.* (Heb 1:3) Other renderings to be found in the same Epistle are substance—*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for* (Heb 2:1) —and very being—*the stamp of God's very being.* (Heb 1:3) So then, these three words, Person, substance, very being, taken together impart the content of the Greek theological expression hypostasis, to be understood as comprising, on the one hand, the notion of Countenance, Person, while, on the other, stressing the cardinal importance of the personal dimension in Being. In the present text the terms Hypostasis and Person(a) are identical in meaning.



In no instance should we turn love against the Truth, flattering one another in the name of "Ecumenical comradeship."

Fr. Georges Florovsky of Blessed Memory (+1979)



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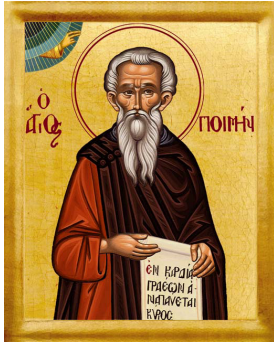
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## WHAT ARE WE TO LOVE MORE THAN ANYTHING IN THE WORLD?

*A story about St. Herman of Alaska (from an Orthodox pamphlet).*

Once Elder Herman was invited to a frigate that had come from Saint Petersburg. The captain of the frigate was a very learned man, highly educated; he had been sent to America by imperial command to inspect all of the colonies; with the captain, there were some twenty-five officers, also educated men. Sitting in this circle of social elite was a desert monk of short stature, in worn-out clothing, who by his wise conversation brought all his educated conversers to such a state that they did not know how to answer him. The captain himself related: "Before him, we were answerless!"

Father Herman asked them all one common question: "What do you, gentlemen, love more than all else, and what would each of you desire for his happiness?"

Various answers poured out. Some desired wealth, some glory, some a beautiful wife, some an excellent ship on which he would command, and so on in this vein. "Is it not true," Father Herman said to them at this point, "that it is possible to reduce all your various desires to one thing—that each of you desires that which, according to his understanding, he considers to be better and more worthy of love?"

"Yes, it is so!" they answered.

"Tell me," Father Herman continued, "what then could be better, higher than everything, superior to everything and, chiefly, more worthy of love than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who created us, adorned us with such perfections, gave life to everything, maintains everything, nourishes and loves everything, Who Himself is love and is more excellent than all men? Ought not one, therefore, love God above all else, desire and seek Him more than anything else?"

Everyone began to speak: "Well, yes! That's understood! That's true per se."

"But do you love God?" the Elder then asked.

Everyone answered: "Of course we love God. How can we not love God?"

"And I, a sinner, have been trying to love God for more than forty years, and I cannot say that I perfectly love Him," Father Herman replied to them, and he began to demonstrate to them how one ought to love God. "If we love someone," he said, "we always remember that one, we endeavor to please that one; day and night our heart is preoccupied with that object. Do you, gentlemen, love God thus? Do you often turn to Him, do you always remember Him, do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?"

We had to admit that we did not!

"For our good, for our happiness," the Elder concluded, "at least let us make a vow to ourselves that from this day, from this hour, from this minute we shall endeavor to love God above all else and to fulfill His holy will!"