

# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

VOL. 17, ISSUE 01-02

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- On Happiness (p. 4)
- The West's Battle against the Holy Fathers (p. 5)
- Patristic Theology (p. 9)
- Sincere Religion (p. 10)
- Repentance Is Needed To Heal the Schism in Ukraine (p. 21)
- The Parable of the Prodigal Son (p. 24)
- Spiritual Freedom or Spiritual Slavery? (p. 26)
- On Pride (p. 28)
- Their Last Breath... (p. 29)
- Our Choice: Orthodoxy or Phanorodoxy? (p. 30)



- Ἀπὸ τὸν Καποδίστρια στὸν Τσίπρα... (σελ. 13)
- Ἡ Ἐωσφορικὴ Ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ (σελ. 14)
- Τὰ Τέσσερα Κακὰ (σελ. 15)
- Ἡ Οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν (σελ. 16)
- Ζακχαῖος ὁ Ἀρχιτελώνης (σελ. 19)



Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## THE PAPAL-LIKE TRAP IN THE "TOMOS"

Source: <https://orthodoxsynaxis.org>.

*From the Editor: On Sunday, January 6, 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople handed over the document, known as a "Tomos," or the decree granting autocephaly, to the "head" of the new Ukrainian pseudo-church, the previous schismatic Metropolitan Epiphany. This autocephaly was decided and declared by Constantinople alone and might well signify the greatest cleft in Orthodox Christianity since the great schism of 1054. It is now up to the other Orthodox churches as to whether they will recognize such autocephaly—several have already declined to do so. This article presents some of the many issues associated with Constantinople's actions, even among those who support autocephaly for Ukraine.*



As the holy synods of the local Orthodox churches deliberate whether or not to accept the Patriarchate of Constantinople's decision to create an autocephalous church in Ukraine, the text of the newly-issued *tomos* may prove decisive in their decisions. While very few, if any, churches appear to be op-

posed to the idea of an autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church in principle, they may very well oppose the manner in which it was granted and the document granting it. This is because the *tomos*, as a canonical document, not only grants autocephaly but attempts to define the very nature of autocephaly and assert Constantinople's vision of its primatial relationship with the other churches. Orthodox hierarchs must read the document carefully and discerningly in order to identify any traps that may have been laid for them in it. In the absence of a conciliar decision, to accept the *tomos* is to accept the vision of the Church that Constantinople has articulated within it.

### Consecrating a New Ecclesiology

Shortly after the Ukrainian translation of the *tomos* was made available, Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, an outspoken proponent of Ukrainian autocephaly, made the following public comment in Russian on Facebook:

*After reading the Ukrainian translation of the tomos (the Greek original isn't available yet), some observers have already come to the conclusion that this autocephaly is curtailed in comparison to the autocephalies of the other local churches. This conclusion, however, is rather hasty.*

*The Brotherhood of St. POIMEN has delayed the publication of the first 2019 issue as we anxiously awaited the results of the Constantinople Patriarchate's "initiative" to solely assume oversight of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and grant its leadership to those whom in the past Constantinople herself (along with all other Orthodox churches) had identified as schismatics. This series of regretful actions have in turn created the greatest rift that has ever existed in His Church since the great schism of 1054.*

*We pray that Patriarch Bartholomew takes actions to reverse what he has put in place in Ukraine and thus re-establish the unity that Our Lord would desire for His Church; any continued actions to the contrary will surely result in Mr. Bartholomew being labeled as the "Schism Patriarch."*

*We are including several articles in this issue so that our readers become aware of the facts surrounding the on-going serious events. Regretfully, there is very little available within the established media and whatever has been circulated by Constantinople is biased and one-sided.*

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen,” a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.” PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, “poimen@mail.com.” Please visit our website for the applicable links.

*The degree of Ukrainian autocephaly provided by the tomos is the same as the degree of autocephaly of the other newly-established (νεοπαγῆ) churches. According to the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s interpretation, this degree [of autocephaly] is by definition less than that of the ancient (πρεσβυγενῆ) churches. In particular, the newly-established churches have communion with the other local churches through the Ecumenical Patriarchate, whom they recognize as their head.*

*Constantinople essentially took advantage of the Ukrainian tomos to canonically secure this interpretation of ALL new autocephalies which, by the way, includes that of Moscow. Another question is that not all new autocephalies agree to accept this interpretation. The newly-established Orthodox Church of Ukraine, however, agrees to accept it. And this is its sole difference from the other local Orthodox churches. [...]*

In the *tomos*, this ecclesiology is expressed most explicitly when it states, “we declare that the Autocephalous Church in Ukraine knows as its head the most holy Apostolic and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne, just as the rest of the Patriarchs and Primates also do.” This is no small statement, as *the Orthodox Church knows one head, Jesus Christ* (cf. Eph 5:23, Col 1:18). While no one disputes that the Patriarch of Constantinople holds a primacy *inter pares*, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has in recent years rejected this concept, most famously in Metropolitan Elpidophoros (Lambriniadis)’s speech declaring the patriarch to be *primus sine paribus*, and more recently in statements by Patriarch Bartholomew, such as when he said, “The beginning of the Orthodox Church is the Ecumenical Patriarchate; ‘in this is life, and the life is the light of the Churches,’” and “the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the first Church and the head and origin of all the local Churches.”

So then, as expressed in the *tomos*, how does Constantinople understand its own headship?

#### The First See is Judged by No One

Historically, the Church of Constantinople’s right to hear appeals from other churches was closely tied to its role as the church of the Byzantine, then Ottoman, capital and its patriarchs’ close associations with imperial authorities. Attempts to universalize this right were often contested or simply rejected, as by the 12<sup>th</sup> century canonist John Zonaras and, following him, St Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain in the *Pedalion*. The *tomos*, however, flatly asserts “the right of all Hierarchs and other clergy to address petitions of appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who bears the canonical responsibility of irrevocably passing judgment over matters related to bishops and other clergy in local Churches.”

This claim to universal jurisdiction has appeared in other recent documents, such as Patriarch Bartholomew’s letter unilaterally receiving Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) into his jurisdiction, claiming that he “indisputably has the responsibility to judge ecclesiastical matters everywhere and to give them a final conclusion” and his letter dated December 24, 2018 to the primates of the Orthodox churches, which speaks of “the exclusivity of the responsibility and privilege belonging to the Church of Constantinople to treat all ecclesiastical issues without limits.”

Moreover, the *tomos* requires that “in the case of major issues of ecclesiastical, doctrinal and canonical nature, His Beatitude the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine must, on behalf of the Holy Synod of his Church, address our most holy Patriarchal and Ecumenical Throne, seeking its authoritative opinion and conclusive support.” As Vladimir Burega, professor and pro-rector at the Theological Academy of Kiev,

has observed, this is the culmination of a gradual process of making greater and more exclusive claims to authority. Thus, in the *tomos* of autocephaly issued to the Church of Serbia in 1879, Constantinople simply requested that the newly-created church consult with the other autocephalous churches “on issues of common ecclesiastical significance which require a common voice and approval.” Not only did Constantinople not set itself apart from the other Orthodox churches, but it correctly identified the purpose of consultation between the churches: finding a common voice. In later *tomoi*, however, this was gradually transformed into a question of new churches submitting to a higher authority.

The most disturbing aspect of these two claims—universal appellate jurisdiction and being the point of reference for major canonical decisions—is the finality attributed to Constantinople’s decisions. Thus, the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s “judgment over matters related to bishops and other clergy in local Churches” is asserted to be “irrevocable.” So too, its opinion is “authoritative” and “conclusive.” **It is very difficult to see how such rights would differ materially from Rome’s doctrine that “the First See is judged by no one.”**

The serious ramifications of enforcing such rights can be seen in some of Constantinople’s recent actions within its own jurisdiction. In late November, the Holy Synod of Constantinople suppressed its Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe (“Rue Daru”), without any warning or prior consultation with members of the Archdiocese. With Constantinople acting as the highest juridical authority, the bishop and people of this archdiocese have no recourse against an obvious injustice. **Asserting such a right across the entire Orthodox world only multiplies the potential for future injustices.**

#### A Church without Boundaries

The *tomos* declares that the jurisdiction of the newly-autocephalous church is limited to the territory of the Ukrainian state no less than four times. Precedent for the idea that every independent state with a critical mass of Orthodox faithful should have an autocephalous church will no doubt give pause to more than a few churches. Just as many will be troubled by Constantinople’s assertion in the *tomos* that “the Ecumenical Throne [...] bears canonical competence over the *Diaspora*.”

An even more serious ecclesiological implication of this text is that it enshrines a claim that there are two types of churches: local churches whose territory is limited by the boundaries of states (or perhaps, in the case of the ‘Ancient Patriarchates’, the canons of the Ecumenical Councils) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, whose territory is boundless. It is boundless in two senses: in its claim to jurisdiction over all places not within the defined territory of a local church and in its claim to have the right to establish *stavropegia* (parishes, monasteries or other foundations directly under the patriarch)

on the territory of any local church. In addition to cementing these claims, the *tomos* adds another: the right to an *exarchate* (essentially, a diocese) of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Ukraine. So here Constantinople asserts its right not only to sole jurisdiction in the *diaspora* and to establish individual institutions under its patriarch’s direct control wherever he pleases, but also the right to create its own diocese within the territory of an autocephalous church.

#### A Turning Point in Orthodox History

How the other Orthodox churches respond to Constantinople’s actions in Ukraine will mark a turning-point in modern Orthodox history. If they accept the *tomos* on Constantinople’s terms and commemorate Epiphany as metropolitan of an autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, they effectively assent to Constantinople’s ecclesiological vision and encourage ever more grandiose claims to special primatial privileges.

Few would disagree that there is a very strong pastoral case for creating an autocephalous church in Ukraine. However, **the path to this autocephaly is through the narrow gate of a pan-Orthodox council.** If the churches reject the *tomos*, it is not an act of rebellion or a rejection of Constantinople’s canonical primacy but rather an exercise of their duty to be a part of the universal Church’s decision-making process because as Patriarch Athenagoras, of blessed memory, never ceased to remind us that “**the granting of autocephaly is a right belonging to the Church as a whole**” and this right cannot be claimed as the sole property of a single church.



**A** person, who carefully examines the movements of his heart cannot but experience pain of heart, when he daily turns over in his mind recollections of proud ostentation and carnal pleasures [i.e., his sensuality]; which are evoked in him not only from the outside, but also from within, as memories of his soul, with which he consorted—not only in thought, but also in action. The Lord said that he would not help those who voluntarily remain in sensuality, but rather those who are warred against, on their own, by involuntary reflections of their former evils. This is why He promised to defend the latter, as having been injured by the Enemy. Conversely, He condemns those who remain in sensuality; because they reject His commandments, saying to them: *Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven* (Mt 7:21). He then *likens them to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand* of his own will. (Mt 7:26).”

**Abba Mark [from the Evergetinos]**

## ON HAPPINESS

By Fr. Pavel Gumerov, from "And They Shall Be One Flesh."

There are conflicting ideas about happiness; some think it is a sum of earthly good things, a kind of social welfare package that makes a person's life comfortable and carefree. Each to his own, but nevertheless, in this case you either got lucky and are happy, or you are left to drag out the pitiful existence of the luckless. This idea of happiness is primitive and over-simplified.

Happiness is immaterial—it is a state of the soul. Of course, people understand happiness in various ways. Some find it in their family, others go to a monastery to dedicate their whole lives to God; for a monk, that is happiness. Some have no family but find happiness in laboring for the good of people, because this labor brings joy to himself and others. Another may have nothing at all, but he is still happy. He is happy because the weather outside is good and he has no sickness at the moment. There are all different kinds of people. And to the contrary, a person may have everything: health, material wealth, a good family, etc. He has only to live and rejoice, but he is still unhappy, does not appreciate it all, and is always discontented with one thing or another.

Thus, happiness does not depend on material conditions of life—it is within a person, in his own soul: *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation... behold, the kingdom of God is within you.* (Lk 17:20-21). This, as we have said, is a state of the soul: the ability to appreciate everything given to us, and to thank God for it.

Every day can give us happiness; we must only be able to see it.

One priest used to counsel his spiritual children to end every day by writing down no fewer than fifty things, *that you should thank God for.* Without the ability to see something joyful and bright in every day, not only can we not be happy, we cannot even live a normal life. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote a story called "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich." In it is described an ordinary day of a prisoner in a strict-regime concentration camp. However, this story is not about the horrors of camp life, but about how one man, in what would seem to be utter darkness, manages to see something good and positive.

He receives an extra piece of bread and he can almost taste it, he thinks about how he is going to eat it; suddenly he unexpectedly finds a piece of a saw and is able to make from it a cobbler's knife and earn a little money. He is able to avoid solitary confinement—that is a great joy. Ivan Denisovich even finds pleasure in work. First of all, he can warm himself by work and the frost doesn't get to him so badly, and secondly, as a former peasant he loves labor, he likes doing what he knows how to do well. The hero of the story always tries to see good human qualities in everyone

around him. He greatly appreciates the help and support of his comrade prisoners. Even in prison, in solitary confinement this person does not fall out of life, and every day brings him joy.

Once a certain priest went to visit the now reposed elder Archpriest Nicholai Guryanov and told him about the sorrows and problems he was having. Fr. Nicholai heard him out and said:

—Rejoice!

—What is there to rejoice about?

The priest thought to himself. But the elder went on:

—Rejoice that you were born, rejoice that you are baptized, rejoice that you are in the Orthodox faith, rejoice that you are still alive!

And perhaps the words of the Apostle Paul: *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* (1 Thess 5:16-18) is the formula for happiness. It is the ability to be joyful about life, to always be with God and to thank Him for all that he sends us.

St. John Chrysostom says, *If something good happens, bless God, and it will remain good. If something bad happens, bless God, and the bad will cease. Glory be to God for all things!*

We not only have to know how to see happiness in our lives, but we also have to be careful with regard to it, and not spill it. There is an oriental fable on this theme.

A certain youth asked his father, "What is happiness?" And his father sent him to a well-known wise man. So, the young man went to the famous teacher expecting to see an ascetic, but the man turned out to be rather wealthy, possessing a fine palace filled with works of art. The youth came to the palace and asked the wise man, "Teacher, tell me what happiness is." The teacher gave him a small spoon filled it with olive oil, and said, "Walk around my palace, look at all the treasures and beautiful works of art inside it, and when you return tell me what you saw. But in doing so, make sure that you do not spill the oil from the spoon." In a little while the youth returned and told the man all about that he had seen, adding that as he looked around at the treasures, all the oil spilled out of his spoon. Then the wise man filled the spoon again with oil and repeated the request. When the youth returned and the teacher asked him what he had seen, the boy said, "I couldn't see anything in your palace because I was making sure not to spill any oil." And truly, he brought the spoon back without spilling a drop. "Happiness is in this," said the wise man. "In being able to preserve the gift that you have, and not waste it."

This parable tells us that by looking at all the wealth and beauty that does not belong to us, that was not given to us, we are not only unable to see them clearly, but we also lose what we do have.

Some people (and there are many) chase all their lives after the bird of happiness, the unreachable ideal, seeking happiness in one marriage, then in another, a third, getting disappointed and then falling in love again. They are passing by their own happiness, and life passes them by. Such people are deeply unhappy.

The English author and thinker G. K. Chesterton has a wonderful saying about this: "Faithfulness to one woman is a small price to pay for seeing at least one woman. Complaining that you can only marry once is like complaining that you can only be born once. This is incompatible with the great experience that we are talking about, and reveals not exaggerated sensuality, but a strange insensibility. Only a fool would be dissatisfied that he cannot enter Eden through five gates. Polygamy is a lack of love, it's like distractedly grabbing up ten priceless pearls."

In speaking of happiness in general and about family happiness in part, it is impossible not to touch upon the subject of love, for love and happiness are two sisters; these concepts are closely related to each other. One wise man said, "Happiness does not mean being happy yourself, but making other people happy." This thought could be expanded: "Whoever makes others happy is happy himself." After all, the possibility to love, to give others happiness, is the manifestation of God's image in us. In this we make ourselves like unto God Himself. The Lord creates the world and man precisely out of love. God cannot but pour out His love and care for people, for He Himself is Love.

And of course, the only person who is truly happy is the person who knows how to love and to give love and happiness to others.

There used to be a slogan here that went, "Man is the forger of his own happiness." At first glance this sounds a little haughty, but if you think about it, there is no contradiction with Christianity in it. After all, happiness directly depends on our relationship to reality; on how we build our lives, relate to others, and appreciate all that God sends us.



**R**epentance signifies the renewal of Holy Baptism. Repentance is a new agreement with the Lord for a new life. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. It is reconciliation with God by deeds of virtue in opposition to our sins. Repentance means a purification of our conscience.

**St. John Climacus**  
[Ladder of Divine Ascent, Homily 5,2]

## THE BIRTH OF THE WEST'S POST-PATRISTIC BATTLE AGAINST THE HOLY FATHERS

*By Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, Emeritus Professor of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. This article is the first part of an insightful presentation by Fr. Theodoros at the "Patristic Theology and Post-Patristic Heresy" a 2012 Symposium of the Holy Metropolis of Piraeus.*

### The Scholasticism of the Franco-Papist West against the Patristic East

**I**n the West, until the 8<sup>th</sup> century, theology and spirituality, in essence, followed the route marked out by the East. As G. Dumont points out, the sources and principles of theological thought, liturgy and spirituality for the West, which characterize the flourishing era of Latin Catholicism, are to be found in the East, however much this may come as a surprise to many Western Christians.

The West owes the East a debt as regards the fact that it formulated into dogmas the great mysteries of Christianity concerning the Holy Trinity, the union of divine and human nature in the one person of Christ, a large number of feasts in the Church's year, especially in honor of the Mother of God, as well as the foundation and organization of monasticism.

The estrangement between East and West begins at a particular time in history: the dynamic appearance on the historical stage of the German Franks of Charlemagne offered the throne of Rome a powerful ally against the pressures of the Byzantine emperor and gave the German prince and his successors the opportunity to found and construct the Holy Roman Empire of the German people as a replacement for Romania (New Rome/Constantinople) which was henceforth known as Byzantium.

According to the analysis of Le Guillu, Charlemagne's ambition was to create a new theological tradition independent of the Patristic Tradition of the East. As he explicitly says: "In the Carolingian books, the first attempt is made by the West to define itself in opposition to the East." The greatest contribution to this estrangement was made by the abandonment of the Patristic Tradition and by the construction of a new theology on the Aristotelian syllogistic method, i.e. the formation of the Scholastic Theology.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century conflict between Saint Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian, we have the clash of the new, scholastic theology with that of the Patristic Tradition of the East which was rooted in the Holy Spirit, and which, until then, the West had followed, too.

### The Clash between Orthodox Illumination and Western Enlightenment in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

**T**here was, indeed, a severe conflict between the scholastic, post-Patristic theology of the Westerners and the empirical theology of the Fathers of the Church which was inspired

by the Holy Spirit. The former was expressed by Barlaam the Calabrian, one of the chief architects of the Western Renaissance and the latter by the great God-bearing and God-revealing Theologian, Gregory Palamas, who achieved in the 14<sup>th</sup> century what John Damascene had in the 8<sup>th</sup>: the expression and codification of the teachings of the Fathers who came before on many issues, the most important being:

(a) whether theology ought to be dialectic or demonstrative, i.e. whether it should be founded on philosophical analysis and discussion, as Barlaam wanted, bringing the scholasticism of the West into the East, or founded on the certainty of the experience of the Holy Spirit which the Prophets, Apostles and Saints had enjoyed, as taught by Palamas;

(b) whether human wisdom leads to perfection and deification, as Barlaam claimed, or whether these were achieved only through divine wisdom, which is granted to those who keep the commandments of God and are cleansed of the passions, in which case, after purification, they receive divine illumination and thereafter attain to the vision of God, as Saint Gregory Palamas contended; and,

(c) whether this illumination is the fruit of the created energy of the intellect, as Barlaam would have it, or of the uncreated energy of God, as stated by Saint Gregory, which really deifies people by energy, by grace, but not by nature and essence, because the uncreated energies are distinct from the essence of God.

Saint Gregory's arguments were overwhelmingly successful and a famous victory was won by the Patristic East, inspired by the Holy Spirit over the scholastic and post-Patristic West. We shall not analyze this here, but merely observe that without observance of God's commandments, the ascetic way of living, and the effort to purify oneself of evils and passions, as the Holy Fathers, those theologians of experience, lived and taught, without these no-one can become wise in divine matters. So the only chance that someone who is not illumined and glorified has, when wishing to speak about theology, is to follow those who were illumined and deified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. If this condition is not in place, we have no wisdom or theology, only foolishness and childishness.

Addressing Barlaam, and all the post-Patristic theologians of all ages—the thinkers, philosophers, academics—Saint Gregory observes pithily in the Holy Spirit: *Without purification, even if you learn natural philosophy from as far back as Adam and up until the end of the world, you will be none the wiser.* Over the last few days I have been looking closely at Saint Gregory Palamas' writings, to confirm what I wanted to say here "following the divine fathers and this God-revealing and God-seeing Father." It would take a long time for me to present the Patristic attitude of Palamas, the honor and value he accords the Holy Fathers.

Of the many things I have perused, I would present merely a few which are indicative, in order to show how mistaken

and how far outside the Orthodox Tradition are those clergy and laity who, (at their academies and theological schools) instead of making the Spirit-inspired and God-illumined Holy Fathers the object of their studies, those who have given us access to the vast, uncreated world of divine majesty, instead bring us down to the created and petty things of human thoughts and philosophies and, often enough, initiate us into the depths of Satan, as Saint Gregory says. For example, they get rid of the confessional lesson of Religious Instruction from schools, catechism, dogmatics, liturgics, history, references to the Mother of God and the Saints, Scripture—Old and New Testaments—and have, instead, through the lesson dubbed "Religious Knowledge," introduced Masonic, Satanic syncretism.

In confirming his truly wondrous accord with the Fathers over all the intervening centuries, Saint Gregory says that it is impossible for the God-bearing Fathers not to agree among themselves, because they are all guided by the inspiration of one and the same Holy Spirit. The Fathers are the sure guardians of the Gospel and Theology because the Spirit of genuine truth is manifested and resides in their spirit, so any people who apprentice themselves to them are taught by God. With authority and mastery he stresses that: *this perfection is for salvation, both in knowledge and dogmas, saying everything regarding God and His creatures, as the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers held, and as all those through whom the Holy Spirit witnessed.*

Barlaam would not have ended in heresy, and with him all the modern, post-Patristic Neo-Barlaamites, had he believed that the divine is not to be approached through human reasoning but with Godly faith; had he accepted, in simplicity, the traditions of the Holy Fathers, which we know are better and wiser than human musings, because they come from the Holy Spirit and have been proved by words rather than deeds. In a snapshot of the Barlaam-like terminology of today's post-Patristic theologians, Saint Gregory asks Barlaam if the latter has understood where this *piety greater than the Fathers* will lead. Barlaam was led there, to such a pit of impiety, because, with reason and philosophy, he investigated what is *beyond word and nature* and did not believe, as did Saint John Chrysostom, that it is not possible to interpret in words the manner of the prophetic sight except and unless you have learned it clearly through experience. For if word is able to present the works and passions of nature, how much more is this true of the energy of the Spirit?

What we have said so far has been aimed at demonstrating that doubts began to be cast on the standing of the Fathers from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, with the development of scholastic theology and then the anthropocentric Humanism of the Renaissance. The scholastic theology of Papism is responsible for the neglect of the Fathers, not only because it made logic and dialectics the basic tools for theologizing and ignored the

illumination from above, divine wisdom, but also because it dogmatized the elevation of the Pope over the synods and Fathers, even over the Church itself. The criterion for correct theological thinking was no longer one of being in agreement with the Fathers, but with the Pope.

Whereas the Tradition of the Church functioned along the line of Christ – Apostles – Fathers, the Papal monarchist view went Christ – Peter – Pope. This powerful post-Patristic storm did not shake the Patristic tradition, the Patristic foundations of the Church, because God revealed, in the middle and late Byzantine times, three new, great hierarchs and ecumenical teachers:

[1] Saint Photius the Great, who was the first, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, to oppose systematically and most theologically the anti-Patristic and heretical Papist teaching on the issue of the filioque and that of the primacy of the Pope, endorsing the Orthodox teaching with a decision of the synod in Constantinople in 879, which is considered ecumenical;

[2] Saint Gregory Palamas, who, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, opposed the humanist philosopher, Barlaam, at the time when Scholasticism was at its height, and who promulgated the illumination of theologians through the uncreated grace and energy of God, as opposed to the created and limited illumination of human wisdom, a position completely endorsed by the hesychast synods of 1451, in Constantinople, which are also considered ecumenical; and,

[3] Saint Mark of Ephesus, that giant and Atlas of Orthodoxy, rightly called Anti-Papist and the Scourge of the Pope, who alone negated and nullified the decision of the pseudo-unifying synod of Ferrara-Florence, which scurrilously and oppressively dogmatized anti-Patristic and heretical teachings, and which to this day is numbered among the ecumenical synods by the Papists.

#### Patristics and Post-Patristics at the Pseudo-Synod of Ferrara-Florence

Sylvestros Syropoulos, who wrote the history of the pseudo-synod of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1439), where, on a Synodal level, Patristic Orthodox theology came into conflict with the post-Patristic scholastic theology of Papism, has preserved for us facts and information which help us to realize how far the

Church is Patristic and how far the West, since the Franks seized the, until then, Orthodox Patriarchate of Old Rome in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, was converted into being post-Patristic, and anti-Patristic, giving rise to a whole host of heresies and schisms.

The Orthodox patriarchs knew that Papism and scholastic theology had transcended and pushed aside the Fathers of the Church and had replaced them with their own “Fathers,” chief among whom was Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> century); thus, in their letters appointing their representatives, (their *locum tenentes*) they (the patriarchs) also set out the limits for the

discussions and decisions of the Synod, whether this was to take place in Basel, Switzerland, where the reformist delegates awaited the Pope, or in some other place designated by the Pope. Union was to take place “*canonically and legally, in accordance with the traditions of the holy ecumenical synods and the holy teachers of the Church and nothing was to be added to the faith nor removed or introduced as new.*” Otherwise they would not accept the anti-Patristic and post-Patristic decisions of the synod.

By taking this stand, the patriarchs expressed the firm, permanent and inviolate position of the Church over the centuries that the Fathers constitute a *sine qua non* element of the identity of the Church and its theology. There is no theology which transcends the Fathers, and those who denigrate them, or condemn them, or, even worse, transcend and surpass them, as

at the well-known Conference in June 2010, at “The Academy of Theological Studies” of the Holy Metropolis of Volos, are no theologians.

According to Saint John Damascene, the mouthpiece of all the Fathers and voice of the self-awareness of the Church, *anyone who does not believe in accordance with the Tradition of the Church is an unbeliever.* Earlier than this, the truly great Athanasius, in his well-known letter to Serapion, makes it clear, in wonderful fashion, what this Tradition is on which the Church is founded: *it is what Christ handed down, what the Apostles preached and what the Fathers preserved.* The Orthodox Patriarchs’ most Orthodox and Patristic framework



**The New Three Hierarchs and Pillars of Orthodoxy: Sts. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas and Mark of Ephesus**

for the discussions and decisions of the council immediately met with resistance on the part of the papal theologian of the Council of Basel and legate to Constantinople, John of Ragusa, who, expressing the Western Frankish spirit of theology which no longer needed the Fathers, intervened with Emperor Ioannes VIII Palaeologus to ask the patriarchs and he succeeded in his aims—to change their letters, omitting the terms and limitations regarding agreement with the synods and the Holy Fathers.

Unfortunately, the emperor gave way, in the face of his great need for financial and military assistance. But even worse, the patriarchs themselves retreated, even though their criteria ought to have been unalterable and firm, purely spiritual and never political, as regards matters of faith. Syropoulos sadly notes that this was an unfortunate prelude for what was to follow and indicated that the emperor had abdicated his role as *fidei defensor*: “It was to such preconditions that the defender of the dogmas of our Church had submitted us.”

Of course, the theologians on the Orthodox side, particularly Saint Mark of Ephesus, had no need of patriarchal suggestions in order to take a stand firmly on the Fathers and to force the Latin theologians into a difficult corner, since the latter did not have Patristic arguments and attempted to endorse their positions dialectically and philosophically in accordance with the prevailing Scholastic Theological method, which was based on the logical categories of Aristotle.

Syropoulos actually preserves a charming and most instructive event for all of us, especially the post-Patristic innovators of our own times. According to him, when the representative of the Orthodox Church of Georgia (Iberia) heard Juan de Tarquemada, from Spain, frequently invoking Aristotle, he turned to Syropoulos in consternation and said: “What Aristotel, Aristotele? Aristotele no good”. When Syropoulos then asked him what was good, he replied: “Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Basil, theologian Gregory, Chrysostom. No Aristotel Aristotele.”

He mocked the Latin scholiast with hand movements, nods and gestures, but, as Syropoulos observes, “he was probably mocking us Orthodox, who had abandoned the Fathers and polluted ourselves with such teachers.”

Earlier, he relates another incident, with the same Georgian delegate leaving the Pope speechless and acting as a teacher to him. Just before the apostasy was completed and the shameful unifying text was signed, the Pope summoned this cleric and with the sweetest affability, which recalls the blandishments and geniality of our contemporary ecumenists, advised him to recognize that the Church of Rome was “the mother of all Churches and indeed the successor to Saint Peter and the *locum tenens* of Christ and the shepherd and universal teacher of all Christians.” So, in order to find salvation for your soul, added the Pope, you must follow the Mother Church, accept

what She accepts, submit to the bishop and be taught and shepherded by him.

The answer of the truly Orthodox bishop lies within the enduring position of the Church and is in agreement with the Fathers. It is a word for word repetition, a thousand years later, of the stance of Athanasius the Great, whom we have mentioned, and of all the Holy Fathers who came after him: *By the grace of God we are Christians and we accept and follow our Church. For our Church holds true to what it has received both from the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and from the tradition of the Holy Apostles and of the ecumenical synods and of the holy teachers recognized by the Church; and it has never departed from their teaching nor has it added nor left anything to chance. But the Church of Rome has added to and transgressed the bounds of the Fathers. This is why we, who hold fast to the things of the Fathers, have cut it off or have removed ourselves from it. So, if your beatitude wishes to bring peace to the Church and unite us all, you must expunge the addition of the filioque from the Creed. You can do this easily, should you wish, because the nations of the Latins will accept whatever you suggest, since they consider you the successor to Saint Peter and respect your teaching.*

Syropoulos’ conclusion: the Pope expected to lead by the nose and win over the Iberian with his false blandishments, given that the man was a foreign-speaker, an individual both unlearned and barbarian. “But, when he heard this answer, he was left speechless.”



The most destructive work in the dogmatic conscience of the membership of the Orthodox Church has been, and continues to be performed by Ecumenism. Ecumenism today is the agent of inter-Christian and inter-religious syncretism and, consequently, is the official agent of the most dangerous multi-heresy of all times, since, through its syncretism, it contributes in a decisive manner to the weakening of the Orthodox criterion and Orthodox self-awareness.

In particular, through its representatives at the local and international level, it continually and gradually makes increasingly greater “discounts” from the ecclesiological/dogmatic awareness of the spiritually-unsuspecting Orthodox faithful. Above all, it achieves this through the relativization, or abolition in practice, of the status of the teachings of the Holy Fathers and, moreover, of their collective decisions made in the context of the Ecumenical Synods.

**Dimitrios Tselengidis**  
Dogmatics Professor of the Theological School,  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki



## ON PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

By Rev. John S. Romanides (+2001).

### The Two Kinds of Faith

Human beings can have two kinds of faith. The first kind of faith, which has its seat in the mind, is the reasonable faith of acceptance. In this case, a person rationally accepts something and believes in what he has accepted, but this faith does not justify him. When Holy Scripture says, *man is saved by faith alone* (Eph 2:8), it does not mean that he is saved merely by the faith of acceptance. There is, however, another kind of faith, the faith of the heart. It is referred to in this way because this kind of faith is not found in the human reason or intellect, but in the region of the heart. This faith of the heart is a gift of God that you will not receive unless God decides to grant it. It is also called *inner faith*, which is the kind of faith that the father of the young lunatic in the Gospel asked Christ to give him when he said, *Lord, help my unbelief*. (Mk 9:24). Naturally, the father already believed with his reason, but he did not have that deep inner faith that is a gift of God.

Inner faith is rooted in an (empirical) experience of grace. And since it is an experience of grace, what would this make inner faith as far as an Orthodox Christian is concerned? Inner faith is noetic prayer. When someone has noetic prayer in his heart, which means the prayer of the Holy Spirit in his heart, then he has inner faith. Through this kind of faith and by means of prayer, he beholds things that are invisible. When someone has this kind of vision, it is called *theoria*. *Theoria*, in fact, means vision.

As a rule, there are two ways for vision to take place.

When a person has not yet attained to *theosis*, it is still possible for him to see by means of the prayer that the Holy Spirit is speaking within his heart. After attaining to *theosis*, however, he can see by means of *theosis*, in which both this inner faith (i.e., prayer of the heart) and hope are set aside, and only love for God remains (as a gift of God). This is what St. Paul means when he says: *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*. (1 Cor 13:10 & 13:13). Note that since faith and hope have fulfilled their purpose and man has reached the point of seeing God, the source of his faith and hope, he now simply knows and loves the One Who is Love.

When the perfect is come, faith and hope are thus done away, and only love remains. And this love is *theosis*. In *theosis*, knowledge comes to an end; prophecy is set aside; tongues, which are in noetic prayer, cease; and only love remains. St. Paul says this in passages of great clarity and beauty. The Church Fathers in turn offer interpretations of these subjects that are indisputably correct. These interpretations are found throughout the entire *Philokolia*.

### What is the Core of Orthodox Tradition?

We happen to be entrusted with a treasure—the theology of Orthodox Tradition. Orthodox theology is the culmination and product of centuries of experience that have been repeated, renewed, and recorded by those who have experienced theosis at different times. We have the experience of the patriarchs and the prophets as well as the later experience of the Apostles. We call all of these experiences *glorification*. To say the prophet was glorified means that the prophet saw the glory of God. To say the Apostle was glorified means that the Apostle saw the glory of Christ. Seeing the glory of Christ, the Apostle ascertained by his own experience that the glory of Christ in the New Testament is the glory of God in the Old Testament. Hence, Christ is the Yahweh and the Elohim of the Old Testament.

Although it is not clear in the Old Testament Who the Holy Spirit is, the Apostles discovered Who He is by experience. Their experience repeats the experience of the prophets, but there is a difference because the Apostles were glorified after the Incarnation: Yahweh of the Old Testament now has the human nature of Christ. Although three of the Apostles were partially glorified during the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, all of the Apostles were fully glorified at Pentecost, during which they reached the highest state of glorification that any human being can ever reach in this life.

After the experience of the Apostles come the experiences of the glorified who include the Church Fathers and those saints who reached theosis. And so the experience of theosis continues to appear in each generation up to the present. This experience of theosis is the core of the Orthodox tradition, the foundation of the local and ecumenical councils, and the basis for the Church's canon law and liturgical life today.

If the contemporary Orthodox theologian is to acquire objectivity, he must rely on the experience of theosis. In other words, we can positively state that a student of Patristic tradition has acquired objectivity in his theological method only when he has personally undergone purification and illumination, and reached theosis. Only in this way will the researcher not only understand the Patristic tradition, but also verify for himself the truth of this tradition through the Holy Spirit.



There is one religion only, the Orthodox Christian Religion. And this spirit the orthodox one is the true one. The other spirits, are spirits of delusion and the teachings are mixed up.

St. Porphyrios (+1991)

## SINCERE RELIGION

By St. Sebastian Dabovich.

*St. Sebastian Dabovich (now St. Sebastian of Jackson and San Francisco) was a prominent Serbian priest in the Russian mission in America in the 1890s and early 1900s. He founded numerous churches and was the author of several books. He died in Serbia in 1940 and was glorified as a saint on May 29, 2015. His feast day is commemorated on November 30.*

† † †



We live in a peculiar age. No time has ever dawned upon the earth like the present era. Startling developments in the world of truth keep the minds of men, to some extent, constantly reaching out after it. “More light! Greater knowledge!” is now the almost universal cry. Great discoveries in science have opened many new and hitherto unknown avenues to

the greater physical development of the human family; and at the same time—it may be said to be true—that the mental development of man has, to some extent, kept pace. In all this onward movement in the world of material and mental research, men turn to the representative of God among men, and inquire if in the “religious world” there are any developments; and we find that there are many and great changes in this “religious world.” Take note—many and great changes in the world of religious opinion, but very little development in religious life!

Many a searching, although blind, mind has mistaken religion for some philosophical system. Too irreverent and profane handling of religion often makes of it a science, a pastime study. Now and again we come by the way of such who make religion a speculation; yes, and a speculation without a question as to its nature. Do you not know that religion is one of the qualities of your soul? An essential substance, I might say, to be plain, of your self-recognizing, self-satisfied, living spirit? Those who are convinced of this fact are not indifferent to religion. Indifference has no place in the serious life of one who seeks to be right-minded.

We hear it frequently remarked that it matters not what one believes if he does right. However, if one does not believe right, he does not do the right thing—that is, if his belief is sincere and carried out in practice. If one believes that which is wrong, and still acts otherwise from force of circumstance, he is wrong in heart. A man may believe

in polygamy, but the law and common custom may forbid its practice. He would be in outward life aright, but in heart would be a virtual polygamist. And if circumstances were favorable, his life would bear its legitimate fruit. And this is just as true of every other moral evil. It is all-important to believe right. Every false religion which has cursed mankind has started in a wrong belief. It might not have affected practical duties for a time, but the fruit finally developed. Thus belief in that first lie of Satan’s (Gen. 3:4) has borne its legitimate fruit in—first, the deification of the beautiful, and unnatural curiosity; second, self-love, delusion, and idol-worship; third, free-thinking, protesting, infidelity, and anarchy.

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.* (Jude 1:3). It is worthy, and more, too, it is a duty, to mention the fact that the large number of Bible-worshippers, who daily read the Holy Scriptures, will not see such passages as this. It is strange, yet it is plain to those who understand the human soul. What do those people think of such texts, and also of these: *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Mt 16:18). *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all* (Eph 4:4-6). *And there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd* (Jn 10:16). *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* (2 Thess 2:15).

To read the Bible does not mean to be a Christian. One may go to church and also study the Holy Scriptures, and yet not be religious. One may be religious, and yet be laboring under false impression, and also untruthful doctrine. If your friend requests you to do something for him, and you, knowing what he said, would still hesitate, had you not been positive of his own opinion of the request. If you are not always positive of a man’s idea, even when you have his words, are you sure of God’s opinion? Are you so elevated that you can read God’s mind?

“Obey and believe in my doctrine,” says the papist Rome. “Be free and strive to create a belief for yourselves,” say the Sects. But the True Church calls to her own, *Let us love one another, that we may with one mind confess Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

What is the Orthodox Church? This is the thought, which is repeated more than once in the closed closet of the heart; the question silently asked by the inquiring mind; and, beyond doubt, it is a proof of the quickening presence of the *Spirit of Truth, which abideth everywhere*, stirring our souls to action superhuman, and to the contemplation of things which are above our comprehension.

Of late, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is often heard of, and the existence of an Orthodox Catholic Church has come before the notice of the reading masses in western Europe and America. A grand revelation! And a heavenly blessing is reserved for all religious people who are striving in these latter times to be right-minded. In the midst of Romanism and Protestantism, free from the fanaticism of a Pius, or the indifferentism of a so-called liberalism, clear of modern congregationalism—almost daily crumbling into isms—we can see a glow in the midst of this chaos, as if of a new spark created in a combustible mass. What we see is none other than the light once revealed to Adam, then faithfully preserved in the Church of the old dispensation, and finally entrusted to the **One** and only Church of God—the Alpha and Omega. This spark we now see illuminated to perfection by the new covenant of God with man, the pledge of which is no less than the ETERNAL WORD, the Only-begotten Son of God Himself—the man Jesus, who is the chief cornerstone of the Orthodox Catholic Church, which rests on the foundation of the Apostles, chosen and put into their places by the Supreme Architect—the Lord Jesus Christ. And behold, **this is the Holy Orthodox and Universal (Catholic) Apostolic Church—still the ark of salvation for mankind.** Could this stronghold, planned by God the Almighty, be obliterated, because of persecution and temptation, and because of the many that willfully stray away, which of themselves break into numerous sects, as the body deprived of life turns to dust? *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it!*

“We are all obnoxious to error and mistakes, and it is but natural that we should make due allowance for human weakness and ignorance. If God had left us in our higher concerns to our devices, we should be still groping in the dark like the heathen of old, whom God left to themselves, in order to show how utterly unable the natural man is to find and grasp the supernatural truth. God mercifully revealed to us His truth, and expects us to thankfully accept it, neither doubting nor denying it. Therefore, what in human concerns might be called a liberal concession to our opponents, would in religion be a foul treachery, opposite God’s truth entrusted to His Church.

It is not liberal, but indifferent, to regard all sorts of religion as equivalent. It is likewise improper not to care to what religion one belongs, just as if one was as good or as bad as the other; or, to put it more forcibly, it is deceitful to call untrue the claim that one Church teaches Christ’s truths purely and completely, to the exclusion of all other churches. This is the principle of all worldly people, and it is a fashion to consider a conscientious religious church-life a downright nuisance, though one is still afraid to call it so. The crowd calls it liberal when they refuse to make any

distinction between the teaching of the different churches, just as if truth and untruth could exist one at the side of the other without any disrespect to God, the Author of truth. It is desire of faith and conviction, or rather desire of taking an interest in religion, that produces this baleful indifference.

It stands to reason that it is sinful to care so little for the revealed truth as to place it on a level with error. You will say, shall we then condemn our erring brethren? By no means. Christ forbids us to judge anybody, for only God knows whether our brother culpably holds the error, or whether he believes it to be the truth. However, even if he believes his error to be the truth, error remains error, and never can become truth. Therefore, we must always condemn error, though we may not condemn the person erring, but must pity him that he takes error for truth.

If you think it is all the same what a man believes, provided he is convinced that it is the truth, you are mistaken, for the heathen of old, the Jews, the Mohammedans, and the professors of all other religions, believe they possess the truth. Why, then, did God send His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world, if mankind could be saved without him? Christ commanded His apostles and their successors to convert the world to Christianity, not to that sort of vague Christianity which we find in the numerous seditions which appropriate this name, but to His one Church, *which is the Foundation and pillar of the truth*, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail. He who believes in these words of Christ can never be indifferent to which Church he belongs, nor can he be indifferent whether his friends or acquaintances continue in error. Therefore, it is his first duty never to countenance religious indifference.

Those who will study the doctrine of the Church, not in the errors and weakness of human superstitions and failings, but in her own divinely inspired rites and institutions, will appreciate the matchless purity of our beloved Church. Let us not be misunderstood. We do not assume to ourselves any prerogative of goodness; on the contrary, woe unto us who have so little profited by the perfect holiness of our Mother Church. The best among us fall grievously short of the ideal of the Church, which towers high above us, bearing aloft the standard of the cross.

Truly glorious and divine is the plan of our Church, but beware of judging her by the failures and errors of her unworthy children. In her daily Liturgy our Mother—the Church—calling the faithful to prayer, teaches us thus: *Let us pray to the Lord for the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy churches of God, and the union of them all. For the unity of the Faith, and the communion of the Holy Spirit making request, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life to Christ our God.*

## “PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING” IS NECESSARY FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

*St. Gregory Palamas.*

Let no one think, my brother Christians, that it is the duty only of priests and monks to pray without ceasing, and not of laymen. No, no; it is the duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer.

St. Gregory the Theologian teaches all Christians to say God’s name in prayer more often than to breathe. So, my Christian brethren, I too implore you, together also with St. Chrysostom, for the sake of saving your souls, do not neglect the practice of this prayer. Imitate those I have mentioned and follow in their footsteps as far as you can.

At first it may appear very difficult to you, but be assured, as it were from Almighty God, that this very name of our Lord Jesus Christ, constantly invoked by you, will help you to overcome all difficulties, and in the course of time you will become used to this practice and will taste how sweet is the name of the Lord. Then you will learn by experience that this practice is not impossible and not difficult, but both possible and easy. This is why St. Paul, who knew better than we the great good which such prayer would bring, commanded us to pray without ceasing. He would not have imposed this obligation upon us if it were extremely difficult and impossible, for he knew beforehand that in such case, having no possibility of fulfilling it, we would inevitably prove to be disobedient and would transgress his commandment, thus incurring blame and condemnation. The Apostle could have had no such intention.

Moreover, bear in mind the method of prayer—how it is possible to pray without ceasing, namely by praying in the mind. And this we can always do if we so wish. For when we sit down to work with our hands, when we walk, when we eat, when we drink we can always pray mentally and practice this mental prayer—the true prayer pleasing to God. Let us work with the body and pray with the soul. Let our outer man perform his bodily tasks, and let the inner man be entirely dedicated to the service of God, never abandoning this spiritual practice of mental prayer, as Jesus, God and Man, commanded us, saying: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.* (Mt 6:6).

The closet of the soul is the body; our doors are the five bodily senses. The soul enters its closet when the mind does not wander hither and thither, roaming among things and affairs of the world, but stays within, in our heart. Our senses become closed and remain closed when we do not let them be attached to external sensory things, and in this way our mind remains free from every worldly attachment, and by secret mental prayer unites with God its Father. *And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,* adds the

Lord. God who knows all secret things sees mental prayer and rewards it openly with great gifts. For that prayer is true and perfect which fills the soul with Divine grace and spiritual gifts. As chrism perfumes the jar the more strongly the tighter it is closed, so prayer, the more fast it is imprisoned in the heart, abounds the more in Divine grace.

Blessed are those who acquire the habit of this heavenly practice, for by it they overcome every temptation of the evil demons, as David overcame the proud Goliath. It extinguishes the unruly lusts of the flesh, as the three men extinguished the flames of the furnace. This practice of inner prayer tames passions as Daniel tamed the wild beasts. By it the dew of the Holy spirit is brought down upon the heart, as Elijah brought down rain on Mount Carmel. This mental prayer reaches to the very throne of God and is preserved in golden vials, sending forth their odors before the Lord, as John the Divine saw in the Revelation, *Four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints* (Rev 5:8).

This mental prayer is the light which illumines man’s soul and inflames his heart with the fire of love of God. It is the chain linking God with man and man with God. Oh the incomparable blessing of mental prayer! It allows a man constantly to converse with God. Oh truly wonderful and more than wonderful—to be with one’s body among men while in one’s mind conversing with God. Angels have no physical voice, but mentally never cease to sing glory to God. This is their sole occupation and all their life is dedicated to this.

So, brother, when you enter your closet and close your door, that is, when your mind is not darting hither and thither but enters within your heart, and your senses are confined and barred against things of this world, and when you pray thus always, you too are then like the holy angels, and your Father, Who sees your prayer in secret, which you bring Him in the hidden depths of your heart, will reward you openly by great spiritual gifts. But what other and greater rewards can you wish from this when, as I said, you are mentally always before the face of God and are constantly conversing with Him—conversing with God, without Whom no man can ever be blessed either here or in another life?

Finally, my brother, whoever you may be, when you take up this book and, having read it, wish to test in practice the profit which mental prayer brings to the soul, I beg you, when you begin to pray thus, pray God with one invocation, *Lord have mercy*, for the soul of him who has worked on compiling this book and of him who helped to give it to the public. For they have great need of your prayer to receive God’s mercy for their soul, as you for yours. May it be so! May it be so!

## Από τὸν Καποδίστρια στὸν Τσίπρα...

Τοῦ κ. Γιώργου Ν. Παπαθανασόπουλου, ἀπὸ τὸ «Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοιπορικὸ».

Ἐάν κάποιος θέλει πρακτικὰ νὰ ἀντιληφθεῖ τὴ διαφορὰ μεταξὺ ὑπερήφανης καὶ ἀναξιοπρεποῦς διπλωματίας ἀρκεῖ νὰ ἀνατρεῖξει στὶς προσωπικότητες καὶ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πρώτου Κυβερνήτη τῆς Ἑλλάδος Ἰωάννου Καποδίστρια καὶ τοῦ σημερινοῦ πρωθυπουργοῦ Ἄλ. Τσίπρα.

Δὲν θὰ ἀναφερθῶ στὴν μεταξὺ τῶν δύο ἀνδρῶν χαώδη διαφορὰ ὡς πρὸς τὶς γνώσεις, τὶς ἐμπειρίες, καὶ τὶς ἱκανότητες. Δὲν θὰ μείνω στό κῦρος ποὺ διέθετε διεθνῶς καὶ μεταξὺ τῶν ἡγετῶν τῶν μεγάλων δυνάμεων ὁ πρῶτος καὶ πῶς «ἀντιμετωπίζουν» τὸν σημερινὸ πρωθυπουργὸ ὁ κ. Τράμπ ἢ ἡ κα Μέρκελ. Δὲν θὰ σταθῶ στὸ ὅτι ὁ πρῶτος Κυβερνήτης τῆς Ἑλλάδος χειριζόταν ἄριστα, πέραν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς, ἄλλες πέντε γλώσσες: ἀγγλικά, γαλλικά, ἰταλικά, γερμανικά καὶ ρωσικά. Θα... μνημονεύσω, πρὸς σύγκριση, μόνον τὸν χειρισμὸ τῶν ἐθνικῶν θεμάτων ἀπὸ τὸν Ἰωάννη Καποδίστρια.

Ἐνα ἀπὸ τὰ ἐπιχειρήματα τῆς κυβερνητικῆς προπαγάνδας εἶναι ὅτι ἡ συμφωνία τῶν Πρεσπῶν εἶναι ἀποτέλεσμα συμβιβασμοῦ, μὲ τὸ δεδομένο ὅτι οἱ ΗΠΑ, ἡ Γερμανία, τὸ ΝΑΤΟ καὶ ἡ ΕΕ ἤθελαν μὲ κάθε τρόπο αὐτὴ νὰ περάσει. Ὁ Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας στὸ θέμα τῆς ἰδρύσεως τοῦ ἐλεύθερου καὶ ἀνεξάρτητου Ἑλληνικοῦ κράτους εἶχε ἀπέναντί του ὅλες τὶς μεγάλες δυνάμεις τῆς ἐποχῆς του, ποὺ ἀποτελοῦσαν τὴν Ἱερὰ Συμμαχία καὶ ἐπηρεάζονταν ἀπὸ τὸν ἀνθέλληνα καγκελάριο τῆς Αὐστροουγγαρίας Μέτερνιχ.

Εἶναι ἀνακρίβεια τὸ ὅτι ἡ Ἐπανάσταση τῶν Ἑλλήνων σώθηκε ἀπὸ τὶς Μεγάλες Δυνάμεις, μὲ τὴν ναυμαχία τοῦ Ναυαρίνου. Ἡ Ἐπανάσταση σώθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς διπλωματικοὺς χειρισμοὺς τοῦ Καποδίστρια καὶ τὴ γενναιότητα ἀγωνιστῶν, μὲ πρῶτον τὸν Κολοκοτρώνη. Μπορεῖ νὰ λεχθεῖ ὅτι τὸ Πρωτόκολλο τῆς Πετρουπόλεως (1826) καὶ ἡ Ἰουλιανὴ Σύμβαση τοῦ Λονδίνου (1827), σημαντικοὶ σταθμοὶ στὴ θετικὴ ἔκβαση τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ζητήματος, προδιαγράφονται στὴν εἰσήγηση τοῦ Καποδίστρια πρὸς τὸν Τσάρο Ἀλέξανδρο, τὴν ἀνοιξη

τοῦ 1822. (Γεωργίου Διον. Πουγκαμισὰ «Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας - Ἐθνικὸς Ἀγωνιστῆς, Διπλωμάτης, Θεμελιωτῆς Κράτους», Ἔκδ. «Κασταλία», σελ. 37). Ὁ Καποδίστριας πέτυχε νὰ ὑπογραφεῖ, στὶς 6 Ἰουλίου τοῦ 1827, στὸ Λονδίνο, ἡ τριμερὴς Συμφωνία Ἀγγλίας, Ρωσίας καὶ Γαλλίας, ἀπότοκος τῆς ὁποίας ἦταν ἡ ναυμαχία τοῦ Ναυαρίνου, τὸν Ὀκτώβριο τοῦ 1827.

Ὁ Κυβερνήτης ἔρχεται στὸ Ναύπλιο στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ 1828, χωρὶς ἀκόμη νὰ ἔχει ἀναγνωριστεῖ τὸ νεο-Ἑλληνικὸ κράτος. Στὶς 30 Νοεμβρίου τοῦ 1829, μὲ τὴ δεύτερη Διάσκεψη τοῦ Λονδίνου, ἀναγνωρίζεται ἀνεξάρτητο Βασίλειο. Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Δεσποτόπουλος γράφει στὴ σχετικὴ μελέτη του: «Ὁ Κυβερνήτης χειρισθεὶς αὐτοπροσώπως τὸ θέμα τῶν σχέσεων τῆς Ἑλλάδος πρὸς τὶς τρεῖς μεγάλες Δυνάμεις, ἐνεργήσας ἀκαταπονήτως καὶ εὐστόχως παρὰ ταῖς Κυβερνήσεις αὐτῶν διὰ τὴν ἀναγνώριση τῶν ἐθνικῶν δικαίων καὶ

ἀντιμετωπίσας ἐπιδεξιῶς καὶ ἀνατρέψας τὰς δυσμενεῖς διὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα ἀποφάσεις αὐτῶν, ταυτοχρόνως ἐξησφάλισε παρ' αὐτῶν ἐνισχύσεις ἀποφασιστικὰς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀγῶνος καὶ τῆς Χώρας».

Μία σημείωση: Ὁ ὑπέροχος Κυβερνήτης Ἰωάννης Καποδίστριας, πέραν τῶν μεγίστων καὶ πολλῶν ἱκανοτήτων του, πίστευε σὲ ἀξίες, σὲ ἰδανικά, στὴν Ἑλλάδα, στὸν Χριστό, καὶ στὴν

Ὁρθοδοξία. **Ἀντιμετώπισε θεματα καὶ τὰ ἔλυσε ἐπ' ὠφελεία τῆς Πατρίδας, δὲν τὰ διεκπεραίωσε ὡς ὑποτακτικὸς.** Οἱ ἰσχυροὶ τῆς Γῆς δὲν τοῦ ἐπιδαψίλευσαν ἐπαίνους καὶ τιμὲς οὔτε Νόμπελ, ἀν ὑπῆρχε... Ἡ δολοφονία ἦταν ἡ «ἀμοιβή» του. Ὅμως Αὐτὸς μένει φωτεινὸ παράδειγμα στὴν Ἱστορία μας. Αἰωνία του νὰ εἶναι ἡ μνήμη!



Ἐάν δὲν κυριευθοῦμε ἀπὸ τὸν ἔρωτα τῶν οὐρανίων Ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν πόθον τῆς ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ (ποὺ εἶναι ἡ Βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν), ἀλλὰ μένουμε προσκολλημένοι στὴν ἐπίγεια ζωὴ, κυλιόμενοι μέσα στὸν βοῦρκο τῶν κοσμικῶν φροντίδων, δὲν θὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ ἀπολαύσουμε τὴν οὐράνια πατρίδα!

**Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος**

## Ἡ Ἐωσφορική Ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 31/7/2015.

Συνήθως μιλάμε γιὰ τὸν ἐγωισμό καὶ τὴν ὑπερηφάνεια ἑνὸς προσώπου καὶ δυσανασχετοῦμε, γιὰτὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ ἐπικοινωνήσουμε μαζί του. Πρόκειται γιὰ ἄνθρωπο ποὺ ὅλα τὰ «γνωρίζει», ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλα τὰ στηρίζει στὸν ἑαυτόν του.

Σὲ κανένα δὲν ἀναγνωρίζει κάτι ἀνώτερο ποὺ νὰ μὴ τὸ ἔχει ὁ ἴδιος. Εἶναι πάντα ἐπικριτικός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαιτητικός ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους νὰ τὸν δέχονται καὶ νὰ τὸν ἐπαινοῦν. Δυὸ ὑπερήφανοι δὲν μποροῦν νὰ συνεργαστοῦν οὔτε νὰ συνυπάρξουν, γιὰτὶ ὁ καθένας ἐπιμένει στὴ γνώμη του καὶ ὅταν ἀκόμα εἶναι ὀφθαλμοφανῶς ἐσφαλμένη. Ἐπίσης ὁ ὑπερήφανος εἶναι φιλόδοξος καὶ φθονερός. Θέλει μόνο αὐτὸς νὰ δοξάζεται καὶ ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους ποὺ ἔχουν προσόντα, ἱκανότητες καὶ ἐπιτυχίες τοὺς φθονεῖ. καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μυστικό του μαρτύριο. Διέπεται ἀκόμα ἀπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀνατροπῆς καὶ τοῦ νεωτερισμοῦ.

Ἡ ἔωσφορική ὑπερηφάνεια, ὅταν μπεῖ στὸ χῶρο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, νοθεύει τὴ διδασκαλία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ὀδηγεῖ στὴν αἵρεση. Αὐτὸ συνέβη πολλές φορὲς ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες, τὸ πιὸ ὅμως χτυπητὸ παράδειγμα ὑπῆρξε ὁ παπισμός, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔχει αἰχμαλωτίσει ἑκατομμύρια Χριστιανῶν στὸ ἔρεβος τῆς αἵρεσης. Ὁ Πάπας ἔγινε ὁ μέγας αἰρετικός, ὁ ὁποῖος συνεχίζει νὰ ἀπομακρύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰτὶ συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖ νέες αἰρέσεις, προκειμένου νὰ στηρίξει... τὶς παλιές, ποὺ στὶς μέρες μας ἀμφισβητοῦνται καὶ ἀπὸ πολλοὺς παπικούς.

Ὁ Φώτης Κόντογλου, ποὺ ἀγαποῦσε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ πικραίνονταν ἀπὸ τὴ δράση τῶν αἰρετικῶν, ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν παπισμὸ ὅτι «ἔχει ἔωσφορικήν ὑπερηφάνειαν, ἢ ὁποῖα ἐκδηλώνεται εἰς κάθε περίστασιν. Ἀπὸ αὐτὴν καὶ μόνην ἐάν κριθῆ, ἀποδεικνύεται ὅτι δὲν ἔχει σχέσιν μὲ τὸν Χριστιανισμόν, τοῦ ὁποῖου τὸ θεμέλιον εἶναι ἡ ταπεινότης: Πρωτεῖα, ἀλάθητα, καισαρισμοί, πλούτη ὑλικά, ἐμφανίσεις αὐτοκρατορικά, ὅλα τὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ τοῦ παπισμοῦ εἶναι ἀνάποδα ἀπὸ ὅσα δίδαξε καὶ ἔκαμεν ὁ Χριστός, ποὺ εἶπε **“εἴ τις θέλει πρῶτος εἶναι, ἔσται πάντων ἔσχατος καὶ πάντων διάκονος”**» (Μάρκ. 9:35). καὶ διερωτᾶται: «Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ παρουσιάζεται ἡ ἔωσφορική ἀλαξονεία, ὡς ὀδηγὸς τῶν Χριστιανῶν; Τί ἄλλο χρειάζεται, διὰ νὰ ἐξηγηθοῦν ὅλοι οἱ νεωτερισμοὶ καὶ αἱ ἀντιχριστιανικαὶ καινοτομίαι, εἰς τὰς ὁποίας προέβη κατὰ καιροὺς ὁ παπισμός; Ὁ ἅγιος Ἐφραίμ ὁ Σύρος λέγει: **“Ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια ἀναγκάζει ἐπινοεῖν καινοτομίας, μὴ ἀνεχόμενη τὸ ἀρχαῖον”**» (Τι εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ τί εἶναι ὁ Παπισμός, 1992, σελ. 9-10).

Παρόλα αὐτὰ ὅμως, τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ ἰδιαίτερα ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος, μιλάει γιὰ τὴν «ἐκκλησία» τοῦ Πάπα, τὸν ὁποῖο ἀποκαλεῖ ἀγιώτατο καὶ πεφιλημένο ἀδελφό του. Δὲν τὸν θεωρεῖ αἰρετικό, γι’ αὐτὸ καὶ συναντᾶται συχνὰ καὶ συμπροσεύχεται καὶ συνευφραίνεται. τὸ θέμα εἶναι σοβαρότατο καὶ προκαλεῖ ἀνησυχία στοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους, οἱ ὁποῖοι βλέπουν τὸν οἰκουμενισμό νὰ διαβρώνει συνειδήσεις καὶ σὲ λίγο θὰ μιλάμε γιὰ ἔνωση τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν» καὶ κοινὸ ποτήριο, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχουν ἐγκαταλειφθεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς αἰρετικούς τὰ ἔωσφορικά τους δόγματα.

**Εἶναι καθήκον τῶν Χριστιανῶν νὰ διαφωνοῦν δημοσίως μὲ τοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ νὰ ὑπερασπίζονται τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία.** Ἀλίμονο ἂν τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦμε λόγῳ κακῶς νοούμενου σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἑλλάδι ψοφοδεεῖς μητροπολίτες, οἱ ὁποῖοι «διαφωνοῦν συμφωνοῦντες», δηλαδὴ μεταξὺ τους διαφωνοῦν, ἀλλὰ δημοσίως συμφωνοῦν μὲ τὸν «μέγало ποιμένα καὶ δεσπότη», τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριάρχη! Αὐτὴ τὴν ἀξιοκατάκριτη τακτικὴ θὰ μπορούσαμε νὰ τὴ χαρακτηρίσουμε μὲ μιὰ παραβολικὴ φράση: «Ἡ μεταμόρφωση τοῦ λιονταριοῦ σὲ βάτραχο!».

Ἐπάρχουν ὅμως καὶ μητροπολίτες μὲ παρρησία, ποὺ λένε τὰ πράγματα μὲ τὸ ὄνομά τους καὶ σ’ αὐτούς πρέπει νὰ ἔχουμε ἐμπιστοσύνη. Ἐχομε ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα τῶν συγχρόνων γερόντων, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἦταν ὅλοι τους ἀντιοικουμενιστὲς καὶ ἀντιπαπικοί.



**Ἐ**σὺ λοιπὸν δὲν εἶσαι πλεονέκτης; Ἐσὺ δὲν εἶσαι ἄρπαγας, ἀφοῦ οἰκειοποιεῖσαι, ὡσὰν δικά σου, ἐκεῖνα, ποὺ δέχτηκες ἀπὸ τὸν Θεόν, γιὰ νὰ τὰ διαχειρισθῆς ὡς οἰκονόμος;...

Τὸ ψωμί, ποὺ ἐσὺ παρακρατεῖς, ἀνήκει στὸν πεινασμένον, τὸ ἔνδυμα, ποὺ ἐσὺ κρατᾶς σὲ ἀποθήκες ἀνήκει στὸν γυμνόν. Τὸ παπούτσι, ποὺ σαπίζει στὸ σπῆτι σου ἀνήκει στὸν ξυπόλυτον, τὸ χρῆμα, ποὺ τὸ κατακρατεῖς καὶ τὸ κρύβεις, ἀνήκει σ’ ἐκεῖνον, ποὺ τὸ ἔχει ἀνάγκη.

Ὡστε τόσους ἀνθρώπους ἀδικεῖς, ἐνῶ θὰ μπορούσες νὰ τοὺς εὐεργετήσῃς μὲ τὶς δωρεές σου.

**Ἅγιος Βασίλειος ὁ Μέγας**

## Τὰ Τέσσερα Κακά

Από τὸ βιβλίον «Αββᾶς Ἀμμωνᾶς».

**Υ**πάρχουν τέσσερα κακά, καὶ ἐὰν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει ἓνα ἀπ' αὐτά, οὔτε νὰ μετανοήσῃ μπορεῖ οὔτε ἢ προσευχή του νὰ εἰσακουσθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό.

Πρῶτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΥΠΕΡΗΦΑΝΕΙΑ. Ὁ ὑπερήφανος νομίζει ὅτι ζεῖ καλά, ὅτι ἡ διαγωγή του ἀρέσει στὸ Θεὸ καὶ στοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὅτι πολλοὶ ὠφελοῦνται μὲ τὴ συναναστροφή του.

Δὲν κατοικεῖ ὁ Θεὸς στὸν ἄνθρωπο ποὺ σκέπτεται ἔτσι. Ὁ Χριστιανὸς πρέπει μᾶλλον νὰ θεωρεῖ τὸν ἑαυτό του κατώτερο ἀπὸ τὰ ἄλογα ζῶα καὶ νὰ πιστεύει ὅτι τὰ ἔργα του δὲν εὐχαριστοῦν τὸ Θεό. Ἄλλωστε ἔχει λεχθεῖ ἀπὸ προφήτη: «Πᾶσα δικαιοσύνη ἀνθρώπου ὡς ῥάκος ἀποκαθημένης ἐστὶν ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ.» (πρὸβλ. Ἦσ. 64:6).

Καὶ ἂν δὲν πιστέψῃ πραγματικὰ ἢ ψυχῇ ὅτι εἶναι πιὸ ἀκάθαρτη ἀπὸ τὰ ζῶα, τὰ πουλιὰ καὶ τὰ σκυλιὰ, ὁ Θεὸς δὲν εἰσακούει τὴν προσευχή της. Καὶ τοῦτο, διότι τὰ ζῶα, τὰ πουλιὰ καὶ σκυλιὰ, οὐδέποτε ἀμάρτησαν ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δὲν θὰ δικαστοῦν στὴν Κρίση. Εἶναι λοιπὸν φανερὸ ὅτι ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς εἶναι ἐλεεινότερος ἀπὸ τὰ ζῶα. Τὸν συμφέρει, σὰν τὰ ζῶα, νὰ μὴν ἀναστηθεῖ οὔτε νὰ δικαστεῖ στὴν Κρίση. Τὰ ζῶα δὲν κατακρίνοῦν καὶ δὲν ὑπερηφανεύονται. Ἐπὶ πλέον ἀγαποῦν ἐκείνους ποὺ τὰ τρέφουν. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὅμως δὲν ἀγαπᾷ, ὅπως ὀφείλει, τὸ Θεό, ποὺ τὸν ἐπλασε καὶ τὸν τρέφει.

Δεύτερον κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΜΝΗΣΙΚΑΚΙΑ. Ἐὰν κάποιος μνησικακεῖ ἐναντίον ὁποιοῦδήποτε ἀνθρώπου, ἀκόμη καὶ ἐναντίον ἐκείνου ποὺ τυχὸν τὸν τύφλωσε, τότε ἢ προσευχή του δὲν ἀνεβαίνει πρὸς τὸ Θεό. Θὰ εἶναι πλάνη νὰ πιστέψῃ πὼς θὰ ἐλεηθεῖ ἢ θὰ συγχωρηθεῖ, ἀκόμη κι ἂν ἀναστήσῃ νεκρούς.

Τρίτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΣΗ. Ἐκεῖνος ποὺ κατακρίνει ἄνθρωπο ἁμαρτωλό, εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸς ἀξιοκατάκριτος, ἀκόμη κι ἂν θαυματουργεῖ. Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶπε: «Μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθήτε.» (Μαθ. 7:1). Πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ μὴ κρίνει ὁ Χριστιανὸς κανένα. Ὁμοίως: «Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ κρίνει οὐδένα, ἀλλὰ τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν δέδωκε τῷ Υἱῷ» (Ἰωάν. 5:22).

Ὡστε αὐτὸς ποὺ κρίνει πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν Κρίση, ποὺ θὰ κάνει ὁ Χριστὸς, εἶναι ἀντίχριστος. Ἐξ ἄλλου πολλοὶ ποὺ ἦσαν πρὶν ληστὲς καὶ πόρνοι, ἔγιναν ὅσοι καὶ δίκαιοι. Καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ εἶδαμε τίς ἁμαρτίες τους, ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀντιληφθήκαμε τίς κρυφές ἀρετές τους καὶ τοὺς κρίναμε ἀδίκως.

Τέταρτο κακὸ εἶναι ἡ ΕΛΛΕΙΨΗ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ. Χωρὶς αὐτή, καθὼς λέει ὁ Ἀπόστολος, κι ἂν ἀκόμη λαλήσουμε με ἀγγελικὲς γλῶσσες, κι ἂν ὀρθοδοξοῦμε σὲ ὅλα, κι ἂν μετακινῶμε ὄρη, κι ἂν δώσουμε ὅλα τὰ

ὑπάρχοντα μας στοὺς φτωχοὺς, κι ἂν μαρτυρήσουμε, σὲ τίποτα δὲν θὰ ὠφεληθοῦμε. (Α' Κορινθ. 13:1-3). Ἄλλ' ἴσως νὰ ἐρωτήσετε: «Πὼς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ δώσει κανεὶς ὅλα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά του στοὺς φτωχοὺς χωρὶς νὰ ἔχει ἀγάπη; Ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη δὲν εἶναι ἀγάπη;»

Δὲν εἶναι τελεία ἀγάπη ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη, ἀλλὰ μέρος της. Ὑπάρχουν πολλοὶ οἱ ὁποῖοι ἄλλους ἐλεοῦν καὶ ἄλλους ἀδικοῦν, ἄλλους φιλοξενοῦν καὶ γι' ἄλλους κρατοῦν μνησικακία, ἄλλους καλύπτουν καὶ ἄλλους ἐμπαίζουν. Συμπαθοῦν τοὺς ξένους καὶ μισοῦν τοὺς δικούς τους. Δὲν εἶναι λοιπὸν ἀγάπη αὕτη, δὲν εἶναι.

Ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη κανένα δὲν μισεῖ, κανένα δὲν ἐμπαίζει, κανένα δὲν κατακρίνει, κανένα δὲν στενοχωρεῖ, κανένα δὲν βδελύσσεται, οὔτε πιστὸ οὔτε ἄπιστο, οὔτε ξένο οὔτε ἁμαρτωλό, οὔτε πόρνο οὔτε ἀκάθαρτο. Αντίθετα, περισσότερο ἀγαπᾷ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀμελεῖς. Γι' αὐτοὺς πονᾷ καὶ πένθει καὶ κλαίει.

Ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη συμπάσχει περισσότερο μὲ τοὺς κακοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς παρά μὲ τοὺς καλοὺς. Ἔτσι μιμεῖται τὸ Χριστό, ὁ Ὅποιος τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς κάλεσε σὲ μετάνοια τρώγοντας καὶ πίνοντας μαζί τους. Γι' αὐτό, δείχνοντας ποῖα εἶναι ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη, δίδαξε λέγοντας: «Γίνεσθε ἀγαθοὶ καὶ οἰκτίσιμοι ὡς ὁ Πατὴρ ἡμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος.» (Λουκ. 6:36). Ἐκεῖνος βρέχει καὶ γιὰ τοὺς πονηροὺς καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς, ἀνατέλλει τὸν ἥλιο καὶ γιὰ τοὺς δίκαιους καὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἀδίκους. Ἔτσι καὶ ὁποῖος ἔχει ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη, ὅλους τοὺς ἀγαπᾷ, ὅλους τοὺς ἐλεεῖ, γιὰ ὅλους προσεύχεται.

Ὑπάρχουν μερικοὶ ποὺ κανοῦν ἐλεημοσύνη καὶ στηρίζουν τὴν σωτηρία τους μόνο σ' αὐτήν, ἐνῶ πολλές φορὲς ἁμαρτάνουν καὶ πολλοὺς μισοῦν καὶ τὸ σῶμα μολύνουν. Καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀσφαλῶς πλανῶνται ἐλπίζοντας στὴν ἐλεημοσύνη τους με τὴν ὁποία νομίζουν ὅτι εὐαρεστοῦν τὸ Θεό.



**Ο** Θεὸς ἐξετάζει τὴν πρόθεσιν. Σὲ ὅσα ὅμως μποροῦμε, ζητεῖ μὲ φιλόανθρωπον τρόπον καὶ ἔργα. Εἶναι μέγας αὐτός, ποὺ δὲν παραλείπει τίποτα ἀπὸ ὅσα μπορεῖ. Μεγαλύτερος ὅμως εἶναι ἐκεῖνος, ποὺ μὲ ταπεινώση ἐπιχειρεῖ πράγματα ὑπὲρ τὴν δύναμή του. Πολλὲς φορὲς οἱ δαίμονες μᾶς ἐμποδίζουν ἀπὸ τὰ ἐλαφρὰ καὶ ὠφέλιμα ἔργα καὶ μᾶς προτρέπουν περισσότερον στὰ πλέον κοπιαστικά.

Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης

## Ἡ Οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν

### Ἡ Οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν δὲν ἔχει καμία σχέση με τὴ σημερινὴ παγκοσμιότητα, ποὺ ἰσοπεδώνει τὰ πάντα, γιατί ἐκείνη ἦταν θεμελιωμένη στὴν ἐλευθερία καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸ.

*Ὁμιλία τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου Νεοφύτου στὸ Ἀκάκι (28 Ἰανουαρίου, 2009).*

Τὸ νὰ μιλά κανεὶς γιὰ τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι ἐγχείρημα δύσκολο, καθότι οἱ τρεῖς αὐτοὶ Μεγάλοι Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, παρόλο ποὺ μᾶς κληροδότησαν ἓνα λόγο γεμάτο φῶς, ἦσαν πρωτίστως ἄνθρωποι τῶν ἔργων. Δηλαδή πραγματώσαν ἐδῶ στὴ γῆ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ μετὰ τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴ βιοτιή τους, ἀφιερώνοντας ὅλες τους τίς δυνάμεις, ψυχικὲς καὶ σωματικὲς, στὴ διακονία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τὰ μεγάλα καὶ ποικίλα χαρίσματα, ποὺ ἔλαβαν δωρεὰν ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό, τὰ ἔδωσαν μετὰ τὴ σειρά τους στὸν κόσμο, δοξάζοντας ἔτσι Ἐκείνον, ποὺ τοὺς τὰ ἔδωσε καὶ ἀνακουφίζοντας καὶ στηρίζοντας τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Σπάνια συναντᾶμε, ἀκόμα καὶ σὲ ἁγιασμένους ἀνθρώπους, τέτοιο φρόνημα καὶ τέτοιο πλοῦτο χαρισμάτων. Ὅπως πολὺ ὀρθὰ σημειώνουν οἱ μελετητὲς τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, ἡ πολυσχιδὴ προσωπικότητά τους συγκέντρωνε καὶ συνδύαζε θαυμαστὲς ἰκανότητες διαποτισμένες ἀπὸ ἀγιότητα, ἀσκητικότητα, θεολογία, ἀκαδημαϊκὴ γνώση, κοινωνικὴ εὐαισθησία, ποιμαντικὴ μέριμνα, συγγραφικὸ ταλέντο καὶ διοικητικὴ μέριμνα. Ἄλλωστε, δὲν εἶναι τυχαῖο, ποὺ ὁ ὕμνωδὸς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοὺς ὀνομάζει «**μεγίστους φωστῆρας τῆς τρισηλίου Θεότητος**» καὶ ἄλλοῦ τοῦ «**Χριστοῦ μας τὸ στόμα**». Ἐπομένως, θὰ μιλήσουμε γιὰ τοὺς τρεῖς αὐτοὺς Μεγάλους Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἔχοντας κατὰ νοῦν ὅτι ἔβαλαν τὰ θεμέλια γιὰ τὴν ὀρθὴ λατρεία τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ σὲ ὅλη τὴν οἰκουμένη καὶ μᾶς κληροδότησαν τὰ ἀθάνατα συγγράμματά τους, ποὺ παραμένουν μέχρι σήμερα ἓνα βασικὸ ἐργαλεῖο γιὰ οἰονδήποτε θέλει νὰ μελετήσῃ τὴν Ὀρθόδοξη πατερικὴ καὶ θεολογικὴ παράδοση.

Προτοῦ προχωρήσουμε, ὅμως, ἄς ρίξουμε μία σύντομη ματιὰ στὴ ζωὴ τους, κάνοντας ἀρχὴ μετὰ τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο.

Ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος γεννήθηκε στὴ Νεοκαισάρεια τοῦ Πόντου περὶ τὸ 330 ἀπὸ γονεῖς εὐσεβεῖς, τὸν Βασίλειο καὶ τὴν Ἐμμέλεια, ποὺ εἶχαν ἀκόμα πέντε κόρες καὶ τρεῖς γιούς. Τὰ πρῶτα μαθήματά του ὁ ἅγιος τὰ παρακολούθησε κοντὰ στὸν πατέρα του, ποὺ ἦταν ρήτορας καὶ διδάσκαλος ἐγκυκλίων μαθημάτων. Ἀκολούθως, φοίτησε στὶς περίφημες σχολὲς τῆς Καισάρειας, τῆς Κωνσταντινούπολης καὶ τῆς Ἀθήνας, σπουδάζοντας ρητορικὴ, φιλοσοφία, γραμματικὴ, διαλεκτικὴ, ἀστρονομία, γεωμετρία καὶ ἰατρικὴ.

Στὴν Ἀθήνα ἀναπτύσσει μετὰ τὸν συμφοιτητὴ του, ἅγιο Γρηγόριο τὸν Θεολόγο, πνευματικὴ καὶ ἀδελφικὴ φιλία, ἡ ὁποία θὰ διατηρηθεῖ σ' ὅλη τους τὴ ζωὴ. Παρόλο δέ, ποὺ εἶχε μελετήσῃ σὲ βάθος ὅλους τοὺς μέχρι τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Πατέρες καὶ διδασκάλους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, δήλωνε ὑπερήφανα ὅτι τὴ θεολογικὴ του σκέψη τὴ διαμόρφωσαν ἡ μητέρα καὶ ἡ γιαγιά του. Ἡ μητέρα του Ἐμμέλεια, ποὺ τοῦ ἐμφύσησε τὴν αἴσθηση περὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς καὶ μόνο Θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ γιαγιά του Μακρίνα, ποὺ κατὰ τὴν παιδικὴ του ἡλικία αὐξήσῃ αὐτὴ τὴν αἴσθηση περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ἦταν ἓνας ἄνθρωπος πολυσχιδής, ἀκαταπόνητος καὶ ὑπερδραστήριος, ἡγέτης σπάνιος. Μετὰ ὅ,τι ἀσχολεῖτο τὸ ἔφερε εἰς πέρας. Ἦταν πρότυπο μοναχοῦ ἀσκητῆ. Ὁργάνωσε τὸν μοναχικὸ βίο μετὰ ἀξιοθαύμαστο τρόπο, ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ διακονεῖται ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὸ κοινωνικὸ σύνολο, χωρὶς νὰ παρεμποδίζεταί τὸ πνευματικὸ, ἡσυχαστικὸ καὶ δοξολογικὸ ἔργο τῶν μοναχῶν. Ἦταν κοινωνικὸς μεταρρυθμιστής. Ἀγωνίστηκε ὅσο κανένας ἄλλος ἄνθρωπος στὴν ἱστορία γιὰ τὴν ἀναμόρφωση τῆς κοινωνίας καὶ τὴν ὀργάνωση τῆς κοινωνικῆς καὶ νοσοκομειακῆς πρόνοιας μετὰ τὰ λίγα μέσα ποὺ διέθετε, ἰδρύοντας στὰ προάστεια τῆς Καισάρειας τὴν περίφημη «πολιτεία τοῦ ἐλέους», ποὺ θὰ γίνῃ μεταγενέστερα γνωστὴ μετὰ τὸ ὄνομα Βασιλειάδα.

Ἦταν μέγας θεολόγος. Προσέφερε τὴν ὀριστικὴ λύση στὸ τριαδολογικὸ πρόβλημα, ποὺ συντάρασε τὴν





Ἐκκλησία κατὰ τὸν 4<sup>ον</sup> αἰώνα. Τὸ σχετικὸ θεολογικὸ του ἔργο υἰοθετήθηκε ἐπίσημα ἀπὸ τὴν Δεύτερη Οἰκουμενικὴ Σύνοδο, τὴν ὁποία ὄραματιζόταν καὶ ἀνέμενε, ἀλλὰ δὲν πρόλαβε, καθότι ἐκοιμήθη δύο χρόνια πρὶν. Κατέστη πρότυπο ποιμενάρχῃ, συγγραφέα καὶ θεολόγου. Συνδύαζε πρακτικὴ ἰδιοφυία, φιλοσοφικὴ σκέψη καὶ θεολογικὴ ἀκρίβεια. Γιὰ μία περίοδο 18 ἐτῶν, μέχρι τὸ τέλος τοῦ βίου του, παράλληλα μὲ τὴν ποιμαντικὴ του ἀπασχόληση καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἀσθένεια τοῦ σώματός του, παρήγαγε συγγραφικὸ ἔργο σὲ ἕκταση καὶ ποιότητα, ποὺ τὸν τοποθετεῖ στὴν πρώτη γραμμὴ τῶν Πατέρων ὄλων τῶν ἐποχῶν.

**Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος** γεννήθηκε γύρω στὸ 328 στὴν Ἀριανζὸ τῆς Καππαδοκίας, ποὺ βρίσκεται κοντὰ στὴ Ναζιανζό, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὀνομάζεται Ναζιανζηνός. Καταγόταν ἀπὸ οἰκογένεια γαιοκτημόνων τῆς Καππαδοκίας. Ἡ μητέρα του, ἡ Νόννα, ἀναγνωρίστηκε ὡς ἁγία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ἐνῶ ὁ πατέρας του, ὁ Γρηγόριος, διετέλεσε ἐπίσκοπος Ναζιανζοῦ. Μετὰ τὶς σπουδές του στὴν Καισάρεια καὶ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια, μεταβαίνει στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ λαμβάνει καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν ἴδια ἀκαδημαϊκὴ γνώση, ποὺ ἔλαβε καὶ ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος.

Ἦταν ἄνθρωπος ἀσθενικός, ἡσυχος καὶ ἡρεμος. Προτιμοῦσε νὰ ζεῖ μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο καὶ νὰ ἀσχολεῖται μὲ τὸ γράψιμο. Ὅποτε ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ ζήσει σὲ μεγάλες πόλεις, τὸ ἔκανε γιὰ χάρι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐξαιτίας τοῦ χαρακτήρα του, προτιμοῦσε τὴν ἀναχώρηση, τὴ φυγὴ. Γι' αὐτὸ ὅλη του ἡ ζωὴ ἦταν γεμάτη ἀπὸ συνεχεῖς μετατοπίσεις. Ἐνῶ ἡ μόρφωσή του, τὸ ἐνδιαφέρον του γιὰ τὰ ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πράγματα καὶ ἡ φωνὴ τῆς Θείας χάριτος ποὺ συχνὰ ἄκουε ἐντὸς του, τὸν ἔσπρωχναν πρὸς τὶς διοικητικὰς εὐθύνες, ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη τὸ φιλάσθενο σῶμα του καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία του γιὰ ἡσυχία, τὸν ἀπομάκρυναν.

Ὡστόσο, στὰ λίγα χρόνια ποὺ διακόνησε τὴν Ἐκκλησία ἀπὸ τὴ θέση τοῦ ποιμένα, ἄλλαξε τὴν πορεία τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν πραγμάτων. Ἄν καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ ποιητικότερος τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν, ὡς συγγραφέας δὲν ἐργαζόταν μεθοδικὰ καὶ συστηματικὰ, ἀλλὰ ἀνάλογα μὲ τὶς περιστάσεις. Τὸ ἔργο του εἶναι πολὺ μεγάλο σὲ ὄγκο καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ πιδὸ μυστικὸς ἀπὸ τὴν τριάδα τῶν Ἱεραρχῶν. Τὰ δὲ κείμενά του χρησιμοποιήθηκαν πάρα πολὺ ὡς μαρτυρίες τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως καὶ ζωῆς καθ' ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνες. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ ἀπένευσε τὸν τίτλο Θεολόγος ὡς κυριώνυμο, γιὰ τὸν ἰδιάζοντα, βαθὺ καὶ ὑψηλὸ χαρακτήρα τῆς θεολογίας του.

**Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος** ἀνήκει στοὺς ἁγίους Πατέρες, ποὺ λόγῳ τῆς τεράστιας συμβολῆς του στὰ διοικητικὰ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, τοῦ μεγάλου κοινωνικοῦ καὶ πνευματικοῦ του ἔργου καὶ τῆς συμβολῆς του στὴν ἀνάπτυξη τῆς θεολογίας, ἡ μνήμη του διατηρήθηκε ζωντανὴ σὲ ὅλους τοὺς αἰῶνες. Εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀπὸ

τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, ποὺ δὲν κατάγεται ἀπὸ τὴν Καππαδοκία, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀντιόχεια τῆς Συρίας. Ἦταν παιδὶ ἐπιφανοῦς οἰκογενείας, τοῦ Σεκούνδου καὶ τῆς ἁγίας Ἀνθούσης, τῆς ὁποίας τὴν ἀρετὴ καὶ τὴν πίστη ἐγκωμιάσε ὁ δάσκαλος τοῦ ἁγίου, ὁ ὀνομαστὸς φιλόσοφος Λιβάνιος, λέγοντας ὅτι εἶναι ἡ ἀξιότερη τῶν Χριστιανῶν. Ὁ ἅγιος γεννήθηκε μεταξὺ τῶν ἐτῶν 344 καὶ 354 καὶ, ὅπως προαναφέραμε, φοίτησε κοντὰ στὸν σοφὸ Λιβάνιο. Μετὰ τὴν κοίμησή τῆς μητέρας του, ἀσκήτεψε γιὰ τέσσερα χρόνια κοντὰ σὲ Σύρο Γέροντα καὶ ἄλλα δύο μόνος σὲ σπήλαιο.

Στὴ συνέχεια χειροτονήθηκε διάκονος καὶ μετέβη στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη, ὅπου δίδαξε καὶ ἐπιδόθηκε στὴ συγγραφὴ. Χειροτονεῖται ἱερέας καὶ ἐπιστρέφει στὴν Ἀντιόχεια, ὅπου ἀναπτύσσει μεγάλο πνευματικὸ ἔργο. Κηρύττει κάθε Παρασκευὴ καὶ Κυριακὴ καὶ τὴ Μεγάλῃ Σαρακοστῇ περιέρχεται ὅλους τοὺς ναοὺς τῆς πόλης καὶ κηρύττει καθημερινά, προφυλάσσοντας καὶ μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο τὸν λαὸ ἀπὸ τὶς διάφορες αἱρέσεις. Τὸ 398 ἐκλέγεται ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ ἀσκεῖ συνεχῆ κριτικὴ κατὰ τῶν ἀπασθαλιῶν τῶν βασιλέων, τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ τῆς πολιτικῆς βίας.

Ἐπιδίδεται σὲ τεράστιο κοινωνικὸ καὶ ποιμαντικὸ ἔργο, κτίζοντας νοσοκομεῖα, γηροκομεῖα, πτωχοκομεῖα καὶ ὀργανώνοντας ὑποδειγματικὰ τὸ ἔργο τῆς κοινωνικῆς πρόνοιας. Ἀναπτύσσει τὸ αἶσθημα τῆς σοβαρότητας τῆς ἱερωσύνης καὶ συμβάλλει καὶ ἀπαιτεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς ἱερεῖς του νὰ εἶναι ὀλιγαρκεῖς, λιτοὶ καὶ μὲ ἦθος. Κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τῆς ἐπισκοπικῆς του διακονίας δέχθηκε πολλὰς ταλαιπωρίες, ἐξορίες καὶ διώξεις. Τὸ συγγραφικὸ του ἔργο εἶναι ὀγκῶδες καὶ θεωρεῖται ὁ ρητορικώτερος τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν.

Ἡ ἐποχὴ, ποὺ ἔζησαν οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, ἦταν περίοδος ταραχῶν καὶ ριζικῶν ἀλλαγῶν, ἂν καὶ ὁ ἀρχαῖος κόσμος παρέμενε ἀκόμα πολὺ ἰσχυρὸς καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶχε νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει τὰ βέλη καὶ τοὺς πειρασμοὺς τῶν ποικίλων αἱρέσεων. Ἡ δὲ αὐτοκρατορικὴ μοναρχία ἦταν τόσο ἰσχυρή, ποὺ εἶχε τὴ δύναμη νὰ ἀλλάξει μέσα σὲ μία μέρα ἀποφάσεις ποὺ ἀφοροῦσαν τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ τὴν Παιδεία, μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα νὰ διώκονται ἅγιοι ἱεράρχες καὶ σημαντικὲς προσωπικότητες ἀπὸ τοὺς θρόνους καὶ τὶς θέσεις τους.

Ἡ αὐτοκρατορικὴ αὐλὴ ἦταν εὐάλωτη στὶς ἐπιρροὲς κακῶν συμβούλων, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἱεραρχῶν, ποὺ ἤθελαν μὲ τὸν ἕνα ἢ τὸν ἄλλο τρόπο νὰ ὑπηρετήσουν τὰ ἰδιοτελεῖ συμφέροντά τους. Τὸ κλίμα αὐτὸ δὲν δίστασαν νὰ στηλιτεύσουν οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες, καὶ ἰδιαίτερος ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος, ποὺ δέχθηκε περισσότερο ἀπὸ τοὺς ὑπόλοιπους τὸν πόλεμο τῶν αὐλοκολάκων. Πέραν τούτου, οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶχαν νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσουν καὶ τοὺς φανατικοὺς Χριστιανούς, ποὺ δημιουργοῦσαν προβλήματα καὶ προχωροῦσαν σὲ βανδαλισμοὺς

έναντίον ειδωλολατρικών ναών ή στο κάψιμο βιβλίων άρχαίων συγγραφέων.

Ειδικά, ό Μέγας Βασίλειος κατέβαλε μεγάλη προσπάθεια να τιθασεύσει μερικούς μοναχούς, που επιδίδονταν σε τέτοιου είδους καταστροφές, διότι ως άριστος γνώστης τής άρχαίας γραμματείας ήξερε ότι ή παιδεία τής έποχής του ήταν στηριγμένη στα κείμενα των άρχαίων συγγραφέων. Έπομένως, εκείνο που χρειαζόταν δεν ήταν ή σύγκρουση και ή απόρριψη, ούτε και ή πλήρης άποδοχή, αλλά ή διάκριση, ή άνάλυση και ή άφομοίωση του άρχαίου κόσμου, όχι ως περιεχομένου, αλλά ως ένδύματος του όρθοδόξου Χριστιανικού λόγου.

Οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες έβλεπαν ότι την έποχή, που έζησαν, ή άρχαιοελληνική παράδοση ήταν ζωσα και πραγματική, όχι μόνο για τους ειδωλολάτρες, αλλά και για πολλούς Χριστιανούς, που αισθάνονταν κληρονόμοι των δύο πολιτισμών, του έλληνικού και του Χριστιανικού και ήθελαν να παραλάβουν από τον έλληνισμό ένα περίλαμπρο ένδυμα κι από τον Χριστιανισμό μία ύψηλή θρησκευτική και ήθική διδασκαλία. Μέσα σ' αυτή την άτμόσφαιρα, οί Καππαδόκες Πατέρες, και ειδικά ό Μέγας Βασίλειος, προσέφεραν τó μέτρο τής διακρίσεως, που προέτρεπε μόν τους Χριστιανούς να σπουδάξουν τή φιλοσοφία και τις συναφείς επιστήμες, αλλά να προφυλάγονται από την κενή άπάτη των ειδώλων, έχοντας για όδηγό τους την άποκάλυψη τής έν Χριστώ άλήθειας.

Η φιλοσοφία μπορούσε να είναι ένα όργανο έπεξεργασίας και διατύπωσης των θεολογικών και ήθικών άντιλήψεων, αλλά τó ζητούμενο ήταν ή διατήρηση τής σχέσης με τον ένα και μόνο Θεό. Η χρησιμοποίηση των όρων και μεθοδολογίας τής έλληνικής φιλοσοφίας θεωρήθηκε άναγκαία, για να διατυπωθεί και να κατανοηθεί σε όρους δογματικούς ή Χριστιανική πίστη. Αξίζει έδω να προσέξουμε τó εξής:

Οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες δεν έπαιρναν, όπως πολλοί πιστεύουν, ό,τι τους άρεσε από την άρχαία γραμματεία για να τó προσαρμόσουν στη Χριστιανική πίστη. Ούτε και συνέχισαν τó έργο μερικών άπολογητών, που ύποστηριζαν ότι κάποια άρχαία κείμενα προετοίμαζαν την έλευση του Χριστού. Αντιθέτως, έχοντας ξεκάθαρη άποψη, άντιμετώπισαν τον άρχαίο κόσμο στο σύνολό του. Και έχοντας ως άφετηρία τον βαθύ συγκλονισμό που ένιωθαν οί Έλληνες άπέναντι στο άπρόβλεπτο τής ζωής, τó όποιο τους ένέπνεε την αίσθηση τής τραγωδίας, άντιπρότειναν στην έποχή τους ως λύση τó άπέραντο έλεος του Θεού, ό όποιος σαρκώθηκε για να προσλάβει τή ζωή και να θεραπεύσει την ιστορία.

Στον τομέα τής παιδείας, οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες άναδεικνύονται πρωτοπόροι άφου, σε μία έποχή

συγκρούσεων και ταραχών, είχαν τó σθένος και την τόλμη να ύποστηρίζουν και να επιμένουν ότι θα πρέπει να μορφώνονται όλοι, άνεξαρχήτως τάξεως και όχι μόνο οί άνώτερες τάξεις του λαού. Κατάφεραν, λόγω τής προσωπικότητάς τους, τής μεγάλης άκαδημαϊκής μόρφωσης και τής ευρύτητας του πνεύματός τους, να καθορίσουν την παιδεία τής έποχής τους.

Έτσι στα σχολεία διδάσκονταν και άρχαιοελληνικά κείμενα και συγγραφείς, όπως ό Όμηρος, οί άρχαίοι τραγικοί Αίσχύλος, Σοφοκλής και Ευριπίδης, ιστορικοί και ρήτορες, άκόμα και μερικές κωμωδίες του Άριστοφάνη. Πολλοί έρευνητές συμφωνούν ότι τα κείμενα αυτά δεν θα σώζονταν, άν οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες δεν τα ένέτασαν στην εκπαίδευση. Και άν σήμερα θεωρούνται προστάτες τής παιδείας και των γραμμάτων, είναι γιατί, όχι μόνο διέσωσαν τα άρχαία γράμματα σε μία έποχή φανατισμού και μισαλλοδοξίας, αλλά και γιατί ή βαθιά τους πίστη τους επέτρεψε να είναι έπιλεκτικοί, διακριτικοί, άνοικτοί και κριτικοί προς κάθε κατεύθυνση.

Γνώριζαν δηλαδή, ότι ή γνώση δεν άρκεί από μόνη της για να κατευθύνει τους νέους προς την όδó τής άλήθειας. Έπιθυμούσαν να διαμορφώσουν τους νέους με τρόπο ώστε να άναπτύξουν τó δώρο τής έλευθερίας που είχαν από τον Θεό δημιουργικά κι όχι φοβισμένα και καχύποπτα, γιατί μόνο έτσι θα μπορούσαν να αγαπήσουν πραγματικά τον Δημιουργό και τó δημιούργημά Του, τον άνθρωπο. Ήθελαν τα παιδιά να είναι μέτοχοι τής αγάπης του Θεού, που εκβάλλει έξω κάθε φόβο, ώστε ό άνθρωπος να αισθάνεται την άνάγκη να διακονεί τον άδελφό του και όχι να τον ύποτάσει. Έτσι, οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες είδαν την παιδεία ως καλλιέργεια τής ψυχής και κοινωνία με τον Θεό, ως διαμόρφωση καλών και ένάρετων χαρακτήρων και όμαλή ένταξή τους στην κοινωνία. Γιατί, όπως λέει άφοπλιστικά ό άγιος Γρηγόριος ό Θεολόγος, «οί άνθρωποι πρέπει να ζούν ό ένας για τον άλλο και όλοι για όλους».

Η κοινωνική ευαισθησία των Τριών Ίεραρχών είναι ύποδειγματική και άξεπέραστη σε εύρος και δημιουργικότητα. Πρώτοι οί Τρεις Ίεράρχες τόνισαν ότι, παράλληλα με την άσκητική και ήσυχαστική ζωή, θα έπρεπε να λειτουργεί και ή διακονία προς τον συνάνθρωπό μας, δηλαδή ή συμπαράσταση και ή βοήθεια προς κάθε πάσχοντα, άνεξαρχήτως φυλής, χρώματος και θρησκείας. Είναι γνωστά τα όργανωμένα συσσίτια του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, στα όποια προσέρχονταν και Έβραίοι και Άρειανοί, καθώς είναι γνωστή και ή κριτική, που άσκοϋσε στους τοκογλύφους και όσους εκμεταλλεύονταν τους ανθρώπους στη δουλειά.

Ό άγιος Γρηγόριος σημειώνει ότι κανένας δεν είναι εκ φύσεως δούλος, άνατρέποντας τή σχετική άποψη, τόσο

του ἀρχαίου, ὅσο καὶ τοῦ ἰουδαϊκοῦ κόσμου. Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος μὲ τὴ σειρὰ του παραχωρεῖ ἐκκλησία στοὺς Γότθους, γιὰ νὰ τελοῦν τὴ λατρεία στὴ δική τους βαρβαρική γλῶσσα. Ὅλα αὐτὰ δείχνουν ἁγίους, ποὺ ἐφάρμοζαν στὴν πράξη καὶ στὴν κυριολεξία τὶς ἐντολὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Δὲν ἦσαν Χριστιανοὶ κατ' ὄνομα, ἀλλὰ κατ' οὐσίαν.

**Ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν εἶναι ὑποδειγματικὴ ἀφοῦ συνδιαλέγονταν μὲ ὅλα καὶ μὲ ὅλους, χωρὶς νὰ ἀποκλίνουν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀλήθεια τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ.** Ἡ ζωὴ τους ἦταν διαποτισμένη ἀπὸ μία οἰκουμενικὴ ἀντίληψη, ἡ ὁποία ἀποτυπώθηκε καὶ στὸ ἀπολυτικό τους, τὸ ὁποῖο λέει: «*τοὺς τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀκτίσι δογμάτων θεῶν πυρσεύσαντας*». Δηλαδή, οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι αὐτοί, ποὺ ἔδωσαν φῶς σ' ὁλόκληρη τὴν οἰκουμένη, μὲ τὶς ἀκτίνες τῶν Θεῶν δογμάτων.

Ἡ ἐποχὴ τους ἦταν ἐποχὴ πολυπολιτισμικότητας, ὅπως θὰ λέγαμε σήμερα. Οἱ ἴδιοι μαθήτευσαν σὲ ἐθνικούς καὶ ἰουδαίους δασκάλους καὶ ἔτσι ἀπὸ νωρὶς ἀντιλήφθηκαν ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶναι οἰκουμενικὴ καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς ἔπρεπε νὰ γίνῃ κατανοητὸς σὲ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀνεξαρτήτως καταγωγῆς, θρησκείας, φύλου, χρώματος ἢ κοινωνικῆς θέσης. Τὸ μήνυμα τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, τῆς νίκης κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου, ἔπρεπε νὰ φτάσῃ σὲ κάθε γωνιὰ τῆς γῆς. **Ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν δὲν ἔχει καμία σχέση μὲ τὴ σημερινὴ παγκοσμιότητα, ποὺ ἰσοπεδώνει τὰ πάντα, γιὰτὶ ἐκεῖνη ἦταν θεμελιωμένη στὴν ἐλευθερία καὶ τὸν σεβασμὸ τῆς διαφορικότητος.** Γιὰ τοὺς Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες ἡ οἰκουμενικότητα δὲν ἦταν σχῆμα λόγου ἀλλὰ πράξη καινοδιαθηκική. Ὁ πλησίον εἶναι ὁ ἀδελφός μου, τὸ ἄλλο μου μισό. Ἔτσι, μποροῦμε χωρὶς ὑπερβολὴ νὰ ποῦμε ὅτι οἱ Τρεῖς Ἱεράρχες εἶναι αὐτοί, ποὺ ἔνωσαν τὴν Ἀνατολὴ μὲ τὴ Δύση καὶ τὸν ἀρχαῖο κόσμον μὲ τὸν νέο κόσμον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς πίστεως.

Ἡ σκέψη τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν ἀποτελεῖ σήμερα τὸ κλειδί γιὰ τὴν ἑλληνικὴ παιδεία. Διότι προσφέρει τὸ οἰκουμενικὸ μήνυμα τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς συνδιαλλαγῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ προβάλλει τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὡς κέντρο τῆς δημιουργίας, ποὺ ἔχει τὴν εὐθύνη τῆς διαχειρίσεως τοῦ κτιστοῦ κόσμου ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ συνομιλεῖ καὶ νὰ κοινωνεῖ μὲ τὸν Θεό, ὡς πρόσωπο ἀνεπανάληπτον καὶ μοναδικό.

Τελειώνοντας, θὰ ἠθελα νὰ ἀναφερθῶ καὶ στὴ τεράστια συμβολὴ τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου στὴ Θεῖα λατρεία, μὲ τὴ διαμόρφωση τοῦ τυπικοῦ τῆς Θεῖας Λειτουργίας, ποὺ εἶναι τὸ κορυφαῖο λατρευτικὸ γεγονός τῶν Χριστιανῶν, τὸ ὁποῖο κορυφώνεται μὲ τὴν τέλεση τῆς Θεῖας Εὐχαριστίας. Ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, ποὺ εἶναι προγενέστερη ἐκείνης τοῦ Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, εἶναι μεγαλοπρεπὴς καὶ μακροσκελὴς

καὶ τελεῖται δέκα φορὲς τὸν χρόνον. Ἐνῶ ἡ Θεῖα Λειτουργία τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου εἶναι στηριγμένη στὴν ἀποστολικὴ Θεῖα Λειτουργία, ποὺ ἀποδίδεται στὸν Ἰάκωβον τὸν Ἀδελφόθεο, ἀλλὰ ἀποτελεῖ καὶ μία συνοπτικότερη ἀπόδοση τῆς Θεῖας Λειτουργίας τοῦ Μεγάλου Βασιλείου.

Εὐχομαι, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ βοήθεια τῶν ἁγίων αὐτῶν Πατέρων, νὰ εἶναι πάντα μαζί μὲ ὅσους ἀγωνίζονται τὸν καλὸ ἀγῶνα τῆς παιδείας, δασκάλους καὶ μαθητές. Ἡ ἐποχὴ μας, μὲ τὸν ἔντονον συγκρητισμὸ, τὴν παγκοσμιοποίησιν, τὴ συνύπαρξιν τῶν πιδ ἀντιφατικῶν πολιτιστικῶν στοιχείων, θυμίζει σὲ πολλὰ τὴ δική τους ἐποχὴ. Γι' αὐτό, ἡ παρουσία τους εἶναι καὶ σήμερα ἐπίκαιρη, ὅπως ἦταν στὴ δική τους ἐποχὴ. Εἴθε τὸ παράδειγμα, ἡ διδασκαλία τους, ἀλλὰ κυρίως ἡ μεσιτεία τους πρὸς τὸν Χριστό, νὰ βοηθοῦν ὅλους μας νὰ δοῦμε καὶ ἐμεῖς «*τὸ φῶς τὸ τῆς γνώσεως*».



## Ζακχαῖος ὁ Ἀρχιτελώνης.

Ἀρχμ. π. Μελέτιος Ἀπ. Βαδραχάνης, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 13/01/2012.

**Ζ**ακχαῖος σημαίνει καθαρὸς, ἀθῶος· κι ὅμως ἠθικὰ ἦταν βρώμικος. Ἦταν τελώνης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτελώνης. Τελώνης ἦταν ὅτι τὸ πιὸ χειρότερο καὶ ὅτι τὸ πιὸ ἀηδιαστικὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ ἐκεῖνη. Ἦταν τὸ πιὸ ἄγριο θηρίο, ποὺ ὑπῆρχε τότε, μὲ τὴ διαφορὰ ὅτι ζοῦσε στὶς πόλεις καὶ ὄχι στὰ δάση. Συνεργάτης τῶν Ῥωμαίων κατακτητῶν, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἔθνους του, ἄγριος, ψυχρὸς καὶ ἀνάληπτος στὴ προσπάθειά του νὰ εἰσπράξῃ τὸ μέγιστον δυνατὸ φόρον καὶ νὰ κρατήσῃ γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτό του τὸ ὑψηλότερο ποσοστό.

Ἀρχιτελώνης λοιπὸν καὶ πάμπλουτος καὶ μέλος τῆς ὑψηλῆς κοινωνίας ὁ Ζακχαῖος. Εἶχε ὅσα ἐπιθυμεῖ κάθε κτηνώδης ἄνθρωπος. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀναπαύοταν· δὲν ἔλεγε ὅπως ὁ ἄφρων πλούσιος «*ψυχὴ μου ἔχεις πολλὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ γιὰ πολλὰ χρόνια. Ἀναπαύου, φάγε, πίε, εὐφραίνου*» (Λουκ. 12, 19). Μέσα του ὑπῆρχε ὑπαρξιακὸ κενό, ποὺ δὲ γέμιζε μὲ τίποτα. Κατοικοῦσε στὴν Ἱεριχὼ καὶ προφανῶς θὰ εἶχε ἀκούσει γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τὴ διδασκαλία Του. Γιὰ τὸ Χριστό, ποὺ πῆρε τὸν τελώνη τῆς Καπερναοῦμ, τὸν Ματθαῖο, καὶ τὸν ἔκανε Ἀπόστολό Του. Μέσα του ὑπῆρχε πόθος νὰ τὸν συναντήσῃ μὲ κάθε τρόπο καὶ νὰ τὸν φορολογήσῃ

πνευματικά. Θὰ εἶχε ἀκούσει ὅτι «ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται, καὶ βιασται ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν» (Ματθ. 11:12). Βιαστὲς στὰ χρόνια τῆς Κ.Δ. λέγονταν κυρίως οἱ τελῶνες, οἱ ὁποῖοι μὲ βίαιο καὶ βάνουσο τρόπο φορολογοῦσαν, εἶχες δὲν εἶχες.

Κάποια μέρα μαθαίνει ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς περνᾷ ἀπὸ τὸ μέρος του. Τρέχει, γιὰ νὰ τὸν δεῖ. «Καὶ ἐξήτει ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦ τίς ἐστι». Ἡ ἐπιθυμία του εἶναι σφοδρὴ καὶ σωστή. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ὅμως ἔχει ἓνα σωματικὸ μειονεκτήμα, ἓνα κουσοῦρι. Εἶναι κοντός. Τὰ πλήθη τοῦ κόσμου, ποὺ περιτριγύριζαν τὸν Χριστὸ δὲν τὸν ἄφηναν, ἀκόμη καὶ ὀπτικά, νὰ τὸν συναντήσει. «Καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ὅτι τῇ ἡλικίᾳ μικρὸς ἦν».

Ἀλήθεια τί πρόβλημα τὰ μειονεκτήματα—σωματικὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ—τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Πόσοι σκανδαλίζονται ἀπ' αὐτὰ καὶ τὰ βάζουν μὲ τὸ Θεό. Κι ὅμως οὔτε τὰ πλεονεκτήματα μᾶς σώζουν οὔτε τὰ μειονεκτήματα μᾶς χάνουν.

Ὁ Σαοὺλ καὶ ὁ Ἀβεσσαλὼμ ἦταν ἄνδρες ψηλοί, ὁμορφοί, μὲ γοητεία. Ἀσκοῦσαν μεγάλη ἐπιρροὴ στὰ πλήθη. Κι ὅμως καταστράφηκαν κι αὐτοὶ καὶ δημιούργησαν προβλήματα στὸ λαὸ τους καὶ στὸ ἔθνος τους. Διότι ἦταν ἀτομοκεντρικοὶ καὶ ἐγωϊστὲς καὶ ὡς ἐκ τούτου δὲν εἶχαν τὴν Θεοῦ βοήθεια. Ὁ Μωυσῆς ἦταν ἰσχυρόφωνος καὶ βραδύγλωσσος κι ὅμως διοίκησε δύο ἑκατομμύρια Ἰσραηλίτες ἐπὶ σαράντα χρόνια, μέσα ἀπὸ ἀντίξοες συνθήκες, καὶ τοὺς ἔφερε στὴ γῆ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. Ἐλάχιστα προσόντα εἶχε καὶ ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Φιλαδελφείας (Ἄποκ. 3:7). Κι ὅμως ἠγήθηγε τεραστίου ἱεραποστολικοῦ ἔργου, τὸ ὁποῖο κανένας δὲν μπόρεσε νὰ σταματήσει. Ἡ παραβολὴ τῶν ταλάντων (Ματθ. 25:14–30) λέγει πολλὰ γιὰ τὸ θέμα μας. Ἡ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἡ προσπάθεια τῶν ταπεινῶν ἀνθρώπων σώζει.

Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ἦταν κοντὸς λοιπόν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ἦταν ἓνα «ἄχρηστο πάθος», ὅπως λέγει ὁ ἄθεος ὑπαρξιστῆς φιλόσοφος Jean-Paul Sartre. Πράγμα ποὺ συμβαίνει γιὰ τοὺς περισσότερους ἀνθρώπους, οἱ ὁποῖοι δὲν εἶναι τίποτα ἄλλο ἀπὸ ἓνα ἄθροισμα ἀχρήστων παθῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν. Εἶχε ἀσίγαστη ἐπιθυμία ὄχι γιὰ κάτι ἀνθρώπινο ἢ ἀμαρτωλό. Εἶχε ἐπιθυμία νὰ δεῖ τὸν Χριστό. Ἡ ἐπιθυμία ἦταν τόσο μεγάλη, ποὺ ἀδιαφορεῖ, γιὰ τὸ ἂν θὰ γίνεαι γελοῖος, ἂν τὸν κοροϊδέσουν, ἂν θὰ τὸν εἰρωνευτοῦν καὶ σακαρφαλώνει σὰν χαμίνι σὲ μία συκομορέα.

Ὁ Χριστὸς, ποὺ γνωρίζει τί συμβαίνει μέσα του, τὸν καλεῖ μὲ τὸ ὄνομά του καὶ τοῦ ζητᾷ νὰ κατεβεῖ, γιατί θὰ τοῦ κάνει ἐπίσκεψη στὸ σπίτι του. «Ζακχαῖε σπεύσας κατὰβηθι· σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μείναι». Ὅταν ὁ ἀνθρώπος ζητᾷ ἓνα, ὁ Θεὸς τοῦ δίνει πολλὰ περισσότερα ἀπ' ὅτι σκέφθηκε καὶ διανοήθηκε (Ἐφεσ. 3:20). Ὁ Ζακχαῖος λαμβάνει τὴν ἀποκάλυψη

ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἶναι ἓνας τυχαῖος ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ ἓνας παντογνώστης, ποὺ γνωρίζει ὅσα μόνο ὁ Θεὸς γνωρίζει. Ἐπιπλέον τοῦ κάνει τὴν τιμὴ νὰ τὸν ἐπισκεφτεῖ καὶ στὸ σπίτι. Αὐτὸ τὸν συγκλονίζει καὶ δημιουργεῖ μέσα του ἓνα πνευματικὸ σεισμό.

Ἡ ψυχικὴ ἀλλαγὴ του ἀποβαίνει ραγδαία. Ἡ μετάνοιά του ἀποκαλύπτεται ἀνάλογη τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Αὐτὸς δὲν ἐνδιαφέρθηκε τί θὰ πεῖ ὁ κόσμος καὶ ἀνέβηκε στὸ δένδρο· ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἐνδιαφέρεται τί θὰ πεῖ ὁ κόσμος κι ἂν σκανδαλιστεῖ, ποὺ ἐπισκέπτεται ἓνα ἐχθρὸ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ συνεργάτη τῶν κατακτητῶν Ρωμαίων. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος δείχνει ὅτι σωστὰ ἐνήργησε ὁ Χριστὸς. Διότι γιὰ χατίρι του ἀπαρνεῖται τὸ ἄνετο καὶ χλιδάτο παρελθόν του καὶ γίνεται πτωχὸς καὶ φίλος τῶν ἀδυνάτων καὶ ὄσων ἀδίκηση. Δὲν θέλει νὰ ἀκολουθήσει τὸν Χριστὸ μὲ τὸ ἀζημίωτο, ὅπως ὁ πλούσιος ἄρχων καὶ νεανίσκος. Δὲν θέλει πλέον νὰ ἐφαρμόξει τὸ σατανικὸ ρητὸ «ὁ θάνατός σου, ἢ ζωὴ μου», ἀλλὰ πιστεύει στὸ λόγο τοῦ Χριστοῦ «ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ὁ κόκκος τοῦ σίτου πεσῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀποθάνῃ, αὐτὸς μόνος μένει· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ, πολλὴν καρπὸν φέρει» (Ἰω. 12, 24). Αὐτὸ τὸ λόγο τὸν εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς, ὅταν ἔμαθε ὅτι κάποιοι Ἑλληνες εἶπαν στὸν Φίλιππο «Κύριε, θέλομεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἰδεῖν» (Ἰω. 12:20–21). Εἶχαν παρόμοιο πόθο μὲ τὸν Ζακχαῖο. Καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς ἐξηγεῖ τί σημαίνει γνωριμία μὲ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ποῖα εἶναι ἡ δόξα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Εἶναι ὁ σταυρὸς, ποὺ θὰ ἐπακολουθήσει.

Ἀκόμη καὶ ἐμεῖς, ποὺ διαμαρτυροῦμαστε σήμερα γιὰ τὴν ἄγρια φορολογία, τὴν ἀνεργία καὶ τὴν ἀδικία, ποὺ ὑπάρχει στὴ κοινωνία μας, προσπαθοῦμε μὲ κάθε τρόπο, θεμιτὸ ἢ ἀθέμιτο, νὰ βροῦμε ἐργασία, νὰ ἐξασφαλίσουμε περιουσία ἢ σύνταξη ἢ δύο μισθοὺς καὶ ἄλλα πολλά. Ὁ Ζακχαῖος ὅμως εἶναι καταπέλτης καὶ ἐντελῶς ἀδιάφορος γιὰ τὸ προσωπικὸ του συμφέρον. «Ἴδου τὰ ἡμίση τῶν ὑπαρχόντων μου, Κύριε, δίδωμι τοῖς πτωχοῖς, καὶ εἴ τινος τι ἐσυκοφάντησα, ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν». Ἡ μετάνοιά του δὲν εἶναι λεκτικὴ καὶ τυπικὴ, ὡς συνέβαινε καὶ συμβαίνει καὶ ἄλλοτε καὶ σήμερα, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον. Ἡ μετάνοιά του εἶναι οὐσιαστικὴ, ἀληθινὴ, κενωτικὴ γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ του καὶ τὰ συμφέροντά του. Ὁ ἄλλοτε γδάρτης τῶν ἄλλων, γδέρνει τώρα τὸν ἑαυτὸ του.

Οἱ πατέρες παρατηροῦν ὅτι στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ὄνομα ἔχουν μόνο οἱ φτωχοὶ (Λάζαρος) ἢ οἱ πλούσιοι, ποὺ διαχειρίστηκαν τὸν πλοῦτο σὰν οἰκονόμοι Θεοῦ καὶ δὲν τὸν κατακράτησαν γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτὸ τους (Ἀβραάμ) ἢ οἱ ἀμαρτωλοὶ πλούσιοι, ποὺ μετανόησαν ὅμως καὶ διέθεσαν τὸν πλοῦτο τους στοὺς φτωχοὺς, ὅπως ὁ Ζακχαῖος. Καὶ ἔχουν ὄνομα, γιατί μόνο αὐτοὶ ἔχουν προσωπικότητα ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς. Οἱ ἄλλοι εἶναι ἀπλῶς «σάρκες»... (Γεν. 6:3).

## REPENTANCE AND NOT AUTO-CEPHALY IS NEEDED TO HEAL THE SCHISM IN UKRAINE

### AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ARCHBISHOP THEodosy (SNIGIRYOV) OF BOYARKA

*By Sergei Geruk, Archbishop Theodosy (Snigiryov) of Boyarka.*

—Your Eminence, how deep is the connection between the Ukrainian Church and the Moscow Patriarchate both throughout history and current times? Are the Ukrainian and Russian Churches really different, almost “warring” amongst themselves, as the schismatics say?

—Certainly not! The connection was and is very deep; historically and spiritually. We have always, for millennia, been one Church! From the Kievan baptismal font in 988 arose the Russian church, which spread the Gospel faith and church life throughout the territory of what was then Rus’. After all, the very same Holy Prince Vladimir of Kiev, like his grandmother Equal-to-the-Apostles Saint Olga, was born near Pskov, and was later the Prince of Novgorod, [Pskov and Novgorod are medieval cities now located in western and northern Russia.—Trans.]. He fought for the Orthodox faith, and it spread to the north, south, east, and west—across all Rus’.

The Ancient Russian Church was then, in terms of canonical status, part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Later, in connection with the wars and desolation [of Kievan Rus’.—Trans.], the residence of the Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus’ was moved to Vladimir-on-Klyazma [located in central Russia.—Trans.], and subsequently to Moscow.

The transfer of the administrative center of the Kiev Metropolis was officially approved by the Patriarchal Synod of Constantinople. Then in the fifteenth century, as a result of historical events, there was a temporary separation of the Western Russian Metropolis, along with Kiev, from the rest of the Russian Church. The division lasted almost 230 years, and in the seventeenth century, unity was again restored. **So spiritually speaking, we have always been one Church.**

Administratively, things were a little different. In modern times, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the formation of an independent Ukrainian State, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church became independent, and received rights of broad autonomy, and full independence in its administration. In fact, our Ukrainian Church has received rights the likes of which had never been seen before in history. At the same time, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remains in full spiritual and canonical connection with the entire Russian Church.

—In light of what you have said, the question arises that is often asked by Ukrainian schismatics: Why is the Moscow Patriarchate the Mother Church for Kiev, and not vice versa? After all, there was no Moscow during the Baptism of Rus’.

And Constantinople constantly repeats that it is the Mother Church for Ukraine.

—Schismatics, as usual, are using their traditional logical fallacy of equivocation (substitution of concepts), banking on the ignorance of whoever is listening to them.

In Church-legal terminology, the “Mother Church” (or *Kyriarchal* Church), is the Patriarchate or Local Church which currently encompasses or includes a given canonical and administrative Church territory. This does not mean the Church from which another [Church or nation.—Trans.] received the Orthodox faith.

By that logic, the Mother Church of the entire Orthodox World would be the Church of Jerusalem, but this is not so. And for Ukraine, the Mother, or *Kyriarchal*, Church today is the Russian Orthodox Church, whether someone likes it or not. Even if, theoretically speaking, we consider the transfer of the Western Russian Metropolis, which is now contested by some historians from the Phanar [Ecumenical Patriarchate.—Trans], this does not change anything.

**Canon law dictates a period of thirty years to confirm the canonical subordination of a given territory to a certain bishop**, upon the fact of this subordination, without subsequent polemics. This is so that there will not be unrest and instability in the Church. And it’s already been more than 300 years since this happened. What is unrecognized? What are they talking about? It seems that some “theologians” do not see anything beyond their office walls, let alone look out the window.

—**Remind us, please, in numerical terms how great is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church today: How many parishes, priests, believers are in it?**

—The [non-schismatic, Ed.] Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the largest religious confession in Ukraine. It includes 12,500 parishes, more than 250 monasteries, 12,000 priests, and more than 5000 monks and nuns. By comparison, all the remaining “Orthodox” confessions of Ukraine taken together have about 5000 parishes and a little more than 200 monks and nuns amongst them.

As for the number of believers in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, I think it is in the many millions. But this number does not lend itself to an exact calculation; statistics of this kind are not kept.

At the festive Cross Procession in Kiev [held by the canonical Church—Trans.], gathered around 250,000 believers were gathered; you can thus draw some conclusions. After all, the majority of believers can’t participate in the procession, only a few from all the dioceses could make it.

If we consider that not everyone was even able to make it to Kiev, or even organize transit, due to obstacles imposed by the authorities in all regions at different levels... then here we have this “small” crowd of believers, “only” 250,000 who gathered in one day, in one city.

—During the last few months the theme of granting a “*Tomos on the Autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church*” was raised by Ukrainian politicians and discussed in the press. By appealing to the Patriarch of Constantinople, President Poroshenko and the Verkhovna Rada violated the separation of Church and state, as defined in article 35 of the Ukrainian Constitution, did he not?

—Yes, that goes without saying! These attempts to interfere in the religious life of society demonstrated by political figures of Ukraine can be called unconstitutional. And it is not only the infamous appeal [of President Poroshenko], of which you are speaking. Following him, many officials of different ranks each according to their station, calling to action to work on this issue: diplomats, district and provincial leaders, etc.

The uninformed in Church matters so argue: What is wrong with the initiatives of the politicians? What is wrong with Ukraine having her own autocephalous Church?

**Ukraine already has her own church; absolutely autonomous, and the most populous—this is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.**

The opportunities and rights of our broad autonomy are much grater than even those of many churches with an autocephalous status! This is an objective and important fact: the rights of autonomy of our Church are much greater than those of many autocephalous Churches. And the majority of the believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church understand this; they understand and appreciate it. But at the same time, they appreciate the spiritual unity with the fullness of the Russian Church, founded by St. Prince Vladimir, as we have already said.

At this historical state, the overwhelming majority of the episcopate, the priesthood, and the lay people of our church are satisfied with its canonical status, and do not want to initiate changes. I am certain that the people of God will give no one the ability to use the Church as a bargaining chip in political games.

We are told that autocephaly will relieve internal tension and resistance from the schismatics, that it will heal the schism. They say that they will return to the bosom of the Church. But this is deception. No form of autocephaly will heal anything, everyone needs to understand this perfectly. **Repentance is needed for the healing of schism in Ukraine, not autocephaly; awareness of one’s own ecclesiological errors, the replacement of their “sacraments,” the canonical ordination of their “priesthood.”**



**The Kiev Pechersk Lavra**

Are they really ready for this yet? On the contrary, we hear from the side of the schismatics increasingly aggressive rhetoric about the seizure of lavras, churches, etc. But [healing the schism.—Trans.]—that’s not what this is really about. It must be understood that the initiative of politicians to “provide autocephaly” has no direct relationship to the canonical and most populous Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This initiative is all a thinly veiled desire for the non-canonical, summary legalization of Ukrainian church schisms, namely the so-called “Kiev Patriarchate” and the “Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church.” That is what all this talk is about, simply masked with some kind of “*Tomos of Autocephaly*.”

**—All said, what if Patriarch Bartholomew unilaterally still decides to legalize the Kiev Patriarchate?**

—If the question is whether Patriarch Bartholomew will break the canonical order in the Church for the sake of legalizing Ukrainian schisms: The latest information from inter-Orthodox consultations and meetings on this issue shows that the Patriarch understands the entire complex issue of the

Ukrainian problem. And it is unlikely that he would want to take responsibility for the unpredictable consequences of this step. [Unfortunately, Patriarch Bartholomew did commit the unthinkable—Ed.]

**—In his interview, Philaret [Denisenko, the “patriarch” of the “Kiev Patriarchate”.—Ed.] already spoke about how the Kiev Caves Lavra, Pochaev Lavra, and other holy places should be “expropriated” from the**

**Canonical Church.**

—Absolutely, in his recent interviews, the leader of the “Kiev Patriarchate” Philaret constantly repeats that in the circumstances of the canonical legalization of his organization, they will claim the property and the very name of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. And this will attract Ukrainian legislators, officials, politicians. Anti-Church bills have already been prepared in the committees of the Verkhovna Rada to help church raiders to implement these plans. And what can this lead to? **I am afraid that this could become the trigger for a full-scale civil confrontation on religious grounds.** It seems to me that this is obvious to any sensible person.

**—Philaret, however, cunning as ever, in a recent statement denied that the monasteries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will be captured by force.**

—Yes, he tried to take it back; apparently he must have been told he spoke too soon and risked damaging the plans. And

how did he support his refutation? With his “honorable” word alone? But if one could believe his word, then there would have been no schism in Ukraine in the first place (remember his Archpastoral word on the cross and Gospel to leave office and not bring trouble in 1992)?

We have already seen this in Western Ukraine, where believers are expelled from churches that they themselves built, in total disregard for the decisions of the courts. And in the face of this, they say, “Everything was free and voluntary.” These are all fairy tales for television viewers. I think Philaret understands perfectly well what he wants to do and how he plans to do it.

God is not in power and hatred but in truth and meekness. Our flock hopes and believes that politicians and schismatics won't be able to take these self-destructive steps. If it comes to that, believers will protect their holy places as they are able.

—And what if they can't?

—Even if one assumes that someone is planning a full-scale persecution of the Church in Ukraine, as it was the case with the Communists, the believers still have no reason to lose spirit. As the folk proverb says: God is not in the wood of the church but the hearts of believers. We will pray in homes as we did in ages past. But we should always remember: With the help of God, the Church will stand *and the gates of hell will not prevail against Her.* (Mt 16:18).

Moreover, we know that Kiev is one of the protected places of the Mother of God, and we believe that she will not allow believers more trials than they can bear. I still think that it won't come to a forceful confrontation.

—The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is now in a difficult position: The Russian Federation has been declared in Ukraine as an “Aggressor State.” Nevertheless, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church maintains a canonical connection with the Moscow Patriarchate. How loyal is the broader Ukrainian society to the believers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?

—It is not only the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that is in a difficult situation, but rather the entire Ukrainian nation. And believers, as part of this nation, are no exception. But unlike other faiths of Ukraine, our Church represents the whole country in all its diversity. It really embraces the whole of Ukraine from Krai to Krai [edge/border] And like no other confession, the sum of its believers represents all regions without exceptions. Therefore, our Church as a community of believers from all regions perfectly understands that the problem of war in Ukraine cannot be narrowly reduced to a “war between the two countries.” The problem is much broader and more global.

It is justly said by Ukrainian sociologists, that in our country, and not only on the front line, there is a confrontation going between two different world views, two different mentalities, two different public self-identifications—pro-Western on the

one hand, and pro-Eastern, pro-Russian, if you will, on the other. For a very long time, both of these primary thought groups of Ukrainian society have lived peacefully, considered and called themselves Ukrainian, and built our country on the basis of parity.

In general, in Ukraine, as a multi-ethnic and multi-faceted state, there exist other significant public factions with their historical memory and worldview. And this diversity has never been a problem before. We always formed a single Ukrainian society, multifaceted, but calm and peaceful. And of course, absolutely, there was and still is present unto this very day the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Millions of our believers pray and build monasteries and churches from Transcarpathia to Donetsk and Luhansk, from Chernigov to Simferopol. Pay close attention: The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the only public institution in modern Ukraine which managed to survive in these difficult years structurally and territorially unscathed.

Why is that? The secret is simple. The Church does not divide but unites. It does not inflame confrontation and hatred, but on the contrary, seeks to extinguish it and calls for peace. Grant that all parts of Ukrainian society live and develop freely and calmly, and then we will all be peaceful and well in our common home. This is how the Ukrainian Orthodox Church thinks and acts.

If politicians were to act this way, the tragedies of today's times could be prevented.

—Your Eminence, what do you think: Is it a long way until real peace can be established in Ukraine?

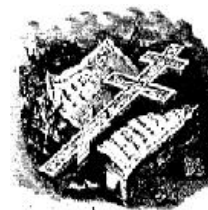
—I think that all external factors of the conflict will lose force if our internal contradictions are resolved; if Ukrainian society becomes one not only in words, but in reality.

And unity for Ukraine is possible only in diversity. That is how it came about in history, and nothing else can be done about it. To achieve this unity in diversity, it is necessary to avoid radicalization of society, and the incitement of hatred on national and religious grounds.

It is necessary to strive for dialog and respect for different points of view and mutual forgiveness.

I believe that such a path could lead in the foreseeable future to reconciliation and finally to the end of the conflict.

May the Lord help us!



Pray like a child, in simplicity of heart, concerning all your needs and sorrows; and entrust yourself to God's will, for the Lord arranges our salvation.

St. Nikon of Optina (+1931)

## THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

*A Commentary in the Light of the Fathers, by Hieromonk Gregorios, published by the Cell of St. John the Theologian Holy Monastery of Koutloumousiou, Holy Mountain.*

### The Parable

#### The Migration of the Prodigal Son to the Land of Sin

Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the estate that will come to me." So the father divided his livelihood between them.

A few days later, the younger son gathered all that he had and traveled to a far country. There, he squandered his property, living immorally. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need.

He went and hired himself to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He wanted to feed himself with the husks that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything.

#### Repentance and Return

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I am dying with hunger! I will get up, go to my father, and tell him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son! Make me as one of your hired servants?"

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still at a distance, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. He ran, and embraced his son, and kissed him. Then the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you! I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

#### The Reception of the Father

But the father said to his slaves, "Bring out the first robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet! Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this, my son, was dead, and he is alive again! He was lost and [now he] is found!" And they began to celebrate.

#### The Elder Brother

Now his elder son was in the field. As he came near to the house, he heard music and dancing. Calling one of the servants, he asked what was going on. The servant replied, "Your brother has returned! Your father has killed the fattened calf, because

he has received him back safe and healthy." However, the elder son became angry and he would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and begged him.

But he answered his father, "Look, for so many years I have served you, and I have never disobeyed a commandment of yours. Yet, you never gave me a goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this, your son, arrived, he who has devoured your living with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him." The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours! But it was fitting to celebrate and to rejoice, for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found."

† † †

### Commentary—God is Love

#### A certain man had two sons.

Jesus Christ, with His teachings and His Sacrifice on the cross, revealed to us the truth about God the Father. Because, as St. Cyril of Alexandria tells us, *God the Father is Visible only to His Son by nature.*" We have been assured by John the Evangelist and Theologian: *No one has seen God at any time. The uniquely-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him.* (1 Jn 2:10). Christ has taught us that God the Father is paternal Love, which is continuously offered to mankind. In order that this truth be understood, Christ used the parable of the prodigal son who was saved.

**A certain man.** St Gregory Palamas says: *In the parable, the Lord calls Himself man, and this is not strange, because He truly became man for our salvation. What does seem strange is His projecting Himself as a man for our benefit, He who is always the protector of our souls and bodies as master and creator of both? He who presented deeds of extreme love and care for us even before we were created?*

The whole creation is an overflowing of divine love. Thus, Gregory the Theologian says: *It was not sufficient for the most merciful God to be moved only in the contemplation of Himself, but the divine kindness had to overflow and expand, so that more and more could benefit from the God of mercy; such being proof of His infinite kindness.* This is why God initially creates the angelic Powers. Next *"He creates a second visible material world, which is the entire universe surrounding us.*





Creation is a loving movement of God. St Maximos theologizes saying: God, *“in the extreme magnitude of His kind love moves beyond Himself (goes forth from Himself), according to His providence, for all living beings, and in a certain way is attracted by kindness, affection and love, and from regions above everything and removed from all things, He descends into the region of all things with ecstatic hyper-substantial strength, without departing from Himself. That is why the most learned in divine things call Him a zealot, because He has a great kind love for living beings ... They call God a projector and a progenitor of affection and love, because these qualities which resided within Himself (namely affection and love), He spread beyond Himself, throughout creation. This is why it has been said: God is love.”*

Even before God created man He demonstrated His love for him. St Gregory Palamas explains this as follows: *Before we were created, God created the Angels to be dispatched as deacons, as St. Paul says, to those who are going to inherit salvation, for our benefit. He also set in place the dome of heaven, built the foundation of the earth, and spread out the sea As for our moral betterment and our guidance towards virtue, there is nothing that our benevolent Master did not do [to assist us]. This material world was built by God as a mirror of the immaterial one, so that by spiritual contemplation of it, we will ascend towards it by means of a wondrous ladder, towards the numinous.*

The purpose of creating the world and man, was to make him a communicant of divine love. Because *the light should not remain unseen, the divine glory undeclared, nor the divine kindness un-enjoyed. Nor should the other divine goods remain unengaged, without someone to become their communicant.* (St. Gregory Nyssa).

Since the purpose of man's creation was that he become a communicant of divine goodness, St. Gregory of Nyssa says that *he was adorned by God with life, logos, wisdom and all the divine goods, so that by means of any of them he would aspire to the corresponding divine good.* All such goods are collectively expressed by the phrase: in the image of God.

Having created man, the Lord God took the man whom He had formed and placed him in the garden of delight, to cultivate and keep it. (See Gen. 2:15) In Paradise man experienced communion with God, *being God's tenant in God's residence, clothed in glory by the same God enjoying the uniquely sweet fruit, namely the contemplation of His face, like another angel.* (St. John of Damascus). The vision of God was the joy and food of Adam and Eve.

St. Basil the Great comments that the supreme good bestowed upon man by the Creator was *his sojourn near God and his union with Him by means of love.* Man had to cultivate and to keep this divine gift in the Paradise of divine love. Moreover, this work that was to be done

by man's free will, would have been the transition from according to the image to in the likeness. (Gen 2:15, Gen 1:25).

*The according to the image coexists in man from the beginning, but to become in likeness to God can only be achieved through the effort of our own free will . The Lord by giving us the power to be like Him allowed us to work toward the likeness of God so that our reward in heaven would reflect our effort.* (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

God is Love and the virtue that will perfect our likeness to God is the virtue of love: *Just as in an icon, when the most vivid of all colors is added it achieves its likeness to the prototype, so it happens to those whom Grace repaints in the divine likeness: when the lighting of love is added, it becomes apparent that the image is found in the effulgence of the likeness.* (St. Diadochos Photike). Man becomes like God through love: *In like manner, when the saints become perfect, they all attain to this perfection, and by the superabundant outpouring of their love and compassion upon all men they resemble God.* (St. Isaac the Syrian).

† † †

**A certain man had two sons.** The parable speaks about two sons, *because human nature was divided into two different paths, thus the division of good and evil separated the human world into two classes.* In the parable Christ calls the benevolent Father and God **man**, and He calls all virtuous and sinful persons His **sons**. *God is the father of both the virtuous and the sinful, because they have all been adopted by Holy Baptism and the parable refers to the faithful.* (St. Gregory Palamas).

God is depicted as a man who has two sons. With the loving relationship between father and child, Christ reveals to us that God is love. (See 1 Jn 4:8). He is the source of love from which man receives love. And because love is expressed most powerfully in the relationship of a father with his children, God calls Himself man and father of all of us. Because, *“on the one hand He became man for our benefit, and on the other He had us reborn by holy Baptism.* (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

From the first words of the parable, we can see that Christ told it in order to reveal to us the magnitude and the standard of God's love.

† † †

**God is love and man was created in the image of God, therefore man is an image of love.** Man resided in Paradise in order to partake of God's love. Because, **Paradise is the love of God.** Man, however, did not honor the divine gifts and chose death instead of life, and hate instead of love. Likewise, the prodigal son left the Paradise of Love towards afar country. He moved away from the Father who loved His children and from the blessed house of paternal love.

## SPIRITUAL FREEDOM OR SPIRITUAL SLAVERY?

By St. Theophan the Recluse, from *"The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It,"* Letter no. 4.

*Worldly life deprives one of freedom and holds in cruel slavery those devoted to the world. Hypocrisy and egoism as persistent qualities of worldly life.*

† † †



Last time I did not talk about anything you had touched upon in your letter, and so I am sending you an addition.

You say, "Another thing I see is how everyone rushes around in a huff, in pursuit of something which no one ever manages to catch. When I happen to pass through some crowded street or place, what a fuss and bustle I see! But then I look—it is the same thing in their homes, and it is probably in their souls, too. I am at a loss—is it really possible to live this way? Another thing I see is how they bind, constrain and tyrannize each other; no one has his own will or any freedom. You do not dare dress as you would like to dress, you do not dare act as you would like to act, you cannot say what you would like to do it—

you cannot do anything as you would like to do it. "Everything they do is subject to some law that was written by no one knows who. It binds everyone, but no one knows how to break its hold. It is in this way that they tyrannize each other. You do not dare listen to anyone—that is unfortunate.

"I, for example, sing. When you want to sing, it is really paradise; it is pleasant for me and for the listeners. But there are times when you sing whether you want to or not. It is considered very polite to do this; to refuse would be considered against the 'law.' And so you sing. The burden is unbearable for me—your chest almost collapses, but you thrust it out to show that you are singing with, all your heart.

"I have noticed this in others, too. There is your freedom for you! Looking from the outside, everyone seems a freeman. A freeman, who gets all tangled up in his arms and legs! It was in regard to this that I began to examine closely whether people do things from the heart. And what of it? Maybe I am mistaken, but I have not seen anything that could be from the soul. There are empty caresses, a readiness to do things for each other, and also mutual admiration.

"Everything is superficial. Beneath the outward appearance that is elegant and smooth is concealed an entirely different spirit, which, if it were to be brought to light, would be found to be neither elegant nor even tolerable. So, it turns

out that when we gather together, we are a collection of hypocritical actors and actresses. What a comedy! Furthermore, what I find most astonishing is the coldness coming from everyone. How could this be?... Indeed, everyone seems to be everyone else's friend, ready to give them the shirt off their back, but there is an underlying coldness."

You are quite right. There is nothing more to add to your description. All this has long since been observed and mentioned to forewarn us.

Long ago, St. Makarios the Great described this bustle of life with its futile pursuit, a little of which you have experienced: *The children of this age have become like wheat poured into the sieve of this earth, and then scattered among the inconstant dreams of this world, in the presence of the unending turmoil of earthly cares, desires and maze of material concepts. Satan shakes the souls, and with the sieve, that is, the earthly cares, scatters the entire sinful human race. From the time of the Fall, when Adam transgressed the law and came under the prince of darkness who gained power over him, with the unending seductive and turbulent thoughts of all the sons of this age, he has led them to conflict in this sieve of the earth. The more the wheat in the sieve is shaken about, turned over and cast up, the more the prince of darkness takes over all people with their earthly cares: he shakes them, agitates them and alarms them, forcing them to flee to vain thoughts, unclean desires, earthly and worldly bonds, and constantly enticing the sinful race of Adam.*

*The Lord foretold to the Apostles the future coming of temptation over them: 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you like wheat: but I have prayed to My Father that thy faith fail not.' (Lk 22:31,32). The pronouncement and decision spoken by the Creator to Cain is clear: 'Thou shalt be groaning and trembling on the earth.' (Gen 4:12).*

*This sentence serves as a secret image and likeness to all sinners, because Adam's race, having transgressed the commandment and fallen into sin, secretly took upon itself these likenesses. People are led into uncertainty by inconstant thoughts of fear, terror, every kind of confusion, desire, and all kinds of pleasures. The prince of this world disturbs every soul which is not born from God, and he disturbs human ideas, which are like wheat constantly being shaken in the sieve, leading everyone into uncertainty, and ensnaring them with worldly seductions, pleasures of the flesh, terrors and confusions. (Homily 5:1,2)*

There is the summary of your observation! You noticed the way things are, and St. Makarios indicated both the reason for this and the origin. It is impossible to begin to speak of this view of the matter in this way if one does not begin to acquire this manner of speaking about things. I therefore ask you to adopt this view and always keep it in mind. It expresses the essence of the matter, and, once you have accepted it with conviction, it will serve for you as a

restraint from the charm of worldly life. In order to be able to think about this more and to get more familiar with this manner of thought, try to read the entire Fifth Homily of St. Makarios. I lent this book to your mother, and she wanted to acquire it.

For my part, I would just add that this futile pursuit and general discontent with everything goes back to the very thing of which I wrote last time. That is, the fact that not every aspect or need of human nature can be nourished by this way of life. An unsatisfied aspect such as hunger demands nourishment in the gratification of its need and drives man to seek such. So man runs to seek gratification, but as he moves around in that very circle, unsatisfied with respect to hunger, no gratification occurs, and hunger does not cease. But neither does the need for nourishment cease, nor does the pursuit of it. And it will never cease for those who live in the spirit of this world. Because the enemy blinds them, they do not notice their error: they have taken the wrong path and are headed in the wrong direction; in this darkness he torments and stifles these poor souls. So the enemy has blinded them, and there is no one to tell them of their error. Thus they roar like ferocious beasts. Isn't this the roar of the lion who goes about everywhere, seeking whom he may devour?

As for the other aspects of worldly life which you noted, I would just say that it cannot be any other way. For such a life is the life of the fallen man, whose primary characteristic is pride or egoism, which presents itself as the primary goal, while everyone and everything else are the means. Thus, everyone's goal is to impose his desires on someone else, or to bind him by them; you have quite accurately called this "tyranny." No matter how well someone conceals his desires, behind them stands egoism, which desires to twist you to its needs, or to use you as its means. So the goal is one of deception; essentially, it uses the strained contrivance of concealing one's faults without correcting them. Otherwise, one's influence on others and manipulation of them would be stopped. That is the reason that everyone exudes such coldness: everyone shuts himself up in his own shell and is unable to produce any warmth.

It is true that you will probably meet a few people with a kind heart; they flatter and touch the heart deeply and directly. Such a disposition is a vestige of the feeling of kinship with others with which man is endowed, but this is at the service of egoism, which uses it as the most expedient means for achieving its ends. I know one such person. It is better to be an outright egoist than such a flatterer. Although it is possible to make out what these flatterers are leading up to, it is a rare person who is able to do so.

While it is true that you almost continually come across good deeds, these are done only to obligate you ten times over for the one good deed. You will say, "How can this be?"

Everyone is always striving for honesty, and if you show dishonesty in something, you ruin yourself."

It is true that this is so, but this honesty is the mask of egoism; the main thing is not to besmirch oneself and lose face, and for this reason the most disgusting deeds are allowed, as many as one can get away with and conceal from others. You will even hear, or have already heard, someone condemned as being an egoist.

Do not think that those who speak like this are themselves above egoism. No, they condemn those who do not allow themselves to be exploited or used as a means to the egotistical ends of those who so judge them. Consequently, the latter are to be exposed as the real egoists.

I have heard that such individuals even reproach monks for egoism; they say that monks live selfishly by themselves. Poor monks! They do not eat, drink or sleep; they are on their feet day and night, in obedience, not having their own will or way-and somehow they have become egoists! By this alone, you may judge of what value in general these accusations of egoism are, such as you hear or will hear among worldly people. They mean they have met their match!

In looking over what I have written, I see that I have judged worldly life very bluntly, but I will not take back a single word. Maybe I would not have written what I have, except that I wanted you yourself to take notice of the rather dark stain on the world. I took a fancy to singing in this particular key, and I do not think it will warp you in any way, considering what you yourself have said.

But I expect you to ask, "Just how is one to be?" This is what we will be trying to answer for the rest of our correspondence. For now I will just say that, for you to shun everyone is, of course, impossible; but **refuse as much as possible to enter into this circle of worldly life.** When it does pull you against your will, act as if you were not there; look, but do not see; listen, but do not hear. Let what you see pass by your eyes, and what you hear pass by your ears. Outwardly behave like everyone else, be straightforward and sincere; but guard your heart from sympathies and attractions.

The main thing is to guard the heart, then you will be there in body only, but not in soul, faithfully carrying out the commandment of the Apostle: *Be as... they that use this world, (but) don't abuse it.* (1 Cor 7:31). "World" here refers to worldly life. You will be using the world, that is, you will have a need to come into contact with worldly life; but when you keep your heart at a distance, then you will not be abusing that life; that is, you will not be participating in it out of sympathy and desire, but out of being obliged by your present circumstances.

I have worn you out by my long letter, but you compelled me to do it. I ask that you carefully peruse what I have written, especially the last lines.

## PRIDE IS THE SUPREME ANTAGONIST OF DIVINE LAW

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from his book "Orthodox Psychotherapy."

A pure nous sees things correctly. A trained intelligence puts them in order. According to the theology of St. Thalassios, the intelligence by nature submits to the word and disciplines and subjugates the body, while it is an insult to the intelligence to be subject to what lacks intelligence, that is, the body, and thus "concern itself with shameful desires". It is also an act of depravity for the soul to abandon the Creator and worship the body. Thus, man's nous before the fall had a relationship with God, and the word expressed this experience and life with the help of the mind, that particular instrument of the body.

But after the fall came the dying and death of the soul. As a result, it became impossible for the whole inner world of the soul to function naturally and for all the harmonised inner functions to go on. Man's nous was confused, hidden by the passions and overcome by impenetrable darkness. The word, not having to express the experiences of the nous, was identified with the mind. Thus the intelligence was raised above the nous and now holds sway in fallen man. In fact this is the sickness of the word and of the intelligence. The intelligence is over-nourished, it has been raised to a greater position than the nous and has captured the word. The over-nourished intelligence is the source of great abnormality in the spiritual organism. Arrogance, with all the energies of egoism, which is the source of the abnormality, is raging there.

What Archimandrite Sophrony writes about the movements of the intelligence in fallen man and about the abnormality which this creates in the whole spiritual organism is characteristic. I quote it in its entirety because it is very expressive. "The spiritual struggle is a manifold struggle but the struggle with pride strikes deepest and is the most grievous. **Pride is the supreme antagonist of divine law, deforming the divine order of being and bringing ruin and death in its train. Pride manifests itself partly on the physical plane but more essentially on the plane of thought and spirit.** It arrogates priority for itself, battling for complete mastery, and its principal weapon is the reasoning mind.

"Intelligence, for example, will reject the commandment *Judge not, that ye be not judged* (Mt 7:1) as nonsensical, urging that the faculty of being able to judge is a distinctive quality in man, which makes him superior to the whole world and affords him the power to dominate.

"In order to assert its superiority the intelligence points to its achievements, to its creativeness, producing many convincing proofs purporting to show that in the age-old

experience of history the establishment or affirmation of truth falls entirely within its province.

"Intelligence, functioning impersonally, is by nature only one of the manifestations of life in the human personality, one of the energies of the personality. Where it is allotted priority in the spiritual being of man, it begins to fight against its source—that is, its personal origin.

"Rising, as he thinks, to the furthest heights; descending, as he believes, to the lowest depths, man aspires to contact the frontiers of being, in order, as is his way, to define it, and when he cannot achieve his purpose he succumbs and decides that 'God does not exist.'

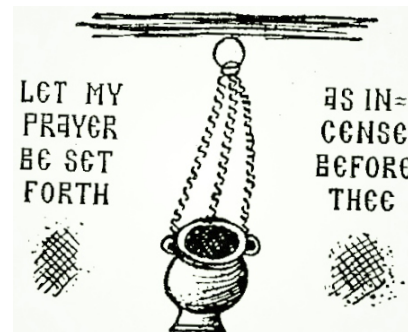
"Then, continuing the struggle for predominance, boldly and at the same time miserably, he says to himself: 'If there is a God, how can I accept that I am not that God?'

"Not having reached the frontiers of being and having attributed to himself this infinity, he stands up arrogantly and declares, 'I have explored everything and nowhere found anything greater than myself, so—I am God.'

"And it is a fact that when man's spiritual being is concentrated on and in the mind, reason takes over and he becomes blind to anything that surpasses him and ends by seeing himself as the divine principle.

"The intellectual imagination here reaches its utmost limits and, at the same time, its fall into the darkest night."

No wise people without God can have pure word and pure intelligence. St. Gregory of Sinai says: *Only the saints, through purity, have become intelligent in accordance with nature. None of those wise in words have had pure intelligence, because they corrupted it from the start with evil thoughts.*



Even though we all hobble along with a limp and are filled with wounds and sins, we like to speak about others. When we visit a hospital, we will observe that all the patients have some type of illness. However, we will not see anyone criticizing another sick person. Have you ever noticed this? No one says to another patient: 'Why are you lying in bed?' Whereas, we are all sick spiritually; and yet, we criticize one another. We have a problem with our eye, and we like to occupy ourselves with someone who has lung disease. Unfortunately, we wretched people fail to realize this.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona

## TAKING YOUR LAST BREATH

*From the "Plow," vol. 1-1 (2000), a periodical of the Ss. Peter & Paul OCA parish, Manville, NJ.*

In 1932, a witness traveled through the whole of Siberia on a scientific expedition. In the area in which the witness was, at the time of the incident there were no inhabitants around at all, just prisoners. In the camps at that time there reigned an unheard of tyranny. For no reason at all, people were shot, beaten, and flogged. Living conditions were terrible; there were sixty to eighty people in barracks, with two tiers of boards for sleeping. In case one of the prisoners didn't fulfill his daily assignment, the camp guards had the right to do what they wanted with him. People were dying of hunger and cold.

In July of 1933—as the witness recounts the incident—our exploration party stopped for several days not far from a concentration camp. The weather had become quite pleasant. After dinner we sat until late at night by the bonfire. We often heard some kind of cries, which echoed through the region. We didn't know yet what kinds of cries these were.

It was a clear, quiet night; the fresh Siberian air was giving off a fragrant aroma of flowers along the valley, I will remember it always! Our sweet morning sleep was interrupted by a kind of mournful human moan. We all got up quickly. The head of our party quickly took up a pair of binoculars, others set up two leveling instruments, and we were looking after our work, when we began to observe a crowd moving in our direction; because of the undergrowth it was difficult to understand what was going on.

It was sixty prisoners, and as they got closer we could clearly see that they were all wasted from starvation and overwork. What did we see? Each of them had a rope on his shoulders. They were dragging a sleigh—a sleigh in the month of July! And on the sleigh was a barrel with human excrement!

The guards who accompanied them apparently did not know there was a scientific expedition on the territory of the concentration camp. We heard the precise words of the guards' commands: "lie down and don't move." One of the guards ran back to the camp; apparently they considered us suspicious. One of our party somehow quickly determined the situation of the prisoners and said: "We've prolonged their lives a few minutes." At first we didn't understand these words. In perhaps 15 or 20 minutes we were surrounded by a platoon of camp guards, who approached holding rifles battle-ready, as if they were about to attack with bayonets. The platoon commander and the political commissar came up to us and asked for our documents. After verifying the documents they explained to us that these sixty men had been sentenced to be shot as an element foreign to Soviet power.

Already a ditch had been prepared for these sixty. The political commissar asked us to go into our tents, which we did. The

sixty martyrs were priests. In the quiet July morning the weak voices of many of the priests were clearly audible. One of the executioners asked the priests standing by the ditch, one by one: "You're taking your last breath; tell us, is there a God or not?" The reply of the holy martyrs was firm and confident: "Yes, there is a God!" The first shot rang out. Sitting in our tents, our hearts pounded. A second shot rang out, a third, and more. The priests were lead up one by one to the ditch; the executioners standing by the ditch asked each priest - Is there a God? The answer was the same: Yes, there is a God! We are living witnesses, we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears how people before their death confessed their faith in God.



## AN INSTRUCTIVE LESSON FOR YOUTH FROM THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

*By Archbishop John Maximovitch.*

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a most instructive lesson for youth. We see in the prodigal son the true character of flighty youth: light-minded, thoughtless, thirsting for independence; in short, everything that usually distinguishes the majority of youths. The younger son grew up in his parents' house. On reaching adolescence, he already began to imagine that life at home was too restrictive. It seemed unpleasant to him to live under his father's rule and his mother's watchful eye. He wanted to imitate his comrades, who had given themselves up to the noisy pleasures of the world. "I am the heir of a rich estate. Would it not be better," he reasoned, "if I received my inheritance now? I could manage my wealth differently than my father does." Thus the light-minded youth was carried away by the deceitful glitter of the world's pleasures and decided to throw off the yoke of obedience and to depart from his parents' home.

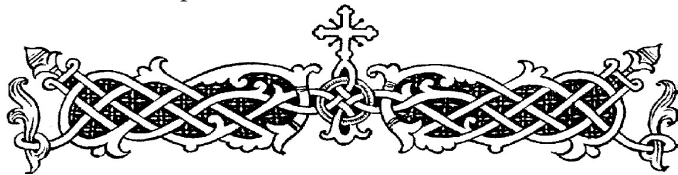
Are not many inspired by similar impulses today, and, while they may not leave their parents' home, do they not depart from the home of their Heavenly Father, that is, from obedience to the Holy Church?

The yoke of Christ seems difficult for immature minds, and His commandments burdensome. They think that it is not really necessary to keep that which God and His Holy Church command us. To them it seems possible to serve God and the world at the same time. They say, "We are already strong enough to withstand destructive temptations and seductions. We can hold on to the truth and sound teachings by ourselves. Slow us to perfect our minds through acquiring

many kinds of knowledge. Let us strengthen our wills ourselves amid temptations and seductions. Through experience our senses will become convinced of the vileness of vice!" Are such desires any better than the ill-considered request of the younger son to his father, *Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me?*

And so, a light-minded youth ceases to heed the commandments and admonitions of the Holy Church. He ceases to study the Word of God and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and listens intently to the sophistries of those who are falsely called teachers, and in these pursuits he kills the best hours of his life. He goes to church less frequently or stands there inattentively, distracted. He does not find the opportunity to devote himself to piety and to exercise himself in the virtues, because he spends so much time attending shows, public entertainments, etc. In a word, with each day he gives himself up more and more to the world, and, finally, he goes off to "a far country."

What is the result of such an estrangement from the Holy Church? It is the same as the result of the prodigal son's leaving his parents' house. Light-minded youths very quickly waste their excellent energies and talents of soul and body, ruining for time and eternity all the good they have done. Meanwhile, there appears "a mighty famine in that land": emptiness and dissatisfaction - the inevitable result of wild pleasures. A thirst for enjoyments appears, which intensifies with the gratifying of wanton passions, and finally becomes insatiable. It often happens that the unfortunate lover of the world, in order to gratify his passions, resorts to base and shameful pursuits, which do not bring him to his senses like the prodigal son and do not return him to the path of salvation, but complete his ruin, both temporal and eternal!



One elder passed seventy weeks in fasting, eating food only twice a week, as he begged the Lord to reveal to him the meaning of a passage in Holy Scripture. But God would not reveal it to him. Seeing this, the elder said to himself, "I have labored long and hard, and I have accomplished nothing. I will go to my brother and ask him."

When he had left his cell and locked the door behind him, an angel from the Lord appeared and said to him: "Seventy weeks of fasting did not bring you nearer to God. Now, however, when you have humbled yourself and resolved to go to your brother with your question, I have been sent to you to explain the meaning of this passage." And fulfilling this, the angel departed.

From the *Paterikon* of Bishop Ignatius

## THE ECCLESIASTIC WORLD MAY DIVIDE INTO ORTHODOXY AND PHANARODOXY

By Maksim Palamarchuk, 12 January 2019, from the webpages of the "Union of Orthodox Journalists--UOJ."

*Actions of the Patriarch of Constantinople can provoke splits within the Local Churches.*

The pan-Orthodox world may again break up, like in 1054, this time having divided into Orthodoxy and "Phanarodoxy." This point of view was expressed by the Vicar of Kiev eparchy, Archbishop Theodosius of Boyarka of the canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine in an interview with Pravoslavie.Ru.

According to the hierarch, today a pessimistic and optimistic scenario is possible in the ecclesiastic world in view of the actions of Constantinople. The former involves the beginning of persecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

"Nevertheless, Constantinople does not recognize its mistakes, as it was in the twentieth century, and will insist on the correctness of the decisions and its primacy of power, eastern "papism," said Vladyka Theodosius. "At the same time, representatives of Ukrainian schismatic groups who do not have the grace of the priesthood will be given carte blanche to all the shrines of the world, including the Holy Sepulcher and the Holy Mountain, to perform blasphemous services there. In this situation, the Local Churches will gradually be compelled to determine whether they remain within Orthodoxy or join the new "Pope."

The hierarch does not exclude that the separation may lie not only along the boundaries of the Churches, i.e. between the Local Churches but also within the Churches themselves.

"Within is between the ascetics of the faith, adherents of the canons of Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and ecumenists, religious "liberals" and ethnophiles, on the other," Archbishop Theodosius said. It means the once united Orthodox world may again break up. It will be a kind of dispersing to two different spiritual poles, as it was in 1054, this time having divided into Orthodoxy and 'Phanarodoxy.' At the same time, in addition to a purely religious confrontation, in some cases the struggle for churches and monasteries between Orthodox and "Phanarious" in the once united Churches will begin. This can create civil tension in some states. What Europe experienced hundreds of years ago can return again in Orthodox countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

According to the hierarch, the position of just one person—the Patriarch of Constantinople, who believes himself entitled to decide for the whole Church of Christ, for the whole of Orthodoxy, can lead to this entire tragedy.

"If this happens, then, no doubt, the descendants will call him the new Herostratus. I think that if all this happens,

then from this time on grace in the sacraments of the communities going farther and farther from the True Church of Christ, even if they externally retain the appearance of church structures, will dry up. As they are removed from Orthodoxy, the grace of the Holy Spirit will increasingly diminish until it gets scanty altogether. Where pride and heresy reign, there is no grace. May all this not be the case with our brothers,” concluded Archbishop Theodosius.

Earlier, Metropolitan Chrysostom, the head of the Metropolia of the Serbian Orthodox Church, battered the actions of Constantinople in Ukraine and sadly stated that “the celebration of Christmas this year will go down in history of the divided and fragmented Church.”

As the UOJ reported, on January 6, in the Cathedral of St. George in Istanbul, the Patriarch of Constantinople regrettably handed over to Epiphany the *Tomos* and the metropolitan’s crosier of the “Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine.”

† † †

## “THE SCALE OF THE SIN IN CONSTANTINOPLE SIMPLY FRIGHTENS ME,” SAYS METROPOLITAN ONUFRIY, HEAD OF THE CANONICAL UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

*The Patriarchate of Constantinople has now fallen. And to be with him is to be in his crime against the Church.*

[Metropolitan Onufriy]



I am a sinner. But the scale of the sin of the Constantinople Synod simply frightens me.

“Well, why argue, after all? Does it really matter which patriarchy or which church? There was Moscow, now there is Constantinople,

then there will be Kiev...”

The question is not idle. Why even speak out against something, or protect something?

So many are surprised by the holy Forerunner, John the Baptist. I have sat on the banks of the Jordan river, thinking about him preaching and baptizing people there. Why did he denounce the king? Why was this his policy?

The fact is, where politics came into contact with moral issues, a person of such authority as John the Baptist did not have the right to remain silent.

After all, King Antipas was the leader of the religious people, he stood at the top of God’s chosen people and served—whether voluntarily or involuntarily—as an example for those whom the saint called for repentance. Any act of the king could become either a temptation to sin, or an exalted

example worthy of emulation. There needed to be a voice of conscience!

The moral crime of the king forced the Forerunner to raise his voice. And he ended up in jail.

The king then enjoyed having this righteous man nearby, and he engaged in long conversations with him.

Is it possible that these conversations would have led to a change in the life of Herod Antipas, if not for the depraved dance of the young girl, his niece, during that binge of drunken bragging before his guests?

Was it worth it for John the Forerunner to denounce the king? Was it worth it to speak up when Herod was wrong, when he personally sinned?

How can we be silent now, when the patriarch of Constantinople sins against the Church of Christ?

Isn’t it easier to close your eyes and say that you can also be saved under the Patriarch of Constantinople? You can say this is important because of “love”! Indeed, you can say almost anything. But the problem is that—in the words of the Apostle Paul—love is “not unreasonable.” And if this slumber is imposed under the guise of love, this is a pure crime! It is a crime against Love itself!

For centuries, the church has been developing various canons and laws, holding the Church’s life in proper order. A single violation is painful when committed by any Christian. But a special, fatal wound occurs when a Church leader does it, and when those who are called to watch over the Church—Bishops—contribute to this robbery!

Power, wealth and politics destroy Christianity in everyone who clings to this dirt. The Patriarchate of Constantinople has now fallen. And to be with him is to be in his crime against the Church, and against Love. I cannot agree to this.

I am a sinner. But the scale of the sin of the Constantinople Synod simply frightens me.

Thus, I remain with the persecuted Church. But I am standing in the right position, in the position of the True Church. And because of this, I am happy.

I am happy, because only those who are faithful to Christ are willing to remain in this Church. I look with reverence at the holy bishops, priests, and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who build up the fullness of holiness with their loyalty. And I ask them not to reject me, a sinner.



The Church of Christ is not built upon any particular set of philosophical principles, and She is not built upon any particular type of sociopolitical organization; rather, the Church is made up of those whose noetic faculties are being healed, the goal being the illumination of the heart, and ultimately, glorification, which is vision of God’s uncreated energies by means of those selfsame energies.

Fr. John S. Romanides (+2001)

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
 BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
 PO Box 38688  
 PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 TUCSON, AZ  
 PERMIT NO 690



A 501(c)(3) ORGANIZATION  
 HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG  
 POIMEN@MAIL.COM

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## A NEW YEAR GREETING AND A REMINDER ON THE SORROWS WE MIGHT EXPERIENCE

By St. Barsanuphius of Optina, January 1, 1913.



I greet all of you gathered here with the New Year. I congratulate you with the joys that I hope the Lord might send you in the coming year. I congratulate you also with the sorrows that will inevitably visit you this year;

perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, or in the near future. Incidentally, do not be confused by sorrows or fear them. Sorrows and joys are closely bound up with each other.

This may seem strange to you, but

remember the words of the Savior: *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.* (Jn 16:21). Day turns to night, and

night turns to day, bad weather turns to good; so also does sorrow turn into joy, and joy into sorrow.

The Apostle Paul pronounced threatening words against those who do not endure any punishment that comes from God: If you are left without punishment, you are illegitimate children. Do not be depressed; let those be depressed who do not believe in God. For them, of course, sorrow is onerous, because they know only earthly pleasures. But people who believe in God should not despond, because through sorrows they receive the rights of sons, without which one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

***Never be despondent. Let those be despondent who do not believe in God. For them sorrow is burdensome, of course, because besides earthly enjoyment they have nothing. But believers must not be despondent, for through sorrows they receive the right of sonship, without which it is impossible to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Say the Jesus Prayer, and leave everything to the will of God. This prayer has many subdivisions, from simple utterance to creative prayer. But for us, even if we were to be on the bottom step, it would be salvific. The powers of the enemy run from one who utters this prayer, and sooner or later he'll be saved all the same.***

*Scorning the impious decree, the Children brought up together in godliness feared not the threat of fire, but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang: 'O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.'* (Irmos of the Nativity of Christ, tone 1, canticle 7).

Sorrows are that very threat of fire, or trial, but we must not fear them; rather we must be like

the godly children and sing unto God in our sorrows, believing that they are sent to us by God for our salvation.

May the Lord save you all, and lead you to the Kingdom of Unwaning Light! Amen.



# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

VOL. 17, ISSUE 03-04

MARCH-APRIL 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- Satan and the Fall (p. 4)
- “Be Holy, for I Am Holy” (p. 7)
- On Orthodox Clergy (p. 9)
- On the Annunciation (p. 10)
- Passion Week (p. 12)
- An Orthodox Brother on Death Row (p. 21)
- Theological Lessons from the Life of St. Mary of Egypt (p. 23)
- Christ Is Risen! (p. 28)
- Humility & Patient Endurance (p. 30)
- A Shameful Recognition (p. 31)



- Ἡ Νοερά καὶ Καρδιακὴ Προσευχὴ (σελ. 13)
- Ἡ Ἁγία Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση (σελ. 14)
- Ἐν Ἀρεταῖς ... καὶ Πίστει Ὁρθῆ (σελ. 16)
- «Αἰωνία ...» (σελ. 17)
- «Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος» (σελ. 18)
- Ὁ Θεὸς Ἐγκαταλείπει; (σελ. 20)

Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## GOD FORBID THAT WE BOAST IN ANYTHING BUT THE CROSS OF CHRIST

*Homily on the Sunday before the Elevation of the Holy Cross by Protopresbyter Peter Heers, September 24, 2017, from “Orthodox Ethos,” [www.orthodoxethos.com](http://www.orthodoxethos.com).*

The Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross, brothers and sisters, and the Church presents before us the Holy Cross in preparation—and then with the Sunday after the feast, in thanksgiving—for the great feast.

We, with Paul, throughout all the generations, boast of the Cross, and only in the Cross. The Cross is our boast as Christians! And, as we heard in the Epistle, Paul, the great Apostle, spent most of his time preaching the Gospel face to face with the Judaizers—those Jews who, as he says, sought to make a good showing, a good impression, in the flesh of the converts. And that means they sought to have a good word, a good image with the unbelievers, those Jews who had not converted.

These were Christians, Jewish Christians, who remained tied down, bound to the law, and the perception of the law. They taught the Christians in Galatia to keep the law, including circumcision, and they meant the ceremonial law, which had been fulfilled in Christ, and replaced by the freedom of grace, and in this, as St. Paul says elsewhere, they taught another gospel. They taught another gospel! Nothing less than another gospel, because they refused to see the fulfillment, and they remained with the type, with the shadow, with the purely human, which does not redeem, which does not make people new creations in Christ.

This is who he speaks of in the Epistle that we heard. Let’s hear this excerpt again. He says, *As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised; only that they may not suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.* And listen to this, this is the key, *But God forbid that I should boast, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* (Gal 6:12-14)

The question is why did the Jewish Christians teach this? Why did they seek to remain with the old Law... to be trapped in the mentality that we are still in the type, in the shadow, waiting for fulfillment. They sought to appear well in the eyes of those unrepentant Jews who claimed that the Jewish converts had abandoned the traditions of the fathers. That is, they sought to compromise with the spirit of the world and the unbelief of the Jews, with the enemies of the Cross! To compromise, in order to avoid reproof, because they did not believe. Underneath all of this worldliness, this resistance, was ultimately lack of faith in the sacrifice of our Lord. Apparently, they had not yet tasted of regeneration and they wanted to avoid persecution. They wanted to avoid the Cross!

The history of the Church is full of such people, up to our day, and in our day perhaps we have many - many of such false, traitorous Christians. Saint John Chrysostomos says that they prefer to offend and even reject Christ in order to be pleasing to men; rather we offend God in order to please men! They are men pleasers, co-workers with the enemies of the Cross. The life of the Cross requires sacrifice. Christ requires

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.orthodoxheritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen,” a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.” PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, “poimen@mail.com.” Please visit our website for the applicable links.

of us sacrifice, because sacrifice is love. When we do not sacrifice, we do not love; when we do not love we cannot be united to the God Who is love.

The Cross is our *path*, our opening to the life of love with the Master and the Eternal life that we all seek. If we put aside the Cross, we put aside the path to God; we put aside love. Only those who lift up the Cross of Christ are led into the freedom of grace. If we deny the Cross we deny the sacrifice, we deny the crucifixion of our intellect. Then we remain enslaved, as they were, to a shadow, but a shadow of the greatness of the Gospel that is being offered to us.

And inevitably they serve two masters: the world and Christ. They become two-faced, double-minded people. We have many of those today in the Church. Two-faced, double-minded: one thing among the faithful, another thing in the world, one thing among the monastics, another thing amongst the world’s leaders. One thing here and one thing there. They are two-faced, double-minded inevitably because they deny the power of the Cross in their lives. They seek ease and comfort; **this is the greatest heresy of our day: a Christianity without the Cross; a Christianity without sacrifice; a Christianity without asceticism. Christianity without love!**

We talk of love today, we hear about love all the time, and most of the time it has nothing to do with the love of God, but rather the love of *self*! And we remain trapped in self-satisfaction: we are good, we believe, and we live according to all of the law, fulfilling it; we are just in the eyes of God, so we believe. We are satisfied with ourselves, with our community, with our identity, but, alas, the love of Christ, the love of His Cross is far from us. These people who remain in the shadow, who remain in self-love, in self-satisfaction, they

are living traps within the Church, they distort the Christian worldview, the *phronema*, and the Christian ethos.

Whether they fall toward the right or to the left, it matters little, they are still of the world. This is one aspect, one area, where many do not see and fall. There are those who are of this mindset **on the right**, and in the temptation on the right. The zealots for the form, the zealots for the packaging, for the law, for the secondary, the tertiary or even the contrary. There are zealots for many things, thinking that in this they are saving or being saved and yet they are of the world, and yet to sacrifice and love. They are not able to prioritize the things, to put them in the right order. They don’t see the source of all the goodness and the blessings.

**First Christ; first the Cross—and then everything else, including our worldly identity. And only in Christ, and only in the Cross, does the rest have meaning, depth and regeneration.** Only in Christ, and in His Cross! And so, when we lose the hierarchy of things, we lose everything. We think we are saving the form, the history, the identity, the Nation, but in fact we are losing all of that, because we have lost Christ! Only He can save the nation, only He can save the people, only He can save the Church, only He can save us. And when we deny the sacrifice of the Cross, we deny His *salvific grace*, the freedom that comes with grace... We are putting the cart before the horse, and we go nowhere in the end.

And **on the left**, many fall also because they seek to serve two masters, the world and the Lord. So you have the worldly, the modernists, the innovators, that deny the crucifixion of their mind, and of their body, and of their life in this world. They mock asceticism, they mock abstinence, they have zeal for the externals, they do not have zeal for exacti-

tude of the faith, of confession of the faith, and those who do, they call fundamentalists. They speak of updating, but what they mean is changing, perverting, distorting, compromising with the world, because they cannot say with Paul that, *God forbid that I should boast, in anything except the Cross of Christ.*

Can we say that? Or, do we boast in ourselves, in our achievements, in our supposed gifts? This is on the personal level: many of us can spot that—the arrogance, the vanity, the pride in ourselves; not all of us, but some of us, many of us, can do that. Can we spot the other kind? That we have pride in an identity, which is worldly and earthly, and we think that this saves... that we belong to the club of the saved. *God forbid that I should boast in anything except the Cross of Christ, by whom the world, (both on the right and the left), has been crucified to me and I to the world.* And then he says: for in Christ Jesus, *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything,* and we can add as we heard the other Epistle read today, *neither Greek nor Jew, neither Russian nor American neither slave nor free, neither man nor woman (Gal 3:28-29); neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.*

Are we being regenerated? Have we overcome the passions? Have we become free from the passions, the delusions of this age, the identity of the world? **The identity of the world!** Many of us think that there is salvation in our worldly identity. Brothers and sisters, **in heaven there is not one Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, American Orthodox soul. There is only an Orthodox Christian soul who lived out his life in America, or in Russia, or in Greece.** There are no identities of *this world* in the next world. Let us not confuse this temporary, quick passing life, and our identity in it, with regeneration, with the Cross of Christ, with sacrifice and love! They are two different things. We can have one, Christ and the Cross and all the rest is regenerated. This is the glory of the history of the Church! That the Cross came, Christ came, and regenerated and renewed and saved and brought up to heaven and made holy human endeavors in the arts, in literature and music. But *first Christ* and His Cross, and then this regeneration and then this new creation, as Paul says.

And he gives us this *rule of faith*. He gives us this rule of faith and he says, as many as walk according to this rule of regeneration, of crucifixion of the mind, of crucifixion of this worldly identity, peace and mercy be upon him, and

upon the Israel of God! He says this to the *phyletists*<sup>(\*)</sup> of his age, to those who are trapped in the identity of this world, the Jews, who had a monopoly on Christ for thousands of years! Who could claim that their culture, their identity, should be the identity of everyone on the face of the earth, except the Jews, from which came our Savior?!...They could claim it? No they could not.

For, it was for a time, it was but a shadow leading to the light! So he says to his fellow Jews, peace and mercy be upon you, if you walk according to this rule; if [however] you remain in this world (whether you be on the right or the left it matters little), if you remain a foreigner to the Cross and the sacrifice, **you are lost!**

He bears, he says—and here he finishes—the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we also, imitating Paul, be made worthy to bear the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ, the crucifixion of our intellect, the crucifixion of our worldly identity!

In the ancient Church when they were persecuted, they said what? I am a Christian from Jerusalem and not from Athens?... No. They said: ***I am a Christian, period. I am a Christian, period... I bear the marks of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucify me and give me life!*** they said to their persecutors. This is

what we need in these end days, we need such Christians... may we be made worthy, may we be made worthy...

† † †

(\*) *Phyletism* or *ethnophyletism* (from Greek ἔθνος *ethnos* “nation” and φυλετισμός *phyletismos* “tribalism”) is the principle of nationalities applied and (erroneously) taking precedence in the ecclesiastical domain.

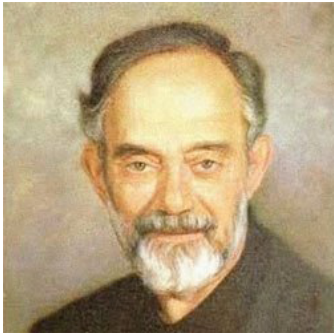


The passions will not stop appearing in us and attacking us, until the grave! Let us prepare ourselves for a lifelong battle against them—firmly convinced that, because of the frailty of our nature, we cannot always achieve victory, and we will sometimes be defeated. Nevertheless, by supporting and strengthening repentance—and its consequent humility—in us, these defeats themselves can serve to help our spiritual progress.

St. Ignatii Brianchaninov

## SATAN AND THE FALL

By Protopresbyter John Romanides (+2001), from "The Ancestral Sin," pp. 75-84. (Footnotes omitted for length).



In the devil there is no truth. He is the very source itself of every form of lie. *For the devil has sinned from the beginning* (1 Jn 3:8), and leads mankind astray into sin. Satan is not simply a negative concept of evil but, quite the contrary, a real power. He has free will, *devices* (2 Cor 2:11), and *wiles*.

(Eph 6:11). He is a personal force capable of perceiving, even before the Resurrection, that Christ is the Son of God.

Under his command he has whole legions of demons and invisible powers, and among them some are more evil than others. The devil and his army of demons have the same teachings. Thus, there exists *demonic wisdom* (Jas 3:15), *the wisdom of the rulers of this age*. (1 Cor 2:8). The demons know that there is one God, and from their assaults against Christ they perceived His divinity. They know who Christ's true followers are. But Christians also know the *devices* of the devil. The demons instigated the Crucifixion of Christ. They do not know the wisdom of God, however, or they would not have crucified Him.

Satan, like God, has faithful sons and followers. The views that Satan is an instrument of the divine wrath (which is typical of post-Augustine Western theology) or that the present power and energy of the devil is only an illusion stand squarely in opposition to biblical and patristic testimonies. According to the thought of the first Christians, Satan continues to be a powerful enemy of God. Like a kind of parasite, the devil subjugated creation to death and corruption. *He was the man slayer from the beginning*. (Jn 8:44). Thus, through the instrumentality of man's fear of death, the devil became the holder of that power, and through that fear drew the world into sin. In other words, *Sin reigned in death* (Rom 5:21) because *the sting of death is sin*. (1 Cor 15:56). *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear because fear hath torment. He that feareth has not been made perfect in love*. (1 Jn 4:18).

Because of the sins that spring forth from the fear of death, *the whole world lieth in wickedness*. (1 Jn 5:19). Through falsehood and fear, Satan, in various degrees, motivates sin. In a certain way, he is the god and ruler of this age or world. But this does not justify the devil's claim that to him has been given all authority over the kingdoms of the earth. God has never ceased to care for the world. Through laws, prophets, and chosen leaders, He guides and chastens men. If it were possible, the demons would have pulled down everything, even the heavens along with the rest of creation. But in no

way are they able to do it. Certainly the God and Father and Creator of all things has not abandoned mankind but has given a Law and sent holy prophets to teach and proclaim to the human race the return to sobriety and the knowledge that God is One.

Despite the victory of the Lord and of the baptized over Satan, the evil spirit is able to move the *heart to lie to the Holy Spirit*. (Acts 5:3). Moreover, the *god of this age blinds unbelievers' minds lest the light of the Gospel of Christ rise on them*. (2 Cor 4:4). For the restraint which human laws could not effect, the Divine Logos would have effected had not the demons, taking as their ally the wicked lust in every man which draws him to all manner of vice, scattered many false and profane accusations, none of which attach to us. With great sincerity, Justin, a former Platonist, writes: *Therefore, we forewarn you to guard yourselves lest the demons we speak against delude you and turn you away from reading and understanding all that we have said. But I fear*, writes St. Paul, *lest in any way, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity that is toward Christ*. (2 Cor 11:3). The devil persistently and in every unlawful manner tries to subjugate men. To accomplish this, he has effective, powerful, and cunning ways of deception. And if indeed the wrath of God had such agents, it would be hopeless for the human race because the only way to be saved would be absolute predestination.

Athenagoras and Justin write that God *committed the care of men and of all things under heaven to angels whom He placed over them. But the angels violated this appointment and were captivated by women and begat children who are called demons*. The souls of the giants are the demons that wander around the earth. And furthermore, they subjugated the human race to themselves... and sowed every manner of evil. Therefore, having believed the deceiving demon, men dared to disobey God and departed from Paradise. The devil was the cause of his own apostasy and that of others. Man disobeyed God, having been deceived by the angel who, because of God's many gifts to man, was jealous and cast a spell on him, thus ruining himself and convincing man to sin through disobedience of the commandments of God... Thus, by his falsehood, the devil was the cause of man's exile from paradise.

The dominant thought of the Fathers is the biblical view that Satan is the primary cause of transgression, sin, and death. Of course there are certain variations in statements, but this in no way alters the essence of the biblical teaching regarding the devil's contribution to the fall of the human race. Thus, Justin and Athenagoras can speak about the intercourse of angels with women on earth, indicating in this way that the demons acted to perpetuate the fall among men after Adam (as if to say that mankind did not fall automatically with the first-made humans), and about the serpent leading Adam astray, and about the deceiving of Eve. The Apostle

Paul speaks about the fall of Adam and at the same time writes, *The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness* (2 Cor 11:3), and *Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and fell into transgression.* (1 Tim 2:14).

Bodily death, as the Scriptures tell us, did not take hold immediately after the transgression of Adam and Eve. Indeed, after the disobedience they lived for many years. First, *through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin* (Rom 5:12) came spiritual death (the loss of grace) and, after a period of time, bodily death. Theophilus writes regarding the first-made men after the transgression: *Then Satan saw that not only were Adam and his wife living but were even bearing children, and he was unable to kill them by his malice. Seeing, therefore, that Abel was pleasing to God, he acted upon his brother Cain and caused him to kill his brother Abel. And thus, the beginning of death was made in this world, and it continues up to the present in every generation of men.*

Satan would very much have wished to kill all of mankind in one sweep, but he is not able to do this because God gives life to all things. The devil brings death only indirectly, through sin and the resulting separation of man from God, which brings death. So he who was made in the image of God became mortal since the mightier Spirit parted from him. And all those who, by their own choice, stand off from God are visited by separation from Him... and separation from God is death. *The wages of sin is death.* (Rom 6:23). Therefore, this is how the passage that says the demons *gave the laws of death over to men* ought to be understood. St. Irenaeus' declarations that *Satan is the cause of death* must be interpreted in the same way. The devil is the primary cause of sin, which distances man from God and results in death. Man is both the victim of the evil one's deception and the accomplice in sin.

Writing on the expulsion of men from paradise, Justin refers strangely to yet another cause, polytheism, in addition to disobedience: *When they came out of paradise, they remembered the names of gods, being no longer taught of God that there are no other gods... Thus, having been cast out of paradise and thinking it was for the transgression alone that they were expelled, and not knowing it was also because they believed there were other gods, they passed down the names of gods to the people who came after them. This first false imagining about gods has its origin in the father of lies. God, then, knowing that the false doctrine*

*of polytheism is like a disease that plagues the souls of men, and wishing to remove it and overturn it, appeared first to Moses and said, 'I am Who is'.* Similarly, Tatian writes, *By means of prohibitions, God became the blocker of wickedness and the praiser of those who persist in virtues. And men attached themselves to one who, because of his being first born [of the angels], was more skillful than the rest. And men and angels declared him to be God, who was a rebel against the law of God.* The soul that is separated from the Holy Spirit is unable to behold things that are perfect and, while seeking after God, it fashions for itself many gods, following the sophistries of the demons. So the wicked energies of Satan and the demons were not limited to the deceiving of Eve alone. On the contrary, they extend throughout the course of world history under a variety of forms. The demons have never ceased to work their deceptions in men.

It would be a great mistake to think that the first Christians regarded the devil merely as a whisperer of bad suggestions in men's ears. Satanic energy is not something that is apparent only in the wicked thoughts of men. In addition to influencing men's thoughts and will, the devil acts in nature, and he acts ontologically. The spiritual and natural dimensions of the energies of Satan are not divided. On the contrary, they are inseparably coefficient.

The fall was not limited to the human race but extended to reasonless animals and reasonless nature. The animals are named wild beasts [θηρία] because they are hunted [θηρευέσθαι], not as if they were made evil or venomous from the first, for nothing was made evil by God, but all things were good, indeed very good; human sin, however, brought evil upon them. For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him.

For creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but because of Him Who subjected it, in hope that creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that all of creation coexisted peacefully until now. So Satan is the primary cause of corruption and temporarily has the power of death. For this reason, the devil is called *the god of this age* (2 Cor 4:4) and the *ruler of matter*. The demonic movements and actions proceeding from the adverse spirit produce these disorderly sallies and, moreover, move men as individuals and as nations, some in one way and some in another. Others who are of no mean reputation, therefore,



have thought that this universe is constituted without any definite order, driven hither and thither by irrational chance. According to Paul, the devil is also the *ruler of the power of the air*. (Eph 2:2).

Despite the fact that marvelous order and harmony prevail in the cosmos, clearly demonstrating that all things are governed by God, nevertheless, there exists in it a kind of parasite that is manifested by death and consequently by disharmony in the societal relations of men and nations. The evils that are produced by death are not from God. *For God created not death*. (Wis 1:13). As a result, this world which is in subjection to death and corruption cannot be considered natural, if by natural we mean the world as God intended it to be. In other words, the world is abnormal, but this is not because of its own nature but because a parasitic force exists in it at present. *For it is not by God that things are moved against nature... But God is perfectly good and is eternally doing good*. The parasitic force in the world shall be completely destroyed at the Second Coming. *The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*. (1 Cor 15:26). *And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more*. (Rev 21:4).

According to the later testimonies of Judaism and the earliest ones of Christianity, the devil and his demons are not only the cause of death, they are also agents of illnesses. Replying to the head of the synagogue, the Lord said, *Thou hypocrite, this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?* (Lk 13:15-17). *He is the Lord of all...and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil*. (Acts 13:36, 38). The casting out of operative demons from sufferers is equal to a cure of bodily and spiritual ills. There are indeed diseases and disturbances of the matter that we are made of. But when such things happen, the demons take note and approach a man whenever weakness lays hold of him. And there are times when, in a wanton tempest, they themselves disturb the working of the body. But being smitten by the power of a word from God, they depart in terror, and the sick man is healed.

In these books of the prophets, then, we found that it was foretold that Jesus would come and mature... and heal every illness and every infirmity: *He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet may be fulfilled, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases'*. (Mt 8:16-17). The casting out of demons through the Holy Spirit is proof that *the kingdom of God has come upon you* (Lk 11:20), and the curing of the ill is proof that Jesus is the awaited Christ.

In reply to the question *Are you the expected One*, the Lord said, *Go and report to John what ye have seen and heard: the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Blessed*

*is he who is not offended in Me*. (Lk 7:22-23). If one is healed by matter through trusting in it, much more will he be healed by having recourse to the power of God. Even if you be healed by drugs (I grant you this out of leniency), it behooves you to attribute the cure to God.

The accusation that Christ heals and *casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons* (Lk 11:15) does not hold up because *no demon can open the eyes of the blind*. (Jn 10:21). Demons do not cure but by cunning make men their captives. How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand; and if Satan rises up against himself, he cannot stand, but he is finished.

All of this clearly presupposes that the cause of infirmities is not God but the devil. Precisely, for this purpose did the Son of God appear, that He might destroy the works of the devil. *But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*. (Mt 12:28). Totally baseless is the view of Western theologians that Satan is nothing but an instrument of divine wrath. What fellowship is there between righteousness and iniquity? What communion is there of light with darkness? What harmony has Christ with Belial? The destruction of Satan and the demons by God is planned even to the exact hour. *What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come here to torment us before the time?*(Mt 8:29). *Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out*.(Jn 12:31).

Christ did not come to teach vague ideas about a transcendental world and a sentimental love as imagined by the schools of Abelard, Schleiermacher, and Ritschl. *I came to cast fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled*. (Lk 12:49). Christ is the destruction of the devil, and He is the salvation of the righteous held under the devil's sway from the ages. God appeared in the flesh in order *to abolish him who has the power of death, that is, the devil*. (2 Tim 1:10). Between God and Satan there is no compromise. On the contrary, a great war rages.



A fox pretends to be asleep; the body and the demons pretend to be chaste. The former is on the watch to seize a bird, the latter to catch a soul. So as long as you live, never trust that clay of which you are made and never depend on it until the time you stand before Christ Himself. And never imagine that abstinence will keep you from falling. It was a being who never ate that was nevertheless thrown out of heaven.

St. John Climacus

## “BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY” [1 PET 1:16]

By Elder Dionisie of Colciu (+May 11, 2004), from “Familia Ortodoxă,” May 2017 (# 5/100), translated and contributed by an “Orthodox Heritage” reader.

### “Pray Unceasingly!”

Sure, the Church has all sorts of prayers for the fulfillment of all of one’s needs. But in each one of us, as persons, in our souls and in our thoughts can be installed a prayer that is small enough, yet very powerful: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* And if at each breath you say, *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,* the propensity to sin is chased out from your thoughts and ideas, and Christ dwells in your heart.

The goodness of God helps us as many times as we run to Him and cry out, “Lord, I pray to You, help me!” At that second, the grace of the Holy Spirit comes and helps you. But we should request, as the Holy Fathers tell us, with humble-mindedness. We should consider ourselves to be sinners before God, that we are not worthy of help: “Lord, You Who descended from the Holy Trinity and took on a human body in order to deliver us from evil, I pray to you, help me!” When we do so with humble-mindedness, it is rendered impossible for God to not help you, not under any pretext whatsoever.

But we are indifferent: “Eh, Lord, help me... Eh, if You want, You can help me, but if not, it doesn’t matter.” No! We should consider ourselves to be as we really are, unworthy. You see what the Lord says: *Be holy, for I am holy.* (1 Pet 1:16). But look, we constantly make mistakes, that is why we can never expect that we are worthy for Him to help us. Not so, as we continuously trample upon the will of God, willingly and unwillingly. It is such that, if we request with meekness and with humble-mindedness the help of God, at that second the grace of the Holy Spirit helps us. Oh! May God help us.

### You Need to Show Spiritual Manliness

From childhood, our minds turn towards the bad, the unclean, but more so they are led towards the bad by the tempter. Because this is his weapon, in order to ruin our minds. But we need to show spiritual manliness. As much as we can, we should fight, we should not receive unclean thoughts. Do you see? *From my youth many passions have warred against me,* as the *Antiphons* say. Many passions. But

*You Yourself help me*—we pray to God to help us, and with the help of God we will all be victors. For God helps us, since the Savior tells us thus: *For apart from Me you can do nothing.* (Jn 15:5).

That is why we must always, for whatever we request, we must request it with humility. God accounts the humble-minded person closer to Him, and He prizes humility more than any other virtue or good deed which you may have. If you request from God, whatever you request of Him with humility, it is not possible for God to not listen to you. He listens to you, He fulfills your wish, but you need to request it with humility.

Whatever happens, realize first that it is from God, because that’s how it is, this is the truth. Since God wants it, we

are at this moment here and we are speaking to each other, and we were at the church... but if God does not want it... That is why “*Without Me,*” without God we cannot do anything.

However, we ought to know this thing, because if we know it, from now on, with humble-mindedness whatever we request from God, we will receive. What does the Lord say? Whatever you request, request it, but you must believe, you should be convinced that God will fulfill your wish. But if you say, “Give, O Lord, such-and-such,” and you see that He did not give it to you, you begin to grumble: “Eh, God does not listen to me...” No! Hold on tight and constantly consider yourself unworthy.

Many times, God delays in fulfilling your wish because it is not beneficial for you; there is no other reason for non-fulfillment of your wish other than

that it is not beneficial. Yet at other times God wants to try you more. It is thus with God. You need to show spiritual manliness then. It’s not that the tempter now comes and puts his bell to your ears, with all kinds of his misfortunes, and we should listen to him. No! Go forth with God, only with God and never the tempter.

### Be Humble-Minded

*He who endures to the end will be saved.* (Mt 10:22). You need patience. Humble-mindedness. Well yes, if we would have these three spiritual gifts—obedience, cutting off or personal will and ego, and humble-mindedness—we would count everything as good. Even if you were to be beaten all day long, or to have your heart poisoned by some words, if we had all three of these gifts, which the Holy Fathers counsel, we would consider everything to be



“*I humbled myself, and I saved myself.*”

Elder Dionisie (+2004)

good. However, if we do not have them... we then focus and chase exclusively our own desires. "Well, my will is good! Look at what He did, He made a mistake! He didn't go the right way."

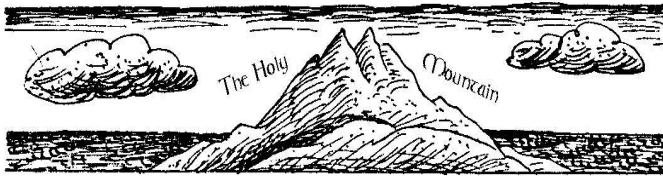
Thus, if you decide to be obedient to whatever they would tell you, to cut off your will, and to never do what you want, then you are covered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, instantly. Yes. And afterwards, you should be humble-minded. Humble-mindedness, that is to say, you should always consider yourself to be inferior to everyone else.

### "Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy On Me!"

As much as you can, you should always pray. If you cannot read, you should constantly say in your soul and in your mind and in your heart: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* It is a very small prayer, but it has the greatest strength, so that the great saints gave up all their philosophical books and drew near to this prayer which is small, yet mighty in power.

For the one which has this prayer, even if he stops to speak with someone, the prayer works in his mind the entire time. This is a fearful thing, a divine work. He goes, does, mends, without letting the prayer stop... That is why the Holy Books say that in normal times there were men who lived in royal palaces and nevertheless possessed the noetic prayer. Irrespective of the turmoil that was likely there and the countless distractions and temptations, these men attained and maintained their godliness.

And this is exactly how you should speak and live the rest of your lives. Since your obligation is to always *pray unceasingly*, you should continuously maintain the Jesus prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!* You must do so without pondering whether you will eventually acquire the noetic prayer or not. And when the thought comes to you to slander someone, repeat, *Lord Jesus Christ...*; when some defiled thought comes, say *Lord Jesus Christ...* The mouth and mind should always be accustomed to saying, *Lord Jesus Christ...*, and slowly, without realizing it, God shall descend His grace upon you.



When one keeps silent, he is given time and freedom for prayer and concentration; but when he passes his hours carelessly, he does not have time to pray. Furthermore, through his careless speech he accumulates various sins. For this reason the Holy Fathers placed the virtue of silence at the summit of the virtues, for without it no virtue is able to remain in the soul of man.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona  
From "*Counsels from the Holy Mountain*"

## ON THE LAST JUDGMENT

By St. Theophan the Recluse, From his letters, translated from Azbykuru by Nun Cornelia (Rees).

Life is short. One hour, another—and then death. Give an account! And we can't say that we forgot to keep a record, for all our deeds are there. They are waiting for us to be read and for our punishment to be meted... that it was all really that way and we have nothing to say about it, no justification. They will be checked with the law and the sentence will be given. Would that it were only for a number of years! But there it's forever. Woe to us! But we don't feel like having compunction! And we don't want to give up our sins... How can this be?! May Thy will be done, *O Lord, Who knowest all things, and save me.*

There have been so many predictions that the end of time is right around the corner. And none of it came true. The Savior said that no one knows the time. So there is no point whatsoever in guessing or being disturbed by other people's guesses. That there will be a Second Coming, this we don't doubt. And neither do we doubt that it will come suddenly unawares, despite all the great signs beforehand. We have only to ceaselessly wait for the Lord, and prepare ourselves for the meeting, without guessing about the time.

Lord, help us to pass this year in the fear of God. Could that be what your dream was about?! Nothing upholds the fear of God so strongly as the remembrance of the Last Judgment. There is no need to give in to the spirit of despondency over this. We should only look carefully around us, and whatever is not pleasing to God should be immediately removed, and if necessary, cleansed away by confession. Then trusting everything to God's mercy, it is only left for us to be of good cheer. The Lord at the Last Judgment will not only be as if judging us, but also as if justifying us all. And He will justify everything if there is at least some small possibility to do so.

If knowing that there is a Gehenna we still live so carelessly, then how would we live if we didn't know about it? Now some will sin and sin, and then think about it.

Don't even think about justifying yourself by your deeds. Justification completely depends upon the Lord's death on the Cross. But there are side issues, which are also like conditions, and although we cannot imagine them perfectly, we can sincerely desire to search for them—to imagine a certain success... feasible, but according to our strength... Here is a task—to decide what a "good defense" before the judgment seat of Christ consists of, about which we pray at the *ectenia*, and to write an answer. Even if we can't decide it in a lifetime, let us at least think about this every day and every hour. Always think of the graveyard!

Remember the old saying, that once we've left the church... So! If there is something wrong with the soul, we won't be able to fix it with funerals.



## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORTHODOX CLERGY

By Metropolitan of Florina Augoustinos Kantiotes (+2010), translated by Fr. E.H. and A.H., original article, in Greek, <http://www.augoustinos-kantiotis.gr/?p=35798>. From the book of former Metropolitan of Florina Augoustinos Kantiotes, "The Christian in the End Times," 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2008, pp. 39-41.



**M**y dear ones,  
We must confess a bitter truth.

Those who believe, who struggle to keep their Orthodox faith are few. A great and immense current is steering many Orthodox away from their faith.

I am going to say something that I have never said. You may call it egotistical, but I will give you a measure, whereby to measure the priests, bishops, and all of the clergy and all the theologians. What is this measure? What is the main characteristic of a priest? To gather *prosphora*? To celebrate beautiful services? To deliver grace-filled sermons from the *ambon* and to make a few damsels teary-eyed with his profound thoughts? What is the single characteristic of a priest and a bishop in our difficult age?

**The main characteristic of the bishop and the priest is a fighting spirit, boldness.** It is what the apostle Paul said that, *Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* [2 Tim 3:12] If you see a priest, if you see a theologian, if you see a metropolitan or an archbishop who is not persecuted, but welcomes the love and appreciation of all, then the words of Christ apply, *Woe to you when all people speak well of you* [Lk 6:26]; know very well that he is not on the correct path.

The same thing applies to someone who calls himself Orthodox, but does not want to go against the flow, this avalanche that is coming down to destroy the world. The Orthodox priest goes against the flow. Saint Athanasios the Great was one, who by himself carried on his shoulders, like the mythological Atlas of old, the whole of Orthodoxy. Saint Mark Eugenikos was another one, who carried in his arms the whole of Orthodoxy. Saint Photios the same.

They were few, but they didn't win by their numbers; they won by their faith. Because the value of a faithful priest, the value of a faithful bishop, the value of a faithful archbishop, the value of a layman or a woman, is worth more than the entire world. Therefore, let us not be scared by this betrayal of our faith that is happening left and right.

I recommend one thing to you: Don't tell me: but this priest or that bishop is good, or, this other fellow is a great

theologian, or, that other one is a great speaker, or, that this one opened Plato's academy and when you hear him speak it's absolutely wonderful! ... Check to see if he has a spark of Saint Mark Eugenikos, a spark of Saint Photios, a spark of Patriarch Keroularios, a spark of Elder Papoulakos (who though an illiterate monk stood up, all alone, against the entire world).

I say these things, mindful of my position as a Greek and as a bishop who bears an immense responsibility. We are ready to sacrifice everything. I dare say (perhaps for the last time from this pulpit) to those of you who love Christ, those of you who love the Church: We have on our side our most holy Virgin, we have on our side all those who have struggled and those who continue to struggle for our Orthodox faith.

Those who are with the devil, let them sit down and shut their mouths. Because their cowardice is of the devil, their temptations are of the devil, their arguments are of the devil, through which they seek to cool off a handful of people who suffer torture, torment and persecution for the faith of our Christ.

We have always had as our slogan the oath of the teenagers of Athens, the lads of ancient Greece, who from atop the Acropolis swore, saying, "**Whether alone or with others, I will defend what is sacred and holy.**" I too, an insignificant soldier, declare with boldness: Whether alone or with others I will defend to the last drop of my blood what is sacred and holy in our faith.

And you, instead of a vain applause and instead of praise, both of which mean nothing, raise your prayers, because few are the Orthodox Christians left, and the battle is spreading, and we will soon find ourselves before new events. Lucifer has been campaigning and raging to eradicate the Orthodox faith from the hearts of the people, not only in our small Greece, but also in every corner of the earth. I don't know what will happen.

I don't know what persecutions those of us bishops and the other clergy who surround us, who have ceased to commemorate Athenagoras will suffer. I don't know to which Mount Athos we will take refuge. I know one thing: whatever happens, if the stars happen to fall, if the rivers run dry, if the world is turned upside down, one thing I know—I steadfastly believe that, in the end, Orthodoxy will prevail.

When the moment of the persecution of the Orthodox will come, then we too have our plan, as all the faithful do. And all of you—the 3,000 of you that are here—scatter what I have told you everywhere. Let the one become two, the two four, the four eight ... becoming a great wave of the sea that will cleanse our homeland in such a way that Greece will become a star in heaven, an Orthodox place, a paradise of Orthodoxy. Amen.

## HOMILY ON THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS

By Saint Theodore the Studite.



Brethren and fathers,

The Annunciation is here and it is the first of the Feasts of the Lord, and we should not simply celebrate as most do, but with understanding and with reverence for the mystery.

What is the mystery? That the Son of God becomes son of man, using the Holy Virgin as the means, dwelling in her and from

her fashioning for Himself a temple and becoming perfect man. Why so? That He might ransom those under the law, as it is written, and that we might *receive sonship* (Gal 4:5), that we may no longer be slaves, but free, no longer subject to the passions, but free of passions, no longer friends of the world, but friends of God, no longer walking according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Those who walk according to the flesh think the things of the flesh; those who walk according to the spirit think the things of the spirit, for the thought of the flesh is death, but the thought of the Spirit, life and peace. And so the thought of the flesh is hostile to God, for it is not subject to the law of God. Indeed it cannot be. Those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*. (Rom 8:5-8).

In brief, this is the power of the mystery, and this is why we should celebrate spiritually and behave spiritually, with holiness and justice, with love, with gentleness, with peace, with forbearance, with *goodness, with the Holy Spirit* (2 Cor 6:6), so that as far as we ourselves are concerned we do not render the dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ empty and ineffectual. Not only that, but we should both pray and grieve for the world. Why so? Because the Son of God came to save the world, but the world rejected Him. Tribes and languages reject Him, the barbarian nations reject Him, those who have had His Holy name invoked upon them reject Him, some through abandoning the faith, others through their evil lives.

What should He have done and did not do? Being God He became man, He humbled Himself, *becoming obedient unto death, the death of the cross* (Phil 2:8); He gave us His Body

to eat and His Blood to drink; He allowed us to call Him Father. Brother, Head, Teacher, Bridegroom, Fellow-Heir and all the other titles which there is no time to mention now. And still He is rejected, and still, He bears it. For, he says, *I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world* (Jn 12:47).

What then is there to say, brethren? That the genuine disciples are grieved by the rejection of their fellow-disciples, thus showing love both for the teacher and for the disciples. So too, genuine servants suffer in the same way from the desertions of their fellow-servants.

This is why the great Apostle orders that we should offer supplications, prayers, entreaties, thanksgivings on behalf of all mankind, *for kings and for all in high positions* (1 Tim 2:1-2); and elsewhere he says this on the subject, *I speak The Truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bears witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have a great grief and unceasing anguish in my heart, for I have prayed that I might be anathema to Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh*. (Rom 9:1-3).

You see the power of love? You see the height of friendship? Moses shows it too when he says to God if You will forgive them their sin, forgive, if not, *wipe me out of the book which You have written*. (Exo 32:32).

So we too, as genuine and not counterfeit disciples, should not only look at what concerns ourselves, but we should grieve and pray for our brothers and for the whole world, so that we all become inheritors of Eternal Life, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom be the glory and the might with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages.

Amen.



When the door of the steam baths is continually left open, the heat inside rapidly escapes through it; likewise the soul, in its desire to say many things, dissipates its remembrance of God through the doors of speech, even though everything it says may be good. Thereafter the intellect, though lacking appropriate ideas, pours out a welter of confused thoughts to anyone it meets, as it no longer has the Holy Spirit to keep its understanding free from fantasy. Ideas of value shun verbosity, being foreign to confusion and fantasy. Timely silence, then, is precious, for it is nothing less than the mother of the wisest thoughts.

St. Diadochos of Photiki

## GREAT LENT: A TIME FOR MORALITY OR A TIME FOR THE HEART

By Hieromonk Alexios Karakallinos.



There is certainly nothing wrong with people trying to do the right thing and to be moral and up-standing citizens.

The problem is that salvation and transfiguration are not a matter of morality.

The publican and the prodigal were not moral people. They did all the wrong things, but yet they came to themselves, they discovered their hearts, and in so doing found the way, not just to moral goodness, but to holiness, to righteousness, and to feasting in the Father's household.

In the West, many speak about Lent as a period of struggle whose goal is for Christians to become better people. For the ancient fathers, however, it is not just about *the good being preserved in their goodness and the crafty becoming good* (*anaphora* of Saint Basil the Great), although these are things to be prayed for. Rather, it is about discovering the heart, being honest about oneself, being humble before God, and in repentance beginning an incredible journey in which the soul seeks to be clothed in Christ, so that thoughts, desires, the will, all become holy, all become bent on salvation, all become an expression of His forgiveness and His love. No frail human morality can ever hope to contain the overflowing fullness of life with which Christ desires to rejuvenate the faithful.

Unfortunately, an emphasis on morality apart from Christ, apart from repentance, apart from humility can lead to conditions like the Pharisee or the elder son, conditions that are ultimately foreign to the spirit of Lent. This is the problem with morality that Father John Romanides points out with trenchant clarity:

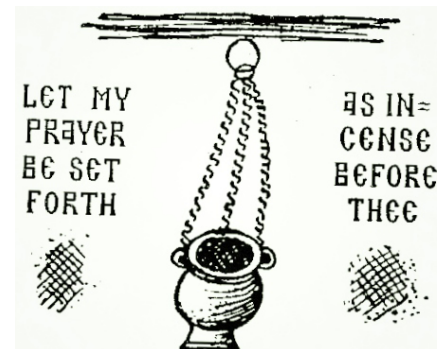
“The biblical tradition as preserved by the Fathers cannot be identified with or reduced to a system of moral precepts or Christian ethics. It is rather a therapeutical asceticism which is not daunted by any degree of malady of the heart or noetic faculty short of its complete hardening. To take the shape of this asceticism without its heart and core and to apply it to a system of moral precepts for personal and social ethics is to produce a **society of puritanical hypocrites who believe they have a special claim on God's love** because of their morality, or predestination, or both. The commandments of Christ cannot be fulfilled by any

simple decision to do so or by any confidence in having been elected.”

Fyodor Dostoevsky takes up this theme in many of his novels and concludes that the humanism derived from a moral code on its own cannot serve as man's ultimate salvation. The world will not be saved by optimistic humanism that believes human progress and morality will eventually save the world. For Dostoevsky and the church fathers, man's deepest problems are not moral, nor even psychological, but ultimately existential and ontological. It's not about following the rules or feeling balanced. It is a matter of choice and it is a matter of human nature being touched by the hand of God Himself. Only by daring to leap towards God in spite of the good and evil that exist in the heart can the believer hope to get beyond the contradiction of the human condition.

In order to avoid descending into nihilism, Dostoevsky offers his readers another path: the acceptance of suffering and affliction in the context of a relationship with God. It is only in this context that man is able to recognize a path out of his fallen condition. It is only this Love that is able to transform suffering into salvific joy.

This is the goal of Great Lent, a journey through the acceptance of ascetical toil and struggle culminating in the joyous feast of Pascha where we celebrate the Risen Lord as *One Who trampled down death by death, and upon those in the tombs, bestoweth Life*. The journey of Great Lent is not about “doing this” or “avoiding that,” but about cleansing our hearts in repentance by reaching out to touch the Lord Jesus. Then, we will do what is truly good, forgiving and loving, then we will avoid what is truly bad, pride, judging, and hatred, not because of a moral precept, but because we will feel Christ's mercy in our heart, so that with Saint Paul, each one of us might say, **yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me**. Amen.

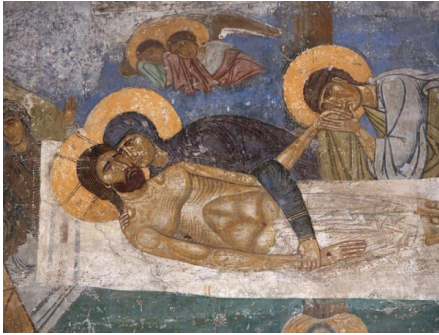


There are three things which bring salvation to man: faith, works, and contemplation. For firstly, one believes from hearing; secondly, one does the commandments; and thirdly, one is granted union with God and enjoys with contemplative faith what he formerly believed with faith from hearing.

St. Maximos of Corinth

## PASSION WEEK: “IT IS THE ONLY TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN WE FORGET OURSELVES”

Source: Pravmir.com, *Orthodox Christianity and the World* (<http://www.pravmir.com/sermon-for-great-friday/>).



**P**assion Week. It is the only time of the year when we forget ourselves, our duties, and our requests. In the Church's hymnody of the Passion services from Thursday to Saturday you will

not find any mention of us sinners, of our downtrodden souls, of our petitions. The contemplation of Christ engrosses everything. Our attention is focused upon Him alone. Therefore, for the attentive Christian, the experience of these days is a school of life in Christ and of life with Christ, which is the only true and normal condition for a Christian.

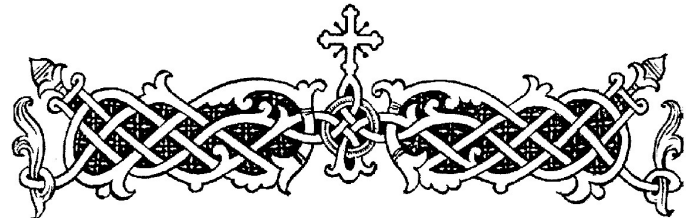
Two sorrowful and horrific actions—the path to Golgotha and the procession to the burial cave—are the objects of our contemplation these days. It is characteristic of the Divine services that they make us participants of those distant and frightful events. In the garden of Gethsemane, our eyes are blinded by torches, a youth wrapped in a cloth hid among trees, and Peter was warming himself by the fire when he was surprised by a cock crow. We peered into Pilate's window, were surprised by the many-voiced roar of the crowd, the women of Jerusalem were wailing over the beaten Sufferer, the thief was forgiven because of the final love entrusted to the Holy One... And two old men and grief-stricken women found the final shelter for the Homeless One.

How vividly one sees the faces of Christ's contemporaries, but He Himself is somehow mystically hidden, remaining inaccessible to this contemplation. But did not St. Isaiah foretell this: *As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.* (Isa 52:14-15). Did you notice that, in the description of the suffering of the Innocent One, the Prophet does not speak a word of sympathy for Him? Why is this so? Because all our feelings are engrossed only by the awesome amazement of God's works, which are beyond our comprehension and reveal the love of Christ, *which passeth understanding* (Eph 3:19). But human love we see too well, and it too is worthy of wonder, for it is a love without hope.

We look at the Cross and the Grave from Pascha; we know too well the joy of the Resurrection, we live by it. And the solemn order of the Divine services of Passion Week, grand and mournful, but penetrated with the expectation of Pascha, its hidden joy, tinges even the Burial Shroud [*Epitaphios*], the last covering of the Sufferer. For us the Burial Shroud is the banner of the Resurrection and the triumph over death and slavery, the banner of freedom and unity with God. But Nicodemus and the Elder of Arimathea, the sorrowful women, and the Mother of God were weeping tears over the bloody cloth, the modest covering of the Dead One. They saw in the Burial Shroud the clothes of the ancient patriarch Joseph which had been wept over by Jacob: *For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.* (Gen 37:35).

Can we imagine the grief and despair of love bereft of all hope? Christ was the most beautiful and sacred being in the lives of these people, but they know that death is irreversible; they know that nobody can overcome it and they have nothing to expect and to be afraid of: Nicodemus no longer conceals his faith in Christ. Joseph risks losing everything he has, and gives even his tomb to the Righteous One. They have nothing to hope for and to expect, their love is stronger than fear. Even if Christ, the purest and most sacred being they have ever seen in their lives, is dead, then I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.

Today God's overwhelming love toward man is revealed to us. But man's love for God is no less striking and admirable, and the memorial of this love is the Holy Burial Shroud in which the body of the Lover of Mankind was wrapped, wrapped with the loving hands of weak and infirm people, but faithful in love even to hell.



**B**efore any fall into sin the demons bring upon a man the following passions: dark forgetfulness; fierce anger, that is, inhuman and beast-like malice; and ignorance, like darkness which has no trace of light. These three passions precede every sin. For a man does not perform a single sin before he has become disposed towards every sin, towards every evil, either by forgetfulness or by anger or by ignorance. From these proceed insensitivity of soul, that is, the mind, which is the eye of the soul, remains dark and is then captivated by all the passions. The first to be born is a weakness of faith; weakness of faith gives birth to self-love, the beginning and end, the root and origin of every evil.

St. Paisius Velichkovsky

## Τι Είναι ή Νοερὰ καὶ Καρδιακὴ Προσευχή;

Πηγή: *Αγιορειτική Μαρτυρία*, τεύχος 2, σελ. 72-74.



**Ἡ** μνήμη τοῦ Θεοῦ στὸν ἄνθρωπο φανερώνει κοινωνία μετὰ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ ἄρα εἶναι σὰν προσευχή. Ὁ ἀγώνας γιὰ τὴν συνεχή ἐπίκληση τοῦ ἁγίου

Ὁνόματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τὴν εὐχή «*Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν*», ἀνανεώνει συνεχῶς στὸν ἄνθρωπο τὴν μνήμη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν κοινωνία μετὰ τὸν Θεό. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος ἔγραφε στοὺς Θεσσαλονικεῖς: «*Ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε*».

Μετὰ τὴν μνήμη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν προσευχή ὁ ἄνθρωπος φανερώνει τὴν ἀληθινὴ εὐγένεια τῆς φύσεώς του, ποὺ εἶναι μεθόριο μεταξὺ ὁρατοῦ καὶ ἀοράτου κόσμου καὶ «*ζῶον θεούμενον*». Ξεπερνᾷ τὴν φυσικὴ ἀναγκαιότητα, ἐκτείνει τὴν ὑπαρξὴ του μέχρι τὸν Θεό, αἰσθάνεται ἐλεύθερος ἀπὸ ὅ,τι τὸν κρατᾷ αἰχμάλωτο στὴν γῆ.

Γιὰ νὰ εἶναι ὅμως ἡ προσευχή ἀληθινὴ, πρέπει νὰ εἶναι προσευχή τοῦ ὅλου ἀνθρώπου καὶ ὄχι μόνον τῶν χειλέων ἢ μόνον τοῦ νοῦ ἢ μόνον τῆς καρδιάς.

Τελεία προσευχή εἶναι ἡ νοερὰ καὶ συγχρόνως καρδιακή. Ὁ νοῦς προσεύχεται μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν καρδιά, ποὺ εἶναι τὸ κέντρο τῆς ὑπάρξεως. Δηλαδή ὁ ὅλος ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ τὸ βάθος του καὶ τὸ κέντρο του προσεύχεται ἐκπληρώνοντας τὴν πρόσκληση τοῦ Θεοῦ: «*Ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν Θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδιάς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς ἑαυτόν*». Ὁλόκληρος ὁ ἄνθρωπος προσφέρεται στὸν Θεό.

Γι' αὐτὴ τὴν προσευχή χρησιμοποιεῖται ἡ μονολόγιστη εὐχή «*Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν*», ποὺ μετὰ τὴν σύντομη ἐπίκλησή της βοηθεῖ στὴν συγκέντρωση τοῦ νοῦ καὶ στὸ βύθισμα τοῦ νοῦ στὴν καρδιά.

Οἱ ἅγιοι Πατέρες, οἱ λεγόμενοι νηπτικοί, ἀπὸ τὴν πείρα τοὺς ἔγραψαν γιὰ τὸν τρόπο καὶ τὴν μέθοδο αὐτῆς τῆς προσευχῆς. Ὑπάρχει μία συλλογὴ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῶν τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων, ποὺ λέγεται Φιλοκαλία. Καὶ ἡ λέξις φιλοκαλία εἶναι χαρακτηριστικὴ. Μετὰ τὴν νοερὰ καὶ καρδιακὴ προσευχή ὁ πιστὸς ἐνώνεται μετὰ τὸν Θεό, θεᾶται τὸν Θεό, ποὺ εἶναι ὅ,τι ὁμορφότερο ὑπάρχει στὸν κόσμον, τὸ ὑπέρτατο κάλλος.

Ἐπειδὴ ὑπάρχει ὁ κίνδυνος νὰ γίνῃ κάποια σύγχυση μεταξὺ τῆς καρδιακῆς προσευχῆς καὶ τῶν διαφόρων τρόπων διαλογισμοῦ καὶ προσευχῆς, ὅπως ἀσκεῖται

στὶς ἀνατολικὲς θρησκείες, νομίζω ὅτι πρέπει νὰ διευκρινίσω μερικὰ ζητήματα:

1. Ὅχι μόνον ἡ μονολόγιστη εὐχή, τὸ «*Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν*», ἀλλὰ καὶ κάθε προσευχὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὅπως ἡ θεμελιώδης θεοπαράδοτος κυριακὴ προσευχή, τὸ «*Πάτερ ἡμῶν*», πρέπει νὰ εἶναι νοερὰ καὶ καρδιακὴ, δηλαδή νὰ βγαίνει ἀπὸ τὸ βαθύτερο εἶναι μας.

2. Ἡ ἀπόκτηση τοῦ χαρίσματος τῆς ἀδιαλείπτου νοερᾶς καὶ καρδιακῆς προσευχῆς δὲν εἶναι γιὰ μᾶς τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους κυρίως ζήτημα μεθόδου καὶ τεχνικῆς, ἀλλὰ **ζήτημα συντετριμμένης καρδιάς, δηλαδή καρδιάς ποὺ μετανοεῖ, πονάει γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες τῆς καὶ ταπεινώνεται**. Χωρὶς αὐτὴ τὴν καρδιά καμιά μέθοδος καὶ τεχνικὴ τῆς προσευχῆς, ὅπως ἡ χρησιμοποίησις τῆς εἰσπνοῆς καὶ ἐκπνοῆς, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ φέρῃ τὴν ἀληθινὴ προσευχή.

3. Ἡ καρδιακὴ καὶ νοερὰ προσευχὴ προϋποθέτει τὴν συμμετοχὴ μας στὴν ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, στὰ Μυστήριά της, τὴν τήρησις τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὴν ὑπακοὴ σὲ πνευματικὸ πατέρα. Δὲν εἶναι δηλαδή μία ἀτομικιστικὴ – ιδιωτικὴ προσέγγισις τοῦ Θεοῦ. Μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὁ ταπεινὸς Ὁρθόδοξος Χριστιανὸς λαμβάνει τὴν Χάρι τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ Χάρις ἐνεργεῖ μέσα του, μετὰ τὴν ἰδικὴ του βέβαια συνεργασία καὶ θέλησις, τὴν ὄντως ἀληθινὴ προσευχή.

Τελειώνοντας στὸ θέμα τῆς προσευχῆς θὰ ἤθελα νὰ πῶ ὅτι ὁ σημερινὸς ἄνθρωπος ἔχει κατ' ἐξοχίαν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ τὴν προσευχὴ γιὰ νὰ μπορεῖ νὰ μὴ ἀπορροφᾶται ἀπὸ τὸν σύγχρονο βαθύτατα ὑλιστικὸ τρόπο ζωῆς ξεχνώντας τὴν θεοείδειά του, δηλαδή τὴν θεϊκὴ καταγωγὴ καὶ τὸν θεϊκὸ προορισμὸ του. Ἀκόμη, γιὰ νὰ μπορεῖ νὰ κρατᾷ τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ του ἐνότητα, ἰσορροπία καὶ εἰρήνη μέσα στὴν φοβερὴ διασπαστικὴ ἀνισορροπία καὶ ἐξωστρέφεια τοῦ συγχρόνου κόσμου. Γιὰ νὰ μπορεῖ, ἔχοντας συνεχή τὴν αἴσθησις τῆς παρουσίας καὶ προνοίας τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν ζωὴ του, νὰ μὴν «ἀγχώνεται», ἀπελπιζέται καὶ βιώνει τὸν κόσμον ὡς κενὸ καὶ «μὴ-νόημα».

Μετὰ τὴν συνεχή ἐπίκληση τοῦ γλυκυτάτου καὶ ἁγίου Ὁνόματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ θὰ αἰσθάνεται τὸν Χριστὸ στὴν καρδιά του, θὰ ἀποφεύγει τὴν ἁμαρτία, θὰ καλλιεργεῖ αἰσθήματα ἀγάπης γιὰ τὸν Θεὸ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Θὰ εἰρηνεύει ὁ ἴδιος καὶ θὰ εἰρηνεύει καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ περιβάλλοντός του.

Ἄς μοῦ ἐπιτρέψετε μία ἀδελφικὴ συμβουλὴ ἀπὸ τὴν πνευματικὴ παράδοσις τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους: **Ὅσο περισσότερες φορὲς τὴν ἡμέρα μετὰ πόθο λέμε τὴν εὐχὴ «Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ...», τόσο πιὸ κοντὰ στὸν Θεὸ θὰ εἴμαστε καὶ τόσο περισσότερη Χάρι καὶ δύναμις θὰ λαμβάνουμε γιὰ νὰ ἀντιμετωπίζουμε τὶς διάφορες δυσκολίες καὶ πειρασμοὺς τῆς ζωῆς.**

## Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση Εἶναι ἢ πιὸ Πνευματικὴ Ἐπανάσταση πού Ἐγινε στὸ Κόσμο. Εἶναι Ἁγιασμένη!

Τοῦ κυρ-Φώτη Κόντογλου.

Ἡ Ἐπανάσταση γίνεται τὶς περισσότερες φορὲς ἀπὸ κάποιες ὑλικὲς αἰτίες, πού εἶναι ἡ σκλαβιά, ἡ στέρηση, ἡ κακοπέραση, τὰ βασανιστήρια, ἡ περιφρόνηση. Ἡ λευτεριά εἶναι ἡ θεότητα πού λατρεύει ὁ ἐπαναστάτης, καὶ γι' αὐτὴ χύνει τὸ αἷμα του. Μὰ τὴ λευτεριά, πολλὲς φορὲς, σὰν τὴν ἀποχτήσῃ ὁ ἐπαναστάτης, δὲν τὴ μεταχειρίζεται γιὰ πνευματικούς σκοπούς, ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ χαρεῖ τὴν ὑλικὴ ζωὴ μονάχα. Κοντὰ στὴν ὑλικὴ ζωὴ ἔρχεται καὶ ἡ πνευματικὴ, μὰ τὶς περισσότερες φορὲς γιὰ πνευματικὴ ζωὴ θεωροῦνε οἱ ἄνθρωποι κάποιες ἀπολαύσεις πού εἶναι κι αὐτὲς ὑλικές, κι ἄς φαίνονται σὰν πνευματικές.

Ἕνας ἐπαναστάτης τῆς γαλλικῆς ἐπανάστασης, νὰ ποῦμε, θεωροῦσε γιὰ πνευματικὰ κάποια πράγματα πού, στ' ἀλήθεια, δὲν ἦταν πνευματικά. Αὐτὸς ἤθελε ν' ἀποχτήσῃ τὴ λευτεριά, γιὰ νὰ κάνει αὐτὰ πού νόμιζε πὼς εἶναι σωστὰ καὶ δίκαια γιὰ τὴ ζωὴ τῶν ἀνθρώπων σὲ τοῦτο τὸν κόσμο μοναχά, δηλαδή γιὰ τὴν ὑλικὴ ζωὴ τους, μὴ πιστεύοντας πὼς ὑπάρχει τίποτ' ἄλλο γιὰ νὰ τὸ ἐπιδιώξῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος. Γι' αὐτὸ λέγω πὼς, γιὰ τὶς περισσότερες ἐπαναστάσεις, οἱ αἰτίες πού τὶς κάνανε νὰ ξεσπάσουνε σταθῆκανε ὑλικές, καὶ ἡ ἐλευθερία πού ἐπιδιώξανε ἦταν προορισμένη νὰ ἱκανοποιήσῃ μονάχα τὶς ὑλικὲς ἀνάγκες.

Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ ὅμως Ἐπανάσταση εἶχε μὲν γιὰ αἰτία καὶ τὶς ὑλικὲς στερήσεις καὶ τὴ κακοπάθησιν τοῦ κορμιοῦ, ὅπως ἡ κάθε ἐπανάσταση, ἀλλὰ, ἀπάνω ἀπ' αὐτὲς τὶς αἰτίες, εἶχε καὶ κάποιες πού εἶναι καθαρὰ πνευματικές. Καὶ πνευματικὸ, κατὰ τὴ γνώμη μου, ἀληθινὰ πνευματικὸ, εἶναι ὅ,τι ἔχει σχέση μὲ τὸ πνευματικὸ μέρος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, μὲ τὴ ψυχὴ του, δηλαδή μὲ τὴ θρησκεία.

Ἡ σκλαβιά πού ἔσπρωξε τοὺς Ἕλληνες νὰ ξεσηκωθοῦνε καταπάνω στὸ Τουρκο δὲν ἦταν μοναχά ἡ στέρηση καὶ ἡ κακοπάθησιν τοῦ κορμιοῦ, ἀλλὰ,

ἀπάνω ἀπ' ὅλα, τὸ ὅτι ὁ τύραννος ἤθελε νὰ χαλάσῃ τὴ πίστη τους, μποδίζοντάς τους ἀπὸ τὰ θρησκευτικὰ χρῆματά τους, ἀλλαξοπιστιζοντάς τους καὶ σφάζοντας ἢ κρεμάζοντάς τους, ἐπειδὴ δὲν ἀρنيόντανε τὴ πίστη τους γιὰ νὰ γίνουνε μωχαμετάνοι. Γιὰ τοῦτο πίστη καὶ πατρίδα εἶχανε γίνῃ ἓνα καὶ τὸ ἴδιο πράγμα, καὶ ἡ λευτεριά πού ποθοῦσανε δὲν ἦταν μονάχα ἡ λευτεριά πού ποθοῦνε ὅλοι οἱ ἐπαναστάτες, ἀλλὰ ἡ λευτεριά νὰ φυλάξουνε τὴν ἁγιασμένη πίστη τους, πού μ' αὐτὴν ἐλπίζανε νὰ σώσουνε τὴ ψυχὴ τους. Γιατί, γι' αὐτούς, κοντὰ στὸ κορμί, πού ἔχει τόσες ἀνάγκες καὶ πού μὲ τόσα βάσανα γίνεται ἡ συντήρησή του, ὑπῆρχε καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, πού εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς πὼς ἀξίζει περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα, ὅσο περισσότερο ἀξίζει τὸ ροῦχο ἀπ' αὐτό.

Ἐκεῖνες οἱ ἄπλες ψυχές, πού ζοῦσανε στὰ βουνὰ καὶ στὰ ρημοτόπια, ἦτανε διδαγμένες ἀπὸ τοὺς πατεράδες τους στὴ πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ γνωρίζανε, μ' ὅλο πού ἦτανε ἀγράμματα, κάποια ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια του, ὅπως εἶναι τοῦτα: «Τὶ θὰ ὠφελῆσῃ ἄραγε τὸν ἄνθρωπο, ἂν κερδίσῃ τὸν κόσμον ὅλο, καὶ ζημιωθῇ τὴ ψυχὴ του;» Ἡ: «Τὶ θὰ δώσῃ ἄνθρωπος γιὰ πληρωμὴ τῆς ψυχῆς του;» Καί: «Ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι πιὸ πολύτιμη ἀπὸ τὴ τροφή, ὅπως τὸ κορμὶ ἀπὸ τὸ φόρεμα!» κ.ἄ.

Γιὰ τοῦτο, κατὰ τὰ χρόνια τῆς σκλαβιάς, χιλιάδες παλληκάρια σφαχτήκανε καὶ κρεμαστήκανε καὶ παλουκωθήκανε γιὰ τὴ πίστη τους, ἀψηφόντας τὴ νεότητά τους, καὶ μὴ δίνοντας σημασία στὸ κορμὶ τους καὶ σὲ τούτη τὴ πρόσκαιρη ζωὴ. Στράτευμα ὀλάκερο εἶναι οἱ

ἄγιοι νεομάρτυρες, πού δὲ θανατωθήκανε γιὰ τὰ ὑλικὰ ἀγαθὰ τούτης τῆς ζωῆς, ἀλλὰ γιὰ τὴ πολύτιμη ψυχὴ τους, πού γνωρίζανε πὼς δὲ θὰ πεθάνει μαζί μὲ τὸ κορμὶ, ἀλλὰ θὰ ζῆσῃ αἰώνια. Ἀκούγανε καὶ πιστεύανε ἀτράνταχτα τὰ λόγια τοῦ Χριστοῦ, πού εἶπε: «Μὴ φοβηθεῖτε ἐκεῖνον πού σκοτώνει τὸ σῶμα, καὶ πού δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κάνει τίποτα παραπάνω. Ἀλλὰ νὰ φοβηθεῖτε ἐκεῖνον πού μπορεῖ νὰ θανατώσῃ καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴ ψυχὴ».

Ἡ ἐλευθερία, πού γι' αὐτὴ θυσιάζονταν, δὲν ἦταν κάποια ἀκαθόριστη θεότητα, ἀλλὰ ἦταν ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστὸς, πού γι' αὐτὸν εἶπε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος: «Ὅπου τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Κυρίου, ἐκεῖ εἶναι καὶ ἡ



ἐλευθερία». Κι ἄλλοῦ λέγει: «Σταθεῖτε στερεὰ στὴν ἐλευθερία πὸν σᾶς χάρισε ὁ Χριστός, σταθεῖτε καὶ μὴν πέσετε πάλι στὸ ζυγὸ τῆς δουλείας. Γιατὶ γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία σᾶς κάλεσε. Ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία μὴν τὴν παίρνετε μονάχα σὰν ἀφορμὴ γιὰ τὴ σάρκα σας».

Γιὰ τοῦτο εἶναι ἀγιασμένη ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση, κι ἀγιασμένοι οἱ πολεμιστὲς τῆς, ὅπως ἦταν ἀγιασμένοι ὅσοι πολεμήσανε μαζί μὲ τὸν Κωνσταντῖνο Παλαιολόγο, πρὶν ἀπὸ τρακόσα ἐξηνταοχτὼ χρόνια, κατὰ τὸ πάρσιμο τῆς Πόλης, καταπάνω στὸν ἴδιο ὄχτρο τῆς πίστες τους.

Στὴν ἐπανάσταση τοῦ Εἴκοσι-Ἔνα, ὅπως καὶ στὴν πολιορκία τῆς Πόλης, μαζί μὲ τοὺς λαϊκοὺς πολεμοῦσανε πλῆθος ραφοφορεμένοι, καλόγεροι, παπάδες καὶ δεσποτάδες, καὶ τραβούσανε μπροστὰ μὲ τὸ σταυρὸ στὸ χέρι, κι ἀπὸ πίσω τους χίμιζε κλαίγοντας ὁ λαός, κ' ἔψελνε:

**Γιὰ τῆς πατρίδος τὴν ἐλευθερία, γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πίστη τὴν ἀγία, γι' αὐτὰ τὰ δύο πολεμῶ, μ' αὐτὰ νὰ ζήσω ἐπιθυμῶ, κι ἂν δὲν τὰ ἀποκτήσω, τί μ' ὠφελεῖ νὰ ζήσω;**

Στὴ Πόλη κρεμάστηκε ὁ πατριάρχης Γρηγόριος, ἀνοίγοντας πρῶτος τὸ μαρτυρολόγιο τῆς Ἐπανάστασης. Ὁ Θανάσης Διάκος πολέμησε σὰν νέος Λεωνίδα, καὶ σουβλίστηκε γιὰ τὴ πίστη του. Ὁ Παλαιῶν Πατρῶν Γερμανός, ὁ Ἡσαΐας Σαλώνων, ὁ Ρωγῶν Ἰωσήφ, ὁ Παπαφλέσσας, ὁ Θύμιος Βλαχάβας, κι ἄλλοι πολλοί, πολεμήσανε γιὰ τὴν ἀγιασμένη πατρίδα τους.

Στὴ Τριπολιτσὰ κλειστήκανε στὴ φυλακὴ κατὰ τὴν Ἐπανάσταση οἱ δεσποτάδες τοῦ Μοριά, κ' οἱ περισσότεροι πεθάνανε μὲ ἀβάσταχτα μαρτύρια. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ στὴ Πόλη, φυλακωθήκανε καὶ κρεμαστήκανε πολλοὶ δεσποτάδες.

Παρακάτω βάζω λίγα λόγια ἀπὸ τὸ ἡμερολόγιο τοῦ ἀντιναύαρχου Γεωργίου Σαχτούρη:

*«Παρασκευή, 25 Δεκεμβρίου. Ἐορτὴ τῶν Γενεθλίων τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἀραγμένοι εἰς Ντάρδιζα μὲ ἡσυχον ἀέρα τῆς τραμουντάνας, πλὴν μὲ χιόνια. Αὐτὴν τὴν ἡμέρα, διὰ τὸ χαρμόσυνον τῆς ἐορτῆς, τὸ πρωί, ὑψώνοντας τὴν σημαίαν μας, ἐρρίχθη καὶ μία κανονιά, καθὼς καὶ ὅλα τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ ἐδῶ ἀραγμένα τὸ αὐτὸ ἔπραξαν.*

*Κυριακὴ, 15 Αὐγούστου. Ἐορτὴ τῆς Θεοτόκου. Ἐξημερώθημεν ἀραγμένοι. Ὑψώσαμεν τὰς σημαίας καὶ ἐρρίξαμεν καὶ ἀπὸ μίαν κανονίαν διὰ τὸ χαρμόσυνον τῆς ἡμέρας».*

Ὁ ναύαρχος Κουντουριώτης ἔκανε τὴ προσευχὴ του, σὰν τοὺς παλιούς, νὰ τὸν βοηθήσει ἡ Παναγία στὴ ναυμαχία τῆς «Ἑλλης», κι ὅπου ἄλλοῦ τὸν καλοῦσε

τὸ χρέος του. τὸ ἴδιο κάνανε καὶ κάνουνε ὅλοι οἱ Ἕλληνες στὸ πόλεμο.

Κατὰ τὴν καταστροφὴ τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας, πρῶτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς θρησκείας πληρώσανε μὲ τὴ ζωὴ τοὺς τὸ καινούργιο χαράτσι στὸν ὄχτρο τῆς πίστες μας. Ὁ μητροπολίτης τῆς Σμύρνης Χρυσόστομος κρεμάστηκε, ὁ δεσπότης τῶν Κυδωνιῶν Γρηγόριος θάφτηκε ζωντανός, ὁ Μοσχονησιῶν Ἀμβρόσιος θανατώθηκε ἄσπλαχνα, κι ὅλοι οἱ παπάδες κ' οἱ καλόγεροι περάσανε ἀπὸ τὸ σπαθί.

Οἱ Γερμανοὶ κ' οἱ Ἴταλοὶ θανατώσανε κι αὐτοὶ τοὺς ρασοφορεμένους τῶν χωριῶν, γιὰ νὰ μὴν ἀπομείνουν παραπίσω ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους θεομάχους.

Ναί! Πίστη καὶ Πατρίδα εἶναι γιὰ μᾶς ἓνα πράγμα. Κι ὅπως πολεμᾷ τὸ ἓνα, πολεμᾷ καὶ τ' ἄλλο, κι ἂς μὴν ξεγελιέται.

Ἡ μάνα μας ἡ πνευματικὴ εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας, πὸν ποτίστηκε μὲ πολὺ κι ἀγιασμένο αἷμα. Κανένας λαὸς δὲν ἔχυσε καὶ δὲν χύνει ὡς τὰ σήμερα τὸ αἷμα του γιὰ τὴ πίστη, ὅσο ὁ δικός μας. Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη εἶναι ὁ θησαυρὸς ὁ κρυμμένος κι ὁ πολύτιμος μαργαρίτης πὸν λέγει ὁ Χριστός.



**Ε**ἶναι ψέμα ὅτι ἀνήκουμε στὴ Δύση. Ἀλλὰ μήτε στὴν Ἀνατολή, μήτε στὸν Βορρᾶ, μήτε καὶ στὸν Νότο ἀνήκουμε. Ἐμεῖς, ὡς Ἕλληνες, ἀνήκουμε ἐδῶ. Πάνω δηλαδὴ ὡς τὸ Βόσπορο καὶ μέσα ὡς ἐκεῖ τὴν Τραπεζοῦντα καὶ κάτω στὴν ὁμορφὴν Κύπρον καὶ πάλι πάνω στὸ γαλάζιο Αἰγαῖο καὶ στροφὴ ἀριστερὰ γιὰ τὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ παραπέρα ὡς τὴ Βόρειο Ἥπειρο καὶ πάλι πίσω στὴ Θράκη καὶ στὸν Ἔβρο καὶ ξεκούραση πιά στὸ Αἶβαλί, στὴ Σμύρνη, στὴν Ἰμβρο καὶ στὴν Τένεδο.

**Κυρ-Φώτης Κόντογλου**

**Δ**ιότι ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι σωτήρας, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι ὁδοσρωτήρας. Δὲν ἰσοπεδώνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, δὲν ἰσοπεδώνει τὴν ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ἡ ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἶναι δῶρο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀλλὰ αὐτὴ ἡ ἐλευθερία εἶναι καὶ πτῆση πρὸς τὰ πάνω καὶ πτώση πρὸς τὰ κάτω.

**Ἄρχιμ. Δανιὴλ Ἀερᾶκης**  
**Ἱερός Ναὸς Εὐαγγελίστριας, Πειραιᾶς**

## Ἐν Ἀρεταῖς Ἐκλάμποντες καὶ Πίστει Ὁρθῆ [Ὁρθρος τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τρίτης]

Γράφει ὁ Φώτης Μιχαήλ, ἱατρός.

*«Τὸν Νυμφίον ἀδελφοὶ ἀγαπήσωμεν, τὰς λαμπάδας  
ἐαυτῶν εὐτρεπίσωμεν, ἐν ἀρεταῖς ἐκλάμποντες  
καὶ πίστει ὀρθῆ, ἵνα ὡς αἱ φρόνιμοι, τοῦ Κυρίου  
παρθένοι, ἔτοιμοι εἰσέλθωμεν, σὺν αὐτῷ εἰς τοὺς  
γάμους.»*

† † †



Τὸ ἀναλόγιο εἶναι τὸ μέγα διδασκαλεῖο τῆς Πίστεώς μας. Οἱ ὕμνογράφοι—ὄσων τὰ ἔργα δοκιμάστηκαν στὸν χρόνο καὶ καταξιώθηκαν στὴν ἐκκλησιολογικὴ καὶ δογματικὴ συνείδηση τοῦ Ὁρθοδόξου πληρώματος—ἦσαν ἄνθρωποι θεοφώτιστοι, ἄνθρωποι τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ἐμεῖς οἱ ἀπαίδευτοι καὶ ἐντελῶς ἀρχαριοὶ στὴν ζωὴ τὴν πνευματικὴ, βρισκόμεθα μεγάλη παρηγοριὰ καὶ

ἀνάπαυση στὰ νοήματα τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μας ὕμνολογίας. Ὅποια ἀπορία καὶ νὰ ἔχει κανεὶς πάνω σὲ θέματα βίου καὶ Πίστεως, εἶναι βέβαιον, ὅτι θὰ βρεῖ ἀπαντήσεις ἀσφαλεῖς καὶ ὑπεύθυνες μέσα στὴν θεολογία τῶν λατρευτικῶν μας ὕμνων.

Στὸ ἀναλόγιο συναντῶνται διαχρονικῶς οἱ δάσκαλοι τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς μουσικῆς, μὲ τοὺς ἑραστὲς τῆς ὀκτωήχου κάθε ἐποχῆς. Συναντῶνται καὶ οἱ φωτισμένοι ὕμνογράφοι ὅλων τῶν ἐποχῶν, δάσκαλοι ἀγιοπνευματικοί, μὲ κάθε ψυχὴ ζῶσα καλῆς ἀνησυχίας, σὲ μιὰ συνάντηση μετάγγισης Θείας Σοφίας· σὲ μιὰ συνάντηση θεοδίδακτης γνωμοδότησης προϋποθέσεων σωτηρίας.

Στὸ ἀναλόγιο παρίστανται, σὲ κάθε ψαλμωδία, Πατέρες καὶ ὕμνογράφοι μαζί. Ὁ λόγος τῶν Ἁγίων μας Πατέρων, ὁ ἐρμηνευτικὸς τῶν Γραφῶν, γίνεται ἀκόμα πιὸ προσιτὸς στοὺς πιστοὺς, μὲ τὴν γραφίδα τῶν ἱερῶν μας ὕμνογράφων.

Παράδειγμα, ὁ ποιητὴς τοῦ ὄρθρου τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τρίτης: Σὲ ἓναν ἀπὸ τοὺς ὕμνους του δὲν κάνει τίποτε ἄλλο, ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ προσφέρει λακωνικῶς, εἰδικὰ γιὰ τὶς ἡμέρες μας τὶς πονηρές, μοναδικῆς ἀξίας διδασκαλία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου.

Ἐλεγε ὁ Χρυσορρήμων Ἰωάννης: «Οὐδὲν ὄφελος βίου καθαροῦ, δογμάτων διεφθαρμένων». Σὲ τίποτε

δὲν ὠφελεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἡ ἐνᾶρετη ζωὴ, ἐὰν τὰ δόγματά του εἶναι διεφθαρμένα. Ἐάν, δηλαδή, ἡ πίστη του εἶναι νοθευμένη.

Καὶ ὁ ὕμνογράφος τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Μεγάλης Τρίτης γνωμοδοτεῖ μελωδικῶς: «Τὸν Νυμφίον ἀδελφοὶ ἀγαπήσωμεν, τὰς λαμπάδας ἐαυτῶν εὐτρεπίσωμεν, ἐν ἀρεταῖς ἐκλάμποντες καὶ πίστει ὀρθῆ, ἵνα ὡς αἱ φρόνιμοι, τοῦ Κυρίου παρθένοι, ἔτοιμοι εἰσέλθωμεν, σὺν αὐτῷ εἰς τοὺς γάμους.».

Ἐμπρός, ἀδελφοί μου, νὰ ἀγαπήσουμε τὸν Νυμφίον Χριστὸ καὶ νὰ συγυρίσουμε τὶς λαμπάδες μας. Πῶς, ὅμως, νὰ δείξουμε τὴν ἀγάπη μας στὸν Νυμφίον Χριστό; καὶ τὶς λαμπάδες μας, τὶς ψυχές μας, πῶς νὰ τὶς τακτοποιήσουμε; «Ἐν ἀρεταῖς ἐκλάμποντες καὶ πίστει ὀρθῆ!». Λαμποκοπῶντας ἀπὸ ἀρετὲς καὶ πίστη ἀνόθευτη!



Ἦρχισαν οἱ ἄγριοι πόλεμοι, ὅπου δὲν μὲ ἄφηναν ἡσυχίαν ἡμέρα καὶ νύχτα. Ἄγριοι πόλεμοι! Μῆτε ὥραν νὰ ἡσυχάσω. Ἐπίσης καὶ ἐγὼ μὲ μανίαν εἰς αὐτούς. Ἐξ ὥρας καθήμενος εἰς προσευχὴν τὸν νοῦν δὲν ἐσυγχώρουν νὰ βγῆ ἀπὸ τὴν καρδίαν. Ἀπὸ τὸ σῶμα μου ὁ ἰδρώτας ἔτρεχε βρῦσις. Ξύλον ἀλύπητα. Πόνος καὶ δάκρυα. Νηστεία ἄκρα καὶ ὀλονύκτιος ἀγρυπνία· καὶ ἐπιτέλους κατέπεσα. Ὅλα ἔτη ὀκτῶ κάθε νύχτα μαρτύριον. Ἐφευγαν οἱ δαίμονες καὶ ἐφώναζαν. Μᾶς ἔκαψε! Μᾶς ἔκαψε! Ὅπου ἔτυχε μίαν νύχτα... καὶ τοὺς ἤκουσε καὶ ὁ πλησίον μου ἀδελφός ξενιζόμενος, ποῖοι ἦσαν αὐτοὶ ποῦ ἐφώναζαν.

Καὶ ὅμως τὴν τελευταίαν ἡμέραν, ποῦ θὰ τοὺς δῶκεν ὁ Χριστός, ἐγὼ πλέον διελογιζόμενος ἀπεγνωσμένος ὅτι, ἀφοῦ τὸ σῶμα μου ἐπεσε τελείως νεκρὸν καὶ τὰ πάθη μου ἐνεργοῦν ὡς ἐν τελείᾳ ὑγείᾳ, οἱ δαίμονες εἶναι οἱ νικηταί. Αὐτοὶ μὲ ἔκαψαν ἀσφαλῶς καὶ ἐνίκησαν καὶ ὄχι ἐγώ. Ἐπιτέλους, καθὼς ἐκαθήμην νεκρός, πληγωμένος, ἀπεγνωσμένος, αἰσθάνομαι ὅτι ἠνοιχθῆ ἡ θύρα καὶ ἦλθε κάποιος, πλὴν δὲν ἐστράφη νὰ ἰδῶ, ἀλλὰ ἔλεγα τὴν εὐχὴν. Καὶ αἴφνης αἰσθάνομαι ὅτι κάτω μου κάποιος μὲ ἐρεθίζει πρὸς ἡδονήν. Καὶ στρέφομαι καὶ βλέπω τὸν δαίμονα, ὅπως εἶναι κασιδῆς· πληγωμένη ἡ κεφαλὴ του, νὰ βρωμάει! Καὶ ὠρμησα θηριωδῶς νὰ τὸν πιάσω. Καί, ὅπως τὸν ἔπιασα, εἶχε τρίχες τοῦ χοίρου, καὶ ἔγινεν ἄφαντος. Εἰς δὲ τὴν ἀφήν μου μὲ ἄφησε τὴν αἴσθησιν τῶν τριχῶν του καὶ τὴν βρώμα στὴν ὄσφρησιν. Καὶ ἐπιτέλους ἀπ' αὐτὴν τὴν στιγμὴν ἐρράγη ὁ πόλεμος καὶ ἔπαυσαν ὅλα. Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰρήνη εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν. καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴ τελεία τῶν ἀκαθάρτων παθῶν τῆς σαρκός...

**Γέρων Ἰωσήφ ὁ Ἡσυχαστής (+1959)**

Ἐκφραση Μοναχικῆς Ἐμπειρίας, ἐπιστ. 37. σελ. 223



## Τι Σημαίνει ἡ Φράση, «Αἰωνία ἢ Μνήμη»;

Ἀγίου Νικόλαου Βελμίροβιτς (Ἐπισκόπου Ἀχρίδος).

Σὲ ταλαιπωρεῖ τὸ ὅτι δὲν ξέρεις τὴ σημασία αὐτῶν τῶν λέξεων, ποὺ ἀκουγες πολλές φορές καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ἔλεγες ἐπάνω ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκρούς. Καὶ καλὰ κάνεις ποὺ ρωτᾷς. Ὅσο καλύτερα γνωρίζεις ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὴν ἀρχαία καὶ καλὴ Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη μας, τόσο καὶ περισσότερο τὴν ἀγαπᾷ.

«Αἰωνία ἢ μνήμη» σημαίνει: Αἰώνια νὰ ὑπάρχει ἡ μνήμη γιὰ σένα. Ἄκουσα μιὰ φορὰ πὼς κάποιος στὸν ἐπικήδειο λόγο ἐπάνω ἀπὸ τὸν νεκρὸ φώναξε: «Αἰωνία σου ἢ μνήμη στὴ ... γῆ!» Παραξενεύθηκα σὲ μιὰ τόσο λανθασμένη ἐρμηνεία τῆς πίστεως μας. Μὰ μπορεῖ κατὶ νὰ εἶναι αἰώνιο στὴ γῆ, ὅπου ὅλα περνοῦν βιαστικὰ σὰν προσκεκλημένοι σὲ γάμο;

Ὅντως, δὲν εὐχόμεστε στὸν νεκρὸ ἐντελῶς μηδαμινὸ πλοῦτο, ὅταν τοῦ εὐχόμεστε νὰ τὸν μνημονεύουν σ' αὐτὸν τὸν κόσμο, ὁ ὁποῖος καὶ ὁ ἴδιος πλησιάζει στὸ τέλος του; Ἀλλὰ ἂς ποῦμε πὼς τὸ ὄνομα κάποιου μνημονεύεται στὴ γῆ ἕως τὸ τέλος τοῦ χρόνου—τὶ κερδίζει αὐτὸς ἀπ' αὐτό, ἐὰν ἡ μνήμη του στὰ οὐράνια ἔχει ξεχαστεῖ;

Τὸ σωστὸ εἶναι νὰ ἐπιθυμοῦμε τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ νεκροῦ νὰ μνημονεύεται αἰώνια στὴν αἰωνιότητα, στὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ καὶ στὸ Βασίλειο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τοῦτο καὶ εἶναι τὸ νόημα τῶν λέξεων «αἰωνία σου ἢ μνήμη».

Μιὰ φορὰ καυχῆθηκαν οἱ μαθητὲς τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὸν Δάσκαλό τους λέγοντας: «Κύριε, καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια ὑποτάσσεται ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου». (Λουκ 10:17). Καὶ ὁ Κύριος τοὺς ἀπάντησε νὰ μὴν χαίρονται γι' αὐτὸ ἀλλά: «Χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγράφη ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς» (Λουκ 10:20), δηλαδή νὰ χαίρονται ἐπειδὴ τὰ ὀνόματά τους εἶναι γνωστὰ καὶ τὰ θυμούνται καὶ τὰ μνημονεύουν στὸ Οὐράνιο Βασίλειο τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τῆς ζωῆς.

Στὴν Ἁγία Γραφή συχνὰ λέγεται πὼς τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν δικαίων θὰ εἶναι γραμμένα στὸ βιβλίον τῶν ζωντανῶν, ἐνῶ τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν θὰ σβηστοῦν καὶ θὰ ξεχαστοῦν. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία περὶ τοῦ πλουσίου καὶ τοῦ Λαζάρου βλέπουμε ὅτι ὁ Κύριος λέει τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Λαζάρου μὲ τὸ ὀλοκάθαρό Του στόμα, ἀλλὰ ἀποσιωπᾷ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἄδικου πλουσίου.

Ὁ Λάζαρος, σημαίνει, ὅτι μῆκε στὸ Βασίλειο τῶν Οὐρανῶν, καὶ ἔλαβε τὴν αἰώνια ζωὴ καὶ τὴν αἰώνια μνήμη, ἐνῶ ὁ ἁμαρτωλὸς πλοῦσιος ἔχασε καὶ τὸ βασίλειο καὶ τὴ ζωὴ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα.

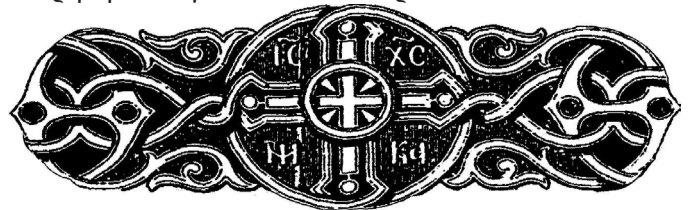
Στὴ θεϊκὴ ἐπιστήμη καμιά φορὰ τὸ ὄνομα ταυτίζεται μὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Στὴν Ἀποκάλυψη γράφεται: «Καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγένετο σεισμὸς μέγας, ... καὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτὰ». (Ἀποκ 11:13). Ὑπὸ τὸν σεισμὸ τῆς γῆς πρέπει νὰ καταλάβουμε μεγάλους πειρασμούς, στοὺς ὁποίους οἱ ἑπτὰ χιλιάδες ἀνθρώπων ὑπέκυψαν, ἀποστάτησαν ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ ἔχασαν τὶς ψυχές τους. Τοῦτο σημαίνει ὅτι δὲν καταστράφηκαν μόνο τὰ σώματά τους—αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐλάχιστης σημασίας—ἀλλὰ οἱ ψυχές καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα. Τὰ ὀνόματά τους στὴν αἰωνιότητα

ἐκημενίστηκαν καὶ σβήστηκαν ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίον τῶν ζωντανῶν.

Ὅποιος ἐπιθυμεῖ μιὰ ἀθάνατη μνήμη στὴν αἰωνιότητα, ἐπιθυμεῖ εὐαγγελικὸ πρᾶγμα. Ἐὰν κάποιος ἐπιθυμεῖ ἀθάνατο ὄνομα στὴ γῆ, θέλει ματαιόδοξο πρᾶγμα. Νὰ ξέρεις ὅτι πολλοὶ οἱ ὁποῖοι ἀθόρυβα καὶ χωρὶς νὰ τοὺς προσέξουν πέρασαν αὐτὴ τὴ ζωὴ, ἀπέκτησαν ἀθάνατο ὄνομα σ' ἐκεῖνο τὸν κόσμο. Νὰ σκέπτεσαι περὶ αὐτοῦ,

ἀδελφὲ Μελέτιε, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς θὰ σοῦ ἀποκαλύψει ἀκόμα πολλὰ. Καὶ ὅταν ἀκούσεις γιὰ τὸ δικό μου θάνατο, πᾶς στὴν προσευχὴ σου: «Αἰωνία του ἢ μνήμη»!

Εἰρήνη καὶ ὑγεία ἀπὸ τὸν Κύριο.



Ἡ προσευχὴ εἶναι τὸ ὄξυγόνο τῆς ψυχῆς, εἶναι ἀνάγκη τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ δὲν πρέπει νὰ θεωρεῖται ἀγχαρεία. Ἡ προσευχὴ γιὰ ν' ἀκουστῆ ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ πρέπει νὰ γίνεται μὲ ταπείνωση, μὲ συναίσθηση βαθιὰ τῆς ἁμαρτωλότητάς μας, καὶ νὰ εἶναι καρδιακὴ. Ἐὰν δὲν εἶναι καρδιακὴ, δὲν ὠφελεῖ. Ὁ Θεὸς ἀκούει πάντοτε τὴν προσευχὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ποὺ εἶναι πνευματικὰ ἀνεβασμένος.

Ἅγιος Παῖσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης

## «Ὁ Ἐπιτάφιος»

Τοῦ πατρὸς Κωνσταντίνου Στρατηγόπουλου· αὐτοτελὲς ἀπόσπασμα ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίον «Τὸ Σταυροδρόμι τῆς Καρδιάς μου» τοῦ πατρὸς Κωνσταντίνου Στρατηγόπουλου, σελ. 41-48, ἐκδόσεις «Φιλοκαλία», Μάιος 2002.

Τὸ Πάσχα ἐκείνη τὴ χρονιά ἦρθε ἀργά. Τὰ χελιδόνια εἶχαν ἤδη ἀρχίσει νὰ κτίζουν τὶς φωλιές τους. Τὰ χελιδόνια ἦταν πάντοτε ἓνα μέτρο χρονικὸ ἂν ἔφταναν πρὶν τὸ Πάσχα, τότε εἶχαμε καλοκαιριάτικο Πάσχα, ἂν ὄχι, τὸ Πάσχα ἦταν χειμωνιάτικο. Κανεὶς βέβαια δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ γνωρίζει γιατί τὰ χελιδόνια ἔρχονται κάποια στιγμή. Εἶναι, ὅμως, σίγουρο ὅτι ὁ Πλάστης καὶ Δημιουργὸς τοὺς ἔδωσε μιὰ σοφία ποὺ εἶναι ἀρκετὴ γιὰ νὰ καταξιώσει τὶς κινήσεις τους.

Ὁ Μάριος ὁ Σεβντᾶς δὲν ἐνδιαφερόταν βέβαια τόσο γιὰ τὰ χελιδόνια· ἄλλοι ἦταν στραμμένα τὰ ἐνδιαφέροντά του. Ὅπως δὴποτε, ὅμως, χάριξε φέτος γιὰ τὸ Πάσχα ποὺ γιορταζόταν μαγιάτικα. Ὁ Μάριος δὲν ἦταν κάποια ἐκτακτὴ προσωπικότητα ποὺ θὰ ἔκανε κάποιον νὰ ἀσχοληθεῖ μαζί του. Ἀλλὰ χωρὶς νὰ τὸ καταλάβει εἶχε κάνει ὅλο τὸ Νιχώρι νὰ ἀσχολεῖται μαζί του.

Σ' αὐτὸ τὸ χωριὸ τοῦ ἄνω Βοσπόρου, ὁ Μάριος κατεῖχε μιὰ θέση δική του. Μιὰ θέση μοναδική. Ἦταν ὁ γελωτοποιὸς τοῦ χωριοῦ. Χωρὶς νὰ τὸ θέλει. Χωρὶς νὰ τὸ ἐπιδιώκει. Ὅλοι γελοῦσαν μαζί του καὶ μόνο ποὺ τὸν ἔβλεπαν. τὸν εἶχαν λίγο γιὰ χαζό, λίγο γιὰ κουτὸ καὶ λίγο γιὰ τεμπελάκο, ἀφοῦ δὲν ἔκανε μιὰ συγκεκριμένη ἐργασία. Ἄλλοτε καθάριζε ἓναν κῆπο, ἄλλοτε ἔκανε τὰ ψώνια κάποιας κυρᾶς. Δουλειὲς ὅλες τοῦ ποδαριοῦ. Φτωχοζοῦσε δὲν τὸν ἔνοιαζε ὅμως. Ὅλοι γελοῦσαν μαζί του. Ὅλοι τὸν πείραζαν. Ἐκείνος ποτὲ δὲν θιγόταν. Πάντα εἶχε καὶ μιὰ ἀπάντηση εὐτράπελη, χαριτωμένη.

- Μάριε, θὰ πᾶς σήμερα γιὰ ψώνια;

- Ὁ Μάριος δὲν πάει ἀπλῶς γιὰ ψώνια, εἶναι ψώνιο, ἀπαντοῦσε ἐκεῖνος. Τὸν ρωτοῦσαν:

- Μάριε, πόσα χρόνια πῆγες σχολεῖο;

- Πηγαίνω κάθε μέρα ἀφοῦ σχολάζω ἀπὸ κάθε δουλειά, ἔλεγε ἐκεῖνος. Ἄλλοτε τοῦ ὑπέβαλαν τὸ δύσκολο ἐρώτημα:

- Ποιὸς εἶναι ὁ πιὸ σπουδαῖος στὸ χωριό;

- Ὅποιος κάνει τὰ πιὸ σπουδαῖα πράγματα χωρὶς νὰ τὸν βλέπει κανεὶς, ἀπαντοῦσε ἐκεῖνος.

Εἶναι ἀλήθεια πὼς αὐτὰ ποὺ ἔλεγε δὲν ἦταν πάντα ἀστεία. Ἀλλὰ τὸ χωριὸ εἶχε συνηθίσει νὰ γελάει. Μόνο ὁ παπα-Ἀντώνης, ἐφημέριος τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου, τὸν ἄκουε μὲ προσοχή. Μερικὲς φορὲς, μάλιστα, ἔλεγε ὁ εὐλογημένος αὐτὸς ἱερέας:

- Αὐτὸς δὲν εἶναι ἠλίθιος. Λέει ἀλήθειες. Ὁ Θεός, βέβαια, γνωρίζει πιὸ καλά.

Πράγματι, μόνο ὁ Θεὸς πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζε τὴν ἀρετὴ τοῦ Μάριου. Μιὰ ἀρετὴ ποὺ φωλιάζει μέσα στὴν καρδιά μερικῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ κανεὶς δὲν τὴν ἀναγνωρίζει. Μιὰ ἀρετὴ ποὺ ἔχει ἀπαίτηση νὰ πεῖ στὸν ἄλλο ἀλήθειες, χωρὶς νὰ τὸν θίξει. Προτιμᾶς τότε νὰ σὲ θεωρήσει ὁ ἄλλος τρελό, παρὰ νὰ τὸν τρελάνεις.

Ἐκείνη, λοιπόν, τὴ χρονιά, ὁ Μάριος εἶχε χαρὰ μεγάλη γιὰ τὸ καθυστερημένο Πάσχα. Τὸ ἔλεγε, ἐξᾴλλου, παντοῦ.

- Γιατὶ Μάριε χαιρεσαὶ γιὰ τὸ καθυστερημένο Πάσχα;

- Μὰ ἐπειδὴ κεντάω. Πρέπει νὰ τελειώσω τὸ κέντημα.

Κι ὅλα τὰ παιδιὰ γύρω ἔσκαγαν στὸ γέλιο.

- Τὶ σχέση ἔχει τὸ κέντημα μὲ τὸ Πάσχα; ρώτησε ὁ Μανώλης ὁ μανάβης, ποὺ ἦταν γνωστός γιὰ τὸ ἀντιεκκλησιαστικὸ του φρόνημα.

- Ὅση σχέση ἔχεις καὶ σὺ μὲ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, τοῦ

ἔλεγε ὁ Μάριος, καμιά καὶ μεγάλη.

Τὴ σχέση, βέβαια, ποὺ εἶχε τὸ κέντημα μὲ τὸ Πάσχα τὴν γνώριζε πολὺ καλά ὁ Μάριος. Πρὶν τρία χρόνια, στὴν περιφορὰ τοῦ ἐπιταφίου, μερικὰ ἀπρόσεκτα παιδιὰ εἶχαν κάψει, παίζοντας, μιὰ μεγάλη ἄκρη τοῦ ἐπιταφίου. Εἶχε στενοχωρηθεῖ πολὺ κι ὁ παπα-Ἀντώνης. Πῶς θ' ἀγόραζε καινούργιο ἐπιτάφιο; Τὰ ἔσοδα τοῦ ναοῦ ἦταν μετρημένα. Μόλις καὶ κάλυπταν τὶς βασικὲς ἀνάγκες. Στὸ τέλος τὸ ξεπέρασε. Δὲν πειράζει, μιὰ φορὰ τὸ χρόνο ἦταν. Θὰ κάλυπτε μὲ λουλούδια τὸ καμμένο μέρος. Κανεὶς δὲν θὰ τὸ βλεπε. Ὁ Μάριος, ὅμως, τὸ τόνισε:

- Δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι τρύπιος ὁ ἐπιτάφιος. Ἀρκετὰ ὅσα ἔκαναν οἱ ἔβραῖοι στὸ Χριστό.

Ἐπρεπε κάτι νὰ γίνε. Χρήματα δὲν εἶχε. Ἀλλὰ εἶχε χέρια. Κάποτε δούλευε στὸ Πέρα, πλάι σ' ἓναν τεχνίτη κεντημάτων. Θὰ προσπαθοῦσε. Γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ θὰ τὸ ἔκανε. Δὲν μπορούμε κι ἐμεῖς νὰ μαρτυροῦμε γιὰ τὸ



Χριστό; Θά εἶχε κόπο αὐτὴ ἱστορία. Ὑπολόγιζε τρία χρόνια. Ἐπρεπε νὰ γίνει τέλειος. Ἐπιτάφιος θὰ ἦταν. Μεράκι χρειάζόταν. Ἀγάπη καὶ Σεβντὰς μὲ μεράκι.

Γιὰ Ἐκείνον ὅμως θὰ τὸ ἔκανε. Τρία χρόνια. Δὲν πειράζει. Ἐκείνος εἶχε κατέβει τρεῖς μέρες στὸν Ἄδη. Τὶ εἶναι τρία χρόνια δουλειᾶς γιὰ τὸ Χριστό; Σ' ὅλη τὴ ζωὴ μας ἔπρεπε νὰ δουλεύουμε γι' Αὐτόν. Τρία χρόνια λίγα ἦταν.

- Βρὲ Μάριε, πῶς πάει τὸ κέντημα; Τὸν ρωτοῦσαν στὸ χωριό, χωρὶς καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι νὰ γνωρίζουν γιὰ ποῖο κέντημα ἦταν ὁ λόγος.

- Θὰ καταλάβεις πῶς πάει ἂν κεντήσεις στὴν καρδιά, στὸ νοῦ καὶ στὸ σῶμα σου τὸ Χριστό, ἀπαντοῦσε ὁ Μάριος.

- Πῶς θὰ Τὸν κεντήσω;

- Τὶ εἶμαι ἐγώ; Ἐκκλησία; Τὶ μὲ ρωτᾷς; Νὰ πᾶς σὲ κανένα πνευματικὸ νὰ δεῖς καὶ τὸ κεντητὸ τὸ πετραχίλι του καὶ θὰ καταλάβεις τὶ ἐννοῶ, ἀπαντοῦσε ὁ Μάριος.

Ὅλο τὸ χωριὸ γελοῦσε μὲ τὸ μυστήριό αὐτὸ κέντημα. Τὶ τρέλα ἦταν πάλι κι αὐτὴ; Τὰ παιδιά στὸ δρόμο τοῦ χωριοῦ τὸ γλεντοῦσαν μὲ τὸ κέντημα. Τὴν ἔπαθε, βέβαια, μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἔξαψη τῆς φαντασίας, κι ἡ κυρὰ Κούλα ἢ Πρίφταινα. Κεντοῦσε μιὰ μέρα, στὴν πόρτα τῆς αὐλῆς τοῦ σπιτιοῦ της, κάτω τσεβρέδες. Μόλις τὰ παιδιά τὴν εἶδαν, ἄρχισαν νὰ φωνάζουν.

- Τὸ κέντημα, τὸ κέντημα. Ἐχει ἀπὸ τὴν τρέλα τοῦ Μάριου.

Εἶχε γίνει πολὺ ἀναξιοπρεπὲς τὸ νὰ κεντᾷς. Ὅλοι, μόλις ἔβλεπαν ἓνα κέντημα, ἔφερναν στὸ νοῦ τους τὸ Μάριο. Καὶ τότε, ἀμέσως, σὲ κατέτασαν στὴ συνομοταξία τῶν τρελῶν. Καὶ τρελός δὲν θὰ ἔθελε κανεὶς νὰ εἶναι.

Τρία χρόνια ὁ Μάριος δεινοπάθησε ἀπὸ τὶς κοροϊδίες. Τρία χρόνια δούλεψε σκληρά. Ἀσκήθηκε. Ξεπέρασε τὸν ἑαυτό του. Ἄς γελοῦσαν ὅλοι μαζί του· δὲν τὸν πείραζε. Αὐτὸς δούλευε μυστικὴ ἐργασία γιὰ τὸ Χριστό. γιὰ τὸν τάφο Του. Τὶ πὶο μεγάλο μπορούσε νὰ κάνει; Ὅταν μιὰ μέρα θὰ πέθαινε, θὰ ἔβλεπε μπροστὰ του, μέσα στὸν τάφο του, τὸ Χριστό. Τὶ θὰ Τοῦ ἔλεγε; Πῶς θὰ Τὸν ἔβλεπε; Ἐπρεπε νὰ προετοιμαστῆ γιὰ τὸν τάφο Του. Ἐπρεπε νὰ τὸν κεντήσῃ ἀπὸ τώρα στὴ ζωὴ του. Τὴν ἡμέρα ὅλοι γελοῦσαν μ' αὐτόν, καὶ τὸ βράδυ ἐκείνος, πάνω ἀπὸ τὸν ἐπιτάφιο, ἔκλαιγε γιὰ ὅλους. γιὰ ὅλα. Κάθε βελονιὰ καὶ δάκρυ. Κάθε βελονιὰ καὶ ἓνας τάφος. Αὐτὸς ὁ ἐπιτάφιος ἦταν πραγματικὸς ἐπιτάφιος. Δουλεμένος μὲ δάκρυα, γιὰ τὸν κόσμο, γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες του.

- Πῶς πάει τὸ κέντημα, Μάριε; Ρωτοῦσαν οἱ φίλοι του.

- Βρεγμένο εἶναι, ἀπαντοῦσε ἐκείνος, καὶ τὰ γέλια τράνταζαν τὸ γύρω χωριό.

Τρία χρόνια κεντοῦσε ὁ Μάριος. Κι ἔγινε σάν τις μυροφόρες, τὴ Μαρία τὴ Μαγδαληνή, τὴ Μαρία τοῦ

Κλωπᾶ, τὴν ἄλλη Μαρία. Καὶ ἔκεινος Μάριος λεγόταν. Μύρα δὲν εἶχε νὰ γίνει μυροφόρος. Τὸ κέντημα, ὅμως, φέτος θὰ τὸ τελείωνε. Εὐτυχῶς καὶ τὸ Πάσχα ἦταν καλοκαιρινό. Εὐτυχῶς καὶ τὰ χελιδόνια ἦρθαν πρὶν ἀπὸ τὸ Πάσχα.

Ἦρθε ἡ Μεγάλῃ Ἑβδομάδα. Ὅλα ἦταν φωτεινά. Ἡ ἀνοιξη στὸ ἀποκορύφωμά της. Κι ὁ Μάριος ἔτοιμος. Ἐτοιμος γιὰ νὰ καταθέσῃ τὸν ἐπιτάφιο ἐκεῖ πού ἔπρεπε. Τρία χρόνια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ του εἶχε γίνει τάφος· γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ δούλευε. Ὁ κόσμος πὶο πολὺ τὸν κοροΐδευε. Ὁ τρελός, ὁ ἠλίθιος, ὁ κουτός. Ναί, αὐτὸς ἦταν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν μπορούσε ἓνα χωριὸ νὰ ἔχει ἓναν καμμένο ἐπιτάφιο· γιὰ τὸ χωριὸ δούλευε. γιὰ νὰ ἔχουν τὸ Χριστό.

Τὴ Μεγάλῃ Παρασκευῇ τὸ πρωὶ ὁ Μάριος πῆρε τὸν ἐπιτάφιο στὴν πλάτη του. Καὶ βγήκε στὸ δρόμο. Ἄρχισε νὰ γυρνᾷ γύρω γύρω στὶς πλατεῖες καὶ στοὺς δρόμους ψάλλοντας τὸ «ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ». Τὸ χωριὸ σηκώθηκε στὸ πόδι. Τὶ τρέλα ἦταν πάλι κι αὐτὴ;

- Μάριε, τὸ βράδυ θὰ βγῆ ὁ ἐπιτάφιος, τὶ κάνεις ἐκεῖ;

- Ἀνοιγῶ δρόμο στὸ Χριστό. γιὰ νὰ μὴν σᾶς ἔρθει ξαφνικὰ τὸ βράδυ καὶ δὲν τὸν προλάβετε. Γιὰ νὰ ἐτοιμάζεστε ἀπὸ τώρα. Τάφος θὰ περάσει ἀπὸ δῶ τὸ βράδυ. Πρέπει νὰ προετοιμαστῆτε γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἀντέξετε.

Ἡ «ζωὴ ἐν τάφῳ», καὶ πάλι καὶ ξανά. Μέχρι ποῦ ἔφτασε στὴν ἐκκλησία. Μπήκε στὸ ἱερὸ τὴν ὥρα πού ἀνεγιγνώσκοντο οἱ μεγάλες Ὑμνες. Στάθηκε μπροστὰ στὸν παπα-Ἀντώνη.

- Πάρε αὐτὸ ἀπὸ ἓναν τρελὸ καὶ χαζό. Ἐνας τάφος ὅπως πρέπει γιὰ τὸ Χριστό. Ὅσο τὸν ἔφτιαχνα τόσο πὶο πολὺ ξεκουραζόμουν. Μὴν πεῖς σὲ κανένα πῶς ἐγὼ τὸν ἔφτιαξα. Στὸν τάφο του ὁ καθένας εἶναι μόνος μπροστὰ στὸ Χριστό. Οὔτε οἱ ἔπαινοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, μὰ οὔτε καὶ ἡ κοροϊδία τους ἔχουν σημασία. Σημασία ἔχει νὰ κεντήσῃς κάτω γιὰ τὸ Χριστὸ στὴ ζωὴ. Συγχώρα με τὸν τρελό, χρονιάρρα μέρα καὶ σὲ διδάσκω. Ἐγὼ ὁ ἀγράμματος. Ἐγὼ ὁ ἠλίθιος, ὁ χαμένος. Κάνε μιὰ προσευχὴ γιὰ μένα.

Ἐκεῖνο τὸ βράδυ ἡ περιφορὰ τοῦ ἐπιταφίου ἔγινε μὲ λαμπρότητα. Ὁ καινούργιος ἐπιτάφιος φάνταζε μὲ μεγαλοπρέπεια. Ὁ πατήρ Ἀντώνιος κατὰ τὴ διάρκεια τῆς περιφορᾶς, ἔνωσε πολλὰς φορὲς εὐωδία ἀνέκφραστη νὰ τὸν περιτυλίγει. Ὁ ἐπιτάφιος εἶχε πάνω του λουλούδια. Μὰ ποτὲ λουλούδια δὲν μύρισαν τόσο ὠραῖα, τόσο οὐράνια. Στὸ τέλος τῆς πομπῆς κι ὁ Μάριος, ὁ μυροφόρος, ὁ Σεβντὰς.

- Μάριε, τὶ κεντᾷς;

- Οὔ, τώρα πιά τελείωσε, τὸ πῆρε τὸ κέντημα ὁ Χριστὸς στὸν τάφο Του. Μὴν τὰ ρωτᾷς. Κάνε καμὶα προσευχὴ καὶ γιὰ μένα τὸν τρελό. **Κάνε μιὰ προσευχὴ γιὰ νὰ ἔχουμε καλὴ ζωὴ «ἐν τάφῳ».**

## Ὁ Θεὸς Ἐγκαταλείπει τὸν Ἄνθρωπο;... Εἶναι Δυνατὸ Αὐτό;

Ἀγίου Σιλουανοῦ τοῦ Ἀθωνίτη.

**Ἡ** ὁδὸς τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ σὲ γενικὲς γραμμὲς εἶναι τέτοιας λογῆς: Στὴν ἀρχὴ ὁ ἄνθρωπος προσελκύεται ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ μὲ τὴ δωρεὰ τῆς χάριτος, κι ὅταν ἔχει πιά προσελκυσθεῖ, τότε ἀρχίζει μακρὰ περίοδος δοκιμασίας. Δοκιμάζεται ἡ ἐλευθερία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἡ ἐμπιστοσύνη του στὸ Θεό, καὶ δοκιμάζεται «σκληρά».

Στὴν ἀρχὴ οἱ αἰτήσεις πρὸς τὸ Θεό, μικρὲς καὶ μεγάλες, ἀκόμη καὶ οἱ παρακλήσεις ποὺ μόλις ἐκφράζονται, ἐκπληρώνονται συνήθως μὲ γρήγορο καὶ θαυμαστὸ τρόπο ἀπὸ τὸ Θεό.

Ὅταν ὅμως ἔλθει ἡ περίοδος τῆς δοκιμασίας, τότε ὅλα ἀλλάζουν καὶ σὰν νὰ κλείνεται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ νὰ γίνεται κουφὸς σ' ὅλες τὶς δεήσεις.

Γιὰ τὸ θερμὸ Χριστιανὸ ὅλα στὴ ζωὴ του γίνονται δύσκολα. Ἡ συμπεριφορὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπέναντί του χειροτερεύει, παύουν νὰ τὸν ἐκτιμοῦν αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀνέχονται σ' ἄλλους, σ' αὐτὸν δὲν τὸ συγχωροῦν, ἡ ἐργασία του πληρώνεται, σχεδὸν πάντοτε, κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ νόμιμο, τὸ σῶμα του εὐκόλα προσβάλλεται ἀπὸ ἀσθένειες. Ἡ φύση, οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ὅλα στρέφονται ἐναντίον του.

Παρὸτι τὰ φυσικὰ του χαρίσματα δὲν εἶναι κατώτερα ἀπὸ τὰ χαρίσματα τῶν ἄλλων, δὲν βρῖσκει εὐνοϊκὲς συνθήκες νὰ τὰ χρησιμοποίησι. Ἐπὶ πλέον ὑπομένει πολλὰς ἐπιθέσεις ἀπὸ τὶς δαμονικὲς δυνάμεις καὶ τὸ ἀποκορύφωμα εἶναι ἡ ἀνυπόφορη θλίψη ἀπὸ τὴ θεία ἐγκατάλειψη. Τότε κορυφώνεται τὸ πάθος του, γιὰτὶ πλήττεται ὁ ὅλος ἄνθρωπος σ' ὅλα τὰ ἐπίπεδα τῆς ὑπάρξεώς του.

Ὁ Θεὸς ἐγκαταλείπει τὸν ἄνθρωπο;... Εἶναι δυνατὸ αὐτό;

Κι ἐν τούτοις στὴ θέση τοῦ βιώματος τῆς ἐγγύτητος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔρχεται στὴν ψυχὴ τὸ αἶσθημα πὼς Ἐκεῖνος εἶναι ἀπείρως, ἀπροσίτως μακριά, πέρα ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀστρικοὺς κόσμους κι ὅλες οἱ ἐπικλήσεις πρὸς Αὐτὸν χάνονται ἀβοήθητες στὸ ἀχανὲς τοῦ κοσμικοῦ διαστήματος. Ἡ ψυχὴ ἐντείνει ἐσωτερικὰ τὴν κραυγὴ τῆς πρὸς Αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ δὲν βλέπει ἀκόμα οὔτε βοήθεια ΟΥΤΕ προσοχὴ. Ὅλα τότε γίνονται φορτικά.

Ὅλα κατορθώνονται μὲ δυσανάλογα μεγάλο κόπο. Ἡ ζωὴ γεμίζει ἀπὸ μόχθους κι ἀναδεύει μέσα στὸν ἄνθρωπο τὸ αἶσθημα πὼς βαραίνει πάνω του ἡ κατάρα καὶ ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὅταν ὅμως περάσουν αὐτὲς οἱ δοκιμασίες, τότε θὰ δεῖ πὼς ἡ θαυμαστὴ πρόνοια τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν φύλαγε προσεκτικὰ σ' ὅλες τὶς πτυχὲς τῆς ζωῆς του.

Χιλιόχρονη πείρα, ποὺ παραδίνεται ἀπὸ γενιὰ σὲ γενιὰ, λέει πὼς, ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς δεῖ τὴν πίστη τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀγωνιστῆ γι' Αὐτόν, ὅπως εἶδε τὴν πίστη τοῦ Ἰώβ, τότε τὸν ὀδηγεῖ σὲ ἀβύσσους καὶ ὕψη ποὺ εἶναι ἀπρόσιτα σ' ἄλλους.

Ὅσο πληρέστερη καὶ ἰσχυρότερη εἶναι ἡ πίστη καὶ ἡ ἐμπιστοσύνη τοῦ ἀνθρώπου στὸ θεό, τόσο μεγαλύτερο θὰ εἶναι καὶ τὸ μέτρο τῆς δοκιμασίας καὶ ἡ πληρότητα τῆς πείρας, ποὺ μπορεῖ νὰ φτάσει σὲ μεγάλο βαθμό. Καὶ τότε γίνεται ὀλοφάνερο πὼς ἔφτασε στὰ ὄρια, ποὺ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ξεπεράσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος.



**Τ**ὸ κακὸ ἀρχίζει ἀπὸ τὶς κακὲς σκέψεις. Ὅταν πικραίνεσαι καὶ ἀγανακτεῖς, ἔστω μόνο μὲ τὴ σκέψη, χαλᾶς ὅλη τὴν πνευματικὴ σου ἀτμόσφαιρα. Ἐμποδίζεις τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα νὰ ἐνεργήσῃ, καὶ ἔτσι ἐπιτρέπεις στὸ διάβολο νὰ μεγαλώσῃ τὸ κακὸ. Ἐσὺ πάντοτε νὰ προσεύχεσαι, νὰ ἀγαπᾶς καὶ νὰ συγχωρεῖς, διώχνοντας ἀπὸ μέσα σου κάθε κακὸ λογισμό.

Ὅταν ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι ταραγμένη, θολώνει τὸ λογικὸ καὶ δὲ βλέπει καθαρά. Μόνο, ὅταν ἡ ψυχὴ εἶναι ἤρεμη, φωτίζει τὸ λογικὸ, γιὰ νὰ βλέπει καθαρὰ τὴν αἰτία κάθε πράγματος.

Ὅι ἀσθένειες μᾶς βγάζουν σὲ καλὸ, ὅταν τὶς ὑπομένουμε ἀγόγγυστα, παρακαλώντας τὸ Θεὸ νὰ μᾶς συγχωρήσῃ τὶς ἁμαρτίες καὶ δοξάζοντας τὸ ὄνομά Του.

Ὅταν προσεύχεσαι, νὰ ξεχνᾶς τὴν σωματικὴ σου ἀρρώστια, νὰ τὴν ἀποδέχεσαι σὰν κανόνα, σὰν ἐπιτίμιο, γιὰ τὴν ἄφεση τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν σου. Γιὰ τὰ παραπέρα μὴν ἀνησυχεῖς, ἄφησέ τα στὸ Θεὸ κι ὁ Θεὸς ξέρει τὴ δουλειά Του.

**Ὅσιος Πορφύριος ὁ Κανσοκαλυβίτης**



**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 οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντας κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».**

## JUSTICE DELAYED IS JUSTICE DENIED: OUR ORTHODOX BROTHER ON DEATH ROW.

### JUDICIAL WARFARE. FRANK ATWOOD AND THE VICKI LYNN HOSKINSON STORY

*By the friends and supporters of Anthony (Frank) Atwood, see <https://justiceforfrankatwood.com/>.*

The sudden disappearance and subsequent murder of 8 year old Vicki Lynn Hoskinson in 1984 stimulated intense hysteria in Tucson, Arizona, and Frank J. Atwood, a drug addled parolee from out of state, spotted near the scene of the crime, was a prosecutor's dream. Presumed guilty before the trial even began and persecuted in the media, the 1987 trial and sentencing were mere formalities in sending Frank to prison.

Once on death row Anthony began helping his attorney to prepare his Arizona Supreme Court appeal. As bad as the trial court proceedings went, the appellate litigation also concluded in disaster. The hoped-for objective review was an exercise in madness; the court even managed to convict Anthony on a charge never brought before the state court.

Next came the post-conviction relief (PCR) proceedings where evidence not previously discovered and presented

could be raised in the trial court. Things looked hopeful but went terribly wrong. Anthony's PCR attorney learned that government experts had deceived his trial attorney and things only went downhill from there.

Years rolled by when, in 2003, an engineering expert, David Hill, began to study the FBI and Pima County Sheriff's office photography. What he learned was staggering. The sole alleged link between Anthony and the victim was a smear of pink bicycle paint on Frank's car bumper (police theorizing that the car hit the bike). Mr. Hill uncovered proof that evidence of this occurrence was fabricated by authorities and that no other corroborating evidence existed.

Ultimately, the case went to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, but the same sordid judicial absurdity also visited these proceedings; the appeal denial came in rapid time and Frank was once again denied justice.

Anthony is currently pursuing an "ineffective assistance of counsel" claim against his attorneys for not submitting the U.S. Supreme Court petition on time, losing his final chance for appeal, and other legal missteps.

Details of the case reside at [www.thefrankatwoodstory.gr](http://www.thefrankatwoodstory.gr) and your visit is highly recommended. You can also sign up for our newsletter with updates on Frank's case at: [www.justiceforfrankatwood.com](http://www.justiceforfrankatwood.com). Please read on to find out how Eastern Orthodoxy changed Frank's life.

### Introduction to Rebirth in Orthodoxy

Frank Jarvis Atwood (now baptized, "Anthony" in the Orthodox Church) was born on January 29, 1956 in Los Angeles to an Army General and a socialite from Austria. By all accounts, he enjoyed an advantageous childhood. He was raised in the Episcopal Church (serving as an acolyte and singing in the choir), learned morality, and excelled in football and baseball leagues. God surely blessed him but, while attending military school in 1970 and preparing to attend West Point, Anthony drifted toward drugs and was suspended. Ashamed and expelled, shortly thereafter he was kidnapped and sexually assaulted.

Ensuant PTSD went untreated and a struggling-to-cope teen engaged in criminal and radical countercultural conduct. Of course, years of incarceration resulted.

Having departed Episcopalianism, Anthony involved

himself in eastern belief systems, tarot, and astrology; but God never left him. Whether dealing with minor brushes with the law, Christian teachers, and more and more serious criminal court experiences, the grace of God remained.

Anthony ultimately abandoned Christ fully, operating a multi-state drug ring and committing countless robberies. While Frank was certainly on the wrong side of the law, he was wrongfully arrested in 1984, convicted and received a sentence of death in 1987—for a murder he did not commit. The classic case of "wrong place, wrong time."

### God's Providence

It took years for Anthony to accept such an unfair course of events as a blessing from God. He initially sought to normalize his situation by enrolling in college courses while working at redeveloping a loving relationship with his parents. (Following God's example of unconditional love, they remained loyal to their son.) As God's Providence stirred within, Anthony determined to rededicate his life in obedience to Christ in January of 1998.

His involvement in Western, Protestant Christianity fanned the flames of desire for God, but over the next decade, Anthony remained spiritually unfulfilled. He continued his schoolwork—earning two Associates degrees, a Pre-Law English Bachelors (at Ohio University), and a Masters in Literature (from Cal State at Dominquez Hills).



One day Anthony glanced at a magazine and noticed an ad for a book on “mystical” Christianity. Protestantism’s intellectual/scholastic emphasis left Anthony hungry for something “within,” so he ordered and read the book. He later contacted the author for more information and was able to contact one of the book’s protagonists, an Athonite monk serving in Cyprus as a Bishop. A blossoming relationship unfolded and Anthony learned that God’s allowance of such secular justice (i.e., wrongful capital murder conviction) was a sign of God’s Providence.

Bishop Athanasios soon invited Anthony to come home to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and Frank was on the road to converting to Eastern Orthodoxy.

In addition to sending books on lives of the saints which presented an accurate depiction of authentic Greek Orthodox life, the Bishop also sent a number of works by other theologians—e.g., Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos (of Nafpaktos, Greece), Father John Romanides and Archimandrite Sophrony. These books stimulated much discourse and introspection.

While his Episcopalian upbringing provided a bit of familiarity with Greek Orthodoxy (the Symbol of Faith/the Nicene Creed, praying to the saints, etc.), Anthony still had to “unlearn” many of Western Protestantism’s falsehoods.

The books lovingly sent by the Bishop infused within him a wealth of invaluable instruction, but his curiosity compelled him to pose many questions and in return, Anthony received his first true teachings in Orthodoxy.

Frank learned lessons on what the One, Holy and Apostolic Church, established by the Lord Jesus Christ in the first century, has always believed... the distinction between studying the true word of God and how it differs from the West’s practice of believers simply developing their own ideas on scriptural meanings.

Eventually it became clear that Anthony was ready for local spiritual guidance and so he reached out to the Abbot of St. Anthony’s Monastery in Florence, Arizona; he would soon receive his teachings personally from Geronda Paisios who visited him at the prison.

### Life in Orthodoxy

The 1988 interaction with Bishop Athanasios led Anthony to read about the lives of the saints and other Greek Orthodox material. Geronda Paisios began visiting every other week and baptized “Anthony” in 2000.

God’s Providence assisted Anthony in his struggle toward purification under the guidance of his monastic, spiritual father and as years passed Anthony penned several books (see, [www.churchfathertheology.com](http://www.churchfathertheology.com)). Most recently an autobiography of he and his wife was published by a Cypriot Monastery. It is called “And the Two Shall Become One” and is available at Amazon.com: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1985391058/>.

Anthony also continued his studies, earning a theology degree from St. Stephen’s Seminary and is currently pursuing a doctorate in theology. The changes everyone has observed in Anthony is clear evidence of the glory of God’s Providence.

While obedience under the Abbot underlined the difference from the Western philosophy where one decides on one’s own scriptural interpretations, it also highlighted heretical Protestant concepts like:

1. Baptism as merely a public declaration of belief (as opposed to an actual death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord) or
2. Divine Liturgy being simply a symbolic remembrance of Christ’s work on the Cross (thus, not the literal partaking of the Lord’s Body and Blood), or
3. The belief in “eternal security” which teaches the acceptance of Jesus provides an everlasting salvation that cannot be lost (not the ongoing process of salvation).

At times, such drastic differences were disconcerting, however, to work out his own salvation via obedience to the Abbot became second nature to Anthony. This provided a sense of purpose and direction, and revealed God’s Providence in allowing the radical worldly injustice in the courts... Truly, “Anthony was Home!”

Anthony continues to gratefully accept God’s Providence, and if God’s will is for him to perish by lethal injection he will obediently embrace that as well. Given judicial abuses, flaws by lawyers and other perceived injustices, Anthony’s spiritual father instructed him to continue his spiritual struggle.

Because Anthony has run out of legal options, we are helping him take this struggle to the media. We are reaching out to five important people for assistance who have a history of dealing with cases like Anthony’s and seek the corresponding support of Orthodox brethren worldwide:

- (a) Rick Halperin: [news@smu.edu](mailto:news@smu.edu) (SMU law professor)
- (b) Lupita Murillo: [lmurillo@kvoa.com](mailto:lmurillo@kvoa.com) (KVOA Tucson journalist)
- (c) Jeffrey Toobin: (New Yorker Magazine writer) <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyToobinAuthor>
- (d) Maria Menounos (Greek Orthodox television personality) <http://mariamemounos.com/contact-me/>
- (e) Alan Dershowitz (Attorney, Harvard law professor) [dersh@law.harvard.edu](mailto:dersh@law.harvard.edu)

Please familiarize yourself with the case facts at the above websites and then contact these individuals to encourage their involvement (Please copy [john@justiceforfrankatwood.com](mailto:john@justiceforfrankatwood.com) with all correspondence. He can also be reached directly at (917) 740-5417).

This would be immensely appreciated.

In the meantime, during this Holy Great Lent and the forthcoming festive days of Holy Pascha, please keep Anthony in your prayers. He will be praying for you.

## THEOLOGICAL LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "Hesychia and Theology," edited from length.

In the life of St. Mary of Egypt, the greatness of her personality is evident, as is the power of God's grace, which brought her to new birth through the wretched state she was in. Let us undertake a brief analysis of ten theological points that can be identified in the life of St. Mary of Egypt.

### 1. The Gift of Baptism

St. Mary of Egypt was baptized at an early age, and after Baptism she sunk into a dissolute life. She herself confessed to Abba Zosimas: "I am a sinful woman, but I have been walled about by Holy Baptism." She sinned as a baptized Christian, and made the members of Christ into members of fornication. This gift of Baptism, however, made it possible for her, through the baptism of repentance, to return to Christ, and for her members to become members of the Body of Christ.

The Baptism that we receive as infants is called the washing of regeneration, because through it we are born again into a new life. By Baptism we are restored to the state that Adam was in before he sinned. It is a gift of the Church to enable us to cast off the garments of skin, our corruption and mortality, and to be lifted up spiritually. St. Athanasius calls Baptism, *a planting for eternal life*. St. Basil regards it as *a chariot to heaven, the cause of our acquiring the kingdom, the gift of adoption*.

Baptism is actually the spiritual vaccination that we receive as infants so that, when we grow up, we can of our own free will vanquish sin, the devil and death. This does not mean that we are deprived of the great privilege of freedom, a gift that God gave us at our creation. Since we do not forfeit our freedom, we can choose to sin even after Baptism, and still have the potential to deny God. According to St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Baptism does not take away our free will or freedom of choice, but gives us the freedom no longer to be tyrannised by the devil unless we choose to be*.

It is good that we receive Baptism at an early age because, without depriving us of our freedom, it gives us the possibility, if we so choose, truly to become members of the Body of Christ.

### 2. The Grace of Repentance

St. Mary of Egypt's repentance came about through God's grace and the blessing of the Holy Mother of God, and was expressed with great intensity. She denied the world absolutely, renounced all the wishes of the carnal 'old man,' and transformed all the powers of her body and soul. By so doing she not only activated the grace of Baptism, but also lived the blessed state of deification.

St. Mary of Egypt lived in an extreme form something that many of the ascetic fathers of the desert experienced. They

would hear a word, either directly from the presence of God as revelation, or from the Elders, and then they would go deep into the desert in order to live this word for the rest of their lives. Every word of revelation has great energy and many years of ascetic effort are required to make it a living reality by God's grace. This happened in the case of St. Mary of Egypt. For forty-seven years she struggled to put into practice the word of revelation that she heard in the Church in Jerusalem, and to assimilate the experience of grace that she was granted through the veneration of the Precious Cross and the voice of the Holy Mother of God. This too came about by the energy of that word.

We can also discern various expressions of self-accusation in her speech. She feels ashamed of her deeds; she regards herself as a snake because of her former life; she calls herself dissolute, "a sinful woman" and "a woman bare of all virtue."

Man has free-will, and God Who gave it to him does not take it away. Nor does He deprive him of the gift of Holy Baptism. Man therefore has the potential, on account of passions, death and corruption, but also as a result of attacks of temptation, to commit sin. The grace of Holy Baptism does not then abandon him completely, but remains in the innermost recesses of his heart, hidden by passions and sins.

Repentance comes about by man's cooperation with the grace of God. It activates the grace of Holy Baptism, which is present in the depths of the heart and is hidden by passions. This is why the service of monastic tonsure, which is an expression of repentance, is called *a second Baptism*. Repentance is man's return from the unnatural state of the loss of communion with God, to the natural or supernatural state of progressing from the divine image to the divine likeness.

St. John of the Ladder has some amazing words to show the great value of repentance: *Greater than baptism itself is the fountain of tears after baptism, even though it is somewhat audacious to say so*. He explains these daring words by saying that Baptism is the washing away of evils that were in us before, whereas repentance, the second baptism, washes away sins committed after baptism.

Repentance is a gift of the Holy Spirit and can be activated in man because the grace of Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation is within him. St. Nicholas Kavalas writes that we receive the grace of Chrismation together with Baptism, but we perceive its effect later, when we want to live a godly life and repent of the deeds that we have done. He writes that for some people the gift of Holy Chrismation manifests itself later through repentance and a change in their way of life: *Some have subsequently repented and bewailed the sins which they have committed and live according to right reason, and so have given proof of the grace that has been infused into their souls*.

It follows that St. Mary of Egypt's repentance and tears were the action of Holy Chrismation, as was her victory over corruption and mortality.

### 3. The Experience of the Mystery of the Cross

St. Mary of Egypt's miraculous change of direction came about when she went into the Church in Jerusalem *in which the life-giving wood of the Cross was being displayed*. When she had been prevented three or four times from entering the Church, she finally realized that the reason why she was prevented *from seeing the life-giving wood was the filth of her deeds*. She felt profound repentance and prayed to the Holy Mother of God to count her worthy to venerate the Precious Wood of the Cross, and promised that, if this were granted, she would then change her life. She would never again do anything to insult her flesh, and would leave the world and everything in it. Among other things, she prayed, *Allow me to see the wood on which the God you bore in the flesh was crucified, Who gave His own blood as a ransom for me*. Then she besought the Holy Mother of God, *Command, O Sovereign Lady, that the door to the sacred veneration of the Cross may be opened also to me, and I offer you to God your Son as a trustworthy guarantor, that I shall never again insult my flesh through shameful intercourse, but as soon as I have seen the wood of the Cross of your Son, I shall at once renounce the world and everything in it, and will immediately go wherever you, as the guarantor of my salvation, shall advise and lead me*.

After that she entered the Church without hindrance and reached the sanctuary. She was granted *the life-giving sight of the Cross, beheld the mysteries of God* and realized how ready God was to accept her repentance. Then she threw herself down and venerated that holy ground. She made a promise before the Holy Mother of God that she would fulfil the terms of her pledge. Afterwards, as we have seen, she went into the desert at the bidding of the Holy Mother of God, to wage the ascetic struggle for the purification of her passions and for her sanctification.

We see from this that St. Mary of Egypt venerated the Precious Cross in a state of spiritual inspiration, and through its power she lived the mystery of the Cross in her personal life, by struggling against thoughts and carnal desires. This was linked with the *theoria* of uncreated Light. There is a very close connection between the Cross and the Resurrection. In patristic theology this is called *living the mystery of the Cross*.

### 4. Sharing in God's Deifying Energy

St. Mary of Egypt's experience of the mystery of Christ's Cross and Resurrection was closely connected with her participation in the deifying energy of God. We see this vividly in her whole life: in her unceasing prayer, in the vision she beheld of uncreated Light and in her experience of continuous communion with God. Thus she attained to the goal of her existence, which was not to lead a moral life based on humanistic principles, but to be deified.

In the teaching of the Fathers of the Church we discover the theological truth that God's uncreated energy *is indivisibly divided into divisions and inseparably separated into separate parts*, and takes various names according to the results it produces.

The saints and angels share in the deifying energy of God. The energy of God that helps man along his path to deification is also known by other names, such as purifying energy, which purifies his heart from passions; illuminating energy, which illuminates his nous; and deifying energy, which deifies man, through the vision of the uncreated Light.

According to the teaching of the Church, man was created by God *in His image and after His likeness*. The divine image refers to man's nous and free will, whereas the divine likeness refers to his communion with God, his deification. **Deification is the vision of uncreated Light, which constitutes man's communion with God**. It follows that man has within him the necessary powers for this journey to deification and for fulfilling the purpose of his creation.

Because man fell into sin and put on the garments of skin (corruption and mortality), a new method was needed to attain this goal. This came about through Christ's incarnation, when He voluntarily assumed a body subject to death and suffering, in order to vanquish death and make it possible for man too to be victorious over it, through the power of Christ.

According to the teaching of our Church, Christ became man in order to deify human nature. Since then, by means of the deified human nature that came about in the hypostasis of the Word, anyone who partakes of the divine and human Body of Christ through the Sacraments and Christian asceticism can be deified. According to St. Maximos the Confessor, man's deification is very closely linked with Christ's incarnation. He writes characteristically: *He makes man god by grace to the same degree as God Himself became man by nature according to the divine Economy*.

However sinful a man may be, whatever state he may be in, however low he may have fallen, he can partake of the deifying energy of God, provided he co-operates with the energy of divine grace. Men participate in deification to many different degrees. Those who have been purified from the passions share in deification *through their exalted and noetic concentration upon the divine*. Others *perfected in virtue by purification through their divine intelligence and through sacred intercourse with God, participate according to their proficiency and the degree of their purification in the same deification as their brethren, and they commune with them in the God of unity*.

### 5. The Suspension of Bodily Energies

In the life of St. Mary of Egypt we clearly see the effects of her deification. These include the suspension of her bodily energies, as demonstrated by the fact that she did not take nourishment; the transformation of her body so that she could endure changes in her environment; the ability to cover long distances in a short space of time; the elevation of her body above the ground while praying; and walking on water, as we saw in the summary of her biography in the first part of the chapter.

Body and soul are linked. When the soul is subjected to the body, it becomes carnal, but when the body is under the



influence of a soul that has the gift of the Holy Spirit, the body is remade accordingly and is hallowed.

In patristic teaching it is clear that the body is reformed in the course of deification. During theoria all the bodily energies are suspended, including the instinct for self-preservation, the digestive process, and all the functions of the fallen body. We see this in the lives of the Prophets and Apostles, as described in the books of the Old and New Testaments.

According to St. Makarios of Egypt, as the body of Christ was glorified when He climbed Mount Tabor, “so also the bodies of the saints are glorified and shine like lightning”. According to St. Symeon the New Theologian, when, through many labours and ascetic efforts, a man rises above the needs of the body, “he carries it round with him as a light weight. It is like a spiritual body, and is neither tired nor hungry nor thirsty”, and he reaches the point of divine vision. According to St. Nikitas Stithatos, when someone repents and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, serenity, peace and silence enter his body. Then his body “becomes full of a new power, a new vigour, a new spiritual strength”. In the Gerontikon we come across many such examples, such as the occasion when someone encountered Abba Silouanos “and saw his face and body radiant like an angel’s, and fell to the ground”.

In the course of man’s regeneration the body is illuminated by the soul. Just as the removal of God’s grace from the soul also affects the body, so the soul’s participation in uncreated grace is transmitted to the body too, because soul and body are closely interrelated. Someone who has been reborn acquires an experience of man’s state before the Fall, and also of eschatological life, the life of the saints in the Kingdom of God.

### 6. The Action of Holy Communion

As we see from the life written by St. Sophronios of Jerusalem, St. Mary of Egypt partook of the Body and Blood of Christ after venerating the Precious Cross, and then devoted herself to a life of total repentance in the desert. Finally she was counted worthy, after forty-seven years of repentance, to partake again of the Body and Blood of Christ, and to depart that same day to God. Asceticism is inseparable from Holy Communion, from eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ.

It is significant that St. Mary of Egypt reached the place where Abba Zosimas was waiting for her by walking on the water of the River Jordan, and left after Holy Communion in the same manner. Immediately after Holy Communion, however, she covered in one hour a distance that should have taken twenty days, and died in the place where she experienced her resurrection and ascension.

The ascetics ascribe great importance to Holy Communion, because according to Christ’s words, no one can live without *eating His Body and drinking His Blood*. (Jn 6:53). Abba Pomen says that, just as a deer living in the desert eats many snakes, is burnt by their poison, and so desires springs of water, so it is for monks: *In the desert, they are burned by the*

*poison of the demons and they long for Saturday and Sunday to come so that they can go to the springs of water, that is, to the Body and Blood of the Lord, to be purified from the poison of the evil one.*

Holy Communion, however, does not act on man unconditionally. Certain conditions must be met if the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ is to act in a purifying, illuminating and deifying way, and not punitively. Christ acts according to a person’s state. Sometimes He purifies him, sometimes He illuminates, and at other times He deifies. **There are, however, circumstances in which He burns him up.**

The gift of the Holy Spirit is also received by other means, such as through prayer, repentance, obedience and doing God’s will. According to St. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Our greatest likeness to and union with God is the goal of our hierarchy. But divine scripture teaches us that we will only attain this through the most loving observance of the august commandments and by the doing of sacred acts.*

In the case of St. Mary of Egypt, the action of Holy Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, with the blessing, protection and assistance of the Holy Mother of God, remained within St. Mary for forty-seven years. Through her heroic asceticism and prayer this energy stayed constantly within her and brought about the deification of her soul and her body. It kept her in a state of intense spiritual inspiration. Her penitence, together with the action of the Holy Communion changed her *nous*, gave her great inspiration and energy, and imbued her with intense longing for God. This energy governed her entire being for forty-seven whole years. We see this from the fact that towards the end of her life she went to take Holy Communion walking on the water of the River Jordan. **She was already in a state of deification.**

In her case the words of St. John of the Ladder apply absolutely, when he says that he saw impure souls prone to carnal desires, who, having made their experience of sinful love a reason for repentance, *transferred the same love to the Lord; and, overcoming all fear, they drove themselves unsparingly towards the love of God*. Divine love transformed her existence, and again the words of St. John of the Ladder hold true: *Blessed is he who has obtained such love and longing for God as an enraptured lover has for his beloved*. He who truly loves *ever keeps before his mind’s eye the face of his beloved, and there embraces it tenderly*. Such a man can find no rest from his yearning even in sleep. In this state, the whole man is commingled in some way *with the love of God*.

When St. Mary of Egypt reached the end of her life, she was possessed by the desire that had been kindled by her profound experience after God’s revelation and Holy Communion. She was full of the energy and love of God, and when she partook again, a second time, of the Body of Christ, she was led into the uncreated Temple, the Kingdom of God, of which she had a foretaste in this life.

### 7. The Gift of a Blessed End

St. Mary of Egypt's entire way of life was the fruit of her communion with Christ, the true Life, and so it was a triumph over death. Her departure from this world was also worthy of her life. Completely out of sight, alone with Christ the Bridegroom, she surrendered her soul to Him for love of Whom she had followed such a hard path. The more someone loves, the more he endures and undergoes sacrifices and labours. All these things are the distinctive characteristics of love and intense longing for God.

Abba Zosimas obeyed the Saint's request that he visit her the following year in the place where he met her the first time, at the dried-up stream. When the Elder reached there, he saw *the Saint lying dead, with her hands placed as was fitting, and lying in such a way as to look towards the East*. While the Abba was wondering whether St. Mary would want her body to be buried, he found near her head a message inscribed by her in the earth. In it she asked Abba Zosimas to bury her body and told him that she had reached the end of her life the night before the saving Passion of Christ, after partaking of the divine and Mystical Supper. Then the Abba, *running to the feet of the Blessed One, washed them with his tears, not daring to touch any other part*.

These are all signs of a holy end. The Saint passed away after partaking of the Most Pure Mysteries in a state of deification. She had foreknowledge of her death, gave verbal and written instructions, arranged the position of her body so as to be facing east, crossed her hands, and remained in this state for a whole year, in an incorrupt form, because Abba Zosimas could recognise her and embrace her feet with tears.

At her burial, apart from Abba Zosimas, there was a lion, which stood next to her body and licked her feet. St. Sophronios writes that Abba Zosimas *saw a large lion standing by the body of the Saint, licking her feet*. At the command of Abba Zosimas, the lion dug a hole in the ground so that St. Mary could be buried. Then the Abba covered her body with earth, weeping and praying, *with the lion standing by*.

It was a burial full of contrition and silence. God's grace was in the dead body of St. Mary, the saintly monk Zosimas was in a state of deepest contrition, the lion watched silently and helped significantly with the burial, and the whole creation revered this event. The grace of God was transmitted through the *nous* of the Saint to her body, and from there it extended to irrational creation as well.

### 8. The Blessed Figure of Abba Zosimas

In the life of St. Mary of Egypt, Abba Zosimas plays an important role. He is described by the hymnographer as *the greatest of Fathers*. Of course the central figure is St. Mary, who by God's grace healed the whole of her previous life through her great love for God, and transformed her being. But the one who discovered her, to whom she revealed her life, who gave her Holy Communion, and who buried her, is also worthy of honour. **Saints are recognized by saints.**

On reading this life we are moved by the personality of Abba Zosimas. We can discern many qualities and spiritual gifts in him, such as his zeal and longing, his humility, sensitivity and tenderness. Only a saint can recognise a saint, and St. Mary revealed herself and her life only to this holy man.

St. Sophronios writes that Abba Zosimas had waged the monastic struggle from early childhood. *His way of life and his words were a credit to him*, and he had devoted himself to every kind of asceticism. He was *a spiritual Elder*, and many people used to ask him about spiritual matters. He lived a life of praxis but also of theoria, *continuously singing psalms and studying the sacred Scriptures*, and had often been found worthy of *divine visions*.

God revealed St. Mary of Egypt to him because he was being troubled by proud thoughts. First God prompted him to go to the monastery beside the Jordan, where he found monks living the hesychastic life in every respect. *He saw Elders radiant in praxis and theoria*, especially during Great Lent. Later God revealed St. Mary to him, and he was humbled to see how exalted her spiritual state was.

When the Abba saw St. Mary in the distance, without realizing exactly what he was seeing, *he was, as it were, inspired by delight and overjoyed at the incredible sight, and he started running in the direction towards which the person he saw was hastening*. Zosimas was running, she was avoiding the encounter, and *they were both running to the same place*. The Abba besought her with tears and cries to stop so that he could see exactly who it was.

At this first meeting *awe and ecstasy of mind took hold of Zosimas*. He knelt down and *asked for a blessing as was customary, but she too prostrated herself*. When he saw St. Mary praying lifted up above the ground, anguish seized him *and he said 'Lord have mercy' over and over again to himself as he lay on the ground*. Later *he flung himself down and tearfully grasped her feet*. As he listened to the account of how she repented, Zosimas *rushed to make a prostration*, but St. Mary would not let him. When St. Mary left, the Abba *knelt down and venerated the place where her feet had stood, and glorifying and thanking God*, he returned to the monastery.

The Abba spent the whole year until that next meeting in *hesychia*, enraptured by what he had seen, and *he entreated God within himself to show him that dear face again*. He was impatient at having to wait so long. Obviously Abba Zosimas was in an ecstatic state as he awaited his next meeting with the Saint.

After a year, when he went out to meet St. Mary and she was late in arriving, Abba Zosimas *did not take his eyes off the desert as he waited to see what he so desired to see*. As time passed the Elder *began to weep, then to sigh, and raising his eyes to heaven he entreated God not to deprive him of this meeting on account of his sins*. When he saw her walking on the water he was *terrified*. As the account tells us, *he was seized by astonishment at the extraordinary sight*.

When he had given her Holy Communion and she was preparing to depart, Abba Zosimas said to her with simplicity: *Would that it were possible to follow you and always see your venerable face.* She asked him to bless her, and the Abba touched the Saint's feet and asked her to pray for the Church, the empire and for himself. Then, sighing and lamenting, he let her depart.

He looked forward all the following year to seeing the Saint again, and hastened to reach *that extraordinary sight.* When he arrived at the appointed place and did not meet her, *he began to weep once more* and besought God to show him *Your* [i.e. God's] *inviolable treasure, the angel incarnate.* Having found her dead, he cried for a long time, then *he recited the psalms appropriate to the time and the occasion, and said the funeral prayers.* In the presence of the lion, as we have seen already, *the Elder again washed the Saint's feet with his tears, and earnestly entreating her now more than ever to pray for everyone, he covered her body with earth.*

All this clearly reveals the spiritual state of Abba Zosimas, because nobody can recognise a saint unless he too has God's grace. We also see his sensitivity and tenderness of spirit. Through this revelation God cured his proud thoughts and he was humbled before the superiority of St. Mary, the former harlot.

### 9. Overcoming the Division between the Sexes

As we read the life of St. Mary of Egypt, we see the spiritual relationship and communication between three persons: St. Mary, who had formerly been a dissolute woman but attained deification; Abba Zosimas, the saintly hieromonk; and Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem, who described St. Mary's life with such love. We also observe the spiritual encounter between Abba Zosimas and St. Mary. Thus we become aware of the spiritual phenomenon whereby gender is transcended through deification [*theosis*].

St. Mary of Egypt actually demonstrated an astonishing manliness in her ascetic life. She practiced asceticism beyond the limits not only of female nature, but of human nature in general, and became like an angel in human form. Carnal lusts were transformed by the intensity of longing for God and wholly dedicated to Him. Because she was living in a state of deification, although her body was naked she was not ashamed. She had attained to the condition of Eve in Paradise before the Fall.

Nevertheless, she was not bold when she met Abba Zosimas. Since the Abba wanted to see her face, she asked him to throw her a rag from his clothing, so that she could cover her natural frailty and thus receive his blessing. Her actual words to him were, *I am a woman and naked, as you see, and the shame of my body is uncovered. But if you really want to give a sinful woman your blessing, throw me the rag you are wearing, that I may use it to conceal my female frailty, and turn towards you to be blessed.*

Abba Zosimas immediately discerned God's grace dwelling within the Saint. Her face was radiant and she was lifted above

the ground while she was praying. He responded swiftly (lest he forfeit her blessing) to the Saint's request that he throw her at least a rag. Having taken off his ancient and torn garment, *he threw it to her, standing with his back towards her.* Once St. Mary had put on the garment and covered *those parts of her body that particularly needed to be covered,* she turned and spoke to him.

By the power of Christ, both of them had transcended the 'divisions' and were living as persons. Their experience reflected in some respects the life of Adam and Eve in Paradise, but, because they were still subject to corruption and mortality, they behaved soberly, modestly, and without boldness.

St. Maximos the Confessor speaks in his works about five divisions: between uncreated and created, between that which is perceived by the nous and that perceived by the senses, between heaven and earth, between Paradise and the inhabited world, and between male and female. Overcoming these divisions was possible for human nature, because it was related to the extremities of each division. It was linked to the earth by the body, to perceptible objects by the senses, to the spiritual world by the soul, and to the uncreated energy of God by the nous.

Man would gradually have made his way upwards, starting by overcoming the division between male and female. This would have come about through the dispassionate relationship between the two sexes. Subsequently, by means of a holy and virtuous life, he would have transcended the division between Paradise and the world. Through living like an angel he would have transcended the division between heaven and earth. By achieving equality with the angels in his manner of knowing he would have overcome the division between the world perceived by the senses and that perceived by the nous, and through love he would have been united with God and have overcome the division between created and uncreated nature.

In the power of Christ and by his own struggle to commune with God in the Person of Jesus Christ, man can now transcend these divisions. We can see this in the relationship between St. Mary of Egypt and Abba Zosimas. Both of them were in communion with Christ to differing degrees. Both were deified, and so had overcome the division between male and female, and they behaved as brother and sister in Christ. However, since they had not yet discarded the garments of skin—bodily corruption and mortality—and were afraid of being too bold, they behaved with mutual respect.

### 10. The Coexistence of Sacramental and Spiritual Priesthood

There is another interesting point to be stressed in the life of St. Mary of Egypt. Both St. Sophronios, as a holy Bishop, and Abba Zosimas, as a saintly hieromonk, greatly revered St. Mary, who had attained deification by grace and had become *a true sanctuary of divine grace.* The blessed sacramental priesthood respected the spiritual priesthood, and the spiritual

priesthood of St. Mary revered the sacramental priesthood of Abba Zosimas.

The sacramental priesthood is a ministry that serves the faithful who are in the created temple and offer their prayers through created worship, in order that they may one day enter the uncreated Temple and pray in uncreated worship. The spiritual priesthood, however, ministers in the uncreated Temple and prays through noetic and uncreated worship.

Both Abba Zosimas and St. Mary of Egypt were such priests of divine grace, as was also St. Sophronios of Jerusalem, who wrote this life in contrition of spirit. St. Mary had absolute reverence for the priesthood of Abba Zosimas and asked for his prayers, and Abba Zosimas knelt humbly before the Saint, venerated the place where she had been standing and sought her prayers.

The life of St. Mary of Egypt is amazing and full of extraordinary acts wrought by God's grace. The main thing this life shows is the twofold love of that blessed woman, St. Mary. There is her former impure love for men, and her hallowed, spiritual and divine love for God. It is the latter that is more significant. From her youth up she was completely given over to carnal desire, and afterwards she acquired intense love for God and devoted herself wholly to Him. She lived a quiet and hidden life, because great loves are secret and unutterable, since there are no words to express them. Anyone who loves God and is possessed by this *sharp and unbearable longing* for God is entirely given over to Him, because he does not want to share his heart among many loves.

The Church has chosen St. Mary of Egypt as a model of a life of inspired repentance, spiritual struggle and progress towards deification. In her, we see how someone can change from a sinner into a saint through participation in the purifying, illuminating and [glorifying] deifying energy of God. Her commemoration is celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> April each year, the day of her glorious repose. However, because of the importance of the life she led, the Church has also appointed that her feast be celebrated on the 5th Sunday of Great Lent, the last Sunday before Holy Week. In this way the Church wishes to demonstrate the measure and degree of our love for God and the manner of repentance.

Anyone who reads this life has a vivid sense of what happens at the end, after the burial of the blessed and hallowed body of St. Mary of Egypt. St. Sophronios writes: *Then both of them departed. The lion went back into the depths of the desert like a lamb. Zosimas returned, blessing and praising Christ our God.*

In accordance with these words, let us too either depart like sheep into the desert of hesychia and dispassion, casting off the ferocity of the passions; or else let us go back like Zosimas to the community of the brethren, blessing and praising God.

With the saintly hymnographer we proclaim:

*Thee we have as a pattern of repentance, all-holy Mary; pray to Christ that this gift may be conferred upon us: to praise thee in our hymns with faith and love.*

## CHRIST IS RISEN

*A Paschal Epistle By Metropolitan St. Philaret of New York (+1985).*

*It is the Day of Resurrection, let us be radiant O ye people; Pascha, the Lord's Pascha: for from death to life, and earth to heaven, Christ God hath brought us, as we chant the hymn of victory.*

† † †

Thus sings the Holy Church in the words of Saint John of Damascus during the festal days of Holy Pascha. The great and holy days of Passion Week, days in which the Church commemorated the saving work and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God, which He deigned to take upon Himself in His incarnation—for the sake of us men and of our salvation...

All the services of Passion Week, moving and deeply edifying, are devoted to this holy remembrance. In celebrating these services, the Church as it were, follows step by step Her Lord and Savior and prayerfully, sorrowfully, and gratefully hymns each step, each moment of His redemptive sufferings in corresponding prayers, liturgical ceremonies, and performance of the mysteries.

But Passion Week has ended! Once, in our Homeland, Archbishop Innocent of Kherson, one of the splendid preachers of which there were many in Russia, in his inspired sermon on the day of Great Friday, the day of the sufferings on the Cross and the death of Christ the Savior, exclaimed: *Again Golgotha and the Cross! Again the Tomb and the Winding-sheet.* But behold, we see that the Tomb is empty and the Winding-sheet no longer covers anyone. Christ is Risen—and taking the place of grief and sadness has come that joy that the Risen One Himself predicted to His disciples, *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* (Jn 16:22).

This joy is the joy in the Risen Lord. He rose from the grave as the victor over Hades and death—everything is flooded by the blinding light of His glorious Resurrection, and the joy about which He predicted to his disciples has now become the inheritance of all faithful children of His Church. Christ's Church renews this joy of the Resurrection every year in the joyful days of Pascha. And the faithful children of the Church hear her good tidings, rejoice and celebrate. But not in vain do we read in the Holy Gospel the words of the Savior, *Fear not, little flock.* (Lk 12:32).

In our time, a terrible time, a time of such a falling away from all principles of faith and morality that we see now, the number of true believers is truly a little flock compared with that majority of mankind that has in fact lost the true faith and trampled on all the principles of Christian morality.

Seeing what people, who have forgotten completely about Christian purity, modesty, and chastity, permit themselves,

and not only permit themselves, but even maintain that all the vileness and filth with which life is now filled is something legitimate, moral, and deserving of approval. Seeing this, the word of Sacred Scripture that tells how man has joined the dumb beasts and become like unto them comes involuntarily to mind. And not only has he become like them, he has even become worse than them, for beasts do not know those abominations of which the Apostle said *it is shameful even to speak*—but that are now done by the sons and daughters of man who have lost their shame and conscience...

But, *lest my mouth speak of human things*, let us turn to the joyous feast of the Resurrection. In the Gospel reading that we heard at the Divine Liturgy on the night of Pascha are the words, *And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not* (Jn 1:5),... the Divine light shone in the darkness and the darkness could not grasp or extinguish it.

In the same way, the light of Christ's Resurrection shines in the world and the darkness of human delusions can not darken or extinguish it.

The Lord Jesus Christ, speaking with the Apostles at the Mystical Supper, told them, *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:33). He was still only preparing for His *podvig* of redemptive and saving sufferings, but in His divine omniscience He saw this *podvig* as already having been accomplished and as Victor spoke of it to His disciples, to reassure them. And in His infinite mercy and goodness, He makes all those who believe in Him participants in this victory, which is why the Apostle says: *Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor 15:57). And in the sacred book of the Apocalypse, we read God's promise, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* (Rev 21:7).

Rejoice then, Christian. And **do not fall into despondency on seeing how evil is spreading in the world.** Of course, it is difficult for the Christian soul to see this spread of evil, filth, falsehood, and malice. Even in his time, our great righteous one, Saint John of Kronstadt, pointed out that one of the most difficult trials for a Christian is the triumph and spreading of evil and falsehood and the impossibility of stopping it. Yes, there are such periods in life. The Savior suggested this in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said to His enemies, who had come to seize Him, *this is your hour, and the power of darkness.* (Lk 22:53). And they took

Him. But their time passed, the power of darkness ended, the light of Christ's Resurrection shone forth, and life conquered death, Good conquered evil, and Truth conquered falsehood.

In the joyous days of Pascha, Russian believers often recall how the great God-pleaser and wonder-worker, Saint Seraphim of Sarov, in the course of the whole year, not just during the Paschal season, met all who came to him with the joyful greeting, *my joy, Christ is Risen!* The great ascetic, in his vast and laborious spiritual experience, recognized all the power and dominion of evil in the world. But he also recognized the triumphant power of the Joyous Resurrection of Christ, before which evil is powerless. And being always filled with the radiant, triumphant joy of Pascha, he shared it with those who came to him with their afflictions and sorrows, transfusing, as it were, this joy into their dejected and grieving souls.



How beautiful our Orthodox Faith is! With what a bright, unfading light it illuminates our lives, filled with sin and vanity! But all its power and light are in the Resurrection of Christ. If Christ the Savior had not risen but had remained in the tomb, life would have turned into a terrible, evil, and unbearable nightmare. But Christ's resurrection did take place, and the Church summons all its faithful children to rejoice and to

celebrate Christ's Resurrection. For in it we *celebrate the slaying of death, the destruction of Hades, and the beginning of a new, eternal life.*

Christ is Risen!

Metropolitan Philaret, Pascha 1982



**O** death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?  
Christ is risen, and you are overthrown!

Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!

Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!

Christ is risen, and life reigns!

Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in a tomb!

For Christ, being raised from the dead, has become the First-fruits of them that slept.

St. John Chrysostom  
Paschal Homily

## HUMILITY & PATIENT ENDURANCE

By St. Theodore the Studite, given on the Wednesday of Holy Week, from Catechesis 72: On the Saving Passion; and Teaching on Humility and Patient Endurance. These Catecheses were given when St. Theodore and his monks were in exile from Constantinople in the reign of Michael II (820-829).



**B**rethren and Fathers, the present day is holy and to be venerated, for from this day the Lord begins to take on himself the sufferings of the Cross for

our sake, in accordance with David's words: *Why did the nations rage and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth rose up and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against his Christ.* [Pss 2:1-2]. They assembled together to plot an evil plan against the Master.

The deceitful Judas denied him utterly and betrays the teacher with a deceitful kiss. The Lord of all things is led away prisoner, stands before the judgement seat, is interrogated and answers; and when He answers—O fearful report!—He is struck by a slave and bears it with long-suffering, saying: *If I have spoken evil, give testimony to the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?* [Jn 18:23]. Then He is scoffed at, mocked, jeered at, ridiculed, spat at, buffeted, scourged. He ascends the Cross, and when He has ascended He prays for His murderers: *Father, forgive them their sin, for they do not know what they do.* [Lk 23:33]. Then He is given gall with vinegar to drink, He is pierced by a lance, the Immortal is put to death.

These in brief are the Master's sufferings, and one who hears them with understanding is not angry, or embittered, or enraged, or puffed up, or arrogant towards his brother; is not envious, or filled with vainglory. Rather he is humbled, crushed, considers himself to be earth and ashes, desires communion in Christ's sufferings, is eager to be conformed to His death, so that he may have a part in the glory of His resurrection.

But you too take courage, because you have shared and are sharing in the Master's sufferings. For you see where you are. Is it not for the sake of His word and His testimony that you are in exile and persecution? Have you not previously experienced prison? Have you not shed your blood under tortures? Have not some of our brothers died a martyr's death? Such then is our boast in the Lord, such our gift. But since until the end beatitude is not assured because of the ease of reversal and the impossibility of knowing what the morrow will bring to birth, stand your ground unflinching and unmoving in the Lord *striving side by side with one spirit and one soul for the faith of the Gospel, in no*

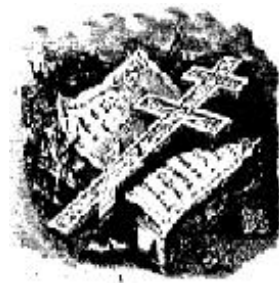
*way intimidated by your opponents* [Phil 1:27-6], *not giving offence in anything, but in everything recommending ourselves as God's ministers* [2 Cor 6:3-4], by obedience, humility, meekness, long-suffering, great endurance.

*For you need endurance in order to do God's will and obtain the promise. For in a little while He who is coming will come and not delay.* [Heb 10:36-37]. But if He will come and not delay, why do we hate being in afflictions and do not rather choose to die each day for the Master? For it is written: *If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we disown Him, He will also disown us; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful; He cannot disown Himself.* [1 Tim 2:11-13].

How great joy the saints will have when they see the Lord coming from heaven with the angels of His power [2 Thess 1:7], inviting them with inexpressible joy, crowning them and becoming their companion for ever and ever? What anguish will they have who have disobeyed the Gospel and transgressed His commandments? *They will suffer the penalty, as it is written, of eternal destruction, cut off from His presence and from the glory of His strength, when He comes to be glorified in His saints and marvelled at among all who have believed.* [2 Thess 1:9-10].

And so, brethren, as we contemplate and think on these things, again and again *let us purify ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God* [2 Cor 7:1], zealous for what is better, striving for what is more perfect, *hating what is evil, holding fast to what is good, loving one another with brotherly affection, outdoing one another in showing honour, not lagging in zeal, being ardent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in affliction, persevering in prayer* [Rom. 12:9-12], that by such sincerity we may worthily celebrate the imminent Pascha, and be counted worthy to enjoy the eternal blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and might with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages.

Amen.



**F**or where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [Lk 12:34]. In order for one to acquire love for spiritual and heavenly objects, one must reject love for earthly things. In order to fall in love with the promised land, one must reject one's diseased fondness for the land of exile.

St. Ignatii Brianchaninov

## A SHAMEFUL RECOGNITION BY THE GOA ARCHONS

*It is with great sadness that we bring to light a shameful event in the life of a very visible Orthodox group in America, the "Archons of the Order of Saint Andrew," via the written words of a conscientious Orthodox priest.*

On Tuesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, the day, 46 years ago, when the SCOTUS legalized abortion, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Reproductive Health Act<sup>(\*)</sup> into law, and then celebrated by lighting the World Trade Center's spire and three bridges in Albany in pink. (Did the Governor choose that day, on purpose, to confirm his apparent hatred of the pre-born baby?)

Governor Cuomo is well known for his outspoken, tenacious and pro-active advocacy in support of the pro-death philosophy (erroneously called, pro-choice, since the "choice" involves killing the pre-born child). Apparently, he would rather not have any pro-life people living in the State. On July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Governor Cuomo referred to all pro-life citizens as: "extreme conservatives who are right-to-life ... they have no place in the state of New York."

New York currently has an abortion rate double that of the National average. And with this new diabolical regulation in place, that number will definitely increase. For it guarantees that a pre-born child can be killed right up to its day of birth, and several other anti-human life provisions (Please go to this Website for more details: <https://www.liveaction.org/news/new-york-nixes-protections-preborn/?fbclid=IwAR3SYwGc1p2HqAXIWHnaScgN9Z90JgidwFTNWHzOKU8V9IFhPEmCnhsbXBs>). In addition, what impact will this ungodly law have upon the African-American population in New York City, where—at the present time—over three fourths of the babies aborted (78%) are of that race; and more African-Americans are being aborted than are being born?

I must share with you something else regarding Governor Cuomo that causes my heart great sadness. On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017, with much pomp and ceremony, Governor Cuomo was given the Athenagoras Human Right's Award at the annual Archon Banquet, in the presence of several Greek Orthodox Hierarchs and at least one OCA Hierarch.<sup>(\*\*)</sup> On January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017, **nine months before he received that award**, Governor Cuomo proposed to engrain, within the New York Constitution, a woman's "right" to choose abortion without restrictions (something that is now a reality through the impious document that he signed on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019), and here is what he said back then: "We have fought very hard for the progress we have made. Great organizations like Planned Parenthood [which performs more abortions than any other abortion provider in the USA] have brought us forward step by step, and we are not going backwards." I pray that someone in

authority will—as a loving father—admonish the Archons for choosing such a person to whom their "human rights" award is given, as well as make the Governor return the award, so that it can be given to someone worthy of it.

Ex-Vice President Joe Biden, who was given that award on October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, should also be asked to return it. While a member of the U.S. Senate, Mr. Biden always voted against the right to life of the child in the womb. And with both his words and actions during his eight years as Vice President, he continued his radical support of the blasphemous "freedom of choice" philosophy. How can these two men, who—without embarrassment or shame, aggressively defend the infanticide of the innocent child in the womb—be given a human rights award, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ?

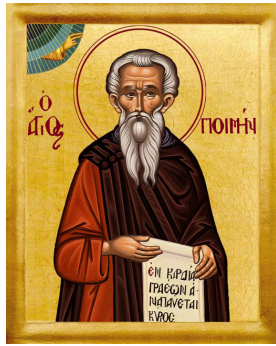
What has happened to us? Do we not realize that for every child that is aborted, as many as 6-10 souls involved—in some way—with that shedding of innocent blood are in danger of losing their souls, if they do not sincerely repent and confess this terrible sin before they depart this temporal life? When shall we stop ignoring the silent screams of God's innocent ones, whose lives are being snuffed out every 34 seconds? How much longer will we continue to *strain out the gnat, but swallow the camel* (Mt 23:24)? Where are the clergy, steeped in the Patristic *fronema* of our Holy Faith, to lead us away from this politically correct, secular humanistic, hedonistic and non-Orthodox approach to life—to help us to return, with heart-originating tears, to our Most Sweet Lord Jesus, Who is calling each one of us - at this very moment - to *repent, for the Kingdom of the heavens hath drawn near* [Mt 4:17]? Why do we seem to love fulfilling our desires and being held in high regards by people in power (even when they actively support positions that are opposite those of our Church), more than we love to stand up for God's Truth and struggle to be in communion with Christ?

† † †

<sup>(\*)</sup>: The "New York Reproductive Health Act" declares abortion a 'fundamental right' in New York State, prohibiting even basic and widely supported protections, such as parental consent and limits on government funding of abortion. The law allows any "health care practitioner" to perform an abortion, enshrines late-term abortion in New York State law, jeopardizes any agency that does not refer for abortion and seriously threatens conscience protections for hospitals and medical professionals. It is noteworthy that the act also allows medical professionals who are not doctors to perform abortions and has repealed criminal charges for harming unborn children. Prior to the act's passage, abortion was illegal after 24 weeks of pregnancy, with very limited exceptions.

<sup>(\*\*)</sup>: While the GOA Archons have issued a short statement on their website condemning the act, there has been zero retraction of the award for either Governor Cuomo nor any other pro-death politicians who have received it.

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TUCSON, AZ  
PERMIT NO 690

A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION  
[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## HOLY GREAT LENT IS UPON US

By St. John of Shanghai.



The doors of repentance are opening, Great Lent is beginning. Every year Great Lent is repeated, and each time it brings us great benefit if we spend it as we should. It is a preparation for the life to come and, more immediately, a preparation for the Bright Resurrection.

Just as a stairway is built into a tall building in order to enable one, by climbing the steps, to easily reach the top, so too, the various days in the year serve as steps for our spiritual ascent.

This is especially true of the days of Great Lent and Holy Pascha.

By means of Great Lent, we cleanse ourselves of the filth of sin, and at Holy Pascha we experience the blessedness of Christ's Kingdom that is to come. In climbing a high mountain, one tries to eliminate all unnecessary weight. The less a person carries, the easier it is for him to climb and the higher he is able to climb. So, too, in order to ascend spiritually, it is necessary first of all to free oneself from the weight of sin. This weight is lifted from us through repentance, provided that we banish from ourselves all enmity and forgive each person whom we consider to be at fault before us. Once cleansed and forgiven by God, we then greet the Bright Resurrection of Christ.

And what a priceless gift of God we receive, at the culmination of our lenten struggle. We already hear about this in the

first hymns of the daily lenten *stichera*: *Our food shall be the Lamb of God, on the holy and radiant night of His Awakening: the Victim offered for us, given in communion to the disciples on the evening of the Mystery.* (*Aposticha sticheron*, Sunday of the Last Judgment).

Communing of the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, unto life eternal—this is the aim of the holy Quadragesima [Forty Days]. Not only on Pascha do we commune, but during Lent also. On Pascha those people should commune who have fasted, confessed and received the Holy Mysteries during Great Lent. Just before Pascha itself there is little opportunity for a proper and thorough confession; the priests are very busy and most of the time occupied with the Passion services. Rather one must prepare ahead of time.

Each time one receives the Mysteries of Christ, one is united with Christ Himself; each time it is a soul-saving act. Why, then, is such significance attached to receiving Holy Communion on the night of Holy Pascha, and why are we all called to do so?

Then, especially, we are given to experience the Kingdom of Christ. Then, especially, we are illumined with the Eternal Light and strengthened for the spiritual ascent.

This is an irreplaceable gift of Christ, an incomparable good. Let no one deprive himself of this joy and, instead of receiving Holy Communion on Pascha night, hasten to eat meat and other foods. Communing of the Holy Mysteries on that night prepares us for the banquet in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Amen.



# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

VOL. 17, ISSUE 05-06

MAY-JUNE 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- The Effects of Ecumenism and Modernism (p. 4)
- Will the Heterodox Be Saved? (p. 6)
- On Idle Talk, Gossip (p. 8)
- On Slander (p. 10)
- Forgiving Others (p. 11)
- The Unbroken Continuity of the Roman Empire (p. 21)
- Patriarch Bartholomew is a Threat for the Orthodox East (p. 25)
- Are We Preaching the Saving Truth? (p. 26)
- Orthodox Family (p. 28)
- Children's Confession (p. 30)



- Ἡ Νοερὰ Προσευχὴ (σελ. 13)
- Ὁ Ἐναγκαλισμὸς τῶν Ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου (σελ. 15)
- Οἰκουμενισμὸς καὶ ἡ Θεότης τοῦ Χριστοῦ (σελ. 16)
- Ἐπὶ Συμπροσεχῶν (σελ. 17)
- «Τὸ Ἔθνος δὲ Στέκη»... (σελ. 19)



Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## ON THE ANTICHRIST AND CHRISMATION

By Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos and Agios Vlasios, from "Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβασις" Nafpaktos, no. 122 (June 2006), pp. 1 and 8; "Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος," no. 1654 (4 August 2006), pp. 3 and 4.

*Hence, the shepherds of the Church must not speak only about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but first and foremost they must help Christians to live in such a way that the Grace of Baptism and Chrismation is activated, by the keeping of Christ's commandments and doctrines, by experiencing these in one's life in an Orthodox manner, by repentance, and by inner noetic prayer of the heart; for in this way they will be able to distinguish between the energies of Christ and the energies of the Antichrist.*

[Metr. Hierotheos Vlachos]

† † †

From time to time, we hear talk about the coming of the Antichrist and what he will bring about among people and in the world. Indeed, there are those who would even determine the specific time period in which he would appear. Many people ask us about this subject, but the answers are to be found in Holy Scriptures, and especially in the Epistles of St. John the Evangelist, the Apostle Paul, and the Revelation of St. John, and in all of the pastoral practice of the Church.

In what follows, I would simply like to make some suggestions, primarily on how one is to deal with this situation.

† † †

1. In his First Catholic Epistle, St. John the Evangelist speaks about the coming of the Antichrist, and also about the activity of antichrists; indeed, he writes to the Christians that the hour is at hand.

In particular, he writes: *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that the antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* (1 Jn 2:18).

According to the interpretation of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, who uses texts by ecclesiastical writers, apart from the Antichrist, who will appear towards the end of the world and near the Second Coming of Christ, there are also many antichrists who are already implementing the work of the Antichrist, both in his age and in every age, and who are forerunners and heralds of the one who is intrinsically, primarily, and truly called the Antichrist.

Just as there were prophets before the coming of Christ, so also, before the coming of the Antichrist, his own forerunners, the false prophets, will appear. Thus, according to the interpretation of many, antichrists are called *the impious heresiarchs*, who uphold and defend *the profane doctrines of the Antichrist*.

This is the reason why St. John the Evangelist, in the following verse, writes: *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 might be made manifest that they were not all of us* (1 Jn 2:19). These were those Christians who had learned revealed truth and the angelic way of life, but, since they were enslaved to sensual pleasures, were unable to comprehend *the majesty of the heavenly good things, the beauty of the noetic world, and the bliss and truly ineffable joy of the ages to come*, according to St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite. They therefore returned to the life of apostasy, and did not desire to become true devotees of the pure life in Christ.

Consequently, before the coming of the Antichrist, the forerunners of the Antichrist manifest themselves: that is,

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the "Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen," a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to "Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen." PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, "poimen@mail.com." Please visit our website for the applicable links.

the various heretics, but also those Christians who, instead of living the life in Christ with purity of heart and true faith of mind, live with passions and weaknesses, without inner prayer or true faith in God.

2. St. John the Evangelist, however, does not confine himself to speaking about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but also speaks about how we must deal with the Antichrist and his forerunners. This is why, immediately following the previous lines, he writes: *But ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* (1 Jn 2:20). In other words, Christians have received *anointing* from God and know how to distinguish between the energies of the Antichrist and antichrists and the energies of Christ. This does not come about by the reading of books, but by the *anointing* that exists in the heart and that teaches.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, once again explaining what this *anointing* is, writes: *that is, you have received the Grace and energy of the Holy Spirit in your hearts from the Master Christ, the Holy of Holies.* And further on, referring to how one receives the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit, he writes: *Christians receive the Grace and energy of the Holy Spirit through Holy Baptism, and indeed through the anointing of the Holy Myrrh, and perhaps this is why the Grace of the Holy Spirit is called anointing and sealing, having the same name as the anointing and sealing of the Holy Myrrh; wherefore when the priest anoints Christians with it, he concludes with these words: "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

The *anointing* of the Holy Spirit is the seal of the Holy Spirit that takes place during the Mystery of Chrismation through the Holy Myrrh, on the day of our baptism.

In what follows, in the same chapter, St. John the Evangelist once again states that the holy *anointing* received by the

Christian at Holy Baptism teaches him to distinguish between truth and falsehood. He writes: *But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.* (1 Jn 2:27).

According to the interpretation of St. Nikodemos, who uses texts by the Fathers and writers of the Church, the *anointing* that man has received is the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which abides in the hearts of Christians, and according to the words of St. John the Evangelist, Christians are exhorted *to abide unchanging and unalterable forever in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love and faith.* And, as is his wont, St. Nikodemos writes: *how and in what manner does man remain unchanging with regard to the gift of the Holy Spirit? This happens when man abides steadfastly in the doctrines of Theology and of the Incarnate Economy, not just rationally, but also existentially.*

**Thus**, whoever speaks about the Antichrist and his forerunners should make reference to all of the passages in St. John the Evangelist, and should specify primarily what St. John says about the manner in which we must confront the Antichrist and his forerunners. Christians distinguish true prophets from false prophets and Christ from the Antichrist only by the activation of Chrismation, which they have received from God and which works in their hearts.

3. The Apostle Paul, also, speaks about the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit, which is also called a seal. To be precise, in his [Second] Epistle to the Corinthians, he writes: *Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.* (2 Cor 1:21-22).

It is most clearly apparent, here, that God is the One Who gives confirmation to Christians. He is the One that anoints us. Anointing is identified with sealing, and this is done by God, Who gives us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

If one examines other similar passages from the Apostle Paul to discover the meaning of the earnest of the Spirit and what it means for one to sing hymns and spiritual songs in his heart, then he will understand that this *anointing* and seal is noetic prayer of the heart, which is an expression of the love that man feels for God.

The Name of Christ has been written on the person that has received the seal of the Holy Spirit. St. John the Evangelist mentions this subject in his Revelation. *And I saw another Angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four Angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'* And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (Rev 7:2-4).

It is unambiguous, here, that the Angel who had *the seal of the living God* sealed the servants of God on their foreheads. A similar passage is found in another chapter of Revelation: *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.* (Rev 14:1). In other words, the saved, who stood with the Lamb—Christ—had the Name of Christ and His Father written on their foreheads. And as the text then says, they sang a *new song* before the throne of God, the content of which they alone knew.

**Thus**, the sealing of Christians with the Name of Christ and His Father is bound up with the *new song*; that is, noetic prayer, which is unknown to people who have no experience of this condition.

4. All of this means that, with the Mystery of Holy Chrismation, which is bound up with the Mystery of Holy Baptism, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, through the sealing of the parts of our body, when the Priest said: *the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

This *anointing* in the heart acts as illumination of the mind: as inspiration, as love for God, as prayer, as hope in eternal life, and as the earnest of the Spirit.

The confession of the Martyrs and the martyrdom that follows is the activation of Holy Chrismation, by means of which the Martyr beholds God; this is why the martyrdom of the Saints is not a simple matter of a rational process, sentimental excitement, or an impetuous action, but it is the fruit of the *vision of God and deification.*

When we commit some sin, however, then the *anointing* in the depths of our hearts is activated through repentance. In other words, repentance that is expressed as an inclination

to change one's life, as love for God, and as prayer, is the activation of the Grace of Holy Chrismation. This *anointing*, moreover, is activated by *noetic prayer of the heart*, which is the *new song* that is sung by those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

When a person, however, denies Christ, departs from the Orthodox Church, and adopts heretical confessions and religions, he then loses this gift. And when he returns to the Orthodox Church, he must once again receive the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit through the Mystery of Chrismation.

**Hence**, the shepherds of the Church must not speak only about the Antichrist and his forerunners, but first and foremost they must help Christians to live in such a way that the Grace of Baptism and Chrismation is activated, by the keeping of Christ's commandments and doctrines, by experiencing these in one's life in an orthodox manner, by repentance, and by inner *noetic prayer of the heart*, for in this way they will be able to distinguish between the energies of Christ and the energies of the Antichrist.

Otherwise, they will confuse uncreated with created energies and, what is worse, they will regard the energies of the Antichrist as the energies of Christ, and vice versa.

This discretion constitutes orthodox pastoral care. And its essence is what is called the Hesychastic Tradition.



All of those who are vouchsafed in the *anointing* of their hearts by the Holy Spirit—that is, the writing of the Name of the Lamb of the Revelation and of His Father in their hearts—will escape from being sealed by the Beast of the Apocalypse and his father, just as they will escape his forerunners. This is the essence of Orthodox pastoral care, which is bound up with the Hesychastic Tradition of the Church. **This is why the preservation of Orthodox monasticism is of great importance.** Every alteration to the Hesychastic spirit of Orthodox monasticism helps the forerunners of the Antichrist to do their job well and deceive the people.



**Y**ou don't excuse others but you excuse yourself? Then, tomorrow Christ will not excuse you. Your heart can become hard as a rock in an instant if you are not careful, and it can equally quickly become tender. You must acquire a maternal heart. You see, a mother will forgive all things, and sometimes will pretend not to see certain mischief. Be patient with others and excuse them; tolerate others so that Christ will tolerate you.

St. Paisios of Holy Mountain

## THE SUBTLE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ECUMENISM AND MODERNISM ON ORTHODOX WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL PIETY

*By Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, hierarch of the Orthodox Church of Greece, Holy Synod in Resistance.*

I constantly emphasize to people that we are not, like some hapless religious bigots—and they unfortunately exist—opposed to ecumenism because we believe or—God forbid—hope that all of those outside Orthodoxy are going to be lost and condemned; rather, we stand in opposition to anything that, drawing on the dangerous spirit of religious and confessional relativism, impugns our conviction that the Orthodox Church contains and continues the fullness of the Church which, in the words of St. Athanasios the Great, *the Lord delivered, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers preserved*. It being our duty to pass on that which we know to be capable of transforming man and the world, we protect our Faith not solely or primarily for ourselves, but, in the Evangelical spirit of love, for our fellow men and women.

If ecumenism has rendered Orthodoxy just one among many religions and bereft of claims to the powers of spiritual and historical primacy—and dubbed us Orthodox traditionalists, according to the standards of “ecumenical love,” ignorant troglodytes—the Orthodox ecumenists bear much of the responsibility for what this has done to the integrity of Orthodoxy and for the distortion of its witness in the contemporary ecumenical world. In this same way, each of us Orthodox today also bears no small responsibility for overlooking, much to our shame, the effects of religious syncretism (and our own laxity in practice) on Orthodox worship and liturgical piety. Here, too, we have thus compromised our witness to the world.

When Russia was converted to Orthodox Christianity, according to pious accounts, it was because Prince Vladimir’s representatives, who had gone throughout the world looking for a religion for his people, returned to the Prince and told him that they had, in the Great Church of St. Sophia, in Constantinople, experienced the beauty of a form of worship so lofty and exalted that they did not know whether they were in Heaven or on earth. Whatever the historical accuracy of this story, it captures perfectly the power of Orthodox worship and liturgical piety to effect contrition and true belief in those who avail themselves of its sacred dimensions. In our worship of God, we Orthodox bring Heaven and earth into communion; we enter into communion with God and bring the soul into intimate contact with its Creator.

How do we do this? First, we worship in an ascetic spirit: we stand while we worship, offering God our minds and bodies in prayer. We fast before Liturgy. We separate ourselves

from the world, to whatever extent possible, in preparation for entering into the ethereal House of God, clad in the best of clothes, with the best of intentions, setting aside enmity with our enemies, and ready to stand spiritually clean before God through the Mystery of confession. The Church, in turn, is adorned in an other-worldly fashion, containing nothing of the daily world and reflecting—even in its iconographic style—another realm: a sacred world transformed and imbued with a new fragrance, a new language, and a new vision, as represented by the incense which we offer up to God, by the exalted poetry of the services, and by the subtle light and uplifting atmosphere of the sacred space which is the Church itself. And in this place, an eschatological New World present in some way even in this fallen domain, we come into direct communion with Christ, taking into ourselves—through the Mystery of the Eucharist, which is the central focus, aim, and purpose of our liturgical worship—His very Body and Blood and being united by Grace with Him, becoming “small Jesus Christs” within Jesus Christ and sons of God by adoption.

The power of the worship and liturgical piety of Orthodoxy, which has drawn even the most aggressive atheist to belief in God by way of a true encounter with Him in the Divine Liturgy, is one of the key Evangelical tools of the Orthodox Church. Yet, while we Orthodox anti-ecumenists may defend our Faith against the theological and ideological assaults of ecumenism and religious syncretism, we have been far too negligent—and *often sinfully and willfully so*, as I said above—in preserving the purity and integrity of this wondrous gift of our liturgical (in essence, our *Eucharistic*) traditions.

I remember my grandfather’s explanation of how the abuse of pews first entered into the Orthodox Church. He traced this generally to European influence and the desire of Orthodox to imitate what they considered the more “civilized” practices of the Latins and Protestants. However, the personal motivations behind this innovation he attributed to pride, since many Orthodox (especially in America) were insulted when non-Orthodox asked them if they were unable to afford pews; to spiritual laxity, since, after the calendar reform and the emergence of modernist ideas, lukewarm believers came to resent the ascetic aspects of worship—which were always a part of the Orthodox ethos and even Orthodox theology, as Father Georges Florovsky observes; and ecumenism, since, as Orthodox began to look at their Church as something “between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism,” rather than a thing in and of itself, they came to believe that Orthodoxy could incorporate into its worship the “comforts” of heterodoxy (as they had the “convenience” of the New Calendar) without negative effects.

My grandfather’s trenchant observations, precisely on the mark, had prophetic dimensions. Now, eight decades after he first saw a decline in the integrity of Orthodox worship and liturgical piety in the Church, and only a little more

than forty years after he spoke to me about these trends, we see a complete distortion of Orthodox worship. Even if one goes to historical Churches in Greece, while they may have Byzantine Icons of a traditional kind, they are often filled with pews (or with fancy carved chairs arranged as pews), completely spoiling the open space of the Church, which represents the worshipping world. Prostrations and similar signs of humble piety are fast disappearing, if simply because they are made impossible by these impediments. In this country, accustomed as they are to sitting at all times in Church, the faithful actually balk and protest at any attempt to encourage them to worship standing, as Orthodox tradition dictates. As a result, they sit, as though in a theatre, watching the “performance” of what they think is a “ritual” disconnected from them, separated, as they are, from participation in the *leitourgia* (literally “the work”) of the people of God.

In the past, Orthodox Churches had benches or choir stalls (*stasidia*) around the perimeter of the sacred space of the Church, so that the old and infirm could sit and where, during long services, those who were standing could rest for a few minutes, before standing again. Today, even in some so-called Old Calendar Churches (i.e., traditionalist Orthodox communities) in this country, naves and narthexes are crowded with pews or rows of ugly chairs, and all sorts of “comfortable” devices are not uncommon. Convenience and comfort have produced churches modelled on the halls and gathering places of the heterodox, if not the meeting places of secular clubs. Bright lights—rather than natural light, subtle oil lamps, and candles—distract the senses; worldly, quotidian artifacts clutter the Church; and familiar and profane adornments and even art (as though Byzantine iconography were just a style to be featured among many other kinds of artistic expression) are scattered about the place where one once encountered God in mystery.

Altar rails, Latin-style votive lights, and other non-Orthodox religious trappings of every kind can be found today in many Orthodox Churches—and, as I have observed, even in Old Calendarist Churches. The theatre has set the standard for our Churches. Chanting, rather than humbly offered as a melodious tribute to God, is frequently theatrical, dramatic, and operatic. In the few instances that the worshippers rise from their chairs, the thought of a bow or a prostration (which is, again, impossible to execute) is the last thing in the minds of any worshipper. If the believers are well-dressed, it is rarely with the thought in mind of meeting, in the Church, the Divine Master and the King of Kings; if anything, it is to impress others with one’s expensive clothes or one’s supposed taste.

The consequences of all of this are devastating. Once the faithful have lost a sense of asceticism in worship, they expect the Church to cater to their needs. One no longer

sees an old and lame worshipper apologizing—unnecessarily—for his or her inability to stand through a service; rather, even healthy believers *expect* the Church to serve their needs and look to their comfort. Such an attitude impedes communion with God, which has already become difficult in an ecclesiastical atmosphere which has lost its ability to foster contrition, silence, and mystery, and which has, once more, become more like the theatre. Moreover, it subtly creates, by way of the influence of forms of worship foreign to Orthodoxy, a disrespect for the other ascetic elements of our Faith: fasting, self-sacrifice, self-abasement, and long-suffering patience.

And what is the final outcome of this deterioration in the traditional worship and liturgical piety of the Church? Ironically enough, it leads to the very thing that—though it may be opposed in theory and word—has been allowed to impact so negatively the inner life, the worship, of the Church; that is, it leads to ecumenism itself. The subtle effects of ecumenism and a spirit of modernism on the worship and liturgical piety of the Church, eating away at the heart of the Eucharistic and ascetic traditions of the Church, ultimately affect, not just the faith of the Orthodox ecumenists, but that of the un-careful anti-ecumenists. Thus it is that, denying to their children the unique experience of Orthodoxy, which so overwhelmed St. Vladimir’s emissaries in Constantinople, and the spiritual fruit that Orthodoxy produces when cultivated in the refined soil of traditional piety, here in the West our Old Calendar Churches have fewer and fewer young people. As the youth see a faith that proclaims itself unique, yet which draws on the ethos and thinking of the ecumenists, with their “comfortable” pews and salvation without ascetic sacrifice, they reject traditional Orthodoxy as “*just another religion.*”

As well, when Orthodox traditionalism succumbs to preaching in word and not in action, it becomes ecumenical in a way that most people do not understand. Bereft of practice and an external manifestation of its beauty and power, Orthodox resistance—and *especially* when it is preached with the fanatic fervor of those unwise in spirit—loses its quality of love. If Orthodox worship draws others by its externals, it is only because these externals are formed by, and endowed and redolent with, love. For true spiritual beauty cannot be separated from the Evangelical love that streams forth from our worship, which is based upon, drawn from, and fully revealed in the love of Christ which the Sacrifice of the Eucharist truly is. When we compromise that witness, then we become, whatever our confession, and no matter how loud or bombastic our pronouncements against religious syncretism, the essence of what ecumenists are: We are one with those who preach a false love.

Our anti-ecumenical efforts, therefore, have only just begun. They must continue, as well, in the restoration of the right worship central to right belief and True Faith.

## WILL THE HETERODOX BE SAVED?

By Saint Philaret, Metropolitan of New York, the New Confessor (+1985), from "Orthodox Life," Volume 34, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1984), pp. 33-36.



**Question:** If the Orthodox faith is the only true faith, can Christians of other confessions be saved? May a person who has led a perfectly righteous life on earth be saved on the strength of his ancestry, while not being baptized as Christian?

**Answer:** *For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that*

*runneth [struggleth], but of God that showeth mercy.* (Rom 9:15-16). In the Orthodox Church we have the path of salvation indicated to us and we are given the means by which a person maybe morally purified and have a direct promise of salvation. In this sense St. Cyprian of Carthage says that *outside the Church there is no salvation.*

In the Church is given that of which Apostle Peter writes to Christians (and only Christians): *According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (2 Pet 1:3-8).

And what should one say of those outside the Church, who do not belong to her? Another apostle provides us with an idea: *For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth.* (1 Cor 5:12-13). *God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.* (Rom 9:18). It is necessary to mention only one thing: that to *lead a perfectly righteous life*, as the questioner expressed it, means to live according to the commandments of the Beatitudes—which is beyond

the power of one, outside the Orthodox Church, without the help of grace which is concealed within it.

The question: Can the heterodox, i.e., those who do not belong to Orthodoxy—the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church—be saved, has become particularly painful and acute in our days.

In attempting to answer this question, it is necessary, first of all, to recall that in His Gospel the Lord Jesus Christ Himself mentions but one state of the human soul which unfailingly leads to perdition—i.e., *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.* (Mt 12:1-32). The Holy Spirit is, above all, the Spirit of Truth, as the Savior loved to refer to Him. Accordingly, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy against the Truth, conscious and persistent opposition to it. The same text makes it clear that even blasphemy against the Son of Man—i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God Himself may be forgiven, as it may be uttered in error or in ignorance and, subsequently may be covered by conversion and repentance (an example of such a converted and repentant blasphemer is the Apostle Paul. (See Acts 26:11 and I Tim 1:13.) If, however, a man opposes the Truth which he clearly apprehends by his reason and conscience, he becomes blind and commits spiritual suicide, for he thereby likens himself to the devil, who believes in God and dreads Him, yet hates, blasphemers, and opposes Him.

Thus, man's refusal to accept the Divine Truth and his opposition thereto makes him a son of damnation. Accordingly, in sending His disciples to preach, the Lord told them: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.* (Mk 16:16), for the latter heard the Lord's Truth and was called upon to accept it, yet refused, thereby inheriting the damnation of those who *believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* (2 Thes 2:12).

The Holy Orthodox Church is the repository of the divinely revealed Truth in all its fullness and fidelity to apostolic Tradition. Hence, he who leaves the Church, who intentionally and consciously falls away from it, joins the ranks of its opponents and becomes a renegade as regards apostolic Tradition. The Church dreadfully anathematized such renegades, in accordance with the words of the Savior Himself (Mt 18:17) and of the Apostle Paul (Gal 1:8-9), threatening them with eternal damnation and calling them to return to the Orthodox fold. It is self-evident, however, that sincere Christians who are Roman Catholics, or Lutherans, or members, of other non-Orthodox confessions, cannot be termed renegades or intentional heretics—i.e. those who knowingly pervert the truth...\* They have been born and raised and are living according to the creed which they have inherited, just as do the majority of you who are Orthodox; in their lives there has not been a moment of

personal and conscious renunciation of Orthodoxy. The Lord, *Who will have all men to be saved* (I Tim. 2:4) and *Who enlightens every man born into the world* (Jn 1.43), undoubtedly is leading them also towards salvation in His own way.

With reference to the above question, it is particularly instructive to recall the answer once given to an inquirer by the Blessed Theophan the Recluse. The blessed one replied more or less thus: “You ask, will the heterodox be saved... Why do you worry about them? They have a Saviour Who desires the salvation of every human being. He will take care of them. You and I should not be burdened with such a concern. Study yourself and your own sins... I will tell you one thing, however: should you, being Orthodox and possessing the Truth in its fullness, betray Orthodoxy, and enter a different faith, you will lose your soul forever.”

We believe the foregoing answer by the saintly ascetic to be the best that can be given in this matter.

† † †

\* The Greek word for “heresy” is derived from the word for “choice” and hence inherently implies conscious, willful rejection or opposition to the Divine Truth manifest in the Orthodox Church.



Elder Joseph always taught his monks that Christ-like obedience was more important than anything else. He would allow his spiritual children in the world to practice mental prayer, but always under the guidance of those who were experienced, for he had seen much delusion among men and had become fearful of it. He would often tell us, “If you see a person not asking for advice, or not heeding advice given, wait, and you will soon see him deluded.”

...

This heavenly man was a master at curing his disciples from their passions, if they managed to stay with him in obedience. Though many came to him to learn by his side, few stayed. It was not easy to live with him. Some might find it hard to believe how sternly he would rebuke me as an expression of his paternal love and care for my soul. For example, in those twelve years that I lived with him, it was very rare to hear my name from his mouth. To call me or to address me, he would use all kinds of insults with a corresponding adjective. But the driving force behind that verbal abuse was true paternal affection and a sincere interest in the cleansing of my soul—and how grateful my soul is now for that paternal affection.

**Elder Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona**

## ON REFUGE FROM SINFUL THOUGHTS

*From The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It. A parable by St. John the Dwarf adapted by St. Theophan the Recluse.*

There was in a certain place a beautiful woman of questionable behavior. The ruler of this country took pity on her, that such beauty would perish, and, when he found the opportunity, he said to her, “Give up your immoral ways, and I will take you to my house and you will become my wife and the mistress of many treasures. Just watch that you are faithful, or else there will be such trouble for you as you cannot even imagine.”

She agreed to this, and was taken to the ruler’s house. Her former friends, seeing that she had disappeared, began searching for her, and found out that she was with the ruler.

Although the ruler was a terror, they did not despair of enticing the beautiful woman back to themselves once again, knowing her weakness. “We have only to go up behind the house and whistle; she will know who it is and immediately run out to us.”

That is just what they did.

They went behind the house and whistled. The beautiful woman, hearing the whistle, startled. Something from her previous life stirred inside of her. But she had already come to her senses, and instead of running out of the house, she rushed into the inner chambers to the ruler himself, and immediately calmed down; she did not even hear the whistling that continued outside.

Her friends whistled a few more times and went off with nothing.

The meaning of the parable is clear. The beautiful woman represents the fallen soul that has turned to the Lord in repentance and made a contract to belong to and serve Him alone. The former friends are the passions. Their whistling is the impulses of passionate thoughts, feeling, and desires. Escape into the inner chambers is shelter in the depths of the heart, there to stand before the Lord.

When this is accomplished within, the passion that has troubled the soul leaves of its own accord as if it had never existed, and the soul calms down.



We know that prayer in and of itself cannot save us, but carrying it out before God can. For when the Lord’s eyes are upon us He sanctifies us, as the sun warms everything upon which it shines.

**St. Gregory Palamas**

## ON IDLE TALK AND GOSSIP

Source: "Letters to a Beginner: On Giving One's Life to God," St. Xenia Skete Press, Platina, CA (1993), pp. 70-75.

*But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

[Mt 12:36]

† † †



You complain, sister, about the trials which are overtaking you, which are arising, according to your words, from certain misunderstandings, suspicion, and indiscretion in conversations. The last, I think, is the effective and chief cause of all your trials and the source of all the evil. On this subject I want to write you a few words about the harm arising from the idle talk and gossip so common among you. This is something you yourself don't even

notice; you speak too much, without discerning whether it is necessary or unnecessary, profitable or harmful, provided only that something is spoken. It is as if you are afraid of silence, which in fact is a nun's first obligation, the chief condition of her success and the adornment of her whole life.

Deeply rooted in people is the love of idle talk, i.e., empty, unnecessary conversations, and it has become a beloved pastime among them. It seems we don't know and don't believe that idle talk is a sin, and a serious sin, which gives birth to a multitude of other sins: quarrels, conflicts, gossip, slander, condemnation, calumny, and the like. Indeed, all the various confusions which fill human life to overflowing, all the disturbances of the inner quiet of the soul, have as their source this same idle talk, which has crept into all of everyday life, as though it were its indispensable property and requirement. If any sin or any passion knows how to clothe itself in an attractive form, it is precisely—idle talk.

It begins under the pretext of conversing, of discussing some business, but then we proceed imperceptibly to an altogether unnecessary, empty, and sinful conversation. Like a deeply-rooted infection, this sickness does not easily submit to healing. It has penetrated all layers of social and private life; it is active in people of every age and gender, every class and social position, and has not even spared monasteries.

One deeply thinking pastor, contemporary to us, writes the following on idle talk, among other things: "How heedlessly, how carelessly we use our words, which should be highly valued as a great gift from God! But on the contrary, what do we least esteem, if not the spoken word? In what are we fickle, if not in the spoken word? What do we throw out every

minute, as though it were dirt, if not the spoken word? O Christian! Value your words, be attentive to them!"

In our words, which we regard so carelessly, so thoughtlessly, will be either our justification or condemnation, as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says: *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* (Mt 12:37); *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.* (Mt 12:36). If even one idle, i.e., empty, unnecessary word will be subject to accounting in the day of judgment, then to what condemnation and punishment will we be subject, who talk idly continually and constantly, restrained neither by place nor time, nor by the presence of outsiders, who, perhaps even against their will, we make participants in our empty conversations, and in such a manner draw them into sin. So, drawing them into sin, we are subject to a double condemnation—both for idle talk and for being a cause of temptation, for *woe*, it is said, *to that man by whom the offence cometh.* (Mt 18:7). We don't think about this, we don't take care at all! We misuse our natural faculty of speech, which was given to us for this purpose above all: that we might praise our Creator, thank and glorify Him with words, as is proper to a rational creature. Even mute nature glorifies Him with its grandeur and harmony, not deviating in the least from the laws appointed to it by the Creator: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands.* (Pss 18:1).

The gift of speech was also given to us that we might understand one another, not through instinct, like the dumb animals, but through intellect. Thus, we verbally express our ideas, which are abundantly and clearly opened to us by our God-enlightened mind, the source of thought and word, in order that we might conduct intelligent, mutual, brotherly conversation on the aim of daily life and its regulation, for mutual edification and benefit, in support and consolation of each other, and the like. It was not given to us that we might talk idly; or judge, slander, and condemn our neighbors, pronouncing judgments on them like unmerciful judges and torturers rather than considering ourselves as their brothers, weak and sinful as they, if not still worse. *Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest,* says the Apostle, *for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* (Rom 2:1, 3) *He that ... judgeth his brother,* says another Apostle, *... judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* (Jas 4:11).

What great evil results from empty and idle conversations and gossip! Sometimes one heedlessly spoken word causes a whole storm of unpleasantness and fills the heart of the one referred to with indignation and hatred. So even a word



that was not ill-intentioned, one we counted as nothing, can strike a mortal sin, just as a small spark often turns into a great fire burning whole villages. *How great a matter a little fire kindleth*, says the Apostle James. *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things* (cf. Jas 3:5); *it is a fire, a world of iniquity:... it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell* (Jas 3:6). *The tongue is an untamable evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God and therewith curse we men, which are after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be! Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* (Jas 3:8-11) *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge ... let him show this out of his works, through good conduct, and not by condemning others. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth* (i.e., don't consider yourself wise). *This is not the wisdom that descends from above, but is earthly ... devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work* (cf. Jas 3:13-16).

Behold the harm from all our idle talk and gossip! And if they are improper to Christians in general, are they not even less pardonable for nuns, who have voluntarily renounced the world with all its worldly sinful ways, who have retired within their monastic gates for a more unhindered attention to their salvation? The enemy of everyone's salvation, knowing the infirmity of men, who notwithstanding their readiness towards a life of pleasing God, are ever inclined to seek indulgences and consolations, is not slow even here to sow his tares amid the wheat of God. You nuns by your departure from the world have also left all its consolations and pleasures permitted to lay people.

The only true consolation for you should consist in your close fellowship and heart to heart talks. Your superiors, as wise and kind guides, don't restrain you, don't forbid you these innocent consolations: you are permitted to visit one another, to go for walks together in your free time, and when you gather for common monastery obediences, you may converse with one another unhindered. But you abuse this liberty, you derive from it not profit and true spiritual consolation, but the opposite: harm, quarrels, gossip, and discord, which like a spark kindles a great fire, which burns away all your monastic labors and struggles. In such a manner you lose your salvation.

Do you not know the apostolic saying: *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God* (Rom 14:12) *Who is ready to judge* (1 Pet 4:5)? Oh, if only you would gather together, like the ancient nuns, for spiritual edification and mutual instruction, you would not converse about irrelevant things and affairs which don't concern you, but only about this, how each of you will *work out your own salvation* (Phil 2:12); what sort of cell rule to have and how to perform it, what

struggles to undertake. Thus you would edify and support one another on your slippery path, stretching out a helping hand to each other, and the words of the all-wise Solomon would be realized in you: *A brother helped by a brother is as a strong city*. (Prov 18:19). And your assembly would be like the assembly of the angels, who in spite of their great multitude have one common holy will, one striving—how to fulfill the will of the Creator.

O Sister, not for nothing is our monastic order called the angelic order!... Surely each of us who has gathered in the holy monastery in the name of the Lord has one and the same will, one striving common to us all: *how he may please the Lord*. (1 Cor 7:32). We have no earthly fetters binding us to the world, there are no anxieties and worldly cares to entangle our wings and hinder our flight to our Heavenly Bridegroom! We are free, like the birds of the air, *which sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; but our heavenly Father feedeth us* (cf. Matt. 6:26). Let us then remember our angelic calling, and *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:1-3), as the holy Apostle teaches.



## A MORNING PRAYER

By St. Philaret of Moscow.

Oh Lord,  
 Grant me to greet the coming day in peace,  
 Help me in all things to rely upon Thy Will.  
 In every hour of the day, reveal Thy Will to me.  
 Bless my dealing with all that surround me.  
 Teach me to treat all that come to me throughout the day  
 with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Thy Will  
 concerns all.  
 In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings.  
 In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by  
 Thee.  
 Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and  
 embarrassing others.  
 Give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day with  
 all that it shall bring.  
 Direct my will.  
 Teach me to pray.  
 Pray Thou Thyself in me.  
 Amen.

## HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF WHEN PEOPLE SPEAK EVIL OF US?

Source: "Orthodox Life," vol. 48, no. 2, March-April 1998, pp. 17-18.

Our good name is very important for us in life. *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*, says the wise Solomon (Prov 22:1). A good name brings us the respect and trust of others, and we have great need of it in life, because no one wants to have dealings with a dishonest person. Therefore we cannot look indifferently on the opinions of others about us. The dishonest person can expect neither heartfelt compassion nor help from others. If we are entrusted with any kind of leadership role, it is almost impossible to control subordinates while lacking the respect of others.

So, what should we do when other people, slander and deprive us of our good name?

1. First of all, no matter how bad and how injurious the evil talk spread about us may be, we must guard ourselves from anger, verbal abuse, and revenge, but remain as placid as possible in spirit, because we all must be of one spirit with Christ, and Christ, in the face of all the accusations from the Jews, remained peaceful, not in the least bit vengeful. *Christ, when he was reviled, reviled not again... but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously*, the holy Apostle Peter says (1 Pet 2:23).

2. When you hear that others are speaking poorly of you and ascribing to you vices of various sorts, bad intentions, and so forth, then immediately subject yourself to the strictest examination to see whether the vices they ascribe to you are really there. Perhaps they say you are proud, a liar, an idler, a spendthrift, a drunkard, a sluggard a debaucher, or whatever else. Examine yourself very closely: do these vices actually lurk within you, if only to a small degree? Is there not pride, falsehood, and so on? Other people's eyes often see our conduct much better and more reliably than our own do, because every person has a certain amount of pride, and pride always conceals us from ourselves. Thus, we can rarely see ourselves accurately, and some people, even quite depraved ones, consider themselves faultless. If impartial examination of yourself shows you that others reproach you justly, that one or another vice indeed exists in you, then quickly offer repentance, fervently pray to the Lord God to deliver you from that vice, try zealously to correct yourself of it, and then everywhere show the most sincere friendly disposition and gratitude towards the one who spoke evil of you, regardless of his intentions for doing so, because without his reproach you perhaps would never have seen your vices, would have died without repentance and correction, and would have perished forever.

3. If, after the most attentive, impartial examination of yourself, you find that the vices ascribed to you do not exist, you may legitimately defend yourself and refute the slander leveled at you, but only when this is necessary not because of your self-love or pride but because of your position in society. But defend yourself calmly, without anger or indignation. Jesus Christ Himself acted thus when they said of Him that He was driving out devils with the help of Beelzebub the prince of devils (Lk 11:15-26).

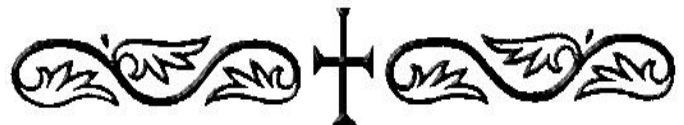
4. If you see that defending yourself will not do you any good, then:

(a) Try to bear patiently the slander leveled at you, no matter how serious, and console yourself with the thoughts, "God sees my innocence, so what should I grieve about? He Himself cares for me, and, if my vindication will be beneficial for me, then He Himself will vindicate me. He will declare my innocence at the Dread Judgement at least, and all the people and all the angels of God will vindicate me with Him."

(b) Console yourself even more with this thought: "They let forth a great stream of abuse on our Savior when he lived on earth, yet He never justified Himself in any court. Some of the abuse was very serious, but He endured everything with equanimity. That is how I should act. *The disciple is not above his master and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his master.* (Mt 10:24-25).

(c) Double your efforts to conduct yourself as irreproachably as possible in all circumstances of your life. Endeavor not only to avoid giving others occasion for spiteful talk by any of your words or deeds, but also endeavor to avert any occasion to be even suspected of any vices, and therefore avoid even permissible behavior if it somehow can give cause for slander. Behave this way, and then do not pay attention to the slander spread about you. May your conscience and God be the witnesses to your innocence.

(d) If the evil talk spread about you does not cease, or even multiplies, then resort to nothing but fervent prayer that the Lord God may have the kindness to enlighten and correct your slanderers. Act this way because Jesus Christ Himself acted this way even towards his executioners. (Lk 23:34).



Let us then not be pleased if we are successful in anything, let us not be proud of our activities, let our material good and glory not exalt us. If we swell up with pride about any good things that come our way we are displeasing to God. The psalmist says of the humble: *The Lord protects the little ones.* He was calling the humble *little ones*. After this saying he added something else. As if we were asking him what he would do in such a case, he added: *I was made humble, and He set me free.*

St. Gregory the Great

## ON FORGIVING OTHERS

By St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, from "Orthodox Christian Journey," *Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry, Hollywood, CA (1997), pp. 47-53.*

Sometimes in life we offend each other. This happens because the devil hates love among us, and cleverly ensnares or incites us to offend our neighbor—from our own personal weakness, from carelessness or from habit. Reconciliation is absolutely necessary in order to preserve peace and harmony.

At times, we brush off the offense and go on as if nothing happened. The Bible teaches that when we sin against our neighbor we also sin against God, and when we offend our neighbor, we offend God Himself. Love toward our neighbor is intertwined with love for God. When love toward our neighbor is destroyed, so too is love toward God. It follows that if we want to be reconciled to God and have peace with Him, we must first be reconciled with our neighbor, and then ask God for mercy.

If we approach God in prayer without reconciling with our neighbor, our prayer is vain and empty. The Lord says, *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* (Mt 5:23-26).

Until peace and love are restored, God will not accept repentance, nor prayers, nor anything else from us. Humbly ask forgiveness without delay, whether the offense is in word or deed.

Death stalks invisibly behind us and seizes us unawares. What will become of us if we are taken without reconciliation? We will appear before the judgment of Christ as we leave this world. What is forgiven now will not appear there. It is important to be reconciled while there is time. If we were able to offend our neighbor, we should also be able to be reconciled without delay. God promises His mercy to all who repent, but He does not promise tomorrow, nor even the next breath.

We must break down the idol of pride and bow down with humility before the offended one. When we bend our knee, we must bow our heart; when we beg forgiveness with our lips, we must beg with our heart. When we repent with our tongue, we must repent and be sorry in our heart. When we kiss each other with the lips, the kiss must come from the heart. For the outward without the inward means nothing. God judges according to the inward disposition.

"Why should I ask forgiveness?" we may ask. "Look who I am!"

We are all created equal in God's sight. He is just and we shall all stand before Him to be judged. And who is to say who is the better person? The Lord examines the righteous man and the ungodly: *The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he*

*shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.* (Pss 11:5). Not the good beginning, but the good end is worthy of praise.

"Perhaps my neighbor won't accept my apology—what then?" Humility has such power it touches even the hardest heart. God, the lover of humility, works through the humble. If we humble our heart before our neighbor, we shall see the power of humility as we are embraced with love and joy. If we are unwilling to try, we are responsible for our sin.

"But my neighbor will gloat over my humility."

Luke tells us that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled: *For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* (Lk 18:14). We are not responsible for our neighbors actions. Our responsibility is to obey our Lord.

The offended one must forgive the offender. To be forgiven by God pray with sincerity and hope, Father...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father also will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt 6:12,14-15).

How terrible it is when we do not forgive our neighbor's trespasses! If we forgive our neighbor, God will also forgive us. If we do not forgive, God will not forgive us. How, then, can we stand before God? And how much is our prayer worth? Almost nothing. For how can we stand before God with anger in our heart? And we must take all the blame, for the sin is ours.

Though we were sinned against, we are all sinners and must forgive. Our neighbor is our debtor and asks forgiveness of us, but we are God's debtor and must ask forgiveness of God. If forgiveness is from the heart, we can pray from the heart, honestly and openly. If the prayer of forgiveness is not from the heart, it is only words and becomes sin. All wrath and anger must be set aside and forgiveness must be sincere before we can honestly pray, "Father, forgive us..." and forgiveness be granted.

As we treat our neighbors, so also does God treat us. Forgiveness or unforgiveness of our sins, and therefore also our salvation or destruction, depends on each of us, individually. Without forgiveness of sins there is no salvation. We are all sinners equally. Do we know who we are and Who God is, against Whom we have sinned, and sin still? All the world is nothing before God (Isa 40). If all the world is as nothing before God, what, then, are we individually, however great our position before others? And what is the sin of our neighbor who offended us? It is as a penny against thousands of pieces of gold or ten thousand talents. Or, even better, it is as nothing against our sins toward God.

If we will not forgive anything, no matter how small, can we hope to receive forgiveness for a great thing? Will we be forgiven by God, Who is eternal justice and incredible majesty? If we do not have mercy on another, what mercy do we expect of God? It is dangerous not to forgive!

“I am in no way at fault I was offended without cause.”

One person sometimes offends another unjustly. When this happens, God is not at fault for He is a just God and there is no injustice in Him. Nevertheless, in frustration and anger we sometimes sin against Him irrationally and without shame by refusing to forgive an unjust offense. Before we can obtain forgiveness of God, we must first forgive the one who sinned against us. Then with a repentant heart pray, “Lord, have mercy.” Unworthy as we are, in His mercy God will forgive us. Glory to His love for us all! Glory to His immeasurable graciousness!

“Though I did a good deed, evil was returned to me.”

True, it is difficult to suffer evil for good. And who does more good than God? Yet we continually sin against Him. Say from the heart, “I have sinned, O Lord, have mercy on me. I forgive my neighbor, forgive also me, Your unworthy servant, who sinned against You, my Creator and Benefactor.”

“I was very patient with the one who offended me.”

We have sinned against God exceeding and the Lord was patient. What if God had given us what we deserve? We would have been in hell long ago. Then, just as God is long-suffering and merciful with us, so we ought also be to our neighbor.

“I know God deals mercifully with me. I am weak and cannot do likewise.”

Cannot, or will not? We cannot walk on water, but what is the difficulty of forgiving? Are we seeking revenge? This is not weakness, but hatred. As Christians, we are commanded, *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.* (Eph 5:1).

“If I forgive my neighbor, evil may be done to me.”

We do not know this. But even if evil is done to us, we must do what God commanded because it is necessary for our salvation. Each of us is responsible for our own deeds and actions. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.* (Rev 22:11).

“I have been grievously offended.”

There can be no more grievous an offense than that done to Christ our Savior, Who was not only blasphemed, reviled, mocked, spat upon, derided, struck and bound, but ultimately crowned with thorns and nailed to the Cross. As they passed by they cursed Him Who was nailed, and put Him to death—the Son of God and the Lord of Glory. Who are we compared to so great a One, and what is this offense against us compared to His sacrifice? It is as nothing.

Christ the Lord endured all these things with great meekness and long-suffering. For whom? For me and for you, His unworthy servants. And not only did He endure all this, He also prayed for His enemies, *Father, forgive them.* (Lk 23:24). Reflect on this as in a mirror and it will no doubt be easier to forgive.

“If I forgive, people will mock me.”

To the impious and those who love this world, the Christian life and morality of the Gospel are foolishness, but it is wisdom before God. We must obey its teachings. Let the mockers mock, for afterward they will weep bitterly.

We speak of either eternal salvation or eternal destruction. If we do not forgive our neighbors their transgressions, therein is hidden the wickedness and unrighteousness of the human heart.

We wish to receive the forgiveness and mercy of God, but do not wish to show mercy and forgiveness to others. Without Christ’s love, how wicked and unrighteous is our heart.

Our Lord told us, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* (Mt 5:44).

It is not enough to love those who love us. The Lord says, *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?* (Mt 5:46-47). As Christians, we must show love and mercy, striving for perfection. Because we are begotten through holy baptism and renewed unto life eternal and a holy life, we must love not only our friends, but also our enemies.

Willingness to forgive is one mark of a true Christian. Our Heavenly Father makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (cf. Mt 5:45). As Christians, we should imitate Him the way children do their father, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.* (Eph 5:1).

“It is impossible to love my enemies and do good to them.”

Not true. It was possible for David, who wept for his enemies, Saul and Absalom, who perished (2 Kings 1; 2 Sam 18). Mourning over the destruction of enemies is a sign of love for enemies. It was possible for St. Stephen, who prayed for his enemies as they stoned him, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* (Acts 7:60). It was possible for all the saints. And it is possible for us. We all have the same weaknesses.

When children learn to read books, they first learn the letters, then spelling, and after that, how to read. As Christians, first we learn to return good for good, which is gratitude; then not to return evil for evil, insult for insult, offense for offense, and not to take revenge, either in word or deed; after this, to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us and to return good for evil.

This is the ladder by which Christians ascend toward perfection, that is toward love of enemies. When we are commanded to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us—commanded by Him Who created us and redeemed the lost by His blood and death, and Who holds our death and life in His hand—will we forgive those who offended us?

If an earthly king commanded us not only to forgive our neighbor the offense, but also to serve our neighbor or be put to death, which would we choose? To die, or to forgive and serve? Our Heavenly King commands us not only to forgive, but also to love our enemies and do good to those that hate us. Otherwise, eternal death will follow. *Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven.* (Mt 7:21).

## Ἡ Νοερά Προσευχή

**Ρωμανίδης:** «*Εκείνο πού χρειάζεται κανείς για να αποκτήσει νοερά προσευχή είναι να έχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα με νοερά προσευχή*».

*Από τὸ βιβλίο: «Εμπειρική Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθόδοξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τὶς προφορικές παραδόσεις τοῦ π. Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδου» τόμος Β', τοῦ Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἀγίου Βλασίου Γεροθέου.*

**Π**ροκειμένου να αποκτήσει κανείς τον φωτισμό του νοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀδιάλειπτη νοερά προσευχή, πού εἶναι ἐπίσκεψη τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, εἶναι ἀπαραίτητη ἡ παρουσία Πνευματικοῦ Πατρός, πού γνωρίζει τὰ θέματα αὐτὰ ἐμπειρικῶς καὶ μπορεῖ νὰ καθοδηγήσει πνευματικὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο.

«*Εκείνο πού χρειάζεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος για νὰ ἀποκτήσει νοερά προσευχή εἶναι νὰ ἔχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα πού ἔχει νοερά προσευχή. Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ πιὸ βασικό. Διότι εἶναι ἀδύνατο ἢ τουλάχιστον σχεδὸν ἀδύνατον νὰ μάθει κανείς τὴν νοερά προσευχή, διαβάζοντας περὶ νοερᾶς προσευχῆς. Μὲ τὴν ἀνάγνωση δὲν βγαίνει τίποτε. Πρέπει νὰ ἔχει Πνευματικό Πατέρα. Αὐτὸ εἶναι σαφές*».

Ὁ Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας λέγεται Κατηχητής, πού καθοδηγεῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπο, μὲ τὴν ἐνέργεια τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, νὰ περάσει ἀπὸ τὴν κάθαρση στὸν φωτισμό, καὶ ἀκόμη λέγεται διδάσκαλος. Μὲ αὐτὴν τὴν ἔννοια μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι κανείς Πνευματικὸς καθοδηγὸς ἔστω καὶ ἂν δὲν εἶναι Κληρικός. Δὲν πρόκειται, δηλαδή, για τὸ Μυστήριο τῆς Ἐξομολογήσεως, ἀλλὰ για τὴν πνευματικὴ καθοδήγηση, προκειμένου νὰ φθάσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος στὴν νοερά προσευχή.

«*Καὶ ὅταν εἶναι κάποιος στὴν φώτιση, εἶναι Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας καὶ ἂς μὴν ἔχει χειροτονηθεῖ. Μπορεῖ νὰ ἔχει σκοτώσει ἄνθρώπους, ἅμα καθαρῶς ὅμως στὴν καρδιά του καὶ φωτισθεῖ, αὐτὸς ὁ φωτισμὸς τὸν κάνει ἴσον μὲ ὅλους τοὺς ἄλλους*».

Καὶ τὸ ὅτι εἶναι πνευματικὰ ἴσος, δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι ἐξάπαντος θὰ χειροτονηθεῖ. Μπορεῖ νὰ μὴ χειροτονηθεῖ ποτέ, διότι ἔχει κωλύματα, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ χειροτονηθεῖ. Παρὰ ταῦτα ὅμως, μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι μέγας ἅγιος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Δὲν εἶναι μονοπώλιο τῶν Κληρικῶν αὐτὴ ἡ θεραπεία. Ἡ θεραπεία μπορεῖ νὰ γίνῃ ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποιοδήποτε πού ἔχει τὴν νοερά προσευχή, ἐνῶ ὁ Κληρικὸς εἶναι ὁ ἱερούργος τῶν Μυστηρίων. Ἄλλο τὸ ἓνα, ἄλλο τὸ ἄλλο. Γι' αὐτό, πάντα στὴν Ὀρθοδοξία διαχωρίζονταν αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα. Τελετουργικὰ εἶναι ὁ λειτουργός. Ἀλλὰ Πνευματικὸς Πατέρας θὰ εἶναι αὐτὸς πού ἔφτασε στὸν φωτισμό».

Αὐτὴ εἶναι μία ζωντανὴ παράδοση στὴν Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία. Πάντοτε ὑπάρχουν ζωντανοὶ πνευματικοὶ ὀργανισμοί, τοὺς ὁποίους ὁ ἄνθρωπος, πού ἐπιδιώκει αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ πρέπει νὰ ἀναζητήσει.

«*Ένας, ὅμως, πού δὲν καταλαβαίνει περὶ φωτισμοῦ καὶ Θεώσεως καὶ ἂς εἶναι ἓνας θεολόγος, καθηγητῆς Πανεπιστημίου, καὶ διαβάζει, θὰ πει: "Τώρα ἄστα, μὲ αὐτὰ ἀσχολεῖσαι, εἶναι δεισιδαιμονίες, μυθιστορήματα" κλπ. Ἄν εἶναι ἔτσι, τότε πάει καὶ ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή περίπατο καὶ ὁ Μωυσῆς δὲν ἔχει καμιὰ ἀξία, κ.ο.κ.*

Ἀλλὰ ἔχουμε τοὺς ἴδιους τοὺς ζωντανοὺς ὁμοίους ἄνθρώπους. Ὑπάρχουν τέτοιοι ἄνθρωποι πού εἶναι ζωντανοί, μὲ νοερά προσευχή, πού φθάνουν στὴν θεοπτία καὶ αὐτὲς οἱ ἐμπειρίες εἶναι πραγματικότητες. Ἀλλὰ για νὰ ξέρει κανείς ὅτι εἶναι πραγματικότητες, πρέπει νὰ πάει νὰ ψάξει νὰ βρεῖ αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἄνθρώπους. Ἄν δὲν ὑπάρχουν αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἐκλείπει αὐτὴ ἡ παράδοση, αὐτὸ σημαίνει ὅτι ἐξέλιπε μία ἐπιστήμη.

Δηλαδή, ἐὰν σήμερα ἐκλείψουν οἱ γιατροὶ καὶ μείνουν μόνο τὰ βιβλία τους καὶ τὰ διαβάζουμε καὶ δὲν ἔχουμε τὴν ζωντανὴ παράδοση τῆς ἰατρικῆς, δὲν εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ ἀναστήσουμε πάλι τὴν ἰατρικὴ ὅπως εἶναι σήμερα. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ για ὅλες τὶς ἐπιστήμες, ἂν ἐκλείψει ἡ ζωντανὴ παράδοση. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ για τὴν Ὀρθοδοξία, ἂν ἐκλείψει ἡ ζωντανὴ παράδοση, θὰ ξεχασθεῖ. Ὅπως στὴν Δύση ἐξέλιπε, ξεχάστηκε».

Τὰ περὶ νοερῶς προσευχῆς περιγράφονται θαυμάσια στὸ βιβλίο «*Περιπέτειες Ἐνὸς Προσκυνητοῦ*».

«*Ἄν θέλετε νὰ ἔχετε ἔτσι μία συνοπτικὴ καὶ πολὺ γρήγορη ἀντίληψη περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πράγματος, σᾶς παρακαλῶ πολὺ νὰ διαβάσετε, μπορῶ νὰ σᾶς τὸ ἐπιβάλω κιόλας, ὡς μέρος τοῦ μαθήματος, ἂν θέλω δηλαδή, ἀπειλώντας ὅτι θὰ σᾶς δώσω κανένα ἐρώτημα, δηλαδή, ἐπάνω στὸ βιβλίο, εἶναι μικρούτσικο βιβλίο καὶ λέγεται: "Περιπέτειες Ἐνὸς Προσκυνητοῦ". Λοιπὸν αὐτὸ τὸ βιβλίο, παρακαλῶ, τουλάχιστον τὸ πρῶτο βιβλίο, δὲν ξέρω ἐὰν στὰ Ἑλληνικά εἶναι καὶ τὰ δύο, διότι εἶναι δύο βιβλία πού ἔχουν μεταφρασθεῖ καὶ δὲν εἶναι βέβαιο ἐὰν εἶναι ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο συγγραφέα. Καὶ ἦταν ἓνας Ρώσος περιηγητῆς, ἓνας αὐτὸ πού θὰ λέγαμε σήμερα ἀγροῖκος καὶ ἀγράμματος, σήμερα ἔτσι θὰ λέγαμε ὅτι ἦταν ἀγράμματος, ἐνῶ πολλὲς φορὲς οἱ ἀγράμματοι εἶναι πιὸ γραμματισμένοι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐγγράμματους. Καὶ βρῆκε αὐτὸς ἓναν Πνευματικὸ Πατέρα καὶ ἔμαθε τὴν νοερά προσευχή, καὶ περιγράφει πῶς τὴν ἀπέκτησε*».

Αὐτὸς ὁ ἀπλοῖκος ἄνθρωπος εἶχε τέτοια παράδοση, πού διάβαζε τὴν «Φιλοκαλία», ἡ ὁποία κυκλοφόρησε πρὸ τῆς ἐπαναστάσεως τοῦ 1821 στὴν περιοχὴ τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας καὶ διαδόθηκε καὶ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα «στὰ ἄλλα μέρη τῆς Ρωμηοσύνης, Ἡπειρο, Μακεδονία, Θεσσαλία, Θράκη, Πόντο, Καππαδοκία, Μικρὰ Ἀσία, στὰ νησιά, στὴν Κρήτη, σ' ὅλη τὴν Μέση Ἀνατολή, μέχρι τὸν Δούναβη, μέχρι τὴν Βεσσαραβία τῆς Ρωσίας».

«*Καὶ μετὰ ὑπάρχει καὶ ἓνα ἄλλο βιβλίο, τὸ ὁποῖο δημοσιεύθηκε στὰ Ἑλληνικά, τοῦ πατρὸς Σιλουανοῦ.*

Και αυτό είναι πάρα πολύ σπουδαίο, διότι είναι γεμάτο από πατερική θεολογία, είναι όλο πατερικό, δηλαδή, έχει τα πιό βαθειά γνωσιολογικά προβλήματα εκεί μέσα, χωρίς ο ίδιος να το καταλάβει. Ο ίδιος, επειδή δεν ήξερε φιλοσοφία και ιστορία φιλοσοφίας και ψυχολογία, ψυχιατρική κ.ο.κ. δεν τα ξέρει αυτά τα πράγματα, γι' αυτό και ο ίδιος δεν είναι σε θέση να αξιολογήσει αυτά που είπε. Αλλά αυτά που λέει και γράφει έχουν καταπληκτική σημασία για την ιστορία της φιλοσοφίας και της γνωσιολογίας κ.ο.κ. Καταπληκτική σημασία!

Και φοβάμαι πολύ ότι εδώ στην Ελλάδα, όσοι διαβάζουν τις “Περιπέτειες Ένός Προσκυνητού”, τον π. Σιλουανό, τα διαβάζουν εύσεβιστικά και συναισθηματικά. Το μεγαλύτερο λάθος είναι αυτά τα βιβλία να διαβάζονται συναισθηματικά και εύσεβιστικά, διότι ούτε για συναισθήματα είναι αυτά τα βιβλία ούτε για εύσεβισμό. Ούτε το ένα ούτε το άλλο. Είναι πάρα πολύ σοβαρά βιβλία έξέπωσης ψυχιατρικής, ψυχολογίας και φιλοσοφίας κ.ο.κ., που πρέπει με σοβαρότητα να διαβάζονται και όχι να διασκεδάζεται ή φαντασία των εύσεβων.

Αυτό γίνεται εδώ στην Ελλάδα. Διαβάζουν εύσεβεις και μπορούν να διαβάσουν και κανένα Κίργκεγκαρ, ή κανένα Φραντσέζο, ύστερα διαβάζουν έναν Έγγλέζο, διαβάζουν έναν Γερμανό περί προσευχής, μπορεί να διαβάσουν την ζωή του Χριστού ενός Ιταλού και να διαβάζουν και τις “Περιπέτειες Ένός Προσκυνητού” και τον π. Σιλουανό και να μην καταλαβαίνουν ότι υπάρχει διαφορά και τα κάνουν όλα ένα. Όλα τα ανακατεύουν, Όλα μαζί.

Μπορεί να πάρουν και ένα βιβλίο που γράφτηκε περί εύσεβείας από τον ίδιο τον διάβολο και να μην το έχουν καταλάβει. Γι' αυτό χρειάζεται πάρα πολλή προσοχή, προσοχή και πάρα πολλή προσευχή. Λοιπόν, η ακριβεία της προσευχής έχει πάρα πολύ μεγάλη σημασία».



Οί φάκελλοι των κεκοιμημένων πιστών και απίστων, μένουν ανοιχτοί μέχρι της Δευτέρας Παρουσίας του Χριστού και δέχονται αλλοιώσεις. Κατ' αναλογία των ανθρώπων και των προσπαθειών της στρατευομένης Εκκλησίας, επηρεάζονται οί φάκελλοι. Για παράδειγμα, τα μνημόσυνα και τα σαρανταλείτουργα, που γίνονται για τους κεκοιμημένους, βοηθούν πολύ.

Επίσης υπάρχουν άνθρωποι που πέθαναν με 100% κόλαση και έως ότου γίνη η Δευτέρα Παρουσία, θα βρεθούν με 1000% κόλαση. Μά θα πη κάποιος: Αυτός πέθανε, πώς άμαρτάνει; Να πᾶς να ρωτήσης τον Καζαντζάκη, να σου πη πώς άμαρτάνει. Επηρεάζεται ο φάκελλός του, κατ' αναλογία της απιστίας του. Ο Καζαντζάκης έγραψε βιβλία, όπου εξέφραζε την απιστία του και πολλοί διαβάζοντάς τα βλέπτονται και έτσι ο Καζαντζάκης άμαρτάνει. Αντίθετα ο Ίερὸς Χρυσόστομος με τὸ συγγραφικὸ ἔργο του, πὸν μᾶς ἄφησε παρακαταθήκη, φαντάζεστε πόσο ὑψηλὰ φτάσανε οί μετοχές του! Έτσι πολλῶν οί άμαρτίες ἢ οί άγαθοεργίες, τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦν πέραν τοῦ τάφου. Με βάση τὰ παραπάνω, κανένας δὲν ξέρει πὸς θὰ βρεθῆ στὴν τελικὴ κρίση.

**Μακαριστὸς Ίεροκῆρυκας Δημήτριος Παναγόπουλος (+1982)**

## Νὰ Κόψουμε τὰ Πάθη!

*Αββάς Δωρόθεος.*

Τρεῖς εἶναι οί καταστάσεις τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ὁ ἕνας ἀφήνει ἐλεύθερο τὸ πάθος του νὰ ἐκδηλώνεται, ὁ ἄλλος δὲν τὸ ἀφήνει νὰ ἐκδηλωθῆ καὶ ὁ τρίτος τὸ ξεριζώνει.

Αὐτὸς πὸν τὸ ἀφήνει νὰ ἐκδηλωθῆ, ἐνεργεῖ ὅπως τοῦ ὑπαγορεύει τὸ πάθος, σὰν αὐτὸ νὰ ἦταν δικαίωμά του. Αὐτὸς πὸν δὲν ἐπιτρέπει στὸ πάθος νὰ ἐκδηλωθῆ, οὔτε τὸ ἀφήνει ἐλεύθερο οὔτε καὶ τὸ κόβει ἀντίθετα τὸ ἐξετάζει καὶ τὸ ξεπερνᾷ τὴ δύσκολη στιγμή, ἀλλὰ δὲν παύει νὰ τὸ ἔχει. Καὶ αὐτὸς πὸν ξεριζώνει τὸ πάθος εἶναι ὁποῖος ἀγωνίζεται καὶ κάνει τὰ ἀντίθετα ἀπὸ αὐτὰ πὸν τοῦ ὑπαγορεύει τὸ πάθος του.

Ἀπὸ ἔπαρση δὲ σηκώνει κανεὶς μία κουβέντα ἀπὸ τὸν ἀδελφό του. Μπορεῖ κάποιος νὰ ἀκούσει μία κουβέντα καὶ νὰ ταραχθῆ καὶ νὰ πει πέντε κουβέντες ἢ καὶ δέκα γιὰ τὴ μία πὸν ἄκουσε. Μετὰ μαλώνει καὶ ταράζει τὸν ἄλλο. Καί, ὅταν τελειώσει ὁ καυγᾶς, συνεχίζει νὰ κάνει κακὲς σκέψεις γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο πὸν τοῦ εἶπε αὐτὴ τὴν κουβέντα καὶ τὴ θυμᾶται μὲ ἐμπάθεια καὶ λυπᾶται πὸν δὲν τοῦ εἶπε ἀκόμα περισσότερα. Ἐτοιμάζει μάλιστα μέσα τοῦ λόγια ἀκόμα χειρότερα νὰ πει στὸν ἄλλο, καὶ ὅλο σκέφτεται: «Γιατί νὰ μὴν τοῦ πῶ αὐτό; Μπορῶ νὰ τοῦ πῶ καὶ τὸ ἄλλο». Καὶ εἶναι συνέχεια θυμωμένος.

Νὰ μία κατάσταση. Ἐδῶ τὸ κακὸ ἔχει γίνεи συνήθεια. Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ μᾶς φυλάξει ἀπὸ τέτοια κατάσταση. Αὐτὴ ἢ κατάσταση ὀδηγεῖ στὴν κόλαση. Γιατί κάθε ἁμαρτία πὸν δὲν διορθώνεται, μᾶς ὀδηγεῖ στὸν ἐσωτερικὸ θάνατο. Ἀλλὰ κι ἂν ἀκόμα θελήσει ἕνας τέτοιος ἄνθρωπος νὰ μετανοήσῃ, δὲν μπορεῖ μόνος του νὰ νικήσῃ τὸ πάθος του, παρὰ μόνον ἂν ἔχει τὴ βοήθεια πνευματικῶν ὀδηγῶν, ὅπως εἶπαν οί Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Γι' αὐτὸ σας λέω πάντα, **νὰ φροντίσετε νὰ κόψετε τὰ πάθη σας πρὶν σᾶς γίνουи συνήθεια.**



## Ὁ Ἐναγκαλισμὸς τῶν Ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου

Πηγή: «Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὁδοιπορικὸ» 29, Ἰουνίου, 2012.



Ὁ μήνας Ἰούνιος καταυγάζεται ἀπὸ τὴ μεγάλη ἑορτὴ τῶν πρωτοκορυφαίων ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου (στὶς 29 Ἰουνίου). Δὲν πρόκειται περὶ μίας ἀπλῆς ἑορτῆς, ὅπως συνήθως ἐορτάζουμε τίς ὑπόλοιπες ἑορτὲς τῶν ἁγίων μας: νὰ

θυμηθοῦμε τὴν κατὰ Χριστὸν πολιτεία τους καὶ στὸ μέτρο τῶν δυνατοτήτων μας νὰ τοὺς μιμηθοῦμε. Στὸν ἑναγκαλισμὸ τῶν δύο ἀποστόλων, ὅπως τὸν βλέπουμε στὴ γνωστὴ εἰκόνα τους, ἡ Ἐκκλησία μᾶς πρόβαλε τὴ σύζευξη τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῶν ἔργων, μὲ ἄλλα λόγια εἶδε τοὺς ἀποστόλους αὐτοὺς ὡς σύμβολο καὶ τύπο τῆς παραδόσεώς της.

Ἵπῃρξε, καὶ ὑπάρχει ἀκόμη σὲ ὀρισμένους αἰρετικούς, ἡ ἄποψη ὅτι οἱ πρωτοκορυφαῖοι ἀπόστολοι ἀκολουθοῦν διαφορετικὲς παραδόσεις καὶ ἐκφράζουν διαφορετικὲς θεολογίες: ὁ ἀπόστολος Πέτρος, λένε, τονίζει τὰ ἔργα ὡς δρόμο σωτηρίας, γεγονός πού τὸν σχετίζει περισσότερο μὲ τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴ παράδοση, καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος τονίζει κυρίως τὴν πίστη, ἄρα εἶναι ὁ ρηξικέλευθος καὶ ὁ ἀληθινὸς Χριστιανός. Τὸν Πέτρο εἶδαν πολλοὶ ὡς πρότυπο τῆς θεολογίας τοῦ Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ, ἡ ὁποία πράγματι ὑπερτονίζει τὰ καλὰ ἔργα εἰς βάρος συχνὰ τῆς πίστεως, καὶ τὸν Παῦλο ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη σχέτισαν μὲ τὸν Προτεσταντισμὸ, ὁ ὁποῖος ὑποβαθμίζει τὰ ἔργα ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως.

Γιὰ ἐμᾶς τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους ὅμως μία τέτοια διασπασμένη κατανόηση τῆς θεολογίας τῶν ἀποστόλων αὐτῶν ἀποτελεῖ μεγάλη πλάνη. Καὶ τοῦτο γιατί καὶ οἱ δύο ἀπόστολοι ἐκφράζουν τὴν ἴδια τελικῶς θεώρηση τῆς πίστεως. Δὲν προβάλλει ἄλλον Χριστὸ ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ἄλλον ὁ Παῦλος. Καὶ οἱ δύο καταθέτουν τὴν ἴδια ἐμπειρία, τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ σωτηρία, γιὰ τὴν ὁποία καὶ οἱ δύο ἔδωσαν μὲ μαρτυρικὸ τρόπο τὴ ζωὴ τους. Τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄλλωστε πού τοὺς φώτιζε, ἦταν καὶ εἶναι πάντοτε τὸ ἴδιο. Ὅταν ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, γιὰ παράδειγμα, τονίζει τὴν πίστη ὡς προϋπόθεση τῆς σωτηρίας, ἐξαγγέλλει τὴν κοινὴ μαρτυρία καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀποστόλων, ποεξάρχοντος τοῦ Πέτρου (βλ. π.χ. Α΄ Πέτρο. 1:5, 9:21, κ.ά.), κατὰ τὴν ὁποία, ναί μὲν ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται (Ρωμ. 1:17), ἀλλὰ ἡ

πίστη αὐτὴ ἐκφράζεται μὲ τὰ ἔργα τῆς πίστεως, μὲ τὴ μετάνοια δηλαδὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ μὲ τὸν καρπὸ τῆς πίστεως, τὴν ἀγάπη. Πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη (Γαλ. 5:6) κατὰ τὴ συνοπτικὴ διατύπωσή του, πού σημαίνει ὅτι τότε ἡ Χριστιανικὴ πίστη ζωντανεύει καὶ ἐνεργοποιεῖται, ὅταν ἀκολουθεῖ τὸν δρόμο τῆς ἀγάπης. Πρόκειται γιὰ διαφορετικὴ διατύπωση τῆς διδασκαλίας καὶ τοῦ ἀποστόλου Ἰακώβου, κατὰ τὴν ὁποία ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων νεκρὰ ἐστὶ (Ἰακ. 2:19). Διαφορετικά, ἡ πίστη μόνη μπορεῖ νὰ θεωρηθεῖ καὶ ὡς δαιμονικὴ, ἀφοῦ καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίττουσι. (Ἰακ. 2:19).

Ἔτσι πίστη καὶ ἔργα (πίστεως) συμπορεύονται στὴ Χριστιανικὴ παράδοση, ἐνῶ ὁποιαδήποτε διάσπαση τῆς πίστεως ἀπὸ τὰ ἔργα ἐρμηνεύεται ὡς τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς συγχύσεως τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ διασπασμένου νοῦ τῶν αἰρετικῶν. Ἡ ἐσωτερικὴ δηλαδὴ διάσπαση, τὴν ὁποία ζοῦν οἱ αἰρετικοί, λόγω τῆς ἐνεργούσας μέσα τους ἀμαρτίας, τοὺς ὀδηγεῖ καὶ στὸ νὰ βλέπουν διασπασμένη τὴ θεολογία τῶν ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου. Μὲ ἄλλα λόγια καὶ στὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ ἐπιβεβαιώνεται ἡ ψυχολογικὴ ἀρχή, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν ὁποία ὁ κάθε ἄνθρωπος γιὰ τὴν κατανόηση τοῦ κόσμου προβάλλει στὴν πραγματικότητα τὸν ἴδιο του τὸν ἑαυτὸ· αὐτὸ πού ζεῖ, τὸ προεκτείνει καὶ πρὸς τὰ ἔξω.

Στὴν πιθανὴ ἔνσταση ὅτι ἱστορικὰ ὑπῆρξε κάποια σύγκρουση τῶν πρωτοκορυφαίων—ὅταν ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος τότε πού ἦρθε ὁ Πέτρος στὴν Ἀντιόχεια, τοῦ ἀντιμίλησε κατὰ πρόσωπο, γιατί ἦταν ἀξιοκατάκριτος. Γιατί πρὶν ἔρθουν μερικοὶ ἄνθρωποι τοῦ Ἰακώβου, ἔτρωγε στὰ κοινὰ δεῖπνα μαζί μὲ τοὺς ἐθνικούς. Σάν ἦρθαν ὅμως, ὑποχωροῦσε καὶ διαχώριζε τὴ θέση του, ἐπειδὴ φοβόταν τοὺς Ἰουδαίους. (πρβλ. Γαλ. 2:11). Ἡ ἀπάντηση δὲν εἶναι διαφορετικὴ: ἡ διαφωνία ἦταν γιὰ τὴν τακτικὴ τοῦ Πέτρου ἀπέναντι στοὺς ἐθνικούς καὶ ὄχι γιὰ τὴν πίστη καὶ τὴν ἀλήθεια πού ζοῦσε. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας, εἶπαμε, πρόβαλε καὶ προβάλλει συνεχῶς τὴν ἐνότητά τους μέσα καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν εἰκόνα τῆς ἑορτῆς τους, ὅπου τοὺς τοποθετεῖ σὲ ἑναγκαλισμὸ.

Ἡ μεγάλη λοιπὸν ἑορτὴ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου, πού ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας τὴ συνοδεύει καὶ μὲ νηστεία (γι' αὐτοὺς γίνεται ἡ νηστεία καὶ ὄχι γιὰ τὴν ἐπομένη, τῆς σύναξης τῶν ἀποστόλων), καὶ μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει τὴ βασικὴ ἀλήθεια τῆς πίστεώς μας. Ὅτι δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ σωθοῦμε καὶ νὰ σχετιστοῦμε μὲ τὸν Χριστό, ἂν μαζί μὲ τὴν πίστη μας σὲ Ἐκεῖνον δὲν κινητοποιηθεῖ καὶ ὅλη ἡ ζωὴ μας. Μὲ ἀπλᾶ λόγια, ἡ ἀγάπη μας γιὰ τὸν συνάνθρωπο (αὐτὸ σημαίνει κυρίως κινητοποίηση τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μας) ἀποτελεῖ καὶ τὴ σπουδαιότερη ἐπιβεβαίωση τῆς πραγματικῆς πίστεώς μας.

## Μὲ Κάθε Τρόπο ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς Πολεμεῖ τὴ Θεότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ

Μητροπολίτης Αἰτωλίας καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας Κοσμάς.

«Κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου...»

[Ἄποκ. 3:11].

† † †

**Η** προτροπή αὐτή, εἶναι προτροπή τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος πρὸς τὸν Ἐπίσκοπο τῆς Φιλαδελφείας καὶ περιέχεται στὸ τρίτο κεφάλαιο τοῦ Ἱεροῦ βιβλίου τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως. Προτρέπει, τὸ Πανάγιο Πνεῦμα, τὸν Ἐπίσκοπο νὰ διαφυλάξῃ θερμῆ, ἀκεραία καὶ ἀμόλυντη τὴν πίστι του. Κράτα καλὰ τὴν πίστι πὸν ἔχεις, γιὰ νὰ μὴν πάρῃ κανεὶς τὸ στεφάνι σου καὶ τὴν ἀνταμοιβὴ τῶν ἀγῶνων σου.

Σήμερα, ἡ προτροπή αὐτὴ εἶναι κατ'ἐξοχὴν ἐπίκαιρη, ἀξιοπρόσεκτη καὶ σωτήρια γιὰ ὄλους μας, κληρικούς καὶ λαϊκούς. Μιλᾷ καὶ στὸν καθένα μας τὸ Πανάγιο Πνεῦμα: Χριστιανὲ τῆς συγχρόνου ἐποχῆς, «κράτει ὃ ἔχεις...». Μένε στίς ἐπάξεις τοῦ Ὁρθοδόξου ἀγῶνος σου. Κράτησε καλὰ, δυναμικὰ στὸ νοῦ καὶ τὴν καρδιά σου, τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια καὶ πίστι, κράτησέ τὴν καθαρῆ, ἀμόλυντη, ἀκαινοτόμητη καὶ ζέουσα. Φύλαξέ τὴν ὡς κόρη ὀφθαλμοῦ, γιατί ὑπάρχει κίνδυνος μέγας, νὰ σοῦ τὴν μολύνουν, νὰ τὴν ἀλλοιώσουν, νὰ τὴν παραχαράξουν καὶ σὺ νὰ χάσης τὴ σωστὴ πορεία γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία σου.

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη ἀλήθεια, ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία μας, ἀγαπητοί, εἶναι μοναδικὸς θησαυρὸς, οὐράνιος, θεῖος. Δὲν τὴν ἐφεῦρε οὔτε ἄνθρωπος, οὔτε ἄγγελος. Τὴν ἀπεκάλυψε Ἀὐτὸς ὁ Σαρκοθεῖς Κύριος καὶ Θεὸς μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ Ἕνας τῆς Ἁγ. Τριάδος, τὴν ἐδίδαξε στὸν κόσμον καὶ τὴν ἐπικύρωσε μὲ τὸ Πανάγιο Αἶμα τῆς σταυρικῆς Του θυσίας, γιὰ νὰ ἔχει αἰώνιο, ἀπόσβλητο καὶ ἀκατάλυτο κῦρος. Αὐτὴ τὴν ἀλήθεια, ὅπως τὴν προσέφερε ὁ Κύριος, τὴν ἐκήρυξαν οἱ θεοκῆρυκες Ἀπόστολοι, τὴν κατηγγάϊσαν οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες καὶ οἱ Ὁμολογητὲς μὲ τὴ μαρτυρικὴ τους ὁμολογία, τὴν ἐστερέωσαν οἱ μάρτυρες καὶ νεομάρτυρες μὲ τὸ ἀγιασμένο αἶμα τους.

Ὅλοι τους, μὲ τὴν ὑπακοή, τὸ σεβασμὸ καὶ τὴν πιστότητα στὸ λόγο τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, χωρὶς ἐγωϊσμοὺς καὶ παρεμβάσεις, διετήρησαν μέσα στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία μας καὶ παρέδωσαν σὲ μᾶς, τὴν ἀποκαλυφθεῖσα, τὴν σώζουσα ἀλήθεια, ἀκριβῆ, τελεία, καθαρῆ, ἀγνή, ἀνόθευτη, ἀκαινοτόμητη, ἀπηλλαγμένη ἀπὸ πλάνες καὶ αἰρετικὲς δοξασίες. Οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας μὲ πολὺ φόβο, ταπεινῶσι καὶ προσευχή, καὶ ὄχι μὲ τίς πυγολαμπίδες τῆς ἐγωϊστικῆς φιλοσοφικῆς καὶ κοσμικῆς σκέψεως, διαχειρίστηκαν τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοπνεύστου Εὐαγγελίου. Ἀπόδειξις ἡ ὁμολογία τῆς

Ζ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου: «Ἡμεῖς κατὰ πάντα τῶν θεοφόρων Πατέρων ἡμῶν τὰ δόγματα καὶ πράγματα κρατοῦντες, κηρύσσομεν ἐν ἐνὶ στόματι καὶ μία καρδιά, μηδὲν προστιθέντες, μηδὲν ἀφαιροῦντες τῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν παραδοθέντων ἡμῖν». Αὐτὸ ἐγίνε καὶ γίνεται πάντοτε στὴν μόνῃ ἐν κόσμῳ Ἐκκλησία, τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο Ἐκκλησία μας.

Ὁ Ἅγ. Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος ὁμολογεῖ: «Ἡ πίστις μου εἶναι αὐτὴ τὴν ὁποία ἤκουσα ἀπὸ τὰ θεῖα λόγια, τὴν ὁποία ἐδιδάχθην παρὰ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων... τὴν πίστι αὐτὴ δὲν θὰ παύσω νὰ διδάσκω. Μαζί της ἐγεννήθηκα καὶ μὲ αὐτὴν “συναπέροχομαι” τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς...».

Καὶ ὁ π. Γεώργιος Φλωρόφσκυ ὑπογραμμίζει: «Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία εἶναι αὐτὴ μὲ τὴν Ἐκκλησία ὄλων των ἐποχῶν καὶ μάλιστα μὲ τὴν πρώτην Ἐκκλησίαν...».

Κάθε θησαυρὸς, ὅμως, ἔχει ἐχθροὺς φοβερούς, διατρέχει κινδύνους μεγάλους ἀπὸ ἄρπαγες, κλέπτες, ληστὲς. Μελετώντας τὴν αἱματοβαμμένη πορεία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μας, βλέπουμε τοὺς ἐκάστοτε «λύκους βαρεῖς», τοὺς ἀσπόνδους ἐχθροὺς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας, διὰ τῆς ὁποίας ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου θέλει νὰ ματαιώσῃ τὴ σωτηρία μας.

Ἰουδαῖοι, Ἀρειανοί, Πνευματομάχοι, Μονοφυσίτες, Εἰκονομάχοι, Μάρτυρες τοῦ Ἰεχωβά, Χιλιαστὲς, Παπικοί, Οὐνίτες, Προτεστάντες, Πεντηκοστιανοί, Εὐαγγελικοί, καὶ τόσοι ἄλλοι, «ὡς λέοντες ὠρυόμενοι», πάντοτε καὶ σήμερα, διακονοῦντες τὸν ἀρχέκακο δράκοντα, ροκανίζουν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέρα τὸ ἅγιο δένδρο τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μας.

Σ' αὐτοὺς ὄλους νὰ προσθέσουμε τὸν νεοεποχίτικο ἐχθρὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας καὶ πίστεως, τὴν παναίρεσι τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ. Μὲ κάθε τρόπο ὁ Οἰκουμενισμὸς σήμερα, μὲ σκοτεινὲς δυνάμεις, ὑπουλα καὶ φανερά, μὲ ἀλλοίωσι τῶν θεσμῶν, τῶν αἰωνίων ἀληθειῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ διωγμοὺς ἀκόμη, πολεμεῖ τὴ θεότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας καὶ θέλει νὰ θέσῃ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Ἀναστάντος Κυρίου καὶ Θεοῦ μας ἀνάμεσα στὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ψευτοθεῶν τοῦ κόσμου. Ἀπόδειξις ἡ ἀλλοίωσι τοῦ μαθήματος τῶν θρησκευτικῶν στὰ σχολεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἑλλάδος μας.

Ἀγαπητοὶ ἀδελφοί, τὴ φωνὴ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἅς τὴν ἀκούσουμε καλὰ σήμερα, πὸν γιορτάζει ἡ μεγάλη μας μητέρα, ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία μας. «Κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου...».

Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος γράφοντας στὸν μαθητὴ τοῦ Ἀπόστολο Τιμόθεο, πὸν ἦταν Ἐπίσκοπος Ἐφέσου, τὸν προτρέπει: «Ὡ Τιμόθεε, τὴν παραθήκην φύλαξον, ἐκτρεπόμενος τὰς βεβήλους κενοφωνίας καὶ ἀντιθέσεις τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως...». «Παιδί μου Τιμόθεε, φύλαξε καλὰ τὴν ἀλήθεια τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, πὸν μᾶς ἐμπιστεύθηκε ὁ Κύριος ὡς πολύτιμο θησαυρὸ καὶ



ἀπόφυγε τοὺς κούφιους καὶ ματαίους λόγους, πὸν βεβηλώνουν καὶ νοθεύουν τὴν ἀλήθεια». (Α΄ Τιμ. 6:20).

Τὴ φωνὴ τῆς μητέρας μᾶς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἄς ἀκούσουμε σήμερα καὶ μεῖς. Τὴν μεταφέρουν σὲ μᾶς οἱ Ἅγιοι Ἀπόστολοι, οἱ Πατέρες, οἱ ὁμολογητές, οἱ μάρτυρες, οἱ νεομάρτυρες.

Ἕλληνες Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, σταθῆτε ἄγρυπνοι στὶς ἐπάλλξεις. Κρατᾶτε, φυλάξτε αὐτὸ πὸν ἔχετε, τὸ θησαυρὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας. Μόνο μὲ τὴν ἀδαμαντίνη Ὁρθόδοξο ἀλήθεια, θὰ ἐπιτύχουμε τὴ σωτηρία μας. Ἐφρῦαξαν οἱ πολέμιοι τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας. Ἐφρῦαξαν τὰ χωρὶς Χριστὸ ἔθνη. Θέλουν νὰ ξεριζώσουν τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ἀπὸ τὶς καρδιές μας. Θέλουν νὰ κάνουν ἄθρησκη τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας. Τὴν Ἑλλάδα τῶν Πατέρων, τῶν ὁσίων, τῶν μαρτύρων, τῶν νεομαρτύρων, τῶν ἡρώων των θαυμάτων.

Κρατεῖστε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία ζωντανὴ καὶ καθαρὴ, ἄμειπτη στὴν ψυχὴ σας καὶ τὴ ζωὴ σας. Μὴν προδώσετε τὸ Χριστὸ μας. «**Ἄν δὲν Τὸν ἀρνηθοῦμε δὲν μποροῦν νὰ μᾶς Τὸν πάρουν**», λέει ὁ Ἅγ. Κοσμάς ὁ Αἰτωλός.

Νὰ εὐχηθοῦμε, ἀγαπητοὶ ὅλοι μας, κληρικοὶ καὶ λαϊκοί, νὰ κρατήσουμε σφικτὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο ἀλήθεια στὴ ζωὴ μας, γιὰ νὰ λάβουμε καὶ μεῖς τὸν ἀμαράντινο τῆς οὐρανοῦ δόξης στέφανο. Ἀμήν.

Μετά πατρικῶν ἐορτῶν εὐχῶν,

+ Ὁ Αἰτωλίας καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας Κοσμάς



**Ἡ** διδασκαλία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Χριστοῦ, διατυπωθεῖσα ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων, ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων Συνόδων, περὶ τῶν αἰρετικῶν εἶναι ἡ ἐξῆς: **αἱ αἱρέσεις δὲν εἶναι Ἐκκλησία, οὔτε δύνανται νὰ εἶναι Ἐκκλησία**. Διὰ τοῦτο δὲν δύνανται αὐταὶ νὰ ἔχουν ἅγια Μυστήρια.

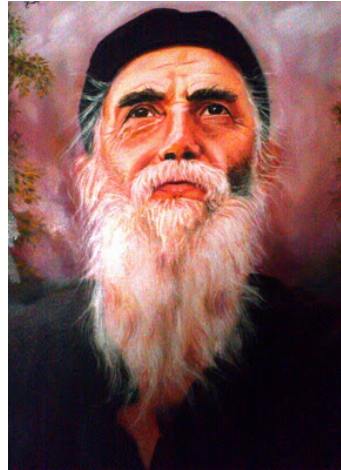
Ἐνεκα τούτου, συμφώνως πρὸς τὸ φρόνημα τῆς Καθολικῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας καὶ συμφώνως πρὸς ὁλόκληρον τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο Παράδοσιν, **ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία δὲν παραδέχεται τὴν ὑπαρξίν ἄλλων μυστηρίων ἔξω ἀπ' αὐτὴν**, οὔτε θεωρεῖ αὐτὰ ὡς μυστήρια, ἕως ὅτου προσέλθῃ τις διὰ τῆς μετανοίας ἐκ τῆς αἰρετικῆς «ἐκκλησίας», δηλαδὴ ψευδοεκκλησίας, εἰς τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Μέχρις ὅτου δὲ μένει τις ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἠνωμένος μετ' αὐτῆς διὰ τῆς μετανοίας, μέχρι τότε εἶναι οὗτος διὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν αἰρετικὸς καὶ ἀναποφεύκτως εὐρίσκειται ἐκτὸς τῆς σωτηριώδους Κοινωνίας = Communio. Διότι «**τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνομίας; ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος**». (Β΄ Κορ. 6:14).

**Ἅγιος Ἰουστίνος Πόποβιτς**

## Ἐπὶ Συμπροσευχῶν

**Ὁ Ἅγιος Παῖσιος εἶχε μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη εὐαισθησία, γι' αὐτὸ δὲν δεχόταν συμπροσευχὲς καὶ κοινωνία μὲ πρόσωπα μὴ Ὁρθόδοξα.**

*Γερομονάχου Ἰσαὰκ «Βίος Ὀσίου Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀγορείτου», Γερὸν Ἡσυχαστήριον «Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Πρόδρομος» Μεταμόρφωσις Χαλκιδικῆς.*



**Ο** Γέροντας ἦταν μοναχὸς μὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸ φρόνημα καὶ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ συνείδηση. Οἱ ἐκκλησιολογικὲς του ἀπόψεις ἦταν πλήρως Ὁρθοδόξοι. Πίστευε ὅτι ἡ Ἐκκλησία κατέχει τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς ἀποκαλυφθείσης Ἀλήθειας. Ἐλεγε: «Ὅ,τι ἔχει ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι λαμπικαρισμένο». Ἡ σωτηρία τῶν ἀνθρώπων

κατορθώνεται στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Αἰσθανόταν ὅτι ἀποτελεῖ μέλος τῆς. Ὑπέτασσε τὸ θέλημά του καὶ θυσιαζόταν γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τῆς. Ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ ἄσκησή του εἶχε ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἀναφορά. Πίστευε ὅτι, «ὅταν διορθώσω τὸν ἑαυτό μου, διορθώνεται ἓνα κομμάτι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας». Ἡ ἀγάπη του γιὰ αὐτὴν ἦταν πολὺ μεγάλη. Γιὰ τὴν εὐστάθειά της ὑπέμεινε κόπους καὶ θυσιές, γιὰ τὴν δόξα τῆς προσευχόταν συνεχῶς. Γιὰ τὴν ἐνότητά της ἀγωνίστηκε πολυτρόπως. Ἐγραφε: «Δὲν εἶμαι ἀπὸ ἐκείνους πὸν ἔχουν κάνει τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν κόμμα. Ἀγαπῶ τοὺς καλοὺς ἐργάτας τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βοηθῶ ὅσο μπορῶ».

Βοήθησε πολλοὺς νέους νὰ γίνουν καλοὶ κληρικοὶ, ἐργάτες στὸν ἀμπελώνα τοῦ Κυρίου. Τοὺς συμβούλευε: «Ἐργασθεῖτε ταπεινὰ μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ ὁ Κύριος θὰ σᾶς προδώσει (ἀναδείξει, φανερώσει) στὰ μάτια τῶν ἀνθρώπων». Κάποιοι ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς σήμερα κοσμοῦν τὴν Ἱεραρχία.

Ἦθελε οἱ κληρικοὶ νὰ ἐτοιμάζουν τὸν λαὸ μὲ τὴν μετάνοια, γιὰ νὰ ἀποφύγουμε τὴν δικαία ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἡ διακονία τους νὰ ἀποβλέπῃ στὴν σωτηρία τῶν πιστῶν καὶ στὴν δόξα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὄχι στὴν αὐτοπροβολή. Ἐλεγε γιὰ κληρικὸ πὸν ἐπετέλεσε ἔργο ἀξιόλογο, ὅτι «θὰ εἶχε... ἀξία τὸ ἔργο του, ἂν δὲν ἦταν κάτι τὸ προσωπικὸ».

Ὁ ἴδιος ἀθόρυβα ἀπὸ τὸ ἀσκητήριό του παρακολουθοῦσε τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴ κατάστασι μὲ ἐνδιαφέρον. Προσευχόταν, μιλοῦσε, ἔγραφε καὶ, ὅταν τὸ ἔκρινε ἀναγκαῖο, ἐξερχόταν στὸν κόσμον γιὰ κάποια ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ὑπόθεσι.

Πονούσε πολύ, όταν υπήρχαν σκάνδαλα και εκκλησιαστικές κρίσεις. Τότε προσευχόταν περισσότερο. «Σὰς ἔγραψα τὸ βαθὺ νόμο μου», ἔγραφε σὲ ἐπιστολή του σὲ μία τέτοια περὸδο (12-4-75), καὶ ἐξηγοῦσε γιατί συμβαίνουν αὐτά: «Λεῖπει ἡ πατερικὴ πνευματικὴ ἀρχοντιὰ καὶ ἐπόμενο ἐῖναι νὰ μαλώνουμε σὰν τοὺς γύφτους».

Τηροῦσε τοὺς ἱεροὺς κανόνες καὶ τὴν τάξη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Σεβόταν τὶς ἀρχές καὶ τὰ θέσμιμα τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους. Χωρὶς γραπτὴ ἄδεια ἐξόδου δὲν ἔβγαινε ἀπὸ τὸ Ὅρος.

Εἶχε εὐλάβεια στοὺς ἐπισκόπους. Ἰδιαίτερος σεβόταν τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ θρόνο. Ἀναγνώριζε τὴν πανορθόδοξη ἀποστολή του καὶ κατανοῦσε τὴν δύσκολη θέση ποὺ βρίσκεται. Προσευχόταν πολὺ καὶ τὸν ὑπερασπίστηκε δημόσια σὲ πολλὲς περιπτώσεις.

Ἀπὸ τὸ Στόμιο εἶδαμε τὸν Γέροντα σφοδρὸ πολέμιό τῶν αἱρέσεων. Στὰ θέματα τῆς πίστεως ἦταν ἀκριβῆς καὶ ἀσυγκατάβατος.

Εἶχε μεγάλη Ὁρθόδοξη εὐαισθησία, γι' αὐτὸ δὲν δεχόταν συμπροσευχές καὶ κοινωνία μὲ πρόσωπα μὴ Ὁρθόδοξα. Τόνιζε: «Γιὰ νὰ συμπροσευχηθοῦμε μὲ κάποιον, πρέπει νὰ συμφωνοῦμε στὴν πίστη». Διέκοπτε τὶς σχέσεις του ἢ ἀπέφευγε νὰ δῆ κληρικούς ποὺ συμμετείχαν σὲ κοινὲς προσευχὲς μὲ ἑτεροδόξους. Τὰ «μυστήρια» τῶν ἑτεροδόξων δὲν τὰ ἀναγνώριζε καὶ συμβούλευε οἱ προσερχόμενοι στὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, νὰ κατηχοῦνται καλὰ πρὶν βαπτισθῶν.

Καταπολέμησε τὸν οἰκουμενισμό καὶ μιλοῦσε γιὰ τὸ μεγαλεῖο καὶ τὴν μοναδικότητα τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας, τὴν πληροφορία του ἀρμόμενος ἀπὸ τὴν ἐν καρδίᾳ του θεία χάρι. Ὁ βίος του ἀποδείκνυε τὴν ὑπεροχὴ τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας.

Γιὰ ἓνα διάστημα εἶχε διακόψει μαζὶ μὲ ὅλο σχεδὸν τὸ ὑπόλοιπο Ἅγιον Ὅρος, τὸ μνημόσυνο τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀθηναγόρα γιὰ τὰ ἐπικίνδυνα ἀνοίγματα του πρὸς τοὺς Ρωμαιοκαθολικούς. Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔκανε μὲ πόνο: «Κάνω προσευχή», εἶπε σὲ κάποιον, «γιὰ νὰ κόβῃ ὁ Θεὸς μέρες ἀπὸ μένα καὶ νὰ τὶς δίνῃ στὸν πατριάρχη Ἀθηναγόρα, γιὰ νὰ ὀλοκληρώσῃ τὴν μετάνοιά του».

Γιὰ τοὺς Ἀντιχαλκηδονίους (Μονοφυσίτες) εἶπε: «Αὐτοὶ δὲν λένε ὅτι δὲν κατάλαβαν τοὺς ἁγίους Πατέρες, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἱ ἅγιοι Πατέρες δὲν τοὺς κατάλαβαν. Δηλαδή σὰν νὰ ἔχουν αὐτοὶ δίκαιο καὶ τοὺς παρεξηγήσανε».

Χαρακτήρισε ὡς βλασφημία κατὰ τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων τὴν προτεινόμενη κάθαρση τῶν Λειτουργικῶν βιβλίων ἀπὸ τὸν χαρακτηρισμὸ τοῦ αἱρετικοῦ γιὰ τὸν Διόσκορο καὶ Σεβήρο. Εἶπε: «Τόσοι ἅγιοι Πατέρες ποὺ εἶχαν θεῖο φωτισμὸ καὶ ἦταν σύγχρονοι δὲν τοὺς κατάλαβαν καὶ τοὺς παρεξήγησαν καὶ ἐρχόμαστε ἐμεῖς μετὰ ἀπὸ τόσους αἰῶνες νὰ διορθώσουμε τοὺς ἁγίους

Πατέρες; Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ θαῦμα τῆς ἁγίας Εὐφημίας δὲν τὸ ὑπολογίζουν; Καὶ αὐτὴ παρεξήγησε τὸν τόμο τῶν αἱρετικῶν».

Χωρὶς νὰ ἐπιδιώκει νὰ φαίνεται ὁμολογητῆς, μὲ τὸν τρόπο του, ἀντιδροῦσε, μιλοῦσε καὶ ἔγραφε σὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πρόσωπα. Ἦ «Ἐκκλησία», ἔλεγε, «δὲν εἶναι καράβι τοῦ κάθε ἐπισκόπου νὰ κἀνῃ ὅ,τι θέλει». Οἱ ἀντιδράσεις τοὺς αὐτὲς συνωδεύονταν ἀπὸ πολλὴ προσευχὴ καὶ ἀγάπη γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἀλλὰ καὶ γιὰ τοὺς παρεκτρεπομένους, καὶ προϋπέθεταν ἀπάθεια, διάκριση καὶ ἄνωθεν φωτισμὸ.

Ἐνα ἄλλο θέμα ποὺ ἀπασχόλησε τὸν Γέροντα ἦταν τὸ θέμα τοῦ ἡμερολογίου. Πονούσε γιὰ τὸν χωρισμὸ καὶ προσευχόταν. Λυπόταν γιὰ τὶς παρατάξεις τῶν παλαιοημερολογιτῶν ποὺ εἶναι ξεκομμένες σὰν τὰ κλήματα ἀπὸ τὴν Ἄμπελο, καὶ δὲν ἔχουν κοινωνία μὲ τὰ Ὁρθόδοξα Πατριαρχεῖα καὶ τὶς κατὰ τόπους αὐτοκέφαλες Ὁρθόδοξες Ἐκκλησίες. Μερικὲς τέτοιες ἐνορίες στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ στὴν Θεσσαλονίκη ἐνώθησαν καθ' ὑπόδειξή του μὲ τὴν Ἐκκλησία, κρατώντας τὸ παλαιὸ ἡμερολόγιο.

Ἐλεγε: «Καλὸ ἦταν νὰ μὴν ὑπῆρχε αὐτὴ ἡ ἐορτολογικὴ διαφορὰ, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι θέμα πίστεως». Στὶς ἐνστάσεις ὅτι τὸ νέο ἡμερολόγιο τὸ ἔκανε Πάπας, ἀπαντοῦσε: «Τὸ νέο ἡμερολόγιο τὸ ἔκανε Πάπας καὶ τὸ παλιὸ εἰδωλολάτρης», ἐννοώντας τὸν Ἰούλιο Καίσαρα.

Μὲ τὴν ἀγάπη, τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ τὴν διακρισὴ του, γνώριζε πότε νὰ μιλά, πῶς νὰ ἐνεργῇ καὶ νὰ βοηθᾷ ἀθόρυβα τὴν μητέρα Ἐκκλησία, ἀποφεύγοντας τὰ ἄκρα καὶ θεραπεύοντας πληγὲς ποὺ ταιλαιπωροῦν τὸ σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ σκανδαλίζου τοὺς πιστοὺς.



Τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ σχίσματος αὐτοὶ (οἱ Λατῖνοι) τὴν ἔδωσαν, βάζοντας τὴν προσθήκη (Φιλιόκβε) ὀλοφάνερα, ἐνῶ πρὶν τὴν ἔλεγαν ἐν κρυπτῷ μέσα ἀπὸ τὰ δόντια τους. Ἐμεῖς λοιπὸν ἤλθαμε σὲ σχίσμα μὲ αὐτοὺς πρωτύτερα, ἢ πιδ σωστὰ αὐτοὺς τοὺς σχίσασαμε καὶ τοὺς ἀποκόψασαμε ἀπὸ τὸ κοινὸ σῶμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Γιατί; Πές μου ποῖο ἀπὸ τὰ δύο ἰσχύει, ὅτι εἶχαν ὀρθὴ διδασκαλία, ἢ ὅτι ὀρθῶς ἔκαναν τὴν προσθήκη; Καὶ ποῖος θὰ μπορούσε νὰ πεί αὐτό, ἐὰν δὲν εἶναι σφόδρα σαλεμένος στὸ μυαλό; Ἀλλὰ θεωροῦμε ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἔχουν ἄτοπα καὶ δυσσεβῆ φρονήματα καὶ ἔκαναν αὐτὴν τὴν παράλογη προσθήκη. Ἐπομένως ὡς αἱρετικούς τοὺς ἀποστραφήκαμε καὶ γι' αὐτὸ χωρισθήκαμε ἀπὸ αὐτούς.

Ἅγιος Μᾶρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός

## Μὲ Ἄθεους, μὲ Ἐκκλησιομάχους, μὲ Καταδιεφθαρμένους Πολιτικούς «Τὸ Ἔθνος δὲν Στέκη»

Γράφει ὁ Δημήτρης Νατσιός, δάσκαλος-Κιλκίς.

Στὸν δεύτερο τόμο τῶν «Ἀπομνημονευμάτων τοῦ Κολοκοτρώνη»—(ἐκδ. Γ. Βαλέτα, σελ. 323)—ἐντόπισα ἓνα πολὺ ὠραῖο καὶ διδακτικὸ ἐπεισόδιο, ποὺ διαδραματίζεται κατὰ τὴν Ἁγιασμένη Ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21. Τὸ διηγείται ὁ Γεώργιος Τερτσέτης—τί σπουδαῖος ἄνθρωπος—σὲ λόγο του στὶς 25 Μαρτίου τοῦ 1855, στὴν τότε Βουλὴ τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Τὸ μεταφέρω, ὡς ἔχει:

«Κύριοι ἀκροαταί, εἰς τὰ 1822, πολεμιστὴς, στρατιωτὴς περίφημος, ἐπῆγε εἰς σεβάσιμον πνευματικὸν νὰ ξομολογηθεῖ, καὶ νὰ μεταλάβει.

Ἐξομολογήθη, ὁ πνευματικὸς του εὐχήθη, τὸν ἐχαίδευσεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ εἶπε:

- Δὲν ἤμπορῶ νὰ σὲ δώσω μεταλαβιά.

- Διατί;

- Χύνεις αἷμα ἀνθρώπινο...!

Ἵρξισθη ὁ στρατιώτης καὶ ἔτρεξε παραπονούμενος εἰς τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Μεθώνης. Τοῦ εἶπε ὅσα λέγει ὁ πνευματικὸς, ὁ στρατιώτης ἦτο θυμώδης. Τὸν ἤκουσεν ὁ ἐπίσκοπος. Τὴν Κυριακὴ, τοῦ λέγει, ἦσου (=νὰ εἶσαι) εἰς τὴν Λειτουργίαν, ἦσου πλησίον μου.

Ἦλθε ἡ Κυριακὴ, ψάλλεται ἡ Λειτουργία. Ὁ Δεσπότης εἰς τὴν μεσινὴ θύρα, εἰς τὴν ὥρα τῆς μεταλαβιάς, κρατώντας τὸ δισκοπότηρο, φωνάζει τὸν στρατιώτη.

- Ἔλα, τοῦ λέγει, πάρε, κράτει τὸ δισκοπότηρο, μετάλαβε μὲ τὰ ἴδια σου τὰ χέρια, τὰ χέρια σου εἶναι πλέον ἄθθα, πλέον εὐεργετικὰ εἰς τὴν πατρίδα ἀπὸ τὰ ἐδικά μας. Ἡμεῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς δεόμεθα τὸν Ὑψιστο μὲ τὴ φωνή· ἐσύ, σταίνοντας τὰ... στήθη σου, εἰς τὰ βόλια τοῦ ἐχθροῦ».

Κείμενο ποὺ μοσχοβολάει εὐωδία λευτεριάς, τὰ ἄνθη τὰ μυρίβνοα τῆς ἀρχοντικῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μας. Λόγια ὅμως ποὺ διδάσκουν καὶ σήμερα, τὴν γενιὰ τὴν δικιά μας ποὺ εἶναι γιὰ τὰ... πανηγύρια. (Στὰ μέρη μου, στὴν ἀλίπληκτο Πιερία, λέμε μιὰ «νόστιμη» παροιμία: «Ἡ ψείρα μας στὸν Ἑλυμπο καὶ μεῖς στὰ πανηγύρια». Δηλαδή ἡ φτώχεια καὶ ἡ δυστυχία μᾶς ἔχει ἀφανίσει καὶ μεῖς ἀσχολοῦμαστε μὲ τὶς προστυχιᾶς καὶ τὶς παλαβομάρες τῶν «καντιποτένιων», ὅπως τοὺς

ὀνόμαζε τοὺς πολιτικάντηδες, ὁ πατριδοφύλακας στρατηγὸς Μακρυγιάννης).

Στὸ ἐπεισόδιο τοῦ «Ἱεροῦ Ἀγῶνος» ποὺ μᾶς διέσωσε ὁ Τερτσέτης, διαβάζουμε γιὰ τὸ πῶς σώθηκε τὸ δοῦλον Γένος κατὰ τὴν μακραίωνη αἰχμαλωσία στοὺς Σαρακηνοὺς. (Ἀναζητώντας κάποτε τὴν ἐτυμολογία τῆς λέξεως Σαρακηνός, βρῆκα στὸ βιβλίο τοῦ Ν. Βασιλειάδη «Ἰσλάμ-Ὁρθοδοξία», σελ. 85, τὸ ἐξῆς ἀξιοσημείωτο. Ὁ Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Δαμασκηνὸς ἔγραφε ὅτι «Σαρακηνοὺς τοὺς Ἰσραηλίτας καλοῦσιν, ὡς ἐκ τῆς Σάρρας κενούς διὰ τὸ εἰρησθαι ὑπὸ τῆς Ἄγαρ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ: Σάρρα κενὴν μὲ ἀπέλυσε»).

Σκοτάδι ψηλαφητὸ ἔπεσε καὶ σήμερα πάνω στὴν πατρίδα μας, τὰ ἐντάλματα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου ἀνατρέπονται καὶ ποδοπατοῦνται, τὰ παιδιὰ μας, μὲσω τῆς ἐλεεινῆς ἐκπαίδευσης, τὰ ξεμυρώνουν καὶ τὰ ξεβαπτίζουν, μᾶς κυβεροῦν ἄνθρωποι χειρότεροι καὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Κι ἂν αὐτὸ φαίνεται ὑπερβολικὸ διαβάσω τὰ λόγια τοῦ Παπουλάκου: «Εἶναι ντροπὴ μας, ἓνα Γένος ποὺ μὲ τὸ αἷμα του πύργωσε τὴ λευτεριά του, ποὺ πορπάτησε τὴ δύσκολη ἀνηφορία, νὰ παραδεχτεῖ πὼς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ πορπατήσῃ στὸν ἴσιο δρόμο ἅμα εἰρήνεψε κι ὅτι δὲν ξέρουμε μεῖς νὰ σιγυρίσουμε τὸ σπίτι, ποὺ μὲ τὸ αἷμα μας

λευτερώσαμε, ἀλλὰ ξέρουν νὰ τὸ σιγυρίσουν ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ δὲν πολέμησαν, ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ δὲν πίστεψαν στὸν ἄγωνα, ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ πᾶνε νὰ μᾶς ἀποκόψουν ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ πασχίζουμε νὰ μᾶς ριξοῦνε στὴ σκλαβιά ἄλλων ἀφεντάδων ποὺ εἶναι πιὸ διαμονισμένοι ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Γιατί καὶ κεῖνα ποὺ σεβάστηκε ὁ Τούρκος, τ' ἄθεα γράμματα τὰ πετᾶνε καὶ πᾶνε νὰ τὰ ξεριζώσουνε... Τ' ἄθεα γράμματα ὑφαίνουνε τὸ σάβανο τοῦ Γένους. Αὐτὰ λοιπὸν τὰ γράμματα θὰ μάθουμε στὰ παιδιὰ μας» (Κ. Μπαστιά, ὁ Παπουλάκος, Ἐκδοτικὴ Ἀθηνῶν, 1997, σελ. 145-146).

Ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα, τὰ ἄθεα γράμματα, μᾶς ἔριξαν στὴν σκλαβιά ἄλλων ἀφεντάδων πιὸ δαιμονισμένων ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους. Ψηφίζονται νόμοι ποὺ μᾶς ἀποκόπτουν ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστό, ποὺ ξεριζώνουν ὅσια καὶ ἱερά, ποὺ ὑφαίνουν—φοβεροὶ λόγοι—τὸ σάβανο τοῦ πάλαι ποτὲ Ὁρθόδοξου Γένους τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ποὺ ἀκυρώνουν τὴν ἐπανάσταση τοῦ '21. Διακόσια χρόνια μετὰ βαδίζουμε ὀλοταχῶς γιὰ ἱστορικὴ εὐθανασία... ἐκτὸς ἄν...



Ἐκτὸς ἂν μιμηθοῦμε τοὺς ἡρωϊκοὺς προγόνους μας. Τί μᾶς διδάσκει τὸ κείμενο τοῦ προλόγου μετὸν περίφημο πολεμιστὴ καὶ τὸν ἅγιο Ἐπίσκοπο Μεθώνης;

Ὁ ἀγωνιστὴς εἶχε πνευματικὸ καὶ ἐξομολογεῖτο γιὰ νὰ μεταλάβει.

Ἐν μέσῳ ἐπανάστασης, μετὸν Τούρκους νὰ θερίζουν, νὰ τηγανίζουν τὸ Ρωμαϊκὸ, μετὰ σφαγῆς, ἀρπαγῆς καὶ γενοκτονίας, ἡ μετάνοια δὲν ἔλειπε.

**«Γιὰ τῆς πατρίδος τὴν ἐλευθερίαν  
γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν πίστιν τὴν ἁγίαν  
γι' αὐτὰ τὰ δύο πολέμῳ...».**

Πολεμοῦσαν καὶ μετανουοῦσαν, γι' αὐτὸ ἦταν Ἁγιασμένη ἡ Ἐπανάσταση. Τί προκοπὴ νὰ περιμένει κανεὶς σήμερα ὅταν ἄθεα ἀπολειψάδια νομοθετοῦν καὶ ψηφίζουν, μετὰ χέρια καὶ ποδάρια, νόμους ποὺ μόνο σὲ πολιτεῖες Σοδόμων καὶ Γομμόρων ἀρμόζουν;

Μετὰ τὴν νίκη στὸ Βαλτέτσι ὁ μεγάλος Κολοκοτρώνης, θὰ πεῖ στὰ παλλικάρια του: (Ἦταν Παρασκευὴ 13 Μαΐου 1821).

«Πρέπει νὰ νηστεύσωμεν ὅλοι διὰ δοξολογίαν ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ νὰ δοξάζεται αἰώνας αἰώνων ἕως οὐ στέκη τὸ ἔθνος, διότι ἦτον ἡ ἐλευθερία τῆς πατρίδος». Τέτοιοι ἄνθρωποι ποὺ μοσχοβολοῦν σὰν τὸ Τίμιο Ξύλο μᾶς ἔσωσαν.

Μὲ ἄθεους, μασόνους, μετὰ καταδιεφθαρμένους πολιτικούς «το ἔθνος δὲν στέκη». «Ἐπλήσθη ἡ γῆ ἀδικίας ἀπ' αὐτῶν...». (Γεν. 6,13).

Τί σπουδαία μορφή καὶ ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος!!! «Ἡμεῖς οἱ ἱερεῖς δεόμεθα τὸν Ὑψιστο μετὰ τὴν φωνή». Καὶ προσευχὴ γιὰ τὴν σωτηρίαν τοῦ Γένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅταν ἦταν ἀνάγκη, ἐπίαναν τὰ στουρναροντούφκα καὶ γίνονταν καπετάνιοι. Οἱ ἱερεῖς, ὁ κληρὸς εἶναι ἡ τελευταία γραμμὴ ἄμυνας τοῦ ἔθνους.

Ἄν ὑποταχθεῖ στὰ θηρία, ἡ Ἑλλάδα τέλειωσε. Τὸ σχολεῖο πλέον ἀλώθηκε, δὲν θὰ μείνει τίποτε ὄρθιο «ἀπὸ τὰ παλιά, δικὰ μας πλούτη». (Παλαμᾶς). Εἴμαστε σὲ δουλεία, σὲ ὑπουλη σκλαβιὰ χειρότερη καὶ ἀπ' τῶν Τούρκων καὶ ἀπ' τῶν Φράγκων. Τὸ ρᾶσο εἶναι ἡ ἀφανὴς ἐθνικὴ σημαία τοῦ Γένους. Νὰ θυμηθεῖ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅτι πάντοτε εἶναι Ἑλληνοσώτριά. Ὡς πότε μιὰ χούφτα ἀφεντάδων πιδ δαιμονισμένων ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους θὰ μᾶς καταστρέφουν;

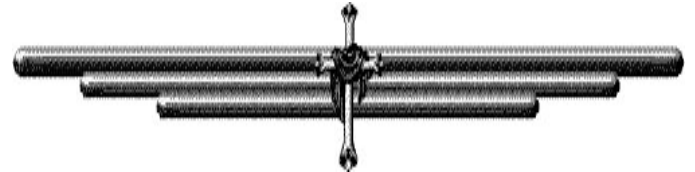
Νὰ κλείσω μετὰ κάτι ποὺ διάβασα στὸ βιβλίον «Μονοτονικὸ, ἐμπειρία 24 ἐτῶν», ἔκδοση τῆς Ι.Σ. τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Διαβάζουμε γιὰ ἓνα γεγονός ποὺ τὸ ἄκουσε καὶ τὸ εἶδε ὁ Κ. Βάρναλης. Μιλᾶ γιὰ τὸν Ψυχάρη, ποὺ ἤθελε νὰ διαλύσει τὴν γλώσσα μας μετὰ τὴν ἰδεοληψίαν του.

«Ὁ Ψυχάρης ἦρθε στὴν Ἑλλάδα πολλὰς φορές. Στὰ 1925 ἦρθε γιὰ τελευταία φορά. Ἐδωσε στὸ θέατρο «Ἀπόλλων» πολλὰς διαλέξεις. Κανένας δὲν

φантаζόταν πόσος κόσμος θὰ γέμιζε ἀσφυκτικὰ τὴν πλατεῖα καὶ τοὺς ἐξώστες. Ὁ Ψυχάρης βγήκε στὴ σκηνὴ μετὰ φράκο καὶ γεμάτος παράσημα. Ἐρριξε μιὰ ματιὰ στὸ ἀκροατήριον καὶ ἄρχισε τὴν διάλεξίν του μὲ αὐτὴν τὴν κουβέντα:

«Βλέπω δασκάλους, βλέπω φοιτητὲς, βλέπω κυρίες, βλέπω ἀξιωματικούς, μὰ δὲν βλέπω κανέναν παπᾶ. Δεῖχτε μου ἓνα παπᾶ νὰ κατεβῶ νὰ τοῦ φιλήσω τὸ χέρι. Αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια δὲν ἦταν δημοσκοπία. Πραγματικὰ ὁ Ψυχάρης πίστευε πὼς δὲν θὰ μπορούσε νὰ κερδίσει τὸ ἔθνος, ἂν δὲν κέρδιζε πρῶτο τὸ σχολεῖον καὶ ὕστερα τὴν ἐκκλησία».

Τὸ σχολεῖον τὸ κέρδισαν... Γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία μᾶς κανοναρχεῖ ὁ ἅγιος Χρυσόστομος: **«Τοιοῦτον ἔχει μέγεθος ἡ Ἐκκλησία: πολεμουμένη νικᾷ. Ἐπιβουλενομένη περιγίνεται ὑβριζομένη, λαμπρότερα καθίσταται δέχεται τραύματα, καὶ οὐ καταπίπτει ὑπὸ τῶν ἐλκῶν. Κλυδωνίζεται ἀλλ' οὐ καταποντίζεται· χεϊμάζεται, ἀλλὰ νανάγιον οὐχ ὑπομένει. Παλαίει, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἡττᾶται πνικτεύει, ἀλλ' οὐ νικᾶται».**



## Ἀνακοίνωσις

**«Ρωμαϊκὸ Ὀδοπορικόν», 6 Ἰουνίου 2019.**

Ἐγούμενοι Ἱερῶν Μονῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, σύμφωνα μετὰ τὸ Τμήμα Πληροφοριῶν τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας, ζητοῦν ἀπὸ τοὺς Οὐκρανοὺς προσκυνητὲς νὰ φέρουν ἐπίσημο ἔγγραφο ὅτι ὑπάγονται στὴν **Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία, ὑπὸ τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Ὀνουφρίου.**

Ὅλοι οἱ προσκυνητὲς ἀπὸ τὴν Οὐκρανία ποὺ ἐπισκέπτονται τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος θὰ πρέπει νὰ φέρουν μαζί τους, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὰ συνηθισμένα ἔγγραφα (διαβατήριον καὶ διαμονητήριον), καὶ ἓνα πιστοποιητικὸ ποὺ θὰ ἐπιβεβαιώνει **τὴν ὑπαγωγή τους στὴν Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας.**

Ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ σχετικὴ ἐγκύκλιος ποὺ ἐστάλη σὲ ὅλους τοὺς Ἐπισκόπους τῶν Ἐπαρχιῶν τῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Οὐκρανίας τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Μόσχας: «Τὸ Γραφεῖο τῆς Μητροπόλεως Κιέβου τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας, μετὰ τὴν εὐλογία τοῦ Μακαριωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Κιέβου καὶ πάσης Οὐκρανίας Ὀνουφρίου, σᾶς ἐνημερώνει ὅτι κατόπιν αἰτήματος Ἱγουμενῶν τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους, κληρικοί, μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοὶ τῆς Οὐκρανικῆς Ὀρθόδοξης Ἐκκλησίας ποὺ ἐπισκέπτονται τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος θὰ πρέπει νὰ φέρουν μαζί τους βεβαίωση ὅτι ἀνήκουν στὴν Οὐκρανικὴ Ὀρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία».

## THE UNBROKEN CONTINUITY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

By Gregory Heers (published with permission). NOTE: Footnotes' text and references hesitantly omitted to reduce the article's length, albeit they significantly add to the quality of the article. The original article can be made available by the author to any student of the history of Romania.

Livy, the Roman historian that lived around the time of Christ, wrote, "I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater or purer than ours, or richer in good citizens and noble deeds." It is therefore lamentable that in the common mind this most glorious empire should be endowed with an end so ignoble and unworthy of mention.

According to any typical history-book, the Roman Empire ended by being divided into two halves: the Western Roman Empire was weakened internally and overrun by barbarian tribes, while the Eastern Empire was somehow transfigured into the "Byzantine Empire" through a gradual process and, although it "survived for another thousand years," apparently deserves no further attention. Thus anyone with an elementary historical education will believe that the Roman Empire, that mighty force that subdued the entire Mediterranean world, silently evaporated, vanished into thin air, at some point in the fifth or sixth century.

This, however, is a lie. There never was a Byzantine Empire. What many now call the "Byzantine Empire" is nothing other than the Roman Empire continuing through the ages. The Roman Empire did not fall in the fifth century. The Roman Empire fell in the fifteenth century AD. Everyone knew this at the time, but the rewriting of history for political purposes has obscured it for the eyes of the contemporary world.

There is, however, yet another threat lying in wait for the Roman Empire. Although acknowledging that historically the Roman Empire was never called "Byzantine," many claim that such an appellation is fitting for its latter phase because in that phase the Empire was substantially different: although it was called the Roman Empire, it was not really Roman but had a different character. It is this slyer attack that the present dissertation wishes to ward off, namely by demonstrating that the continuity of the Roman Empire was never broken. In so doing it will examine various aspects of Roman society through the ages and ask two questions: "Did this aspect change?" and "If it changed, did this change negate the Roman identity?"

Of all the institutions of the **Roman government**, continuity is most obvious in the emperors. Like the rolling years, emperors succeeded one another without interruption from Augustus to Constantine XI. In stark contrast with the custom in other contemporary kingdoms, the imperial office in the Roman Empire was never officially hereditary, since in theory the emperor had to be selected by the Sen-

ate, the people, and the army together. The Roman Empire thus always retained its republican character.

The aforementioned Senate presents another example of the continuity of the Roman Empire, since it also existed to the very last day of the empire. Although it is true that its actual power gradually decreased to the point of non-existence, this was no novel phenomenon of the sixth or seventh century. From the very beginning of the empire, from the reign of Augustus, the emperor had seized the real power for himself, leaving to the Senate only a semblance of authority. As the memory of the republic faded, there was increasingly less need for that semblance of senatorial power and the Senate became an imperial counselor. Nevertheless, even in this the Senate was actually returning to its original state: the *senatus* ("assembly of elders") of the early days of Rome had been precisely an advisor to Rome's first kings.

However hardworking he might be, the emperor needed assistants, governors and prefects over different regions. Immediately after the emperor in rank was the Prefect of the City who was responsible for all the affairs of the capital (e.g. trade, employment, justice, food supply), of New Rome, just as he had been of Old Rome. The provinces had their own governors. In ruling the empire's far-stretching domain, the fourth-century emperors Diocletian and St. Constantine the Great had divorced the military and civilian functions of a province's governor. In the mid-seventh century, however, the political and military rule of the provinces, henceforth called themes, was reunited in the same person. Once again, far from being a deviation, this was actually a return to Roman custom, since "traditionally the governor of a Roman province had also been its military commander." Thus, if anything, **the empire was more Roman in the seventh century than it had been in the fourth.**

**Roman law** is another domain wherein continuity is grandly displayed. The laws of the Roman Empire took form between the approximate years of 150 BC and 150 AD and drew from five sources: the will of the citizens, the Senate, the Praetors (a type of magistrate), the Emperor, and the jurists. These laws were systemized, clarified and reformed on the orders of Emperor Justinian in his *Codex Justinianus* (AD 529). In addition to this, Justinian also produced the *Digesta* or *Pandectae* which, according to the twentieth-century historian Will Durant, was "[A] gather[ing] into a system [of] those responsa or opinions of the great Roman Jurists which still seemed worthy to have the force of Law" and the *Institutiones*, which "reproduced, amended and brought up to date the Commentaries of Gaius, who in the second century had ... summarized the civil law of his time."

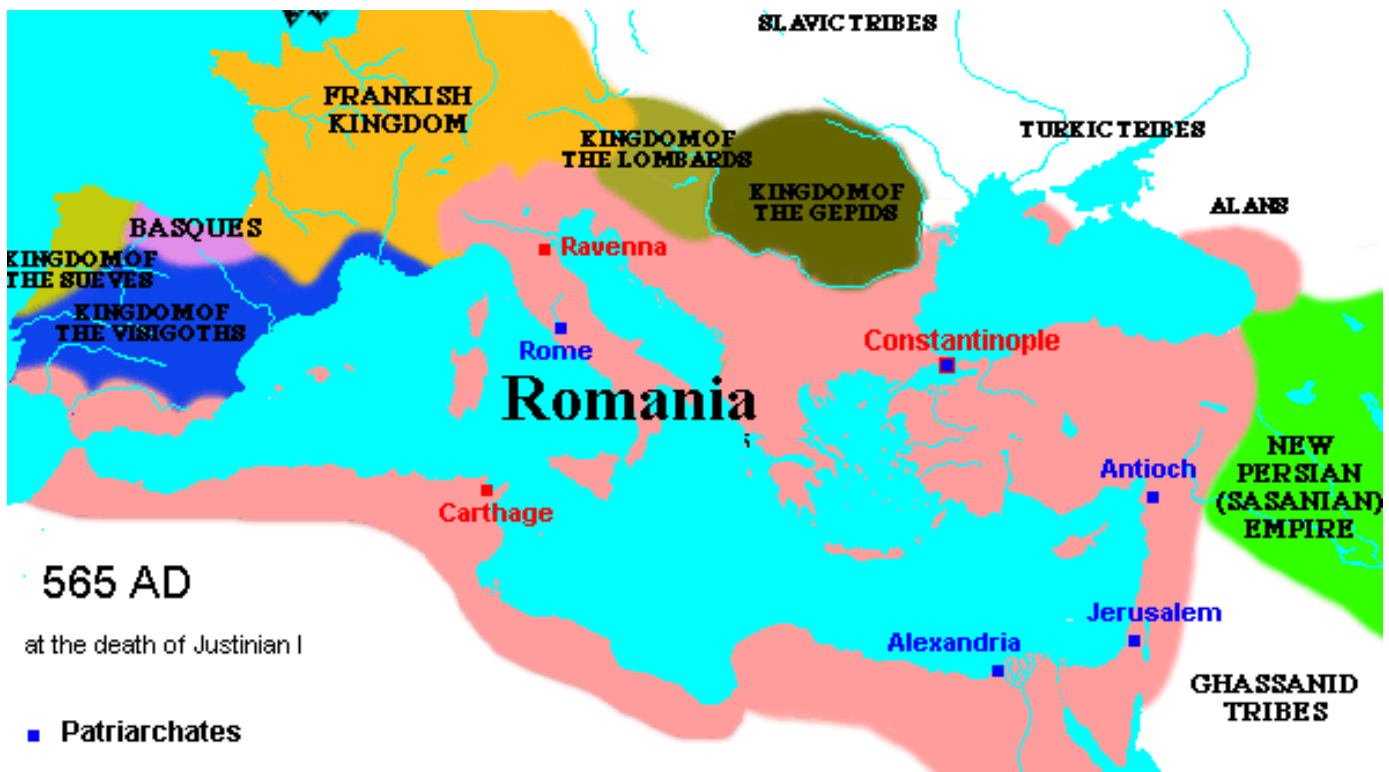
Thus Justinian's law-code was nothing new; it was entirely based on the pre-existing corpus. Durant concludes, "And

this, with some interruptions, remained the law of the Byzantine [sic] Empire till 1453,” and further on, “[The Code] soon ceased to be obeyed except in a narrowing realm. The Eastern nationalistic heretics [i.e. the Monophysites] whom it flayed opened their arms to the Moslems.... Italy under the Lombards, Gaul under the Franks, England under the Anglo-Saxons, Spain under the Visigoths, ignored the edicts of Justinian. ... It continued to the end the code of the Byzantine [sic] Empire.” Thus, the “Byzantine” Empire alone created and used this code because it alone was, not simply the successor of the Roman Empire, but the Roman Empire itself.

The **social structure and taxation** of the empire also entered the Code of Justinian, and these, just like other aspects of

not their size. Thus, the institutions of the later empire are nothing other than a continuation of what was laid down in the early days.

In speaking of institutions one cannot overlook **education**, yet another splendid example of the continuity of the Roman Empire. There was absolutely no change in the education of the empire through its history. This cannot be oversimplified. A paragraph from H. I. Marrou’s “History of Education in Antiquity” will suffice to demonstrate this and also serve as a summary of the past four paragraphs: “Surprising as it may seem, there is to begin with a whole area where, strictly speaking, the old classical school never came to an end in the Greek East; for Byzantine [sic] education was a direct continuation of classical education. This



the law, were structures erected upon foundations laid long ago. In the Code, the two basic classes of citizens were the *honestiores* (the aristocracy, senators, and magistrates) and the *humiliores* (the commoners). This distinction, however, had already developed in the second century AD, and, as a part of the Code, remained in force for the rest of the empire’s history. Likewise, a system of taxation developed by Emperor Diocletian was also used throughout the subsequent years of the empire. In his book on the ancient Mediterranean Charles Freeman states: “Diocletian developed a system under which each individual was assessed on the production potential of his land rather than its extent,” while George Kyrmeles, in his book on the history of the Roman Empire after St. Constantine, mentions that “The fields, the γαῖες, were divided into three categories depending on their quality and production,”

is in fact simply one particular aspect of the fundamental fact that there was no gap, no difference, even, between the civilization of the Late Roman Empire and the early Byzantine [sic] Middle Ages.”

A major objection raised against the Romanity of the later empire is the change of the **empire’s official language** from Latin to Greek. Although at least half of the empire’s population had always spoken Greek, Latin was the official language up until the seventh century. At this point, several questions must be asked. First, is Latin an indispensable, inseparable part of the Roman identity? Also, is Greek definitely a non-Roman language? Ultimately, is language essential to national identity?

A reply to the last question would be that it depends on the context. Although language is tremendously important for

any sort of identity, especially a cultural identity, its change alone does not necessitate a change in a people's national identity, especially in vast multicultural empires such as the Roman Empire or contemporary America. Certainly the original Americans were English-speaking Protestant Englishmen, yet no one would argue on that basis that the Catholic Irishmen or the African-Americans or the Spanish-speaking Floridians or anyone else, of whatever race or religion, is not a true American.

Furthermore, supposing that one day Spanish should become the official language of the United States, would those States no longer be America? Surely not. If then this is the case today regarding Spanish, which, one must admit, has not played a major role in the history of the United States, how much less of a problem should Greek be to the Roman identity when the Greek-speakers of southern

Italy had been neighbors of Rome from the very beginning and contributors to Rome's cultural formation? How is the Greek language unromanly when, according to Vergil's Aeneid, a Greek settlement on the Palatine Hill predated Rome? When finally the city of Rome itself is named after the Greek word ῥώμη, "strength"? Seeing that the language of ancient Rome is called precisely Latin and not

Roman, what further proof is necessary to show that the Latin language, or any one language for that matter, is not an integral part of the Roman identity?

Likewise, it is equally ridiculous to maintain that there is such a thing as a Roman race by blood, taking into account that when Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, wanted to populate his newly-established city, he declared it a haven and attracted the outlaws, debtors, and political exiles of the entire surrounding region. Rome was thus an ecumenical city from its very birth. When in AD 212 Emperor Caracalla granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn inhabitants of the empire, he was simply repeating on a grand scale what Romulus had done in his nascent town. Given these thoughts, the replacement of Latin by any language and certainly by Greek does not signify a divergence from Roman identity at all.

If not language, what about religion? Can Romans still be themselves after relinquishing their ancestral gods? In other words, **is religion essential to national identity?** One would think that to the modern, secular ear the answer to this question would seem obvious, yet this argument is often used, paired up with the argument of language, against the continuity of the empire. It is true that in several circumstances religion and nation have been conflated throughout history. The most obvious example is the Jews, whose name denotes at one and the same time a people and a religion. Similarly, the Assyrians consider as their countryman only him who belongs to the Assyrian Church of the East.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, however, such religious nationalities did not exist. On the one hand, polytheism can hardly be called an organized religion,

since gods of other traditions such as Isis or Cybele could easily be integrated into the Greco-Roman pantheon and worshipped alongside Zeus or Aphrodite. On the other hand everyone in the empire, with the exception of the Christians and the Jews, worshipped a set of gods that were to a certain degree equivalent with each other: he whom the Romans called Jupiter was known as

Zeus among the Greeks, as Ammon among the Egyptians, as Taranis among the Celts. Even within a specific tradition some especially honored Apollo while others worshipped Dionysus, to give a simple example.

In this loose kind of religion a Roman could even worship an Asian goddess without raising the least doubt concerning his identity. Therefore it is unreasonable to claim that by being baptized the Romans ceased being Roman. One might as well say that all those formerly pagan peoples entirely vanished upon entering the baptismal font, that we cannot speak of a Christian Greek or a Christian Syrian or for that matter of a Christian Russian, since obviously no nation was Christian before it was baptized.

The fate of the Roman name, however, is strangely intertwined with the **Christian Faith** and has persevered in close connection with it down to the present day. Far from



considering it paradoxical to be Christian and Roman at the same time, the Romans of the eighth century and thereafter considered those two names virtually synonymous. This mentality was shared most notably by the Franks, whose king, Louis II, clearly expressed it in his letter to Emperor Basil I in AD 871: “[J]ust as we are the seed of Abraham through the faith of Christ, and the Jews ceased to be the sons of Abraham because of their treachery, so we took up the rule of the Roman empire on account of our good belief and orthodoxy; while the Greeks ceased to be emperors of the Romans because of their cacodoxy, that is their bad belief.” In other words, it is impossible to be a heretical Roman.

Ironically, Louis’s own argument speaks against him and his own words condemn him, since it was the Franks, not the “Greeks,” that introduced the Filioque into the Nicene Creed. This identification of “Roman” and “Orthodox Christian” penetrated deeply and left its mark even on language: Pontic Greek contains the verb ῥωμανίζω (“romanizo”) with the definition, “I become a Christian, a Roman.” Moreover, in the Ottoman Empire, all Orthodox Christians were legally grouped together in the Rum Millet (millet-i Rum), the Roman race. Even today the followers of the Pope of Rome use the Roman name, probably without realizing it themselves, to denote what they perceive as the true faith, namely Roman Catholicism, while in the Middle East canonical Orthodox Christians are called Rum Orthodox, “Roman Orthodox,” to be distinguished from the other Christians groups of that region. **The Roman name has had a long association with the Orthodox Christian Faith; that the Roman Empire was not really Roman because it was Christian should be the last conceivable argument of any knowledgeable person.** It can only stand on a basis of ignorance.

**The continuity of the Roman Empire in its several aspects was never interrupted or broken.** Whether in the city of the countryside, the laws or the taxes, the language or the religion, things either ancient or recent, what radical break has there been with the past? What sudden turn did the empire ever take? What took place except gradual and organic change? If England is still called England after having been overtaken by a people of different blood, tongue, and faith, why is not Romania given her rightful name?

Political motivations, rivalry, and men’s own interests have purposefully slandered her for more than a millennium. Too long has the Roman Empire been deprived of a thousand years of its history. Breaking habits is always difficult, but **for the sake of truth this habit of using the word “Byzantine” must be broken!** The only Byzantines that ever existed were the inhabitants of that small Greek colony on the banks of the Bosphorus. An invention and vehicle of Frankish and

German propaganda, **Byzantine terminology distorts and obscures the truth of things.**

Even if one accepts that the empire was technically not Byzantine, if he persists in calling it by that name his perception of history shall inevitably and subconsciously be influenced. Unless a man understands history deeply and truly, his gaze penetrating beneath the surface, he will not fully realize his own place in history and consequently what his own path should be. Of all the empires that have ever existed, the Roman Empire, with its 1480-year-long history, has had arguably more impact on mankind than any other.

**Let every lover of truth understand: the Roman Empire is one and the same, from its beginning to its very end in the fifteenth century.**



**T**he very existence of the primitive Greek Romans has been completely abolished by historians who continue to support Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 which inaugurated the historical dogma that the Roman language was and is Latin. This has remained so in spite of the Roman sources which describe Greek as the first language of the Romans. It seems that Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 was based on hearsay and the need to cut off West Romans enslaved to the Franco-Latins from the free East Romans. Frankish Emperor Louis II (855-875) clearly supports Charlemagne’s Lie of 794 with the following words: In 871 he writes to Emperor of the Romans Basil I (867-885) that “we have received the government of the Roman Empire for our orthodoxy . The Greeks have ceased to be emperors of the Romans for their cacodoxy. Not only have they deserted the city (of Rome) and the capital of the Empire, but they have also abandoned Roman nationality and even the Latin language. They have migrated to another capital city and taken up a completely different nationality and language.”

Between 330 and 1453 Constantinople New Rome was the Capital of the Roman Empire. She was **not the capital of any Byzantine Empire which never existed.** Those who say and write such nonsense are either intentional liars with a hidden agenda or else brainwashed by the creators of this Byzantine Empire which never existed. Those who hide the Roman reality of this Empire are either agents of the Frankish propaganda of Charlemagne who decided in 794 that the Roman Empire is a “Greek” Empire in order to hide it from West Romans enslaved to the Franco-Latins. Then this so-called “Greek” Empire had to become a “Byzantine” Empire in order not to confuse the Modern Greek State with the Greek Empire invented by Charlemagne in 794.

**Fr. John S. Romanides**  
**“Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine”**



## PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW IS A THREAT FOR THE ORTHODOX EAST!

*By Demetrios Anagnostou. This article from a recent issue of the Greek Orthodox weekly newspaper "Orthodox Typos." The author, Demetrios Anagnostou, is a well-known theologian and publicist. [Editor's Note: With the "election" of a new Archbishop for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, a known ecumenist and avid follower, believer, supporter and co-architect of Constantinople's papal ambitions, the inclusion of this article in our current issue is deemed necessary.]*

The practice of Church Tradition in the fight with heresies and schismatics that threaten the unity of the Church is never just a protest and a canonical fight with cunning theories and schismatic (anti-canonical) actions; at the same time, it is also the condemnation of those Church actors who support them and act accordingly.

Of course, today, we find ourselves in the reality of an entire century of ecumenist propaganda; this propaganda begun with the release of the infamous Patriarchal encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1920 "To the Churches of Christ Everywhere" (where heretical communities are called the "Church of Christ"! ). This encyclical became what is nowadays considered to be the charter for ecumenism, led by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Thus, we have reached the point where for us "conciliarity" and "pan-Orthodox" have imposed the intentional abolition of the terms "heresy" and "heretics" in the Church-Synodal lexicon; concurrently, any document condemning delusions and confirming the existence of other churches beyond the bounds of the Orthodox Church are considered unnecessary! (Refer to the decisions of the dreadful Crete "Council").

It is significant that in Church history it often happens that corresponding heresies and schisms are fixed under a name not only from the content of the relevant theories (for example: Monophysites, Theopaschites, iconoclasts, papists, etc.), but also from the names of their inspirers, leaders, and creators (for example: Arianism, Nestorianism, Paulicians, etc.).

In the twentieth century, for the first time in Church history, this traditional practice was successfully artificially neutralized in respect to the emergence and development of the modern heresy of ecumenism, which, according to the great Serbian dogmatician St. Justin (Popović), is a pan-heresy. It happened and continues to happen mainly because this heresy (undeclared, despite the obviousness of it) is still allowed (if not protected) by the majority of the Local Orthodox Churches. Moreover, it is connected with the fact that in several cases, the bearers and supporters of this particular heresy are themselves the heads of the Local Orthodox Churches.

The most significant of these cases and the most serious and dangerous precedent is the example of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is not only a bearer of the modern pan-heresy, but also its leader, main patron, and guide. This is not a subjective assessment and not a private opinion, but a common conviction that is proven and unconditionally confirmed on the basis of the official and public actions, statements, and texts of this patriarch—the primate of the once glorious and Orthodox See of Constantinople.

Thanks to his office, Patriarch Bartholomew has managed to remain untouchable for a long time, avoiding canonical confrontation and accusations, although he often provokes the feelings of all the Orthodox faithful (pastors and flocks) by his clearly anti-Orthodox and anti-canonical actions and purely heretical beliefs.

He is himself (according to his own statement) a faithful continuer of the line of his predecessor—the Mason, Patriarch Athenagoras, who was dedicated to syncretism and pan-religion. This line is treasonous to Orthodoxy. Day by day it becomes clearer and more obvious that Patriarch Bartholomew is striving for the proclamation of and his actual appointment as the second (Eastern) Pope, and for the transformation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople into a super-Patriarchate recognized on the international political and Church level—the new Eastern Vatican (of course, in the worst case scenario)!

Recently, this open leader and defender of the Church-fighting pan-heresy of ecumenism, after the traumatic (for him) experience of attempting to subjugate world Orthodoxy by the sadly infamous "Holy and Great Council" organized by him and convened two years ago on Crete, chose a "new way" for the spreading and strengthening of his power, and, accordingly, his theories about an "Eastern Pope."

Bartholomew now follows the tried and tested method of "divide and conquer" (including causing a schism in the body of the Church), such that he himself and his plans are weakened in the short term but in the long term undermine the power and influence of those who dared to hamper the realization of his great dream, the convening of the first Ecumenical (ecumenistic) Council, the purpose of which was to synodically legitimize the pan-heresy of ecumenism in a pan-Orthodox fashion.

In particular, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, known for his vindictive character (as the Greek Church has learned from bitter experience), has carried out his plan for an indirect schism in the flock and the ecclesiastical (jurisdictional) dissection of his Church "opponents"—those who oppose his ambitions to become a super-Patriarch and to make the Patriarchate of Constantinople the Eastern "Vatican." These opponents, besides the Moscow Patriarchate, are the ancient Antiochian and Serbian Patriarchates.

For the sake of his own interests and in connection with his obligations and service to the well-known political superpower (the U.S.), the ambitious Patriarch could (as we will probably see in the near future) “lead” two more dioceses of other Patriarchates (after Ukraine) to “autocephaly” and turn them into Phanar satellites.

Here we are talking about Montenegro (a metropolia of the Serbian Patriarchate) and the dioceses beyond the borders of Syria (in neighboring states), which belong to the jurisdiction of the Antiochian Patriarchate! After the political events connected with the so-called “Macedonian” issue, the candidate for “victim” in the Phanariot’s plans is also the so-called “Macedonian Church” (canonically referred to as the Ohrid Archdiocese), which is also the canonical territory of the Serbian Patriarchate and has for many years been in a state of schism, isolated and not recognized by the Orthodox world.

Positioning himself as a faithful keeper and scrupulous defender of the historical rights of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (as he fancies himself), he completely ignores the rights of the rest of his brothers, and is prepared, putting on the guise of defender of the autonomy and fighter for the independence of Local Church administration and structures, to miraculously restore schismatics, to unconditionally recognize them, and to sow ecclesiastical controversies and schisms (clearly violating Orthodox ecclesiology and introducing, despite his own assurance to the contrary, ethnic and secular-state criteria in the sphere of Church decisions).

In view of the above, given the “tomois of autocephaly” recently presented to the schismatic formation of the new “church” of Ukraine (circumventing the one and only canonical Orthodox Church that exists there, against the will of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has canonical authority there), the thesis that Patriarch Bartholomew has become a real threat to the Orthodox East is confirmed.

We should not forget that this threat continues to corrode Orthodoxy and undercut the unity of the Orthodox Church, and it ultimately serves to prepare the majority to recognize the pseudo-council of Crete, which is the completion of a fruitless theological dialogue with papists and the restoration of full communion with those who have from of old deliberately fought against our faith and our family!

This threat, aimed directly at the Orthodox faith and the unity of the Eastern Orthodox Church, should be canonically neutralized as quickly as possible by Orthodox hierarchs around the world located in the lands of those who preserve the right faith, esteeming themselves as pastors of the Church, who have vowed to pass on the inviolable covenants and to observe the sacred rules and statutes of the holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

May God grant it!

## ARE WE PREACHING THE SAVING TRUTH OR HIDING IT?

*By Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis.*

The terms “neo-patristic,” “post-patristic” and “contextual” theology have, I believe, basically the same meaning. They were invented by non-Orthodox theologians involved in ecumenical dialogues among them and between them and non-Christians. They were foolishly adopted by their Orthodox colleagues of the same mind. While post-patristic theology suits the purposes of the syncretistically-minded non-Orthodox and non-Christians, its adaptation by theologians who call themselves Orthodox constitutes a betrayal of the Faith and Tradition of the Church.

According to such theologians, we should not merely repeat the scriptural and patristic texts, but rather we should try to convey the “spirit” of these texts into our present-day cultural environment. As a result, a number of academic theologians and high-ranking Orthodox clerics try to reinterpret the holy Scripture, the holy Canons and the writings of the Holy Fathers in order to be able to approach the non-Orthodox and non-Christians.

Approach them **to what purpose?** Not to preach to them the saving truth, but rather to hide it from them, saying truth is relative, and whatever anyone believes is truth to them, because the real purpose is to peacefully co-exist, to promote peace and not discord, “unity in diversity.”

*If the Orthodox Church is corrupted and ceases to be the bearer of the only Truth, what will She have to offer to those outside Her? Is it possible that doing so in an effort to save those outside, the result will be the loss of Church members? Fortunately, the authenticity of the Truth of the Church is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit and not by people, so God will always send the suitable persons who will defend the Truth with their lives and their words.*

The claim that “the Church engaged in dialogue with Judaism and Hellenism” is preposterous. In whatever “dialogue” the Fathers of the Church engaged in with non-Christians, it was not “in order to live in peace with them,” but **to lead them away from their deception and lead them to the truth and salvation.** The contemporary inter-religious dialogue the ecumenists have been engaged in with other faiths has **nothing to do with the contacts the Fathers have had with non-Orthodox and non-Christians.**

The purpose of Orthodox Conferences is “the inter-religious understanding and cooperation, and through these to the elimination of fanaticism from every side, and thus to reconciliation of peoples and the prevalence of the ideas of freedom and peace in the world, to serve modern man, irrespective of race and religion.”

I wonder: is the purpose of the Orthodox Church “to achieve the truly credible furtherance of God’s will that peace, social justice and respect for fundamental human rights will prevail,” as the “Athens Declaration” concludes?

Or, are “the humanitarian principles of the religions, such as freedom, human dignity and the true love of the others... the new way of discussion and understanding”?

Or, is the purpose of Trinitarian theology, as another contextual Orthodox theologian, Prof. Petros Vasiliadis, states, to give “us the opportunity to understand the other as a co-walker of the discovery of the truth”?

Post-modernist, post-patristic, contextual Orthodox theologians must have lost their heads if they believe that Orthodoxy must embrace the unorthodox applications of their newly discovered essential tool, contextuality, for bringing the gospel of salvation to the world. How do they think the whole world was Christianized? The irony is that the people of other cultures and religions of the world accepted the new Faith, while the people of the same culture and religion (Jewish) rejected it. What explanation do they offer?

Christianity spread with remarkable speed to the entire world, and did well by spreading the gospel of salvation through witness (*martyria*) and through martyrdom (*martyrio*). The Apostles and those appointed in their place were able, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, to reach peoples of all backgrounds and make them disciples of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. The people received the gospel of salvation and lived their lives according to it, expressing it correctly under the guidance of their pastors who were faithful to it and remaining in communion with the Church established by Christ and His Apostles.

Living in the Spirit and guided by Him, the Church continues to bring the salvific message to those who are receptive to receive it, no matter where they are, even in our “post-modern and globalized modern world.” She is always relevant, because She is the living Body of the Lord, in Whom all the graces indwell. It is a pseudo-argument that She remains enclosed within forms and shapes of the past, which are incomprehensible to people of different cultures and religions. We have the luminaries of our faith to guide us securely to Christ, *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. (Jn 14:6) We are in no need of the post-patristic contextual theology of the syncretist\* ecumenism.

Orthodox theology is in no need to run after inventions of the heretical Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Orthodox theology is in no need to “reclaim” the western “discovery” of its lost “contextual character,” because she is always guided to the truth. The purpose of the Church is not to maintain a perennial “dialogue” with other religions, for the purpose of mutual acceptance and respect;

the purpose of the Church is instead to preach the gospel of salvation to the ends of the world, that Christ rose from the dead, and lives in the bodily form He assumed when He was incarnated, in which He also resurrected, and with which He shall come again to take with Him those who remained faithful to Him and bring them to the Father and live forever His life.



\**Syncretism* is the combining of different beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merging or assimilation of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths. Syncretism constitutes an essential characteristic of the heresy of ecumenism. [From the Editor].



Let us put away from us our spiritual short-sightedness, and let us cease concentrating all our attention upon temporal, earthly things; let us foresee with our mental vision the future, everlasting life, and rise in our hearts to our heavenly country. Indeed, it is incredible short-sightedness for the immortal soul only to look upon the present, visible things, generally relating to the senses, and flattering our carnal nature, and not contemplate the life of the world to come—the blessings which *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, but which the Most Merciful and Most Wise God has prepared for those who love Him. (1 Cor 2:9). Of what do we not deprive ourselves through this voluntary short-sightedness?!

Our life is incomplex: because our life is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the most incomplex eternal Being, having no beginning. *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*. (1 Jn 5:11). Why, then, do we seek life in men, in enjoyments, in money, in honors, in dress, etc.? There is no life for the heart in these things, but only affliction, confinement, and spiritual death. Why do we forsake the Fountain of living waters? The Lord, and hew out ‘cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jer. 2:13)? Why do we toss about and trouble about trifles? Why are we so greedy after enjoyments, money, honors, dress and various other things? All these are dead, perishable, transitory.

**St. John of Kronstadt**

## THE ORTHODOX FAMILY

By Archbishop Chrysostomos, from "Orthodox Tradition," vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 34-36.

The Orthodox Church exalts the family. The Church itself is often characterized by the Fathers in images drawn from the family. In the family, as in the Church, basic values are formed, the soul is shaped and established, and the path of salvation is set forth. The family is that warm place where the leaven of the Faith is nurtured, where we first begin to rise to full life in Christ. It is for this reason that every Bishop, every Priest, every monastic, and all pious laymen remember, in their daily prayers, their mothers and fathers, that their *days may be long on the earth*. It is for this reason that, even after their repose, we remember our fathers and mothers and family members, praying for them fervently and, in our prayers, reaching across the chasm of death to be with them even in the afterlife, in the spiritual world. So special is the family that we remember those in error and heresy and sin even more dearly than those upright and unwavering in the Faith. This is the wonder of the family.

The Orthodox family, however, is always understood in its spiritual context. It is a spiritual unit. The selfish, social family, which triumphs the rights or privileges of blood ties, is for us Orthodox not a true family. An economic unit that uses family relationships to attain worldly possessions or wealth; the social unit turned in on itself, making the family responsible only for itself, that family which is a "god," the single most important thing in life, that thing most worth fighting for... All these, too, are not families for the Orthodox believer.

As exalted and sacred as the family might be, our first loyalty as true Christians is to God. Anything which comes before Christ, to paraphrase Holy Scripture, is not worthy of Christ. Anyone who places the priorities of the family before the Church and the commandments is a cultist, betraying both the Church and the authentic family. A true family is not worldly. A true family is an Icon of the Church and the brotherhood of all mankind. A true family does not confine its love to those within its boundaries,

but extends to its neighbors (and even its enemies) the love which has been developed, cultivated, and refined within the family.

In contemporary America the social family, the family created without spiritual goals, is turning ugly. On Christmas and holidays, for example, we gather in our homes, ignore the poor, resent the "intrusion" of friends and acquaintances into our food- and drink-filled festivities, and pay homage to Christ or the theme of the holiday in perfunctory services or commemorations designed around the family activities—if any homage is paid at all. We have abandoned, to a great extent, the custom of visiting the infirm and needy on holidays. Rather, we have turned to a social selfishness that extends out from these holidays to the whole year, poisoning and killing society itself, making people cold, alien, and insensitive to others. And even the family itself suffers. Family members embrace, relate to one another in empty and inane exchanges of words, and often hide their need for real

love and affection—for the true love and affection known only to the spiritual family, to that family which reaches beyond itself.

Thus the model American family which so shocks us Christians, but which predominates in the society around us: a family beset by drug abuse, alcohol, the killing comforts of wealth and material gain, divorce, and even suicide!

So far has the American family strayed from

the spiritual image that, if a young man or woman is to go away today and enter the monastic life, dedicating himself to prayer for the family and others, this is an occasion for shame and embarrassment. The family unit may even explode in hatred, decrying the personal separation that such a life might entail.

Deep love, that love which survives separation (and even death), is disappearing from our families. We delight in those who succeed in the emptiness of material life and remove even the privileges of the family from those who seek the spiritual life. How far we have come from the traditional Christian family, based as it was in the past—especially in our Orthodox societies—on spiritual values, in which a monastic or Priestly vocation was the cause of merriment and rejoicing. To such families, a monastic or Priestly vocation



represents a total fulfillment of family goals, a realization of the Christian life, and a reification (*regarding a concept as a concrete thing, Ed.*) of Christian ideals. If we reflect on the contrast between the true family and the social unit qua family created in modern materialistic society, we can precisely glimpse what the true Orthodox family is.

Just as an army trains soldiers to battle the enemy for the sake of the homeland, so the true family, the Orthodox family, endows its children with the spiritual armor by which they can overcome temptation, battle sin, live exemplary and moral lives, gain union here on earth with God, fulfill the divine potential within man, and pass into the next life with the spiritual power to pray for family members left behind. A true Orthodox family teaches love to its members—that intuitive, spontaneous love natural to blood relations, and encourages them to go out into the world sharing this love with others and perfecting it to whatever degree possible.

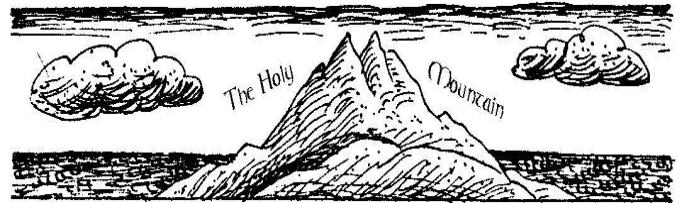
A true family moves out beyond itself. If family members should gain wealth or fame, these are secondary things. These accomplishments are measured only by the primary contribution that they make to the Church, to society in general, and to the fulfillment of Christian ideals. And if a family member should embrace monasticism, it is for this individual that the Church reserves the greatest praise: for one who can, without the reinforcement of family ties and the comfort of marital affection, show and give love unselfishly; for one who can, living in poverty, produce richness in his soul and heart; for one who can, in the face of the world's ridicule and scorn, maintain inner dignity; for one who can, though separated from his family, show more real love, in his prayers and example, than those present to it.

Though only part of my family is Orthodox, my own experience in entering the monastic life has not been as difficult as it might have been. But I have seen terrible cases of ill treatment, in which monastics have been hurt deeply by the attitudes of their own families—usually in the case of converts who enter monasticism from non-Orthodox families. Some families, lacking a spiritual understanding of the family itself, consider such monastics outcasts, betrayers of the family, and destroyers of the family unit. Every foul and vulgar motivation is attributed to the monastic. Hatred, resentment, and antipathy are engendered among family members for the monastic.

We must reflect on these instances with sobriety, since they reflect an attitude which is now invading even the Orthodox family in this country, where the larger Orthodox jurisdictions have either no monastic institutions or—with very few exceptions—monastic institutions wholly foreign to anything in Orthodox tradition. Where are those mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers who would rejoice in offering up a family member to intense service

to God, a service in which limited family love is lifted up to expansive spiritual love? Where are those who would give up the best, the strongest, and most beloved to a life of purity?

There could be nothing more pristine than the true Orthodox family. It is, after all, the crucible in which the elements of whole persons are formed. We should exalt such a family and pray that God will make us worthy to lead and to establish such families. At the same time, we must be careful not to accept as a true family that which is false! We must guard against mere social views of the family. And those families wrongly formed and wrongly operating we must call—by the power of love that even they have in their midst—back to the Christian image of the family that we see in the lives of Christ, the Theotokos, the Apostles, and the Martyrs and Saints.



Sophronius and I went to the same Abba Palladios with this request, “Of your charity, tell us, father, where you came from, and how it came about that you embraced the monastic life.”

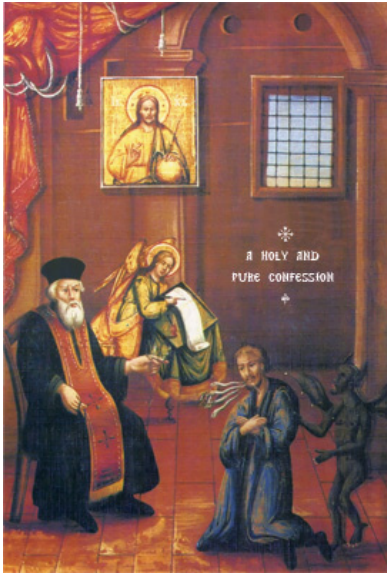
He was from Thessalonica, he said, and then he told us this: “In my home country, about three stades beyond the city wall, there was a recluse, a native of Mesopotamia, whose name was David. He was a man of outstanding virtue, merciful and continent. He spent about twenty years in his place of confinement. Now at this time, because of the barbarians, the walls of the city were patrolled at night by soldiers. One night those who were on guard duty at that stretch of the city walls nearest to where the elder’s place of confinement was located, saw fire pouring from the windows of the recluse’s cell.

“The soldiers thought the barbarians must have set the elder’s cell on fire, but when they went out in the morning, to their amazement, they found the elder unharmed and his cell unburned. Again the following night they saw fire, the same way as before, in the elder’s cell - and this went on for a long time. The occurrence became known to all the city and throughout the countryside. Many people would come and keep vigil on the wall all night long in order to see the fire, which continued to appear until the elder died. As this phenomenon did not merely appear once or twice but was often seen, I said to myself, “If God so glorifies his servants in this world, how much more so in the world to come when He shines upon their faces like the sun? This, my family, is why I embraced the monastic life.”

**From “The Spiritual Meadow” of John Moschos**

## CONFESSION FOR CHILDREN

By Elder Cleopa of Romania (translated by NS and KS).



I confess to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Most-Holy Theotokos, all the Saints, to the Holy Angel, the guardian of my life, and to your holiness, Father, all of my sins from my last Confession until today:

I make the Sign of the Holy Cross bad and crooked, upsetting God.

I do not make the Sign of the Holy Cross in the evenings when I go to bed, neither in the

mornings when I wake up, nor when I sit at the table for a meal, nor when I arise from the table after a meal, nor when I go to school or when I pass in front of the holy churches.

I do not know how to say the Lord's Prayer or the Creed, nor other prayers for children.

I do not say the Lord's Prayer or other prayers for children when I go to bed, neither when I arise, nor when I sit at the table.

I do not do bows or prostrations in the evenings or mornings, as my mother and priest have taught me.

I do not read prayers from the Prayer Book, for the praise of God, or the Mother of God, or all of the Saints.

I do not wear a Cross permanently on my chest, neither when I go to school or to the church, nor when I go to sleep in my bed.

I do not know how to say the beginning prayers, that is to say *O Heavenly King, Holy God, All Holy Trinity and Our Father*, neither the Creed or Psalm 50 or *It Is Truly Meet*, nor the prayers which are said at the table.

I have eaten without praying beforehand and have risen from the table without saying the prayers of thanksgiving.

I do not listen sometimes to my parents, especially my mother, but I do my own will instead.

I do not listen to my grandparents, God-parents, the priest, or my school-teacher.

I have stolen money from my house, from my parents, from my grandparents, or from my classmates.

I did not tell my parents that I stole money or other things from them, nor how much I took, nor what I did with the money or the things that I stole.

I have eaten non-fasting foods secretly on Wednesdays, Fridays, or during the fasts, without my parents' permission.

I have grieved my mother and my father and they spanked me, but I did not ask for their forgiveness, nor did I promise that I will listen to them.

I have argued and fought with my siblings, with my classmates, and with the children at play, I swore at them, I cursed them to the Evil One, I punched and kicked them, threw rocks at them, hit them with a stick, and I did not ask forgiveness from them.

I do not kiss the hand of my mother, father, or grandparents in the evening, at bedtime, in the mornings, or when I come home from school, nor do I ask forgiveness when I grieve them.

I do not give thanks daily to God or to my parents that they gave me life, that they take care of me, that they give me food, that they nourish me, that they have sent me to school and teach me the right faith and fear of God.

On Sundays and feast days I get up late, I do not pray to God, I do not do prostrations, neither do I go with my parents to the Divine Liturgy in the church, but I eat in the morning, I watch television, and afterwards I go to play with children.

Sometimes I go to sleep without worshipping or praying, neither when I rise from sleep.

When I go with my parents to the church, I do not have patience at the holy services, nor do I pray in my mind, but I go outside to play with the children.

I go to church after eating and take the Holy Bread after having eaten, forgetting that this is a sin and grieving God.

During the fast, my mother gives me fasting food, but in secret or at school I eat non-fasting foods: chocolate, ice-cream, eggs, meat and cheese, without telling the priest or my parents about this sin.

I only confess to the priest because my mother made me, and I commune the Body and Blood of the Lord without prayer and fasting.

After Holy Communion, I fight with children, spit on the floor, and speak bad words, forgetting the Lord and the advice of my priest and parents.

I do not help my parents with tasks at home or in the field, and I lie to them that I have to study, while instead I go out to play with friends.

I leave for school or friends' houses, in the village or city, without asking permission from my parents, neither do I tell them sincerely where I was or what I did.

I run home from school, I do not do my lessons, I make bad grades, and I do not tell my parents all that I am doing from fear or from carelessness.

I have gotten used to the television, with cartoons and bad films, watching television in the evening without permission from my parents and afterwards going to bed without prayer.

I quarrel with boys and girls, speaking much, telling lies, and encouraging the children to do bad things.

I have seen my father drunk, smoking, cursing, and quarreling with my mother, and I have also tried to do what he does.

I have begun to smoke secretly, to steal, to curse, and to be absent from church, telling lies afterwards, speaking ugly words, and no longer listening to my parents or teacher.

I have become friends with bad children and acquaintances, who taught me to run away from home, to do ugly deeds, and to no longer listen to anyone.

I do not show respect as is due to my parents, priest, teachers, relatives or God-parents, neither do I kiss their hand.

These and many more sins than these have I done, and I beseech you, Father, to forgive me, to loose me, and to pray to God for me, the sinner, but I promise with the help of God to not do these sins any longer, to do penance for them, and to make a good beginning.



## THE FEARFUL PROMISES MADE BY A BISHOP AT HIS CONSECRATION

*Much is written these days regarding the "Canonical Orthodox" Churches and how to find them. Many assert [for example] that if a local Church is not in communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople [etc.] that local Church is "uncanonical." This contradicts the record of Church history. There were not a few Patriarchs of Constantinople that were condemned for heresy. During the reigns of these heretical Patriarchs, the saints broke communion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and were later praised for this by the Church. In fact, each of the five great Patriarchates, including Rome, was under the sway of heresy at one time or another during the first thousand years of the Church. If this is so, then by what criteria can we use to distinguish a genuinely Orthodox bishop from a false shepherd? The answer is simple. Look into the man's life and see if he has kept the promises he made at his consecration.*

The text of the promises made by a bishop at his Third Confession of Faith:

"In this my confession of the holy Faith, I promise to observe the Canons of the holy Apostles, and of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and of the holy Local Councils, the traditions of the Church, and the decrees, orders and rulings of the Holy Fathers. And all things whatsoever they have accepted I also accept; and whatsoever things they have rejected those also do I reject.

I promise also to preserve the peace of the Church, and firmly and zealously to teach the people entrusted to me, and not to devise anything whatsoever which is contrary to the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith all the days of my life; and that I will, in all things, follow and always obey the Most Holy Synod; and to be, in all things, of one mind with my fellow Hierarchs and conjointly with them submissive to the divine law, and the sacred rules of the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers; and with all sincerity to cherish towards my fellow Hierarchs spiritual affection, and to regard them as brethren.

And I promise to rule the flock committed unto me with the fear of God and in devoutness of life; and with all diligent heed to guard it against all heresies of doctrine.

And I also confess, in this my written profession of faith, that neither by the promise, nor by the gift of gold, or of silver am I come to this ministry; but, on the contrary, I have received it by the election of the Most Holy Synod.

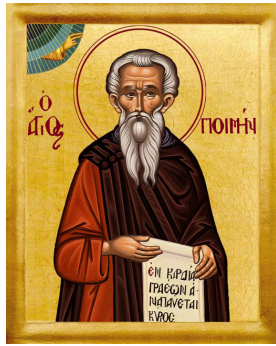
And herewith I promise also to do nothing under constraint, whether coerced by powerful persons, or by a multitude of the people, even though they should command me, under pain of death, to do something contrary to the divine and holy laws: nor to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in another diocese than my own, nor to exercise any other episcopal function without the permission of the Bishop of that diocese; and that I will not ordain either a Priest, or a Deacon, or any other ecclesiastic in another's diocese, nor receive such into my diocese without letters of dismissal from their own Bishops.

I will deal with the opponents of the Holy Church with reasonableness, uprightness and gentleness, according to the words of the Apostle Paul: *And the servant of the Lord must not dispute, but be gentle unto all, and a teacher, and forbearing, in meekness instructing those who set themselves in opposition, if perchance God might give them repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth.*

I promise to visit and watch over the flock now confided to me, after the manner of the Apostles, to discern whether they remain true to the Faith, and in the exercise of good works, more especially the Priests; and to inspect with diligence, and to exhort and inhibit, that there may be no schisms, superstitions and impious veneration, and that no customs contrary to Christian piety and good morals may injure Christian conduct.

And all those things, my bounden duty, which I have this day promised in word, I also promise to perform in deed unto my uttermost breath, for the sake of the covenanted good things to come. And may God, Who seeth the heart, be the witness to my vow. And may our Saviour Himself by my helper, in my sincere and zealous governing and my performance thereof; and unto Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and dominion, honour and worship, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen."

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

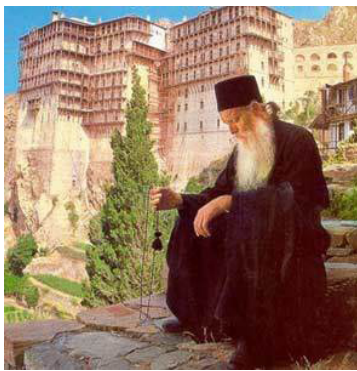
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TUCSON, AZ  
PERMIT NO 690

A 501(c)(3) ORGANIZATION  
[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## THE CONFUSION BETWEEN RATIONAL AND NOETIC PRAYER

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, from "Empirical Dogmatics," vol. 2.



Some people confuse rational and noetic prayer. Prayer with the prayer-rope is not noetic prayer.

I have heard nuns saying, "Now I shall pray noetic prayer." They sit down, take the prayer-rope and think that is noetic prayer. If they use the prayer-rope they have noetic prayer. They do not

understand that the prayer ought to be in the heart, not only in the prayer-rope and the brain. They do not know the difference between rational and noetic worship. They are not the same thing. They are different.

In the beginning one starts by repeating the prayer, *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me* with the mouth and the rational faculty, and at some point the prayer enters the heart.

Because the beginner cannot manage this, as he has not yet distinguished between the nous and the rational faculty, he sits and prays as much as he can with the rational faculty, under the guidance of his spiritual father. He prays continually until

the day when, instead of praying this prayer with his rational faculty, he begins to pray it with his nous in his heart.

The amazing thing is that, when the nous enters the heart and prays, the rational faculty is outside observing the movement of the nous.

What the Fathers say is clearly observable: when the nous prays and when it enters and leaves the heart, the innate reason, that is to say, the rational faculty, sits and watches it. Someone who practises asceticism reaches the point where his rational faculty can see the nous entering and leaving the heart, because he is now in control. Whenever he wants, he concentrates, takes his nous and puts it into his heart, with his rational faculty watching.

When the nous itself prays without ceasing, this happens biologically, physiologically, here in the region of the heart. It takes place within the heart; this thing literally happens in man's heart, and man's innate reason actually sits and enjoys it. The reason may not be praying and only the heart may pray. When someone goes to church his heart prays and his reason prays as well, each more or less independently of the other. The reason sits and watches the heart and the nous, and listens.

These things are to be found scattered here and there in the Fathers of the Church and you will find them marvellously described in the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. Wherever that pilgrim went he was praying in his heart. He carried prayer about with him in his heart. It's an amazing phenomenon.



# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

VOL. 17, ISSUE 07-08

JULY-AUGUST 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- The Eight Means of Temptation (p. 5)
- The Mystery of Man's Heart (p. 7)
- On the Name of the Antichrist (p. 10)
- On the Dormition (p. 21)
- The Beatitudes of St. Paisios (p. 22)
- The Resurrection of the Dead (p. 24)
- On Mortal Sins (p. 26)
- The Law of Changes in Our Practical Life (p. 29)



- Ἐνας Θάνατος ποῦ Προκαλεῖ Χαρὰν (σελ. 13)
- Γαστριμαργία: Εὐχάριστο Πάθος; (σελ. 14)
- Ἐπὶ Ἀρχαγγέλων (σελ. 17)
- Ἐνας Ἅγιος Δεσπότης (σελ. 18)



**Publisher:** St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

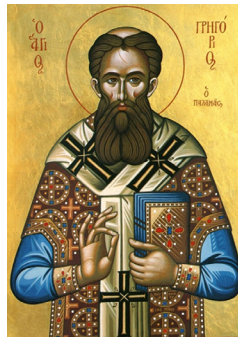
**Editor:** George Karras

**Story Editors:**

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## SERMON ON THE TRANSFIGURATION

By Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, Greece.



For an explanation of the present Feast and understanding of its truth, it is necessary for us to turn to the very start of today's reading from the Gospel: *Now after*

*six days Jesus took Peter, James and John his brother, and led them up onto a high mountain by themselves.* (Mt 17:1).

First of all, we might start by asking when the Evangelist Matthew began his six-day count? What kind of day was it? What does the preceding statement indicate, where the Savior, in teaching His disciples, said to them: *For the Son of Man shall come with his angels in the glory of His Father*, and further: *Again I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.* (Mt 16:27-28)? That is to say, it is the Light of His own forthcoming Transfiguration which He terms the Glory of His Father and of His Kingdom.

The Evangelist Luke points this out and reveals this more clearly saying: *Now it came to pass about eight days after these words, that He took Peter and John and James, and went up the mountain to pray. And as He prayed, His countenance was altered, and His raiment became a radiant white.* (Lk 9:28-29). But how can the two be reconciled, when one of them speaks definitively about the interval of time

as being *eight days* between the sayings and the manifestation, whereas the other (says) *after six days*?

There were eight on the mountain, but only six were visible. Three, Peter, James and John, had come up with Jesus, and they saw Moses and Elias standing there and conversing with Him, so altogether there were six of them. However, the Father and the Holy Spirit were invisibly with the Lord: the Father, with His Voice testifying that this was His Beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit shining forth with Him in the radiant cloud. Thus, the six are actually eight, and there is no contradiction regarding the eight. Similarly, there is no contradiction with the Evangelists when one says *after six days*, and the other says *eight days after these words*.

These two variations formulate an apparent mystery, and may even create a doubt or rather contradiction as to the number and who exactly was present upon the Mount. It stands to reason, and everyone rationally studying in accordance with Scripture knows that the Evangelists are in agreement one with another. Luke spoke of eight days without contradicting Matthew, who declared *after six days*. There is not another day added on to represent the day on which these sayings were uttered, nor is the day on which the Lord was transfigured added on (which a rational person might reasonably imagine to be added to the days of Matthew).

The Evangelist Luke does not say *after eight days* (like the Evangelist Matthew says *after six days*), but rather *it came to pass eight days after these words*. But where the Evangelists seem to contradict one another, they actually point out to us something great and mysterious. In actual fact, why did the one say *after six days*, but the other, in ignoring

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.orthodoxheritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the "Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen," a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to "Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen." PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, "poimen@mail.com." Please visit our website for the applicable links.

the seventh day, have in mind the eighth day? It is because the great vision of the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is the mystery of the Eighth Day, i.e., of the future age, coming to be revealed after the passing away of the world created in six days.

About the power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom the Kingdom of God is to be revealed, the Lord predicted: *There are some standing here who shall not taste death, until they have seen the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.* (Mt 16:28). Everywhere and in every way the King will be present, and everywhere will be His Kingdom, since the advent of His Kingdom does not signify the passing over from one place to another, but rather the revelation of its power of the Divine Spirit. That is why it is said *come in power*. And this power is not manifest to simple ordinary people, but to those standing with the Lord, that is to say, those who have affirmed their faith in Him like Peter, James and John, and especially those who are free of our natural abasement. Therefore, and precisely because of this, God manifests Himself upon the Mount, on the one hand coming down from His heights, and on the other, raising us up from the depths of abasement, since the Transcendent One takes on mortal nature. Certainly, such a manifest appearance by far transcends the utmost limits of the mind's grasp, as effectualized by the power of the Divine Spirit.

Thus, the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord is not something that comes to be and then vanishes, nor is it subject to the sensory faculties, although it was contemplated by corporeal eyes for a short while upon an inconsequential mountaintop. But the initiates of the Mystery, (the disciples) of the Lord at this time passed beyond mere flesh into spirit through a transformation of their senses, effectualized within

them by the Spirit, and in such a way that they beheld what, and to what extent, the Divine Spirit had wrought blessedness in them to behold the Ineffable Light.

Those not grasping this point have conjectured that the chosen from among the Apostles beheld the Light of the Transfiguration of the Lord by a sensual and creaturely faculty, and through this they attempt to reduce to a creaturely level (i.e., as something "created") not only this Light, the Kingdom and the Glory of God, but also the Power of the Divine Spirit, through Whom it is meet for Divine Mysteries to be revealed. In all likelihood, such persons have not heeded the words of the Apostle Paul: *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him. But to us God has revealed them through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.* (1 Cor 2:9-10).

So, with the onset of the Eighth Day, the Lord, taking Peter, James and John, went up on the Mount to pray. He always prayed alone, withdrawing from everyone, even from the Apostles themselves, as for example when with five loaves and two fish He fed the five thousand men, besides women and children (Mt 14:19-23). Or, taking with Him those who excelled others, as at the approach of His Saving Passion, when He said to the other disciples: *Sit here while I go over there and pray.* (Mt 26:36). Then He took with Him Peter, James and John. But in our instance right here and now, having taken only these same three, the Lord led them up onto a high mountain by themselves and was transfigured before them, that is to say, before their very eyes.

*What does it mean to say: He was transfigured?* asks the Golden-Mouthed Theologian (Chrysostomos). He answers this by saying: *It revealed something of His Divinity to them,*

as much and insofar as they were able to apprehend it, and it showed the indwelling of God within Him. The Evangelist Luke says: *And as He prayed, His countenance was altered* (Lk 9:29); and from the Evangelist Matthew we read: *And His face shone as the sun.* (Mt 17:2). But the Evangelist said this, not in the context that this Light be thought of as subsistent for the senses (let us put aside the blindness of mind of those who can conceive of nothing higher than what is known through the senses). Rather, it is to show that Christ God, for those living and contemplating by the Spirit, is the same as the sun is for those living in the flesh and contemplating by the senses. Therefore, some other Light for the knowing the Divinity is not necessary for those who are enriched by Divine gifts.

That same Inscrutable Light shone and was mysteriously manifest to the Apostles and the foremost of the Prophets at that moment, when [the Lord] was praying. This shows that what brought forth this blessed sight was prayer, and that the radiance occurred and was manifest by uniting the mind with God, and that it is granted to all who, with constant exercise in efforts of virtue and prayer, strive with their mind towards God. True beauty, essentially, can be contemplated only with a purified mind. To gaze upon its luminance assumes a sort of participation in it, as though some bright ray etches itself upon the face.

Even the face of Moses was illumined by his association with God. Do you not know that Moses was transfigured when he went up the mountain, and there beheld the Glory of God? But he (Moses) did not effect this, but rather he underwent a transfiguration. However, our Lord Jesus Christ possessed that Light Himself. In this regard, actually, He did not need prayer for His flesh to radiate with the Divine Light; it was but to show from whence that Light descends upon the saints of God, and how to contemplate it. For it is written that even the saints *will shine forth like the sun* (Mt 13:43), which is to say, entirely permeated by Divine Light as they gaze upon Christ, divinely and inexpressibly shining forth His Radiance, issuing from His Divine Nature. On Mount Tabor it was manifest

also in His Flesh, by reason of the Hypostatic Union (i.e., the union of the two perfect natures, divine and human, within the divine Person [Hypostasis] of Christ, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity). The Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon defined this Hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, divine and human, as *without mingling, without change, without division, without separation.*

We believe that at the Transfiguration He manifested not some other sort of light, but only that which was concealed beneath His fleshly exterior. This Light was the Light of the Divine Nature, and as such, it was Uncreated and Divine. So also, in the teachings of the Fathers, Jesus Christ was transfigured on the Mount, not taking upon Himself something new nor being changed into something new, nor something which formerly He did not possess. Rather, it was to show His disciples that which He already was, opening their eyes and bringing them from blindness to sight. For do you not see that eyes that can perceive natural things would be blind to this Light?

Thus, this Light is not a light of the senses, and those contemplating it do not simply see with sensual eyes, but rather they are changed by the power of the Divine Spirit. They were transformed, and only in this way did they see the transformation taking place amidst the very assumption of our perishability, with the deification through union with the Word of God in place of this.

So also she who miraculously conceived and gave birth recognized that the One born of her is God Incarnate. So it was also for Symeon, who only received this Infant into his arms, and the aged Anna, coming out [from the Jerusalem Temple] for the Meeting, since the Divine Power illumined, as through a glass windowpane, giving light for those having pure eyes of the heart.

And why did the Lord, before the beginning of the Transfiguration, choose the foremost of the Apostles and lead them up onto the Mount with Him? Certainly, it was to show them something great and mysterious. What is particularly great or mysterious in showing a sensory light, which not only the foremost, but all the other Apostles



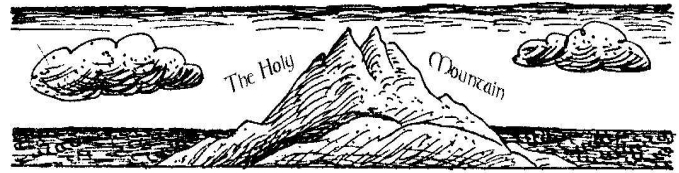
already abundantly possessed? Why would they need a transforming of their eyes by the power of the Holy Spirit for a contemplation of this Light, if it were merely sensory and created? How could the Glory and the Kingdom of the Father and the Holy Spirit project forth in some sort of sensory light? Indeed, in what sort of Glory and Kingdom would Christ the Lord come at the end of the ages, when there would not be necessary anything in the air, nor in expanse, nor anything similar, but when, in the words of the Apostle, *God will be all in all* (1 Cor 15: 28)? That is to say, will He alter everything for all? If so, then it follows that light is included.

Hence it is clear that the Light of Tabor was a Divine Light. And the Evangelist John, inspired by Divine Revelation, says clearly that the future eternal and enduring city *has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it. For the Glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb will be its lamp.* (Rev 21:23). Is it not clear that he points out here that this [Lamb] is Jesus, Who is divinely transfigured now upon Tabor, and the flesh of Whom shines is the lamp manifesting the Glory of divinity for those ascending the mountain with Him?

John the Theologian also says about the inhabitants of this city: *They will not need light from lamps, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shed light upon them, and night shall be no more.* (Rev 22:5). But how, we might ask, is there this other light, in which *there is no change, nor shadow of alteration* (Jas 1:17)? What light is there that is constant and unsetting, unless it be the Light of God? Moreover, could Moses and Elias (and particularly the former, who clearly was present only in spirit, and not in flesh [Elias having ascended bodily to Heaven on the fiery chariot]) be shining with any sort of sensory light, and be seen and known? Especially since it was written of them: *They appeared in glory, and spoke of his death, which he was about to fulfill at Jerusalem.* (Lk 9:30-31). And how otherwise could the Apostles recognize those whom they had never seen before, unless through the mysterious power of the Divine Light, opening their mental eyes?

But let us not tire our attention with the furthestmost interpretations of the words of the Gospel. We shall believe thus, as those same ones have taught us, who themselves were enlightened by the Lord Himself, insofar as they alone know this well: The Mysteries of God, in the words of a prophet, are known to God alone and His perpetual proximity. Let us, considering the Mystery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in accord with their teaching, strive to be illumined by this Light ourselves and encourage in ourselves love and striving towards the Unfading Glory and Beauty, purifying our spiritual eyes of worldly thoughts and refraining from perishable and quickly passing delights and beauty which darken the garb of the soul and lead to the fire of Gehenna and everlasting darkness. Let us be freed from these by the

illumination and knowledge of the incorporeal and ever-existing Light of our Savior transfigured on Tabor, in His Glory, and of His Father from all eternity, and His Life-Creating Spirit, Whom are One Radiance, One Godhead, and Glory, and Kingdom, and Power now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



Parents must teach their children from their earliest days. They must teach them the fear of God, must cut their bad impulses and faults, and they must not fawn upon them or satisfy their bad desires or appetites. The small child is like the soft candle that you shape as you like, and which accepts whatever seal you put upon it.

Whatever letters you write on a clean sheet of paper will remain imprinted. In the same way, whatever the small child learns when he is small will remain imprinted until old age.

When the tree is small, if the wind blows, it bends. If we put a pole next to it, then it becomes straight. If we don't put up a pole, and it becomes bent, it will always remain bent. If, when it is grown up and well rooted, we want to straighten it, it breaks and is cut down. It is the same with our children. Let us support them in the Faith and in the fear of God when they are small. Let us fence them in and surround them with walls of instruction and good examples, until they get rooted in virtue—when they won't fear any danger.

Everything that the all-wise Holy Apostles and the Godly-wise Fathers of our Holy Orthodox Church handed down to us, many of their successors today want to abolish and so dislodge the Church. However, they will be unable to do this, because the Lord will crush them like vessels of clay. And the few elect will be shaken, and few out of the few will remain unshaken. Let us force ourselves to remain faithful and unshaken in whatever we have received from the divine Apostles, the Holy Fathers, and the teachers of our Church. Do and write as much as you can, but be aware: Today's generation has eyes and sees not, ears and hears not...

The good Confessor's manner, the cheerfulness of his face, the fatherly affection with which he receives the sinner, the sweet language of his teaching, the courage which he gives to the shy, the consolation which he offers to those who have committed many sins and are in despair, citing the example of any who repented and were saved—all these are conducive to sincere repentance and confession of the sinner. It is to such spiritual fathers and physicians of the soul that the sinner ought to entrust the therapy of his soul.

**Blessed Elder Philotheos of Paros (+1980)**

## THE EIGHT MEANS OF TEMPTATION

By Elder Cleopa (+1998).



The Holy Fathers say that, on the path of salvation, one is tempted by the devil from eight sides: From the front, from behind, from the left, from the right, from above, from below, from inside, and from the outside.

**1.** One is tempted **from behind** when one continuously remembers the sins and evil deeds one has committed in the past, recalling them anew in one's mind, reshuffling them, engaging them, despairing because of them, and contemplating them sensually. Such a remembrance of how we have sinned in the past is a demonic temptation.

**2.** One is normally tempted **from the front** through fear at the thought of what the future holds: of what will happen to us or to the world; of how much longer we will live; of whether we will have anything to eat; of whether there will be a war or any other kind of serious and frightful event to come; and, in general, by making all kinds of guesses, predictions, prophecies, and everything else that induces fear of the future in us.

**3.** One is tempted by the devil **from the left** through the call to commit obvious sins and to behave and act in ways that are known to be sinful and evil, but which people do nonetheless. This temptation is a direct call to sin openly and consciously.

**4.** There are two ways in which the devil tempts **from the right**. The first is when one performs good deeds and actions, but with a bad or malicious intent and purpose. For example, if one does good or acts well out of vainglory, to receive praise, to obtain a position, to acquire fame, or in order to attain some benefit for oneself—it follows that one is doing such good out of vanity, avarice, and greed. The performance of good deeds for bad purposes is sinful and vain. The Holy Fathers liken such a performance of good deeds (such as fasting and almsgiving) to a body without a soul, inasmuch as the purpose for which a deed is accomplished is its soul, while the deed itself is its body. Therefore, the performance of good deeds with an ungodly purpose is essentially a temptation coming from the right, that is, coming under the guise of good. The second demonic temptation from the right comes through various apparitions and visions, when one receives visions of the devil in the form of God or an Angel of God. The Holy Fathers call trusting these specters from the devil, or accepting these demonic phenomena, delusion or deception.

**5.** Further, the devil tempts one **from below** when one is capable of performing good deeds or holy virtues but is too lazy to do so; or when one knows that one should make greater efforts and labors in ascetic struggles (in virtues and good deeds), and is capable of doing so, but does not do so out of laziness or because one is looking for excuses for one's laziness. One thereby spiritually rejects these virtues by doing much less than one could in fact do.

**6.** Temptations **from above** also come about in two ways. The first is when one takes upon oneself ascetic struggles that exceed one's strength, thereby recklessly straining oneself. This happens, for instance, when one is sick but imposes a fast on oneself that is beyond one's strength; or generally when one overdoes any ascetic struggle that is beyond one's spiritual and physical capacity. Such obstinacy lacks humility and is unreasonably presumptuous.

Another temptation from above is when one strives to learn the mysteries of Holy Scripture (and of God's mysteries in general), but does not do so according to one's spiritual maturity. That is, when one wants to penetrate the mysteries of God in Holy Scripture (or in the saints, the world, and life in general) in order later to explain and teach these mysteries to other people when one is not spiritually mature enough to do so. The Holy Fathers say that such a person wants to chew through a bone with baby teeth. St. Gregory of Nyssa speaks about this in his work, *The Life of Moses*. He says that it was for this reason that God commanded the Israelites, who were imperfect, to eat only the meat (which is like milk for the teeth) from the Passover lamb—and, moreover, with bitter herbs—and not to break into pieces or to eat the bones, but rather to burn them in fire (cf. Exodus 12: 8, 10:46). This means that we, too, should interpret only those mysteries in Holy Scripture (and in our faith in God generally) that correspond to our spiritual maturity and to eat (absorb) them with bitter herbs, that is, with everything that life brings us (suffering, grief); we should not bite into the mysteries of Holy Scripture, Divine knowledge, and God's Providence, like so many hard bones, with our baby teeth; they are susceptible to fire only, that is, they become clear only in ripe spiritual maturity and in experienced souls that have been tested by grace-filled Divine fire.

**7.** One is tempted **from within** by that which one has in one's heart and by that which proceeds from the heart. The Lord Jesus Christ clearly stated that it is from within, from one's heart, that sinful and impure thoughts, desires, and lusts proceed (cf. Matthew 15:19) and tempt one. Temptations come not only from the devil, but also humanly, from the evil intentions and skills, lusts, evil desires, and inner love of sin that proceed from an unclean heart.

**8.** Finally, the eighth door to demonic temptation is opened **from the outside**, through external things and occasions, that is, through everything that enters from outside

through one's senses, which are the soul's windows. These external things are not evil in and of themselves, but by means of them one's feelings can be tempted and induced to evil and sin.

These, then, are the eight means by which everyone is tempted, regardless of whether one is in the world or in seclusion.

Against each of these temptations—from behind, from the front, from the left, from the right, from above, from below, from inside, and from the outside—one must fight by means of **watchfulness** (the precise Slavonic word is *trezvenie*, that is, attentiveness, carefulness, and wakefulness of soul and body; wakefulness and vigilance of spirit; sobriety and discernment; attention to one's thoughts and actions; or, in a word: judgment. On the other hand, by means of constant prayer that invokes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, through **unceasing prayer**. (Or, as it is said in Greek, *Prosochi kai prosefchi*—that is, as the Holy Fathers put it, *by attention and prayer*.)

In other words, the Holy Fathers said that the battle against all temptations and passions consists in the following: guarding all one's mind, soul, and body from temptation—this is our ascetic struggle, from our human point of view; from the Divine side, one must continuously and prayerfully call upon the help of the All-Merciful Lord Jesus Christ—and this is that unceasing and primary prayer of the hesychasts called the Jesus Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner!*

† † †

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

[Jn 16:33]



An old man said: For nine years a brother was tempted in thought to the point of despairing of his salvation, and being scrupulous, he condemned himself, saying, "I have lost my soul, and since I am lost, I shall go back to the world." But while he was on the way, a voice came to him on the road, which said, "These nine years during which you have been tempted have been crowns for you; go back to your place, and I will allay these thoughts." Understand that it is not good for someone to despair of himself because of his temptations; rather temptations procure crowns for us if we use them well.

From "The Desert Banquet"

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND HERESY?

*Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (+2001), from the book "Patristic Theology"*

I believe we can comprehend the basic difference between them, if we take medical science as an example. There, we have doctors who belong to the Medical Association; if a doctor is not a member of the Medical Association, he cannot exercise the medical profession. For a doctor to be legal, he must not only be a graduate of a recognized Medical School, but also a member of the Medical Association. The same prerequisites apply to lawyers. These sciences undergo continuous monitoring, because, if one were to deviate from the proper exercising of his profession, he is tried by the pertinent authority of the professional Association he belongs to, and is expelled from the Body of that profession.

The same however occurs in the Church. The respective procedure within the Body of the Church—that is, the excision of a member—is called "excommunication;" if it relates to a member of an ecclesiastic rank, then it is called "unfrocking/deposition." It is how heretics are excommunicated from the Body of the church.

Just as within the medical realm a "quack" (fake doctor) cannot possibly be permitted to heal, thus also in the Church it is not possible for a heretic to heal the souls of people; because, being a heretic, he does not know how—nor is he able—to heal. Therefore, in the same manner that a union between a "quack" Association and the Medical Association is never possible, it is likewise never possible for a union to take place between the Orthodox and heretics. An actual doctor is not one who merely reads many medical books, but rather, the one who has graduated from the Medical School of a University, and also has apprenticed over a significant period of time near an experienced professor of proven ability to heal the sick.



Meekness is an unchanging state of mind, which both in honor and dishonor remains the same. Meekness consists in praying sincerely and undisturbedly in the face of afflictions from one's neighbor. Meekness is a cliff rising from the sea of irritability, against which all the waves that strive against it break, but which itself is never broken.

St. John Climacus

## THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S HEART

By Archimandrite Zacharias of Essex.



**Question 1:** Forgive this very naive question: Where is the heart? Not “What is the heart?” but “Where is the heart?”

**Answer 1:** The heart is within our chest. When we speak of the heart, we speak of our spiritual heart which coincides with the fleshly one; but when man receives illumination and sanctification, then his whole being

becomes a heart. The heart is synonymous with the soul, with the spirit; it is a spiritual place where man finds his unity, where his mind is enthroned when it has been healed of the passions. Not only his mind, but his whole body too is concentrated there.

St. Gregory Palamas says that *the heart is the very body of our body*, a place where man's whole being becomes like a knot. When mind and heart unite, man possesses his nature and there is no dispersion and division in him any more. That is the sanctified state of the man who is healed. On the contrary, in our natural and fallen state, we are divided; we think one thing with our mind, we feel another with our senses, we desire yet another with our heart. However, when mind and heart are united by the grace of God, then man has only one thought—the thought of God; he has only one desire—the desire for God; and only one sensation—the noetic sensation of God. That is why repentance and tears are so much appreciated; they help us to find that healing, that state of integrity, because no human being can weep having two thoughts; we weep because of one thought that hurts us. If we are hurt by the thought that we are separated from God, that *salvation is far from the sinner* and all those things that inspire this pain in our heart, then, of course, we can cry; but if we have two thoughts, we cannot cry.

The saints do not have many thoughts; they may have only one thought, but through that thought, they see the whole of cosmic being, heaven and earth. That thought becomes a pair of binoculars through which they see and discern everything. Tears are much appreciated in the spiritual life because, sooner or later, they make the heart surface. If we have tears because we desire God and we want to be reconciled with Him, surely the heart will be found and the mind will descend into it and God will reign there with grace.

**Question 2:** If a person arrives at that state of having acquired a humble heart, is it possible then to fall back to the old state, and if so, is it harder to get back or is it easier?

**Answer 2:** We go up and down all the time, but we never stop seeking and “fishing” for those humble thoughts that unite the mind with the heart. For example, all the thoughts of the Holy Scriptures can help us, because they come from the humble Spirit of God. Therefore, any thought expressed in the Holy Scriptures can become a *burning coal* that will touch the heart as it touched the lips of Isaiah. That is why we should always study the word of God and have it dwelling richly in our heart, as St. Paul says: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* (Col 3:16).

It is easy for grace to ignite one of these thoughts at the time of prayer, and then we have one verse from the Scriptures to pray with for a long time. And the Holy Spirit prays with us because this particular word is given by Him. This single thought that brings tears and repentance may come from the Holy Scriptures, quickened by grace; it may come directly from God Himself, through prayer; it may come from the hymnology of the Church, from a word of an elder or a brother; it can come from anywhere. God is constantly seeking our heart, and He can provoke it with whatever is at hand. We only have to be ready to “snatch” it.

Prayer of self-condemnation is especially helpful. The prayers before Holy Communion are full of these thoughts of self-condemnation before the thrice-Holy God. I think that if we read them carefully we would always receive great help; one day one sentence from those prayers will stay with us and work repentance, another day another one, and so on. Prayer of self-condemnation helps a lot because it follows the path of Christ, which goes downward. He is the One Who first went down, and He then *ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* (Eph 4:8). For this reason Fr. Sophrony says that those who are led by the Holy Spirit never cease to blame themselves before God and this leads them downwards.

But we must be careful, because not everybody can bear this. Those who are healthy psychologically can do so and find great strength and consolation, but for those who are less strong, there is another way which involves giving thanks to God continuously and balancing the prayer by ending it with the words *although I am unworthy, O Lord.* St. Maximus the Confessor says that true humility is to bear in mind that we have our being “on loan” from God. We find humility if we thank God continuously for everything, if we thank Him for every single breath He gives us. In one of the prayers before the Sacrament of Baptism, we say that God has spread out the air for us to breathe, and we find a similar idea in one of the prayers of the kneeling service at Pentecost. Consequently, if we thank God for everything and for every single breath of air that He gives us, we will maintain a humble spirit.

**Question 3:** In our journey to the heart, as we come to know God more, there is spiritual growth. Part of our journey is also learning and studying, and I was wondering if you could comment on the balance between the knowledge and growth of the mind versus the knowledge and growth of the heart. How do we know whether they are growing together or whether they are growing apart? And as we learn, we realize that we will never truly learn anything anyway, and it seems that the heart goes one way and the mind realizes that it will never know it at all.

**Answer 3:** I think it is true that intellectual work is not very favorable for the activity of the heart, but it is necessary and we have to go through it, at least for a number of years. It is necessary for the life of the Church, especially if we are to serve people. The only thing that can protect us is if we do it in obedience to the Church—to a bishop or a spiritual father. That will protect us and keep us for a time.

I remember when I was studying theology, I was trying to keep the prayer. It was not possible. One week I kept the prayer, but the following week I could not keep up with my work. When I tried to catch up with the work, I lost the prayer. I did not have any stability in those years. Sorry to speak of my personal experience, but looking back, I can say that it was very profitable because I was told to do it and I did it, and the prayers of the one who asked me to do it protected me.

Once I said to one of my elders at the monastery, “Nowadays, the work of a spiritual father is so difficult and dangerous; you have to be incorruptible to do it.” And he replied, “No, that is wrong. You do not have to be incorruptible; you have to have a point of reference.” And he was right: a point of reference in the person of an elder in the Church keeps the spirit of humility, that is to say, it protects us from danger. We do not have to be incorruptible, but we have to have a trustworthy point of reference. Nobody is incorruptible.

**Question 4:** In our modern culture that is so materialistic, scientific and focused on biology and the natural sciences, how can we even become aware that the heart is something more than just a muscle? How can we become aware of ourselves as being something more than just a brain or a circulatory system?

**Answer 4:** We must learn the language of God. I wanted to talk to you about this later, but I will say a few words now.

Since all of us have sinned, we all have a common language, the language of pain. When we come to God, we will inevitably have to suffer in order to be purified. If we speak to God with that pain, if we pour out our heart to God with that pain, then God will listen to us, and the heart will be activated.

I have an example from the First Book of Samuel. The Prophetess Hannah was childless, but she had a servant who had many children. This servant despised her; she was very proud and arrogant, because she was so vainglorious about her family. Hannah did not take any revenge, although she was the mistress, but she went to the temple and she poured out her heart to God in pain. Of course God heard her and answered her prayer, and the following year she came back to

the temple with her newborn son, Samuel.

When we suffer tribulation, pain or illness in our life, we must remember to pour out our heart out to God rather than seek human consolation, by going from one person to another and talking about it. This might give us some psychological consolation, but we lose all the tension of life, that energy of

pain which is so precious when we direct it towards God. This is one way.

The other way, as I have said before, is to find someone who can teach us how to speak to God. In the temple, little Samuel was sixteen or seventeen when he heard a voice calling him and he ran to Eli, the priest of the temple, and the priest said to him, *Go back to sleep, nobody called you.* The same thing happened a second time. Again he ran to Eli, saying to him, *Did you call me?* and the priest sent him back to sleep once more. When the same thing happened a third time, Eli, who had been initiated into the life of the Spirit, understood that this was a prophetic calling from God, and he advised him, *Go, and if you are called again say “Here am I, speak for Thy servant heareth.”* (cf. 1 Sam. 3:1-20). Indeed, the voice called again and Samuel received the prophetic anointing.

Similarly we learn to speak to God with our heart through obedience to our elders and, in fact, the ministry of a priest is to teach his people this language of God in the same way





as Eli taught Samuel. We all have a common language of pain, of suffering; one way or another we all go through it in this life, because God loves us.

**Question 5:** In the monastic life it is easy to see who might be your elders, but how can we identify these persons in our life in the world? From what sources can we find our elders outside of that life?

**Answer 5:** This has always been an important question in the life of the Church, and I remember St. Symeon the New Theologian saying that one must seek for an elder with tears. Pray to God that He gives you one and, if you do not find one, then speak to God directly, pouring out your heart to Him with tears, and the Lord Himself will be your Teacher.

What I say now is a bit risky and dangerous, but it is easy to suppose that there are no such elders any more. I believe that if we are humble, it is easier to find one. If we are humble, we can make anybody a prophet, because if we approach with a humble heart and trust, then God will speak to us. I remember Fr. Sophrony saying to us, "Make your spiritual father a prophet!" That is to say, approach with faith and trust, and God will inspire him to give you a word.

As I have said earlier, true repentance proves that God is just, righteous and blessed in all His ways, and that we are liars. It often happens that we, the spiritual fathers, do not know what we are saying. People come and ask a word of us. Sometimes the word comes naturally without our realizing it; at other times, nothing comes. It does not depend only on us; it depends also on the faith of the person who asks.

A little girl, twelve years old, came to me and said, "Sometimes I have proud thoughts; tell me what to do." And I said to that little girl, "Give thanks to God for all the things He has done for you. Give thanks to Him for every breath of air He gives you." And that little girl grabbed my word and ran away happily. Forgive me for talking about myself, but it is the only way to speak concretely about these things. There is a dangerous side to it, because we can spoil the *ethos* of our life and of the Church, but I am now speaking among my fellows, among priests, and I feel I can be more specific and open. We must do everything in such a way as not to usurp the spiritual space of the other, of our fellows. And if we are to succeed in this, we have to be careful not to lose our humility.



If you want to be spiritually tranquil, never part from someone while feeling agitated, but try in every way to forgive everyone in your soul and to make peace as much as possible. In so doing, you will part from others with a calm spirit, and you will enjoy serenity of the soul.

**Venerable Moses of Optina**

## "THEY HAVE COMMITTED EVERY SIN OF THE FLESH, BUT I LOVE THEM"

Source: From the book "Hieromonk Elder Porphyrios: An Anthology of Advice."



The Elder told me one day: "Boys and girls come to me sometimes. Those poor children, and what haven't they done. They have committed every sin of the flesh, but I love them."

The Elder did not justify the actions of the youth, which he characterized as carnal sins, but at the same time he loved them as precious souls "for whom Christ died". By his love he attracted them like a magnet and gradually they were healed of their worship of the flesh.

This patristic attitude of the Elder was misunderstood by conservative puritans, who mourned, and some irresponsible progressives, who rejoiced, for the same reason: that supposedly the Elder "tolerated" carnal sins. They did not understand that sin cannot be combated against with an intolerant condemnation of the sinner, nor through guilty legalism of the fall. The Elder effectively fought sin by loving the sinner and helping them become aware of their responsibility for their fall, and the possibility in Christ of them being freed from it and guilt through repentance and forgiveness and the life in Christ. He wanted to guide them to a new life, and not trouble their soul with the past.

The saint often advised his spiritual children that love, unity and cooperation of parents and good understanding between them and their children gives a sense of security and confidence to their children. Otherwise, the children become unsafe and insecure. Often the insecure children can lead to the "safety" of a gang and/or obtain a violent behavior (as a reaction to a dysfunctional family).

The behavior of the children is related to the situations they experienced in their family. The negative attitude of parents creates wounds in the hearts of the children and leaves scars of injury in their souls that keep during their whole life. These psychological scars are affecting their behavior and their relationship with others, during the rest of their lives.

In other words, the experiences the children carry from their childhood affect their lives and their behavior in relation to others (family, sexual relationship, friends). Children, Saint Porphyrios said, become older, educated, but do not really change. This is obvious even from the most minor events of their life.

## ON THE NAME OF THE ANTICHRIST THE NAME OF THE MENACE, THE SON OF PERDITION, THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS!

Source: "Revelation, the Seven Trumpets & the Antichrist," vol. III, *Orthodox Christian Lessons by Archimandrite Athanasios Mitilinaios* (+2006), translated & adapted by Constantine Zalalas, pp. 316-321, Zoe Press (2015).

*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.*

[Rev 13:18]

† † †



The type of wisdom the Evangelist refers to is divine wisdom and not the product of man's reason or intelligence. Saint John wants to stress that the information he is passing down to generations of Christians can only be understood through divine revelation and divine illumination.

You may wonder whether this wisdom, and more specifically this puzzle of a name, was revealed to some past giants of the Spirit, some important Christians? The answer is no; this name was not revealed.

Perhaps the name of the Antichrist was revealed to Saint John the Evangelist. We base this on the mandate given to Saint John in Revelation, when the angel tells him, *These things you will not write down.* (Rev 10:4). This knowledge was only for Saint John, and he was not permitted to share this knowledge with the Church. This particular detail is also found in Daniel when the prophet was also prophesying about the Antichrist (Dan 12:4).

These instances show that there are some specific revelations which do not pertain to the Church as a whole, but are relevant only to the person of the prophet who writes these prophecies. This is especially true in that Saint John could have easily asked the Lord, "Lord, please tell me, who is this menace of the Church, this destroyer of the entire world? Tell me, who is he?" The Lord may have responded, "I will tell you his name. This is his name, but you will not write his name in the book. You will only write down the number of his name."

This makes it almost impossible to ascertain the name, because a number of names correspond to that number. Perhaps the name of this menace, the son of perdition, the man of lawlessness, was also known to Saint Paul. Perhaps

it was revealed to him. Alternatively, the name of the Antichrist may have been made known to the twelve apostles, and they withheld it from the Church, so Christians would generally lack knowledge about the name of the Antichrist.

Certainly one can wonder, why then is Saint John the Evangelist creating this provocation by stating, *This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number . . . ?* This provocation is not designed to frustrate the reader, but mainly to draw his attention in order to provoke a healthy curiosity. The reader needs to be observant and to develop the inner sense that the Antichrist is coming. Moreover, a great many features of the physiognomy of the Antichrist will be made available, as Scripture is not lacking in these. The only thing lacking is the name.

So, what Saint John is indicating is that the vigilant Christian will not have any difficulty ascertaining the name if he becomes knowledgeable about all his other features, so that when the Antichrist does come, he will be able to point him out immediately. Saint John purposefully provokes the reader's watchfulness—not his curiosity. It is well-known that man easily succumbs to his curiosity, as attested to by the many attempts made throughout history to decode this enigmatic number 666. Needless to say, all those attempts were in vain because the number corresponds to many different names. In these previous decoding efforts, the Greek alphabet was used, as well as the Latin and the Hebrew alphabets. If you want my humble and lowly opinion, which is the opinion mainly accepted by the Church, the decoding of the number will require the use of the Greek alphabet. The reason is that Revelation was originally written in the Greek language. The letters of the Greek alphabet were used to create the numerical systems of those times in that each letter of the alphabet was used to correspond to a number.

Needless to say, previous hasty attempts to decode the name of the Antichrist did not stop short of misspelling names for the sake of making things fit. An example of one of the names used was *Latinos*, as those doing the decoding wanted to show that the Roman emperor was the Antichrist. In the process however, they misspelled the word *Latinos*. They added an extra letter [Lateinos the letter *epsilon* next to *iota*, so that they could change the number of this word from 661 to 666. The letter *epsilon* provided those much-needed five points, *epsilon* being the fifth letter of the Greek alphabet.

The same holds true with the name *amoumai*, which was suggested by Saint Hippolytus, of Rome. He conjectured that it does not have to be a name but the idea of the denial of Jesus Christ." He misspelled the word by placing an *epsilon* at the end instead of the diphthong *alpha iota*. He did this to accommodate the needed number. Since the *alpha*

*iota* diphthong provided ten numbers, which were too many (676), misspelling the word and using *epsilon* made things work out. These excessive interpretations do not deserve serious consideration.

So then, how are we to deal with this enigmatic number? Certainly not like the Pentecostals gathering here in our city of Larisa, who have been claiming that the name of the Antichrist would be William II. It is beyond me how they imagine such a name—William II! Since such conjecture has been going on for eons, and it is all in vain and to be avoided, let's look at the golden rule of our Church. This is found in the fifth book of Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, (chapter thirty) and repeated by Saint Andrew of Caesarea in his interpretation of Revelation.

Saint Irenaeus writes, *It is safer and less dangerous to await the fulfillment of the prophecy than to attempt to conjecture and decode the possible names, especially since many names correspond to the afore-said number.* Thus, it is much safer to await the fulfillment of these events than to have anyone obsessively search to pinpoint the name of the Antichrist. Saint Andrew of Caesarea writes (this is axiomatic): *Regarding the exact number and the other details written about him, (meaning the Antichrist) time and experience will reveal to those who remain vigilant (neptic).*

It is true indeed that time reveals the prophecies. However, it is through spiritual experience and *nepsis* of the heart that one ascertains that the fulfillment of prophecy is at hand. What is *nepsis* of the heart? A *neptic*, in the literal sense, is one who exercises sobriety in all things; his mind is clear. It is well-known that the different passions cause a type of drunkenness; they darken the *nous* and the heart. Thus, if we are free from this drunkenness of the passions and we maintain a state of *nepsis*—a clarity in our heart, then we can see every single thing clearly in order to interpret the events of history. On this, Saint Ignatius exhorts Saint Polycarp in his epistle; *Study the times pro-*

*fusely in full expectation of the One to come.* The Second Coming of Christ, as we will see further in the lessons to come, is chronologically connected with the appearance of the Antichrist, since Christ will come immediately after the appearance of the Antichrist. So, when Saint Ignatius exhorts that we study the times profusely, it means to keep a close watch on the unfolding of events so that you can see clearly. All of this presupposes a *neptic* heart, a heart cleansed from passions, evils and weaknesses—to be a believer, a person of faith. Thus, Saint Andrew epigrammatically states: *The time and experience will reveal to those who are neptic.*

This will be especially critical when the two prophets, Elijah and Enoch identify the Antichrist. The non-believers will be highly disappointed and indignant because the Antichrist will be their idol, their ideal world leader who will ultimately put the two prophets to death, whereas the faithful will have no question about his identity. The witness of the two prophets will further confirm the experience of the faithful who will be adequately informed from the multiple references in Scripture and the Church Fathers regarding the identity of the Antichrist.

Saint Andrew continues, *If the name of the Antichrist needed to be known (in advance), the one who saw it would have revealed it to us.* This is why I told you that Saint John probably knew the name: *However, the Grace of God did not want to have the name of this destroyer included in holy Scripture. As many names are found with this number, it would be the practice of logic to discover it* (PG 105, 339C). In other words, it would be an exercise in curiosity to attempt to find how many names fit this number. This being the case, we should not be curious; rather, we should wait until the fullness of time comes.

Now, many of us may wonder: Since the name is not revealed and the number should not be decoded, then what is the purpose of having it in the Scripture? Is Saint John the Evangelist simply toying with us? Of course not.



**Icon of the Last Judgment**

As a prophet, Saint John writes with all seriousness and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this inscription will be made manifest during the fullness of time when the prophecy will be fulfilled.

When Christ told the disciples about things that would materialize in a few days, He would say, *I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you truly believe.* (Jn 14:29). For example, on Great Thursday evening, Christ said to the disciples, *Tonight the sheep will be scattered because the shepherd will be struck. Peter, tonight you will deny me three times. And the rest of you will also deny me* (Mt 26:31-35). *I will resurrect in three days.* (Mk 9:31). *Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.* (Jn 16:20-22). Truly, the Lord had good reason to say, *I have told you these things so that when they come to pass, you will believe* (Jn 14:29).

Prophecy is the greater proof of truth and authenticity—prophecy, not miracles. Many false miracles will be worked by the Antichrist. The devil can work miracles, unfortunately, as many people experience in spiritism and the magic arts. Prophecy, however, is the unshakable criterion of truth. The devil has no knowledge of the future. Thus, he cannot prophesy; he can make an intelligent guess at times.

God sends a spirit of delusion upon the people who believe in the devil as punishment, such that they believe the guesswork of the devil which can be seen in the interpretation of people's dreams, in promises of fortune-tellers, in mediums, in coffee cup readers, and in spiritists. God often allows these to come true so that those who trust in the works of the devil believe the lie. This punishment of God is at times disciplinary or condemnatory, and more often condemnatory, I am afraid. The spirit of delusion is a final punishment given by God. God abandons these workers of wickedness once and for all, as Saint Paul states, *Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness* (2 Thess 2:11-12). The Old Testament is also very clear about the spirit of delusion.

Consequently, prophecy is a privilege that can only belong to God. It was used here (in Revelation) so that the people of any given generation, whether it be our generation or some future generation, can say; indeed, the prophecy is true! We need to prepare ourselves accordingly.

*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

[Mt 11:15]

## THE BLESSINGS OF ALMS

Source: "The Lives of the Fathers of the Eastern Desert," by Bishop Leontius of Neapolis ("Life of John the Almsgiver").



One day, the all-wise John (the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, 610-619) heard of a generous giver and so he sent for him privately and said jokingly:

—How is it that you became so generous? Was it natural to you, or did you put constraint upon yourself?

Some to whom he put this same question stood shamefacedly before him and would not answer, whilst others would tell him their story. One man whom the Saint questioned answered as follows:

—As a fact, master, I neither give anything nor do any good; but the little I do give and do from that which comes to me through Christ and your prayers I came to do in this way. Formerly I was very hardhearted and unsympathetic and one day I lost money and was reduced to poverty. Then my reason began to say to me: "Truly, if you had been charitable, God would not have forsaken you." And thereupon I decided to give five coppers [*pholleis*] a day to the poor. But when I started giving them, Satan immediately checked me by saying: "Those coppers would really have been enough to buy a bath-ticket or vegetables for your family." Then I felt at once as if I were taking the money out of my children's mouth and so I gave nothing.

—But I noticed I was being mastered by this vice, so I said to my slave: "I want you to steal five coppers daily without my noticing it, and give them in charity." For I am a money-changer master.

The money-changer continued:

—My slave, worthy fellow, began by stealing ten coppers, and occasionally even a shilling [*keratin*]. When he noticed that we were being blessed, he began to steal gold crowns, [*trimisia*] as well, and give them away as well. One day I was expressing my astonishment at God's blessings to us, I said to him: "Those five coppers, boy, have greatly benefited us. So now I want you to give ten." At that the slave said to me with a smile: "Yes, be thankful for my thefts, since but for them we should not even have bread to eat today. However if there can be a just thief, I am he!" And then he told me that he had given shillings and even crowns. So it was through his faith, master, that I grew accustomed to giving with all my heart.

The holy Patriarch was much edified by this story and said:

—Truly I have read many stories in the lives of the fathers, but I have never heard anything like this!

## Ένας Θάνατος που Προκαλεί Χαράν

Του Αρχιμ. Μελετίου Απ. Βαδραχάνη, «Ορθόδοξος Τύπος»,  
ἀριθ. φύλ. 1891, 12 Αύγουστου 2011.

Παράξενο να πανηγυρίζεις ένα θάνατο και να προσκαλείς σε πανηγύρι, αντί για πένθος, όλόκληρη την οικουμένη. Παράξενο να χαιρέσαι, να σκιριτάς, να χορεύεις έορτία και ν' αγαλλιᾶσαι στη θέα αὐτοῦ τοῦ θανάτου. Κι ὅμως στὴν Ἐκκλησία μας αὐτὸ εἶναι ὁ κανὼν καὶ ἡ γενικὴ συνήθεια, ὅταν ἐορτάζουμε τὸ θάνατο τῶν ἁγίων μας, καὶ μάλιστα τὸ θάνατο τῆς Παναγίας μας.

Ἔτσι ὅταν ἔχουμε τὴ μνήμη τοῦ εἰρηνικοῦ ἢ μαρτυρικοῦ θανάτου κάποιου ἁγίου, ὁ ναὸς τοῦ τιμωμένου ἁγίου στολιζέται, ὅσο πιὸ μεγαλόπρεπα τὸ ἐπιτρέπει ἡ οἰκονομικὴ κατάστασή του. Στολιζέται, ὅπως στολιζόταν οἱ ἀρχαῖες πρωτεύουσες τῶν μεγάλων αὐτοκρατοριῶν, ὅταν περίμεναν νὰ γυρίσει ὁ αὐτοκράτορας καὶ νὰ κάνει τὸν θρίαμβό του, δηλαδὴ τὴν μεγαλοπρεπῆ καὶ πανηγυρικὴ εἴσοδό του στὴν πρωτεύουσα. Καλλίφωνοι ψάλτες προσκαλοῦνται, πλῆθος ἱερέων προστρέχει, ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἢ οἱ ἐπίσκοποι ὅπου αὐτὸ εἶναι δυνατό, οἱ ἀρχές, ὁ λαός...

Εἶναι ὅλοι χαρούμενοι, ὅλοι φαιδροί, ὅλοι μὲ τὴν κατὰ Θεὸν ἔπαρση ὅτι στὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Χριστοῦ νικῆθηκε ὁ θάνατος

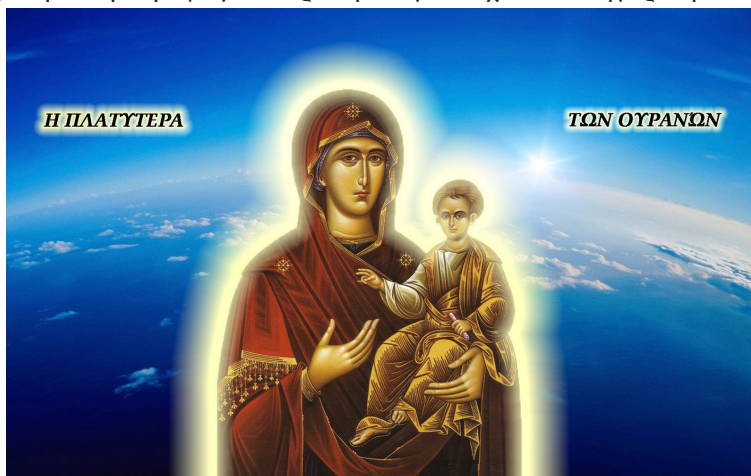
καὶ συνεπῶς ὁ θάνατος τῶν ἁγίων, ἀπὸ ὀριστικὴ καὶ ἐξαθλιωτικὴ ἐκημδένιση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ποῦ ἦταν, τώρα μεταβάλλεται σὲ μιὰ γέννηση στὴν αἰώνια καὶ χαρούμενη καὶ εὐτυχισμένη ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴ. Σὲ μιὰ καταξίωση ἄνευ προηγουμένου. Σὲ μιὰ δόξα ἀφθορῆ, ἀμάραντη καὶ ἄληκτη.

«Ὁ θάνατός σου Κύριε, ἀθανασίας γέγονε πρόξενος εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἐν μνήματι κατετέθης, οὐκ ἂν ὁ παράδεισος ἠνέωκτο» ψάλλει ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας στὴ νεκρῶσιμη ἀκολουθία. Τὸ ἴδιο καὶ ὁ θάνατος τῶν ἁγίων συντελεῖ στὴν ἐδραίωση καὶ ἰσχυροποίηση τῆς στρατευομένης Ἐκκλησίας καὶ στὴν προκοπὴ καὶ πνευματικὴ πρόοδο τῶν πιστῶν. Οἱ ἅγιοι δὲν χάνονται οὔτε χωρίζονται ἀπὸ τοὺς πιστοὺς, ἀλλὰ ἀέναα καὶ ἀδιάκοπα μεσιτεύουν γι' αὐτοὺς στὸν Κύριο. Εἶναι πρόδρομοὶ τους καὶ προάγγελοι τους στὸν Παράδεισο μ' ὅτι αὐτὸ συνεπάγεται. Ἀναμένουν νὰ τελειωθοῦμε κι ἐμεῖς καὶ ὅλοι μαζί νὰ συμμετάσχουμε στὸ τραπέζι τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Στὴν Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη, πρὶν τὴν ἀνάστασι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ θάνατος ἦταν φοβερὸς ἀκόμη καὶ γιὰ δικαίους τοῦ ἀναστήματος τοῦ Ἀβραάμ, τοῦ Ἰσαάκ, τοῦ Ἡλία. Τὸν φοβόταν καὶ ἔκαναν ὅτι μπορούσαν γιὰ νὰ τὸν ἀποφύγουν. Μετὰ τὴν ἀνάστασι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅμως, ὁ θάνατος—λέγει ὁ ἅγιος Χρυσόστομος—κατάντησε σὰν ἓνα λιοντάρι, ποῦ τοῦ βγάλανε τὰ δόντια καὶ τοῦ κόψανε τὰ νύχια. Βρυχᾶται καὶ ὀρμᾶ νὰ μᾶς κατασπαράξει, ἀλλὰ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ μᾶς κάνει κακό. Προκαλεῖ τὸ γέλιο καὶ τὴν περιφρόνησή μας. Δὲν τὸ φοβοῦνται οὔτε οἱ γυναῖκες οὔτε τὰ παιδιά. Ἀντίθετα, τὸν ἀντιμετωπίζουν θριαμβευτικὰ καὶ μὲ περιφρόνησι.

Ἔγνος εἶναι γιὰ μᾶς τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ὁ θάνατος. Ἔνας ἕγνος ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποῖο θὰ ξυπνήσουμε ξεκούραστοι καὶ ἀνανεωμένοι, μὲ καινούργια καὶ ἀθάνατα σώματα. Ἄφθορα καὶ ἀγέραστα, ἄτρωτα ἀπὸ τὴ φθορὰ καὶ τὴν ἀσθένεια. Γι' αὐτὸ λοιπὸν καὶ οἱ μνήμες τοῦ θανάτου τῶν ἁγίων ἔχουν πανηγυρικὴ καὶ ὄχι πένθιμη μορφή.

Εἰδικὰ ὁ θάνατος τῆς Παναγίας προκαλεῖ ἀνείπωτη καὶ ἀνέκφραστη χαρὰ στοὺς πιστοὺς, διότι δὲν μοιάζει μὲ τὸν θάνατο τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἀκόμη καὶ τῶν ἁγίων. Γιατὶ αὐτὴ ἦταν καθαρὴ ἀπὸ κάθε ἁμαρτία. Θεώθηκε ἀπὸ τὴ χάρι τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος κι ἀπὸ τὴν κνοφορία καὶ τὴ



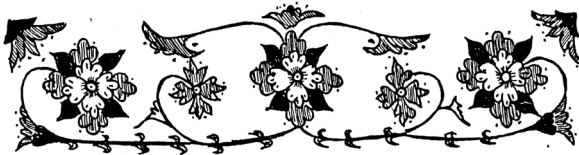
γέννησι τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου. Ἔγινε δοχεῖο τοῦ ἀστέκτου (ἀβάσταχτου) πυρὸς καὶ χωρίο τοῦ ἀχωρήτου Θεοῦ. Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ θάνατος δὲν εἶχε δύναμι ἐπάνω της. Πέθανε μὲν γιὰ νὰ πληρώσει τὸ κοινὸ μέτρο τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, μετέστη ὅμως πρὸς τὸν Υἱὸ καὶ Θεὸ της. Καὶ μένει ζῶσα καὶ μετὰ τὸν θάνατό της, γιὰ νὰ χαιρέται γιὰ τὴν δόξα τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ γιὰ νὰ προσεύχεται ἀδιάκοπα γιὰ ὅλο τὸ λαὸ της, ὅλον τὸν κόσμο.

«Ἐν τῇ Γεννήσει τὴν παρθενίαν ἐφύλαξας, ἐν τῇ Κοιμήσει τὸν κόσμον οὐ κατέλιπες Θεοτόκε. Μετέστης πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν, μήτηρ ὑπάρχουσα τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ταῖς πρεσβείαις ταῖς σαῖς λυτρομένη, ἐκ θανάτου τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.» Ὁ θάνατος τῆς Θεοτόκου—ἐκείνης ποῦ γέννησε τὴν Ζωὴ καὶ τὴν Ἀνάστασι—λαμβάνεται ἐπιπλέον ὡς ὁ τύπος τῆς ἀναστάσεως ὅλων τῶν Χριστιανῶν καὶ δίδεται ὡς τὸ παράδειγμα

Γιὰ τὴν νίκη κατὰ τοῦ θανάτου, ποῦ ἐπιτέλεσε ἡ ἀνάστασι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἔτσι τὴν προσφωνεῖ ὁ ὕμνωδός: «Χαῖρε ἀναστάσεως τύπον ἐκλάμπουσα!». Τὸ

ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ δὲν φαίνεται ἄμεσα, ἀλλὰ οὐσιαστικά ὁ θάνατος καταργήθηκε πράγματι. Δὲν ὀνομάζεται κἄν θάνατος, ἀλλὰ κοίμησις, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτὸ τὸ καθιέρωσε ἀνάμεσα στὸν εὐσεβῆ λαὸ τὸ γεγονός τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου. Τὸ σῶμα τῆς Παναγίας μας κοιμήθηκε στὴν ἀγκαλιὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τῆς καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς πρεσβεύει γιὰ ὅλους μας μπροστὰ στὸν θρόνο Του. Ἡ μετάστασή τῆς ἀπ' αὐτὴ τὴν ζωὴ στὴν ἄλλη, τὴν ἀληθινή, δὲν εἶναι πρόξενος πένθους ἀλλὰ αἰτία χαρᾶς καὶ πανηγύρεως. Πανηγυρίζει ὁ λαὸς μας στὴν γιορτὴ τῆς καὶ ζῆ μιὰ μικρὴ Λαμπρὴ, χορεύει καὶ ἀγάλλεται ὅπως στὴν γιορτὴ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως. Διότι στὸ πρόσωπο τῆς Παναγίας βλέπει ὁ κάθε πιστὸς τὸν ἑαυτὸ του ὡς μέλος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ στὴν Κοίμησή τῆς βλέπει τὸν δικό του θάνατο ὡς μιὰ κοίμησις ἕναν ὕπνο μέσα στὰ χέρια τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποῖο θὰ σηκωθεῖ σὰν θὰ σημάνει ἡ σάλπιγγα τῆς ἀναστάσεως καὶ θὰ εἶναι αἰώνια μὲ τὸν Θεό.

Ἀπ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἀποψη ἡ γιορτὴ τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου εἶναι μιὰ ὁμολογία πίστεως τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὅτι «προσδοκεῖ ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν», ἀλλὰ καὶ ἕνα κήρυγμα καὶ μιὰ διδαχὴ παρηγοριᾶς καὶ ἐλπίδας στοὺς χαροκαμένους ἀνθρώπους, ποὺ πενθοῦν γιὰ τὸν θάνατο τῶν ἀγαπητῶν τους, καὶ στοὺς ἀπεγνωσμένους, ποὺ δὲν ἐλπίζουν σὲ κανένα παρὸν οὔτε μέλλον. Ἡ Κοίμησις τῆς Θεοτόκου μᾶς βεβαιώνει ὅτι ὁ θάνατος εἶναι μιὰ ἀνάπαυλα πρὶν τὴν ἀνάστασις καὶ ἕνα προοίμιο τῆς αἰώνιας δόξας, γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο βέβαια ποὺ πεθαίνει ἐν Χριστῷ. Καὶ γιορτάζοντας «τῆς Παναγίας», βιώνουμε μὲ ἕναν τρόπο ποὺ πολὺ μᾶς ἐγγίζει, τὴν ἀνάστασις τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐφαρμοσμένη στὴν ζωὴ καὶ στὸν θάνατο τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ποὺ πολὺ Τὸν ἀγάπησε καὶ βαθεῖα Τὸν κατάλαβε καὶ ἀσύλληπτα ταπεινὰ Τὸν ὑπρέτησε: τῆς Ἑπεραγίας Ἐνδόξου Δεσποίνης μας Θεοτόκου καὶ Ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας.



**Ε**κεῖνος, ποὺ πιστεύει πραγματικὰ στὸν Κύριον φοβάται τὴν Κόλασιν, καὶ αὐτὸς ποὺ φοβάται τὴν Κόλασιν ἐγκρατεύεται καὶ δὲν πέφτει σὲ πάθη. Αὐτὸς πάλι, ποὺ ἐγκρατεύεται ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη ὑπομένει τὶς θλίψεις. Ὑπομένοντας τὶς θλίψεις στηρίζει τὴν ἐλπίδα τοῦ στὸν Θεόν. Ἡ ἐλπίδα πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἀποσπᾷ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀπὸ κάθε ἐναγώνια μέρμινα καὶ φιλόκοσμη προσπάθεια. Ἐφ' ὅσον λοιπὸν ἀπαλλαγῆ ὁ νοῦς ἀπὸ τὴν μέρμινα καὶ τὴν φροντίδα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, τότε πλέον θὰ ἀποκτήσῃ τὴν ἀγάπην πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.

Ἅγιος Μάξιμος ὁ Ὁμολογητῆς

## Γαστριμαργία: Εὐχάριστο Πάθος;

Τοῦ κ. Γεωργίου Θ. Μηλίτη, διδασκάλου.

**Α**πὸ τὰ πανάρχαια χρόνια οἱ ἄνθρωποι πίστευαν ὅτι ρίζα καὶ αἰτία πολλῶν ἀσθενειῶν ποὺ τυραννοῦν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ἡ πολυφαγία ἢ ἡ γαστριμαργία, ὅπως ἀλλοιῶς λέγεται.

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας θεωρεῖ τὴν γαστριμαργία αἰτία πολλῶν κακῶν καὶ μητέρα πολλῶν ἄλλων ἁμαρτημάτων, διότι αὐτὴ ἔβγαλε τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἀπὸ τὸν Παράδεισο.

Ἡ γαστριμαργία εἶναι ἕνα ἐλάττωμα, ἕνα πάθος, ποὺ μᾶς παρακινεῖ νὰ τρῶμε καὶ νὰ πίνουμε περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅσο χρειάζεται τὸ σῶμα μας γιὰ νὰ συντηρηθεῖ. Οἱ ἅγιοι Πατέρες, καὶ μάλιστα ὁ ἱερός Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος, λένε ὅτι πρόκειται γιὰ βαρεῖα ἁμαρτία, ὅπως ἀποδεικνύεται ἀπὸ τὴν ἱστορία τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου γένους: «*Αὐτὴ ἐξόρισε τὸν Ἀδὰμ ἀπὸ τὸν Παράδεισο, αὐτὴ προκάλεσε τὸν μεγάλο κατακλυσμὸ, αὐτὴ ἔκανε τοὺς Ἰσραηλίτες εἰδωλολάτρες, αὐτὴ ἔριξε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους σὲ πολλὰ ἄλλα κακά.*»

Ἡ γαστριμαργία καταβάλλει σχεδὸν ὅλους μας, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι εὐχάριστο πάθος. Εἶναι ἀμφίβολο καὶ ἐπίφοβο ἂν πρὸ τοῦ θανάτου ἐγκαταλείπει τὸν ἄνθρωπο· εἰδικὰ σήμερα, ἐποχὴ ἀφθονίας καὶ καλοζωίας, ἔχει δημιουργηθεῖ τὸ πλέον κατάλληλο κλίμα, αὐτὸ τὴ βοηθεῖ νὰ γιγαντώνεται καὶ νὰ διαφεντεύει σ' ὅλη σχεδὸν τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα.

### Τι Λέμε Γαστριμαργία;

Ἡ γαστριμαργία εἶναι ἕνα ἐλάττωμα, ἕνα πάθος, ποὺ κυριεῖ πολλοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Ἡ λέξις γαστριμαργία εἶναι σύνθετη καὶ παράγεται ἀπὸ τὸ οὐσιαστικὸ **γαστήρ** (κοιλία) καὶ τὸ ρῆμα **μαργαίνω** (κατέχομαι ὑπὸ μανίας, καὶ μάργος λέγεται ὁ μανιώδης)· ἔτσι, ὅταν καταλαμβάνει κάποιον ἡ μανία νὰ γεμίσει τὴν γαστέρα (κοιλία) του, αὐτὸ λέγεται γαστριμαργία. Ἄρα γαστριμαργία εἶναι τὸ πάθος ποὺ μᾶς παρακινεῖ νὰ τρῶμε καὶ νὰ πίνουμε περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅσο χρειάζεται τὸ σῶμα μας γιὰ νὰ συντηρηθεῖ.

Τὸν ἀκριβὴ ὀρισμὸ τῆς γαστριμαργίας δίνει ὁ Ἅγ. Ἰωάννης ὁ Σιναΐτης στὸ βιβλίον του «Κλίμαξ»: «*Γαστριμαργία εἶναι ἡ ὑποκριτικὴ συμπεριφορὰ τῆς κοιλίας, ἢ ὅποια ἐνῶ εἶναι χορτασμένη, φωνάζει πὼς εἶναι ἐνδεὴς (φτωχὴ) καὶ ἐνῶ εἶναι παραφορτωμένη μέχρι διαρρήξεως, ἀνακράζει ὅτι πεινᾷ. Γαστριμαργία εἶναι ἡ δημιουργὸς τῶν καρυκευμάτων, ἢ πηγὴ τῶν τέρψεων τοῦ λάρυγγα. Γαστριμαργία εἶναι μιὰ ἀπάτη τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν. Καθ' ἡ στιγμὴν κάποιος τρώγει τὸ μέτριον σὲ ποσότητα φαγητοῦ του, ἢ γαστριμαργία τὸν κάνει νὰ σκέπτεται πὼς νὰ ἦτο δυνατὸν νὰ καταβροχθίσει διὰ μιᾶς τὰ σύμπαντα.*» (Κλίμαξ, ἔκδ. Παρακλήτου 1985).

Ὁ Εὐάγγελος καὶ ὁ Μάξιμος ὁ Ὁμολογητὴς τὴν ὀνομάζουσαν «ἐμπαθὴ λογισμόν», μ' ἄλλα λόγια «τὸ σῶμα παρεμβαίνει μόνον ὡς ὄργανο πραγμάτωσης τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς». (Συμεών Νέος Θεολόγος).

Γαστρίμαργία, κατ' ἄλλον Πατέρα, εἶναι ἡ κατανάλωση ποσότητας φαγητοῦ μεγαλύτερης ἀπ' ὅση εἶναι ἀπαραίτητη γιὰ τὴν ἐπιβίωσή μας, ἐνῶ λαίμαργία ἢ τάση πρὸς φαγητὰ πού ἔχουν ἀπολαυστικὴ γεύση ἢ ἡ κατανάλωση φαγητοῦ ἀποκλειστικὰ γιὰ εὐχαρίστηση.

Συμπερασματικὰ ἡ γαστρίμαργία, κατὰ τοὺς Πατέρες, εἶναι «ἀναζήτησις τῆς ἡδονῆς τοῦ ἐσθίειν», «ἐπιθυμία τοῦ ἐσθίειν γιὰ τὴν ἡδονήν», ἀκόμα ἢ «ἀκράτεια τοῦ στόματος καὶ τῆς κοιλίας».

### Θυγατέρες τῆς

Σύμφωνα μὲ τοὺς Πατέρας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας ἡ γαστρίμαργία δὲν βλάπτει μόνον τὴν ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ γεννᾷ καὶ ἄλλα πάθη καὶ ἀμαρτήματα.

Τὸ πρῶτο πάθος πού τὴν ἀκολουθεῖ εἶναι «ἡ πορνεία καὶ κάθε σαρκική ἀκαθαρσία». Κατὰ τὸ ὄσιο Μᾶρκο τὸ ἀσκητὴ τὴν γαστρίμαργία «ἀκολουθοῦν ἢ λήθη καὶ ἢ ραθυμία». Ἄλλοι Πατέρες τονίζουν ὅτι τὴν ἡδονὴ πού προκαλεῖ τὸ φαγητὸ ἢ τὸ πιετὸ διαδέχεται ἢ ὀδύνη. τὴν εὐχαρίστηση τοῦ λάρυγγα διαδέχεται καταρχὴν ὁ πόνος καὶ τὸ βάρος τοῦ στομάχου, καὶ στὴ συνέχεια ἢ παχυσαρκία καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀναριθμητὰ δεινὰ πού προέρχονται ἀπὸ αὐτὴ.

Κυρίως ὅμως, ἡ γαστρίμαργία προκαλεῖ ζάλη στὸ κεφάλι, βάρος καὶ ἀτονία στὸ σῶμα. Ἔτσι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐγκαταλείπει τὸ πνευματικὸ του ἔργο, ἐπειδὴ ἔρχεται σ' αὐτὸν ἢ ὀκνηρία. Ἀκολουθεῖ ἢ σκότιση τοῦ νοῦ καὶ τῶν λογισμῶν καὶ ἢ ταραχὴ τὴν ὥρα τῆς προσευχῆς. Ὁ νοῦς γίνεται ἀδιάκριτος καὶ οἱ πονηροὶ λογισμοὶ βρίσκονται στὸ ἀποκορύφωμά τους ὅταν κανεὶς δὲν ἔχει καθαρὸ νοῦ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀσχοληθεῖ μὲ πνευματικὰ πράγματα.

### Οἱ Πατέρες γιὰ τὴ Γαστρίμαργία

Στὰ πατερικὰ κείμενα διαβάζουμε ὅτι τὰ πάθη δὲν ἀνήκουν στὴ φύση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Εἶναι ἀρρώστιες τῆς ψυχῆς. Ὅταν ὅμως χρονίζονται στὸν ἄνθρωπο, γίνονται δεύτερη φύση του καὶ δὲν ἀπομακρύνονται. Ἀκόμα κι ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος μετανοεῖ καὶ δέχεται τὴ Χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ, δὲν ἀπαλλάσσεται μὲ μιᾶς ἀπ' αὐτά, ἀλλὰ χρειάζεται νὰ προσπαθήσει καὶ νὰ ἀγωνισθεῖ γιὰ πολὺ καιρὸ ἂν θέλει νὰ τὰ καταπολεμήσει.

Γιὰ τὴ γαστρίμαργία λέγουν ὅτι εἶναι ἀτομικὸ ὀλισθημα. Γίνεται, ὅμως, θανάσιμο ἀμάρτημα γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ὅταν προξενεῖ βλάβη καὶ σκάνδαλο στὸν πλησίον, ὅταν γνωρίζει ὅτι θὰ πάθει κάποια σοβαρὴ ἀσθένεια καὶ δὲν ἐγκρατεῦται, ὅταν ξοδεύει πάρα πολλὰ χρήματα γιὰ νὰ τρώει πλοῦσια τὴ στιγμὴ πού ὁ πλησίον του στερεῖται τὰ ἀναγκαῖα καὶ δὲν τὸν ἐλεεῖ κι ὅταν δὲν τηρεῖ τὶς καθιερωμένες ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία μας νηστείες (ἐφόσον δὲν ἐμποδίζεται ἀπὸ κάποια ἀρρώστια).

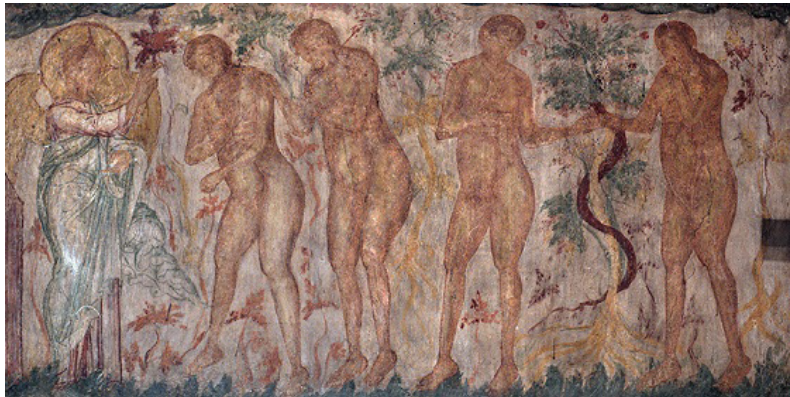
### Πῶς Θεραπεύεται

Ὅπως γιὰ ὅλες τὶς ἀσθένειες τοῦ σώματος ὑπάρχουν φάρμακα πού τὶς καταπολεμοῦν καὶ τὶς θεραπεύουν ἔτσι καὶ γιὰ τὶς ἀσθένειες τῆς ψυχῆς, τὰ πάθη, ὑπάρχουν τὰ κατάλληλα φάρμακα πού ὄχι μόνον τὶς θεραπεύουν ἀλλὰ ἀπελευθερώνουν τὸν ἄνθρωπο ἀπὸ τὸν τυραννικὸ ζυγὸ τους.

Ἰσχυρὸ ὄπλο γιὰ τὴν καταπολέμησι τῆς γαστρίμαργίας εἶναι ἡ νηστεία. Αὐτὴ δόθηκε σὰν ἐντολὴ στὸν Παράδεισο· διαβάζουμε στὴ Γένεσι: «Καὶ ἐνετείλατο Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τῷ Ἀδάμ λέγων ἀπὸ παντός ξύλου τοῦ ἐν τῷ Παραδείσῳ βρώσει φαγῆ, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ ξύλου τοῦ γινώσκειν καλὸν καὶ πονηρὸν, οὐ φάγεσθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἢ δ' ἂν ἡμέρα φάγητε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε». (Γέν. 2:16).

Ἡ ἀγία μας Ἐκκλησία προκειμένου νὰ βοηθήσει τοὺς πιστοὺς ὄχι μόνον νὰ ἀπαλαχθοῦν ἀπὸ τὸ πάθος τῆς γαστρίμαργίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ ἀνεβοῦν πνευματικὰ θέσπισε περιόδους νηστείας. Ἔτσι οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι νηστεύουμε κάθε Τετάρτη καὶ Παρασκευὴ· σαράντα ἡμέρες πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἑορτὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων (ἀπὸ 15 Νοεμβρίου μέχρι καὶ 24 Δεκεμβρίου)· τὴν Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλῃ Τεσσαρακοστῇ (ἀπὸ τὴν Καθαρὰ Δευτέρα μέχρι καὶ τὸ Μεγάλο Σάββατο, εἶναι πολὺ αὐστηρὴ νηστεία)· τὴ νηστεία τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων (ἀρχίζει τὴ Δευτέρα μετὰ τὴν ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἁγίων Πάντων καὶ τελειώνει στὶς 28 Ἰουνίου)· τέλος ἔχουμε καὶ τὴ νηστεία πρὸς τιμὴν τῆς Παναγίας (ἀρχίζει ἀπὸ τὴν 1<sup>η</sup> Αὐγούστου καὶ τελειώνει τὴν παραμονὴ τῆς ἑορτῆς τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου).

Οἱ Πατέρες λέγουν ὅτι οἱ πιστοὶ πρέπει νὰ δεῖνουν προσοχὴ διότι ἡ νηστεία χρειάζεται διάκριση, δὲν πρέπει νὰ νηστεύουμε πάνω ἀπὸ τὶς δυνάμεις μας, ὅταν ἡ ὑγεία μας δὲν τὸ ἐπιτρέπει· δὲν πρέπει νὰ ξεχνῶμε, ὅμως, ὅτι οἱ ἔρουνες πού ἔκαναν οἱ εἰδικοὶ ἔδειξαν



ὅτι ὅταν κάνουμε νηστεία σύμφωνα με τὶς ὑποδείξεις τῶν Πατέρων, ὄχι μόνον δὲν κινδυνεύει ἡ ὑγεία μας ἀλλὰ ἀπεναντίας ὁ ὀργανισμὸς ἀποτοξινώνεται καὶ δὲν προσβάλεται εὐκόλα ἀπὸ διάφορες ἀσθένειες. Χριστιανικὴ νηστεία καὶ ὑγιεινὴ διατροφή εἶναι γιὰ τὴν Ἱατρικὴ σχεδὸν ταυτόσημες ἔννοιες.

Μαζὶ μετὰ τὴ νηστεία, οἱ Πατέρες, σὰν ἀντίδοτό τῆς συνιστοῦν καὶ τὴ μνήμη τοῦ θανάτου, καθὼς καὶ τῆς Μέλλουσας Κρίσεως: «Ὅταν λάβεις θέση σὲ πλούσιο τραπέζι—συμβουλεύει ὁ Ἅγ. Ἰωάννης τῆς Κλίμακος—φέρε ἐμπρὸς σου τὴ μνήμη τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τῆς κρίσεως ἴσως ἔτσι νὰ συγκρατήσεις λίγο τὸ πάθος. Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἂν ἀκόμη δὲν ἐγκρατευθεῖς, τουλάχιστον θὰ ταπεινωθεῖς καὶ θὰ ἀναστενάξεις, συγκρίνοντας τὴν πολυφαγία σου μετὰ τὸ πάθος τοῦ Χριστοῦ». (Κλίμαξ σελ. 191).

Δὲν πρέπει νὰ μᾶς διαφεύγει ὅτι στὴ γαστρεντερία συνήθως πέφτουμε ὅταν τρώμε συχνότερα ἀπ' ὅσο πρέπει ἢ νωρίτερα ἀπὸ τὴν κατάλληλη ὥρα, ὅταν τρώμε καὶ πίνουμε περισσότερο ἀπ' ὅσο μᾶς χρειάζεται, ὅταν ἐπιζητοῦμε πλούσια, ἀκριβὰ καὶ ἐξεζητημένα φαγητά, ὅταν τρώμε μετὰ βουλμία καὶ ὅταν σπαταλᾶμε μεγάλο μέρος τοῦ πολύτιμου χρόνου τῆς ζωῆς μας σὲ γαστρονομικὰ ἀσχολίες καὶ φροντίδες. Ὁ χρυσὸς κανόνας εἶναι: «*Νὰ δίνουμε στὸ σῶμα ὅσα ἢ ἀνάγκη θέλει καὶ ὄχι ὅσα ἢ ἡδονὴ ἀπαιτεῖ*».

#### Οἱ Πατέρες γιὰ τὴν Τροφή

Ἴσως κάποιος νὰ πεῖ ὅτι οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας εἶναι ἐναντίον τῆς τροφῆς· αὐτὸ δὲν εἶναι σωστό, διότι κανένας ἐκ τῶν Πατέρων δὲν πέθανε ἀπὸ ἀσιτία διότι ἔτρωγαν τὸ ἀναγκαῖο φαγητὸ πὺν χρειαζόντουσαν γιὰ νὰ διατηρηθοῦν στὴ ζωὴ. Ἀκόμη οἱ Πατέρες δὲν θεωροῦν ὅτι ἡ τροφή εἶναι ἀκάθαρτη καὶ κακὴ ὥστε νὰ κάνει τὴν γαστρεντερία πάθος. Αὐτὸ ἐπιβεβαιώνεται καὶ ἀπὸ τὴ Γραφή: «*Οὐ τὸ εἰσερχόμενον εἰς τὸ στόμα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον*». (Ματθ. 15:11). Ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος γράφει στὸ μαθητὴ του Τιμόθεο: «*Πᾶν κτίσμα Θεοῦ καλόν, καὶ οὐδὲν ἀπόβλητον μετὰ εὐχαριστίας λαμβανόμενον*». (Α' Τιμ. 4:4). Ἄρα, τὸ πάθος τῆς γαστρεντερίας δὲν εἶναι ἐπακόλουθο τῆς τροφῆς πὺν παίρνουμε, ἀλλὰ στὸ σκοπὸ καὶ στὸ στόχο πὺν βάζουμε ὅταν καθόμαστε νὰ φᾶμε.

Ὁ ἅγιος Δωρόθεος Γάζης ἔλεγε: «*Ἄλλο πρᾶγμα εἶναι τὸ νὰ φάγει κάποιος διὰ νὰ ἱκανοποιήσει τὴν φυσικὴν ἀνάγκην λήψεως τροφῆς καὶ ἄλλο νὰ φάγει διὰ νὰ δοκιμάσει τὴν ἐκ τοῦ φαγητοῦ ἡδονήν. Ὁ σκοπὸς διὰ τὸν ὁποῖον τρώγει τις εἶναι ἐκεῖνος ὁ ὁποῖος δημιουργεῖ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Τὸ νὰ τρώγει δὲ κανεὶς ὅσον ἐπιβάλλουν αἱ σῶματι καὶ τοῦ ἀνάγκαι σημαίνει ὅτι οὗτος ὀρίζει εἰς τὸν ἑαυτὸν τοῦ πόσον πρέπει νὰ φάγει καθ' ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν*».

#### Τέλος

Πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζουμε, ὅτι τὸ φοβερὸ πάθος τῆς γαστρεντερίας εἶναι ἀνελέητο καὶ ὁ ἀγὼνας γιὰ τὴν καταπολέμησή του δὲν εἶναι εὐκόλος. Εἶναι σκληρὸς καὶ κουραστικὸς. Συνεχῆς καὶ ἰσόβιος. Πρέπει νὰ παλέψουμε μ' ἓναν πολὺ δυνατὸ ἐχθρὸ, πὺν μᾶς βλάπτει σωματικά, ἀλλὰ κυρίως ψυχικά. Ἄς πάρουμε τὴν ἀπόφαση καὶ ἂς τὴν τηρήσουμε «*μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὴν πολυφαγία καὶ τὴν πολυποσία*». Ἄς ἔχουμε πάντα στὸ μυαλὸ μας αὐτὰ πὺν ἔλεγε ὁ Μέγας Ἀντώνιος: «*Ἐγκράτεια εὐδαιμονία ἐστὶ καὶ ἐλπίς ἀγαθὴ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων*» καὶ νὰ μὴ ξεχνοῦμε ὅτι «*ἢ νηστεία, τὸ ἀντίδοτό τῆς γαστρεντερίας, εἶναι βία φύσεως καὶ περιτομὴ τῶν ἡδονῶν τοῦ λάρυγγα, ἐκτομὴ τῆς σαρκικῆς πυρώσεως, ἐκκοπὴ τῶν πονηρῶν λογισμῶν, ἀπελευθέρωση ἀπὸ λογισμοὺς ὀνειρῶν, καθαρὸτητα προσευχῆς, φωτισμὸς τῆς ψυχῆς, διαφύλαξις τοῦ νοῦ, διάλυσις τῆς πυρώσεως, θύρα τῆς κατανύξεως, ἐλαφρότης τοῦ ὕπνου, ὑγεία τοῦ σώματος, πρόξενος τῆς ἀπαθείας, ἄφεση τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, θύρα καὶ ἀπόλαυσις τοῦ Παραδείσου*». (Κλίμαξ, σελ. 191).



#### Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑΣ

Ὁ νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας εἶναι ἓνας καὶ βρῖσκεται μόνον μέσα στὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, μᾶς λέγει ὁ Ἅγιος Μάρκος ὁ Ἀσκητὴς στὸ ἔργον του «*Περὶ πνευματικοῦ Νόμου*» (ἐκδόσεις Παναγόπουλος), ὅπου γράφει μεταξὺ ἄλλων:

«*Ὁ νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας (δηλ. τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου) διδάσκει ὄλη τὴν ἀλήθεια. Καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν διαβάζουν, μόνον γιὰ νὰ λάβουν μία γνώση του. Λίγοι ὁμως τὸν ἐννοοῦν, ἀνάλογα μετὰ τὴν ἐκτέλεση τῶν ἐντολῶν*».

Καὶ λίγο πὺν κάτω ἐξηγεῖ ὁ Ἅγιος: «*Ὁ νόμος τῆς ἐλευθερίας (δηλ. τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου) μετὰ τὴν ἀληθινὴν γνώση διαβάζεται, μετὰ τὴν ἐργασία τῶν ἐντολῶν γίνεται ἀντιληπτὸς, ἢ πληρωσὴ του ὁμως γίνεται μετὰ τοὺς οἰκτιρμοὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ*».

Καὶ καταλήγει: «*Ὅσοι δὲν λογαριάζουν ὅτι εἶναι ὑποχρεωμένοι νὰ τηροῦν ὄλες τὶς ἐντολές τοῦ Χριστοῦ, αὐτοὶ διαβάζουν σωματικά τὸν νόμον τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ δὲν ἐννοοῦν μήτε ἐκεῖνα, πὺν λένε, μήτε ἐκεῖνα γιὰ τὰ ὁποῖα δίνουν διαβεβαιώσεις (Α' Τιμ. 1:7). Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ νομίζουν ὅτι τάχα ἐκπληρώνουν τὸν νόμον μετὰ τὰ ἔργα τους*».

Ἐμεῖς πὺν διαβάζουμε τὸν λόγον τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου;



## Ἐπὶ Ἀρχαγγέλων

### Ποιοὶ εἶναι οἱ Ἀρχάγγελοι καὶ Ποιὰ εἶναι τὰ Ὄνόματά τους;

Ἀγίου Νικολάου Βελμύροβιτς, «Ὁ Πρόλογος τῆς Ἀχρίδος»,  
Ἐκδόσεις Ἀθως.

Ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή δίνει σαφῆ καὶ ἀκράδαντα μαρτυρία ὅτι οἱ ἄγγελοι ἀκαταπαύστως ἐπικοινωνοῦν μὲ τοῦτο τὸν κόσμο. Ἡ Ἱερὰ Παράδοση τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας μᾶς διδάσκει τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀρχηγῶν τῶν ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων: Μιχαήλ, Γαβριήλ, Ραφαήλ, Οὐριήλ, Σαλαθιήλ, Ἰεγουδιήλ καὶ Βαραχιήλ (ἐνίοτε συμπληρῶνεται καὶ ἓνας ὄγδοος, ὁ Ἰερεμιήλ). Ποιοὶ εἶναι οἱ Ἀρχάγγελοι καὶ τί σημαίνουν τὰ ὀνόματά τους;

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Μιχαήλ**» στὴν Ἑβραϊκὴ γλῶσσα σημαίνει «ποιὸς εἶναι ὁμοιος μὲ τὸν Θεό;» (τίς ὡς ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν;). Ὁ ἅγιος Ἀρχάγγελος Μιχαήλ ἀπεικονίστηκε ἤδη ἀπὸ τοὺς πρώτους Χριστιανοὺς ὡς στρατηγός, ὁ ὁποῖος κρατᾷ

στὸ δεξιὸ χέρι τοῦ δόρυ, μὲ τὸ ὁποῖο ἐπιτίθεται στὸν Ἐωσφόρο, τὸν Σατανᾶ, καὶ στὸ ἀριστερὸ τοῦ χέρι κρατᾷ ἓνα πράσινο κλαδὶ φοίνικα. Στὴν κορυφὴ τοῦ δόρατος ὑπάρχει μία λινὴ κορδέλα μὲ κόκκινο σταυρό. Ὁ Ἀρχάγγελος Μιχαήλ θεωρεῖται ὡς ὁ φρουρὸς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου πίστεως, ὁ ὁποῖος μάχεται κατὰ τῶν αἰρέσεων.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Γαβριήλ**» σημαίνει «Ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ», ἢ «ἰσχυρὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ». Εἶναι ὁ ἀγγελιαφόρος τῶν μυστηρίων τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἰδιαίτερος δὲ τῆς Ἐνσαρκώσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὄλων τῶν σχετικῶν μὲ αὐτὴν μυστηρίων. Ἀπεικονίζεται συνήθως κρατώντας στὸ δεξιὸ χέρι τοῦ φανάρι μὲ φωτισμένη λαμπάδα καὶ στὸ ἀριστερὸ τοῦ χέρι ἓναν καθρέφτη ἀπὸ πράσινο ἴασπη. Ὁ καθρέφτης σηματοδοτεῖ τὴ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς ἓνα κρυμμένο μυστήριον.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Ραφαήλ**» σημαίνει «Θεῖα θεραπεία» ἢ «Θεὸς ὁ θεραπευτῆς». (Τωβίτ 3:17, 12:15). Ὁ Ραφαήλ ἀπεικονίζεται νὰ ὀδηγεῖ μὲ τὸ δεξιὸ χέρι τοῦ τὸν Τωβίτ (ὁ ὁποῖος κρατᾷ ἓνα ψάρι ἀλιευμένο στὸν Τίγρη ποταμὸ) καὶ μὲ τὸ ἀριστερὸ μία ἀλαβάστρινη ἰατρικὴ θήκη.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Οὐριήλ**» σημαίνει «Πῦρ τοῦ Θεοῦ», ἢ «Φῶς τοῦ Θεοῦ». (Γ΄ Ἐσδρας 3:1 καὶ 5:20). Ἀπεικονίζεται νὰ κρατᾷ ἓνα σπαθὶ κατὰ τῶν Περσῶν στὸ δεξιὸ χέρι τοῦ καὶ μία πύρινη φλόγα στὸ ἀριστερὸ.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Σαλαθιήλ**» σημαίνει «πρεσβευτῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸ». (Γ΄ Ἐσδρας 5:16). Ἀπεικονίζεται μὲ χαμηλωμένο τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ τὰ μάτια του, κρατώντας τὰ χέρια του στὸ στήθος σὲ στάση προσευχῆς.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Ἰεγουδιήλ**» σημαίνει «αὐτὸς ποὺ δοξάζει τὸν Θεό». Ἀπεικονίζεται μὲ χρυσοῦ στεφάνι στὸ δεξιὸ τοῦ χέρι καὶ τριπλὸ μαστίγιον στὸ ἀριστερὸ.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Βαραχιήλ**» σημαίνει «εὐλογία τοῦ Θεοῦ». Ἀπεικονίζεται νὰ κρατᾷ στὸ χέρι τοῦ λευκὸ τριαντάφυλλο κοντὰ στὸ στήθος του.

Ἀρχάγγελος «**Ἰερεμιήλ**» σημαίνει «ἐξύμνηση τοῦ Θεοῦ». Τιμᾶται ὡς ἐμπνευστῆς ὑψηλῶν σκέψεων, ποὺ ἀνυψώνουν τὸν ἄνθρωπο πρὸς τὸν Θεὸ. (Γ΄ Ἐσδρας 4:36).

Οὐράνιοι Ἀρχιστράτηγοι, ἐσεῖς ποὺ ἄνωθεν ἐπιβλέπετε μὲ μεγάλη στοργή, σκεπάστε μας μὲ τίς φτεροῦγες σας, προστατέψτε μας μὲ τὴ δυνάμη σας.

Εἴσαστε ὀπλισμένοι μὲ τὴ δυνάμη τοῦ Θεοῦ, στεφανω-

μένοι μὲ τὴ δόξα Του, κρατᾷτε πύρινες ρομφαῖες γιὰ νὰ θεορίζετε τοὺς δαίμονες.

Ἀστραπιαῖος, ὡς ἀκτίνες φωτὸς διασχίζετε τὰ σύννεφα, ὅλα τὰ σύννεφα τοῦ ἀέρα, ὅπου δίνετε μάχες, παλεύοντας ὑπὲρ

τοῦ Ὑψίστου Θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

Ἀκούραστοι, ἄγρυπνοι φρουροί, χαριέστατοι, ἀκαταπαύστως ὑπερίπτασθε πάνω ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ὅλη τὴν κτίση, πάνω ἀπὸ ἀναρίθμητους κόσμους.

Ὅλες οἱ κραταιὲς στρατιᾶς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ—οἱ ἐνάρετες λεγεῶνες μὲ τὰ ἀγαθοποιὰ τάγματα τῶν ἀγγέλων—δικές σας εἶναι, ἀδελφοί μας, κατὰ τὸν κοινὸ μας Πλάστη.

Θεῖοι ἀρχιστράτηγοι τῶν οὐρανίων Δυνάμεων, ὀδηγήστε μας ἐκεῖ ὅπου πρέπει νὰ ἀρθοῦμε, στὸν θρόνον τοῦ Ὑψίστου Θεοῦ, ὁ ὁποῖος τὰ πάντα δημιούργησε ἐκ τοῦ μηδενός.

† † †

Ἀπολυτίκιον (Κατέβασμα) — Ἦχος δ΄  
**Τῶν οὐρανίων στρατιῶν Ἀρχιστράτηγοι,  
δυσωποῦμεν ὑμᾶς ἡμεῖς οἱ ἀνάξιοι, ἵνα ταῖς ὑμῶν  
δεήσεσι, τειχίσῃτε ἡμᾶς, σκέπη τῶν πτερύγων,  
τῆς αὐλοῦ ὑμῶν δόξης, φρουροῦντες ἡμᾶς  
προσπίπτοντας, ἐκτενῶς καὶ βοῶντας Ἐκ τῶν  
κινδύνων λυτρώσασθε ἡμᾶς, ὡς Ταξίαρχαι τῶν  
ἄνω Δυνάμεων.**



## Ένας Άγιος Δεσπότης: Μητροπολίτης Σιατίστης Αντώνιος (+2005)

Πηγή: «Βήμα Ὁρθοδοξίας», <https://www.vimaorthodoxias.gr/>.

### Ἀπὸ τὸν Ἐκδότη

Στις 17 Δεκεμβρίου τοῦ 2005, «ὁ πῖο ταπεινὸς δεσπότης τῆς Ἐκκλησίας», ὅπως τὸν ἀποκάλεσαν πολλοί, ἄφησε τὴν τελευταία πνοή του στὸ «Μποδοσάκειο» νοσοκομεῖο Πτολεμαΐδας, σὲ ἡλικία 85 ἐτῶν, μετὰ ἀπὸ τρίμηνη μάχη μὲ τὸν καρκίνο. Ὁ θάνατός του προκάλεσε μεγάλη ὀδύνη στὸν λαὸ τῆς Σιατίστης καὶ τῆς εὐρύτερης περιοχῆς τῆς ἱεράς Μητροπόλεως. Ὁ Ἅγιος Μητροπολίτης Ἀντώνιος παραμένει ἓνα καὶ (δυστυχῶς) μοναδικὸ στὶς μέρες μας παράδειγμα ἀγιοσύνης, ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ ποιμαντικῆς ἡγεσίας τύπου ποῦ σπανίζει καὶ ἴσως οὔτε κὰν ὑπάρχει στὸν κύκλο τῆς σημερινῆς Ἑλληνορθόδοξης Ἱεραρχίας. Τὴν εὐχή του νὰ ἔχουμε.

† † †

Ἄπλως καὶ πάμπωχος ἦταν ὁ Δεσπότης Ἀντώνιος. Δὲν εἶχε Μερσεντὲς μὲ ὀδηγό, ἀλλὰ ἀνέβαινε καὶ στὶς καρότσες τῶν ἀγροτικῶν γιὰ τὶς μετακινήσεις του. Ὅταν τὰ ἔργα μιλοῦν ἀπὸ μόνα τους τότε τὰ σχόλια περιτεύουν...

Αἰτία γι' αὐτὸ τὸ ἄρθρο; Ἐνα γράμμα:

Στέλιο, ἀγαπητὲ φίλε καὶ ἀδελφέ, καλημέρα,

Ἄργησα νὰ σοῦ γράψω. Ἀπουσίαζα. Σοῦ ὀφείλω τὰ βιογραφικὰ ποῦ τὰ φωτοτύπησα ἀπὸ τὸν τόμο ποῦ ἐκδόθηκε γιὰ τὰ τριάντα χρόνια τῆς ἐπισκοπικῆς του διακονίας.

Ἐκεῖνο ποῦ θὰ ἠθελα νὰ σὲ βεβαιώσω εἶναι ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦταν Ἅγιος. Ζοῦσε ἅγια. Εἴκοσι χρόνια ποῦ τὸν ἔζησα ἀπὸ κοντὰ τὸ ἔβλεπα, τὸ ἔνοιωθα. Ἀκτινοβολοῦσε φῶς, γέλιο, καὶ πάντα ἠρεμος. Ἄπλως σ' ὄλα του. Φτωχὸς μέχρι τρέλας. Λιτὸς ἀπερίγραπτα. Ντρέπομαι ὅταν ἀναλογίζομαι τὸ πόσες φορὲς λειτούργησα μαζί του καὶ ἐγὼ φοροῦσα στολὲς πλούσιες καὶ αὐτὸς ἦταν πλάι μας φτωχότατος.

Θὰ σοῦ πῶ κάτι γιὰ νὰ θαυμάσεις πάνω σ' αὐτό. Ἀγόρασα μία βαλίτσα, κάποτε, γιὰ τὶς στολὲς μου ὅταν μετακινούμουν. Δερμάτινη. Ἦλθε λοιπὸν στὴν Ἐκκλησία, ὡς τοποτηρητής. Εἶχε μία βαλίτσα ξύλινη—ἐσωτερικὰ ἐπενδυμένη μὲ ταπετσαρία χάρτινη, σὰν καὶ αὐτὲς ποῦ ἔχουν κάτι λαϊκὰ μπαούλα. Ντράπηκα. Παπᾶς

ἐγώ. Δεσπότης αὐτός. Τοῦ λέω, «Γέροντα δὲν πάει ἄλλο. Θὰ πάρετε τὴ βαλίτσα τὴ δική μου». Ἐπαναστάτησε. «Ὅχι» μοῦ λέει, «ἐσὺ εἶσαι οἰκογενειάρχης, ἔχεις παιδιά καὶ ἄλλα τέτοια». Τελικὰ τὴν πήρε.

Ἔστερα ἀπὸ μέρες μοῦ τηλεφώνησε. «Ἐλα νὰ πάμε νὰ λειτουργήσουμε σὲ κάποια κωμόπολη». Πάω, καὶ τί νὰ δῶ. Ἡ ξύλινη βαλίτσα. «Πάλι τὰ ἴδια» τοῦ λέω. «Παιδάκι μου», μοῦ λέει, «ἔπιασε τόπο, τὴν ἔδωσα σὲ μία φτωχὰ γυναίκα».

Πήγαμε, κάποτε μὲ τοὺς δικούς μου στὴ Σιατίστη νὰ τὸν ἐπισκεφθοῦμε. Καὶ τί νὰ δοῦμε: Σφουγγάριζε τὶς σκάλες τῆς Μητροπόλεως. «Αὐτὰ τὰ λεφτὰ ποῦ θὰ ἴδιναι σὲ μία γυναίκα, τὰ βάζω στὸ φιλόπτωχο—καὶ ὕστερα μὴ ξεχνᾶτε πὼς ἂν ἤμουν στὸ μοναστήρι, θὰ ἔκανα κάποιο διακόνημα».

Μοῦ διηγήθηκε κάποιος:

Ἦταν ὁ πρῶτος καιρὸς ποῦ εἶχε ἔλθει στὴ Μητρόπολη. Δὲν ἦταν ἀκόμα γνωστός. Πῆγε μία Κυριακὴ σὲ χωριό, στὸ Βόιο. Τέλειωσε ἡ Λειτουργία.

Βγήκε ἔξω καὶ περιμένε κανένας νὰ τὸν μαζέψει γιὰ τὸν πάει στὴ Σιατίστη. Αὐτοκίνητο δὲν εἶχε μέχρι ποῦ πέθανε. Στάθηκε ἓνας μὲ τὸ αὐτοκίνητό του, αὐτὸς ποῦ μοῦ τὰ διηγείται, καὶ τοῦ λέει. «Παπούλη ποῦ πάς»; Λέει αὐτὸς Σιατίστη. «Καὶ ἐγὼ ἐκεῖ πάω, ἀλλὰ ἔχω δίπλα μου τὴ γυναίκα μου. Πρέπει νὰ στριμωχθοῦμε». Τοῦ λέει ὁ Δεσπότης. «Στὴν

καρότσα μὲ παίρνεις;» Λέει «Ναί».

Ἀνέβηκε στὴν καρότσα ὁ Δεσπότης. Φτάσαμε στὴ Σιατίστη. Θέαμα. Ἐτρεξαν ἄνθρωποι. Στάθηκαν μπροστὰ στὸν ἐπίσκοπο. Τὸν βοήθησαν νὰ κατέβει. Χειροφιλήματα. Ρωτάει ὁ ἄνθρωπος. «Ποιὸς εἶναι;» «Ὁ Δεσπότης», τοῦ λένε. Ἀρχίζει νὰ κλαίει. «Ἐβαλα», μοῦ λέει, «τὸν Δεσπότη στὴν καρότσα καὶ ἄφησα τὴ γυναίκα μου στὸ κάθισμα».

Καὶ τέτοια περιστατικά, Στέλιο, πολλά. Αὐτὸς ὁ Ἅγιος ἄφησε περιουσία στὴ Μητρόπολη: Τὰ μοναστήρια του. Ἀτέλειωτες ὥρες ἐξομολόγηση. Ἡ μισὴ Κοζάνη πήγαινε σ' αὐτόν. Ἀγρυπνίες. Κόσμος ἀπὸ Καστοριά, Γρεβενά, Κοζάνη, Πτολεμαΐδα. Δυὸ φορὲς ἔκανε τοποτηρητὴς ἀπὸ 2-3 μῆνες καὶ τὰ γύρισε ὄλα τα χωριὰ τῆς περιοχῆς, ἑκατὸν πενήντα (150) τὸν ἀριθμὸ, ἀπὸ δύο φορὲς!

Στὴν κηδεῖα του, ὅταν ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος εἶπε ὅτι σήμερον κηδεύουμε ἓναν ἅγιο, ὁ κόσμος ὅλος φώναξε



μὲ μία φωνὴ τρεῖς φορές «Ἅγιος». Ἀκόμα σηκώνεται ἡ τριχά μου. Αὐτὲς τὶς ἡμέρες κυκλοφόρησε ἓνα βιβλίον «Ἐνας Φιλομόναχος Ἐπίσκοπος». Μόλις τὸ πάρω θὰ στὸ στεῖλω. Χαιρέτα ὅλους. Εὐχου – Εὐχομαι.

Πάπα-Γιώργης Μπετσάκος

Κοζάνη, 12 Μαρτίου, 2006

† † †

**Ο** Μακαριστὸς Μητροπολίτης Σισανίου καὶ Σιατίστης κ. Ἀντώνιος Κόμπος γεννήθηκε τὸ 1920 στὸ Ἄργος Ἀργολίδος. Ἦταν ἀπόφοιτος τῆς Μαρασλείου Παιδαγωγικῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν καὶ τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Ἀθηνῶν. Κάτοχος μεγάλης θεολογικῆς παιδείας, συμπλήρωσε τὶς σπουδές του στὰ Πανεπιστήμια Ὁξφόρδης καὶ Παρισίων.

Διετέλεσε καθηγητὴς καὶ Διευθυντὴς Ἱερατικῶν Σχολῶν. Κατὰ τὰ ἔτη 1971-74 ὑπηρετήσε ὡς ἱεροκέρυκα εἰς τὴν Ἱερὰν Μητρόπολιν Αἰτωλίας καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας. Διάκονος ἐχειροτονήθη εἰς τὰς 3.12.67, πρεσβύτερος δὲ εἰς τὰς 4.12.67. Τὴν 23<sup>ην</sup> Μαΐου 1974 ἐξελέγη Μητροπολίτης Σισανίου καὶ Σιατίστης.

Ἐξέδωσε ἀξιόλογα ἐπιστημονικὰ ἔργα. Δημοσίευσε βιβλιοκρισίας καὶ ἄρθρα ἐποικοδομητικὰ εἰς διάφορα περιοδικὰ. Ἐκοιμήθη ἐν Κυρίῳ τῇ 17/12/2005.

Μία μαρτυρία...

Ἦταν ἓνας σεμνὸς ἡλικιωμένος κληρικὸς, ψηλὸς, ἀδύνατος, ἀσκητικὸς, ποὺ ταξίδευε μὲ τὸ καραβάκι στὴ γραμμὴ «Δάφνη-Ἁγία Ἄννα». Στὴ διαδρομὴ ἦταν λιγομίλητος, συμμαζεμένος. Τὸ καραβάκι πέρασε τὰ μοναστήρια καὶ ἔφτασε τὸν ἄρσανά τῆς Ἱ. Μονῆς Ἁγίου Παύλου, ὅπου ὁ ταξιδιώτης κληρικὸς ἔκανε, ὅπως καὶ σὲ κάθε μοναστήρι, τὸ σταυρὸ του.

Πέρασαν ἀπὸ τὸ μουράγιο τῆς Ν. Σκῆτης καὶ σὲ λίγο ἀντίκρισαν τὴν Ἁγία Ἄννα καὶ ἔκανε πάλι μὲ εὐλάβεια τὸ σταυρὸ του. Ἐδῶ ἦταν ὁ προορισμὸς τοῦ εὐλαβοῦς κληρικοῦ. Σηκώθηκε ἀπὸ τὴ θέση του μαζὶ μὲ τοὺς ἄλλους, καὶ μόλις τὸ καραβάκι ἔπιασε στὸ μουράγιο, οἱ περισσότεροι κατέβηκαν ἐκεῖ. Κατέβηκε καὶ αὐτός.

Γύρισε ὅμως τὸ κεφάλι του πρὸς τὰ πίσω καὶ εἶδε ἓναν νεαρὸ ἱερομόναχο νὰ ἀγωνίζεται νὰ βγάλει ἀπὸ τὸ καραβάκι ἓνα σωρὸ πράγματα ποὺ εἶχε. Δὲν χάνει εὐκαιρία καὶ τὸν ρωτᾷ. «Νὰ σὲ βοηθήσω, πάτερ;»

«Νὰ εἶναι εὐλογημένο γέροντα», ἀπαντᾷ ὁ νεαρὸς ἱερομόναχος, κι ἀμέσως ὁ ἡλικιωμένος κληρικὸς παρὰ τὴν ἡλικία του, μὲ νεανικὸ φρόνημα, βοήθησε σβέλτα στὴ μεταφορὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπὸ τὸ καραβάκι στὸ μουράγιο. Τελείωσαν, καὶ ὁ μοναχὸς εὐχαρίστησε τὸν ἄγνωστο κληρικὸ καὶ ἐκείνος ξεκίνησε ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκρη τοῦ μουράγιου γιὰ νὰ πάρει στὴ συνέχεια τὸν ἀνήφορο. Τότε τὸν γνώρισαν μερικοὶ καὶ ἔτρεξαν κοντά του. Ἐβαλαν μετάνοια κατὰ τὸ συνηθισμένο... «Εὐλόγησον, Δέσποτα!», «Ὁ Κύριος». «Εὐλογεῖτε, Σεβασμιότατε!», «Ὁ Κύριος».

Ὁ μοναχὸς τὰ ἔχασε! Τόση ὥρα λοιπὸν τὸν βοηθοῦσε ἓνας Δεσπότης νὰ βγάλει τὰ πράγματα ἀπὸ τὸ καΐκι; Ποιὸς νὰ ἦταν ἄραγε αὐτὸς ὁ ταπεινὸς παπᾶς, ὅπως ἐμοίαιζε; Ἔτρεξε, ἔβαλε μετάνοια, πήρε εὐχή, ζήτησε συγχώρεση ποὺ δέχθηκε νὰ γίνε βοηθὸς τοῦ ἓνας Δεσπότης, κι ἐκεῖνος δὲν ἀντέδρασε καθόλου, θεωρώντας το γιὰ κάτι φυσικὸ καὶ ἀνθρώπινο τὸ νὰ προσφέρεις βοήθεια στὸν διπλανό σου...

Ποιὸς Δεσπότης ὅμως ἦταν; Ἦταν ὁ μητροπολίτης Σισανίου καὶ Σιατίστης Ἀντώνιος Κόμπος. Μὴ μοῦ πεῖτε τώρα, ὅτι ἔχουμε πολλοὺς σὰν κι' αὐτόν...

Μία ἀκόμη μαρτυρία:

Γεῖα σᾶς φίλοι μου!

Νὰ σᾶς πῶ καὶ ἐγὼ λίγα περιστατικὰ γιὰ τὸν μακαριστὸ Ἀντώνιο!

Ὁ ἐπίσκοπος κ. Ἀντώνιος σπάνια χρησιμοποιοῦσε αὐτοκίνητο, καὶ συνήθως πήγαινε μὲ λεωφορεῖο σὲ ὅλες τὶς Συνόδους τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα πολλοὶ Ἱεράρχες τὸν ... πείραζαν καὶ τὸν ... φώναζαν «ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος τῶν ΚΤΕΑ».

Μία φορὰ πανηγύριζε ἓνα χωριὸ κοντὰ στὴ Σιάτιστα καὶ θὰ προεξείχε ὁ Μητροπολίτης. Ὁδηγὸ τότε δὲν εἶχε. Ὅποτε κάνει ὠτο-στόπ καὶ στὸ δρόμο σταματᾷ ἓνα τρακτέρ ποὺ κουβαλοῦσε ἄχυρα μὲ καρότσα. Ὁ ὀδηγὸς ἔτσι φτωχὸ καὶ χωρὶς κάτι νὰ δείχνει πὼς εἶναι Μητροπολίτης, τὸν πέρασε γιὰ ἀπλὸ μοναχὸ καὶ τοῦ εἶπε, πὼς μόνο πίσω στὰ ἄχυρα ἔχει θέση. Ὁ Μητροπολίτης Ἀντώνιος δέχτηκε μὲ χαρά!

Ὅταν ἔμπαιναν στὸ χωριὸ μὲ τὸν Δεσπότη πάνω στὰ ἄχυρα, κάποιοι χωρικοὶ τὸν ἀντιλήφθηκαν καὶ ἄρχιζαν νὰ φωνάζουν. «Ὁ Δεσπότης ἦρθε!... Ὁ Δεσπότης ἦρθε!...». Οἱ καμπάνες ἄρχισαν νὰ χτυπᾶνε δυνατὰ καὶ ὁ ὀδηγὸς τοῦ τρακτέρ τὰ ἔχασε, ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἀπὸ λίγο κατάλαβε τί γινόταν...

Ἐνα ἀκόμη γεγονὸς ἦταν, πὼς εἶχε ἓνα κῆπο ποὺ ὅλο σκάλιζε φορώντας κάτι παλιὰ ρᾶσα. Ἔτσι, ὅταν μία παρέα ἀπὸ γνωστοὺς καὶ φίλους του πήγαν νὰ τὸν δοῦν, δὲν τὸν κατάλαβαν νομίζοντας πὼς εἶναι ὁ κηπουρὸς... «Ποῦ εἶναι ὁ Δεσπότης;», τὸν ρωτᾶνε. «Τί τὸν θέλετε;», τοὺς λέει. «Νὰ πάρουμε τὴν εὐχή του», τὸν λένε. «Νὰ πάω νὰ τὸν φωνάξω», τοὺς λέει. Πῆγε, ἔβαλε ἓνα ἄλλο καθαρὸ ρᾶσο, καὶ γύρισε κοντὰ τους...

Τέλος ἀπὸ προσωπικὴ ἐμπειρία μπορῶ νὰ πῶ, πὼς εἶχε τὴν ἀθωότητα καὶ ἀγνότητα μικροῦ παιδιοῦ, καὶ πολὺ μεγάλη ἀγάπη γιὰ ὅλο τὸν κόσμον, ποὺ τὴν καταλάβαινες ἀπὸ τὴν συμπεριφορὰ του.

### Οἱ Τελευταῖες Στιγμές του

**Ο** γνωστὸς διορατικὸς γέροντας Γαβριὴλ ποὺ βρίσκεται λίγο ἔξω ἀπὸ τὶς Καρυές, διαβεβαίωσε ὅτι ὅταν κοιμήθηκε ὁ Μακαριστὸς Ἀντώνιος ἔγινε τέτοιο «γλέντι» στὸν Παράδεισον ποὺ εἶχε νὰ γίνε ἀπὸ τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς κοίμησης τοῦ Ἁγίου Νεκταρίου!

Ἄς δοῦμε τώρα τὴν περιγραφή πὸν ἔδωσε ἕνας πιστὸς Χριστιανός, σχετικὰ μὲ τὶς τελευταῖες ὥρες τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Ἀντωνίου:

Βρέθηκα, λέει, μὲ τὸ μοναχό, στὰ χέρια τοῦ ὁποῦ κοιμήθηκε ὁ μακαριστὸς Μητροπολίτης Σισανίου καὶ Σιατίστης Ἀντώνιος. Τὸν παρακάλεσα νὰ μοῦ περιγράψει τὶς τελευταῖες στιγμὲς τῆς κοιμήσεώς του, καὶ μοῦ εἶπε:

Ὁ Μακαριστὸς κατὰ τὶς τελευταῖες ἡμέρες ἦταν σὲ ἄσχημη κατάσταση καὶ εἶχε δυσκολία ἀκόμη καὶ στὸ νὰ μιλήσει. Τὸν εἶχαμε πάει στὴν Ἀθήνα ὅπου ἐκεῖ ἔκανε ἐγχείρηση ἀφαίρεσης τοῦ στομάχου λόγω τοῦ καρκίνου πὸν εἶχε. Τὴν ἐπόμενη ἡμέρα, μετὰ τὴν ἐγχείρηση μὸλις μπήκαμε στὸ δωμάτιο τὸν εἶδαμε νὰ κλαίει ἔντονα κοιτάζοντας τὸν Ἐσταυρωμένο σὲ μία εἰκόνα μέσα στὸ δωμάτιο τοῦ νοσοκομείου.

«Τί ἔπαθες Δέσποτα;» τὸν ρωτήσαμε. Μὲ δυσκολία ψέλλισε, «θὰ σὰς πῶ... θὰ σὰς πῶ...», ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ πλέον δὲν μποροῦσε νὰ μιλήσει. Προφανῶς κάτι εἶδε πὸν τὸν συγκλόνησε...

Μετὰ, τὸν φέραμε στὸ γυναικεῖο μοναστήρι στὸ Μικροκάστρο ἀλλὰ δὲν ἠθελε νὰ τὸν περιποιῶνται οἱ μοναχὲς καὶ ἔτσι καθόμασταν δίπλα τοῦ ἐναλλάξ διάφοροι μοναχοί. Εἶχα μία ἀδιόρατη διαίσθηση ὅτι θὰ κοιμηθεῖ στὰ χέρια μου. Δὲν ξέρω γιατί.

Ἡ ὑγεία του ἐπιδεινώθηκε καὶ τὸν πήγαμε στὸ νοσοκομεῖο Μποδοσάκειο στὴν Πτολεμαῖδα. Κάποια μέρα δὲν ὑπῆρχε ἄλλος μοναχὸς νὰ πάει στὸν Μακαριστὸ καὶ ὁ Γέροντας εἶπε σ' ἐμένα νὰ πάω μίας κι ἔτυχε νὰ εἶμαι δίπλα τοῦ ἐκείνη τὴν στιγμὴ.

Πῆγα στὸ νοσοκομεῖο. Ὁ Μακαριστὸς ἦταν στὴν ἐντατικὴ ἀλλὰ ἐπειδὴ ἦταν κι ἄλλοι ἀσθενεῖς μέσα, δὲν ἠθελε νὰ εἶμαι ἐκεῖ καὶ παρέμενα στὸν διάδρομο. Μετὰ ἀπὸ ὥρα ἢ προῖσταμένη μὲ φώναξε καὶ μοῦ εἶπε ὅτι ὁ Δέσποτας τελείωσε. Μὲ θλίψη μπήκα μέσα κι ἀσυναίσθητὰ του ἔπιασα τὸ χέρι του καὶ προσευχόμενα γιὰ περίπου εἴκοσι λεπτά. Σὲ κάποια στιγμὴ πετάχτηκα πάνω συνειδητοποιώντας ὅτι ἔπρεπε νὰ εἰδοποιήσω τὴν Μητρόπολη καὶ τὸ Μοναστήρι γιὰ τὴν κοίμησή του. Τότε ἔρχεται κατὰ πάνω μου ἔντρομη ἢ προῖσταμένη, μία σκληρὴ γυναίκα, καὶ μοῦ λέει:

-Πάτερ τί κάνατε ὅση ὥρα τοῦ κρατούσατε τὸ χέρι;

-Τί συμβαίνει; τὴν ρώτησα.

-Πάτερ αὐτὸ πὸν ἔγινε εἶναι ἐκπληκτικό! Ἐνῶ ὅταν σὰς φώναξα ὅλες οἱ ἐνδείξεις ἀπὸ τὰ μηχανήματα βεβαίωναν ὅτι ὁ Δέσποτας εἶχε πεθάνει· ἀπὸ τὴν στιγμὴ πὸν τοῦ πιάσατε τὸ χέρι ἄρχισαν πάλι νὰ δείχνουν ἐνδείξεις ἀνθρώπου ἐν ζωῇ! Δὲν τὸ πιστεύω! Εἶμαι συγκλονισμένη. Μόλις τοῦ ἀφήσατε τὸ χέρι, οἱ ἐνδείξεις στὸ μηχανήματα ξαναμηνδενίστηκαν...

Στὸν τάφο του περνοῦν πολλοί, προσκυνοῦν καὶ ζητοῦν πνευματικὴ βοήθεια, γιατί εἶναι πεπεισμένοι

ὅτι ἔχει παρηγοσία στὸν Θεό. Προσκύνησαν δύο σὲ περίοδο χειμῶνος καὶ αἰσθάνθηκαν παρατεταμένη εὐωδία, χωρὶς νὰ κάψουν θυμίαμα καὶ χωρὶς νὰ ὑπάρχουν λουλούδια.

Τὸν εἶδε γνωστὸς του σὲ ὄνειρο μετὰ τὴν κοίμησή του καὶ ὁ Σεβασμιώτατος τοῦ εἶπε: «Κοντὰ σας εἶμαι. Σὰς βοηθῶ. Νά, βλέπεις αὐτὴν τὴν κυρία; Ἔχει πρόβλημα καὶ πρέπει νὰ τὴν βοηθήσω», καὶ τοῦ ἔδειξε μία μεσήλικη γυναίκα.

Ἄλλος, τὴν τεσσαρακοστὴ ἡμέρα ἀπὸ τὴν κοίμησή του, τὸν εἶδε σὲ ὄνειρο καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Μὴν ἀνησυχεῖς. Ὅλα θὰ πᾶνε καλά. Παρακαλῶ τὴν Παναγία νὰ σοῦ χαρίσει μία ἄριστη σύζυγο», πράγμα πὸν συνέβη μετὰ ἀπὸ λίγο καιρὸ.

Παρουσιάστηκε σὲ πνευματικοπαίδι του σὲ ὄνειρο καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Ἐτοιμάσου, θὰ ἔρθω νὰ σὲ πάρω». Δὲν κατάλαβε τὴν σημασία καὶ ἐνῶ ἦταν ὑγιής, χωρὶς κάποιο πρόβλημα, ἐκοιμήθη σὲ λίγους μῆνες.

Ὁ ἀπλὸς καὶ ταπεινὸς Ἱεράρχης, ὅπως ἀθόρυβα ἔζησε καὶ ἀγωνίστηκε ἔτσι ἀθόρυβα ἔφυγε ἀπ' αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ, ἀφήνοντας πίσω του ἕνα πλούσιο πνευματικὸ ἔργο, τὴν φωτεινὴ ζωὴ του καὶ τὴν διδακτικὴ του ταπείνωση. Τὴν εὐχή του νὰ ἔχουμε.



## Ὅταν Ἀρχίσει τὸ Κακὸ ἀπὸ τὴν Συρία...

Ἀπὸ πνευματικὸ τέκνο τοῦ μακαριστοῦ παπα-Γιάννη Καλαΐδη.

Ὁ παπα-Γιάννης ἦταν πνευματικὸ τέκνο τοῦ μακαριστοῦ Ἀντωνίου Μητροπολίτου Σισανίου καὶ Σιατίστης, τὸν ὁποῖο τιμοῦν οἱ περισσότεροι ὡς σύγχρονο Ἅγιο. Ὁ πατὴρ, μᾶς ἀπεκάλυψε ὅτι ὁ μακαριστὸς πέραν ὅλων τῶν χαρισμάτων πὸν εἶχε, ἔγινε δέκτης μεγάλων ἀποκαλύψεων ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό.

«Τὸν καιρὸ δὲ πὸν ἦταν στὸ νοσοκομεῖο στὰ τελευταῖα του, μετὰ τὴν τελευταία ἐγχείρηση πὸν ἔκανε, μὸλις τὸν φέρανε στὸ δωμάτιο κοιτοῦσε ἀπέναντι τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἐσταυρωμένου Χριστοῦ καὶ ἔκλαιγε σὰν μικρὸ παιδί λέγοντας μὲ τὴν γνωστὴ ταπεινότητά του «**πῶς μὲ ἀξίωσες Χριστέ μου, ἐμένα καὶ μοῦ ἀπεκάλυψες αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα!**», προφανῶς κάτι σοβαρὸ εἶχε δεῖ πιὸ μπροστά... Ὅταν τὸν ρωτήσαμε «τί εἶδες Δέσποτα;» μὲ δυσκολία μᾶς ἀπάντησε, γιατί εἶχε πρόβλημα μὲ τὴν φωνή του, «ὅταν ἀρχίσει τὸ κακὸ ἀπὸ τὴν Συρία νὰ ἀρχίσετε νὰ προσεύχεστε!» καὶ τὸ ἐπανέλαβε πολλὲς φορὲς «ἐκεῖ, ἀπὸ τὴν Συρία ὅταν ξεκινήσει...» ἐννοώντας ὅτι μετὰ θὰ πιάσει ἡ πόρρα καὶ ἐμᾶς... Τὸν ξαναρωτήσαμε «τί ἄλλο εἶδες Δέσποτα;» καὶ μᾶς εἶπε «θὰ σὰς πῶ μετὰ...» ἀλλὰ μετὰ ἐκοιμήθη...»

Αὐτὸ ἦταν προφανῶς τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Κυρίου...

## ON THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

By Saint John of Kronstadt.

*Magnify, O my soul, the honourable Translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven.*

[Refrain for the 9<sup>th</sup> Ode of the Canon]

† † †

Let us be happy, beloved brothers and sisters, that we belong to the Holy Orthodox Church, worthily and rightly glorifying the Most Holy Sovereign Theotokos on this eminent day out of all the days of the year with special solemnity. There exists on earth many societies and entire governments that do not consider the need nor the obligation to call upon and glorify the Queen of heaven and earth, the Mother of Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, and other saints and angels; to submissively serve Her lovingly, as the true Mother of God. Sadly in Russia nowadays we have heretics (among us) who actively dishonor the Mother of God, the saints, their icons, their relics and their festivals. O, if only they also unanimously with us glorified the worthy Queen of heaven and earth!

Today the Holy Church solemnly glorifies the honorable Dormition or translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven. A wonderful translation—she died without serious illness, peacefully. Her soul is taken up in the divine hands of Her Son and carried up into the heavenly abode, accompanied by the sweet singing of angels. And then, her most pure body is transferred by the apostles to Gethsemane where it is honorably buried, and on the third day it is resurrected and taken up to heaven. You see this on the icon of the Dormition of the Theotokos. On it is represented the life-bearing body of the Theotokos laying on a bier, surrounded by the apostles and hierarchs, and in the center of the icon the Lord holding in His hands the most pure soul of the Theotokos. The translation of the Mother of God is a paradigm of the translation in general of the souls of Christians to the other world.

We say that our dead have “fallen asleep” or “passed away.” What does this mean? This means that for the true Christian there is no death. Death was conquered by Christ on the Cross. But there is a translation, i.e. a rearrangement of his

condition, i.e., his soul is in another place, in another age, in another world beyond the grave, eternal, without end, that is what is meant by “falling asleep.” It is as if it were a temporary dream after which, by the voice of the Lord and the fearful yet wonderful trumpet of the Archangel, *and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* (Jn 5:29). This is what the Christian means by translation. We should be ready for this translation, for the day of the general resurrection and judgment, for this indescribable world event, recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

This preparation for the meeting of the heavenly King before the dread judgment seat, after death, is essentially the person’s preparation throughout the whole of his life. This preparation means a change in all his thoughts, and the moral change of all his being, so that the whole man would



be pure and white as snow, washing clean everything that defiles the body and spirit, so that he is adorned with every virtue: repentance, meekness, humility, gentleness, simplicity, chastity, mercifulness, abstention, spiritual contemplation, and burning love for God and neighbor.

Our preparation for meeting the heavenly King, and for the inheritance of eternal life in heaven, should consist of these things. The heavenly King desires souls adorned with immutable virtue, souls prepared so that the Very Lord Himself could abide in them. Do not marvel that the Very Lord wants to live in us. In fact the human soul is more spacious than the heavens and the earth, for it exists in the image of God. And if one removes sins from the soul, the Lord of all will settle in it and will fill it with Himself. *We will come to him and make our dwelling with him* (Jn 14:23), says the Lord about the souls who love Him.

And so, ye participants in the Christian feasts, and especially the present feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, ye who are brightly adorned with every virtue and translated to the heavenly kingdom, to Her Son and God, proclaim to each and every one about preparing their souls to be the dwelling place of the Lord, about continual repentance, and about the incorruptible adornment of Christian virtue. Let your death also be unashamed and peaceful, serving as the pledge of a good answer at the dread judgment seat of Christ.

Amen.

## THE BEATITUDES OF ST. PAISIOS

Source: "Epistles," by Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, Holy Monastery "Evangelist John the Theologian," Souroti, Thessaloniki, Greece (2002).

"Precious Cross," December 2, 1972

Sister Abbess Philothei,  
Your blessing!

Today, a kind of craziness took hold of me and I took the pencil, as does the madman who writes his outbursts on the wall with charcoal, and I sat down to write my own thoughts on paper like one crazed, and, again, like a lunatic, to send them to you in writing. I am doing this latter craziness out of much love for my sisters, that they might be edified, even if only a little.

The reason for the initial craziness was five letters, one after the other, from various parts of Greece on a variety of subjects. While the events described were great blessings of God, those who wrote to me had fallen into despair because they dealt with them in a worldly way.

After replying accordingly to their letters, I took the pencil like a madman, as I have said, and wrote this letter. I believe that even a fifty-cent piece from your journeying brother will be something toward a flint for each one of the sisters so as to light a little candle in her cell and offer her doxology to our Good God.

I feel great joy when every sister, with her particular cross carries out the equivalent struggle with *philotimo*.

It is a small thing to give to Christ a heart equal in size and as luminous as the sun out of gratitude for His great gifts, and especially for the particular honor He showed us monks by conscripting us with personal summons to His Angelic Order.

A great honor also belongs to the parents who were thus made worthy of becoming related to God. Unfortunately, however, most parents do not realize this and, instead of being grateful to God, are infuriated, etc., for they see everything in a worldly way, like those people I mentioned earlier, who became the reason for me to take the pencil and write everything that follows:

1. Blessed are those who loved Christ more than all the worldly things and live far from the world and near God, with heavenly joys upon the earth.

2. Blessed are those who managed to live in obscurity and acquired great virtues but did not acquire even a small name for themselves.

3. Blessed are those who managed to act as a fool and, in this way, protected their spiritual wealth.

4. Blessed are those who do not preach the Gospel with words, but live it and preach it with their silence, with the Grace of God, which betrays them.

5. Blessed are those who rejoice when unjustly accused, rather than when they are justly praised for their virtuous life. Here are the signs of holiness, not in the dry exertion of bodily asceticism and the great number of struggles, which, when not carried out with humility and the aim to put off the old man, create only illusions.

6. Blessed are those who prefer to be wronged rather than to wrong others and accept serenely and silently injustices. In this way, they reveal in practice that they believe in *one*

*God, the Father Almighty* and expect to be vindicated by Him and not by human beings who repay in this life with vanity.

7. Blessed are those who have been born crippled or became so due to their own carelessness, yet do not grumble but glorify God. They will hold the best place in Paradise along with the Confessors and Martyrs, who gave their hands and feet for the love of Christ and now constantly kiss with devoutness the

hands and feet of Christ in Paradise.

8. Blessed are those who were born ugly and are despised here on earth, because they are entitled to the most beautiful place in Paradise, provided they glorify God and do not grumble.

9. Blessed are those widows who wear black in this life, even unwillingly, but live a white spiritual life and glorify God without complaining rather than the miserable ones who wear assorted clothes and live a spotted life.

10. Blessed and thrice blessed are the orphans who have been deprived of their parents' great affection, for they managed to have God as their Father already from this life. At the same time, they have the affection they were deprived of from their parents in God's savings bank *with interest*.

11. Blessed are those parents who avoid the use of the word "don't" with their children, instead restraining them from



The tomb of St. Paisios next to the church of St. Arsenios the Cappadocian, at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian, situated in the village Souroti, approximately 20 km from Thessaloniki, Greece.

evil through their holy life—a life which children imitate, joyfully following Christ with spiritual bravery.

**12.** Blessed are those children who have been born *from their mother's womb* (Mt 19:12) holy, but even more blessed are those who were born with all the inherited passions of the world, struggled with sweat and uprooted them and inherited the Kingdom of God in the sweat of their face (cf. Gen 3:19).

**13.** Blessed are those children who lived from infancy in a spiritual environment and, thus, tirelessly advanced in the spiritual life. Thrice blessed, however, are the mistreated ones who were not helped at all (on the contrary, they were pushed towards evil). But, as soon as they heard of Christ, their eyes glistened, and with a one hundred and eighty degree turn they suddenly made their soul to shine as well. They departed from the attraction of earth and moved into the spiritual sphere.

**14.** Fortunate, worldly people say, are the astronauts who are able to spin in the air, orbit the moon or even walk on the moon. Blessed, however, are the immaterial *Paradisians*, who ascend often to God and travel about Paradise, their place of permanent abode, with the quickest of means and without much fuel, besides one crust of bread.

**15.** Blessed are those who glorify God for the moon that glimmers that they might walk at night. More blessed, however, are those who have come to understand that neither the light of the moon is of the moon, nor the spiritual light of their soul of themselves, but both are of God. Whether they can shine like a mirror, a pane of glass or the lid of a tin can, if the rays of the sun do not fall on them it is impossible for them to shine.

**16.** Fortunate, worldly people tell us, are those who live in crystal palaces and have all kinds of conveniences. Blessed, however, are those who've managed to simplify their life and become liberated from the web of this world's development of numerous conveniences (i.e., many inconveniences), and were released from the frightening stress of our present age.

**17.** Fortunate, worldly people say, are those who can enjoy the goods of the world. Blessed, however, are those who give away everything for Christ and are deprived even of every human consolation for Christ. Thus it is that they manage to be found night and day near Christ and His divine consolation, which many times is so much that they say to God: *My God, Thy love cannot be endured, for it is great and cannot be fit within my small heart.*

**18.** Fortunate, worldly people say, are those who have the greatest jobs and the largest mansions, since they possess all possibilities and live comfortably. Blessed, however, according to the divine Paul, are those who have but a nest to perch in, a little food and some coverings. (cf. 1 Tim 6:8). For, in this way, they've managed to become estranged from the vain world, using the earth as a footstool, as children

of God, and their mind is constantly found close to God, their Good Father.

**19.** Fortunate are those who become generals and government ministers in their head by way of heavy drinking (even if just for a few hours), with the worldly rejoicing over it. Blessed, however, are those who have put off the old man and have become incorporeal, managing to be earthly angels with the Holy Spirit. They have found Paradise's divine faucet and drink from it and are continually inebriated from the heavenly wine.

**20.** Blessed are those who were born crazy and will be judged as crazy, and, in this way, will enter Paradise without a passport. Blessed and thrice blessed, however, are the very wise who feign foolishness for the love of Christ and mock all the vanity of the world. This foolishness for Christ's sake is worth more than all the knowledge and wisdom of the wise of this world.

I beg all the Sisters to pray for God to give me, or rather take from me my little mind, and, in this way, secure Paradise for me by considering me a fool. Or, make me crazy with His love so I go out myself, outside of the earth and its pull, for, otherwise my life as a monk has no meaning. I became externally white as a monk. As I go I become internally black by being a negligent monk, but I justify myself as one unhealthy, when I happen to be so; other times, I excuse myself again for being ill, even though I am well, and so I deserve to be thoroughly thrashed. Pray for me.

May Christ and the Panaghia be with you!

With love of Christ,

Your brother,

Monk Paisios



When someone takes the first step to reconciliation, he immediately feels joy, peace and relief. Why? Prior to this, hatred, enmity, separation and alienation laid like a heaven burden on his shoulders. There was also pressure from the devil who wanted his way. God, on the other hand, is love and humility. All of us are filled by our egotism and seek to erect our own will. We believe that we are correct, that we are good and that others are at fault.

What does it indicate when we criticize others and consider ourselves flawless? This is why the Lord commands: *Judge not that you not be judged.* And He adds: *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged.* (Mt 7:1-2). To criticize others is an extremely serious sin, although we indulge in it like bread and butter, and as a 'sin which so easily besets us' (Heb 12:1). A besetting sin is one that takes place at every opportunity and all the time.

**Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona**

## THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

By His Eminence Metropolitan Augoustinos Kantiotis (+2010), Bishop of Florina, Greece, from "On the Divine Liturgy—Orthodox Homilies," Vol. Two, translated by Asterios Gerostergios, pp. 164-171, *Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 115 Gilbert Road, Belmont, MA (1986).*

### I AWAIT THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD!



If mankind had never sinned, dear readers, we would have never known death; we would have remained immortal—immortal not only in soul, but also in body. But sin occurred, and along with the other consequences, it brought this calamity called death, which is the separation of soul and body. This is the punishment we received after committing sin. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* (Gen 3:19). The body, made up of different natural elements, moves and acts by means of the immortal soul. The soul now loses its precious companion with death, which dies and dissolves into the elements from which it was made. The flesh decays and only bones remain, and even these, over a long period of time, wear away and become ashes, reminding us of the Church hymn: *I called to mind the Prophet who cried, "I am but earth and ash."*

All bodies rot away and dissolve. However, there are some exceptions to this natural law of decay: the holy *relics* of men and women who were sanctified. These bodies remain incorrupt and are proof of the power of Christ, who works miracles through the relics of Saints.

Now the Church, in the eleventh article of the Symbol of the Faith, proclaims that the dead will be resurrected. Will they be resurrected? No! Shout unbelievers. But what are their arguments?

The bodies of human beings, they say, dissolve into the great crucible of the earth, and only their ashes exist. What about bodies burned in terrible fires, bodies of people drowned in the great seas and eaten by fish, bodies of people devoured by lions and other wild beasts—how is it possible to resurrect these bodies?

In Christ's time, there were people who believed in God, but did not believe that bodies would be resurrected. These people were the Sadducees. When St. Paul went to Athens, stood on the Areopagus and preached that a day will come

when the dead will rise and be judged, the philosophers listening to him began to laugh and mocked him. Today there are still many who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They say:

—When someone dies, forget him, he's gone for good!

In spite of this, the Church continues to say that the dead will be resurrected. Where do we find the truth about the resurrection? Primarily, in God's word. Even the wisest people can be mistaken, but the word of God is truth; and since the word of God declares that the dead will rise, we believe it and proclaim it.

Where in God's word, the Holy Scriptures, is the resurrection of the dead mentioned? Let's bring up only some of these passages:

First, the famous 36<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel. Ezekiel saw an awesome vision. He was brought to a field where, many years before, a battle had taken place and many people were killed. Their bodies were eaten by wild birds and their fleshless bones covered the plain. The spectacle was horrible. While the prophet looked at the scattered bones in this macabre scene, he heard a voice say to him:

—Son of man, is there any hope for these bones to live?

—O Lord, Thou knowest, he answered.

—Prophecy to these bones, the voice of God commanded.

The prophet obeyed the order and prophesied to the bones. Immediately, the bones began to creak and come together, joining one to another, making whole skeletons. The skeletons filled with flesh and were finally covered with skin. But they were still dead bodies; there was no life in them—an endless array of dead bodies.

—Prophecy again, commanded the voice of God.

The prophet spoke again and wind came from the four corners of the earth and the dead bodies stood up on their feet and walked as if in a military parade. This vision is proof, an assurance of God, that the dead shall be resurrected. They will be resurrected by the trumpet of the archangel, which will sound by God's command—the trumpet call of resurrection for all the dead.

Another quotation related to the resurrection of the dead is found in the Second Book of Maccabees. There we have the story of seven brothers, and their heroic mother. In spite of all the threats made them by a tyrant, they did not deny their true faith, but with the courage their faith gave them, they faced their martyrdom. Although the tyrant tortured them; cutting off their hands and feet, these admirable martyrs answered the tyrant:

—Hands and feet are not ours. God gave them to us, and we believe that God, for whom we are sacrificed, will give them back to us in the resurrection!

Christ Himself assured us in the most positive way that the dead will be resurrected. We hear Christ's words in the Funeral Service when the Gospel is read, saying, *Verily, ver-*



ily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it shall live. (Jn 5:25).

In addition, Christ proclaimed the resurrection of the dead through miracles. He raised dead people three times: the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus, who was dead four days. Finally, the greatest proof of the resurrection of the dead is Christ's own resurrection.

By Christ's resurrection death was completely defeated; and believers of every century proclaim with the Apostle Paul: *O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where thy victory?* (I Cor 15:55).

Yes, dear friends, the dead will be resurrected, and we ourselves will be resurrected, because, after a while we too will be dead.

But the question is raised: "How will bodies be resurrected from the dead?" To this question St. Paul gives an answer.

He gives examples, and one example is the seed of plants. What is the importance of a seed? It is sown in the earth, buried like a dead person. It rots like a dead body, and out of this rotten seed comes a sweet-smelling flower, which, with its new appearance proclaims that God makes new bodies from dead ones, bright bodies which will differ from the old ones as much as a huge oak tree differs from a tiny acorn.

O God, Thou dost great and marvelous wonders in heaven and earth!

Let everyone of us, with steadfast faith, proclaim: *I await the resurrection of the dead.*

† † †

### AND LIFE IN THE AGES TO COME...

In the previous article of the Symbol of the Faith we proclaim that another life exists beyond the grave, which is eternal. Let's speak about it now.

Everybody dies. Death is the punishment given us because of sin. Death, however, as we discussed it in our previous homily, is not annihilation of our human existence. The shovel of the grave digger does not mean that there, in the grave, is the end of us. Death marks a turning point in human life, just as birth does. This phase of our life is not the last one; it is the beginning of a new life under different conditions.

Our Church teaches that we are composed of two things—body and soul. The body decays after death and

dissolves into the elements from which it is made. *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* (Gen 3:19). One day, however, our bodies will be resurrected, spiritual and incorruptible.

The soul, though, does not consist of material elements, as does the body. It is immaterial, and being immaterial it is immortal. The soul does not die, it lives on earth together with the body and uses the body as a servant. With death, this union is interrupted and the soul alone, free from the weights and responsibilities of the flesh, continues living, but under other conditions.

The souls of the departed await the terrible Day of Judgement, and those who on earth lived according to the will of God have a foretaste of heaven, experiencing joy and gladness; but those who did not live as God wanted, who remained unrepentant until the end of their lives, experience sorrow and distress. They feel beforehand a measure

of eternal damnation, and, like a defendant on trial, having committed many crimes and not at peace, but in agony over the outcome of the trial, so also are the sinful and unrepentant souls who are waiting for the Day of Judgement. This state, which will last from

the day of their death to the Day of Universal Judgement, is called the *Intermediate State* of souls.

The Intermediate State will come to an end. The Day of Universal Judgement will come and then, as the Lord assures us, people will be separated: some *shall go away into everlasting punishment*, and others *into eternal life.* (Mt 25:46).

Eternal life, eternal damnation! People today hear these words and do not pay attention, because they do not believe in God, or, if they believe, think that it is impossible for God, who is Love, to punish people this way.

There is no Hell, they say, there is no eternal life. We shall not bring in here philosophical arguments to convince people that there is a Hell and a Paradise. Since Christ in a most positive way assured us that Hell and Paradise exist, we believe Christ, Who never lies. Christ is the Truth and Life—if we do not believe Christ, whom shall we believe? Christ is the truthful witness, and His witness is worth more than that of people. Only Christ knows our past, present and future. Outside of Christ, we do not know what life is and what death is.

Eternal life! Eternal life differs greatly from our present life, because our present life is transient, that is, it lasts only a



little time, while life beyond the grave has no end. The 80 or 90 years we **might** live here on earth, compared to eternal life, are only a drop of water in the ocean.

A certain author, in order to give an idea of what eternity is like, used this example. Imagine, he says, that all the sand from every river, lake and sea were all in one place. Then imagine a bird coming to take one grain of sand in its beak. After a thousand years, another comes and takes a second grain of sand, and this continues every thousand years. How many millions, trillions of years must pass before the birds take the last grain? No matter if it seems impossible! The mathematicians say the time will come when a bird will take the last grain from this pile of sand and there will be an end; but in the eternity about which Christ speaks, there will be no end.

The life we speak of is not only eternal, it is also unchangeable. That is, the decisions the supreme tribunal of God pronounces for unbelievers and unrepenting sinners cannot be changed.

Some may ask: "What is Hell." Is it snakes and scorpions? Fire and brimstone? Darkness without light? It is something worse than these, something worse than anyone could imagine. Hell, for one thing, is a sinner's conscience, which now, in the heart of the impious, the criminal, the murderer, is dormant. In the other world, however, it will awaken, and one will see all the crimes he has committed. One will see the whole tragic situation, and he will hear the terrible, endless "I accuse" addressed to the guilty.

"What is Paradise?" It is a new life so beautiful the human mind cannot imagine. There, none of the sufferings exist which bother us here. There is no sickness or death, derision or slander, cries or mourning. New bodies, glorious and incorruptible will be resurrected, differing from the old, earthly bodies as a flower differs from a bare seed, as an oak differs from an acorn. We will have new, spiritual bodies, like the body of Christ after his resurrection. There will be a new union with the soul, which, united with the spiritual body, will enjoy the blessings which human eye cannot see, nor human ear hear, nor human heart imagine.

Paradise! An illustrious old preacher used to say, we will enjoy you (Paradise), but here we cannot understand you!

Eternal Damnation, Eternal Life! There is life in the Age to come, and the kind of life we will live then depends on the kind of life we live now.

O Christ! Enlighten us to believe and not lose everything, and then lament in vain.

My beloved, let us close our ears to the faithless, and let us believe what our Church tells us: *I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.* Let us be ready, wherever we are, for death, that we might go to the other world, where are the saints and the angels, and where is Christ, the King of the Ages. Amen.

## ON MORTAL SINS, REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Source: "The Evergetinos, A Complete Text," vol. I of the First Book, translated and edited by Bishop Chrysostomos, with Hieromonk Auxentios, John Petropoulos, Gregory Telepneff, and Hieromonk Ambrosios, pp. 45-53, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, Etna, CA (1988).

*A mortal sin is that sin for which a person does not repent. No one is so good and so merciful as God. Yet a man who remains obstinately in sin and will not repent—not even God forgives him. We are deeply sorry when we sin, nevertheless, we gladly embrace every excuse and occasion for sins.*

[Abba Mark]

† † †



Through the works of the Devil, a brother who lived in a small monastic house regularly fell to immorality; nonetheless, he forced himself not to

put aside his monastic habit. After finishing his services and his rule of prayer, he would entreat God with groans: "My Lord, whether I wish it or not, save me, for I, mud that I am, crave for the stench of sin; but Thou, as God All-Powerful, are able to prevent me from sinning. For, if Thou hast mercy on the righteous, this is nothing of note; and, if Thou, by the same token, savest the pure, this is nothing admirable; these, by virtue of the measure of their struggle and virtue, are worthy to enjoy thy goodness. Master, let thy mercies do their miracle, and show to me Thy endless love of man; for the poor man has entrusted unto Thee, that is, he who has been deprived of all the virtues."

These and similar things the brother said each day, with eyes filled with tears; whether he had happened to sin or not.

Anyway, one night, according to his habit, he fell into the loathsome sin of immorality; but immediately at midnight he got up to fulfill his rule of prayer. The Devil, who had led the brother into sin, would literally go mad at the hope that the sinful brother held out for his salvation and his effrontery, as the Devil saw it, to place himself before God by his prayers. So it was that this time he decided to appear visibly before the brother, telling him: "You wretch! How do you not become red with shame in standing before God? How do you dare to bring the name of God to your lips? Are you so brazen that you dare even chant?"

To these words of the Devil the brother answered:

"This cell is a forge: you give a hit with the hammer and receive one; thus I will continue to fight against you until death and wherever I am on the last day of my life. So take heed: grounding my courage in the limitless goodness of God, I tell

you on my oath and assure you that, on the name of Him Who came to call sinners to repentance and to save them, I will not cease to pray to God in defiance of you, until you cease to war against me. And we shall see who will win: you or God.”

Hearing these decisive words, the Devil said to the brother: “All right, from now I will not war against you, so that I am not responsible for your gaining the victor’s crown for your patience.” From that moment, the Enemy departed from the brother’s presence.

And the brother, who had been so assaulted up to that time, came to contrition and thereafter sat and wept unceasingly for his sins.

Often he thought to himself: “You do good in weeping.” But he would respond to this thought: “Away with such good; for whether He saves a man’s soul or not, it is not God’s desire that any man, having spotted his soul in all kinds of disgraceful deeds, should then merely sit and lament for this waste (but that he should actively repent).”

† † †

A brother once lived in the skete together with Abba Paphnoutios. This brother battled with thoughts of immorality and would often say, under the influence of passion: “Not even with ten women would I be able to satisfy my desire.” But the Elder would entreat him and say: “Do not think this way; this

is a test and it will pass.” However, the brother did not heed this valuable advice, but eventually went into Egypt and took a woman, in keeping with his desire.

After a numbers of years, the Elder went up to Egypt from the skete and encountered the fallen brother, who was carrying a basket of shells. But such was his wretchedness that the Elder did not recognize him immediately.

The fallen brother approached the Elder and said to him: “Elder; I am the one who was your disciple at the skete.”

On recognizing the brother and seeing to what wretchedness he had fallen, the Elder broke into tears and with grief said:

My child, why did you leave the honor with which you were adorned and come here to fall to such wretchedness and dishonor? Anyway, did you take the ten women, as you said, in order to satisfy your passions?”

The brother sighed deeply and with his eyes wet with tears answered:

“Father, I took only one woman to satisfy my physical weakness; and I toil laboriously just to keep her in bread.

The Elder said to him tenderly:

“Return with me, my child.”

“Abba, is there a chance to repent?” The brother asked in agony.

“Of course there is,” the Elder answered the brother encouragingly.

With these words of hope, the fallen brother abandoned everything and followed the Elder into the desert. As soon as they came to the skete, on account of the experience gained from his sinful deeds, he evolved into a spiritually combative and good monk.

† † †

A brother posed the following question to an Elder: “Father, if someone happens to fall to some temptation, such as immorality, through the work of the Devil, what happens to those who become scandalized at seeing this fall to temptation?”

The Elder, rather than directly answer, related the following: There once lived a renowned Deacon in a coenobitic monastery in Egypt. During this time, a man from the city, who was banished by the ruler for his political convictions, fled to this monastery with his whole family, so as to be safe from his persecutors.

With the influence of the Devil, the Deacon fell into sin with one of the women

among those who had come with the man from the city. When the sin became public, everyone was shocked with the disgrace.

The Deacon went away to an Elder much loved by him and confessed the incident to him. At the back of his cell the Elder had a crypt, a fact known to the Deacon also. Repenting for his sin, therefore, the Deacon asked the Elder to let him go into the crypt and to be literally entombed there, without anyone, except only for the Elder, knowing this fact. Indeed, the Elder consented and gave the place to the brother.

The Deacon then moved into this dark place and repented sincerely before God, grieving unceasingly and taking nothing else as food, save only a little water and a little bread, which the Elder from time to time provided for him.

During the period of time in which the Deacon was subjecting himself to the harsh practice of repentance, the water level of the (Nile) river had not risen at the appointed flood period, so that the whole area (of Egypt) was in danger of



drying up completely. To ward off the danger of drought, therefore, everyone offered up supplications and continually entreated God with Faith to hold off disaster. Then the following was revealed to one of the holy men: "Unless you go to ask such-and-such a Deacon, who is hidden in the cell of a certain monk, to pray to God, the level of the river's waters will not rise."

This holy man, having received this information, revealed it to everyone. And those who heard this message marveled and all together went to the cell of the monk, called forth the Deacon from his dark crypt, and imposed on him to pray to God, so as to save the place from drought. And no sooner had the Deacon prayed, than immediately the level of the river's waters rose.

This miracle was an indication that God had accepted the Deacon's repentance, and thus all who had earlier been scandalized were now more greatly benefited by his repentance and glorified God.

† † †

A brother was beset by the demon of lust. It so happened that the brother once passed by a village in Egypt and saw a beautiful woman, who was the daughter of a pagan priest. On seeing her, he was wildly aroused and, under the influence of his passions, went to the father of the girl and said:

"Give me your daughter as my wife."

"I cannot give her to you," the pagan priest answered, "without asking my god. Wait a bit."

Indeed, the pagan priest went to his god's oracle (through which, as we know, the Devil speaks) and asked:

"A monk came to my home and wants my daughter as his wife. Shall I give her to him?"

The demon hidden in the oracle answered him:

"Ask him if he will deny his God, his Baptism, and the vows which he made as a monk."

When the pagan priest returned, he said to the monk:

"Will you deny your God, your Baptism, and your monastic vocation?"

Indeed, the monk accepted his terms. But immediately he saw something bright come from his mouth and, like a dove, go up to the heavens.

Right away the pagan priest ran to the demon and said:

"Behold, the monk did all that you asked." Then the demon said to him:

"Do not give your daughter to him as a wife, for his God has not departed from him, but is still helping him." So once again the pagan priest went to the monk and told him:

"I cannot give you my daughter as a wife, since your God continues to remain near you and help you."

On hearing this response, the monk was deeply moved and said within himself:

"Even though God in His singular goodness has bestowed upon me so many good things, I, wretch that I am, have

denied Him, His holy Baptism, and monastic vows. But despite my denial, God has not departed from me, though I have so greatly betrayed Him, and continues to help me. After that, do I not have a duty to run to Him, grounded in the surety of His boundless goodness?"

Having now recovered from the dizziness of passion, the brother left immediately for the desert and went to his Elder, to whom he confessed his denial, as well as all of his thoughts.

With kindness, the Elder told him:

"Brother, remain with me in my cave and fast two days at a time for three weeks: that is, you can fast strenuously for two days and on the third relax the fast. And I will ask God to forgive you."

The Elder did indeed grieve for the brother and entreated God with earnestness:

"My God," he would say, "give me the soul of this monk and receive his repentance:"

God, merciful as He is, heard the sincere and fervent prayer of the Elder, especially since it came forth from genuine love.

When the first week of the cloistered monk's penance had been fulfilled, the Elder visited him and told him:

"Have you perhaps beheld something?"

"Yes," the monk answered, "I saw a dove high in the heavens in front of my head."

The Elder said to the repentant monk:

Take care of yourself and ask God with the whole of your soul, without cessation, to forgive you."

With these recommendations the Elder once again departed.

As soon as the second week had passed, the Elder came again to the cave where the monk was cloistered:

"So, how is it going, Brother? Perhaps you have again seen something?" He asked with fatherly concern and care.

"Yes, Elder. I saw the dove next to my head."

The Elder, having advised him anew to pray with earnestness and to stay in a state of vigilance in his soul, took leave.

When, at last, the third week had elapsed, the Elder went to the cloistered monk and said to him:

"Have you seen anything more?"

With joy, the monk answered:

"I saw the dove come and perch on my head. So, when I stretched out my hand with joy to grab him, he flew into my mouth."

When the Elder heard this answer, he thanked God and said to the repentant monk:

"Do you see, my brother? God has accepted your repentance. Therefore; be careful with yourself from now on."

Crying, the emotion-filled brother answered the Elder:

"From now and ever after, Father, I will remain near you, and I shall not leave until I die."

And, indeed, the monk remained with the loving Elder and never left.

## THE LAW OF CHANGES IN OUR PRACTICAL LIFE

By the Holy Elder Joseph of Vatopaidi (+2009), from "Elder Joseph the Hesychast: Struggles, Experiences, Teachings," translated by Elizabeth Theokritoff, Holy Monastery of Vatopaidi (1999).



Every rational nature undergoes countless alterations, and changes come upon every man at every hour, throughout his earthly life. When in the course of various changes we were alarmed by unforeseen transformations, the holy Elder would explain to us the mysteries of these operations from the experience of the Fathers, with detailed descriptions. He

would often draw our attention to the subject of alterations and changes, and tell us:

In changes you should be courageous in both of the main phases. Firstly, you must remain unmoved amidst the pressures and transformations which they produce in you; and secondly, you must discern the causes which have given rise to them. The main causes of changes, according to the great Makarios, are the following four (and there are also the various complications from passions and satanic interventions which stimulate and reshape them):

(a) natural changes, resulting from climatic conditions, which cause a change in a person's mood;

(b) a diet which is not appropriate to our constitution transforms our disposition;

(c) a pang (a brief piercing spasm of pain, *Ed.*) of conscience resulting from some omission or excess in our duties in general, caused principally by an unregulated life, in which case the spiritual law permits an earth tremor in order to wake us up;

(d) the devil himself, who, in his envy for anyone who is making progress, makes war against him as far as God allows.

This is the nature of changes, whereas their properties are beneficial if rightly used.

Changes and trials form an almost indistinguishable union in which either one may provoke the other, and the two of them lead those who are prudent to profit and advancement. Whether the trial produces the change or the change the trial, we reach the same conclusion: that we must face them philosophically and with patient endurance. Abba Mark says, *Afflictions that come to us are the result of our own sins.*

*But if we accept them patiently through prayer, we shall again find blessings.*

Included in the mystery of changes are also events that come from the "right" hand side, especially in those who are struggling in the proper way. When someone carries out a commandment or performs some other good deed in full conscience, he must certainly expect the seal to be set on his action. Many have kept up the labor of doing the commandment without a murmur, and yet, through inexperience, have been unable to bear the trial when the seal is set on their noble toil, and thus have suffered harm.

Here the Elder, who was insistent about these details, would often say to us:

As night follows day, so successes are followed by trials that test us.

Patient endurance of the testing which follows a good work proves the person's willing and conscious intention, showing that he carried out this action not accidentally, but by choice and purely for the sake of God's commandment. This is one aspect; the second is that it increases mindfulness of God within him, and in a certain way he receives a good addition to his spiritual workshop. On the other hand, the person who loses heart in the trial that follows his action has lost the boldness of firm faith which he had, and through failure has produced forgetfulness in his mind.

Where there is love and self-control and, according to the ever-memorable Elder, repentance and prayer, every difficulty and perplexity evaporates.

Particularly in the beginning, when the penitent embarks on his spiritual struggle, he is quite paralyzed by changes. This is because he does not expect or realize that changes shift as a natural rule, particularly when he is careful and does not of himself give them any occasion. The Elder was always telling us, "You should take advantage of good changes and cry out to God, like David, that He may remember you when you yourselves will forget." The outcome of changes is forgetfulness of God, complete lassitude (a sense of weariness, fatigue *Ed.*) of one's members and a loss of appetite for anything good. It was with this in mind that the prophet said, *So even to old age and grey hairs and when my strength deserts me, O God, do not forsake me.* (Pss 71:18).

The Elder also explained, "Don't be misled into thinking that these dry, graceless states can be overcome by effusiveness and meeting people and joking; they are overcome only by patient endurance, prayer and hope. For younger people it helps to call to mind the things to come, death and eternal life, and—to some extent—to consider in detail God's economy for the salvation of the world."

When we asked him if and how far he had been troubled by these changes, he told us, "If I describe to you the struggle I have had here, you will not be able to bear hearing it. But God's goodness and our Lady the Mother of God, who

always protected me, gave me a kind of perseverance and toughness and I did not give way. Here it is tears that help us and save us most of all. Everything depends on the divine goodness.”

On other occasions he would tell us, “Fear, too, provokes changes, but beginners can be seriously harmed by their neighbor’s seeming prejudice against them or ill-disposition towards them. When there is someone present who you know speaks ill of you and slanders you, it is almost impossible for this not to produce a change, however much you try not to be affected. But after forgiveness and prayer for that person, you regain your equilibrium after the trauma of grief.”

One of the most consoling features of our life at the beginning was the Elder’s explanation and description of the repeated changes which occur inevitably, so it seems, in our everyday life. To beginners’ zeal—or rather *beginners’ piety*, as St John Climacus calls it—the transformation that occurs in one’s character seems strange, and it makes people who are inexperienced and unknowing feel uneasy. They do not see why such an alteration has for no reason changed the disposition of their inner world, and even of their bodily members. They search for faults in their own conduct and have difficulty finding anything,

because according to the measure of their strength they have left nothing undone. So why the alteration? Why do they experience dryness, lack of will, the quenching of their fervor, an unnatural exhaustion in their limbs and the withering of their prayer? And yet these things happen!

The fall of our forefathers has left us a legacy of parasitic phenomena which came in after the Fall: the rupture of our personality, marks of corruption, the constituent elements of death and death itself. Included among these manifestations of corruption and flux are to be found the *changes and alterations*, as the fathers call them. It is the results of these changes that give rise to the irregularities referred to above. These now innate states in which the self is altered have become our most inseparable companions and betrayers, and can cause a tremendous amount of harm if we are not alert to their opposition.

These states too, according to the judgement of the Fathers, may be either natural or *acquired* from outside; and those

which are acquired belong to two categories, one much worse than the other. The natural states are those which are always present in man’s character whether he wants them or not, even if he guards against them with all his might; as we have said, these are a hereditary affliction since the Fall. *Acquired* changes depend on causes and occasions. One class, the more innocent, arise from the natural influences of sickness, diet, climate and evil demons; the other class comprises those for which we are personally culpable. When man stirs up his conscience against him, for the many reasons that this can happen, his disposition then undergoes change and is altered regardless of his will.

In the first case, that of the natural changes which are so frequent, there is no other means of dealing with them apart from faith. Since, in the words of St Paul, we walk *by faith and not by sight*, we do not look for evidence of a miracle, nor do we pay attention to emotions, and we are indif-

ferent to what happens. We pay no attention to what we feel in the heat of the day or the cold of the night; our sole concern is to bear, willingly and without complaint, the weight of our cross, the law of the commandment and the imposition of our duty, according to the saying *they go forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing*. (Pss 126:6).

It is right that consolation should accompany

the laborers of the commandments who are *weary and heavy laden*. (cf Mt 11:28). But in this vale of tears where we serve out our exile, the spurious growths of changes interrupt the regular sequence, in the same way as different weather conditions occur in the atmosphere. Here, however, there is a different mystery. The all-saving providence of God has enlisted the natural occurrence of changes as a saving means of education, for the formation and perfecting of His children. When God calls a soul to knowledge of Himself and obedience to Him, He bestows His grace upon it as a free gift, in the form of fervor and faith and dedication and other joyful manifestations of His own gift. **Once the “agreements are signed” and official service in His army and obedience begin, the Giver then withdraws His grace by stages and leaves the soldier alone in order to test his faith: will he stay fighting and working, or will he turn back?** It is precisely during these progressive intermissions in grace that the changes appear, which means that their



**Elder Joseph the Hesychast and His Synodia**

place in our lives has now taken on a purpose. Glory to the love for mankind of our good Master, who has grafted the parasitic outgrowths of corruption and death into the training and formation of His children!

In the second case, however, where the prevailing changes are not the natural ones, and where grace does not withdraw of its own accord in order to test us, but it is our own actions that are responsible for its withdrawal—here care is needed to correct the fault before any more damage is done. In this case, the error is to be found in these main areas: it results either from negligence, when we have been remiss in our duties, or from self-conceit which has opened the way to pride. Then it requires humiliation and labor, and fasting, and vigil, and extensive prayer with deepest humility, according to the words of the Psalm, *consider my humiliation and my trouble and forgive all my sins* (Pss 25:18), and again, *when I was humbled, the Lord saved me* (Pss 115:6).

The presence of grace in the soul, which is the crowning of our whole purpose, requires of man Christ-like behavior and quite literally nobility, in as much as we are *those who belong to Christ* (Gal. 5:24), in St Paul's words. Any deviation from this position is considered a betrayal of the *good confession* (cf. 1 Tim 6:12), and as a result grace withdraws. On this account we must take care to keep it within us and, if it departs for any reason, we must call it back by sincere repentance.

I recall how on one occasion I did something wrong, I think through inexperience. Once I had confessed my fault to the Elder—not that he had been unaware of it before—and after sincere repentance on my part, he said to me: “I want you to perform an additional labor in order to satisfy grace which you have grieved by your inattentiveness.” And he sent me on a long journey from our huts at Little St. Anne as far as Karyes, coming back by the north side through the Lavra and Kavsokalyvia. Ostensibly it was on some errand, but in reality it was a penance to produce pain through ascetic labor, which is the practical condition of repentance.

In this way these spiritual elders knew how to reconcile human differences with divine justice, because they believed in the words of the Psalm, *Before I was humbled I went astray; therefore have I kept Thy word* (Pss. 119:67) and *If I had not been humbled, then Thou hadst humbled me, that I might learn Thy commandments* (cf. Pss 119:71). After this saving lesson through which I regained my place in the providence of our Christ's love for mankind, I sang songs of triumph: *Let those who fear Thee turn to me, and those that know Thy testimonies* (Pss 119:79) and *It is good for me that Thou didst humble me, that I might learn Thy commandments.* (Pss 119:71).

Every occasion provided by the events of our lives was a pretext for the elders to expound the all-saving providence of God, a page in the universal governance of all things through the most infinite fatherly care of our God and

Father, our helmsman. As we have said elsewhere, what the blessed Elder was trying to do was to *habituate* us to the correct stance—the movement and dependence of all things upon the unsleeping eye of the divine wisdom and justice of Him *through whom all things were made, and without Him was nothing made that was made.* (Jn 1:3). He would tell us, “If you make this your consciousness, you will arrive without effort at a state in your lives where movement is stilled, bringing about lasting peace—because in this way you do not blame or condemn anyone for anything, not even Satan himself. Learn to regard self-accusation as the most basic means to progress, and learn to look directly to the starting-point of the fault, since, as Abba Mark says, *everything involuntary has its cause in what is voluntary, and man has no greater enemy than himself.*”



Nothing in the entire universe happens without either the will of God or His consent. Everything we see that is good and harmonious is the result of the will of God. As for anything that is in chaos, God knows why it is like that; and why He has permitted it. He sets the limits. What we must know is that He is present everywhere.

How unthankful we are, and how much we have cleaved to the corrupt things of this world! We are too engrossed in things of this world, and thus become spiritually impoverished; because one cannot sit on two chairs. One cannot drink both from the Cup of the Saviour and from the cup of the adversary. We must decide whom we will serve: God, or the things of this world. One cannot serve God and mammon at the same time.

What is a life? Nothing! It is difficult to comprehend how short life is. A young person does not understand this. It has occurred to me many times that we are miserable wretches indeed—we who live on the earth. We cannot live as long as 4 billion seconds, which is 120 years. ... What is one hundred years? Nothing! A moment... Our life is eternity.

We must begin with ourselves, and not try to change others. The Holy Fathers say that we must correct ourselves, to work on our salvation, and many around us will be saved. We must strive always to be kind, good, and quiet—at peace, so that people will always feel peace and quietness in our presence. We know that we can either attract people with our thoughts, or drive them away. We need to change, so that our faith might be strengthened.

**Blessed Elder Thaddeus of Serbia (+2002)**

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TUCSON, AZ  
PERMIT NO 690



A 501(c)(3) ORGANIZATION  
[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## THE ROBE OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

*The Orthodox Church celebrates the Deposition of the Holy Robe of the Theotokos on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Here is some information about the feast and a picture of the Holy Robe today (or possibly a portion of or one of numerous robes of the Theotokos), and how it came to rest in Georgia.*



During the reign of Leo the Great (457-474) two patricians and brethren on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land lodged with an old widow, a Christian of Jewish descent. Seeing the many miracles wrought at a small shrine in her house, they pressed her until she revealed to them that she had raiment of the most holy Theotokos kept in a small coffer.

Our Lady had had two virgins in her lifetime who attended upon her; before her holy Dormition, she gave each of them one of her divine garments as a blessing. This old widow was of the family of one of those two virgins, and it had come through the generations into her hands. With the permission of God, that this holy relic might be had for the profit of many, the two men took the garment by stealth and brought it to Blachernae near Constantinople, and building a church in honor of the Apostles Peter and Mark, they secretly enshrined the garment therein.

But here again, because of the multitude of miracles that were worked, it became known to the Emperor Leo, and a magnificent church was built, as some say, by that same Leo, but according to

others, by his predecessors Marcian and Pulcheria, and enlarged by Leo when the holy raiment was found. The Emperor Justin the Younger completed the church, which the Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes raised up immediately again after it had burned in 1070. It burned again in 1434, and from that time it remained a small house of prayer together with the renowned holy spring.

After the seventh century, the name Blachernae was given to other churches and monasteries by their pious founders out of reverence for this famous church in Constantinople. In this church John Catacuzene was crowned in 1345; also, the Council against Acindynus, the follower of Barlaam, was convoked here.

There are several different explanations as to how the Robe came to Georgia. According to one account, it was brought from Jerusalem at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to another, it was brought to Georgia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of iconoclasm in Byzantium. According to the chronicle Life of Kartli, the wonder-working Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos had been preserved in the church at Khobi for many centuries.

In 1640 the Russian envoys Fedot Elchin and Pavel Zakharev visited western Georgia and reported having seen the Precious Robe. It was also described in the accounts of various travelers through western Georgia including the patriarch of Alexandria (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century); and several monks of Mt. Athos.

Every year on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Most Precious Robe is carried from the Zugdidi Museum to the Cathedral of the Blachernae Icon of the Theotokos. Pilgrims from many countries have traveled to Zugdidi to venerate the Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God.



# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

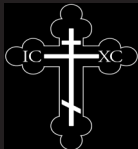
VOL. 17, ISSUE 09-10

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- The Gospel on Many Cares and Sudden Death (p. 5)
- The Way of the Church's Holy Fathers (p. 9)
- Paternal Advice from a Saint's Deathbed (p. 11)
- A Prophecy (p. 21)
- St. Joseph the Hesychast (p. 22)
- Glorifying Schism in the Church (p. 25)
- The Secular Spirit vs. Athonite Holiness (p. 27)
- On the Ecumenist Post-Patristic Theology (p. 29)
- Who Is a Heretic? (p.30)
- Witness the Faith! (p. 31)



- Ἡ Ἐωσφορικὴ Ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ (σελ. 13)
- Ἡ Παναγία, τὸ Λάδι καὶ τὸ Ψωμί (σελ. 14)
- Ἐνας Κόσμος Ἀχαρισ!... (σελ. 16)
- Ἐπιστολὴ Ἁγίου Παΐσιου (σελ. 19)
- Πικρὲς Ἀλήθειες (σελ. 20)



Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniatthis & Kostas Matsourakis

## PAPISM AS THE OLDEST PROTESTANTISM

By St. Justin Popovich.

*What are, on the other hand, the fruits of the God-Man society [the Church]—Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors. That is its goal, that is its meaning and design, that is the proof of its indestructible strength. Not books and libraries, systems and cities—all things that are here today and gone tomorrow. The various pseudo-Christian humanisms fill the world with books, while Orthodoxy fills it with the hallowed.*

† † †

In the European West, Christianity has gradually transformed into humanism. For a long time and arduously, the God-Man diminished, and has been changed, narrowed, and finally reduced to a man: to the infallible man in Rome and the equally “infallible” man in London and Berlin. Thus did Papism come into being, taking everything from Christ, along with Protestantism, which asks the least from Christ, and often nothing.

Both in Papism and in Protestantism, man has been put in the place of the God-Man, both as the highest value and as the highest criterion. A painful and sad correction of the God-Man's work and teaching has been accomplished. Steadily and stubbornly Papism has tried to substitute the God-Man with man, until in the dogma about the infallibility of the pope—a man, the God-Man was once and for all replaced with ephemeral, “infallible” man; because with this dogma, the pope was decisively and clearly declared as something higher than not only man, but the holy Apostles, the holy Fathers, and the holy Ecumenical councils.

With this kind of a departure from the God-Man, from the ecumenical Church

as the God-Man organism, Papism surpassed Luther, the founder of Protestantism. Thus, the first radical protest in the name of humanism against the God-Man Christ, and his God-Man organism—the Church—should be looked for in Papism, not in Lutheranism. Papism is actually the first and the oldest Protestantism.

We should not do this ourselves. Papism indeed is the most radical Protestantism, because it has transferred the foundation of Christianity from the eternal God-Man to ephemeral (lasting for a very short time, *Ed.*) man. And it has proclaimed this as the paramount dogma, which means: the paramount value, the paramount measure of all beings and things in the world. And the Protestants merely accepted this dogma in its essence, and worked it out in terrifying magnitude and detail.

Essentially, Protestantism is nothing other than a generally applied Papism. For in Protestantism, the fundamental principle of Papism is brought to life by each man individually. After the example of the infallible man in Rome, each Protestant is a cloned infallible man, because he pretends to personal infallibility in matters of faith. It can be said: Protestantism is a vulgarized Papism, only stripped of mystery (i.e., sacramentality), authority and power.

Through the reduction of Christianity, with all its eternal God-Man qualities, to man, Western Christianity has been turned into humanism. This may seem paradoxical, but it is true in its irresistible and unerasable historical reality. Because Western Christianity is, in its essence, the most decisive humanism; and because it has proclaimed man as infallible, and has turned the God-Man religion into a humanist religion. And that this is so is shown by the fact that the God-Man has been driven to

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.orthodoxheritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen,” a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.” PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, “poimen@mail.com.” Please visit our website for the applicable links.

the heavens, while his place on earth has been filled with his replacement, Vicarius Christi—the pope.

What a tragic piece of illogic: to establish a replacement for the everywhere-present God and the Lord Christ! But this piece of illogic has been incarnated in Western Christianity: the Church has been transformed into a state, the pope has become a ruler, bishops have been proclaimed princes, priests have become leaders of clerical parties, the faithful have been proclaimed papal subjects. The Gospel has been replaced with the Vatican’s compilation of canon law; Evangelical ethic and methods of love have been replaced with casuistry, Jesuitry and the “holy” Inquisition. What does all this mean? With the systematic removal and destruction of everything that does not bow to the pope, even with forced conversions to the papal faith, and the burning of sinners for the glory of the meek and the mild Lord Jesus!

There is no doubt that all these facts converge into one irresistibly logical conclusion: in the West there is no Church and no God-Man, which is why there is no true God-Man society in which men are mortal brothers and immortal fellows. Humanistic Christianity is actually the most decisive protest and uprising against the God-Man Christ and all the Evangelical, God-Man values and norms. And even here is evident European man’s favored tendency, to reduce everything to man as the fundamental value and the fundamental measure. And behind that stands one idol: *Menschliches Allzumenschliches\** (Human, All Too Human, *Ed.*).

With the reduction of Christianity to humanism, Christianity has been no doubt simplified, but also at the same time—destroyed! Now that the *gleichhaltung* of Christianity with humanism has been accomplished, some in Europe are seeking a return to the God-Man Christ. [*gleichhaltung* is the

act, process, or policy of achieving rigid and total coordination and uniformity (as in politics, culture, communication) by forcibly repressing or eliminating independence and freedom of thought, action, or expression: forced reduction to a common level: forced standardization or assimilation, *Ed.*]. However, the cries of individuals in the Protestant world—“*Zuruck zum Jesus!* Back to Jesus!”—are empty cries in the dark night of humanistic Christianity, which has abandoned the values and the measures of God-Man and is now suffocating in desperation and impotence. While from the depths of centuries past reverberate the bitter words of the melancholic prophet of God, Jeremiah: *Accursed is the man who puts his confidence in man!*...

In a broader historical perspective, the Western dogma about man’s infallibility is nothing other than an attempt to revive and immortalize dying humanism. It is the last transformation and final glorification of humanism. After the rationalistic Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the shortsighted positivism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nothing else was left to European humanism than to fall apart in its own impotence and contradictions. But in that tragic moment, religious humanism came to its aid with its dogma about the infallibility of man saved European humanism from imminent death. And, although dogmatized, Western Christian humanism could not help absorbing all the fatal contradictions of European humanism, which are united in one single desire: to exile God-Man from the earth. Because **the most important thing for humanism is for man to be the highest value and the highest measure. Man, not God-Man.**

According to our own Orthodox feeling: Christianity is only Christianity through the God-Man, through His God-

Man ideology and God-Man methods. That is the fundamental truth for the sake of which no compromises can be made. Only as the God-Man is Christ the highest value and the highest measure. One should be truthful and consistent to the end: if Christ is not the God-Man, then he is the most impudent fraud, because he proclaimed himself as God and the Lord. But the Evangelical historical reality irrefutably shows and proves that Jesus Christ is in everything and in all things the perfect God-Man. Therefore, one cannot be a Christian without a belief in Christ as God-Man and in the Church as His God-Man Body, in which He left His entire Miraculous Person. The saving and life-giving power of Christ's Church lays in the eternally-living and all-present personality of the God-Man. Any substitution of the God-Man with a man, and any winnowing of Christianity in order to pick out only that which pleases a man's individual preference and reason, turns Christianity into shallow and impotent humanism.

The outstanding importance of Christianity lies in its life-giving and unchangeable God-Manhood, by which it models humanity as a whole, bringing it from the darkness of non-being to the light of Pan-being. Only by its God-Man power is Christianity the salt of the earth, the salt that saves man from rotting in sin and evil. If it dissolves into various humanisms, Christianity becomes bland, becomes salt that has turned flat, useless, fit to be tossed out and trod on.

Any tendency or attempt at a *gleichaltung* of Christianity with the spirit of the times, with ephemeral movements and regimes of certain historical periods, takes away from Christianity that specific worth which makes it the singular God-Man religion in the world. In the Orthodox philosophy of society, **the rule above all rules is this: do not accommodate the God-Man Christ to the spirit of the times, but rather accommodate the spirit of the times to the spirit of Christ's eternity—Christ's God-Manhood.** Only in this way can the Church preserve the life-giving and irreplaceable personality of the God-Man Christ and remain a God-Man society; in such a God-Man society, people fraternize and live with the help of Divine love and justice, prayer and fasting, meekness and humbleness, goodness and wisdom, charity and faith, love of God and love of one's brother, and all the other Evangelical virtues.

According to the God-Man philosophy of life and the world, man, society, nation, and state are to accommodate themselves to the Church as the eternal ideal, but the

Church must never accommodate itself to them—much less submit to them. A nation has true worth only inasmuch as it lives the Evangelical virtues and incarnates in its history the God-Man values. What applies to the nation, applies to the state as well. The goal of the nation as a whole is the same as the goal of the individual: to incarnate in one's self Evangelical justice, love, sanctity; to become a *holy people—God's people*—which in its history proclaims the Divine values and virtues (1 Pet 2:9-10; 1:15-16).

† † †

They will ask us: where are the concrete fruits of this God-Man society? How was it that precisely on the field of Orthodoxy's radiation came about the appearance of "the most radical secularism in human history?" (Josef Pieper—a German Catholic philosopher whose views are rooted primarily in the Scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas and in the teachings of Plato, *Ed.*) Does there not also exist an Eastern "Humanism" (e.g., Caesaro-Papism, etc.)? Thus, the enemies of Orthodoxy ask: The success of atheistic social humanism on the soil of Orthodoxy: is that not proof of the "inability of Orthodoxy" to solve the most elementary social problems?

It is a fact that this world lies in evil and sin. The reduction of everything to man is in fact the atmosphere in which sinful human nature and man in general—no matter where he is located—lives and breathes, and something

toward which they strive. It is, therefore, no wonder that the tides of this sinfulness, just like the tides of European pseudo-Christian poisons, from time to time wash over the Orthodox peoples as well. However, one thing is irrefutably true: the Orthodox Church has never ecclesialogically dogmatized any sort of humanism, whether we are talking about Caesaro-Papism or any other "ism."

The Holy Orthodox Church, with the strength of its genuine and uncorrupted God-Manhood and Evangelical truthfulness, and through its constant call for repentance regarding everything that is not from God-Man, it has preserved, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the wisdom and the chastity of its heart and its soul. And by this it has remained and continues to be the "salt" of the earth, man and society.

On the other hand, the tragedy of Western Christianity lies precisely in the fact that it, either by correcting the image of the God-Man, or by denying it, has attempted to once again introduce demonized humanism, so characteristic of sinful human nature, to—where? Into the heart of the God-Man organism itself—the Church, whose essence lies precisely



in the freeing of man from it. And through it into all regions of life, person and society, proclaiming it as the supreme dogma, as the universal dogma. With this, the demonized intellectual pridefulness of man, hidden under the cloak of the Church, becomes the dogma of a faith without which there is no salvation! It is horrible to think it, much less say it: with this, the sole “workshop of salvation” and graduation to God-Manhood in this world, is gradually turned into a demonized “workshop” of violence over consciousness and dehumanization! A workshop of the disfigurement of God and man through the disfigurement of the God-Man!

The Orthodox Church has proclaimed no poison, no sin, no humanism, no earthly social system as dogma—neither through Councils, nor through the “Body” of the Ecumenical Church. While the west, alas, does nothing but that. The latest proof: the Second Vatican Council.

The Orthodox Faith: in it, repentance is a necessary holy virtue; and it always calls for repentance. In the West: the pseudo-Christian faith in man does not call for repentance; on the contrary, it “clerically” obligates a maintaining of its fatal-to-man homo-idolization, its pseudo-Christian humanisms, infallibilities, heresies, and it pridefully considers that in no case are these things for which one should repent.

Contemporary atheistic social humanism—ideologically and methodologically—is in everything a fruit and an invention of pseudo-Christian Europe, wed with our own sinfulness. They ask us: how did it arrive on the soil of Orthodoxy? It is God trying the endurance of the righteous, visiting the children for the sins of their fathers, and announcing the strength of His Church by taking it through fire and water. Because, according to the words of the wise-in-God Macarius of Egypt, that is the only path of true Christianity: *Wherever the Holy Spirit is, there follows, like a shadow, persecution and battle... It is necessary that the truth be persecuted.*

What are, on the other hand, the fruits of the God-Man society?—Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors. That is its goal, that is its meaning and design, that is the proof of its indestructible strength. Not books and libraries, systems and cities—all things that are here today and gone tomorrow. The various pseudo-Christian humanisms fill the world with books, while Orthodoxy fills it with the hallowed. Thousands and hundreds of thousands, even millions of martyrs and newly martyred, fallen for the Orthodox faith—there is the fruit of God-Man society. Thus does the famous Francois Mauriac, a Roman Catholic, on the dark horizon of the contemporary world, with each day more and more pushed into the darkness of born-in-Europe, soul-losing homo-idolatry, see **only one bright spot, that gives hope for the future of this world: the bathed in the blood of the martyred and newly-martyred faith. The Orthodox faith.**

But in the West? They neither know the Church, nor the path, nor the way out of the hopelessness; all is sunk in

soul-losing idolatry, in love of pleasure, love of self, and love of lust. Hence in Europe we see the renaissance of polytheism. The “False Christs,” false gods that have flooded Europe and are exported from it to all the marketplaces of the world, have for their main assignment the killing of the soul in man—that unique treasure of man in all the worlds, and in that way make impossible the very possibility of a genuine society.

In writing this, we are not writing the history of Europe, its virtues and faults, nor the history of the European pseudo-churches. We are merely laying out the entelechy of its ontology (the realization of potential of its ontology, *Ed.*), descending into the path and essence of European intellectual pridefulness, into its demonic underground, where its black sources are, whose water threatens to poison the world. **This is not a judgment of Europe but a heartfelt prayerful call to the solitary path of salvation, through repentance.**

† † †

[\*]: *Menschliches Allzumenschliches*, “Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits,” (German: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Ein Buch für freie Geister*) is a book by 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, originally published in 1878. Nietzsche sets out his unsettling views in a series of 638 aphorisms—assessing subjects ranging from art to arrogance, boredom to passion, science to vanity and women to youth. This work also contains the seeds of concepts crucial to Nietzsche’s later philosophy, such as the will to power and the “need to transcend conventional Christian morality.” Nietzsche thus sets the modern pathway to western atheism and stands in direct contrast to any and all Orthodox Christian values, principles and dogma.



Let everyone find out then where he is: how many milestones he has passed on the road. We ought not only to examine ourselves every day but also over a period of time, every month, and every week. “The first week I was a prey to such and such a fault—how do I stand now?” Similarly over a period of time: “Last year I was overcome so many times by such and such a fault—how about now?”

And likewise we ought to examine for ourselves each of our faults—whether we have made a little progress or are in the same condition, or have become worse. For so long as we have not uprooted our evil tendencies, may God give us the strength not to give them free reign but to hold them in check. For it is a very grave thing to let loose our passions and not to check them.

**St. Dorotheos of Gaza**

## THE GOSPEL ON MANY CARES AND SUDDEN DEATH [Lk 12:16-21]

A homily by St. Nikolai Velimirovic, bishop of Ochrid, from "Homilies, vol. Two," pp. 269-276.

Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said: 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: Take thine ease: eat, drink and be merry!' But God said unto him: 'Thou fool; this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."

† † †

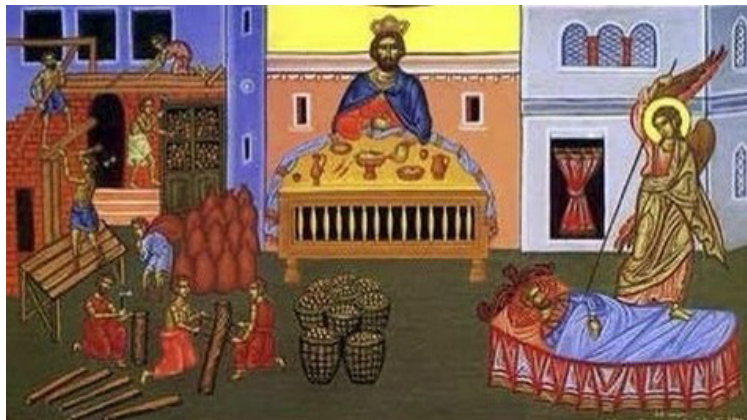
The Lord Jesus Christ came among men to heal their souls from thieving tendencies, for these tendencies are a grave sickness of the human soul.

Does a son steal from his father? No; but a servant steals from his master. At the moment that Adam turned his spirit of sonship into a spirit of servanthood, his hand stretched out to the forbidden fruit. Why does a man steal what is another's? Is it because he needs it? Adam had everything, and was lacking in nothing, but even so he went to steal. Why does a man steal from a man, and a servant from a servant? Because they had first learned to steal from their masters. Men always first steal from God, and then from one another. The forefather of mankind first stretched out his hand to steal what was God's, and then, as a result, his descendants began to steal from one another.

Men steal from God and from men, from nature and from themselves. A man steals not only with all his senses but with his heart, soul and thoughts. There is, moreover, never an act of theft in which the devil is not man's ally. He is the prompter and instigator of all theft; he is the leader and initiator of all thieving thoughts. No thief is ever alone in the world. There are always at least two who go together to steal, and a Third sees them. Man and the devil go to steal, and God sees them. As Eve did not steal on her own, but in company with the devil, so no-one has ever carried out an act of theft alone, but always in company with the devil. The devil, though, is not just the leader and fellow-participant in the theft, but the reporter of the theft. He is

not interested in the things stolen but in the destruction of a man's soul, in dissension and hatred among men and in the destruction of the whole human race. He does not go to steal for the sake of stealing, but *as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* (I Pet 5:8). That it is *the devil* who arouses the soul to every evil act, and *sows every tare in the soul*, is made clear by the Lord Himself (Mt 13:39). With every act of theft that a man performs, the devil steals a part of his soul. The soul of a habitual thief is more and more shrunken, withered and ruined, like a lung riddled with tuberculosis.

For a man to keep himself from this thieving tendency, he must look on all he possesses as God's and not as his. When he makes use of his possessions, he must reckon that he is using what is God's, not his. Eating bread at his table, he must render thanks to God, for the bread is not his but God's. For a man to be healed of the sickness of stealing, he must look on others' possessions as God's, and must know that when he steals from men he steals from God. Is it possible to



steal from Him whose eye is ever open? For a man to chase away his wicked fellow in thieving, the sower of every evil, he must be vigilant over his soul, that the devil may not sow thieving desires and thoughts in it; and when he finds them sown there, he must apply himself at once to burning them out with the fire of prayer. Is

a man not crazy who runs after the worse when he has known the better? Is a thief not crazy and ridiculous to visit another's house at night to steal bales of cotton cloth, when he can see his friend driving up to visit him with a wagon full of gifts of silk and velvet?

The Lord Jesus, the Lover of mankind, brought with Him and opened to men innumerable and incomparable heavenly gifts, and invited them to take them openly and freely, on one condition: that they first wrest their souls away from corruptible earthly goods. Some men obeyed Him, took His gifts and enriched themselves; others, though, did not obey Him, but remained with their corruptible and stolen riches. As a warning to these latter, the Lord told the parable that is recounted in today's Gospel:

Jesus spake a parable unto them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying: 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' He was not just rich; he had such a yield from his harvest that he did not know where to store it. Looking at his wheat-covered fields, and his orchards

and vineyards whose branches were weighed down by fruit, his gardens overflowing with all kinds of vegetables and his hives full of honey, this rich man did not look towards heaven and cry out with joy: "Glory and praise to Thee, O most high and most merciful God! How great an abundance Thou hast, in Thy power and wisdom, brought forth from the black earth! Thou hast, through the sun's rays, poured sweetness into all the fruits of the earth! Thou hast given every fruit a wonderful form and particular flavour! Thou hast rewarded me a hundredfold for my small labours! Thou hast had mercy on Thy servant, and hast poured such gifts from Thy full hands into his lap! O my most wondrous Lord, teach me to give joy to my brethren and neighbors with these Thy gifts. May they, together with me, rejoice and thankfully glorify and praise Thy holy name and Thine inexpressible goodness."

Does he say all this? No; instead of remembering the Giver of all these gifts, he first worries about where to heap them up and keep them, like a thief who finds a bag of money in the road does not wonder where it came from or whose it is, but first worries about how to hide it. This rich man is in reality a thief. He cannot say that all this abundance has come from his own efforts. A thief takes pains over his thieving, using his skill and intelligence; he often exercises a great deal more skill and intelligence than a plowman or sower does. The rich man had done nothing, nor could he do anything, about the sun, rain, winds and earth. These are the four main elements—earth, air, fire and water—that, by God's will, give fruit to plants and trees. This abundant fruit, then, is neither his nor the result of his futile efforts, nor his by the right of possession, for he is not the owner of the sun, the rain, the winds or the earth. This abundant fruit is the gift of God. A man appears grotesque in the eyes of all when he, receiving a gift from another, neither says "Thank you" nor pays any attention to the giver, but hastens only to hide it in a safe place. A decent beggar, on receiving a crust of black bread, thanks the giver, but this rich man does not spare a single thought or a single word to thank God for such a rich harvest, nor have a single smile of joy for such a marvel and so great a grace from God. In place of prayer and thanksgiving, hymns to God and joyfulness of heart, he is immediately seized on by worries about how to gather such gifts and bestow them in such a way that not a single grain may remain for the birds of the air or a single apple fall into the hands of his poor neighbors.

*And he said: "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."* See here the great labours of a man without understanding! Instead of striving to kill the old man in himself and raise up the new man, he invests all his efforts in the pulling down of his old granaries, barns and farms and building new ones. If his harvest is as abundant the

following year, he will again have to labour to extend his old granaries or build yet more. And so his granaries will, from year to year, become larger and newer, and his soul will become narrower and older, and his old grain will rot away like his soul. He will be surrounded by envy, and curses will be heaped on him, for poor men will look with envy on his riches, and the hungry will curse him for his hardness and selfishness. And so his wealth will bring ruin to him and to his neighbors. His soul will be destroyed by hard-heartedness and selfishness, and those of his neighbors by envy and cursing. See how a man without understanding can use God's gift to both his own and others' ruin. God gave him his riches to be blessing and salvation both to him and his neighbors, but he made use of them to bring a curse on himself and others.

Saint John Chrysostom advises all who are open to advice: "Have you eaten your fill? Remember the hungry. Have you quenched your thirst? Remember the thirsty. Are you warm enough? Remember the frozen. Do you live in a richly-furnished house? Bring the homeless into it. Have you made merry at a party? Bring merriment to the sad and sorrowful. Have you been honoured as a rich man? Visit and relieve those in need. Have you come out joyful from your master? Make sure all your servants are joyful. If you are merciful and indulgent towards them, you will yourself be shown mercy when your soul leaves your body."

It is said of two great ascetics in the Egyptian desert that they prayed to God to reveal to them whether there was anyone in the world who served Him better than they did. And this was indeed revealed to them: they were told to go to a certain place and to a certain man to find out what they wanted to know. They came to the place revealed to them, and found a simple man, Eucharistos by name, who kept cattle. The ascetics, seeing nothing remarkable about this man, asked him how he tried to fulfil God's will. After long hesitation, Eucharistos told them that he divided all that he earned from his cattle into three parts: he gave one to the poor and needy, one he used for entertaining guests and the third he kept for himself and his chaste wife. Hearing this, the ascetics praised his benevolence and returned home. See how much greater and more pleasing to God charity is than strict asceticism. But this greedy rich man described in the Gospel had no thought for God, his soul or charity. His one thought was how to extend his barns and how to gather all the fruits from his lands. What, though, will he do when he has done all this? Let him tell us himself:

*"And I will say to my soul: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: Take thine ease: eat, drink and be merry!'"* How can the soul eat and drink? The body eats and drinks the harvest of the lands, not the soul. The rich man is thinking of his body when he speaks of his soul. His soul has so completely grown into his body and become one with it that

he no longer knows it by its name. No clearer expression could be found for the destructive triumph of the body over the soul. Imagine a lamb in a dog's den, trapped and forgotten in this den. The dog hurries around and drags food into the den for itself. When it has filled its den with meat, offal and bones from a variety of carrion, it calls to the hungry lamb: "Now, my dear lamb, eat, drink and be merry; here's food for many days!" Having said this, the dog will fall to, but the lamb will remain hungry and die of hunger. This rich man behaves in the same way with his soul as the dog does with the hungry lamb.

The soul is not fed with food that decays, but he offers it such food. The soul yearns for its heavenly homeland, where its granaries and the source of its life are to be found, but he nails it to the earth and vows it that he will keep it thus nailed down for many years. The soul rejoices in God, but he never has God's name on his lips. The soul is nourished by justice and mercy, but it does not occur to him to use his riches to bring justice and mercy to the needy, the poor and the deformed around his house. The soul desires pure, heavenly love, but he pours oil on the flames of the passions, and censes the soul with the filthy smoke that they produce. The soul seeks its adornment: *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* (Gal 5:22-23); he, though, decks it with drunkenness, gluttony, adultery and vanity. How can a vegetarian lamb not die in the company of a carnivorous dog? How can the soul not die when pressed down by the heavy cadaver of the body?

Not all the rich man's folly, though, consists in his offering meat to a lamb or, rather, bodily food to the soul, but also in his making himself the lord of time and of life. We see that he prepares himself food and drink *for many years*. Hear, then, God's reply:

*"But God said unto him: 'Thou fool; this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?'"* Thus spoke the Lord of life and of the world, the Commander of time and death, *in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.* (Job 12:10). You foolish man, why do you not think with your mind instead of with your belly? As it was not in your power to determine the day of your birth, neither have you control over the day of your death. The Lord lit the candles of your earthly life when it seemed good to Him, and He will extinguish them when He so determines. As your riches could not hasten the hour of your coming into the world, so they cannot delay the hour of your leaving it. Do dawn and dusk depend on you? Does the wind's blowing and dying down depend on you? To the same degree does the span of your earthly life depend on you. And also your granaries and cellars, and your sheepfolds and enclosures. All this belongs to God, as your soul does. Every day and every hour, God can take what is His from you and give it to others.

All is His during your lifetime, and it will still be His after your death. Your life and your death are in His hands. Why, then, do you speak of many years to come? Your life is counted to the minute, O man, and your last minute could tick away this very day. Do not, therefore, take thought for the morrow: what you will eat or drink, or what you wear; but take thought, far more thought, for the soul with which you come before God, your Creator and Lord. Take more thought for the Kingdom of God, for this is the food of your soul (Mt 6:31-3).

The Lord ended this parable with the words: *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* How shall it be for him? He shall suddenly be parted from his riches, and his soul from his body. His riches will be given to others, his body to the earth and his soul to a place blacker than the earth, where there is *wailing and gnashing of teeth*. No single good work will be there to welcome him into the heavenly Kingdom that his soul might find a place there. His name will not be found written in the Book of Life, and it will neither be known nor named among the blessed! He has received his reward on earth, and God's heavenly riches will not be revealed to his spirit.

Oh, how terrible is sudden death! When a man thinks himself to be firmly established on earth, it can suddenly open and swallow him up as it swallowed up Dathan and Abiram (Num 16:32). When a God-forgetting merry-maker makes ready to go on as such for many years, fire descends and devours him like Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24). When a man thinks he has well-insured himself with God and man, he will fall dead like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10).

A sinner sustains a twofold loss from a sudden death: to himself and to his family. To himself, for he dies unrepentant, and to his family, for it stuns his kinsfolk with an unexpected blow and he leaves unfinished work behind him. Blessed are they who experience sickness before their deaths, enduring pain and suffering. Such a one is given the opportunity to look back over the whole of his life, to survey and count his sins, to repent of all the evil he has done and all the good he has not done, to weep with repentance and lament before God, cleansing his soul with tears, and to beg God for forgiveness; also to forgive all who have insulted or done evil to him during his lifetime, to bless all his friends and enemies, to remind his children to fear God, remember the hour of their death and enrich their souls betimes with faith, prayer and acts of charity.

Look how those pleasing to God, the righteous, died in the Old Testament: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David. They were all sick before their deaths, and during their sickness the name of God did not leave their lips. They all left good testaments to their descendants and blessed them. This is the death of a righteous person. But

you will say: have not many of the righteous died unprepared in battle? No; the righteous never die unprepared. They always prepare for death, and await from day to day their parting from this life. Their hearts are constantly filled with repentance and confession to God, and the glorifying of His name. The righteous do this in times of peace and prosperity; and even more in times of war, violence and temptation. Their whole life is a constant preparation for death, and so they never die unprepared.

To prepare oneself for death also means to *enrich oneself in God*. Only those who truly believe in God and in a life beyond this life prepare for death, for that other life. The unbelieving never prepare for death. They prepare for as long a life as possible here on earth. They are afraid of thinking about death, and make little effort to enrich themselves in God. He who prepares for death prepares for eternal life, and the nature of this preparation for eternal life is known to every Christian.

A wise man confirms his faith in God every day, and guards his heart from unbelief, doubt and malice, as a wise householder guards his vineyard from destructive midges (small flies, *Ed.*) and grasshoppers. A wise man exercises himself every day in the fulfilling of God's commandments by acts of forgiveness, charity and love, and he is thus enriched in God. A wise man does not keep that which is dearest and most precious to him in granaries and corn cribs, but confides it to God's keeping. This most precious thing is his soul. It is his greatest possession; the only thing that does not decay and die. A wise man has his accounts with the world balanced every day, and he is ready to lie down and die with the firm faith that he will live and come before the face of God.

Saint Anthony the Great says: "Reflect within yourself and say: 'I shall not remain in this world longer than today', and you will never sin against God."

There is nothing more light-minded than to say: "Let me die suddenly, so that I may not feel my death!" Thus speak the foolish and godless. The wise and devout say: "May God's will be done!" Better to be sick for years and to have growths and cramps from our sickness than to die unprepared and unrepentant. The pains of this world quickly pass, as do its joys. In the other world, though, there is nothing ephemeral and transitory, but all is eternal, whether torment or joy. It is therefore better to suffer a little here than there, for there the measure of both pain and joy is incomparably greater.

May God's will be done! We pray our all-seeing God not to send sudden death on us in the midst of our sins and misdeeds, but to spare us as He spared King Hezekiah (Isa 38:1-5), and give us time for repentance. By His mercy, may He give us some indication of our approaching death, that we may hasten to do some further good and save our souls

from eternal fire; that our names may be found in the Book of Life, and that our faces may be seen among the righteous in the Kingdom of Christ our God. To Him be glory and praise, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit—the Trinity consubstantial and undivided, now and forever, through all time and all eternity. Amen.



There have been great lights in the world who illumined it with their miracles just as the sun does with its beams. Some say that in a monastery (in Gaul) there was a monk who was diligent in praying and reading with the others according to the rules of monasteries. But secretly and in private he offered the sacrifices of prayers to the omnipotent God. For after he completed the schedule of prayers in the oratory, he secretly slipped away from the presence of the brothers and went among the thick brambles, boxwoods, and oak trees, where he hoped that no one but God alone would see him. There he knelt in prayer. After he had knelt and prayed to the Lord for a long time, he stood up from the ground, lifted his palms and eyes to heaven, and silently recited a series of psalms. He looked to heaven with such remorse that streams of tears gushed from his eyes.

When one of the brothers carefully followed him and saw what he was doing, he did not keep it from the abbot.

The abbot noted when the pious monk hurried off again to do this and followed at a distance; kneeling on the ground, he watched what the faithful disciple was practicing. As the abbot watched from a distance, he saw a great miracle. For a flame extended from the monk's lips and gradually was stretched to a great distance and rose above him like a rope. Without interruption the flame gave off a bright light and seemed to ascend all the way to heaven. And although the flame grew and was extended into the air from his hair, it did not harm his head.

The abbot was amazed by the sight but restrained himself a bit longer. At the end of his prayers, the monk returned to the monastery. The abbot followed by a different road.

A short time later he reproved the monk with many reprimands in order to discipline "his vain glory," but he never mentioned what he had seen.

**Gregory of Tours**  
**Glory of the Confessors, 37**



## THE WAY OF THE CHURCH'S HOLY FATHERS

By St. Paisios The Athonite, from "Epistles," Holy Monastery "Evangelist John The Theologian," Souroti, Thessaloniki, Greece (2002), Pages 133-138.

In former days, the Holy Fathers first withdrew into the desert, becoming themselves a desert void of their passions by struggling, without plans or programs of their own, left in the hands of God, avoiding honors and power, even when they arrived at measures of sanctity—unless Mother Church had need of them. They did obedience to the will of God and they glorified the name of God with their holy life. They became spiritual blood donors, for they had acquired good spiritual health in the desert, with good spiritual food and vigilant patristic watchfulness.

In our days, however, many of us, who are unfortunately influenced by worldly love, which can make no spiritual pledge, supposedly venture to do good, to donate blood, but our blood is full of spiritual bacteria and we do more harm than good.

If, however, we were living patristically, we would all have spiritual health, which even all the heterodox would envy, leaving their sick delusions aside to be saved without preaching. Now, however, they are not moved by our Holy Patristic Tradition, for they want to see how we continue the Patristic Tradition, to see our true kinship with our saints.

Unfortunately, nowadays, words and books have multiplied and experiences have diminished, because the worldly spirit, which pursues all conveniences and avoids all bodily effort, influences people. Most of us find rest in much reading but little or no implementation. We simply marvel at the holy athletes of our Church without realizing how much they had labored, for we have not toiled so as to be able to understand their toil, to love them and to struggle out of *philotimo* in order to imitate them.

Those, however, who do struggle with *philotimo* and do not give themselves rest, removing their ego from every one of their actions, they help our world very positively. For, only then are the souls in need of help given rest, and only then will their own souls find inner rest, in this life as well as in eternity.

Those who pursue power while being overpowered by passions, who pass off their personal interests as spiritual, and who resort to worldly authorities in order to solve their ecclesiastical problems are left abandoned by the Grace of God. Do not let the devil fool you with the words *I appeal unto Caesar*

because Apostle Paul was submitted to Caesar's authority, and since God had previously informed him that he would preach Christ in Rome as well, he asked Caesar to transport him to Rome (to pay his way). When someone tries to settle ecclesiastical matters in an Orthodox way, but his goal is to better establish himself, how can he be blessed by God?

Neither should anyone be impressed by those who settle ecclesiastical matters exceptionally well—even "orthodoxically"—if these same people are not well situated in the life of the Church, but rather trouble Her with imprudent excessiveness or frivolity.

The two extremes always weary Mother Church, as well as those who hold to them, because the two extremes as a rule stab one another. In other words, it is as if the one extreme is held by a possessed man who is spiritually insolent (and feels contempt for everything), and the other extreme is held by a madman who is childishly zealous with narrow-mindedness. God forbid—these two ends could strike at one another continually and *an end to it all* no one will find. Those who will be able to bend these two extremes and make them unite, will be

crowned by Christ with two imperishable crowns.

We should neither create problems in the Church nor magnify the minor human disorders that occur, so as not to create greater evil and the wicked one rejoice. He who is irritated about a minor disorder and abruptly rushes to ostensibly correct it passionately and with ill tem-

per resembles the light-headed sacristan who sees a candle dripping and abruptly dashes to fix it, stumbling over people and candlesticks, and thus causing an even greater disorder during the Divine Service.

Unfortunately, in our days, there are many who weary Mother Church. Among these, those who are educated have grasped the dogma with their mind and not with the spirit of the Holy Fathers. Others, who are unlearned, have grasped the dogma with their teeth, which explains why they grate their teeth when discussing ecclesiastical themes. Hence it is that they cause more serious harm to the Church than the enemies of our Orthodoxy.

There are people who justify their wickedness by examining others and not themselves, or by publicizing predicaments of the Church to the world—even things that should not be said in public—using as a pretext the *tell it unto the church* of the Gospel (Mt 18:17). Let them do this first for their small church, their family, or their brotherhood; if they think this is good, let them then disgrace Mother Church as well. Good children, I believe, never accuse their mothers. Unfortunately,



however, many inconsiderate people offer a wealth of live ammunition to heretics, enabling Jehovah's witnesses and other heretics to seize Orthodox cities and villages and expand their missionary work.

It is well known to discerning spiritual Fathers that this demonic practice (namely, deriding the local church's clergy and the Church at large) has turned many people into Jehovah's witnesses. It is also known to the whole world that not even one Jehovah's witness has become Orthodox in this unorthodox way.

The Good God, on the other hand, endures us lovingly without ridiculing anyone, even though, as the Beholder of hearts, He knows our pitiful state well. The same thing applies to saints who never insulted a sinful person in the presence of others, but with love, spiritual nobility, and in a hidden way, helped in the correction of the evil. We, notwithstanding that we are sinners, do the opposite (like hypocrites).

Only a man possessed by a demon is justified to mock people in the presence of others and tell them about their past (in as much as the demon has rights, of course), in order to make weak souls falter. The unclean spirit, naturally, does not reveal people's virtues, but only their weaknesses. Those who are liberated from their passions, however, since they no longer possess wickedness, correct the evil by their kindness. If sometimes they see a little uncleanness that is not easily cleaned, they cover it up with a plate, in order for the others who might see it not to be disgusted by it. Those, on the contrary, who reinvestigate the rubbish, resemble scavengers.

An honest and straightforward person is neither he who speaks the truth to your face, nor he who publicizes it, but rather such a one is the person who has love, lives a true life, and speaks with discernment, when he should, saying the right word at the right time. Those who admonish others without discernment are spiritually darkened and hardened and haplessly view people as lifeless logs. And, although they hack at them unmercifully, and the people suffer, they rejoice over the "rectangle" they've made out of their lifeless logs (cubism!).

Those who rush to play the role of the spiritual Father, while still being filled with many spiritual toxins, resemble the unripe, sour quince fruit: no matter how much sugar one adds, sufficient sweetness cannot be produced, or if it is produced, it quickly turns sour. Sweet words and great truths have value when they come out of truthful mouths and find a place within good-intentioned souls and those great people who have pure intellects. The internal purity of the beautiful soul of the true man beautifies his external person as well, and the divine sweetness of God's love sweetens even his countenance. The internal beauty of the soul, apart from spiritually beautifying and sanctifying man externally, with Divine Grace revealing him to others, also beautifies and sanctifies the ugly clothes the graced man of God wears.

Of greater worth is the blessed man who has changed internally and been sanctified also externally, than those who continually change externally (their clothes) but internally maintain the old man with his "antiquated" sins. Of greater value is one word of a humble man, who has spiritual experience, coming with pain from the bottom of his heart, than a whole array of learned words from a superficial man, coming with great speed from his learned tongue. His tongue does not enlighten souls for it is fleshly and not that fiery tongue of Holy Pentecost.



Indivisible division is also at the very core of the mystery of the Divine Eucharist as well. After all, what is the prayer that the Bishop (or Presbyter) reads after the consecration of the Precious Gifts? Don't they say, *broken is the bread of life, which being broken yet is not divided, being ever eaten, never is consumed*. But what does that mean? Since Christ's human nature also shares in the New Testament mystery of God's presence, Christ's human nature is now the means by which God is present in our midst and manifests Himself to us. Now even His human nature is *indivisibly divided among individual creatures*.

In the same way, we know from the experience of *theosis* that one simple energy of God *is indivisibly divided among individual creatures*. We also know that the Incarnation is the source for what takes place during the Divine Eucharist. After the Lord's Resurrection, we no longer know Christ according to the flesh—we only know the glorified Christ or Christ in His glory. But this does not mean that Christ does not have flesh. Christ does have flesh and a complete human nature, which now after His Ascension has been glorified.

Now when we commune of the Lord's Body and Blood, we do not receive only a piece of Christ Who is then within us, but each communicant receives Christ in His entirety. But this does not mean that there are many Christs. There is only one Christ and He dwells in His entirety within every believer who has communed of the Immaculate Mysteries. When the priest cuts into pieces the Lamb on the holy paten/diskos, Christ is not cut into pieces. He *is multiplied without being multiplied among many*. In other words, Christ in His entirety is in every pearl or in each piece of Divine Bread. This is the mystery of God's presence to man.

Now this same mystery was also at work before Christ assumed flesh, when He appeared to the Old Testament prophet. While the Word or the Angel was manifesting Himself to the prophet, He was at that very moment simultaneously present throughout the rest of creation as well. The Angel of God was present with both the prophet and the rest of creation at the same time.

**Protopresbyter John Romanides**  
From "Patristic Theology"

## PATERNAL ADVICE FROM A SAINT'S DEATHBED

By Elder Philotheos Zervakos (+1980), "Autobiography, Homilies and Miracles," *Orthodox Kypseli Publications* (2006), 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 for 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, 1 Jn 5:20).

You must be careful not to depart from our loving God; do not leave Him, but love Him. Our Savior 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 unto 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 with God and makes one 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 come to 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* 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 of 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 contradicting 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.* 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, *Go, I do not know you.*

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. (cf. Gal 5:14-21). 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 labor and pain are the good things achieved.

The Saints did not make it to Paradise easily, but labored and struggled against 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.

Thus, prayer and watchfulness are necessary. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is indeed 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 the following 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 Pet 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 benefitted.

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 Most Holy 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, unbeneficial 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. Nektarios did (and still does) miracles, she was envious and wrote a book against the saint: 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. Nektarios to be a Saint should have the curse of all the Ecumenical Synods, etc. She cursed God and the great saints of our days without thinking about it; God had made them saints because of the humility, the faith, and the love they had.

Be very 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 must 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.



#### EXCERPTS FROM OUR LITURGICAL TRADITION [REFERENCING THE TOLL HOUSE]

*Noetic roaring lions have surrounded me, seeking to carry me away and bitterly torment me. Do thou crush their teeth and jaws, O pure One, and save me.* (Ode 3, Troparion 2).

*Behold, terror has come to meet me, O Sovereign Lady, and I am afraid of it. Behold, a great struggle awaits me, in which be thou unto me a helper, O Hope of my salvation.* (Ode 4, "Both Now").

*They that shall lead me hence have come, holding me on every side. But my soul shrinks back and is afraid, full of great rebelliousness, which do thou comfort, O pure One, by thine appearance.* (Ode 7, "Glory").

*O thou that gavest birth to the Lord Almighty, when I come to die, do thou banish from me the commander of the bitter toll-gatherers and ruler of the earth, that I may glorify thee unto the ages, O holy Theotokos.* (Ode 8, Troparion 3).

And from a canon at the departing of the soul from the body, for those who have suffered a long time, by St. Andrew of Crete:

*Come all you that have gathered together, who have lived your lives in piety, and lament the soul bereft of the glory of God, for shameful demons are striving to enslave it.* (Ode 1, Troparion 1).

*Behold, a multitude of evil spirits are standing about, holding the handwriting of my sins, and they cry out exceedingly, shamelessly seeking my lowly soul.* (Ode 1, "Glory").

*Sovereign Lady! O Sovereign Lady! Have mercy now on my perplexed soul looking to thy protection only, and do not disdain me, O Good One, who am being given over to demons.* (Ode 4, "Both now").

*Have mercy on me, O all-holy Angels of God Almighty, and deliver me from all the evil toll-collectors, for I have no good deeds to balance my evil deeds.* (Ode 7, Troparion 2).

**St. Tikhon's "The Book of Needs"**

## Ἡ Ἐωσφορική Ὑπερηφάνεια τοῦ Παπισμοῦ

Τοῦ πρωτοπρεσβυτέρου π. Διονυσίου Τάτση, Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος, 31/7/2015.

Συνήθως μιλάμε γιὰ τὸν ἐγωισμό καὶ τὴν ὑπερηφάνεια ἑνὸς προσώπου καὶ δυσανασχετοῦμε, γιὰτὶ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ ἐπικοινωνήσουμε μαζί του. Πρόκειται γιὰ ἄνθρωπο πὸν ὄλα τὰ «γνωρίζει», ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄλα τὰ στηρίζει στὸν ἑαυτὸν του. Σὲ κανένα δὲν ἀναγνωρίζει κάτι ἀνώτερο πὸν νὰ μὴ τὸ ἔχει ὁ ἴδιος. Εἶναι πάντα ἐπικριτικός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαιτητικός ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους νὰ τὸν δέχονται καὶ νὰ τὸν ἐπαινοῦν.

Δυὸ ὑπερήφανοι δὲν μποροῦν νὰ συνεργαστοῦν οὔτε νὰ συνυπάρξουν, γιὰτὶ ὁ καθένας ἐπιμένει στὴ γνώμη του καὶ ὅταν ἀκόμα εἶναι ὀφθαλμοφανῶς ἐσφαλμένη. Ἐπίσης ὁ ὑπερήφανος εἶναι φιλόδοξος καὶ φθονερός. Θέλει μόνο αὐτὸς νὰ δοξάζεται καὶ ὄλους τοὺς ἄλλους πὸν ἔχουν προσόντα, ἱκανότητες καὶ ἐπιτυχίες τοὺς φθονεῖ. Καὶ αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μυστικὸ του μαρτύριο. Διέπεται ἀκόμα ἀπὸ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀνατροπῆς καὶ τοῦ νεωτερισμοῦ.

Ἡ ἔωσφορική ὑπερηφάνεια, ὅταν μπεῖ στὸ χῶρο τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, νοθεύει τὴ διδασκαλία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ὀδηγεῖ στὴν αἵρεση. Αὐτὸ συνέβη πολλές φορές ἀνὰ τοὺς αἰῶνες. Τὸ πιὸ ὁμως χτυπητὸ παράδειγμα ὑπῆρξε ὁ παπισμός, ὁ ὁποῖος ἔχει αἰχμαλωτίσει ἑκατομμύρια Χριστιανῶν στὸ ἔρεβος τῆς αἵρεσης. Ὁ Πάπας ἔγινε ὁ μεγάλος αἰρετικός, ὁ ὁποῖος συνεχίζει νὰ ἀπομακρύνεται ἀπὸ τὸ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, γιὰτὶ συνεχῶς ἐπινοεῖ νέες αἱρέσεις, προκειμένου νὰ στηρίξει... τίς παλιές, πὸν στίς μέρες μας ἀμφισβητοῦνται καὶ ἀπὸ πολλοὺς παπικούς.

Ὁ Φώτης Κόντογλου, πὸν ἀγαποῦσε τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ πικραίνονταν ἀπὸ τὴ δράση τῶν αἰρετικῶν, ἔλεγε γιὰ τὸν παπισμὸ ὅτι «ἔχει ἔωσφορικήν ὑπερηφάνεια, ἡ ὁποία ἐκδηλώνεται εἰς κάθε περίστασιν. Ἀπὸ αὐτὴν καὶ μόνην ἐάν κριθῆ, ἀποδεικνύεται ὅτι δὲν ἔχει σχέσιν μὲ τὸν Χριστιανισμόν, τοῦ ὁποῖου τὸ θεμέλιον εἶναι ἡ ταπείνωσις: Πρωτεῖα, ἀλάθητα, καισαρισμοί, πλοῦτη ὑλικά, ἐμφανίσεις αὐτοκρατορικά, ὄλα τὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ τοῦ παπισμοῦ εἶναι ἀνάποδα ἀπὸ ὅσα δίδαξε καὶ ἔκαμεν ὁ Χριστός, πὸν εἶπε: *Εἴ τις θέλει πρῶτος εἶναι, ἔσται πάντων ἔσχατος καὶ πάντων διάκονος.*» (Μάρκ. 9:35).

Καὶ διερωτᾶται: «Πῶς εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ παρουσιάζεται ἡ ἔωσφορική ἀλαζονεία, ὡς ὀδηγὸς τῶν Χριστιανῶν; Τί ἄλλο χρειάζεται, διὰ νὰ ἐξηγηθοῦν ὄλοι οἱ νεωτερισμοὶ καὶ αἱ ἀντιχριστιανικαὶ καινοτομίαι, εἰς τὰς ὁποίας προέβη κατὰ καιροὺς ὁ παπισμός; Ὁ ἅγιος Ἐφραίμ ὁ Σύρος λέγει: *Ἡ ὑπερηφάνεια ἀναγκάζει ἐπινοεῖν καινοτομίας, μὴ*

*ἀνεχόμενη τὸ ἀρχαῖον.*» («Τι εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ τι εἶναι ὁ Παπισμός», 1992, σελ. 9-10).

Παρόλα αὐτὰ ὅμως, τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ ἰδιαίτερα ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος, μιλάει γιὰ τὴν «ἐκκλησία» τοῦ Πάπα, τὸν ὁποῖο ἀποκαλεῖ ἀγιώτατο καὶ πεφιλημένο ἀδελφὸ του. Δὲν τὸν θεωρεῖ αἰρετικό, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ συναντᾶται συχνὰ καὶ συμπροσεύχεται καὶ συνευφραίνεται. Τὸ θέμα εἶναι σοβαρότατο καὶ προκαλεῖ ἀνησυχία στοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους, οἱ ὁποῖοι βλέπουν τὸν οἰκουμενισμό νὰ διαβρώνει συνειδήσεις καὶ σὲ λίγο θὰ μιλάμε γιὰ ἔνωση τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν» καὶ κοινὸ ποτήριο, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχουν ἐγκαταλειφθεῖ ἀπὸ τοὺς αἰρετικούς τὰ ἔωσφορικά τους δόγματα.

Εἶναι καθήκον τῶν Χριστιανῶν νὰ διαφωνοῦν δημοσίως μὲ τοὺς οἰκουμενιστὲς καὶ νὰ ὑπερασπίζονται τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία. Ἀλίμονο ἂν τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦμε λόγω κακῶς νοοῦμένου σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἑλλάδι ψοφοδεεῖς μητροπολίτες, οἱ ὁποῖοι «διαφωνοῦν συμφωνοῦντες», δηλαδὴ μεταξὺ τους διαφωνοῦν, ἀλλὰ δημοσίως συμφωνοῦν μὲ τὸν μεγάλο ποιμένα καὶ δεσπότη, τὸν Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριάρχη! Αὐτὴ τὴν ἀξιοκατάκριτη τακτικὴ θὰ μπορούσαμε νὰ τὴ χαρακτηρίσουμε μὲ μιὰ παραβολικὴ φράση: **«Ἡ μεταμόρφωση τοῦ λιονταριοῦ σὲ βάτραχο!»**.

Ὑπάρχουν ὅμως καὶ μητροπολίτες μὲ παρρησία, πὸν λένε τὰ πράγματα μὲ τὸ ὄνομά τους καὶ σ' αὐτοὺς πρέπει νὰ ἔχουμε ἐμπιστοσύνη. Ἔχουμε ἀκόμα καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα τῶν συγχρόνων γερόντων, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἦταν ἀντιοικουμενιστὲς καὶ ἀντιπαπικοί.



**Κ**αὶ πρέπει ἡμεῖς οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι νὰ παραιτηθῶμεν παντὸς διαλόγου πρὸς αἰρετικούς, κατὰ τὴν ὀρθὴν συμβουλὴν τοῦ Θεορρήμονος Ἀποστόλου Παύλου, **«Αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ πρώτην καὶ δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ, εἰδὼς ὅτι ἐξήστραπτεν ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀμαρτάνων ὧν αὐτοκατάκριτος...»**.

Πρὸς τί λοιπὸν ἡ τόση προθυμία πρὸς μεταβάσιν εἰς Ρώμην, πρὸς τί ἡ ἐπίμονος ἐκζήτησις ὑφ' ἡμῶν διάλογον; Πρὸς τί τόσον ἡ κακοπαθοῦσα καὶ παραποιομένη κατὰ Θεὸν ἀγάπη; Δὲν μᾶς σωφρονίζουν τὰ παθήματα τῆς Φερράρας καὶ τῆς Φλωρεντίας; Δὲν ἐλάβομεν εἰσέτι πείραν τῆς Λατινικῆς στρεψοδικίας καὶ τῆς ὑπερηφανείας; Δὲν διεκρίναμεν τὰ ὄρια μεταξὺ ἀληθείας καὶ ὑποκρισίας ἐν τῇ πίστει;

**Γέροντος Γαβριὴλ Διονυσιάτη (+1983)**

## Ἡ Παναγία, τὸ Λάδι καὶ τὸ Ψωμί [Μία ἀληθινὴ ἱστορία]

Γιάννη Πρόφη, λαογράφου-συγγραφέα.



**Ἡ** κυρα-Μαρία, ἡ «Καραβίδαίνα», νεωκόρος, «κλησάρισσα» στὴν ἐνορία τῆς «Παναγίας τοῦ Κουρσαλά» στὸ Κορωπί, μπῆκε στὴν παγωμένη ἐκκλησιὰ ἐκεῖνο τὸ βροχερὸ χειμωνιάτικο ἀπόγευμα τῆς Κατοχῆς. Ἡ ἐκκλησιὰ ἦταν σκοτεινὴ καὶ ἔρημη. Τὸ λιγοστὸ φῶς ποὺ ἔμπαινε ἀπὸ τὰ πλαϊνὰ παράθυρα

δὲν ἦταν ἀρκετὸ γιὰ νὰ φωτίσει τὸ μέσα μέρος τῆς, στὴ μεριά τοῦ τέμπλου. Οὔτε καντήλι οὔτε κερὶ ὑπῆρχε ἀναμμένο. Ποῦ νὰ βρεθεῖ λάδι; Εἶχε περάσει σχεδὸν μία βδομάδα καὶ τὰ καντήλια ἦταν ὅλα σβηστά. Κι ἡ ἴδια ἡ κλησάρισσα, χήρα γυναῖκα, ἦταν νηστικιὰ ἐδῶ καὶ τρεῖς μέρες. Δὲν εἶχε λίγο ψωμί νὰ βάλει στὸ στόμα τῆς, οὔτε ξεροκόμματο.

Καμμιά δουλειὰ δὲν εἶχε νὰ κάνει στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἀπόγευμα ἡ κυρα-Μαρία. Τὶς δουλειὲς τὶς εἶχε κάνει ὅλες ἀπὸ τὸ πρωί. Στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ μπῆκε μόνο καὶ μόνο γιὰ νὰ κάνει παρέα στὴ φιλενάδα τῆς, τὴν Παναγία τοῦ τέμπλου, καὶ νὰ κλάψει τὸν πόνο τῆς. Πῆγε ἓνα σκαμνί, κάθισε μπροστὰ ἀπὸ τὴν εἰκόνα καὶ βυθίστηκε στὶς σκέψεις τῆς. Ἡ εἰκόνα ἦταν σκοτεινὴ, μόνο ἓνα ἀντιφέγγισμα στὸ ἀσημένιο τῆς φωτοστέφανο φαινόταν. Κι ἄλλες φορὲς εἶχε καθίσει ἔτσι κοντὰ στὴν Παναγία, ἀλλὰ τότε ἡ εἰκόνα ἦταν φλύαρη, τῆς μιλοῦσε καὶ τῆς ἔλεγε πολλά.

Σήμερα ὅμως ἦταν ἐντελῶς σιωπηλὴ καὶ ἀμίλητη. Ἡ κυρα-Μαρία κατάλαβε: Ἡ Παναγία ἦταν στενοχωρημένη, γιατί... τὸ καντήλι τῆς ἦταν σβηστό. Σηκώθηκε ἀπὸ τὸ σκαμνί καὶ γονάτισε μπροστὰ Τῆς. Σὰ βρῦση τρέξαν ἀπὸ τὰ μάτια τῆς τὰ δάκρυα.

— Ἄχ, Παναγιά μου Ἀσημένια [Ἀρβανίτικα: *Shërmëri ergjënde*= Παναγία Ἀσημένια], ψιθύρισε, κἄνε τὸ θάμα σου! Στείλε μου λίγο λάδι νὰ σ' ἀνάψω τὸ καντήλι σου, γιατί κι ἐγὼ δὲν μπορῶ νὰ σὲ βλέπω νᾶσαι μέσα στὸ σκοτάδι. Μοῦ μαυρίζε ἡ καρδιά μου. Ὅσο γιὰ μένα, ἓνα μικρὸ κομματάκι ψωμί μοῦ φτάνει. Ἐσὺ ὅλα τὰ μπορεῖς, κἄνε τὸ θάμα σου!

Ἐδῶ ἡ κυρα-Μαρία τελείωσε τὴν προσευχὴ τῆς, σηκώθηκε ὄρθια, σκούπισε τὰ δάκρυά τῆς καὶ περιμένε ἀπόκριση. Περιμένε, περιμένε, ἀλλὰ τίποτα, ἄκρα σιωπὴ, οὔτε ἓνας ψίθυρος δὲν ἀκούστηκε ἀπὸ

τὴν εἰκόνα. Ἀπελπίστηκε ἡ κυρα-Μαρία. Ἐπίασε τὸ κεφάλι τῆς ἀνάμεσα στὶς παλάμες τῆς καὶ θρήνησε:

— Ἄχ, Παναγιά μου Ἀσημένια, ξανάπε, μόνι! Πῶς καταντήσαμε ἔτσι ἐμεῖς οἱ δύο; Ἐσὺ χωρὶς λάδι κι ἐγὼ χωρὶς ψωμί [Ἀρβανίτικα: *Ti ra val edhe u ra bukë*= Ἐσὺ χωρὶς λάδι κι ἐγὼ χωρὶς ψωμί].

Πῆγε καὶ ξανακάθισε στὸ σκαμνί καὶ περιμένε μὴπως ἀκούσει κάτι.

Κι ὅσο περνοῦσε ἡ ὥρα τόσο τὴν ἔπνιγε ἡ ἀπελπισία. «Δὲν μπορεῖ, κάτι θὰ γίνεῖ», σκέφτηκε σὲ μία στιγμή, γιὰ νὰ παρηγορήσει τὸν ἑαυτὸ τῆς. Καὶ νά, μέσα σ' αὐτὴ τὴ σιωπὴ, κάτι τῆς φάνηκε ὅτι ἀκουσε, σὰν κάποιος νὰ γύρισε τὸ χερουλί τῆς πόρτας. Ἀλλὰ ὁ ἦχος ἦταν τόσο ἐλαφρὺς καὶ σιγανός, ποὺ νόμισε ὅτι τ' αὐτὴ τῆς τὴν ξεγέλασε. Δὲν ἔδωσε σημασία καὶ παραδόθηκε καὶ πάλι στὶς μαῦρες σκέψεις τῆς. Ὅμως τώρα τῆς φάνηκε πῶς ἀκουσε μέσα στὴν ἐκκλησιὰ ἀνάλαφρα βήματα, σιγανὰ καὶ ἤρεμα, ποῦρχονταν πρὸς τὸ μέρος τῆς. Γύρισε καὶ κοίταξε πίσω τῆς. Εἶδε μία σκοτεινὴ γυναικεία μορφή μὲ μαντήλι στὸ κεφάλι. Τρόμαξε λίγο, μὰ ἀμέσως μπόρεσε νὰ ξεχωρίσει στὸ πρόσωπο τῆς γυναίκας ἓνα μικρὸ χαμόγελο καὶ ἡσύχασε. «Κάποια γνωστὴ θᾶναι», σκέφτηκε κι ἀμέσως ρώτησε:

— Ποιὰ εἶσαι, θέλεις τίποτα; Ἡ ἀπόκριση ἦρθε ἀμέσως:

— Ἡ Κοῦλα εἶμαι, Μαρία μου... Ἡ Κοῦλα τοῦ Ἡλία τοῦ Πρόφη. Εἶναι σκοτάδι ἐδῶ μέσα, γι' αὐτὸ δὲν μὲ γνώρισες.

— Ἄ, ἡ Κοῦλα εἶσαι; Καλῶς τηνε...», τῆς εἶπε ἡ κλησάρισσα καὶ συνέχισε:

— Καὶ πῶς ἦρθες τέτοια ὥρα ἐδῶ, μόνι Κοῦλα; Ἀπόψε δὲν ἔχουμε Λειτουργία.

— Τὸ ξέρω, ἀλλὰ ἦρθα νὰ σοῦ φέρω αὐτά, εἶπε ἡ γυναῖκα κι ἀμέσως ξεκρέμασε ἓνα μικρὸ ταγάρι ποῦχε στὸν ὦμο τῆς καὶ τῷδωσε στὴν κλησάρισσα.

— Καὶ τί 'ναι αὐτὰ ποὺ ἔφερες; Ξαναρώτησε αὐτὴ μὲ λαχτάρα, καὶ τὸ μυαλό τῆς πῆγε στὸ λάδι καὶ στὸ ψωμί.

— Σ' ἔφερα ἓνα μικρὸ μπουκάλι μὲ λάδι καὶ μισὸ καρβέλι ψωμί, ἀπ' αὐτὸ ποὺ ἔψησα σήμερα στὸ φούρνο, ἀπάντησε ἡ Κοῦλα.

— Καὶ πῶς σηκώθηκες νᾶρθεις ἐδῶ, μόνι Κοῦλα, μὲ τέτοιο νερόχιονο ποὺ ρίχνει ἔξω; Ρώτησε αὐτὴ παίρνοντας στὰ χέρια τῆς τὸ ταγάρι.

Ἡ Κοῦλα κάθησε καὶ σκέφτηκε, δὲν εἶχε ἔτοιμη ἀπάντηση νὰ δώσει, ἀλλὰ στὸ τέλος τῆ βροῆς:

— Δὲν ξέρω, ἀλλὰ νά, ἐκεῖ ποὺ καθόμουνα στὸ τζάκι μόνι μου, σὰν κάποιος νὰ μὲ ἔσπρωξε καὶ νὰ μοῦ 'πε: «Σήκω καὶ πήγαινε στὴν Παναγία, νὰ δώσεις λάδι καὶ ψωμί στὴ Μαρία τὴν κλησάρισσα.» Γι' αὐτὸ σοῦ τὰ ἔφερα.

Ἀκούγοντας αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ἡ κυρα-Μαρία ταραχτήκε. Τὰ μάτια της πλημμύρισαν καὶ πάλι μὲ δάκρυα. Πῆγε μπροστὰ στὴν εἰκόνα κι ἔκανε ἀμέτρητα σταυροκοπήματα. Κι εὐχαριστοῦσε τὴν Παναγία μὲ λόγια ποὺ δὲν μπορούσε νὰ καταλάβει κανεῖς. Κι ὅταν τελείωσε, γύρισε καὶ εἶπε στὴν Κοῦλα:

—Ἐγὼ ξέρω, μοὶ Κοῦλα, ποιὸς σ' ἔστειλε. Νά, αὐτὴ ἡ Παναγία, ἡ Ἀσημένια, σ' ἔστειλε. Τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ἐσὺ καθόσουνα στὸ τζάκι, ἐγὼ ἔκανα προσευχὲς καὶ τῆς ζητοῦσα νὰ κάνει τὸ θάμα Της, νὰ στείλει λίγο λάδι ν' ἀνάψω τὸ καντήλι Της καὶ μία μπουκιὰ ψωμὶ γιὰ νὰ φάω κι ἐγώ... Καὶ νὰ ποὺ ἔκανε τὸ θάμα! Ἔστειλε ἐσένα νὰ τὰ φέρεις... Σ' εὐχαριστῶ, Παναγία μου, καὶ σένα Κοῦλα μου!

Ἡ Κοῦλα δάκρυσε τώρα ἀπὸ χαρὰ. Δὲν τολμοῦσε οὔτε νὰ τὸ φανταστῆ πὼς ἡ Παναγία τὴν εἶχε διαλέξει νὰ ἐκτελέσει τὴν ἐπιθυμία Της. Ἦτανε πολὺ μεγάλη αὐτὴ ἡ τιμὴ ποὺ τῆς ἔκανε. Πῆγε καὶ γονάτισε μπροστὰ στὴν εἰκόνα καὶ μὲ τὴ μελωδική της φωνὴ ἔψαλε ταπεινὰ μία προσευχή:

—Τὴν πᾶσαν ἐλπίδα μου εἰς σὲ ἀνατίθημι...

—Ἔλα τώρα ν' ἀνάψουμε τὸ καντήλι της, ἀλλὰ δὲν ξέρω ἂν ἔχουμε σπύρτα, εἶπε τώρα ἡ κλησάρισσα στὴν Κοῦλα.

—Φέρε ἐσὺ τὸ καντήλι καὶ σπύρτα ἔχω ἐγὼ μαζί μου, ἀπάντησε αὐτή.

Ἔβαλε ἡ κυρὰ Μαρία τὸ σκαμνὶ κάτω ἀπὸ τὴν καντήλα, ἀνέβηκε πάνω καὶ κατέβασε τὸ ποτήρι τοῦ καντηλιοῦ. Ἡ Κοῦλα τὸ γέμισε μὲ λάδι. Βάλανε καινούργιο λουμίνι, τὸ ἀνάψανε καὶ ἡ κυρα-Μαρία ἀνέβηκε καὶ πάλι πάνω στὸ σκαμνὶ καὶ ξανάβαλε τὸ ποτήρι στὴ θέση του. Ἀνάψανε μετὰ καὶ τὸ καντήλι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, δεξιὰ ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁραία Πύλη. Ἡ ἐκκλησιὰ φωτίστηκε ὁλόκληρη. Ποτὲ ἄλλοτε δὲν τὴν εἶχανε δεῖ τόσο φωτισμένη. Ἡ Παναγία στὴν εἰκόνα τῆς φαινότανε τώρα εὐχαριστημένη. Στὰ χεῖλη της διακρίνανε ἓνα μικρὸ χαμόγελο. Ἡ ἐκκλησιὰ ζεστάθηκε ἀπότομα κι ἡ παγωνιά κι ἡ θλίψη ἔξαφανίστηκαν. Οἱ δύο γυναῖκες γονάτισαν τώρα μαζί μπροστὰ στὴν Παναγία καὶ ψιθύριζαν προσευχὲς. Ἔψαλαν στὸ τέλος, «*Τὴν τιμιωτέραν τῶν Χερουβείμ καὶ ἐνδοξοτέραν ἀσυγκρίτως τῶν Σεραφείμ*». Σηκώθηκαν μετὰ ὄρθιες, φίλησαν τὶς εἰκόνες τοῦ τέμπλου καὶ στάθηκαν ἀρκετὴ ὥρα νὰ τὶς κοιτάζουν.

—Τώρα ἂς πηγαίνουμε», εἶπε σὲ κάποια στιγμή ἡ κυρα-Μαρία.

Κάνανε γιὰ τελευταία φορὰ τὸ σταυρὸ τους, προχώρησαν μαζί πρὸς τὰ ἔξω κι ἔκλεισαν τὴν πόρτα τῆς ἐκκλησιᾶς. Τώρα ἔξω εἶχε σκοτεινιάσει ἐντελῶς. Χαιρετηθήκανε, φιληθήκανε κι ἡ κάθε μία ἐτοιμάστηκε ν' ἀναχωρήσει γιὰ τὸ σπίτι της.

—Νᾶσαι καλά, μοὶ Κοῦλα, ποὺ ἦρθες, γιατί πῆρες ἀπὸ πάνω μου μεγάλη σταναχώρια. Ἀπόψε θὰ κοιμηθῶ ἡσυχῃ, εἶπε ἡ κλησάρισσα.

—Δὲν ἔκανα καὶ τίποτα σπουδαῖο, ἀλλὰ θέλω καὶ σὲ παρακαλῶ νὰ μὴν πεῖς σὲ κανένα τίποτα, ἀπάντησε ἡ ἄλλη φεύγοντας.

—Ἐννοια σου καὶ δὲν θὰ τὸ πῶ, τὴν καθησύχασε ἡ κυρα-Μαρία.

Ἡ κλησάρισσα δὲν κράτησε τὸν λόγο της. Κάποτε διηγήθηκε αὐτὸ ποὺ συνέβη στὴ θεῖσα Ἑλένη τοῦ Λουκά τοῦ Πρόφη. Κι ἐκείνη τὸ εἶπε στὶς κόρες της. Κι οἱ κόρες της μᾶς τὸ διηγήθηκαν ὅταν ἔγινε τὸ μνημόσυνο τῆς μαμᾶς, σαράντα μέρες μετὰ τὸν θάνατό της καὶ πενήντα χρόνια μετὰ τὸ γεγονός. Καὶ τότε, ὅλοι τότε νιώσαμε νὰ γεμίζει ὁ ἀέρας γύρω μας μὲ μίαν «*ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας πνευματικῆς*».



Ἡ συνειδησις, ὦ ἡ συνειδησις! Ἀκούγεται μέσα στὸ σκοτάδι ποὺ καλύπτει τὴ γῆ, ἀκούγεται σὰν τὸ λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ τὴ νύχτα τῆς Μεγάλης Πέμπτης.

Ἔτυχε ποτὲ νὰ κοιμηθῆτε σὲ ἓνα ἐξοχικὸ μέρος, ὅπου τὴ νύχτα ἐπικρατεῖ ἡσυχία; Πόσο καθαρὰ ἀκούγεται τὸ λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ! Ἀλλὰ ὅταν ἐκεῖ φυσήξει ἄγριος ἄνεμος καὶ τὰ κλαδιὰ τῶν δέντρων σείωνται καὶ γίνεται θόρυβος μεγάλος, τότε τὸ λάλημα τοῦ πετεινοῦ πνίγεται καὶ δὲν ἀκούγεται. Ἔτσι συμβαίνει καὶ μὲ τὴ συνειδησις. Πάντοτε λαλεῖ. Ἀλλὰ ὅταν τὰ πάθη ξεσηκώνονται σὰν θύελλες καὶ καταιγίδες καὶ δημιουργοῦν τεράστιο θόρυβο μέσα στὸ ψυχικὸ μας κόσμο, τότε ἡ φωνὴ τῆς συνειδήσεως πνίγεται καὶ δὲν ἀκούγεται.

Ἀλλὰ μία μέρα ὅπωςδήποτε θ' ἀκουστῆ. Μακάρι ν' ἀκουστῆ. Σ' αὐτὸ τὸν κόσμο. Γιατί ἄλλιῶς θ' ἀκουστῆ στὸν ἄλλο κόσμο. Καὶ τότε τὸ «κατηγορῶ» τῆς συνειδήσεως θάνατι ἀδιάκοπο καὶ ἀνυπόφορο. Θάνατι αἰώνια κόλασις. Ὅπως λέει ὁ ἱερός Χρυσόστομος, καλύτερα νὰ σὲ κεντήση σκορπιός, παρὰ νὰ σὲ κεντήση ἡ συνειδησις.

Ἀπὸ τὸ φυλλάδιον «*Σταχυολογήματα τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Ἀὐγουστίνου Καντιώτου*», Ἐκδόσεις «*Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη*»

## Ένας Κόσμος Άχαρις, Κατάλληλος Μόνο για ...Άγίους και ...Ευνούχους!

Γράφει ο Σάββας Ηλιάδης, Δάσκαλος, Κιλκίς, 19-6-2019.

Έναν παραλογισμό ζει σήμερα ο άνθρωπος. Έναν άκραίο παραλογισμό, ο οποίος μοιάζει να είναι κληρονομιά από τον δαιμονισμένο του Ευαγγελίου. Έκείνον τον Γαδαρηνό, που δεν έμενε σε σπίτι, που τον έδεναν με τις άλυσίδες, αλλά τις έκοβε και έτρεχε γυμνός στις έρημιές και στα μνήματα. Εκείνον που ήταν ο φόβος και ο τρόμος των συγχωριανών του. Μέχρι που τον θεράπευσε ο Χριστός και κάθισε δίπλα του «*ίματισμένος και σωφρονών*».

Κύριο χαρακτηριστικό αυτού του παραλογισμού είναι η φοβερή αντιφατικότητα, η οποία έχει πηγή και αίτια το γυναικείο φύλο, τη γυναίκα. Και μάλιστα τη γύμνια της, το ...καμάρι της! Διότι, όταν μιλάμε για ντύσιμο, έννοούμε το ντύσιμο—μάλλον το ξεγύμνωμα!—της γυναίκας. Ένα φαινόμενο, το οποίο κατέκτησε όλες τις ηλικίες των γυναικών. Όλες τις κατηγορίες. Αρχίζοντας από αυτές που «έχουν ήθικες άρχες και δεν τις παραβαίνουν με τίποτε», μέχρι τις προοδευτικές, τις ελεύθερες, των «έλευθέρων ήθων», όπως τις έλεγαν κάποτε.

Και λοιπόν δεν συμβαίνει τίποτε. Δεν πειράζει... Πότε θα τα φορέσει αυτά, σου λέει; Άς τα φορέσει τώρα που... είναι μικρή, νέα, να τα χαρεί. Έτσι λένε, όταν τις ρωτήσει κάποιος τις μητέρες ή τις γιαγιάδες, αφού βέβαια και αυτές είναι, κατά πάσα πιθανότητα, παρομοίως ένδεδυμένες. Αυτή είναι η απάντηση.

Καθμένες μου, όταν θα μεγαλώσει με αυτή την συνήθεια, τότε θα τρέχετε και δεν θα συμμαζεύεται! Τα πάθη λειτουργούν άμφίδρομα και στα δύο μέρη της ύπαρξης! Και θροιάζουν και ριζώνουν και τρέφονται και αναπτύσσονται και δεν ξεριζώνονται εύκολα πιά! Σώμα και ψυχή είναι άλληλοεξαρτώμενα!

Το πιό όδυνηρό όμως είναι πως η απάντηση αυτή ακούγεται και από στόματα γυναικών που έχουν σχέση με την πίστη. Που εκκλησιάζονται, εξομολογούνται, κοινωνούν. Αναρωτιέται κανείς: Άγνοούν πως αυτό δεν είναι άπλως θέμα ήθικό αλλά σωτηριολογικό; Δεν συναισθάνονται τη σοβαρότητα του πράγματος; Την καταστροφική δύναμη της άσεβους αυτής συμπεριφοράς; Δεν ξέρουν πως σκοπός της ζωής είναι ο άγιασμός του ανθρώπου; Δεν ξέρουν πως ο άνθρωπος είναι πλάσμα σύνθετο; Πως έχει ψυχή και σώμα και πως δεν μπορεί να αγιάσει μόνο το ένα μέρος της ύπαρξής του; Πως αγιάζουν όμοιο σώμα και ψυχή. Τέλος πάντων, δεν τους τα λένε οι πνευματικοί τους ή κάνουν άνυπακοή και μένουν στο θέλημά τους;

Και ποιά η θέση του άνδρα απέναντι σ' αυτήν την κατάσταση; Ποιά θα μπορούσε να είναι; Στέκονται

ως άπλοι κομπάρσοι στο έργο. Δεν είναι δυνατόν να συμφωνούν όλοι μ' αυτήν την κατάσταση, αλλά αφού την έχουν στα χέρια τους οι γυναίκες, δυστυχώς, δεν έχουν και πολλά περιθώρια να σταθούν γενναίως. Πρώτα να τις έμποδίσουν ως συζύγους ή ως θυγατέρες ή ως συγγενείς. Άλλα και να προστατέψουν τους έαυτούς τους από τον πειρασμό.

Πως και από που να φυλαχτεί ο άνδρας από έναν τέτοιο δαιμονικό πειρασμό, από ένα σκάνδαλο «παντοκρατορικό»; Ούτε στην προπρωτική παραδείσια κατάσταση ζούμε ούτε την αγιότητα βιώνουμε! Άλλα και ο ευνουχισμός είναι άδύνατος. Είναι παραλογισμός, έγκλημα, φυγομαχία και φοβερή άμαρτία. Άλλά, παρεμπιπτόντως, όλη αυτή η κατάσταση που οδηγεί τάχα; Μήπως δεν έχουν ευνουχιστεί οι νέοι ήδη, αφού η γυναίκα κατέστη άνεραστη; Έγινε προκλητική μεν και έλκυστική σαρκικά, όχι όμως ψυχικά. Έχασε την φυσική χάρη του θήλεος. Την ντροπαλότητα, την αιδώ, τη συστολή, τη σεμνότητα, πράγματα που την καθιστούν όντως πλάσμα θηλυκό και έράσιμο. Και δεν πείθει. Κατά συνέπεια, έχασε και ο άνδρας εκείνο το ξεχωριστό, το γλυκό, το όνειρώδες, το πλήρες αισιοδοξίας ένδιαφέρον για το άλλο φύλο.

Βέβαια, η φυγή μακριά από τη «φωτιά» και η φυλακή των αισθήσεων είναι η μία λύση, αλλά όχι πάντοτε έφικτή. «*Εγώ δε λέγω υμίν ότι πās ό βλέπων γυναίκα προς τον έπιθυμῆσαι αυτήν ἤδη εμοίχευσε αυτήν εν τη καρδιά αυτού.*» (Ματθ. 5,28), λέει ο Χριστός. «*Φεύγετε την πορνείαν*», λέει ο άπόστολος Παύλος. Όμως, η συχνή συνάντηση και συνεργασία άνδρων και γυναικών στους χώρους έργασίας, οι κοινωνικές υποχρεώσεις σε διάφορους χώρους, σε συνδυασμό με την έλευθεριότητα και το θλιβερό φαινόμενο άπαξίωσης του θεσμού της οικογένειας από όλους τους οργανωμένους φορείς, από το Κράτος μέχρι τον τελευταίο όλιγομελή Σύλλογο, αφήνουν όρθάνοιχτο το δρόμο για το στραβοπάτημα και την άρχη της καταστροφής. Την άρχη του πόνου, σωματικού και ψυχικού. Της άπόγνωσης και των κατά συνέπεια έπακολουθούντων άπονενομημένων πράξεων.

Πως, λοιπόν, εκθέτουν άναιδώς σε δημόσια θέα τα μέλη του σώματός τους οι γυναίκες, τα όποια ο Θεός δημιούργησε για ιερό σκοπό; Κατ' άρχάς είναι θέμα άξιοπρέπειας. Έσύ, γυναίκα με προσωπικότητα, με σοβαρότητα, με μόρφωση, με έγωισμό, με ύπερηφάνεια, ναί, με ύπερηφάνεια και έγωισμό, πως καταδέχεσαι να ευτελίζεσαι, εκθέτοντας μέρη του έαυτού σου, τα όποια φυλάσσονταν άνέκαθεν ιερώς άποκεκρυμμένα, προσφέροντάς τα ως θέαμα στον όποιοιδήποτε «καλοπροαίρετο» θεατή; Πως «δίνεσαι» στα μάτια του οίουδήποτε; Τα μέλη εκείνα,



τὰ ὅποια εἶναι προορισμένα νὰ συνεργαστοῦν μὲ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ νὰ ἀποδώσουν καρποὺς ἱεροῦς; Τὰ μέλη ἐκεῖνα, τὰ ὅποια εἶναι προορισμένα νὰ τὰ ἀκουμπήσει μέσα στὸ μυστήριο τοῦ γάμου μόνο ἓνα ἄλλο σῶμα, τὸ σῶμα τοῦ συζύγου. Νὰ ἐνωθοῦν καὶ νὰ καρπίσουν εὐλογία; Τὰ μέλη ποῦ θὰ προσφερθοῦν ἀπὸ τὴ μάνα νὰ ἀναθρέψουν ψυχούλες, τοὺς καρποὺς τῆς τεκνογονίας, τὰ εὐλογημένα γεννήματα, τὰ παιδιά; Τόση ἀπαξίωση στὸ σῶμα, ἐνῶ εἶναι ὄργανο ποῦ ἐπιτελεῖ ἅγιο ἔργο!

Ἀλλὰ καὶ ἂν εἶσαι Χριστιανή, πῶς γίνεσαι αἰτία πειρασμοῦ στὸν ἀδελφό σου; Σ' αὐτόν, μὲ τὸν ὅποιο θὰ προσευχηθεῖτε μαζὶ στὸν ναὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ θὰ πᾶτε νὰ κοινωνήσετε ἀπὸ τὸ ἴδιο ἅγιο ποτήριο; Δὲν τοῦ κλείνεις τὸ δρόμο γιὰ τὴν πνευματικὴ του προκοπή; Κι ἂν ἐσὺ λὲς πῶς δὲν ἔχεις πρόβλημα, δὲν σκέφτεσαι τὸν ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφό σου καὶ πηγαίνεις καὶ στέκεσαι μπροστὰ του ἀκόμη καὶ τὴν ὥρα τῆς Θείας Λειτουργίας, φορώντας τὰ ἀρώματά σου καὶ τὰ προκλητικὰ ἐνδύματά σου; Δὲν τὰ σκέφτεσαι αὐτά; Δὲν ξέρεις τί λέει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο: «Ὅς δ' ἂν σκανδαλίση ἓνα τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, συμφέρει αὐτῷ ἵνα κρεμασθῇ μύλος ὄνικος εἰς τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ καταποντισθῇ ἐν τῷ πελάγει τῆς θαλάσσης. Οὐαὶ τῷ κόσμῳ ἀπὸ τῶν σκανδάλων ἀνάγκη γάρ ἐστιν ἔλθειν τὰ σκάνδαλα· πλὴν οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκεῖνῳ δι' οὗ τὸ σκάνδαλον ἔρχεται.» (Ματθ. 18:6-7). Μετάφραση: «Ὅποιος ὅμως σκανδαλίζει καὶ παρασύρει στὴν ἁμαρτία ἓνα ἀπὸ τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ ἀπλοῖκοὺς αὐτοῦς, ποῦ πιστεύουν σὲ μένα, εἶναι προτιμότερο γι' αὐτόν νὰ κρεμαστεῖ στὸν τράχηλό του μυλόπετρα ἀπὸ ἐκεῖνες ποὺ γυρίζει ὁ ὄνος (τὸ γαϊδουρι) στὸν μύλο, καὶ νὰ καταποντιστεῖ στὴν ἀνοικτὴ θάλασσα. Ἀλίμονο στὸν κόσμο ἀπὸ τὰ σκάνδαλα· διότι ἐξαιτίας τῆς διαφθορᾶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, κατ' ἀνάγκη θὰ ἔλθουν σκάνδαλα καὶ πειρασμοί. Ἀλίμονο ὅμως στὸν ἄνθρωπο ἐκεῖνο, ἀπὸ τὸν ὅποιο ἔρχεται τὸ σκάνδαλο».

Ὁ καθένας ἀπὸ τὴ θέση του ὀφείλουμε νὰ τὰ λάβουμε ὑπόψη αὐτὰ καὶ νὰ προσπαθήσουμε μὲ φιλότιμο νὰ τὰ βάλουμε στὴ ζωὴ μας, γιὰ νὰ ἔχουμε προκοπὴ καὶ ἐμεῖς ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσοι στὸ διάβα τῆς ζωῆς μας θὰ βρεθοῦν κοντὰ μας.



**Ἐ**ὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτιάν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἐαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

**Ἰωάν. Α' 1:8**

## «Φοβοῦμαι ὅτι θὰ Δοῦμε στὴ Μητρόπολη τῶν Ἀθηνῶν Ἐνα Καρδινάλιο σὰν Κόκορα...»

Ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης π. Αὐγουστίνου Καντιώτου «Κόρακες τοῦ Οἰκουμενισμοῦ ἐξέλθετε τῆς Κιβωτοῦ», ἔκδοση 2016, σελ. 4.



**Ο** Ὁρθόδοξος λαὸς τῆς Ἀνατολῆς, ἀλλὰ ἰδιαίτερος τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἔγινε στόχος ἀγρίας πρωτοφανοῦς ἐπιθέσεως. Ἐχθροὶ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου

πίστεως ὑλισταί, ἄπιστοι, ἄθεοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἰρετικοὶ παλαιότεροι καὶ νεώτεροι, ποικιλώνυμοι, πτερωτοὶ δράκοντες τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως, βαρεῖς λύκοι καλυπτόμενοι μὲ τὴν δορὰν τοῦ προβάτου ἔχουν ἐπιδράμει στὸν δυστυχημένο μας λαό. Οὐνίται, Παπισταί, Ἐπισκοπιανοί, Πρεσβυτεριανοί, Πεντηκοστιανοί, Ἀβδεντισταί (Σαββατισταί) Πλημμυούθιοι, Χιλιασταί καὶ ὅλα τα εἶδη τῶν αἱρέσεων εὐρίσκονται καὶ δροῦν ἀνάμεσά μας.

Οἱ σκοτεινὲς δυνάμεις ἔχουν βραχυκυκλώσει τὸ ταλαίπωρον Ἔθνος μας καὶ εἶναι σὰν ἀετὸς στὸ κλουβί. Ἐμπρὸς νὰ σπάσουμε τὴν φυλακὴν αὐτὴ καὶ ὁ ἀετὸς νὰ πετάξει πάλι ψηλά, πολὺ ψηλά, μέχρι τ' ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

Μᾶς ἔρχεται στὴν Ἑλλάδα ἐκτός τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν ὁ παπισμὸς. Ὁ παπισμὸς εἶναι θηρίον τῆς Ἀποκαλύψεως. Τί ἐστὶ παπισμὸς; Σύνολο αἱρέσεων. Καὶ φοβοῦμαι δυστυχῶς, ὅτι θὰ δοῦμε στὴ Μητρόπολη [τῶν Ἀθηνῶν]—ἐγὼ δὲν πηγαίνω στὴ Μητρόπολη—θὰ δεῖτε τὴν ἐπίσημη ἐορτὴ τῆς 25<sup>ης</sup> Μαρτίου, μπροστὰ-μπροστὰ, πρῶτον σὰν κόκορα, μὲ τὰ φτερὰ του τὰ κολωτὰ νὰ στέκεται δίπλα στὸν πρωθυπουργό, δὲν ξέρω ποιὸς θὰ εἶναι τότε, ἓνας καρδινάλιος. Ἀπὸ ὥρα σὲ ὥρα ἐτοιμάζουν νὰ μᾶς φέρουν καρδινάλιο, γιὰ νὰ φορέσουμε κουστοῦμι!

Ἡ Ἑλλὰς τοὺς μοιρῖζει χωριατίλα καὶ θέλουν νὰ μᾶς φορέσουν Εὐρωπαϊκὸ κουστοῦμι! Μά, χίλιες φορὲς μὲ φουστάνελα, χωριάτες, μὲ χωριάτικο κουστοῦμι καὶ Ἑλλάδα στὴν καρδιά. Ἐμεῖς θέλουμε νὰ μείνουμε Ἑλληνες καὶ μόνον Ἑλληνες, Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί.

† † †

**Σημ.:** Ἡ ἀνωτέρω φωτογραφία ἐλήφθη τὴν 25<sup>η</sup> Μαρτίου 2017 ἐντός τοῦ Μητροπολιτικοῦ Ναοῦ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν! Δυστυχῶς, ἡ προφητεία τοῦ ἀοιδίου Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης Αὐγουστίνου Καντιώτη ἐκπληρώθηκε ἐπακριβῶς!

## Ἐπιστολή Ἁγίου Παΐσιου τοῦ Ἀθωνίτου κατὰ Οἰκουμενιστῶν καὶ Φιλενωτικῶν

«Άγνωστη ἐπιστολή πόνου κατὰ οἰκουμενιστῶν καὶ φιλενωτικῶν», *I. M. Σταυρονικήτα Ἁγίου Ὁρους 23-1-1969, Θεοδρομία IB3 (Ιούλιος-Σεπτέμβριος 2010), σελ. 420-423. (Ἡ ἐπιστολή αὐτή στάλθηκε πρὸς τὸν Ἀρχιμανδρίτη Χαράλαμπο Βασιλόπουλο, προηγούμενο τότε τῆς Ἱεράς Μονῆς Πετράκη).*

Σεβαστὲ πάτερ Χαράλαμπε:

Ἐπειδὴ βλέπω τὸν μέγαν σάλον ποὺ γίνεται εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν μας, ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν διαφορῶν φιλενωτικῶν κινήσεων καὶ τῶν ἐπαφῶν τοῦ Πατριάρχου μετὰ τοῦ Πάπα, ἐπόνεσα κι ἐγὼ σὰν τέκνον Τῆς καὶ ἐθεώρησα καλόν, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὴν προσευχῆς μου, νὰ στείλω κι ἓνα μικρὸ κομματάκι κλωστή (ποὺ ἔχω σὰν φτωχὸς μοναχός), διὰ νὰ χρησιμοποιηθῆ κι αὐτό, ἔστω καὶ γιὰ μιὰ βελονιά, διὰ τὸ πολυκομματιασμένον 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 συγγνώμη ἐν πρώτοις ἀπ' ὅλους, ποὺ τολμῶ νὰ γράφω κάτι, ἐνῶ δὲν εἶμαι οὔτε ἅγιος, οὔτε θεολόγος.

Φαντάζομαι ὅτι θὰ μὲ καταλάβουν ὅλοι, ὅτι τὰ γραφόμενά μου δὲν εἶναι τίποτε ἄλλο παρὰ ἓνας βαθύς μου πόνος διὰ τὴν γραμμὴν καὶ κοσμικὴν ἀγάπην, δυστυχῶς, τοῦ πατέρα μας κ. Ἀθηναγόρα.

Ὅπως φαίνεται, ἀγάπησε μίαν ἄλλην γυναῖκα μοντέρνα, ποὺ λέγεται Παπική Ἐκκλησία διότι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Μητέρα μας δὲν τοῦ κάμνει καμμίαν ἐντύπωσι, ἐπειδὴ εἶναι πολὺ σεμνή. Αὐτὴ ἡ ἀγάπη, ποὺ ἀκούσθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν Πόλι, βρῆκε ἀπήχησι σὲ πολλὰ παιδιὰ του, ποὺ τὴν ζοῦν εἰς τὰς πόλεις. Ἄλλωστε αὐτὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἐποχῆς μας: ἡ οἰκογένεια νὰ χάσῃ τὸ ἱερὸ νόημα τῆς ἀπὸ τέτοιου εἶδους ἀγάπης, ποὺ 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 δεῖξῃ ἀγάπην πρῶτα σὲ μᾶς τὰ παιδιὰ του καὶ στὴ Μητέρα μας Ἐκκλησία, αὐτός, δυστυχῶς, ἔστειλε τὴν ἀγάπην του πολὺ μακριά. Τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα ἦταν νὰ ἀναπαύσῃ μὲν ὅλα τὰ κοσμικὰ παιδιὰ, ποὺ ἀγαποῦν τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἔχουν τὴν κοσμικὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην, νὰ κατασκανδαλίσῃ ὅμως ὅλους ἐμᾶς, τὰ τέκνα τῆς

Ὁρθοδοξίας, μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα, ποὺ ἔχουν φόβον Θεοῦ...

Μετὰ λύπης μου ἀπὸ ὅσους φιλενωτικούς ἔχω γνωρίσει, δὲν εἶδα νὰ ἔχουν οὔτε ψίχα πνευματικὴ οὔτε φλοιό.

Ξέρουν ὅμως, νὰ ὀμιλοῦν γιὰ ἀγάπην καὶ ἐνότητα ἐνῶ οἱ ἴδιοι δὲν εἶναι ἐνωμένοι μετὰ τὸν Θεόν, διότι δὲν Τὸν ἔχουν ἀγαπήσει.

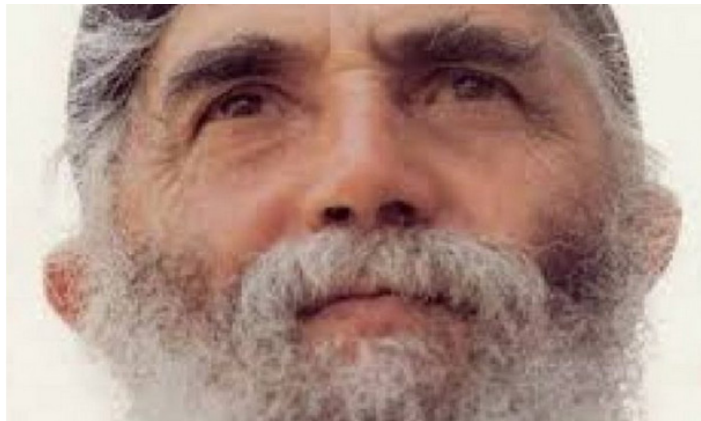
Θὰ ἤθελα νὰ παρακαλέσω θεορμὰ ὅλους τοὺς φιλενωτικούς ἀδελφούς μας:

Ἐπειδὴ τὸ θέμα τῆς ἐνώσεως τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν εἶναι κάτι τὸ πνευματικὸν καὶ ἀνάγκην ἔχουμε πνευματικῆς ἀγάπης, ἃς τὸ ἀφήσουμε σὲ αὐτοὺς ποὺ ἀγαπήσανε πολὺ τὸν Θεόν καὶ εἶναι θεολόγοι, σὰν τοὺς Πατέρας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ ὄχι νομολόγοι ποὺ προσφέρανε καὶ προσφέρουν ὀλόκληρο τὸν ἑαυτὸν τους εἰς τὴν διακονίαν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας (ἀντὶ μεγάλης λαμπάδας), τοὺς ὁποίους ἀναψε τὸ πῦρ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ὄχι ὁ ἀναπτήρας τοῦ νεωκόρου.

Ἄς γνωρίζωμεν ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχουν μόνον φυσικοὶ νόμοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πνευματικοί. Ἐπομένως, ἡ μέλλουσα ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀντιμετωπισθῆ με συνεταιρισμὸν ἀμαρτωλῶν (διότι διπλὴν ὀργὴν θὰ λάβωμεν), ἀλλὰ με μετάνοιαν καὶ τήρησιν τῶν ἐντολῶν τοῦ Κυρίου. Ἐπίσης, ἃς γνωρίσωμεν καλὰ ὅτι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία μας δὲν ἔχει καμμίαν ἔλλειψιν. Ἡ μόνη ἔλλειψις, ποὺ παρουσιάζεται, εἶναι ἡ ἔλλειψις σοβαρῶν Ἱεραρχῶν καὶ Ποιμένων με πατερικὴς ἀρχῆς.

Εἶναι ὀλίγοι οἱ ἐκλεκτοί. Ὅμως δὲν εἶναι ἀνησυχητικόν. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Αὐτὸς τὴν κυβερνάει. Δὲν εἶναι Ναός, ποὺ κτιζεται ἀπὸ πέτρες, ἄμμο καὶ ἀσβέστη ἀπὸ εὐσεβεῖς καὶ καταστρέφεται με φωτιὰ βαρβάρων, ἀλλὰ εἶναι ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός. «Καὶ ὁ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὸν λίθον τοῦτον συνθλασθήσεται· ἐφ' ὃν δ' ἂν πέσῃ, λικμησεί αὐτόν. Καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι τὰς παραβολὰς αὐτοῦ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν λέγει». (Ματθ. 21:44-45).

Ὁ Κύριος, ὅταν θὰ πρέπη, θὰ παρουσιάσῃ τοὺς Μάρκους τοὺς Εὐγενικούς καὶ τοὺς Γρηγόριους Παλαμάδες, διὰ νὰ συγκεντρώσουν ὅλα τὰ κατασκανδαλισμένα ἀδέλφια μας, διὰ νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Πίστιν, νὰ στερεώσουν τὴν Παράδοσιν καὶ νὰ δώσουν χαράν μεγάλην εἰς τὴν Μητέρα μας.



Εἰς τοὺς καιροὺς μας βλέπομεν ὅτι πολλὰ πιστὰ τέκνα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας μοναχοὶ καὶ λαϊκοί, ἔχουν, δυστυχῶς, ἀποσχισθῆ ἀπὸ αὐτήν, ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν φιλενωτικῶν. Ἔχω τὴν γνώμην ὅτι δὲν εἶναι καθόλου καλὸν νὰ ἀποχωριζόμεθα ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν κάθε φοράν ποὺ θὰ πταίῃ ὁ Πατριάρχης. Ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ μέσα, κοντὰ στὴν Μητέρα Ἐκκλησία ἔχει καθῆκον καὶ ὑποχρέωσι ὁ καθένας ν' ἀγωνίζεται μὲ τὸν τρόπον του. Τὸ νὰ διακόψῃ τὸ μνημόσυνον τοῦ Πατριάρχου, νὰ ἀποσχισθῆ καὶ νὰ δημιουργήσῃ ἰδικήν του Ἐκκλησίαν καὶ νὰ ἐξακολουθῆ νὰ ὀμιλῆ ὑβρίζοντας τὸν Πατριάρχην, αὐτὸ νομίζω, εἶναι παράλογον.

Ἐὰν διὰ τὴν α' ἢ τὴν β' λοξοδρομήσῃ τῶν κατὰ καιροὺς Πατριαρχῶν χωριζόμεθα καὶ κάνωμε δικές μας Ἐκκλησίες—Θεὸς φυλάξῃ—θὰ ξεπεράσωμε καὶ τοὺς Προτεστάντες ἀκόμη. Εὐκόλα χωρίζει κανεὶς καὶ δύσκολα ἐπιστρέφει...

Δυστυχῶς, ἔχουμε πολλές «ἐκκλησίες» στὴν ἐποχὴ μας. Δημιουργήθηκαν εἴτε ἀπὸ μεγάλες ὀμάδες ἢ καὶ ἀπὸ ἓνα ἄτομο ἀκόμη. Ἐπειδὴ συνέβη στὸ καλύβι τῶν (ὀμιλῶ διὰ τὰ ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὁρει συμβαίνοντα) νὰ ὑπάρχῃ καὶ ναὸς, ἐνόμισαν ὅτι μποροῦν νὰ κάνουν καὶ δική τους ἀνεξάρτητη Ἐκκλησία.

Ἐὰν οἱ φιλενωτικοὶ δίνουν τὸ πρῶτο πλήγμα στὴν Ἐκκλησία, αὐτοί, οἱ ἀνωτέρω, δίνουν τὸ δεύτερο.

Ἄς εὐχηθοῦμε νὰ δώσῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὸν φωτισμὸν Του σὲ ὅλους μας καὶ εἰς τὸν Πατριάρχην μας κ. Ἀθηναγόραν διὰ νὰ γίνῃ πρῶτον ἢ ἔνωσις αὐτῶν τῶν «ἐκκλησιῶν», νὰ πραγματοποιηθῆ ἢ γαλήνη ἀνάμεσα στὸ σκανδαλισμένο Ὁρθόδοξο πλήρωμα, ἢ εἰρήνη καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη μεταξὺ τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἀνατολικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν καὶ κατόπιν ἄς γίνῃ σκέψις διὰ τὴν ἔνωσιν μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων «Ὁμολογιῶν», ἐὰν καὶ ἐφ' ὅσον εἰλικρινῶς ἐπιθυμοῦν νὰ ἀσπασθοῦν τὸ Ὁρθόδοξον Δόγμα.

Θὰ ἤθελα ἀκόμη νὰ εἰπῶ, ὅτι ὑπάρχει καὶ μιὰ 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 ὄχι διὰ τὸ γενικώτερον καλὸν τοῦ ἀγῶνος. Παρακολουθεῖ δὲ ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον (περισσότερον ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτὸν του) εἰς τὸ τι θὰ εἰπῆ ἢ τι θὰ γράψῃ διὰ νὰ τὸν κτυπήσῃ κατόπιν ἀλύπητα. Ἐνῶ ὁ ἴδιος ἂν ἔλεγε ἢ ἔγραφε τὸ ἴδιο πράγμα, θὰ τὸ ὑπεστήριζε καὶ μὲ πολλές μάλιστα μαρτυρίες τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς καὶ τῶν Πατέρων.

Τὸ κακὸ ποὺ γίνεται εἶναι μεγάλο, διότι ἀφ' ἑνὸς μὲν ἀδικεῖ τὸν πλησίον του, ἀφ' ἑτέρου δὲ καὶ τὸν γκρεμίζει μπροστὰ στὰ μάτια τῶν ἄλλων πιστῶν. Πολλὲς φορὲς σπέρνει καὶ τὴν ἀπιστία 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 ἐπεικῆς ἢ ὀλίγον ὀξύς, ἀμέσως βγάσωμε τὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι δὲν εἶναι πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος.

Ὅλοι χρειάζονται εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ὅλοι οἱ Πατέρες προσέφεραν τὰς ὑπηρεσίας των εἰς Αὐτήν. Καὶ οἱ ἥπιοι 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 ὄλοι εἴμεθα ὑποχρεωμένοι νὰ ἀνεχώμεθα ὄχι μόνον τὸν πνευματικὸν του χαρακτήρα, ἀλλὰ ἀκόμη καὶ τὶς ἀδυναμίες ποὺ ἔχει σὰν ἄνθρωπος.

Καὶ πάλιν ἔρχομαι νὰ ζητήσω εἰλικρινῶς συγγνώμην 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 θλιβερές εἰδήσεις διὰ τὴν Ἁγίαν Ὁρθοδοξίαν μας ἐπόνεσα πολὺ καὶ ἐθεώρησα καλὸ νὰ γράψω αὐτὰ ποὺ ἔνοιωθα.

Ἄς ευχηθοῦμε ὄλοι νὰ δώσῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὴν χάριν Του καὶ ὁ καθένας μας ἄς βοηθήσῃ μὲ τὸν τρόπον του διὰ τὴν δόξαν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας.

Μὲ πολὺν σεβασμὸν πρὸς ὅλους,

Ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὁρει τῆ 23ῆ Ἰανουαρίου, 1969

Παῖσιος μοναχός



Ὅσοι τὰ βάζουν μὲ τὴν πίστη δὲν πρέπει νὰ μᾶς τρομάζουν. Δὲν τὰ βάζουν μὲ μᾶς. Τὰ βάζουν μὲ τὸν Θεό. **Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς πολεμήσει ὑπὲρ σου.** (Σοφ. Σειρ. 4:28) Καὶ ὅσοι τὰ βάζουν μὲ τὸν Θεὸ κάνουν γκάφες καὶ αὐτογελοιοποιοῦνται, ἀλλὰ ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τὸ κακὸ τὸ χρησιμοποιεῖ γιὰ τὸ ἀγαθό.

**Ἅγιος Παῖσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης**  
«Μαρτυρίες Προσκυνητῶν» Β' τόμος, σελ. 359.

## Πικρές Αλήθειες

Το μακαριστού Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης π. Αύγουστίνου Καντιώτη (+2010).



**Α**γαπητοί, πρέπει να ομολογήσουμε μία πικρά αλήθεια. Οί πιστοί που αγωνίζονται για να κρατήσουν την Ὁρθοδοξία είναι ὀλίγοι. Τὸ ρεῦμα τὸ μεγάλο καὶ τὸ ἀπέραντο εἶναι ἐκεῖνο πὸν σιγὰ-σιγὰ ἔχουν ἀπομακρυνθεῖ ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο πίστη.

Θὰ πῶ ἓνα λόγο, πὸν ποτὲ δὲν τὸν εἶπα. Θὰ τὸν πεῖτε ἐγωιστικὸ, ἀλλὰ σὰς δίνω μία ζυγαριά, γιὰ νὰ ζυγίσετε παπᾶδες, δεσποτάδες καὶ ὄλο τὸν κληρὸ καὶ ὄλους τοὺς θεολόγους. Ἡ ζυγαριά αὐτὴ ποῖα εἶναι; Ποῖο εἶναι τὸ γνώρισμα τοῦ παπᾶ; Νὰ μαζεῦει πρόσφορα; Νὰ κάνει ὠραῖες ἀκολουθίες; Νὰ κηρύττει χαριτωμένα καὶ νὰ χρηστολογεῖ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄμβωνος καὶ νὰ δακρῦζουν τὰ μάτια μερικῶν δεσποιναιρίων γιὰ τοὺς στοχαστικούς του λογισμούς; Ποῖο εἶναι τὸ γνώρισμα τοῦ παπᾶ καὶ τοῦ δεσπότη σ' αὐτὰ τὰ δύσκολα χρόνια;

Τὸ γνώρισμα τοῦ δεσπότη καὶ τοῦ παπᾶ εἶναι ἡ μαχητικότης, ἡ παρηρησία. Εἶναι ἐκεῖνο πὸν εἶπε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, ὅτι «Οἱ θέλοντες εὐσεβῶς ζῆν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διωχθήσονται». (Β' Τιμ. 3:12).

Ἄν δεῖτε παπᾶ, ἂν δεῖτε θεολόγο, ἂν δεῖτε μητροπολίτη καὶ ἀρχιεπίσκοπο πὸν δὲν διώκεται ἀλλὰ ἀπολαύει τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ἐκτιμήσεως ὄλων, τότε ἔχει ἐφαρμογὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ: «Οὐαὶ ὅταν καλῶς ὑμᾶς εἴπωσι πάντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι» (Λουκ. 6:26)· νὰ ξέρετε πολὺ καλὰ ὅτι αὐτὸς δὲν βαδίζει καλῶς.

Ἡ ἂν λέγεται Ὁρθόδοξος καὶ δὲν θέλει νὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει τὸ ρεῦμα, τὴν χιονοστιβάδα αὐτὴ πὸν κατέρχεται γιὰ νὰ διαλύσει τὸν κόσμο. Ὁ παπᾶς ὁ Ὁρθόδοξος πάει κόντρα μὲ τὰ ρεύματα. Ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος ἓνας ἦτο, ἀλλὰ κράτησε στοὺς ὦμους του ὡς Ἄτλας ὀλόκληρη τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία. Ὁ Μᾶρκος ὁ Εὐγενικός ἓνας ἦτο, ἀλλὰ ἐπίσης κράτησε στὰ χέρια τοῦ ὀλόκληρη τὴν Πίστη μας. Ὁ ἱερός Φώτιος τὰ ἴδια.

Ὀλίγοι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ δὲν νικάει μὲ τὰ νούμερα, νικάει μὲ τὴν πίστη. Γιατί ὅσο ἀξίζει ἓνας πιστὸς παπᾶς, ὅσο ἀξίζει ἓνας πιστὸς ἐπίσκοπος, ὅσο ἀξίζει ἓνας πιστὸς ἀρχιεπίσκοπος, ὅσο ἀξίζει ἓνας λαϊκὸς καὶ μία γυναίκα δὲν ἀξίζει ὀλόκληρος ὁ ντουνιάς. Λοιπὸν νὰ μὴ πτοοῦμεθα διότι γίνεται αὐτὴ ἡ προδοσία τῆς Πίστεως μᾶς δεξιά καὶ ἀριστερά.

Ἐνα σὰς συνιστῶ. Μὴ μοῦ λέτε, ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶναι καλός, αὐτὸς εἶναι θεολόγος σπουδαῖος, αὐτὸς κάνει διαλεκτική, αὐτὸς ἀνοίξε ἀκαδημία τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ ἅμα τὸν ἀκούσεις εἶναι θαῦμα!... Μέτρησέ τον ἂν ἔχει μία σπίθα ἀπὸ τὸ Μᾶρκο τὸν Εὐγενικό, ἂν ἔχει μία σπίθα ἀπὸ τὸν ἱερὸ Φώτιο, ἂν ἔχει μία σπίθα ἀπὸ τὸν Κηρουλάριο, ἂν ἔχει μία σπίθα ἀπὸ τὸν Παπουλάκο (ὁ ἀγράμματος αὐτὸς στάθηκε ἀπέναντι ὀλόκληρου τοῦ κόσμου).

Τὰ λέγω αὐτὰ ἔχων ἐπίγνωση τῆς θέσεώς μου ὡς Ἕλληνας καὶ ὡς ἐπισκόπου ἔχοντος τεράστια εὐθύνας. Εἴμεθα ἔτοιμοι τὰ πάντα νὰ θυσιάσωμεν. Τολμῶ, ἴσως γιὰ τελευταία φορὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος αὐτοῦ, νὰ πῶ: Ὅσοι ἀγαπᾶτε τὸ Χριστό, ὅσοι ἀγαπᾶτε τὴν Ἐκκλησία, ἔχουμε τὴν Παναγία μαζί μας, ἔχουμε μαζί μὲ ὄλους ἐκείνους πὸν ἀγωνίστηκαν καὶ ἀγωνίζονται γιὰ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξο Πίστη μας.

Ὅσοι εἶναι μὲ τὸ διάβολο, νὰ κάτσουν κάτω, νὰ κλείσουν τὰ στόματά τους. Διότι διάβολος εἶναι ἡ δειλία των, διάβολος εἶναι ἡ δελεαστικότης των, διάβολος τὰ ἐπιχειρήματά των, πὸν ζητοῦν νὰ ψυχράνουν μία χούφτα ἀνθρώπων οἱ ὁποῖοι βασανίζονται καὶ τυραννιοῦνται καὶ διώκονται γιὰ τὴν Πίστη τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας.



**Ε**ν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις θέλει εἶσθε μῖσος, φθόνος, φιλονεικία, μάχαι εἰς τὰ Κοινόβια μέχρι φόνων, ὡσαύτως καὶ ἐν ταῖς Λαύραις ἰδιορρουθμίαι...

Ἐκ τῆς κακίας τοῦ ἐνὸς πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον καὶ διὰ τὸ ὅτι ἡμελήθησαν οἱ Ἱεροὶ Κανόνες ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ πνευματικοὶ ἀγῶνες, θέλουν προχειρίζεσθαι ἡγούμενοι καὶ ποιμένες αὐτῶν ἄνδρες ἀδόκιμοι ἀρετῆς, ἄπιστοι ἀπρόκοποι, ἀνωφελεῖς, ἀγροῖκοι, μὴ διακρίνοντες τὴν δεξιάν ὁδὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀριστερᾶς, ἀμελεῖς καὶ ἀσυντελεῖς, φιλομέριμοι, καὶ τὰς διανομίας ἀναιδῶς μεταχειριζόμενοι, τὰ πρωτεῖα μὲ δῶρα ἀρπάζοντες καὶ ἐπεμβαίνοντες εἰς τὴν ἡγουμένην μὴ γινώσκοντες κατηχεῖν καὶ νοθετεῖν τὸ ποίμνιον τῆς ἀδελφότητος καὶ μὴ γνωρίζοντες ὅτι εἶναι αὐτοὶ τύπος καὶ παράδειγμα ὠφελείας εἰς τοὺς ἀκολουθοῦντας τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ μὴ νοοῦντες ὅτι αὐτοὶ θὰ δώσωσιν λόγο τῷ Θεῷ ἐν Ἡμέρᾳ Κρίσεως ὑπὲρ τοῦ ποιμνίου αὐτῶν.

Ἐκ δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀμελείας καὶ καταφρονήσεως τῶν ποιμένων ἀπολοῦνται. Μέλλουσιν δὲ κολάζεσθαι οὐ μόνον οἱ ἀμελεῖς καὶ ῥάθυμοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ ἐνάρετοι ἀδελφοί.

**Ἀββᾶ Μωϋσέως τοῦ Αἰθίοπος**  
«Λειμωνάριον τὸ Παλαιὸν», σελ. 78-79

## A PROPHECY OF FUTURE LAWLESSNESS

By St. Anatoly the Younger (+1922) [Optina Monastery].

**H**eretics will seize power over the Church. And from that heresies will spread everywhere and deceive many people. The enemy of the human race will act with cunning in order to draw into heresy, if possible, even the elect.

He will not begin by crudely rejecting the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the virtue of the Theotokos, but he will begin imperceptibly to distort the teachings and statutes of the Church and their very spirit, handed down to us by the Holy Fathers through the Holy Spirit.

Few will notice these wiles of the enemy, only those more experienced in the spiritual life. Heretics will seize power over the Church and will place their servants everywhere; the pious will be regarded with contempt. He (the Lord) said, by their fruits ye shall know them, and so, by their fruits, as well as by the actions of the heretics, strive to distinguish them from the true pastors.

These are spiritual thieves, plundering the spiritual flock, and they will enter the sheepfold (the Church), climbing up some other way, using force and trampling upon the divine statutes. The Lord calls them robbers (cf. Jn 10:1). Indeed, their first task will be the persecution of the true pastors, their imprisonment and exile, for without this it will be impossible for them to plunder the sheep.

Therefore, my son, when you see the violation of patristic tradition and the divine order in the Church, the order established by God, know that the heretics have already appeared, although for the time being they may conceal their impiety, or they will distort the Divine Faith imperceptibly, in order to succeed better in seducing and enticing the inexperienced into the net.

The persecution will be directed against not only pastors but against all servants of God, for all those ruled by heresy will not endure piety. Recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing by their proud dispositions and love of power. They will be slanderers, traitors, everywhere sowing enmity and malice; therefore the Lord said that by their fruits you will know them. True servants of God are humble, love their neighbor and are obedient to the Church.

Monastics will be greatly oppressed by the heretics and monastic life will be scorned. Monasteries will become scarce, the number of monastics will decline, and those who remain will endure violence. These haters of monastic life, however, having only the appearance of piety, will strive to attract the monks to their side promising them protection and worldly goods, and threatening those who oppose them with expulsion.

These threats will cause great despair among the fainthearted, but you, my son, rejoice that you have lived until that time, for then the faithful who have not shown any other virtues, will receive crowns merely for standing firm in the faith, according to the word of the Lord (cf. Mt 10:32).

Fear the Lord, my son. Fear to lose the crown prepared (for you), fear to be cast by Christ into the outer darkness and eternal torment. Stand bravely in the faith, and if necessary, endure persecution and other sorrows, for the Lord will be with you... and the holy martyrs and confessors, they will look upon you and your struggle with joy.

But woe to the monks in those days who will be bound with possessions and riches, who because of love of peace will be ready to submit to the heretics. They will lull to sleep their conscience, saying, "We are preserving and saving the monastery and the Lord will forgive us." The unfortunate and blind ones do not at all consider that through heresy the demons will enter the monastery and then it will no longer be a holy monastery, but merely walls from which grace will depart.

God, however, is mightier than the enemy, and He will never leave His servants. True Christians will remain until the end of this age, only they will choose to live in secluded, deserted places. Do not fear sorrows, rather fear pernicious heresy, for it strips us of grace and separates us from Christ. This is why the Lord commanded us to consider the heretic as a pagan and a publican.

And so my son, strengthen yourself in the grace of Jesus Christ. Hasten to confess the faith, to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Tim 2:13), Who has said, *Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* (Rev 2:10). To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honor, glory, and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.



**T**he suffering and misfortune that the Lord allows to fall on the righteous is not the work of evil but a medicine, both for the righteous themselves and for those around them who understand that their suffering is sent from God for their good. The suffering that comes from the attacks of evil spirits on man, or as a consequence of sin, is evil. But the suffering that God allows to fall on men, in order to cleanse them completely from sin, pluck them out from under the devil's tyranny and bring them close to Himself - this purifying suffering neither comes from evil or is in itself evil, but is from God and for the good of men. *It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes* (Pss 118:71), says the discerning King David.

**St. Nikolai Velimirovich**

## ST. JOSEPH THE HESYCHAST

By Elder Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona, from "My Elder: Joseph the Hesychast and Cave-dweller," *Saint Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery* (2013), pp. 663-671.

### His Legacy

Our Holy Elder Joseph was a poor hermit who lived in caves far from society, yet he became one of the Church's most influential figures of the twentieth century by kindling a revival of the Jesus prayer—a prayer he recommended for both monastics and laymen. He was not interested in cleaning *the outside of the cup* (cf. Mt 23:25 & Lk 11:39) but worked at the internal cleansing of his heart. Geronda ploughed deeply with his labors and *ascesis*. He sowed plentifully with unceasing prayer and *theoria*. He watered abundantly through streams of sweat and floods of tears. And he didn't despair waiting for the harvest, but patiently endured all his internal and external trials.

However, the fruit of his labors appeared primarily after his repose. *Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* (Jn 12:24). In other words, after he died his labors began to blossom. What was this blossoming? His spiritual children. Geronda tilled, sowed, and watered, and we, his children, have entered into his labors. We are merely harvesting the fruits of that heavenly man. His disciples inherited abundant grace, which attracted many people to them.

When Geronda went to the Holy Mountain in 1921, there were 5,500 monks there. When he reposed in 1959, there were only half as many. Not only was the population decreasing dramatically, but also the average age was significantly higher. In other words, the few monks remaining were decrepit old men for the most part. Young monks were not coming, and the old ones were dying off. Thus in 1971, there were only 1,145 monks left—a mere fifth of what the population had been just fifty years earlier. The situation had become so alarming that many people thought that monasticism would soon disappear from the Holy Mountain.

Things started turning around when Geronda's disciples began repopulating the monasteries of the Holy Mountain. Many well-educated young men, yearning for noetic prayer, gathered around Geronda's disciples and formed large brotherhoods. Because of the large size and good

reputation of these brotherhoods, they were asked to move into the monasteries, which had only a few old monks living in them. Thus the brotherhood of Papa-Haralambos repopulated Dionysiou Monastery, the brotherhood of Fr. Joseph the Cypriot repopulated Vatopedi Monastery, and my disciples repopulated the monasteries of Philotheou, Xeropotamou, Konstamonitou, and Karakallou. [Note: Elder Ephraim was also asked by the Governing Council of the Holy Mountain to repopulate the monastery of the Great Lavra, but he declined.] Moreover, Geronda's disciples have repopulated and established dozens of women's monasteries with hundreds of monastics throughout Greece, Cyprus, the United States, and Canada. Meanwhile, the laymen who are grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren of "Pappou" Joseph number in the thousands.

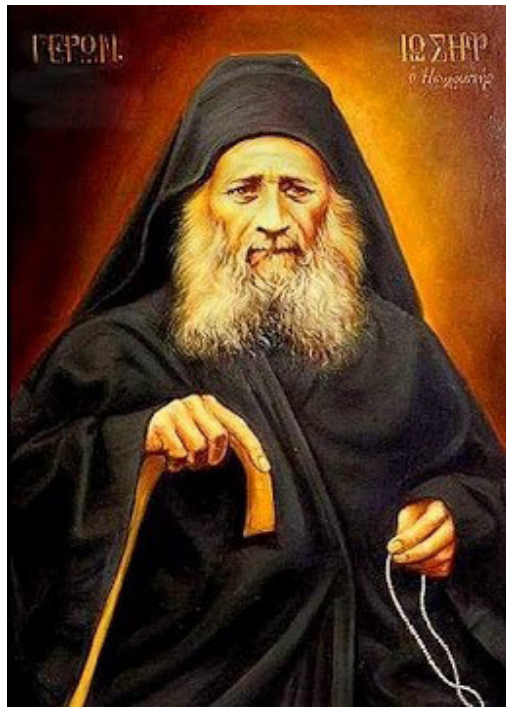
What is even more amazing is that Geronda himself foresaw this renewal. Once, when we were still at the Small Skete of St. Anne, a layman from Ouranoupolis, named John Bitsios, came to visit him. He loved Geronda very much, because Geronda had helped him. After speaking briefly with Geronda, he saw his three disciples working (Fr. Joseph the Cypriot, Papa-Haralambos, and me) and asked: "How nice! Geronda, are these young monks your disciples?"

Geronda paused for a moment. Then he smiled and replied with a twinkle in his eye: "You see these young monks? They will take over the Holy Mountain! He foresaw our future, and that is why he told us to separate after his death so that each

one of us could form our own large brotherhood. [Note: Elder Sophrony, who came to the Holy Mountain a decade after Elder Joseph did, witnessed the same decline and wrote: "Noetic work, which constitutes the core of genuine monastic life, is now at an extreme low."].

Furthermore, there has also been a spiritual reawakening due to Elder Joseph. In his days, a spiritual drought prevailed; no one was interested in noetic prayer. Nowadays, though, so many people come to us, his disciples, and say: "We read the letters of Elder Joseph and were deeply moved. Tell us about noetic prayer. Teach us how to pray." Thus, Geronda continues to inspire people around the world through his letters that have been translated into almost a dozen different languages.

I can say authoritatively that if it weren't for Geronda, almost no one on the Holy Mountain today would be oc-



cupying himself with noetic prayer. As my spiritual brother, Fr. Joseph the Cypriot, said:

The spiritual renewal on the Holy Mountain—may my fellow Athonites allow me to put it like this—is largely due to Geronda. Back then, Mount Athos was decaying, and the inner spiritual work of monasticism, which constitutes genuine theology, was neglected. If this spiritual work is flourishing on the Holy Mountain, it is primarily due to Elder Joseph the Hesychast and Cave-dweller, whose immense impetus brought back to the Athonite environment the true meaning and continuation of the theology of St. Gregory Palamas.

Professor Georgios Mantzaridis also realized the significant impact of Geronda on Athonite monasticism and wrote:

Elder Joseph was a simple and humble monk who, through his austere asceticism and silence, left traces of his presence very clearly at the Holy Mountain. If we have a new flowering of Athonite monasticism today, this is due to a certain extent to Elder Joseph the Hesychast.

Today many writings of the holy Fathers about noetic prayer have been published, and many monastics and laymen thirst for it. Unfortunately, though, now that we have this flowering of interest in noetic prayer, Geronda is gone. If Geronda were alive now, he would be swarmed by pilgrims! This is because he was the only worker of noetic prayer and because many more pilgrims visit the Holy Mountain nowadays. But Geronda is gone, and no one has reached his level. Who, today, can keep vigil in prayer all night every night, weeping not for just himself but for the entire world? Who can do his kind of *asceticism*? Who can pray and weep as he did?

One day when we were still at the Small Skete of St. Anne, Geronda came out of his cell after his vigil. I don't know what lofty state of grace he had just experienced, but he looked up to the sky, raised his arms up in the air; and exclaimed with tears running down his face: "Oh, my dear God! There is so much treasure; there are so many riches, but there is no one to inherit them! All I have is two young monks."

At the time, I was just an infant in terms of my spiritual growth, and I couldn't fathom or grasp the deep meaning of what Geronda was saying. But now I understand. After all, he would say the Jesus prayer noetically for seven or eight hours while keeping his nous within his heart. Can you imagine how much grace of the Holy Spirit, how much divine illumination, how much Uncreated Light he experienced?

What were the riches he was talking about? The riches of the grace of the Holy Spirit. He once described these riches as follows:

The waves of revelations amaze my mind; my tongue grows numb and cannot speak, unable to utter the

words in time. The noetic siphons gush forth dew in torrents—however, there is but little soil in our days. The riches of our Lord are many, but unfortunately there are few heirs. To inherit them requires a bloody struggle, but here there is only laziness. Thus I am compelled to open the ducts unto the world; for there is hope that pure souls will receive the word, and then I shall receive the reward of love. So listen to my words, lend me your ears.

Even though for years Geronda could not find heirs for his riches, later in life he said to Gero-Arsenius:

Arsenius, now I can be at rest and say to the Lord: *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.* (Lk 2:29). We lived such a hard life together; we even shed blood to find God within. Yet my constant grievance all these years was this: Many people spent time with us; benefitted, and left, unable, however, to follow our spiritual work. I thought that I would depart with this grievance. But look; now in my old age God brought these young monks. Mark my words: The entire Holy Mountain will rely on these monks.

#### His Sanctity

Elder Joseph is an exceptional phenomenon in these contemporary days of spiritual poverty, and his life emits the fragrance of sanctity. The providence of God arranges that there will be such heroes in every generation so that there will always be inspiring examples. Although reading the lives of saints who lived centuries ago is also a source of inspiration, having a contemporary example is much more inspiring.

People sometimes wonder: "Is it possible to live the gospel in modern times? Is it really possible today to live a lofty spiritual life?" They sometimes think that the answer to these questions is "no," and they become discouraged. After all, times are constantly changing, and living a pure life is becoming more and more difficult. But thanks to God's providence, spiritual giants like Elder Joseph confirm that indeed *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* (Heb 13:8).

Papa-Ephraim of Katounakia had this to say about Geronda:

Elder Joseph was a spiritual giant and a teacher of noetic prayer taught by God. His love for our dear Panagia was unmatched. For her sake he patiently endured everything, and it was from her that he received the great charisma of prayer of the heart. He was counted worthy of seeing her many times in his temporal but angelic life. Alas! Where are people like him nowadays to tell you heavenly words full of grace? His pure heart said the prayer without ceasing: *Lord Jesus Christ; have mercy on me,* and the Holy Spirit was upon his head.

I believe that Elder Joseph reached higher levels than St. Silouan the Athonite—much higher, in fact.

Nowadays there are no figures like him anymore; he was the last one.

People have told me to write to the Ecumenical Patriarchate that Elder Joseph was a saint. I told them, “We shall not do that. God will do that, through the prayers of holy Elder Joseph.” Other people will recommend that the Church examine whether these signs of sanctity are indeed divine signs that he was a saint and should be canonized and celebrated. We won’t make this suggestion ourselves, since they might consider us biased as his spiritual children.

Nevertheless, our conscience tells us that he is a saint. Not only does our conscience say this, but so does the conscience of pious people throughout the world. This is manifest in the faith with which they invoke his prayers, as well as in the demand for his written counsels. It can also be seen in the numerous icons of him that people everywhere have painted. My spiritual brother, Fr. Joseph the Cypriot, has already prepared a service for our *Venerable and God-bearing Father, Joseph the Hesychast*.

Likewise, several others have also composed *troparia* for him.

### In Heaven

Now that Geronda is up in Heaven with the angels, he sees things very clearly. He sees the beauty of heaven that surpasses description, and he knows what hell is. He is probably saying, “I wonder what my spiritual grandchildren are doing?” and he is looking down to see. He was never idle in this life, so he is not about to be idle now. He comes and observes how we are working out our salvation. He provides for us; he helps us; he prays for us; he visits our monasteries; and he is constantly interceding with God so that we do not fail. That is why the demons scream: “Joseph turned into a ghost and goes to the monasteries to help them!”

He entreats God to take special care of us because he knows that we don’t have his *ascesis* and aren’t at his spiritual level. He sees the dangers we face; he sees our mistakes; he sees our passions. He sees everything and begs God’s mercy for us.

For his prayers to be more effective, all we need is reverence towards this great man. He left this life, yet he is alive and grants us life and grace by visiting us and delivering us—without our seeing him—from many evils that the demons want to inflict on us. His prayers and his presence rescue us miraculously from great harm, even though we don’t realize where this help comes from. For example, once in my sleep I saw three demons disguised as monks, and they were approaching me in order to harm me. One of them was about to kill me, but then Geronda stepped in front and drove them away. When I woke up, I said to myself, “This is Geronda’s protection.”

We are blessed to have such a contemporary intercessor in Heaven. It is a great honor for us, a tremendous benefaction from God. We are unworthy of this, and especially I, who

knew him first-hand. God counted me worthy of burying him. It is a great blessing for a disciple to be counted worthy of burying his elder, because in this manner he becomes his successor. It is an honor for us to be blessed to have a patristic inheritance from this man.

Now Geronda is in Heaven, in the sea of God’s Love, and he is enjoying the reward of the labors of his ascetical life and is receiving the consolation for his tears. He shed rivers of tears not just for his own sins but also for the sins of many people. He also shed tears of immense and unbounded love for God our Father.

† † †

So this is my portrayal of my blessed elder. Geronda told us many things about his life so that we would ponder them and continually benefit from them. He left these true stories to us as a spiritual inheritance from his labors, and now I have passed them on to you. We must now take all these examples from his life and make them our own as much as we can. We must try to resemble him in his love for God and man, and in his *ascesis*—primarily in terms of his spiritual *ascesis*: through vigil, prayer, and chastity with a spiritually enlightened mind. For since we have a spiritual kinship with him, we have a sacred duty to follow in his footsteps as much as we can. Geronda will be delighted if we try to imitate him; even in a plain and simple manner.

We firmly believe that he has great boldness before God. God took him so that he would intercede for us and prepare a place for us. Let us invoke his prayers. Let us entreat him to make us, too, experience a small part of the spiritual states he had when he was in this life. May we also know God as he knew Him. For this is our goal in life: to know God and to be united with Him. It’s not just a matter of believing in Him the way we do now, but we need to see Him in another way—to see Him through the lens that only people who have contact with Him can.

May Geronda’s intercessions help us to struggle alongside him and have a little bit of his bravery and peace of conscience so that we may depart from this life to the next life painlessly and peacefully. He is waiting for us!



Cry out the prayer without ceasing. May God grant you a blessed beginning! May it not abandon you, or rather, may you not abandon the prayer—the life of the soul, the breath of the heart, the sweet-scented springtime which creates a spiritual spring in the struggling soul.

My children, prayer and humility are the all-powerful weapons which we must keep continuously in our hands with sleepless attentiveness, because these, with God’s help, will give us the victory against the demons.

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



## GLORIFYING CHURCH SCHISM

*By Fr. Zechariah Lynch; Fr Zechariah is an Orthodox priest in Pueblo, Colorado, at the Archangel Michael Orthodox Church.*

*“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ...” or we may now lament,  
“O Constantinople, Constantinople!”*

Once you were a defender of true Orthodoxy, and now you have begun to promote worldly political agendas. Once you preached the heavenly homeland, and now you are grasping at earthly power!

Rise up! Not in defense of your own rights and powers but rather in the humble defense of Truth and Orthodoxy. Then we will gladly follow you!

My Grandmother is a full blooded Greek. My lineage on this side goes back to Cappadocia where my ancestors lived for ages (they left during the exchange of populace). It is a great encouragement to know that many Greeks (including my ancestors) stood like an anvil in Holy Orthodoxy under the relentless hammer of Turkish Muslim rule.

Did they endure persecution, the seizure of property, and even death for the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople? Or was it rather for the Truth of Holy Orthodoxy? Yes, ultimately, it was for love of Christ Jesus and His Church, Orthodoxy, that they endured.

Orthodox Greeks, do you not see your fellow Orthodox brothers and sisters in Ukraine suffering valiantly, as once did your ancestors? They have been persecuted by the Government forces, heretics, and radical nationalists. They have lost church buildings, they have been forced out of homes, they have been beaten—all for the same Holy Truth for which your ancestors stood. Now, will you not stand with your Orthodox brethren? Or will your own ancestors condemn you and your silence? Does not the blood of Christ Jesus in Holy Communion bind all Orthodox together in a manner greater than ethnic bloodlines (as great as they may be)? Are we not all of the “Orthodox race” through holy baptism?

With great grief and sadness I read the news that the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) intends to give the “Athenagoras human rights” award to the schismatic and false “metropolitan” Epiphany of the illegitimate “orthodox church of Ukraine.” This act is endorsed by the Greek Archdiocese of America and its Hierarch, Archbishop Elpidophoros, together with a Jesuit like group called the “Archons.”

It seems now that all one has to do is “support the Ecumenical Patriarch” (with no questions asked) and one is a human rights hero (does the EP now stand for all of humanity too?).

I have no ill will towards the EP but the EP is not Orthodoxy, nor is it the sole standard thereof, nor a “first without equals.” The EP is called, as every Patriarchate and every Bishopric, to uphold the standard of Orthodoxy. This

standard is not directly equated with any one Patriarch or Bishop. Every Patriarch, Bishop, Priest, Monk, and Laymen is subject to the Gospel and Holy Orthodoxy. (Let one recall the numerous times that the EP, and other Patriarchates, have espoused heretical teaching.) The EP is currently promoting a false “church” as a true one; this action is both erroneous and detrimental to the True Church.

In a number of previous articles, I have outlined how nefarious the false church in Ukraine is.

*You shall know them by their fruits*, says our Lord (Mt 7:16). The testimony of the fruit of the false church in Ukraine, which is supported by the EP, is that it is not Christian. Its “hierarchs” are indeed wolves in sheep’s clothing, mercenaries in pastoral garb.

Does the EP have the authority to override the Gospel? Does it have the power to turn stones into children of Israel? It does not. (Only true repentance can truly change a man by grace.)

Why is a lie being promoted as truth? The claim is that “In Ukraine he (Mr. Epiphany) has already provided the Solomon-like wisdom that was needed to reunify the Church, return to Eucharistic unity, and establish it as an integral member of the group of autocephalous Orthodox Churches worldwide.”

This is a preposterous and outright deceptive claim; every point in it is false. The facts are that Epiphany (and those under him) has caused greater division and promoted persecutions; he has acted in an altogether unchristian manner. May we now be heathen in vestments as long as we work “as a defender of the religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate ...”? What does it say of such “freedoms” when it enlists false christians to defend it?

Has the EP replaced Christ the Lord as the standard of Holy Orthodoxy and the Head of the Church? Has the goal of maintaining the perceived honor and prestige of the EP replaced the true Christian vocation of being a humble servant of Christ the Lord and His Church?

*A dispute also arose among the disciples as to which of them ... was the greatest. And Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.”* (Lk 22:24-26).

The giving of this “award” to the false “Metropolitan” Epiphany is an absolute disgrace and travesty. How can an uncanonical “Bishop” with an illegitimate “ordination” who heads a “church” that actively persecutes (with violent acts) the long-standing true and canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church be given a “human rights” award from an Orthodox Patriarch?

The Scripture says, *If anyone says “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother*

*whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.* (1 Jn 4:20).

Are we so in love with our own selves that the Scriptures are no longer relevant? Are we simply going to praise white-washed tombs because they serve worldly political agendas and aggrandizement? Will we be silent as true Christians suffer and false ones are exalted? Woe to us if we lose our salt, for we will be trampled underfoot even in our pretty vestments. Woe to us when we call evil good. And such an action is calling that which is evil—schism, division, and persecution—good. Or as another priest has already said, “somehow this looks completely demonic.”

Those that promote and agree with these actions are in fact participators in them. They themselves are also facilitators of the persecution of the True Church in Ukraine; their hands are also stained with blood. The entering into unity with a schismatic group means that there is a communing of the same spirit.

**The glorifying of schismatics is heresy.**

Will other Orthodox Hierarchs (around the world, but most of all in America where the award is to be given) speak against this new machination of the EP? Will we stand with the true Hierarchy of Ukraine, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Onufry? Will Orthodox Greeks honor their laudable ancestry and heritage by speaking out in defense of their true Orthodox brethren in Ukraine? Or will they become like new Turks: participators in the active persecution of fellow Orthodox?



With the “rationale” for accepting the Tomos of “Autocephaly” of the Schismatic Church of Ukraine, we are in danger of possibly also being led in the future to the sacramental acceptance of Papism and other heresies without the fundamental conditions of repentance and the renunciation of their dogmatic delusions, something that Ecumenism attempts today, not only in theory but already in practice. So we wonder, essentially, whether the spiritual institutions within our Church have begun to “function” devoid of their spiritual foundation. We wonder whether in recent decades a “new ethos” has been introduced with the hidden aspiration to become the habitual ethos also in customary law, which will undermine the Canonical Tradition of the Church. Historically, we know that when such a mentality was consolidated in the West, the Western Church was led to Papism—with all its dogmatic deviations—and ended up cut off from the One and only Church.

**Dr. Demetrios Tselengidis**

Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Thessaloniki, from his letter to the Holy Synod of Greece about the Ukrainian Schismatic Church

## A PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

*By Rev. Joe Wright.*

This prayer burst into the public consciousness back in January of 1996, when the Rev. Joe Wright, senior pastor of the 2,500-member Central Christian Church in Wichita, was invited to deliver the opening prayer at a session of the Kansas House of Representatives. On that occasion he offered the following “Prayer of Repentance:”

*Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask your forgiveness and seek your direction and guidance.*

*We know your Word says, “Woe to those who call evil good,” but that’s exactly what we’ve done.*

*We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values.*

*We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of your Word and called it moral pluralism.*

*We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism.*

*We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle.*

*We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.*

*We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation.*

*We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare.*

*We have killed our unborn and called it choice.*

*We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable.*

*We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building esteem.*

*We have abused power and called it political savvy.*

*We have coveted our neighbors’ possessions and called it ambition.*

*We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression.*

*We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.*

*Search us O God and know our hearts today; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free.*

*Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas, and who have been ordained by you, to govern this great state.*

*Grant them your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of your will. I ask it in the name of your son, the living savior, Jesus Christ.*

*Amen.*

Rev. Wright read the prayer at the opening of the legislature on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1996 and then departed, unaware of the ruckus he had created until his church secretary called him on his car phone to ask him “what he had done.” His prayer had apparently “offended” a great number of House Democrats, some of whom characterized his prayer as a “message of intolerance” and one that “reflects extreme and radical views.”

This took place in 1996. One cannot help but wonder: what would they do or say nowadays?

## MODERN MAN'S SECULAR SPIRIT AND ATHONITE HOLINESS

*By St. Paisios the Athonite, excerpt from "Athonite Fathers and Athonite Matters," a concise recount of many fathers of Mount Athos who were holy people, who were alive (or recently reposed) around the time when Elder Paisios was beginning his monastic journey (more specifically, probably during the 1950s and 1960s).*

I am much troubled by my conscience for not having kept detailed notes about the virtuous fathers who lived in these latter days, and about whom I was told by devout elders when I was a mere beginner as a monk. As I am also troubled at my great negligence for not retaining, even in my memory, all the divine events which these holy elders experienced and told me about in their simplicity, to help me spiritually.

The fathers of those days had great faith and simplicity. Although most of them were basically illiterate, they, nevertheless, received constant divine enlightenment because of their humility and zeal for spiritual combat. While, in our own days, knowledge has increased, unfortunately, logic has shaken people's faith from the foundations and filled their souls with questions and doubts. So, it is only natural that we should be deprived of miracles, because miracles are experienced and cannot be explained by logic.

This terribly secular spirit which prevails in modern man, who has turned his entire attention towards living better, with greater ease and less effort, has, unfortunately, affected most spiritual people; they, too, are also attempting to become saints with less effort—but it can never happen, because *the saints gave blood and received spirit*. While we rejoice now at the great shift towards the holy fathers and monasticism, and admire the worthy young people who dedicate themselves with high ideals, at the same time, we hurt because we see all this good material not finding the appropriate spiritual leaven; hence, this spiritual dough does not rise and ends up like unleavened bread.

In the old days, even only twenty years ago, simplicity still abounded in the *Garden of the Mother of God*. The fragrance of simplicity of the fathers drew God-fearing people like bees and nourished them, while, they, in turn, transmitted this spiritual blessing to others for their benefit. Wherever you went, very simple stories of miracles and heavenly events were heard, because the fathers considered them perfectly natural.

Living in this spiritual atmosphere of grace, it never occurred to you to doubt what you heard, because you were living part of it yourself. Neither would it ever occur to you to make notes of these heavenly events, nor retain them in your memory for coming generations, because you thought that this patristic way of living would continue. How could anyone have known that in a few years most people would become deformed by too much education—since they are being taught in the spirit of atheism and not in that of God,

which can sanctify external education, too—and faithlessness will reach such a point that miracles will be considered fairy-stories from bygone days? Naturally, when the doctor is an atheist, however many tests he performs on a saint with his scientific equipment (X-rays and so on), he will not be able to discern the grace of God. Whereas if he, too, has holiness in him, he will see divine grace radiating.

To give a more vivid picture of grace so that readers can better understand the patristic spirit that reigned a few years ago, I felt it would be a good thing to refer to cases of simple elders of that time as living examples.

When I was a beginner at the Monastery of Esphigmenou, I was told by the God-fearing Elder Dorotheos that an elder of great simplicity used to come to help at the monastery infirmary. He thought that the Ascension, the feast which the monastery celebrates, was a great saint, like Saint Barbara, and when he prayed with his *komboskini* he used to say *Saint of God, intercede for us!* One day, a sickly brother had arrived at the infirmary and since there wasn't any nutritious food there, the elder hurried down the steps leading to the cellar, stretched his hand out of a window overlooking the sea and said, *Saint Ascension, please give me a little fish for the brother*. What a miracle! A large fish leapt out into his hand. He took it quite naturally, as if nothing had happened, and happily went off to prepare it so as to strengthen the brother.

The same elder told me of another father (Pachomios, I think), who had gone to *Kapsala* to live in stricter *ascesis* and had reached great spiritual heights. One day, one of the fathers of the monastery put aside two fish which he cleaned, in order to go and see him and offer them to him as a blessing. As he was cleaning them, however, a raven suddenly snatched up one of the fish and took it to Father Pachomios in *Kapsala* (a distance of five and a half hours on foot). Father Pachomios had received information from God about the brother's visit and just as he was wondering what to treat him to, the raven dropped the fish. Later, when the brother came and heard about this, he also glorified God, Who, in our own times, also feeds His people through a raven, as He did the Prophet Elijah.

A few years ago, there lived an elder, Fr. Charalambos, at the Monastery of Koutloumousiou. He was very simple but also a man of "great violence," not only in his spiritual duties, but also in his monastic tasks. A most willing man in all things, Father Charalambos would have done most jobs, because in his day only a few old fathers remained in the monastery. He was also assigned at the Library, but was removed from this task because he would never lock the door. He used to say: "Let people read the books." It never even occurred to him that there are also people who steal books. He was of great purity and simplicity.

Apart from his many monastic tasks, he even planted trees as well for future generations, because he believed that the

Monastery of Koutloumousiou would once again be filled with monks. While his hands were forever at work for others, his mind and heart were working at his spiritual duties, through the unceasing prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me*. He was always first for the services. He actually directed one of the choirs which are on either side of the church. And when the canonarch was going across to the other choir to intone to them, Father Charalambos would say the Jesus Prayer very rapidly, so as not to interrupt his unceasing prayer.

And so he lived, very hard-working and very spiritual, without ever letting up. Unfortunately, a terrible dose of flu knocked him off his feet, and the doctor told the fathers not to leave his side, because his life would soon end. Father Charalambos heard him from under the bedclothes and answered: What are you talking about? I am not dying till Pascha comes so I can say *Christ is Risen*.

Indeed, about two months went by and Pascha came. He said Christ is risen, received Communion and then rested in peace. The simple elder, so full of *philotimo*, had really become a child of God and together with God had arranged the date of his death.

In the Skete of Iveron, Elder Nicholas of the Markiani Brotherhood told me about a father who also had childlike simplicity; once, when their well had dried up, he let down an icon of Saint Nicholas into the dry shaft with the rope tied to the ring and said: "Saint Nicholas, you come up together with the water, if you want me to light the icon lamp for you; you can do it. You see, so many people come and we don't even have some cold water to give them."

What a miracle! The water gradually began to rise and the icon of the saint floated on the top until he was able to hold it in his hands, kiss it reverently and take it into the church. (This happened some fifty years ago.)

In the same skete, a little higher up from this hut, there is the Cell of the Holy Apostles, where two brothers now live. Elder Pachomios also belonged to this brotherhood; one could clearly detect the holiness radiating on his face. The elder was very simple and completely illiterate but full of grace. When he came to the central church of the skete for the service on feast days, he never sat on a *stasidi*, but always remained standing, saying the Jesus Prayer, even during all-night vigils. Whenever anyone asked him what point had been reached in the service, he would reply: "The Psalters, the fathers are reading the Psalters."

He called everything Psalters. He knew absolutely nothing about chanting, apart from Christ is Risen, which he chanted at Pascha. He was always willing to do the will of others, without having any will of his own.

No matter how many worries you had, you needed only to look at Father Pachomios and they would go away. Everyone loved him, even the snakes, which trusted him and didn't slither off when they saw him. There were a lot of snakes in the area

around the hut, because there was water there. The other two fathers were very afraid of the snakes, but Father Pachomios would go near them with a smile, pick them up and put them outside the fence.

One day, when he was hurrying to the hut of the Markiani Brotherhood, he came across a large snake in his path. He wrapped it round his waist like a belt, so that he could finish what he had to do first and then put it outside their grounds. Father James took fright at the very sight of it, which made Father Pachomios wonder.

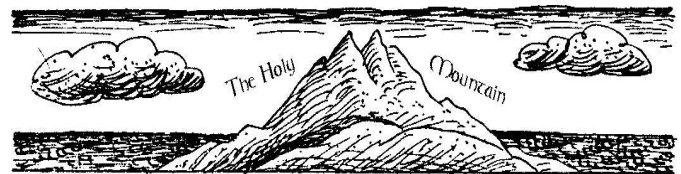
He later told me: "I don't know why they are afraid of snakes. There is our own Father Andrew, who is even afraid of scorpions! I just scoop them up in the palms of my hands from the walls and throw them outside the hut. Now that my hands tremble so much with Parkinson's disease I just drag the big snakes outside."

I asked the elder: "Why don't the snakes bite you, Father Pachomios?"

He answered: "Christ writes on a piece of paper somewhere that if you have (the) Faith, you can pick up snakes and scorpions and they will not harm you."

This saintly elder had rested in the Lord on October 22, 1967, one year before Elder Tychon passed away. I shall write later about him, as well as about other righteous fathers who strove with *philotimo* in the Garden of Our Most Holy Lady and were purified with the aid of the Good Mother, the Pure Virgin. They became soldiers of Christ, conquered their passions, and exterminated the enemy, the devil. These "Commandos" of our Church have been crowned by Christ with an incorruptible crown.

I knew many of them at first hand, but unfortunately have not imitated them, which is why I am now so far behind them. I wish with all my heart that those who read about their godly exploits will imitate them and also beg them to pray for me, wretched Paisios.



Let no one deceive you, brother: without holiness, as the Apostle says, no one can see God (cf. Heb 12:14). For the Lord, who is more than holy and beyond all purity, will not appear to an impure person. Just as he who loves father or mother, daughter or son (cf. Mt 10:37) more than the Lord is unworthy of Him, so is he who loves anything transient and material. Even more unworthy is the person who chooses foul and fetid sin in preference to love for the Lord; for God rejects whoever does not repudiate all filthiness: *Corruption does not inherit incorruption*. (1 Cor. 15:50).

**St. Theognostos**

"The Philokalia," vol. 2; Faber and Faber, pg. 375

## ON THE ECUMENIST POST-PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

*By Elder Athanasios Mitilinaios (+2006), from one of his homilies in November 1982, translated from Greek by Constantine Zalalas. This article has been circulated in many websites and periodicals in Greece; many have commented on the elder's prophetic gift based on this.*

The Antichrist will officially declare the commencement of a new age on earth which will succeed the Christian age possibly creating a third covenant. We have the Old Testament, the New Testament, and he will most likely create a third testament. This *cacodox* dogma about a third covenant is very old. Saint Gregory the Theologian even refers to this. Do not let this surprise you because it is nothing more than what we are witnessing in our days.

What is the nature of this third covenant, this third testament? It is the widespread perception, cultivated excessively in our days about an antiquated Christianity. This perception flourishes among secular Christian circles and worldly people with an ecumenist mentality. These secular and ecumenist church leaders claim that traditional Christianity is antiquated and bankrupt. It does not offer anything to the heart of the modern man. It needs to be modified. The old traditional Christianity is somehow powerless. Therefore, according to these modern Christian minds it is necessary to create a new dimension and in reality, a third covenant.

As we mentioned, this state already exists. Besides, what else did the Prophet Daniel mean when he wrote, *He will think to change times and law. He will alter the law of God.* This is the third covenant. The Church Fathers and the Saints of the Church will be out of season and considered very old fashioned. In much sadness, we may ask, could the Antichrist be reigning in Christian nations as we are speaking? Saint John Chrysostom refers to something to this effect. This does not refer to the final Antichrist because Saint Cyril of Jerusalem already said, God forbid! The secular Christian nations will serve as agents and servants of the Antichrist.

In Orthodox Christian lands, we are not immune to heretical ecumenist clergy hidden behind high chairs. They can be bishops, patriarchs, archimandrites, and members of the Masonic Lodges who often make their neo-Orthodox heresy very public. They go on to claim that the holy canons are out of season, inapplicable. The Rudder of Saint Nicodemos is meaningless and worthless. Fasting should be abrogated and abstinence is reminiscent of the dark ages. They claim that we live in a new era and we must see our youngsters in a different light. They can co-habitate before marriage; they can lead their sexuality freely, without any canonical repercussions and so on.

Since this spirit is prevalent today, even among Orthodox clergy, is it not possible that the agents of the Antichrist are also working in today's Orthodoxy? Do we see now why God has His Saints at every age and in every century? Simply to tell

the faithful that we cannot claim that the Saints are a thing of the past and their teachings are inapplicable. God gives us many Saints in each century. During the twentieth century, we have many saints such as Saint Silouan, Saint Nektarios, Saint John Maximovitch, Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, and so many others. In Greece, Saint Nektarios has been labeled the Saint of our century, the twentieth century.

By the way, it is not by accident that the deluded Old Calendarist "Abbess" Magdalene, is blaspheming and cursing Saint Nektarios. This is the reaction of Satan who is working through this pitiable and demon-possessed woman. Our church was forced to excommunicate this woman so I can speak freely about her.

This is an indication that the Antichrist will not tolerate the existence of Saints because he will maintain that sainthood is a thing of the past, somewhat mythical and medieval and much like the Gospel and such a Gospel cannot possibly produce Saints. This is precisely why God will provide us with Saints in every generation to shut the lips of those who like to speak about an antiquated Gospel. Saint Ephraim the Syrian further adds, "During those days (of the Antichrist) the faces of the God loving Christians will be full of tears and they will be fervently asking for God's word. **The people will be desperately searching for an Orthodox sermon and the reply will be, there is no such sermon anywhere.**



Worldly stress is the result of worldly happiness, of worldly pleasures and self-indulgence. Educated externally and being full of anxiety, hundreds of people (even young children) are driven to psychoanalysis and psychiatrists. New psychiatric hospitals are being built and young psychiatrists go on for post-graduate studies. Many of them do not even believe in God, or accept the existence of the soul. How can these people help the human soul, when they themselves are full of anxiety? How can one feel truly comforted, if he does not believe in God and in the true and eternal life after death?

When man grasps the deeper meaning of this true life, stress goes away—divine consolation comes and he is healed... The answer to our anxiety is not drugs, alcohol, tranquilizers or psychiatric treatment. It will not be cured by Yoga or some new age or eastern meditation practice. The problem is that we have lost God as the center of our lives. Once we make our love of God the primary focus of our lives and allow His grace to work through us, then no matter what circumstance we encounter in life we will be comforted and embraced in His love. All anxiety disappears. This is the aim of the Orthodox way of life: to put God first and seek the Holy Spirit. The anxieties of modern life are only symptoms of our separation from God.

**St. Paisios the Athonite**

## WHO IS A HERETIC?

By Constantine Zalalas.

On the Sunday of the Fathers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical synod, we commemorate the victory of Orthodoxy over heretical and schismatic members, a title used by the Orthodox Study Bible New Testament and Psalms on page 506. The Holy Fathers anathematized Dioskoros and Eutiches and all Monophysites from the Body of Christ and articulated the Chalcedonian definition which affirms that Christ is perfect God and perfect Man. The two distinct natures were united in the one Person of Christ (the person of the Logos), *without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation*. Without confusion and change excludes any notion of Monophysitism. Without division and separation defends and immunizes the faithful against Nestorianism.

On this particular Sunday and in commemoration of the 600 Holy Fathers the Church strategically chose the Epistle Reading from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Saint Paul's letter to Titus, verses 8 to 15, regarding heretical and schismatic members, a heading used by the Orthodox Study Bible. I will refer specifically to verse 10 which is correctly translated by King James from the Greek, and I quote: «*Αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νοουθεσίαν παραιτοῦ*», *A man who is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject*. (Tit 3:10).

The word heretic has been softened by the New English translations due to political correctness perhaps or ecumenistic friendships and dialogues. The word heretic sounds a bit "harsh" and "medieval," so a new and softer term is mostly used: a man who is divisive, or factious, or a man who loves to argue. The Greek, however, cannot be changed; thus, the Ecumenist hierarchs who recently preached on this verse and posed the question: "Who is a heretic?" And proceed to answer: "The Monophysites, the Protestants, and all our non-denominational Christian brothers and sisters (of the World Council of Churches)? No, they are not heretics, they simply did not accept this or that Ecumenical Synod. These are churches that did not accept the Fourth or Fifth or Sixth, or some Ecumenical Synod. Heretics are the Jehovah's witnesses, the Mormons, and perhaps the Scientologists, and the modern day adherents to Arianism."

Tragically, this mindset is totally foreign and irreconcilable to that of our Holy Fathers throughout Church history and contradicts the Spirit of the Scriptures. Mormons, Jehovah's witnesses, and all adherents of Arianism who reject the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation of the Second Person of The Holy Trinity are not at all Christians since they do not believe in the Doctrine of Christ. According to Saint John the Evangelist, *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father*

*also*. (1 Jn 2:23). So an atheist is not only the person who does not believe in the existence of God but he who does not accept the God-Human Person of Christ. Saint John repeats again in his Second Universal Epistle: *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*. (2 Jn 1:9). The term heretic was always applied to Christians who adulterated and betrayed *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*. (Jude 1:3).

The filioque, the primacy and infallibility of the Popes, created grace, are heretical teachings that adulterate and betray the Orthodox Faith. Iconoclasm, the elimination of all Holy Tradition, Sola Scriptura, the elimination of the Holy Mysteries and especially of Divine Liturgy are terrible heresies created by human reason, the same reason which spawned the Reformation and divided Christianity into thousands of pieces in the West.

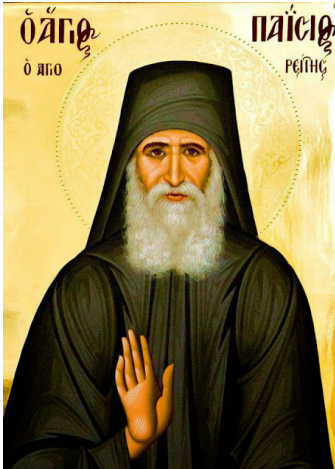
As Orthodox Christians we respect all people, including our enemies. We will help, feed and clothe anyone of our needy neighbors regardless of creed. We will be careful not to be divisive at work or in public and we can use the word non-Orthodox if you will, in our missionary endeavours. Saint Paul did precisely the same thing when he was teaching in Athens. He was very respectful to the Athenian idolaters. He called them God-fearing people, although his spirit was churning inside from all the demonic energy of the Athenian idols. There he was doing missionary work. But in his aforementioned Epistle to Titus, he is doing pastoral work, where he instructs his co-workers and future Bishops of the Church. So there is a difference between missionary work, and pastoral work. Pastoral work has to do with teaching our own, with safeguarding our Orthodox people from destructive heretical teachings and cacodoxies.

Saint Paul in the course of this Epistle, instructs Titus and all his co-workers and likely future Bishops of the Church that a man who is a heretic, after a first and second admonition let him be. Do not spend months and years to try convince him differently. The weed of heresy is a disease. Elsewhere Saint Paul calls heresy gangrene that will overtake the entire body if it is not cut off quickly. Unfortunately, Papism, Protestantism, Monophysitism and Nestorianism are not some benign customs but heretical teachings that impede our good neighbors from reaching their God given potential, robbing them from the potential of *theosis* or Holiness which is the highest privilege for a created being. *Be ye holy; for I am Holy*. (1 Pet 1:16). Holiness cannot be achieved without true faith (*Orthodoxia*) and true practice (*Orthopraxia*).

We will close with the greeting of the Apostle of Truth and Love: *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, and truth and love*. (2 Jn 1:3).

## CHRISTIANS MUST WITNESS THEIR FAITH, SPEAK UP, AND RESIST EVIL

By St. Paisios the Athonite.



If Christians do not begin to witness their faith, to resist evil, then the destroyers will become even more insolent. But today's Christians are no warriors. If the Church keeps silent, to avoid conflict with the government, if the metropolitans are silent, if the monks hold their peace, then who will speak up?

The spirit of lukewarmness reigns. There is no manliness

at all! We have been spoiled for good! How does God still tolerate us? Today's generation is the generation of indifference. There are no warriors. The majority are fit only for parades.

Godlessness and blasphemy are allowed to appear on television. And the Church is silent and does not excommunicate the blasphemers. And they need to be excommunicated. What are they waiting for? Let us not wait for someone else to pull the snake out from its hole so that we can live in peace.

They are silent out of indifference. What is bad is that even people who have got something inside have begun to grow cool, saying: "Can I really do anything to change the situation?" We have to witness our faith with boldness, because if we continue to be silent we will have to answer in the end. In these difficult days each must do what is in their power. And leave what is out of their power to the will of God. In this way our conscience will be clear.

If we do not resist, then our ancestors will arise from their graves. They suffered so much for the Fatherland, and we? What are we doing for it?...

If Christians do not begin to witness their faith, to resist evil, then the destroyers will become even more insolent. But today's Christians are no warriors. If the Church keeps silent, to avoid conflict with the government, if the metropolitans are silent, if the monks hold their peace, then who will speak up?...

### Make War Against Evil

You see, if we do not begin to make war against evil, to expose those who tempt believers, then the evil will grow larger. If we throw aside fear then the faithful will be emboldened a bit. And those who wage war against the Church will have a harder time.

In the past our nation lived spiritually, so God blessed her, and the saints helped us in miraculous fashion. And we were victorious against our enemies, who always outnumbered us. Today we continue to call ourselves Orthodox Christians, but we do not live Orthodox lives...

### Beware of Lukewarm Clergy

A lukewarm clergy lulls the people to sleep, leaves them in their former condition so they will not be upset. "Look", they say. "By all means do not say that there will be a war, or the Second Coming, that one must prepare oneself for death. We must not make people alarmed!"

And others speak with a false kindness, saying: "We must not expose heretics and their delusions, so as to show our love for them." Today's people are water-soluble. There is no leaven in them.

If I avoid upsetting myself to protect my fleshly comfort then I am indifferent to holiness! Spiritual meekness is one thing, and softness and indifference are quite another. Some say: "I am a Christian and therefore I have to be joyful and calm." But they are not Christian. They are simply indifferent. And their joy is only a worldly joy.

He in whom these worldly seeds are present is no spiritual person. A spiritual person consists of nothing but pain. In other words, he is in pain at what is going on, he is in pain for people's condition. And divine comfort is bestowed upon him for his pain.



It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard tell of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper they said to him: "Aren't you Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and proud man?" "Yes, it is very true," he answered.

They resumed. "Aren't you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?" "I am." He responded.

Again they said, "Aren't you Agathon the heretic?" But at that he replied: "I am not a heretic."

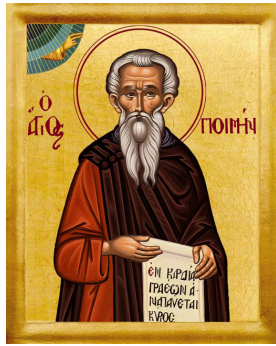
So they asked him, "Tell us why you accepted everything we cast you, but repudiated this last insult."

He replied: "The first accusations I take to myself, for that is good for my soul. But heresy is separation from God. Now I have no wish to be separated from God."

At this saying they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified.

From the Desert Fathers

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TUCSON, AZ  
PERMIT NO 690

A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION  
HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## THE VALUE OF THE JESUS PRAYER

By Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra (+2019).



We should read one of the Fathers of the Church. Ten minutes are enough, but even five minutes if you want. And read another five or ten minutes from the Holy Scriptures. From the Old Testament first, because the Old Testament is the foundation. It is the support, the foundation of the Church and of our lives. And our peace. If we don't know the Old Testament, we will

never understand God. Because God revealed Himself there. And then He revealed to us saying: *I am what I say there, in the Old Testament. And here I write about that.* If we do not identify these places, we will not be able to understand them.

If you tell me the words "foreign occupation," and if I know nothing about this, I saw no war at all, I am a king in my house... How shall I understand it? But when I cross the border and I see the church that they have locked and destroyed, and they burned its tiles and everything, and it's now a ruin... And I see the houses there, deserted, with the windows open, fallen to the ground, damaged... Then I understand what "foreign occupation" means...

I need to make the connection: "Oh, that's the meaning of this, isn't it?" So that's what happens with the Old Testament!

God revealed many things there. And the correspondents are in the New Testament and in the lives of the saints of our Church.

Let us read a little bit and learn to say the Prayer. One hundred thousand words of read prayer do not replace the few words of the prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!* Look, five little words! [This prayer has only five words in Greek, *Ed.*]

This is doxology, thanksgiving, supplication, confession, theology, witness. This prayer encompasses everything.

God understands even if we do not understand it.

I can say unceasingly: *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me* and I may not understand anything, but God understands. So we should say the prayer!

It's a very easy thing, my beloved! If we take care of it, you will see, in a month, no doubt, that, as I told you, your heart will rejoice! There is no man who asked something from God and didn't receive. Otherwise, He wouldn't be God!

So when we say to him: "Give me, Lord, the prayer!" "Put it in my heart!" Will He not do it?

He will give us happiness.

He will give us peace.

He will give us festive joy.

He will give us tears.

He will give us everything.

Whatever you want to acquire through these words, from heaven and from earth, you will see, it will be so for you. Whether it be a hidden thing or a visible one, you will receive it, God will give it to you!



# 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]

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

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

VOL. 17, ISSUE 11-12

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2019

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN

## In This Issue:

- O Foolish Ones... (p. 4)
- Duties of Pastors and of the Flock (p. 7)
- On the God-Pleasing Life (p. 10)
- Tidings of Great Joy (p. 12)
- A Nativity Epistle (p. 21)
- The Value of Time (p. 22)
- The Commercialization of Christmas (p. 24)
- St. Mark of Ephesus and the False Union of Florence (p. 26)



- Ἦταν Ἄνθρωπος! (σελ. 13)
- Τὰ Χριστούγεννα Γεννήθηκε ὁ Χριστός! (σελ. 14)
- Ὁ Κύριος θὰ Στείλει... (σελ. 16)
- Ἡ Ἀλήθεια γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα (σελ. 17)
- Ἔρχεται «Διωγμός!» (σελ. 19)
- Αὐτὰ εἶναι Χριστούγεννα (σελ. 20)



Publisher: St. POIMEN Greek Orthodox Brotherhood

Editor: George Karras

Story Editors:

Markos Antoniathis & Kostas Matsourakis

## PEACE FROM GOD CHRIST IS BORN!

*By the saintly Patriarch Pavle of Serbia (+2009), given at the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade at Christmas, 1999.*

*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. [Jn 6:68]*

† † †



Persons and events come and go with the relentless march of time. That which today seems important and crucial may be completely forgotten tomorrow. Persons

regarded by their contemporaries as influential and powerful are forgotten, as if they never existed. History brings and then carries away everything with itself, it concocts and then abandons to oblivion. Everything appears temporary and relative, even we ourselves. Man can carry on in various ways with the pessimism of history, but it is far more important how God sees history. By His constant presence and action in history God, through what only appears like a meaningless course of events, prepares the way that leads toward a predetermined goal. By His entering into history He has transformed history so that particular events are not relative and temporary, but on the contrary, they are unique, unrepeatable and of crucial importance both for God and for man. God's presence in history cures history itself of its natural pessimism.

And precisely today, here and now, for the two thousandth time we celebrate and remember the event that divides history in two; the event so significant that we count the years from it and now

complete the second millennium. Two thousand years have passed since that night when history's greatest miracle took place in that cave near Bethlehem, when the Son of God Himself came and put on flesh and became like one of us and dwelt among us. (Jn 1:14). He is none other than the eternal and uncreated Son, the Word or Logos of God, through Whom all things were made. Since that night nothing in human life and history is as it was before. The *Sun of Righteousness* (Mal4:2) was born to us and all the depths of human fallenness and struggle against God have been filled by His warmth and light. From that night on, all human life and the history of every nation comes down to only one dilemma, to one simple question: Are you for or against Christ? One simple question, but a question so crucial that our entire life and the future of our people hinges upon it. That question overshadows and defines every historical period of the past twenty centuries.

For or against Him? Earlier periods that were, at least for the most part, "for Christ," brought forth fruit that stands as an example and a starting point for all times. That fruit is called Christian culture. It represents an attempt to Christianize every segment of personal, social and national life, so that nothing remains outside or apart from Christ. We call it an attempt, since nothing in history is absolute and final. But the value is truly in the deeply Christian attempt, since a basic characteristic of Christianity is its all-inclusiveness—that Christ be all in all.

Let us simply remember how the writer of the life of the Serbian ruler Stefan Lazarevic said of him, that he wished that "life throughout his land truly be like the Church of God." The fruits of life directed in this way are magnificent.

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688  
USA

[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)

Orthodox Heritage is published bi-monthly by the “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen,” a laity brotherhood. All correspondence should be addressed to the Brotherhood at the Phoenix address or the e-mail address above.

Please visit our website for our mission and other useful information.

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

If you wish to receive this periodical, please write or e-mail us with your address. We suggest to all that share our views and wish to assist us to donate \$24 per annum (\$48 for those outside of the US). This amount will greatly assist us in the costs it takes to bring these articles to you, as well as to aid in our other educational and philanthropic activities.

Please note that the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. POIMEN is a publicly supported organization as described in section 509(a)(2) of the IRS Code and that it is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(a) of the Code as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our supporters and donors can thus deduct contributions to the extent that they are gifts, in accordance with section 170 of the Code.

Checks should be made out to “Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen.” PayPal users may utilize their credit card and address payments to our e-mail address, “poimen@mail.com.” Please visit our website for the applicable links.

Christianity was poured into the everyday way of life. It Christianized every soul and created the atmosphere in which all personal and social life developed. No matter what area of life in that period we examine, we always find at its core a Christian vision and understanding of life and the world. It was an inexhaustible source of vitality and, most importantly, optimism for the age that declared itself *for Christ*. Even the tragedies that occurred, such as our Kosovo, could take on a Christian character in the national consciousness. Historical periods cannot be repeated, neither can models from the past be transplanted into the present. But what remains as an example for all times is the creative effort to base all of life on Christ, so that there are no spheres of life or activities that honor laws or rules other than Christian ones. Epochs that were *for Christ* well understood His words that *no one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and mammon.* (Mt 6:24). But then come dark times, times that struggle against God and Christ, regardless of whether they come from conquering foreign peoples or from the actions of our own people. The goals and methods are always the same: Kill Christ in the souls of the people, throw Him out of every area of life, and erect and proclaim new gods. In every such time Christians answered in the same way—with their blood. In such times the history of the whole Church, as well as of our Serbian Orthodox Church, is written in blood. From Kosovo to Jasenovac all the martyrs and new-martyrs witnessed that there is no life without Christ, and they did not fear those who could kill only their bodies but could not harm their souls. Their blood is our foundation, and we are accountable to it, that we not betray Christ even at the price of our lives, much less for our positions or careers. Their blood will be the measure of our salvation.

For or against Christ? On the basis of this yardstick, how can we grade the century we are leaving behind? Wars and a whole ocean of spilled Serbian blood. Suffering and misfortunes characterize the past century, but its grade can be summed up in only one word—failure. So much war, so much blood, and so little peace. Even the peace we did have during the past hundred years was not really peace, since we used those times to create the groundwork for new conflicts and wars. Governmental and ideological adventurism during the twentieth century cost the Serbian Church and people dearly. And in the end, what is left is that we are beginning the new century and the new millennium in a state of total crisis. Many are the names and characteristics of the crises in which we find ourselves, but fundamentally what we have is that deepest and most difficult of all possible crises—the crisis of humanity. Wrong has become right for us, falsehood has become truth, and we can only cry out with the Psalmist David, *Help, Lord, for there is no longer anyone who is godly! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak lies every one to his neighbor; with lying lips and deceitful hearts they speak.* (Pss 12:1-2).

The twentieth century constantly preached with the lips of its demonic “wisdom” that human lives are the cheapest of all merchandise. In the number of its victims it far surpassed all other centuries of human history. The tyrannies to which it gave rise have nothing comparable in any other time of history. The ideological dictatorships which arose during this time, especially in Orthodox countries, were unprecedented attacks on human freedom and human life. In the name of ideologies millions lost their lives simply because they wished to think and live differently.

What is man, and what is he worth? The twentieth century said that man is nothing, but this feast today tells us, just as that day two thousand years ago told us, that man is sacred. And that applies not only to his spirit or his soul, but also to his body. The whole of man, body and soul together, is an inviolable shrine of incalculable and eternal worth. Today's feast tells us this, the day on which the Bodiless becomes embodied and on which the Son of God becomes the Son of man. This precisely is what is radically new in our faith.

That the soul is holy is suggested by other religions, but that the body is equally sacred is found nowhere else. During the whole first eight centuries of Christianity, which were characterized by struggles against heresies, the Church unyieldingly defended this truth: that the whole of man, both body and soul, is holy. And that applies to every human being, regardless of his religion or nationality. Every murder, every disrespect for human personality and freedom, is sin, even more so when it is justified on ideological or nationalistic grounds.

In contrast to this dismal picture of the twentieth century, today we see before us a young mother holding her newly-born Child to her bosom, and are moved to feel one of the greatest of human virtues and attributes: a warm heart. The motherly love of the Most Holy Theotokos permeates today's entire event and radiates a warm feeling within us. Christmas is the feast of warmth and of warm human hearts. If it seems that there is no place today a person can "warm" himself, it is because human hearts have grown cold. They have become hard and unfeeling even towards the suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters who in recent years have been left homeless, exiled from their birthplaces, and some even without their loved ones. That life is hard is not the exception but the rule. Only the twentieth century has brought the simple-minded dream that life should be easy and leisurely, which it never has been throughout history. *In the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread*, the Lord tells Adam (Gen 3:19), and that is the law of human life. But afflictions and difficulties and limitations are easier to bear when we have warmth in us and amongst us. For in the day of His second coming, the Lord will not ask us what kind of times we lived in, but how we related to our neighbor. Was he our "hell" or our "heaven?" We ourselves build either heaven or hell in our own hearts out of the momentary circumstances we are given, and the warmth of the human heart is able to transform any situa-

tion, even to make a cave in Bethlehem the most beautiful palace and birthplace of the King of kings.

It is hard to be a human being. To be a human being who spreads human warmth is even harder, but it is a task to which we are suited and which the Lord Himself has entrusted to us—to be human, even during inhuman times. Let us look around us. See how many families are governed by coldness, where there is no more love and which are disintegrating. There are more and more such families. See how many ties of kinship, neighborliness, friendship and *kumstvo* (godparenthood, *Ed.*) have been broken and enveloped in coldness. We will be completely immobilized by the ice of discord and intolerance, of disunity and envy, if we do not bring Christ into our hearts and especially into the hearts of our children. He is the only One able to bring together the disunited and reconcile the alienated, to warm our hearts and give peace to our lives.

So what is to be done now, in the new century and new millennium? We pose this question to ourselves. We pose this question to our brothers throughout the world who care about us. The future is hidden and unknown. There are many roads before us, but they are not all the right roads. Some of them lead to destruction. But the future which lies before us is not simply something we must await, but it is a road we, first of all, must construct. We are responsible for our future no less than for our past. It is revealed to us as a possibility which we must responsibly and consciously create. And overshadowing the future is the same question we have already asked—For or against Christ?

If the Lord has not revealed the near future to us, leaving it up to us to create it, He has revealed to us the final and ultimate truth—that no matter what, He will triumph. He revealed that good is far stronger than evil, and that every triumph of evil is temporary and illusory. The weeds and the wheat grow together, but only until the harvest. For or against Christ—this is the question that will determine both our future and the future of all nations. As we gather here today around the Divine Infant Christ celebrating His birth, we hope and we pray to Him that He will be reborn in our hearts, in our neighbors, in our people and our country, and in the hearts of all people and all nations.

Peace from God—Christ is Born!

Your intercessors before the cradle of the Divine Infant:

Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade-Karlovci and Serbian Patriarch PAVLE



## O FOOLISH ONES AND SLOW OF HEART... [LK 24:25]

By the late Avgoustinos N. Kantiotis, bishop of Florina, Greece (+2010), from "Follow Me," translated by Asterios Gerostergios, Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont, Massachusetts, pp. 242-250.

All of us, at one time have wondered why the Lord allowed Peter to fall. And there is a very distinct reason for it. This fall, which Peter would remember for the rest of his life—it is said that whenever he heard a cock crowing, he shed tears—this great fall kept him humble. It nearly cost him eternity. He would have been lost forever, but the Lord prayed for him and his faith did not perish.

How now could he not be thankful to the Lord for his salvation? How could he not be sympathetic with sinners, who, drawn by strong passions, committed serious sins? A "righteous man," a Pharisee, would have condemned such mercilessly and would have sunk them in despair. Peter—sympathetic with sinners. How many times during his apostolic career had he comforted sinners who came to him crying for their sins! "My child," the Apostle would tell each of them, "do not despair. God's mercy is infinite, and I also sinned before the Lord. I sinned greatly. Even if the rivers would become tears, they would not be able to wash away my sin. Each time I remember it I am shattered, but the Lord forgave me. And you, whenever you repent and are sorry for your sins, the Lord will forgive you. Don't despair, then, but give thanks and glorify God."

Peter's intentions were good. He deeply loved Christ, and therefore Christ saved him from that fall and he came out with priceless spiritual prizes: self-knowledge, humility, and empathy. God's mysteries! That divine grace somehow knows how to make spiritual gain from the sins into which chosen souls have unwittingly fallen! Just as the omniscient God knows how to extract sweet flowers from a dunghill, so from the dunghill of sin, when there is sincere repentance, He extracts flowers of virtue. Truly, *all things work together for good to those who love God.* (Rom 8:28).

Brothers and sisters, fellow sinners, do not misconstrue these words and say in your hearts, "Since good comes from sin, let us then sin." Peter did not say "I'll deny the Christ so that grace may come upon me." No, his sin was not premeditated, but a terrible whirlwind which, for reasons we gave above,

found him weak and nearly destroyed him. Meditate, I ask, on Paul's words in Romans 3:5-8: *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

It is easy for a person to change and go from the heights of innocence to the depth of corruption and depravity, as the following anecdote shows.

An artist was once passing through a quarter of an Italian city. He saw a small child in whose face shone pure joy and innocence. He painted the child and took the picture to his studio, and whenever he was taken by melancholy, he looked

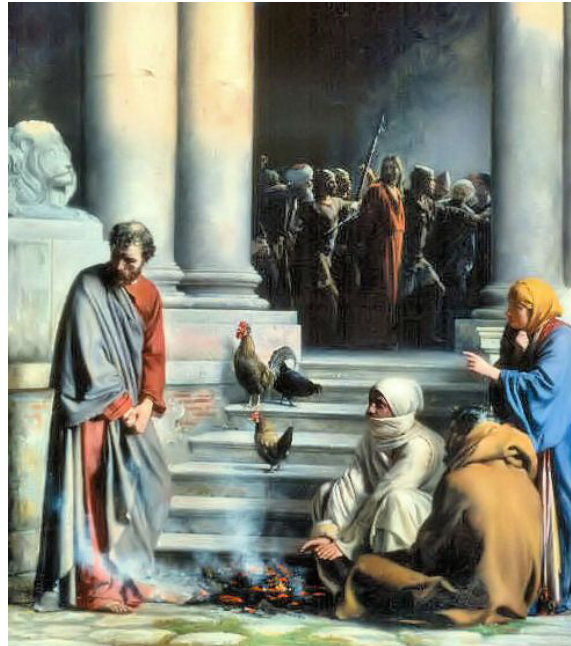
at the bright form of the child on the picture and his melancholy passed.

After many years, the same artist visited a jail to paint the wicked form of a criminal. He found it in the face of one prisoner who had committed a horrible crime. He painted the criminal's face and placed this picture next to the one of the innocent child, and beneath them wrote the epigram, "The Beauty of Heaven and the Ugliness of Damnation." But to the painter's astonishment, he discovered that the innocent child and the horrible criminal were one and the same person! Who knows what circumstance changed this innocent child

into that abominable wrong-doer. The two paintings are now in the Museum of Tuscany.

How easily we are transformed! Therefore, St. Augustine is heard to say somewhere in his Confessions, *Lord, we have seen souls who for their virtues near the stars of heaven, yet for pride and an unwatchful life fall and wallow in the dung of earth.*

Thus, brethren, we, too, can draw a lesson from Peter's fall. From what heights the Apostle fell! Perhaps someone superficially judging the events would condemn Peter for his denial and say that if he were in his place, he would not have denied the Lord. You see, it is easy to make ourselves heroes in words, but how words differ from reality! We live in times of peace. Immediate danger of death does not prevent us from confessing our faith; but, how many times when, without the threat of execution, does our duty come into conflict with our baser behavior and we prefer the voice of conceit and stifle the voice of our conscience, which is the voice of God? When



it comes to the test and we perjure ourselves for money or fear of a mighty person or for love or a relationship, denying the truth, do you not think that at that moment a voice like Peter's repeats: *I do not know the man?*

If we look at our lives, how many "little denials" of Christ do we see and how we would groan over our conceit, over our fear, and over our opportunism, which makes us deniers of righteousness and truth! And these, I say, in peaceful times, in a democratic state where we can freely express our ideas and feelings. If tomorrow brings a whirlwind and our democracy is swept away and an anti-Christian tyranny comes to power threatening to persecute the Faith, then we would see how many would be ready to sacrifice their good life and their bodies for the Lord. How many would leave sacred meetings? How many would not seek to erase their names from the records of religious societies and brotherhoods? How many would swear and anathematize themselves, saying that they have no relationship with religious life or movements?

This occurred during the persecutions of the first centuries; could it not be repeated now on a grander scale?

Addressing Gospel workers who continue Christ's work in our age, we say that they, too, must taste the bitter cup of denial in evil times. Let's mention an example from our religious movement today.

In a provincial city the author had a student in his catechetical school who showed eagerness and zeal, but when he grew up and tried to find work, he happened to be asked by a powerful person, hostile to missionary work, if he knew me. The young man was afraid, perhaps, that if he said he knew the author and that he was his student, the man would be displeased and his hope of arranging things would perish. He therefore answered, "I never heard of him," and so got on the good side of the agent.

But the young man, scolded by his conscience for what he had done, came crying to me and said, "Father, I have denied you." "My child, do not groan," I told him, "to deny me and not Christ is a small matter." "No," responded the young man, "it does matter, for I know you not as a mere man, but as a Gospel preacher."

Gospel workers will hear: *I do not know the man*. They will come across people whom they have taught and helped spiritually—as well as materially—but when these same persons are persecuted by a modern-day Annas or Caiaphas, they will deny knowing their Gospel worker to have the goodwill and protection of the powerful of the day, both in Church

as well as state. "Renounce that preacher publicly," once said a bad bishop to a novice theologian, "and you will have all my favor and protection."

But you, honored Gospel worker, do not lose heart. In the life of a preacher and every faithful follower of Christ, repeating His life in the smallest possible miniature, such painful things will happen. Always hold fast to Christ, and have courage and boldness. He who enables every living thing and all creation to preach to Him and sing His praises, was denied by His most fiery disciple, Peter. Many denied Him throughout the Ages and still do today, so what is so strange if they deny you, a mere earthling?

† † †

A school was opened near Lake Gennesaret, a model school. There were twelve students at the start, and its instruction

was lofty. It astounded everyone. Nowhere was heard nor ever will be heard a higher teaching. The lessons were not confined to the narrow circle of the Twelve as specialized instruction, secret, which no one else could know, but was meant to be known all over the world. The Lord said: *Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.* (Mt 10:27).

The truth was meant to be known by the Apostles who made disciples of all nations. For the Twelve to make disciples of the whole world, they first had to become disciples themselves. They had to be enlightened; then they could enlighten. They had to be sculpted in the workshop of divine instruction to become living statues of virtue. They had to be purified and

polished to become mirrors that reflected Christ's glory. They had to become spiritual suns which dispelled the darkness of error and sin.

Was this an easy task? It is said of a famous sculptor that, when he saw a block of marble submerged in mud, he pulled it out, carved it, and one day a shining angel appeared! The muddy block had been transformed into a marvelous work of art. Teaching is like stone-cutting. One sculpts marble; the other sculpts raw minds. There is a difference, however, in the object of the two professions. Marble puts up no opposition; it is worked to the desire of the sculptor. People, however, as living and free beings, put up opposition, and teaching, desiring to shape people, is made difficult. There are hard minds which frustrate every attempt to instruct them.

Every teacher encounters difficulties, but no teacher ever found as many difficulties in his work as Christ did. His



teaching, as we said, was lofty; however, His disciples' minds, influenced by the Judaic superstitions deeply entrenched in the consciences of many, were incapable of understanding the new teaching of the Nazarene. Their doubts came one after the other. Their ideas about the Messiah's mission were low and earthly. They dreamed of an earthly kingdom with Christ as an all-powerful king and themselves in prominent positions. They certainly quarreled over attaining rank for first place. Jealousy stung their hearts. Intolerance and vengeance disturbed their spirits. Clouds of melancholy and gloom darkened the skies of their souls. Little faith came into their souls, narrowing the range of belief. Terror seized their hearts. Strangers did not denounce their failings; Christ revealed them. These same men admitted their weaknesses in the Gospels. St. Chrysostom observes, "For with this object He reveals their deficiencies, that after these things thou mightest know what manner of men they became by grace."

The Apostles did not attempt to justify or diminish the impression, as if to tell us, "This is what we are—people with weaknesses and failings. How far we are from the spirit of Christ! He told us about the heavenly kingdom and we thought about crowns on earth. He called us to martyrdom and we fought over places of honor. Foolish and unlearned disciples, how much sadness we caused in Jesus' holy heart! One of us denied Him before a servant girl, the other betrayed Him for a most meager reward. The others forsook Him at the most critical moment. The Lord was right to rebuke us and tell all of us what He told Luke and Cleopas: *O foolish ones and slow of heart!*"

Truly, before His enemies abused Him, before the nails of His crucifiers penetrated His holy body, before the soldier's lance pierced Him, the disciples He loved more than anything else in the world made Him drink the bitter cup. Many times, He was a stranger to those around Him, and the mere presence of Judas served to be a source of constant affliction for Jesus.

He bore these afflictions, however. He did not dissolve the circle; He did not send the disciples back to their homes as incapable of instruction or spiritual advancement. No, He held them close, and as time passed and the end of His earthly life drew near, He spoke still more fervently to them. Despite their imperfections; they would be the ones who continued His work in the world.

Certainly as God He did not need them. He could have transmitted the gospel by other means. He could have sent angels and archangels into the world, who as fiery spirits would traverse the earth, but He chose human beings. The foolish things of the world—the rough, the base, and the nobodies—He chose to accomplish the great miracle of feeding the world on God. Truly, no beginning could have been more negligible than the beginnings of Christianity, but it is also the proof that our religion is of God, Mighty and All-powerful.

Spiritual fathers and Church teachers, from your pulpits you preach to the masses and many people hear you. Thank God for this blessing, but you should not be satisfied with this alone. Seek out those few cultivated souls in your audience who will be able to continue your spiritual work. The discovery and education of young people for missionary service should be your first priority. Have you found such individuals? Have they approached you? Have they stated their desire to follow naked the naked, crucified Lord? Kneel and give thanks to the Lord, for in your generation there are still missionary callings.

These young people, however, do not become missionaries overnight. They need enlightened instruction and a brilliant example. They will also pass tests, as do all Gospel workers. You must be armed with patience and love. Until the time they throw out the worldly views, errors, and superstitions of our times—until the time they build up brave and lofty minds—O what you will endure! There will be times when you will weep. The shadow of a Peter who denies or a Judas who betrays will become your greatest cross. Get up, my brother, your labors to promote Gospel workers will not be in vain. When it is time for you to dawn in the other world, there will dawn on the horizon of the Church new Gospel workers, new stars lighting the world.



I think of how, with such love, All-good God, You created man in the blessedness of Paradise. Not only did you create me in order to give form to my earthly being, but to give to me Your own divine breath. But I listened to the enemy and was deceived, and chose the path which led me far from You. And it was a way filled with pain and anguish, inconsolable and desolate—without hope, without end.

Until You returned. But now, with my earthly form. Because it was right to fulfill the debt of my own nature. Out of much love, You assumed that which I had lost. You came as such a small, quiet and humble infant, self-silenced lest You frighten me. You, Almighty God.

And it only remains for me now to make the great decision, to open my heart and let You nestle inside. That You may place therein Your throne, that You may stay longer with me; and, by Your Presence, renew me as a member of the Mystical Body of Your Church, to foretaste from now the Kingdom of the Heavens.

This is the greatest joyous event, Lord: Your coming to the Earth and into my heart.

May You make me worthy to remain always a welcoming manger, to accept You and to have everything for Christmas in my heart with You.

**An Anonymous Expression of our Lord's Nativity**

## DUTIES OF PASTORS AND OF THE FLOCK

By St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, bishop of Voronezh (+1783). From "Journey to Heaven, Counsels On the Particular Duties of Every Christian." Translated by Fr. George D. Lardas, published by Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY (1991).

### On the Duty of Pastors



Pastors are here taken to mean bishops and priests. The very name pastor indicates of what sort they must be. For they shepherd not irrational, but rational, sheep of Christ, people created in the image of God and redeemed with the blood of Christ, the Son of God. Heed this, then, beloved pastor!

1. You should not seek this rank or honor, but await the calling.

2. When you are called, consider whether you are able to take up such a burden; and if you cannot bear it, do not approach it lest it weigh you down and plunge you into the abyss. He who would correct others must correct himself, he who would teach others must first teach himself. He who would shepherd and save others must watch over himself. He who would keep watch over and guard others must be good himself. He who would be a leader and show the way to others and lead them to the heavenly home must go on before himself. He by whom all should be enlightened must be a light to the world, the salt of the earth, and so on. He who would be an intercessor for others to God must first be pure and blameless himself. His own conscience must not reproach him who would reprove others for sin, lest he hear, *Physician, heal thyself!* (Lk 4:23). Consider these things, beloved, and do not approach burdens greater than your strength.

3. A pastor must without fail teach people, lead them to true repentance, plant the fear and love of God in men's hearts, put the fear of God's judgement in reckless and unrepentant sinners, encourage the troubled and doubtful and those inclined to despair with the mercy of God and the consolation of the Gospel, and root out superstition; schism and heresy. He must draw all this teaching from the wellsprings of Israel, the sacred books of the word of God, and transmit it to the people under him.

4. The place of teaching is the holy church; however, the pastor can and must impart his teaching in every place, wherever there may be a gathering, whenever occasion per-

mits. In this we have as an example to all pastors Christ the Saviour of the world, Who taught not only in the temple of Solomon, but also in homes, and in the desert, and in other places. Occasion will give the diligent and clever pastor a time and place to speak, as we see even in the Gospel. While sitting at table, he might speak of the table of the Kingdom of Heaven, and so on.

5. You must consider beforehand whatever you have to say to people, and think on it well, and then you may set it before the people. Food is sprinkled with salt before it is cooked, and then it is set on the table, and it is both pleasing and useful to those that sup. Thus a pastor must first prepare the food of the word of God within his heart, and sprinkle it with the salt of reason, and then set a spiritual table for his hungry people, otherwise the pastor might easily sin in word.

6. Because there are two kinds of people—those that live recklessly, and those that are humbled with the fear of God's judgement and hunger for consolation—then the pastor has an obligation to set forth in his words to those without fear the Law of God and God's judgement, and thereby lead them into true repentance and contrition; and he must give the Gospel consolation to those that are contrite and sorrowful and troubled in conscience. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* (1 Tim 1:15).

7. Sometimes a word of reproof (the act of reproving, censuring, or rebuking, *Ed.*) must be spoken to all in general, and sometimes to some particular person. When reproof is given in general, then one may speak strictly and sharply, that sinners listening might feel the lash of fear in their hearts, and so be wakened as from the sleep of sin. We see this in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. But when you wish to say a word of reproof to a particular person, and it concerns a sin known both to you and to him, in that case speak carefully, lest while you treat one sore you do not open a greater wound. Seek a time and an occasion for this. There is no better occasion than when he himself confesses his sin to you. Then you may tell him everything, only speak soothingly and with sympathy, and not with anger, so that he may know that you speak out of love, and that you sincerely desire his salvation.

8. When people, whoever they may be, commit iniquity and you know it openly, take extreme care not to be silent, but everywhere reprove their iniquity in your speech, lest you be like a dumb dog that does not bark when thieves break into a house and loot it, and wolves fall upon the flock and devour it.

Stand firm, beloved, and show your pastoral work even though you must necessarily suffer. In this work you have as your examples the prophets, apostles and luminaries of Christ who lived in times of old.

9. Keep from flattering rich and exalted people that live in the luxury and pride of this world, and keep from minimizing their vices, or even worse than that, from making them out as nothing, lest instead of being a teacher you are a flatterer; but reprove every vice plainly and bear witness to the truth in every place and at all times, for you speak the word of God as a messenger of God. Let all such people know that you are their pastor and teacher, and that you must give account for them to the just Judge.

10. Avoid speaking the word of God for the sake of praise and human glory, lest you sin before God, appropriating to yourself that which is not yours. The word of God is given for the sake of men's salvation and for the glorification of God's name. One must preach it for this end. When you fittingly discharge your pastoral duty, then you will have praise though you may not wish it, however not from all. Those that are good and zealous for their salvation will love and praise you, but those that are wicked and neglectful of their salvation will hate you and revile you. You will not, then, please everyone.

11. Whatever you teach the people under you, you must first do yourself. Thus you will teach in word and deed when your manners and life are in agreement with your word. You sit in a high place and stand before all. All look at you, then, and observe what you do and say. Therefore, teach them goodness by your word and example, that they may hear from your lips a useful word, and see the example of your good life, and so they will profit by your word and life.

Beloved! Be a light to your people in word and life. Be their salt, be a leader into that homeland, and not merely a signpost by the roadside showing them the way, but go on before yourself. Guard them as a watchman, and guard yourself. Proclaim the word of God to them, but first do so yourself. Invite them to the great supper of eternal blessedness, but go on before yourself.

12. Without the help of God, the efforts of the pastor himself as well as those of the people will not be discharged or meet with success. For this reason the pastor has an obligation to pray diligently to God for himself and for the people, that He help both himself and all the people.

The Apostle portrays the virtues a pastor must be adorned with and how diligent he must be, in his First and Second

Epistles to Timothy and in the Epistle to Titus. Read them for yourself and you will see. Worthy of all acceptance is his saying, *A bishop, and a priest, must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well in his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)* (1 Tim 3:2-5).

### On the Duty of the Flock toward the Pastor

1. First, because the pastor speaks the word of God, then to whatever he teaches, pay diligent heed, O Christian, and do it. Concerning this the Apostle says, *Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they must watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.* (Heb 13:17).

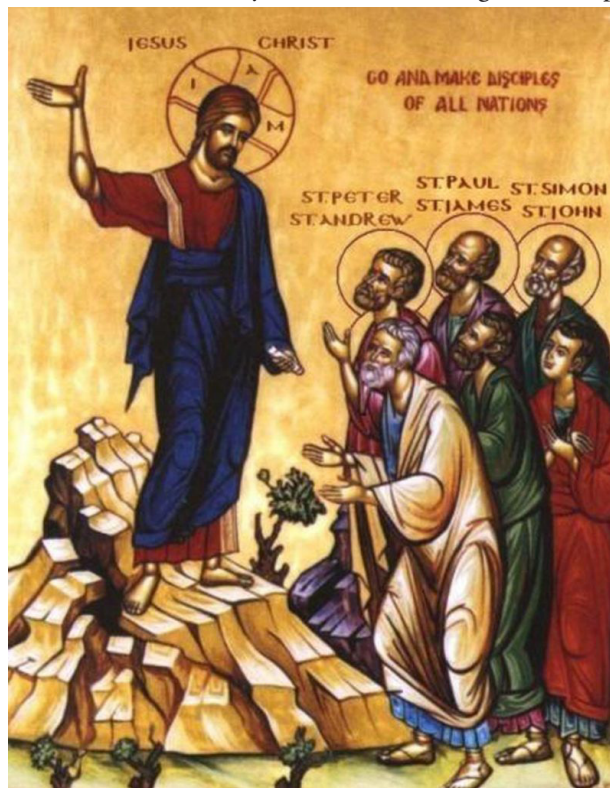
2. Second, the pastor is the messenger of God who is sent to you by God, and he proclaims to you the way of salvation and invites you in the name of God into His eternal Kingdom. For this reason, revere him as the messenger of God that proclaims to you such great good things, and who invites you to them. *He that receiveth you receiveth Me,* (Mt 10:40) says the Lord. Receive, then, and revere the pastor as the messenger of Christ.

3. Third, because the pastor provides for the common good, and as he looks after you as well

as for all so that all may receive eternal salvation, then love him as your father and benefactor, and be grateful to him. You call him father, that is well: he begets you as well as others, not to the temporary, but to eternal life. Love him, then, as so great a father to you. You love your father according to the flesh, how much more ought you love this father.

4. Fourth, as he takes care and provides for all and for you, do not leave him in need, but help him in his requests and supply his needs, that he may have time to take care and look after the common good. Thus by mutual love and benefaction the common good will not be without success.

5. Fifth, because many among the people are not men of goodwill and as they do not love pastoral reproof but wish to live according to their own will, they invent and broad-





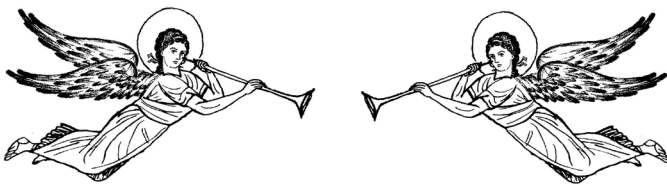
cast no little slander against the pastor. Then when you hear such slander and ill report against the pastor, do not believe it and guard your lips, lest you say anything about it to anyone else. Otherwise you will sin gravely, as you will return evil for good, which is a great iniquity. It is a serious thing to slander and dishonor a simple person, how much more so a pastor. From this great discord follows among the people, and disregard and disobedience to the pastor, and thus his labor may end without profit. Pay careful attention to this, avoid evil gossip against the pastor. Most of all do not spread evil gossip about him, lest you feel the avenging hand of God upon you.

6. Sixth, if you see in the pastor such weaknesses as occur even among the people, do not be scandalized and do not judge him, but understand that the pastor is a man, just like everyone else, and that he has the same weaknesses as do the rest of the people.

7. Seventh, because the pastor is subject to many temptations, and the devil and his evil servants war against him most especially, therefore he also needs the special help and support of God. Then, you, and all the people as well, must pray to God for him that He may help him and strengthen him.

The happiness of the household depends on a good householder, the happiness of soldiers depends on a good commander, and the happiness of a sailing ship depends on a good helmsman. Then pray that the pastor may be wise and good, and that Christian Society may be happy.

8. When the pastor himself does not do what he teaches, but lives contrary to his teaching, heed the word of Christ which He spoke concerning such pastors, *The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after to their works: for they say, and do not.* (Mt. 23:2-3).

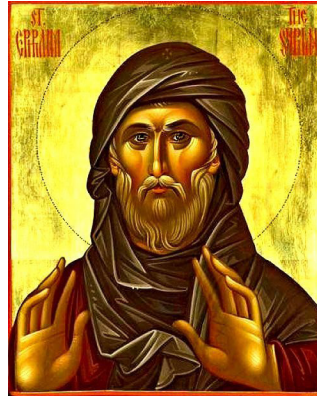


He comes not as a fierce man of war, threatening all things living with death, but as a newly born babe, bringing the hope of rebirth and life into the entire realm of death; He comes—but the land of destruction does not meet, does not embrace, does not praise, does not even see its Saviour, and does not hear the Word of God keeping silence in a manger. Virtually in vain does *the glory which Jesus Christ had with God the Father before the world was* (Jn 17:5) on the lips of the angels, follow Him descending into the world and pursuing Him, attain even unto the earth.

**St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (+1867)**

## A HYMN

*By St. Ephraim the Syrian.*



I fall in adoration at your feet,  
Lord!

I thank you, God of goodness;  
God of holiness, I invoke you,  
on my knees, in your sight.

For me, an unworthy sinner,  
You have willed to undergo the  
death of the cross,  
setting me free from the bonds  
of evil.

What shall I offer in return for your generosity?

Glory to you, friend of men!

Glory to you, most merciful!

Glory to you, most patient!

Glory to you who forgive sin!

Glory to you who have come to save us!

Glory to you who have been made man in the womb of a  
Virgin!

Glory to you who have been bound!

Glory to you who have been scourged!

Glory to you who have been derided!

Glory to you who have been nailed to the cross!

Glory to you, laid in a sepulcher, but risen again!

Glory to you who have preached the Gospel to men and  
have been believed!

Glory to you who have ascended to heaven!

Glory to you, seated at the right hand of the Father

and who will return with him, in majesty, among the angels,  
to judge those who have disregarded your passion!

The powers of heaven will be shaken;  
all the angels and archangels, the Cherubim and Seraphim  
will appear in fear and trembling before Your glory;  
the foundations of the earth will quake  
and all that has life will cry out before Your majesty.

In that hour let your hand draw me beneath Your wings,  
and save me from the terrible fire, from the gnashing of teeth,  
from the outer darkness and from despair without end.

That I may sing to Your glory:

Glory to Him who through His merciful goodness  
has deigned to redeem this sinner.

† † †

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus  
Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us!

Amen!

## ON THE GOD-PLEASING LIFE A PASSAGE FROM ABBA POIMEN THE GREAT ABOUT THE GOD-PLEASING LIFE, THE CONQUEST OF THE PASSIONS AND THE SOWING OF THE VIRTUES

Source: "The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It," by St. Theophan the Recluse, translated by Alexandra Dockham, *The Holy Monastery of St. Paisius, AZ (1996), Letter Sixty-Nine, pp. 254-259.*



Who got you interested in St. Poimen so that you want to know more about him? No matter who it was, I am glad of it. You will find who St. Poimen was and how he lived

in the *Menaion* under August 27<sup>th</sup>, and also in the *Sayings Concerning the Ascetic Deeds of the Saints and Blessed Fathers*. You will find a number of his sayings in these places.

He was from a simple family and was uneducated, but the experiences of spiritual life and grace so enlightened his mind that because of his astute, precise knowledge of the laws of the rising up to perfection of spirit, it is fitting to place him among the first of the instructive Fathers wise in the ways of God.

Until you get to reading about him, I will write for you the most important points from his teaching and sayings that relate to what I have been explaining to you for a long time.

Repentance and grieving over one's sins is the beginning of the Divine path. This is what you encounter in St. Poimen.

He saw a woman who was sitting on a grave and weeping bitterly, and he said, "If all the pleasures of the world were to appear here, they would not free her soul from grief. We too must continually grieve thus." (Saying 26).

The 72<sup>nd</sup> saying also recounts a similar situation, and the words of St. Poimen are quoted in this way: "I assure you that if man does not do away with all fleshly desires and does not thus weep, he cannot become one with God. This woman's entire soul and life were absorbed in grief."

A person who repents and grieves over his sins naturally shuns evil and does good. Until he is this way, he may not undertake to do evil by deed, but he cannot be free from wicked thoughts. That is why his shunning of evil consists almost entirely in struggle with the thoughts. This is what St. Poimen talks about.

One of the brothers went to Abba Poimen and said to him, "Father! I have many thoughts, and I am in danger because of them." The old man took him outside and said, "Expand your chest and do not inhale!" "I cannot do that," answered

the brother. "If you cannot do that, then neither can you stem the flow of the thoughts," said the old man. "But your job is to resist them" (Saying 28).

Your job is to resist them, but how? First of all, be attentive to yourself and be sober. A brother said that when he was with others, he would amuse himself and return to his cell not the same as when he left it. He asked how he should act. The elder told him, "When you return to your cell, do you want to find yourself the same as when you left? Maintain vigilance over yourself both at home and outside the home" (137). "In general," Abba Poimen would say; "the thing you need most is a sober mind" (135).

When maintaining vigilance over yourself, as soon as you observe the passionate, immediately pray and it will go away. A brother asked Abba Poimen about the struggle with rebellious thoughts, and the Elder answered him: "This situation is like a man who has fire on one side, and a cup of water on the other. When the fire begins to scorch, he takes water from the cup and puts it out. Fire is the suggestion of the enemy (the passions), while water is earnest prayer to God." (146)

To suffer less from passionate thoughts, it is necessary to remove oneself from occasions that arouse them. One must remove himself from everything passionate, said Poimen. A man who is close to something that could engender passion is like someone standing over a deep precipice into which the man's enemy may easily throw him. But the man who removes himself from that which is capable of arousing passion is like someone standing far from the precipice. Let the enemy drag him so as to toss him into the abyss, but while he is dragging him along by force, the man will call out to God and God will help him. (59)

The most important thing is to try in every way possible not to give in to the thoughts. For encouraging this, we read the following in the sayings about St. Poimen: "A brother asked him whether a person could always suppress his thoughts without yielding to the enemy in a single one? The elder answered, 'There are those that suppress ten but yield one.' That very same brother asked the same thing of Abba Sisoës, and he said, 'Indeed, there are those who yield nothing to the enemy.'" (88, 89)

Another: Abba Anoub asked Abba Poimen about pure thoughts that are engendered in the human heart, and about vain desires. Abba Poimen answered him: *Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?* (Isa 10: 15). Do not give them a hand, and they will not do anything." (15)

What then will come of this unyielding? The passions will die away. That is what Abba Poimen told Abba Isaiah when the latter asked him about impure thoughts. He said: "If a trunk full of clothing is not looked after, then in time the clothing will disintegrate. So too will the thoughts, if we do not in fact carry them out, vanish in time, as if they disintegrated." (20)

Abba Joseph asked Abba Poimen about the same thing, and he said, "If someone were to place a snake and a scorpion in a jar and close it up, then in time, of course, the creatures would suffocate. So too will bad thoughts that come from the demons die away, if we resist them patiently and do not feed them." (21)

However, in shunning evil through such ruthless opposition to passionate thoughts and desires, one must at the same time do good, cultivating every sort of virtue within oneself. Through both these things the heart will soon be purified. There are many lessons in St. Poimen about cultivating virtue. Here are the most important ones.

He quotes a saying of Abba John the Dwarf, who said, "I desire to possess every virtue, if only to a small degree." (46) Further on he offers his own lesson about this, saying, "When a man decides to build a house, he gathers many different materials for construction. So too must we acquire all the virtues, if only to a small degree." (130)

There are, however, virtues that are fundamental and provide guidance, and that is why one must direct all efforts toward them. St. Poimen often indicates which ones these are. For example: "Maintaining self-vigilance, being attentive to one's self and discernment are the three virtues that guide the soul." (35)

"Fall down before God, humble yourself and reject your own will; these are the working tools of the soul!" (36) "In the Scriptures it is written, *Though these three men, Noah Daniel and Job, were in it, as I live, they shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.* (Ezek 14:14, 14:20). "Noah represents poverty; Job, patience; Daniel, discernment. If a man has these three virtues, then the Lord dwells in him." (60)

"The three fundamental virtues are the fear of God, prayer, and charity toward one's neighbor." (160)

Abba Poimen had a layman tell the brothers the following: "I do not know how to speak from the Scriptures, so I will tell you a parable. A man said to his friend, 'I want to go see the king. Come with me.' The friend answered him, 'I will go with you half-way.' He said to another friend, 'Take me to the king.' He said, 'I will take you as far as the king's palace.' The man said to a third person, 'Come with me to the king.' 'Let's go,' replied the third friend, 'I will go with you to the king's palace, bring you inside, announce your arrival and present you to him.' Abba Poimen asked the layman, 'What does this parable mean?' He replied, 'The first friend is asceticism, which leads you to the true path; the second is purity, which takes you to Heaven; the third friend is almsgiving, which will fearlessly bring you to the King Himself, God.'" (109)

When, in this way, you do not yield to the passions on the one hand, and you cultivate the virtues on the other hand, the heart gradually softens (182), warms up and receives within itself the Divine flame, which you have only to look after to be safe. Abba Poimen says concerning this: "When a pot is

warmed by a fire, then no fly or other creature can touch it; but when it becomes cold, then they perch on it. It is the same way with the soul: So long as it is in a state of spiritual activity (enthusiasm of the spirit for God), the enemy cannot affect it." (111)

These excerpts are sufficient for you. You will find for yourself the other things that are necessary and valuable for you in St. Poimen. I just wanted to use these excerpts to refresh your memory about all that we have talked about earlier. Here is the entire path that you have set out on. Indeed, no matter which Father you begin to read, you will find essentially the same thing in each, although they differ in their portrayal and explanation.

May you become wise! Lord give the blessing!



Two philosophers came to an elder and asked him to say something beneficial to them. The elder remained silent. Again the philosopher spoke, "Will you not answer us, father?" The elder said to them, "That you are skilled in the use of words, I am fully aware; but I do testify to you that you are not truly philosophers. How long will you cultivate the art of speech, you who have no understanding of what it is to speak? Let the object of your philosophy be always to contemplate death, possessing yourselves in silence and tranquility."

Abba Palladios told us of something that happened in Arsinoe, a city of the Thebaid. A man was arrested there for murder. After suffering many tortures, he was finally condemned to be beheaded. As he was being taken to where he had committed the murder—a point about six miles outside the city—there was a monk following behind, apparently with the intention of seeing how he would be decapitated. As he passed along the way to his execution, the condemned man saw the monk who was following and said to him, "Well now, Abba, have you no cell, sir, nor any work to occupy your hands?" The monk answered, "Of course I have a cell, brother, and also something to occupy my hands." The man rejoined, "Then why do you not stay in your cell and weep for your sins?" The monk replied, "Ah, brother, I am very negligent of my soul's health—and that is precisely why I am coming to see how you die, that by this means I might come to have some compunction." The condemned man said to him, "Go your way, Abba. Remain in your cell and give thanks to God who saved us. It was because He was made man and died for us that man dies no more the eternal death."

John Moschus, "*Leimonarion*"

## TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

By Metropolitan Philaret (+1985).

Once long ago, nearly two thousand years in the past, at the dawn of Christianity, the pre-eminent Apostle Paul, one of the greatest preachers of the Christian Faith, wrote in his epistle to his beloved disciple Timothy: *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh* (1 Tim. 3:16).

And the holy Gospel, relating to us how this, the greatest event in the history of humanity, the manifestation of God in the flesh took place, says that the angel who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds of Bethlehem told them: *I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:10-11).

Great joy... Behold, the Holy Church, solemnly celebrating the great and splendid feast of the Nativity of Christ, renews this great joy in our sight from year to year, reverently and joyously pondering and reminding us of the wondrous accomplishment of the merciful and co-suffering love of Him Who descended from the unapproachable and dread throne of His divine glory and appeared on our sinful earth, “for us men and for our salvation...” The saintly Theophan the Recluse says that there can be no greater joy for the Christian soul than the joy which the angel proclaimed on the blessed night of the Nativity of Christ, and which he said would be a great joy for us, for all people.

O Christian! Does your heart rejoice on this splendid feast day? Behold, before us is the world which surrounds us, which does not know the beauty and light of Orthodoxy. The children of this world, for all appearances, also celebrate the Birth of Christ. But what is their “Merry Christmas!” which thousands and millions of their post-cards and greetings say? Having torn themselves away from the fundamental laws of the Church, having lost all connection in fact with ancient Christian piety, they have reduced the celebration of the great and splendid feast to greetings, gifts and brightly-colored lights. Yet there would be nothing foolish in all of this if it were warmed from within with the truth and joy of the great solemnity of our holy and saving Faith. But do we not see that their entire celebration is but decorative in character? On the outside it is elegant, but within there is spiritual emptiness...

Nay, the joy of the Nativity of Christ lies not in gifts and greetings, but in the news that the Omnipotent Creator of all that exists appeared on earth, dwelt among men, gave them His marvelous evangelical law and the wondrous example of spiritual life in God and love for God and neighbor; by His redemptive and salvific sufferings He has freed us from sin, the curse and death, and has opened for us a path to His heavenly kingdom and to everlasting joy in God and with God.

On the night of the Nativity of Christ, the holy angels chanted: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men* (Luke 2:14); And He Who was born on that night, bidding farewell to His beloved disciples on another night, the night of His redemptive sufferings, confirmed the angel’s words, saying: *Peace I leave with you. My Peace I give you*—yet to this He added—*not as the world giveth, give I to you* (John 14:27).

This is the holy peace of Christ, His precious gift to each soul which believes in Him, and it now overshadows all such faithful souls, despite all the bloody chaos and foolishness which we see in the world today. But do there not now come to mind other dread words of the Lord, which He spoke through His prophet: *Peace, peace; and where is peace?* (Jer 6:14). Yea, there is no peace, nor will there be, all the pitiful attempts and efforts of contemporary “peace-makers” to bring about “peace in this world” notwithstanding. For the awful threat of monstrous, fratricidal war hangs over this world, and the world will not escape this horror if it does not come to its senses and return to the path of Christ’s truth. But will it? Is not the fulfillment drawing nigh to us of the dreaded prophecy of the Apostle, who says that the ancient world was inundated with water (the universal deluge), and the present world will perish through fire, the earth also, and the works that are in it, *shall be burned up*, as we are told in the second Epistle of the holy Apostle Peter (3:10)...

But enough of this. The radiant feast quickly approaches! Let every Christian soul rejoice on these splendid days of festival. What awaits us in the future, the Lord alone knows. The Elder Ambrose of Optina, that great righteous man of the Russian land, said: “What will be, will be; what will be, will be what God grants.” And God does everything well...

I greet you all with the feast!

**Christ is Born? Give Ye Glory!**



The incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, He was not far from it before, for no part of creation had ever been without Him Who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet fills all things that are. But now He entered the world in a new way, stooping to our level in His love and Self-revealing to us.

**St. Athanasios the Great**

## Ήταν... Άνθρωπος!

*Φυλλάδιο Γεροῦ Ναοῦ Ἀγίας Κυριακῆς Ἀμφιθέας-Παλαιοῦ Φαλήρου.*

**Μ**ὲ τὴν πρώτη ματιὰ ἔβλεπε κανεὶς ἀπλῶς μία γριούλα. Ἔσερνε τὰ βήματά της στὸ χιόνι, μόνη, παρατημένη, μὲ σκυμμένο κεφάλι. Ὅσοι περνοῦσαν ἀπὸ τὸ πεζοδρόμιο τῆς πόλης ἀποτραβοῦσαν τὸ βλέμμα τους, γιὰ νὰ μὴ θυμηθοῦν ὅτι τὰ βάσανα καὶ οἱ πόνοι δὲ σταματοῦν ὅταν γιορτάζουμε Χριστούγεννα. Ἐνα νέο ζευγάρι μιλοῦσε καὶ γελοῦσε μὲ τὰ χέρια γεμάτα ἀπὸ ψώνια καὶ δῶρα καὶ δὲν πρόσεξαν τὴ γριούλα. Μία μητέρα μὲ δυὸ παιδιά βιάζονταν νὰ πάνε στὸ σπίτι τῆς γιαγιάς. Δὲν ἔδωσαν προσοχή. Ἐνας παπᾶς εἶχε τὸ νοῦ του σὲ οὐράνια θέματα καὶ δὲν τὴν πρόσεξε.

Ἄν προσεχαν ὅλοι αὐτοί, θὰ ἔβλεπαν ὅτι ἡ γριὰ δὲ φοροῦσε παπούτσια. Περπατοῦσε ξυπόλητη στὸν πάγο καὶ τὸ χιόνι. Μὲ τὰ δυὸ της χέρια ἡ γριούλα μάζεψε τὸ χωρὶς κουμπιὰ παλτό της στὸ λαμό. Φοροῦσε ἕνα χρωματιστὸ φουλᾶρι στὸ κεφάλι, σταμάτησε στὴ στάση σκυφτὴ καὶ περιέμενε τὸ λεωφορεῖο. Ἐνας κύριος ποὺ κρατοῦσε μία σοβαρὴ τσάντα περιέμενε κι αὐτὸς στὴ στάση, ἀλλὰ κρατοῦσε μία ἀπόσταση. Μία κοπέλα περιέμενε κι αὐτὴ, κοίταξε πολλὲς φορὲς τὰ πόδια τῆς γριούλας, δὲ μίλησε.

Ἦρθε τὸ λεωφορεῖο καὶ ἡ γριούλα ἀνέβηκε ἀργὰ καὶ μὲ δυσκολία. Κάθισε στὸ πλαῖνὸ κάθισμα, ἀμέσως πίσω ἀπὸ τὸν ὁδηγό. Ὁ κύριος καὶ ἡ κοπέλα πῆγαν βιαστικὰ πρὸς τὰ πίσω καθίσματα.

Ὁ ἄντρας ποὺ καθόταν δίπλα στὴ γριούλα στριφογύριζε στὸ κάθισμα κι ἔπαιζε μὲ τὰ δάχτυλά του. «Γερωντικὴ ἄνοια», σκέφτηκε.

Ὁ ὁδηγὸς εἶδε τὰ γυμνὰ πόδια καὶ σκέφτηκε: «Αὐτὴ ἡ γειτονιὰ βυθίζεται ὅλο καὶ πιὸ πολὺ στὴ φτώχεια. Καλύτερα νὰ μὲ βάλουν στὴν ἄλλη γραμμὴ, τῆς λεωφόρου».

Ἐνα ἀγοράκι ἔδειξε τὴ γριὰ. «Κοίταξε, μαμά, αὐτὴ ἡ γριούλα εἶναι ξυπόλυτη». Ἡ μαμὰ ταράχτηκε καὶ τοῦ χτύπησε τὸ χέρι. «Μὴ δείχνεις τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, Ἄντρα! Δὲν εἶναι εὐγενικὸ νὰ δείχνεις».

«Αὐτὴ θὰ ἔχει μεγάλα παιδιά», εἶπε μία κυρία ποὺ φοροῦσε γοῦνα. «Τὰ παιδιά της πρέπει νὰ ντρέπονται». Αἰσθάνθηκε ἀνώτερη, ἀφοῦ αὐτὴ φρόντισε τὴ μητέρα της.

Μία δασκάλα στὴ μέση του λεωφορείου στερέωσε τὰ δῶρα ποὺ εἶχε στὰ πόδια της. «Δὲν πληρώνουμε ἀρκετοὺς φόρους, γιὰ νὰ ἀντιμετωπίζονται καταστάσεις σὰν αὐτές;» εἶπε σὲ μία φίλη της ποὺ ἦταν δίπλα της. «Φταῖνε οἱ δεξιοί», ἀπάντησε ἡ φίλη της. «Παίρνουν ἀπὸ τοὺς φτωχοὺς καὶ δίνουν στοὺς πλούσιους».

«Ὅχι, φταῖνε οἱ ἄλλοι», μπῆκε στὴ συζήτηση ἕνας ἀσπρομάλλης. «Μὲ τὰ προγράμματα πρόνοιας κάνουν τοὺς πολίτες τεμπέληδες καὶ φτωχοὺς». «Οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρέπει νὰ μάθουν ν' ἀποταμιεύουν», εἶπε ἕνας ἄλλος ποὺ ἐμοιάζε μορφωμένος. «Ἄν αὐτὴ ἡ γριὰ ἀποταμίευε ὅταν ἦταν νέα, δὲ θὰ ὑπέφερε σήμερα». Καὶ ὅλοι αὐτοὶ ἦταν ἱκανοποιημένοι γιὰ τὴν ὀξύνοιά τους ποὺ ἔβγαλε τέτοια βαθιὰ ἀνάλυση.

Ἄλλ' ἕνας ἔμπορος αἰσθάνθηκε προσβολὴ ἀπὸ τὶς ἐξ ἀποστάσεως μουρμούρες τῶν συμπολιτῶν του. Ἐβγαλε τὸ πορτοφόλι του καὶ τράβηξε ἕνα εἰκοσάρι. Περπάτησε στὸ διάδρομο καὶ τὸ ἔβαλε στὸ τρεμάμενο χέρι τῆς γριούλας. «Πάρε, κυρία, ν' ἀγοράσεις παπούτσια». Ἡ γριούλα τὸν εὐχαρίστησε κι ἐκεῖνος γύρισε στὴ θέση του εὐχαριστημένος, ποὺ ἦταν ἄνθρωπος τῆς δράσης.

Μία καλοντυμένη κυρία τὰ πρόσεξε ὅλα αὐτὰ καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ προσεύχεται ἀπὸ μέσα της. «Κύριε, δὲν ἔχω χρήματα. Ἀλλὰ μπορῶ ν' ἀπευθυνθῶ σὲ σένα. Ἐσὺ ἔχεις μία λύση γιὰ ὅλα. Ὅπως κάποτε ἔριξες τὸ μάννα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ τώρα μπορεῖς νὰ δώσεις ὅ,τι χρειάζεται ἡ κυρούλα αὐτὴ γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα».

Στὴν ἐπόμενη στάση ἕνα παλικᾶρι μπῆκε στὸ λεωφορεῖο. Φοροῦσε ἕνα χοντρὸ μπουφάν, εἶχε ἕνα καφεῖ φουλᾶρι καὶ ἕνα μάλλινο καπέλο ποὺ κάλυπτε καὶ τὰ αὐτιά του. Ἐνα καλῶδιο συνέδεε τὸ αὐτί του μὲ μία συσκευὴ μουσικῆς. Ὁ νέος κουνοῦσε τὸ σῶμα του μὲ τὴ μουσικὴ ποὺ ἄκουε. Πῆγε καὶ κάθισε ἀπέναντι στὴ γριούλα. Ὅταν εἶδε τὰ ξυπόλυτα πόδια της, τὸ κούνημα σταμάτησε. Πάγωσε. Τὰ μάτια του πῆγαν ἀπὸ τὰ πόδια τῆς γιαγιάς στὰ δικά του. Φοροῦσε ἀκριβὰ ὀλοκαίνουρια παπούτσια. Μάζευε λεφτὰ ἀρκετὸ καιρὸ γιὰ νὰ τὰ ἀγοράσει καὶ νὰ κάνει ἐντύπωση στὴν παρέα.

Τὸ παλικᾶρι ἔσκυψε καὶ ἄρχισε νὰ λύνει τὰ παπούτσια του. Ἐβγαλε τὰ ἐντυπωσιακὰ παπούτσια καὶ τὶς κάλτσες. Γονάτισε μπροστὰ στὴ γριούλα. «Γιαγιά, βλέπω ὅτι δὲν ἔχεις παπούτσια. Ἐγὼ ἔχω κι ἄλλα».

Προσεκτικὰ κι ἀπαλὰ σήκωσε τὰ παγωμένα πόδια καὶ τῆς φόρεσε πρῶτα τὶς κάλτσες κι ὕστερα τὰ παπούτσια του. Ἡ γριούλα τὸν εὐχαρίστησε συγκινημένη.

Τότε τὸ λεωφορεῖο ἔκανε πάλι στάση. Ὁ νέος κατέβηκε καὶ προχώρησε ξυπόλυτος στὸ χιόνι. Οἱ ἐπιβάτες μαζεύτηκαν στὰ παράθυρα καὶ τὸν ἔβλεπαν καθὼς βιάζετο πρὸς τὸ σπίτι του.

«Ποῖς εἶναι;», ρώτησε ἕνας. «Πρέπει νὰ εἶναι ἅγιος», εἶπε κάποιος. «Πρέπει νὰ εἶναι ἄγγελος», εἶπε ἕνας ἄλλος. «Κοίτα! Ἐχει φωτοστέφανο στὸ κεφάλι!» φώναξε κάποιος. «Εἶναι ὁ Χριστός!» εἶπε ἡ εὐσεβὴς κυρία. Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγοράκι, ποὺ εἶχε δείξει μὲ τὸ δάχτυλο τὴ γιαγιά, εἶπε: «Ὅχι, μαμὰ τὸν εἶδα πολὺ καλὰ: **ἦταν ...ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ!**»

## Τὰ Χριστούγεννα... Γεννήθηκε ὁ Χριστός!

Γράφει ὁ Γεώργιος Ἐξάρχος, Φιλολόγος.

«Τὰ Χριστούγεννα γεννήθηκε ὁ Χριστός!». Αὐτονόητο; Ἴσως γιὰ μᾶς τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους. Ὅμως καὶ αὐτὸ πλέον συζητεῖται.

Πολλὲς φορὲς κατὰ τὸ πᾶρελθον ἐπιχειρήθηκε νὰ καταργηθεῖ ἡ ἐορτὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων διὰ τῆς βίας ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστιανικὸ πλῆρωμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Τὸ 1644 στὴν Βρετανία, ὁ Ὀλιβερ Κρόμγουελ καὶ τὸ κόμμα τῶν πουριτανῶν, θέλησαν νὰ καταργήσουν μὲ νόμο τὰ Χριστούγεννα. Ἔτσι ἡ ἡμέρα ἀπαγορεύθηκε νὰ εἶναι ἀργία, ἡ δὲ Βουλὴ συνεδρίαζε κάθε χρόνο τὴν ἡμέρα τῶν Χριστουγέννων γιὰ περισσότερο ἀπὸ μία δεκαετία.

Τὸν περασμένο αἰῶνα στὴν κομμουνιστικὴ Ῥωσσία εἶχαν ἀπαγορευθεῖ τὰ Χριστούγεννα

ἀπὸ τὸ 1917 ὡς τὸ 1990 ὁπότε καὶ κατέρρευσε τὸ καθεστῶς. Ἐπὶ κυβερνήσεως δὲ Στάλιν εἶχαν ἀντικατασταθεῖ ἀπὸ τὰ σταλινούγεννα!

Ἡ χειρότερη ὁμως πολεμικὴ τῶν Σιωνιστῶν εἶναι αὐτὴ τῆς ἐκκοσμικεύσεως τῶν Χριστουγέννων, ἡ ὁποία μεταβάλλει τὸ ὑπερκόσμιον γεγονός σὲ ἐγκόσμιον καὶ ὑλιστικόν. Φθάσαμε σήμερα, νὰ προβάλλουμε μίαν ἐντελῶς εἰδωλολατρικὴ ἀτμόσφαιρα στὰ σπίτια μας καὶ ὡς ἐκ τούτου καὶ στὴν κοινωνία μας, ἀφοῦ ἔτσι μᾶς προτιμᾷ ἡ παγκοσμιοποίηση.

Στὶς ΗΠΑ, οἱ λεγόμενοι «πολιτικὰ ὀρθοὶ Ἀμερικανοί», ὑπὸ τὸ πρόσχημα τῆς μὴ προσβολῆς τάχα τῶν ἀλλοθρήσκων (βλέπε καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἑλλάδι διανοουμένους...) ἔχουν ἐπιδοθεῖ σὲ ἕναν ἀγῶνα ἀπαλείψεως κάθε ἀναφορᾶς στὰ Χριστούγεννα.

Ὅμως καὶ στὴν Ὁρθοδόξη πατρίδα μας εἶναι δυσεύρετες πλέον οἱ εὐχετήριες κάρτες ποὺ ἀναγράφουν «καλὰ Χριστούγεννα», ἀφοῦ βεβαίως ὁ νεοέλληνας μόνον ὡς ἀπλὲς γιορτὲς ἢ διακοπὲς ἐκλαμβάνει τὰ Χριστούγεννα. Ἀκόμη καὶ ἡ «ΑΤΤΙΚΗ ΟΔΟΣ» συγχρονισμένη σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ὄχι στὸ Ἑλληνορθόδοξο (Ῥωμαϊκόν) γράφει ἀπὸ τὰ Χριστούγεννα τοῦ 2004 σὲ ὅλες τὶς φωτεινὲς ἐπιγραφὰς τῆς «καλῆς γιορτῆς».

Ἐπιπροσθέτως κατάφερε δυστυχῶς ἡ παγκοσμιοποίησις νὰ πιστέψουμε πὼς Χριστούγεννα χωρὶς δένδρο δὲν ὑφίστανται!!! Τὸ δένδρο κατέληξε νὰ

εἶναι τὸ παγκόσμιον σύμβολον τῶν Χριστουγέννων καὶ ταυτοχρόνως κατέληξε νὰ βρίσκεται στὸ ἐπίκεντρο τῆς ἐορτῆς, μετατοπίζοντας τὴν προσοχή μας καὶ ἀπὸ Αὐτὸ τὸ Θεῖο Βρέφος. Τὸ ἔθιμον αὐτὸ δὲν ἔχει καμμία σχέση μὲ τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες παραδόσεις μας, πρὶν ἀπὸ δύο αἰῶνες ἦταν τελείως ἄγνωστο σὲ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πλὴν τῆς Γερμανίας καὶ ἔχει παντελῶς παγανιστικὰς ρίζες.

Γράφει ὁ π. Θ. Ζήσης, καθηγητὴς πανεπιστημίου στὴν Θεολογικὴ σχολή: «Ἀπὸ τὶς πληροφορίες τῶν πηγῶν, τῆς βιβλιογραφίας καὶ τῆς ζωντανῆς ἐμπειρίας καὶ παραδόσεως δὲν ἀπομένει ἴχνος ἀμφιβολίας περὶ τοῦ ὅτι τὸ χριστουγεννιάτικον δένδρο εἶναι ξενόφερτον ἔθιμον. Ἀποτελεῖ αὐτὸ κατασταλαγμένη καὶ ἀμάχητη γνώσις.» Ὅπως ἔγραψε καὶ ὁ καθηγητὴς λαογραφίας Δ. Λουκάτος ἐμφανίστηκε γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ τὸ 1833 στὸ Ναύπλιο ἐπὶ Ὀθωνος, καὶ τὰ Χριστούγεννα τοῦ 1843

στὴν Ἀθήνα, στὸ σπίτι τοῦ Ἰ. Παπαρηγοπούλου, τοῦ προξένου τῆς Ῥωσσίας.

Τὸ περιστατικὸ διασώζει καὶ ὁ στρατηγὸς Μακρυγιάννης. Εἶχε προσκληθεῖ ὁ ἴδιος τὴν ἡμέρα τῶν Χριστουγέννων ἀπὸ τὸν γνωστὸ Ἀθηναῖο πρόξενον τῆς Ῥωσσίας. Φθάνοντας στὸ σπίτι τοῦ Παπαρηγοπούλου μαζὶ μὲ τὸν φίλον του καὶ συναγωνιστὴν του Κώτσο Λιδωρικιώτη, ὁ



στρατηγὸς μὲ ἐκπλήξις εἶδε ἕνα δίμετρο ἔλατον στὸ σαλόνι τοῦ προξένου, κούνησε τὸ κεφάλι του καὶ τοῦ εἶπε: «Ὁραῖο εἶναι κύρ-Γιάννη. Καὶ τοῦ χρόνου νὰ εἴμαστε καλά. Ἀλλὰ τὰ δένδρα μου ἐγὼ δὲν τ' ἀφήνω νὰ φυτρώνουν μέσα στὴν καμάρα!... Μόνον τ' ἄρματα μου φυτρώνουν ἐκεῖ!...»

Ἀπὸ τότε τὸ Δένδρο ἐπεκτάθηκε στὶς λίγες ἀριστοκρατικὰς οἰκογένειες τῶν Ἀθηνῶν. Ἐναν αἰῶνα μετὰ, κατὰ τὴν γερμανικὴν κατοχὴν, ἐπεκτάθηκε καὶ στὰ εὐρύτερα λαϊκὰ στρώματα. Μετὰ τὴν ἀπελευθέρωσιν καὶ μάλιστα μετὰ τὸ 1950 διεδόθηκε περισσότερο ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἄγγλους καὶ τοὺς Ἀμερικανούς ποὺ παρέμειναν στὴν Ἑλλάδα.

Κι ἂν δὲν νοοῦνται Χριστούγεννα χωρὶς δένδρο, ὁμοίως δὲν νοοῦνται Χριστούγεννα χωρὶς «Ἀη-Βασίλην!». Ἀκόμη καὶ ὡς πρὸς τὸ ὄνομά του ἡ παγκοσμιοποιημένη ἐκδοχὴ τοῦ Ἀη-Βασίλη προκαλεῖ σύγχυσιν. «Σάντα Κλάους» τὸν λένε οἱ Δυτικοί, ὄνομα ποὺ παραπέμπει στὸν Ἅγιον Νικόλαον. Ὑπάρχει ὁμως σύγκρισις; Ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑσπερία (Σκανδιναβία) ὁ ἕνας, ἀπὸ

τὴν Ῥωμανία (Βυζάντιο) ὁ ἄλλος, Λίαν στρουμπουλὸς ὁ ἕνας, μᾶλλον ἀσκητικὸς καὶ ὀλιγαρχικὸς ὁ δεύτερος. Γέρος μὲ λευκὴ γενειάδα ὁ Φράγκος, νέος μὲ μαῦρα μακριὰ γένεια ὁ δικὸς μας.

Ὅταν κάποιοι μιμοῦνται τὴν ζωὴ ἐνὸς Ἁγίου κατὰ τὴν προτροπὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας μας «ἐορτὴ Ἁγίου, μίμησις Ἁγίου», κάποιοι ἄλλοι ντύνονται μὲ τὴν στολὴ τοῦ «χονδροβασίλη» καὶ κυκλοφοροῦν στοὺς δρόμους σὰν καρνάβαλοι, διότι δὲν ὑπάρχει κάτι ἀνώτερο νὰ τοὺς ἐμπνεύσει!

Ὁ «Ἀη-Βασίλης» ὅμως συνεπάγεται καὶ πολλὰ δῶρα! Στὶς ΗΠΑ ὑπολογίζεται ὅτι τὰ δῶρα ὑπερβαίνουν τὸ 0,5% τοῦ ΑΕΠ. Στὴν Ν. Ὑόρκη, μάλιστα, ἡ τελετὴ τῆς ἀφῆς τοῦ χριστουγεννιάτικου δένδρου, ἐγκαινιάζει ἐπισημῶς μία περίοδο ξέφρενων ἀγορῶν ποὺ τελειώνουν μὲ τὶς ἐκπτώσεις στὶς ἀρχὲς τοῦ χρόνου! Ἡ ὑπερκατανάλωση, δηλαδή, σὲ ὅλο της τὸ μεγαλεῖο!

Τὸ χειρότερο ὅμως εἶναι ὅτι ἡ παραδοσιακὴ Θεία Λειτουργία τῶν Χριστουγέννων ἀντικαθίσταται ἀπὸ τὰ ξενύχτια, τὰ «ρεβεγιὸν» καὶ τὴν χαρτοπαιξία. Τόσο ὅμως ὁ 43<sup>ος</sup> κανόνας τῶν Ἀποστόλων, ὅσο καὶ ὁ 50<sup>ος</sup> τῆς ΣΤ' Οἰκουμενικῆς Σύνοδου καταδικάζουν μὲ ἀφορισμὸ τοὺς πιστοὺς ποὺ παίζουν μὲ χρήματα! Συνεπῶς, στὴν «ὅλη μαγεία τῶν Χριστουγέννων» εἶναι ἐντεταγμένα καὶ τὰ παιχνίδια τῆς τύχης, τὰ ὁποῖα μαζὶ μὲ ὅλα τὰ παραπάνω, θὰ μᾶς κάνουν νὰ νοιώσουμε ὡραῖα καὶ κάπως διαφορετικὰ ἀπὸ τὶς ἄλλες μέρες! **Πραγματικά, μὲ πόσο κατώτερα ἀλλὰ καὶ πόσο ἐπιβλαβῆ πράγματα ἐπιχειρεῖται νὰ ὑποκατασταθῇ ἡ Πίστις τοῦ Χριστοῦ!**

Ἡ παγκοσμιοποίηση, ὅμως, καὶ ἡ Νέα Ἐποχὴ δὲν θὰ παύσουν νὰ παραγάγουν ἐορτὲς δῆθεν Χριστιανικῆς (ὅπως τοῦ υπάρχοντος βεβαίως Ἁγίου Βαλεντίνου, μὲ διαφορετικὴ ὅμως χοροιά) ἢ καὶ νὰ προσπαθοῦν νὰ καταργοῦν μὲ τὸν τρόπο τους τὶς Χριστιανικῆς (ὅπως αὐτῆ τῶν γενέθλιων μὲ τὴν ὁποῖα ἐπιχειρεῖται ἡ κατάργησις τῆς ὀνομαστικῆς ἐορτῆς). Ἡ μίμησις ἐξάλλου ποὺ ἀκριτῶς, ἀκατακριτῶς καὶ ἀδιακριτῶς ποὺ «τιμοῦμε» ὡς νεοέλληνες, μᾶς κάνει νὰ πιθηκίζουμε! Ἔχουν καλλιεργηθεῖ στὸν λαὸ μας σὲ ὑπερβολικὸ βαθμὸ συναισθήματα μειονεξίας ἐναντὶ τῶν Εὐρωπαίων.

Ἐν κατακλείδι, ὅταν ἀποδίδουμε στὰ Χριστούγεννα τὸ πραγματικὸ τους νόημα καὶ ὅταν τὰ ἐορτάζουμε πνευματικά, τότε ἐπιτυγχάνεται καὶ ὁ μέγας σκοπὸς τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅσον ἀφορᾷ τὸ λεγόμενον χριστουγεννιάτικο κλίμα, δὲν ἔχουμε ἀνάγκη τὰ ξενόφερτα-Φράγκικα ἔθιμα. Πῶς μπορούμε νὰ ἐρμηνεύσουμε τὸ γεγονός ὅτι τὰ Χριστούγεννα τιμῶνται καὶ στὴν Κίνα, στὴν Ἰνδία, στὴν Κορέα μέχρι καὶ σὲ αὐτὴ τὴν Ἀφρική; Τιμῶνται βεβαίως σὲ ὅλες αὐτὲς τὶς ἀλλόθρησκες περιοχὲς, διότι δὲν τιμοῦν

τὴν Γέννησι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀλλὰ μίαν γιορτὴν καθαρὰ ὕλιστικὴ καὶ παγκοσμιοποιημένη.

Ἄντὶ τοῦ στολισμοῦ ἐνὸς δένδρου ἂς καταφύγουμε στὸν στολισμὸ ἐνὸς καραβιοῦ, ὅπως ἔκαναν καὶ οἱ πρόγονοί μας, τὸ ὁποῖο συμβόλιζε τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. Ἄς ψάλλουμε τὰ κάλαντα, μιμούμενοι τὰ κάλαντα τῶν ἀγγέλων, ποὺ ἐκεῖνο τὸ βράδυ στὴν Βηθλεὲμ ἀνήγγειλαν τὸ χαρμόσυνο γεγονός τῆς Γεννήσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἄς κόψουμε τὴν βασιλόπιττα τιμώντες ἔτσι τὸν Μέγα Βασίλειο. Μὰ πάνω ἀπὸ ὅλα **ἂς προσευχηθοῦμε νὰ γεννηθῇ καὶ φέτος ὁ Χριστὸς στὴν καρδιὰ μας...**

Ἄπὸ τοῦδε καὶ στὸ ἐξῆς ἂς ζήσουμε τὰ Χριστούγεννα πιό... Ῥωμαίικα, σκεπτόμενοι πῶς **τὰ Χριστούγεννα γεννήθηκε ὁ Χριστός!!!**



**Κ**αλά, θὰ πεῖ κανεὶς, καλὰ οἱ Τοῦρκοι, καὶ οἱ Ἀμερικάνοι καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι δὲν θέλουν νὰ βλέπουν τοὺς ἱερεῖς μας νὰ φοροῦν ράσο, ἀλλὰ οἱ Ἕλληνες, ποὺ ξέρουν τί προσφέρει στὴν πατρίδα τὸ ράσο, ποὺ στοὺς δρόμους καὶ στὶς πλατεῖες βλέπουν ἀγάλματα ἱερέων καὶ ἱεραρχῶν, ποὺ θυσιάστηκαν γιὰ τὸ γένος, οἱ Ἕλληνες πῶς τολμοῦν νὰ περιφρονοῦν καὶ νὰ ὑποτιμοῦν τὸ ράσο;

Τὸ ράσο, ἡ ἰδιαίτερη αὐτῆ ἐνδυμασία τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων κληρικῶν, ἔχει τὴν ἱστορία του, μίαν ἱστορία ζυμωμένη μὲ δάκρυα καὶ αἵματα, μίαν ἱστορία ποὺ δὲν πρέπει ποτὲ νὰ τὴν ξεχνᾶμε. Μ' αὐτὰ ποὺ λέμε δὲν θεωροῦμε τὸ ράσο δόγμα τῆς πίστεώς μας κάτι δηλαδή τὸ ἀμετάβλητο. Ἀλλὰ κι ὅσοι νομίζουν, πῶς καταργώντας τὸ ράσο καὶ ντύνοντας τοὺς ἱερεῖς μὲ μοντέρνα ἐνδυμασία θὰ ἐκσυγχρονισθεῖ καὶ θὰ προοδεύσει ἡ Ἐκκλησία, σφάλουν οἰκτρά.

Δὲν φταίει τὸ ράσο γιὰ τυχὸν ἀποτυχίες καὶ σκάνδαλα τῶν σημερινῶν κληρικῶν. Αὐτά, ἂν καταργηθεῖ τὸ ράσο, ὄχι μόνον δὲν θὰ λιγοστέψουν, ἀλλὰ καὶ θὰ ἀυξηθοῦν. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας στὶς μέρες τὶς πονηρῆς, ποὺ ζοῦμε, δὲν ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἐξωτερικῶν μεταρρυθμίσεων, ἀλλ' ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἐσωτερικῶν ἀλλαγῶν. Ἔχει ἀνάγκη ἁγίων καὶ ἐμπνευσμένων κληρικῶν, ποὺ θὰ φορέσουν καὶ θὰ τιμήσουν τὸ ράσο καὶ θὰ τὸ κάνουν λάβαρο τῶν πιὸ ὡραίων ἀγώνων γιὰ τὴ θρησκευτικὴ, ἠθικὴ καὶ ἐθνικὴ ἀναγέννησι τοῦ Γένους μας.

**Μητρ. Αὐγουστίνος Καντιώτης (+2010)**

## «Ὁ Κύριος θὰ Παρουσιάσῃ τοὺς Μάρκους τοὺς Εὐγενικούς καὶ τοὺς Γρηγορίου Παλαμάδες, γιὰ νὰ Ὁμολογήσουν τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Πίστη καὶ νὰ Στερεώσουν τὴν Παράδοση...»

*Ἀγίου Παΐσιου Ἀγορεύου, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο: «Μὲ Πόνου καὶ Ἀγάπης γιὰ τὸν Σύγχρονο Ἄνθρωπο», Γέροντος Παΐσιου Ἀγορεύου, Λόγοι Α΄, ἐκδ. Ἠσυχαστήριον «Εὐαγγελιστῆς Ἰωάννης ὁ Θεολόγος», Σουρωτὴ Θεσσαλονίκης.*

**Π**ολλοὶ ἅγιοι Μάρτυρες, ὅταν δὲν ἤξεραν τὸ δόγμα, ἔλεγαν: «**Πιστεύω ὅ,τι θέσπισαν οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες.**» Ἄν κάποιος ἔλεγε αὐτό, μαρτυροῦσε. Δὲν ἤξερε δηλαδή νὰ φέρῃ ἀποδείξεις στοὺς διώκτες γιὰ τὴν πίστη του καὶ νὰ τοὺς πείσῃ, ἀλλὰ εἶχε ἐμπιστοσύνη στοὺς Ἅγιους Πατέρες. Σκεφτόταν: «*Πῶς νὰ μὴν ἔχω ἐμπιστοσύνη στοὺς Ἅγιους Πατέρες; Αὐτοὶ ἦταν καὶ πιὸ ἐμπειροὶ καὶ ἐνάρετοι καὶ ἅγιοι; Πῶς ἐγὼ νὰ δεχθῶ μία ἀνοησία; Πῶς νὰ ἀνεχθῶ νὰ βρίζῃ ἓνας τοὺς Ἅγιους Πατέρες;*»

Νὰ ἔχουμε ἐμπιστοσύνη στὴν Ἱερὰ Παράδοση. Σήμερα, δυστυχῶς, μπήκε ἡ Εὐρωπαϊκὴ εὐγένεια καὶ πάνε νὰ δεῖξουν τὸν καλὸ. Θέλουν νὰ δεῖξουν ἀνωτερότητα καὶ τελικὰ πάνε νὰ προσκυνήσουν τὸν διάβολο μὲ τὰ δύο κέρατα. «Μία θρησκεία, σοῦ λένε, νὰ ὑπάρχη» καὶ ἔτσι τὰ ἰσοπεδώνουν ὅλα.

Ἦρθαν καὶ σ' ἐμένα μερικοὶ καὶ μοῦ εἶπαν: «Ὅσοι πιστεύουμε στὸν Χριστό, νὰ κάνουμε μία θρησκεία». «Τώρα εἶναι σὰν νὰ μοῦ λέτε», τοὺς εἶπα, «χρυσὸ καὶ μπακίρι, χρυσὸ τόσα καράτια καὶ τόσα ποῦ τὰ ξεχώρισαν, νὰ τὰ μαζέψουμε πάλι καὶ νὰ τὰ κάνουμε ἓνα. Εἶναι σωστὸ νὰ τὰ ἀνακατέψουμε πάλι; Ρωτήστε ἓναν χρυσοχόο: «Κάνει νὰ ἀνακατέψουμε τὴν σαβούρα μὲ τὸν χρυσό;» Ἔγινε τόσος ἀγώνας, γιὰ νὰ λαμπικάρῃ τὸ δόγμα.»

Οἱ Ἅγιοι Πατέρες κάτι ἤξεραν καὶ ἀπαγόρευαν τὶς σχέσεις μὲ αἰρετικὸ. Σήμερα λένε: «Ὅχι μόνο μὲ αἰρετικὸ ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ Βουδιστὴ καὶ μὲ πυρολάτρη καὶ μὲ δαμιονολάτρη νὰ συμπροσευχηθοῦμε. Πρέπει νὰ βρίσκονται στὶς συμπροσευχές τους καὶ στὰ συνέδρια καὶ οἱ Ὁρθόδοξοι. Εἶναι μία παρουσία». Τί παρουσία; Τὰ λύνουν ὅλα μὲ τὴν λογικὴ καὶ δικαιολογοῦν τὰ ἀδικαιολόγητα. Τὸ Εὐρωπαϊκὸ πνεῦμα νομίζει ὅτι καὶ τὰ πνευματικὰ θέματα μποροῦν νὰ μποῦν στὴν Κοινὴ Ἀγορά.

Μερικοὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους ποῦ ἔχουν ἐλαφρότητα καὶ θέλουν νὰ κάνουν προβολή, «Ἱεραποστολή», συγκαλοῦν συνέδρια μὲ ἑτεροδόξους, γιὰ νὰ γίνετα ντόρος καὶ νομίζουν ὅτι θὰ προβάλουν ἔτσι τὴν Ὁρθόδοξία, μὲ τὸ νὰ γίνουν δηλαδή ταρταμοσαλάτα μὲ τοὺς κακοδόξους. Ἀρχίζουν μετὰ οἱ ὑπερ-ζηλωτὲς καὶ πιάνουν τὸ ἄλλο ἄκρο· λένε βλασφημίες γιὰ τὰ Μυστήρια

τῶν Νεοημερολογιτῶν κ.λ.π. καὶ κατα-σκανδαλίζουν ψυχές ποῦ ἔχουν εὐλάβεια καὶ Ὁρθόδοξη εὐσυστησία.

Οἱ ἑτεροδόξοι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη ἔρχονται στὰ συνέδρια, κάνουν τὸν δάσκαλο, παίρνουν ὅ,τι καλὸ ὑλικὸ πνευματικὸ βρίσκουν στοὺς Ὁρθόδοξους, τὸ περνᾶνε ἀπὸ τὸ δικὸ τους ἐργαστήρι, βάζουν δικὸ τους χρῶμα καὶ φέριμα καὶ τὸ παρουσιάζουν σὰν πρωτότυπο. Καὶ ὁ παράξενος σημερινὸς κόσμος ἀπὸ κάτι τέτοια παράξενα συγκινεῖται, καὶ καταστρέφεται μετὰ πνευματικά. Ὁ Κύριος ὅμως, ὅταν θὰ πρέπη, θὰ παρουσιάσῃ τοὺς Μάρκους τοὺς Εὐγενικούς καὶ τοὺς Γρηγορίου Παλαμάδες, ποῦ θὰ συγκεντρώσουν ὅλα τὰ κατασκανδαλισμένα ἀδέλφια μας, γιὰ νὰ ὁμολογήσουν τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη καὶ νὰ στερεώσουν τὴν Παράδοση καὶ νὰ δώσουν χαρὰ μεγάλη στὴν Μητέρα μας Ἐκκλησία.

Ἐὰν ζούσαμε πατερικά, θὰ εἶχαμε ὅλοι πνευματικὴ ὑγεία, τὴν ὁποία θὰ ζήλευαν καὶ ὅλοι οἱ ἑτεροδόξοι, καὶ θὰ ἄφηναν τὶς ἀρρωστημένες τοὺς πλάνες καὶ θὰ σώζονταν δίχως κήρυγμα. Τώρα δὲν συγκινοῦνται ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγία μας Πατερικὴ Παράδοση, γιατί θέλουν νὰ δοῦν καὶ τὴν Πατερικὴ μας συνέχεια, τὴν πραγματικὴ μας συγγένεια μὲ τοὺς Ἅγιους μας. Αὐτὸ ποῦ ἐπιβάλλεται σὲ κάθε Ὁρθόδοξο εἶναι νὰ βάζῃ τὴν καλὴ ἀνησυχία καὶ στοὺς ἑτεροδόξους, νὰ καταλάβουν δηλαδή ὅτι βρίσκονται σὲ πλάνη, γιὰ νὰ μὴν ἀναπαύουν ψεύτικα τὸν λογισμό τους, καὶ στερηθοῦν καὶ σ' αὐτὴν τὴν ζωὴ τὶς πλούσιες εὐλογίες τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ στὴν ἄλλη ζωὴ τὶς περισσότερες καὶ αἰώνιες εὐλογίες τοῦ Θεοῦ.



**Δ**ιὰ τὰς πολλὰς ἡμῶν ἁμαρτίας κινδυνεύουν νὰ ἐξημώσουν ὅλα τὰ Πατριαρχεῖα, Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ Ἀλεξανδρείας. Ἀλλὰ διὰ ποίαν αἰτίαν; Ἡ αἰτία εἶναι ἡ ἁμαρτία. Ἐγίναμεν καὶ λαὸς καὶ κληρὸς σκότος. Ὅταν δὲ τὸ φῶς γίνετα σκότος, τὸ σκότος πόσον;...

Ζητῶ ὡς ὁ Διογένης μὲ τὸν φανὸν τῆς πίστεως ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ὅμως δὲν εὐρίσκω. Διατί; Διότι πάντες ἐξέκλιναν καὶ ἐξαχρειώθησαν, καὶ διότι ἡ παροῦσα γενεά, ὡς γενεά ἁμαρτωλός, διεστραμμένη καὶ πονηρά, γεννᾷ τέκνα ἁμαρτωλὰ καὶ πονηρά.

Ἄς μὴ ἀπελπιζώμεθα ὅμως, ἀλλὰ ἄς παρακαλοῦμε τὸν Κύριον μετὰ πίστεως καὶ δακρύων νὰ ἐγείρει τέκνα ἐκλεκτὰ διὰ νὰ μὴ ἀπωλεσθοῦμε. Νὰ γίνουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς τέκνα φωτός, διὰ νὰ φωτίζουμε τοὺς εὐρισκόμενους εἰς τὸ σκότος...

**«Ὁρθόδοξος Φιλόθεος Μαρτυρία», τευχ. 64, Ἰαν. - Μάρτ. 1996, σελ. 59. [Σημείωσις: ἐγράφη τὸ 1962!]**



## Ἡ Ἀλήθεια γιὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα καὶ ἡ Μυθοποίηση τῶν Χριστουγέννων

Τοῦ πρ. Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο: «Παρεμβάσεις Ἱστορικές καὶ Θεολογικές», ἐκδ. «Διήγησις», Ἀθήνα 1998.

Ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως εἶναι ἡ θέωση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου:

—«Ἄνθρωπος γίνεται Θεός, ἵνα Θεὸν τὸν Ἀδὰμ ἀπεργάσῃται.» (Τροπάριο Χριστουγέννων).

—«Αὐτὸς ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν.» (Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος).

—«Ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἐγένετο ὁ Θεὸς καὶ θεὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος.» (Ἅγιος Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος).

Στὴ λογικὴ ἐνὸς ἠθικιστοῦ ὁ ὅρος «θεοποιηθῶμεν», ποὺ χρησιμοποιοῦν Πατέρες, ὅπως ὁ Μ. Ἀθανάσιος, εἶναι σκάνδαλο. Γι' αὐτὸ μιλοῦν γιὰ «ἠθικὴ θέωση». Διότι φοβοῦνται νὰ δεχθοῦν ὅτι μὲ τὴν θέωση μεταβάλλεται «κατὰ χάριν» αὐτὸ ποὺ ὁ Τριαδικὸς Θεὸς εἶναι «κατὰ φύσιν» (Ἄκτιστος, Ἄναρχος, Ἀθάνατος). Τὰ Χριστούγεννα εἶναι, γι' αὐτό, ἅμεσα συνδεδεμένα καὶ μὲ τὴ Σταύρωση καὶ τὴν Ἀνάσταση, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν Ἀνάληψη καὶ τὴν Πεντηκοστή.

Ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς-Θεάνθρωπος χαράζει τὸ δρόμο, ποὺ καλεῖται νὰ βαδίσει κάθε σωζόμενος ἄνθρωπος, ἐνούμενος μαζί Του. Ὁ Εὐαγγελισμὸς καὶ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ὁδηγοῦν στὴν Πεντηκοστή, τὸ γεγονὸς τῆς θεώσεως τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν Χριστῷ, μέσα δηλαδὴ στὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἄν τὰ Χριστούγεννα εἶναι ἡ γέννηση τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς ἀνθρώπου, ἡ Πεντηκοστή εἶναι ἡ τελείωση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὡς Θεοῦ κατὰ χάριν. Μὲ τὸ βάπτισμά μας μετέχουμε στὴ σάρκωση, τὸ θάνατο καὶ τὴν ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ζοῦμε καὶ μεῖς τὰ «Χριστούγεννά μας», τὴν ἀνάπλασή μας. Οἱ Ἅγιοι δέ, ποὺ φθάνουν στὴν ἔνωση μὲ τὸ Χριστό, τὴ θέωση, μετέχουν στὴν Πεντηκοστή καὶ φθάνουν ἔτσι στὴ τελείωση καὶ ὀλοκλήρωση τοῦ ἀναγεννημένου ἐν Χριστῷ ἀνθρώπου. Αὐτὸ σημαίνει ἐκκλησιαστικὰ πραγμάτωση τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἐκπλήρωση δηλαδὴ τοῦ σκοποῦ τῆς ὑπάρξεώς του.

Ὅσο καὶ ἂν εἶναι κουραστικὸς ὁ θεολογικὸς λόγος, καὶ μάλιστα στὸν ἀμύητο θεολογικὰ σύγχρονο ἄνθρωπο, δὲν ἐκφράζει παρὰ τὴν πραγματικότητα τῆς ἐμπειρίας τῶν Ἁγίων μας. Μέσα ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν ἐμπειρία καὶ μόνον μποροῦν νὰ κατανοηθοῦν ἐκκλησιαστικά, δηλαδὴ Χριστοκεντρικά, τὰ Χριστούγεννα. Ἀντίθετα,

ἡ ἀδυναμία τοῦ μὴ ἀναγεννημένου ἐν Χριστῷ ἀνθρώπου νὰ νοσηματοδοτήσῃ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ἔχει ὁδηγήσει σὲ κάποιους γύρω ἀπ' αὐτὰ μύθους. Οἱ ἄγευστοι τῆς ἀγιοπνευματικῆς ζωῆς, μὴ μπορῶντας νὰ ζήσουν τὰ Χριστούγεννα, μυθολογοῦν γι' αὐτά, στὰ ὅρια τῆς φαντασίας καὶ μυθοπλασίας, χάνοντας τὸ ἀληθινὸ νόημά τους. Ὅπως μάλιστα θὰ δοῦμε, ὁ ἀποπροσανατολισμὸς αὐτὸς δὲν συνδέεται πάντοτε μὲ τὴν ἄρνηση τοῦ μυστηρίου, ἀλλὰ μὲ ἀδυναμία βιώσεώς του, ποὺ ὁδηγεῖ ἀναπόφευκτα στὴν παρερμηνεία του.

Μία πρώτη μυθολογικὴ ἀπάντηση στὸ ἐρώτημα τῶν Χριστουγέννων δίνεται ἀπὸ τὴν αἵρεση, τὴ στοχαστικὴ καὶ ἀνέρευση—ἀνεμπειρικὴ δηλαδὴ—θεολόγησι. Ὁ δοκητισμὸς, ἡ φοβερότερη αἵρεση ὅλων τῶν αἰώνων, δέχθηκε κατὰ φαντασίαν νάρκωση τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου (δοκεῖν-φαίνεσθαι). Φαινομενικὴ, δηλαδὴ, παρουσία τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν ἐνδοκοσμικὴ πραγματικότητα. Γιὰ ποῖο λόγο θὰ μπορούσε νὰ ἐρωτήσῃ κανεὶς. Οἱ Δοκῆται ἢ Δοκηταὶ κάθε ἐποχῆς δὲν μποροῦν νὰ ἀνεχθοῦν, στὰ ὅρια τῆς λογικῆς τους, τὴ σάρκωση καὶ τὴ γέννηση τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς ἀνθρώπου. Μεταβαλλόμενοι σὲ αὐτόκλητους ὑπερασπιστὲς τοῦ κύρους τοῦ Θεοῦ, ντρέπονται νὰ δεχθοῦν κάτι ποὺ ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Θεὸς ἐπέλεξε γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία μας. Τὸ δρόμο τῆς μητρότητας.

Νὰ γεννηθεῖ δηλαδὴ ἀπὸ μία Μάνα, ἔστω καὶ ἂν αὐτὴ δὲν εἶναι ἄλλη ἀπὸ τὸ καθαρότερο πλάσμα ὅλης τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ἱστορίας, τὴν Παναγία Παρθένο. Ὅλοι αὐτοὶ μποροῦν νὰ καταταχθοῦν στοὺς «ὑπεράγαν» Ὁρθοδόξους (κατὰ τὸν Ἅγ. Γρηγόριο τὸ Θεολόγο). Γιατί ὁ Δοκητισμὸς ὁδήγησε στὸ Μονοφυσιτισμὸ, στὴν ἄρνηση τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Εἶναι οἱ συντηρητικοί, οἱ τυποκράτες, οἱ εὐσκανδάλιστοι. Γι' αὐτοὺς ὅλους εἶναι σκάνδαλο ἢ ἀλήθεια, ἡ πραγματικότητα, ἡ ἱστορικότητα. Ἐνῶ ἄλλοι ἀπορρίπτουν τὴ Θεότητα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, αὐτοὶ ἀρνοῦνται τὴν Ἀνθρωπότητά του.

Καὶ ὅμως, ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία ὡς Χριστιανισμὸς στὴν αὐθεντικότητά του, εἶναι ἡ «ἱστορικότερη θρησκεία», κατὰ τὸν ἀείμνηστο π. Γεώργιο Φλωρόφσκυ. Ζεῖ στὴν πραγματικότητα τῶν ἐνεργειῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὴ σωτηρία μας καὶ τίς δέχεται μὲ τὸ ρεαλισμὸ τῆς Θεοτόκου: «Ἴδου ἡ δούλη Κυρίου, γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ρῆμα σου.» (Λουκ. 1:38)! «Καὶ ὁ Πιλάτος στὸ Σύμβολο» λέγει μία ὠραία σερβικὴ παροιμία. Διότι ὁ Πιλάτος, ὁ



πιὸ ἄβουλος ἀξιωματοῦχος τῆς ἱστορίας, ὡς ὑπαρκτὸ ἱστορικὸ πρόσωπο, βεβαιώνει τὴν ἱστορικότητα τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου. Εἰς πείσμα ὅμως τῶν Δοκητῶν, ὁ Θεὸς-Λόγος «σὰρξ ἐγένετο—δηλαδὴ ἄνθρωπος—καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (τὸ ἄκτιστο φῶς τῆς Θεότητάς Του)» (Ἰωάνν. 1:14). Διότι «ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς» (Κολ. 2:9), εἶναι δηλαδὴ τέλειος Θεὸς καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος.

Ἡ σάρκωση καὶ γέννηση τοῦ Θεανθρώπου εἶναι σκάνδαλο γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη σοφία, ποὺ αὐτοκαταργούμενη καὶ αὐτοαναιρούμενη σπεύδει νὰ χαρακτηρίσει «μωρία» τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ποὺ κορυφώνεται στὸν Σταυρικὸ Του θάνατο (Α΄ Κορ. 1:23). Εἶναι δυνατὸν ὁ Θεὸς νὰ φθάσει σὲ τέτοιο ὄριο κενώσεως, ὥστε νὰ πεθάνει πάνω στὸ Σταυρὸ ὡς Θεάνθρωπος; Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ σκάνδαλο γιὰ τοὺς σοφοὺς τοῦ κόσμου. Γι' αὐτοὺς οἱ «θεοὶ» τοῦ κόσμου τούτου συνήθως θυσιάζουν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους γι' αὐτούς, δὲν θυσιάζονται αὐτοὶ γιὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Πῶς θὰ δεχθῶν τὸ μυστήριον τῆς Θείας Ἀνιδιοτέλειας; «Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλὰ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ... ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ.» (Ἰωανν. 3:16-17). Στὰ ὄρια τῆς «λογικῆς» ἢ «φυσικῆς» θεολογήσεως χάνεται τελικὰ τὸ Θεῖο στοιχεῖο στὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ μένει τὸ ἀνθρώπινο, παρανοημένο καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ παρερμηνευόμενο. Διότι **δὲν ὑπάρχει ἱστορικῶς ἄνθρωπος-Χριστός, ἀλλὰ Θεάνθρωπος.** Ἡ ἔνωση Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου στὸ πρόσωπο Θεοῦ-Λόγου εἶναι «ἀσύγχητη» μέν, ἀλλὰ καὶ «ἀδιαίρετη». Οἱ «λογικῆς» ἐρμηνεῖες τοῦ Προσώπου τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀποδεικνύονται παράλογες, διότι ἀδυνατοῦν νὰ συλλάβουν μὲ τὴ λογικὴ τὸ «ὑπερλόγο».

Ἡ νομικὴ-δικανικὴ συνείδηση ζεῖ καὶ αὐτὴ στὸ Χριστὸ τὸ σκάνδαλό της. Ἀναζητεῖ σκοπιμότητα κοινωνικὴ στὴ Σάρκωση καὶ καταλήγει καὶ αὐτὴ στὸ μῦθο, ὅταν δὲν αὐτοπαρὰδίδεται στὸν Θεῖο Λόγο. Οἱ Φράγκοι κατασκεύασαν, μέσω τοῦ διακεκριμένου σχολαστικοῦ τους Ἀνσέλμου (11<sup>ος</sup> αἰ.), τὸ μῦθο τῆς «ικανοποιήσεως τῆς θείας δικαιοσύνης». Ὁ Θεὸς-Λόγος σαρκούται, διὰ νὰ σταυρωθεῖ-θυσιασθεῖ καὶ δώσει ἔτσι ἱκανοποίησι στὴν προσβλήν ποὺ προξένησε στὸ Θεὸ ἢ ἀνθρώπινη ἁμαρτία! Τὰ κρατοῦντα τότε στὴ φραγκικὴ φεουδαρχικὴ κοινωνία προβάλλονται (μυθολογικὰ) στὸ Θεό, ποὺ παίρνει τὴ θέση στὴ φραγκογερμανικὴ φαντασία ἐνὸς ὑπεραυτοκράτορα. Ἄς φωνάξει ὁ Ἰωάννης: «Οὕτως ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν...» (3:16), ἢ ὁ Παῦλος: «*Συνίστησι δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς, ὅτι ἔτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν*

*Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε.*» (Ρωμ. 5:8). Ὅχι! «Γιὰ νὰ πάρει ἐκδίκηση» καὶ «ζητώντας ἱκανοποίησι» θὰ μάθει νὰ φωνάξει ὁ δυτικὸς (ἢ δυτικοποιημένος) ἄνθρωπος.

Ἔτσι πλάσθηκε ἓνας «Χριστιανισμὸς» ἄλλου εἴδους, ποὺ δὲν διαφέρει ἀπὸ μυθοπλασία, ἀφοῦ προβάλλει στὸ Θεὸ τὴ φαντασία καὶ τὶς προλήψεις μας. **Ἡ ἐκλογίκευση καὶ ἡ ἐκνομίκευση τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεανθρώπου εἶναι ὁ μεγαλύτερος κίνδυνος τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ στὴν ἱστορία.**

Ἡ θρησκευτικὴ (τυπολατρικὴ) συνείδηση ζεῖ τὸ «σκάνδαλο» τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως καταφεύγοντας στὴ θρησκευτικοποίησι τῆς Πίστεως. Ἐξαντλεῖ τὸ νόημα τῶν Χριστουγέννων στὶς τελετὲς καὶ χάνει τὸν ἀληθινὸ σκοπὸ τους, ποὺ εἶναι ἡ «υἰοθεσία» (θέωση). «*Ἴνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν...*» (Γαλ. 4:5). Εἶναι τὸ σκάνδαλο τοῦ φαρισαισμοῦ, ἔστω καὶ ἂν λέγεται Χριστιανισμὸς.

Εἶναι ὅμως οἱ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ «Παιδίου» ποὺ βιώνουν τὸ σκάνδαλο τῆς ἐξουσίας. Ὁ Ἡρωδισμὸς! Οἱ κρατοῦντες ἢ μᾶλλον «δοκοῦντες ἄρχειν...» (νομίζοντες ὅτι κυβερνοῦν) (Μάρκ. 10:42), ὅπως ὁ Ἡρώδης, βλέπουν στὸν νεογέννητο Χριστὸ κάποιον ἀνταγωνιστὴ καὶ κίνδυνο τῶν συμφερόντων τους. Γι' αὐτὸ «*ζητοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου*» (Ματθ. 2:20). Παρερμηνεύουν ἔτσι τὸν ἀληθινὸ χαραχτήρα τῆς βασιλικῆς ιδιότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τῆς ὁποίας «*οὐκ ἔσται τέλος*». Ὁ Χριστὸς ὡς Βασιλεὺς ὅλης τῆς κτίσεως εἶναι ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὸς Κύριός της, ὁ δημιουργὸς καὶ σωτήρας της καὶ ὄχι ὡς οἱ Ἡρώδες τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, ποὺ ἀδίστακτοι δολοφονοῦν, γιὰ νὰ κρατήσουν τὴν ἐξουσία τους.

Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Θεολόγος προσφέρει δυνατότητα ὀρθῆς προσεγγίσεως τῶν Χριστουγέννων, δηλαδὴ ἀγιοπνευματικῆς: «*Τοῖνυν ἐορτάζομεν μὴ πανηγυρικῶς, ἀλλὰ θεϊκῶς μὴ κοσμικῶς, ἀλλὰ ὑπερκοσμίως μὴ τὰ ἡμέτερα, ἀλλὰ τὰ τοῦ ἡμετέρου (=ὄχι δηλαδὴ τοὺς ἑαυτοὺς μας, ἀλλὰ τὸν Χριστὸν ἃς τιμᾶμε...): μᾶλλον δὲ τὰ τοῦ Δεσπότην μὴ τὰ τῆς ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῆς ἰατρείας μὴ τὰ τῆς πλάσεως, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῆς ἀναπλάσεως.*



**Ὁ** Θεὸς μᾶς ἀγαπάει πολὺ, μᾶς ἔχει στὸ νοῦ Του κάθε στιγμή καὶ μᾶς προστατεύει. Πρέπει νὰ τὸ καταλάβουμε αὐτὸ καὶ νὰ μὴ φοβούμεστε τίποτε.

**Μ**όνον ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, μόνον ἡ ἀληθινὴ ἀγάπη μας, ποὺ θυσιάζεται μυστικὰ γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, μπορεῖ νὰ σώσει καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ μᾶς.

**Ἁγίου Πορφυρίου Κουσοκαλυβίτου**

## Έρχεται «Διωγμός!» Καὶ οἱ Ἐκκλησίες καὶ οἱ Ἐπίσκοποι θὰ Ἐξαλείψουν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο...

Προφητικά Λόγια τοῦ Μακαριστοῦ Γέροντος Μητροπολίτου Φλωρίνης πρ. Ἀγουστίνου Καντιώτη (+2010).



Γέρος πλέον ἐπίσκοπος, τώρα πού βρίσκομαι στὸ τέλος τῆς ἐπιγείου ζωῆς μου, ὕστερα ἀπὸ πολυπλαγκτὸν καὶ ἄκρως περιπετειώδη δρᾶσιν σαράντα ἐτῶν στὴν πατρίδα μας, σᾶς συνιστῶ, παιδιά μου: Ἄν ἔρθει ἐποχὴ πού θὰ ἀκούσουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς, ὄχι στὸ θέατρο ἀλλὰ στὴν πραγματικότητα, «διωγμός!» καὶ ἀκουστεῖ ἡ λέξι «διωγμός» ἐναντίον τῶν πιστῶν Χριστιανῶν,

νὰ μὴ φοβηθεῖτε, καὶ νὰ μὴ δειλιάσετε.

Ἐγὼ δὲν θὰ ζῶ πλέον, θὰ βρίσκομαι ὑπὸ τὸν τάφο, θὰ βρίσκομαι στὴν ἄλλη ζωὴ. Ἐσεῖς θὰ ἀκούσετε νὰ φωνάζουν, ἀπ' ἄκρου εἰς ἄκρου, «διωγμός». Καὶ οἱ ἐκκλησίες καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ ἐπίσκοποι θὰ ἔξαλείψουν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, γιὰ νὰ κηρυχθεῖ νέον «εὐαγγέλιο». Καὶ ὅτι γίνεται στὴν Ἀλβανία καὶ ὅτι γίνεται σὲ χώρες μακριά, θὰ γίνῃ καὶ στὴν Ἑλλάδα—προφητεύω.

Ἀλλὰ ἓνα πρᾶγμα νὰ ξέρετε πολὺ καλὰ ὅτι δὲ θὰ νικήσουν οἱ ἄθεοι, ἀλλὰ οἱ πιστοί. Προσευχὴ λοιπόν. Στὰ ὄπλα καὶ στὰ γόνατα. Γιατὶ θὰ ἔρθῃ ἡ ὥρα πού θὰ γίνῃ ἐρείπωση. Τότε ἐσεῖς, πού θὰ μαζεύεστε γιὰ νὰ ἀκούτε λόγον Χριστιανικόν; Εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸ ἓνα χάρισμα.

**Ἐρώτηση:** Γέροντα, τι πρέπει νὰ κάνουμε γιὰ νὰ μὴ μᾶς πιάσει ὁ φόβος καὶ ὁ πανικός, ἐκεῖνες τὶς δύσκολες ἡμέρες;

Ὅχι, ὄχι, δὲν θὰ μᾶς πιάσει πανικός. Νὰ ἔχουμε θάρρος, ὅμως νὰ μὴν τὸ ἐπιδεικνύουμε, ἀλλὰ νὰ περιμένουμε τὴν κατάλληλη στιγμή γιὰ νὰ τὸ δεῖξουμε. Γιατὶ ὅταν ἐκδηλώνει κανεὶς τὸ θάρρος του τὴν κατάλληλη στιγμή, ἔχει μεγάλη σημασία. Ἀγωνίζεσθε λοιπόν τὸν καλὸν ἀγώνα καὶ μία μέρα θὰ συναντηθοῦμε στοὺς οὐρανοὺς. Ἐκεῖ θὰ γίνῃ ἡ συνάντησις ὅλων τῶν πιστῶν. Πᾶτε στὸ καλὸ καὶ νὰ προσεύχεστε.

Θὰ νικήσετε!!! Ἡ Ἐκκλησία ζεῖ καὶ θὰ ζήσει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Διότι ἰδρυτὴς τῆς εἶναι ὁ Χριστός, παιδιά. Εἶθε νὰ κρατήσετε μέσα σας ἀναμμένη τὴν λαμπάδα τῆς πίστεως. Φῶς νὰ εἴστε ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ

τούτῳ. Μέσα στὸ σκοτάδι πού ὑπάρχει (ἄλλοι εἶναι προτεστάνται, ἄλλοι καθολικοί, ἄλλοι διαφόρων ἄλλων ὀνομάτων καὶ καταστάσεων, ἄλλοι βλάσφημοι κ.λ.π.), ἐσεῖς παιδιά μου, ὅσο λίγοι καὶ ἂν μείνετε μετὰ τὸ Χριστὸ μὴ φοβηθεῖτε, θὰ νικήσετε. Καὶ ἂν ἀκόμα, παιδιά μου, παιδιὰ τοῦ κατηχητικοῦ σχολείου, παιδιὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας, τοῦ Πόντου καὶ τῆς Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἂν σὲ ἀρνηθεῖ ἡ μάνα σου καὶ ὁ πατέρας σου καὶ μείνεις ἓνας μέσα στὴν πόλη σου ἢ στὸ χωριὸ σου, νὰ μὴ δειλιάσεις. Καὶ ἂν ὅλη ἡ κοινωνία γονατίσει μπροστὰ στὸ διάβολο, ἐσὺ μὴ γονατίσεις καὶ ἐσὺ ὁ ἓνας θὰ νικήσεις.

Τὸ λέω καὶ τὸ τονίζω. Μπορεῖ νὰ γονατίσουν ἄλλες πολιτεῖες ἀλλὰ ἡ πόλη αὐτή, πού εἶναι βαμμένη μετὰ τὸ αἷμα τῶν μαρτύρων καὶ τῶν ἡρώων, δὲν θὰ γονατίσει ποτέ. Στὶς φλέβες μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων ρεεῖ αἷμα μαρτύρων τῆς Νικομήδειας, τῆς Μικρᾶς Ἀσίας καὶ τοῦ Πόντου. Θὰ μείνουμε κάστρο τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θὰ ἀποδείξουμε γιὰ μία ἀκόμη φορὰ, πρὸς πείσμα τῶν δαιμόνων, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἀπέθανε ἀλλὰ ζεῖ εἰς αἰῶνας αἰώνων.



**Ἀ**ς ἀποκτήσουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς ἀγάπη, ἄς ἀποκτήσουμε εὐσπλαγχνία γιὰ τὸν πλησίον. Καὶ ἔτσι θὰ ἀποφεύγουμε νὰ καταλαοῦμε, νὰ κατακρίνουμε, νὰ ἐξουθενώνουμε τοὺς ἄλλους. Ἄς βοηθήσουμε ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον σὰν νὰ εἴμαστε μέλη τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος. Ποῖος εἶναι ἐκεῖνος πού, ἐπειδὴ ἔχει μία πληγὴ στὸ χέρι του ἢ στὸ πόδι του ἢ σὲ κάποιο ἄλλο μέρος τοῦ σώματός του, σιχαίνεται τὸν ἑαυτὸ του ἢ κόβει τὸ μέλος του καὶ ἂν ἀκόμη σαπίσει, καὶ δὲν προσπαθεῖ μᾶλλον νὰ τὸ καθαρίσει...

Καθένας ἄς ὑπηρετεῖ τὸ σῶμα ἀνάλογα μετὰ τὴν δύναμή του. Καὶ φροντίστε πάντοτε νὰ βοηθεῖ ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλο εἴτε διδάσκοντας καὶ βάζοντας τὸ λόγο τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν καρδιὰ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, εἴτε παρηγορώντας, ὅταν ὁ ἄλλος εἶναι λυπημένος, εἴτε δίνοντας ἓνα χέρι καὶ βοηθώντας τὸν ἀδελφό. Φροντίστε νὰ ἐνωθεῖτε μεταξύ σας. Γιατὶ ὅσο ἐνώνεται κανεὶς μετὰ τὸν πλησίον, τόσο περισσότερο ἐνώνεται μετὰ τὸν Θεό.

**Ἀββᾶς Δωρόθεος**

**Ν**ὰ μέμφεσαι τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου, νὰ περιφρονεῖς καὶ νὰ κόβεις τὸ θέλημά σου καὶ νὰ θέτεις τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου κάτω ἀπὸ ὅλη τὴν κτίσι. Καὶ ἄς μάθει ἡ ἀγάπη σου ὅτι ὅλη ἡ πάλῃ τοῦ διαβόλου εἶναι νὰ μᾶς χωρίσει τὸν ἓνα ἀπὸ τὸν ἄλλο.

**Ἀββᾶς Βαρσανούφιος**

## Αὐτὰ Εἶναι Χριστούγεννα

Τοῦ ἀρχιμανδρίτου πατρός Ἰακώβου Κανάκη.

Στὶς μεγάλες πόλεις σημειώνεται ἡ ἀπόλυτη ἀντίθεση. Ζεστή ἀτμόσφαιρα στὰ μαγαζιά καὶ στὰ ἐστιατόρια καὶ ἔξω ἀπὸ τὶς πόρτες καὶ τὰ παράθυρά τους ἄστεγοι, νηστικοὶ καὶ παγωμένοι ἄνθρωποι. Χαμόγελα στοὺς ἀνέμελους θαμῶνες τους καὶ ἔξω ἄνθρωποι ἀπογοητευμένοι σχεδὸν «ἡμιθανεῖς». Ἄνθρωποι ποὺ ἀναζητοῦν «τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων» καὶ ἄλλοι ποὺ εἶναι μόνοι τους «χριστοί», ἀλλὰ ἀόρατοι γιὰ τοὺς πρώτους.

Μία κοινωνία μὲ τόσες ἀντιθέσεις, σὲ τέλεια σύγχυση, ποὺ αἰμορραγεῖ καὶ πλέον φαίνεται. Δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ κρυφτεῖ μὲ τίποτα. Ἐντονα πλέον τὰ σημάδια ποὺ γίνονται τραύματα μέρα μὲ τὴν ἡμέρα, μιᾶς κατὰ βάση πολὺπλευρης πνευματικῆς κρίσης. Ὑπάρχει ὅμως μέσα σ' αὐτὴν τὴν τεταμένη ἀτμόσφαιρα μία εὐκαιρία ἀκόμη ἐφέτος, νὰ ἔρθουμε πιὸ κοντὰ στὰ Χριστούγεννα, νὰ τὰ βιώσουμε πραγματικά. Μία κίνηση, ἓνα βλέμμα, ἓνα νεῦμα σὲ ὅσους πάσχουν, ἀποτελεῖ τὴν μέγιστη ἐλεημοσύνη. Ἡ συμπαράσταση στὸν διπλανὸ ἄνθρωπο, σὲ κάθε ἄνθρωπο, ὁδηγεῖ στὰ Χριστούγεννα.

Ἐνα ἐλάχιστο ἐνδιαφέρον πρὸς τὸν πλησίον καὶ ἀμέσως ἡ ψυχὴ ἐνεργοποιεῖται, ζωντανεύει, χαίρεται καὶ μπαίνει στὸ πραγματικὸ πνεῦμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων. Τῶν Χριστουγέννων ὄχι μόνο τῶν παιδιῶν, ὅπως κάποιοι λένε, ἀλλὰ ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ κυρίως αὐτῶν ποὺ ἀναζητοῦν μία φάτνη. Ὅντως, ἐκούσια ἢ ἀκούσια, μία φάτνη ζητᾷ ὁ ἄνθρωπος γιὰ νὰ ξαναγεννηθεῖ σὲ μία νέα κατάσταση, σὲ μία νέα κοινωνία, ὄχι ὅπως τὴν κατέστησαν οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ οἱ δυνατοὶ στὸ παρελθόν. Ὅλοι μία φάτνη ἀναζητοῦν ἀλλὰ συχνὰ μακριὰ ἀπὸ τὴν φάτνη ἐκείνη τῆς Βηθλεέμ.

Ὅμως νὰ ποὺ ἡ προέκταση αὐτῆς τῆς ἱστορικῆς φάτνης δὲν περιορίζεται χρονικὰ καὶ τοπικά.

Ἡ προέκταση ὑφίσταται καὶ σήμερα. Ἡ φάτνη τοῦ Χριστοῦ πάντοτε ἀναζητοῦσε καὶ ἀναζητᾷ αὐτοὺς ποὺ θὰ τὴν προτιμήσουν, ἄσχετα μὲ τὸ πότε καὶ τὸ ποῦ ἔζησαν καὶ ζοῦν. Μία φάτνη ποὺ ἀφορᾷ σὲ κάθε ἄνθρωπο, ὅπου καὶ νὰ γεννηθῆκε, ὅποια γλώσσα καὶ ἂν μιλάει, ποὺ ἀφορᾷ στὸ παρελθόν, στὸ παρὸν καὶ στὸ μέλλον. Αὐτὴν ἀναζητοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι γιὰτὶ γι'

αὐτὴν εἶναι προορισμένοι. Θὰ λύγιζαν καὶ οἱ πιὸ σκληροὶ ἂν διάβαζαν, ἂν γνώριζαν, ἂν αἰσθάνονταν τὴν ἔνταση τῆς ἀγάπης μὲ τὴν ὁποία μᾶς ἀναζητᾷ ὁ Θεὸς ποὺ σπαργανώνεται «σήμερον».

Στήριξη ζητοῦν ἰδιαίτερος οἱ ἄνθρωποι σήμερα περισσότερο ἀπὸ ποτέ. Τὰ σπιτικά τους καὶ οἱ καρδιές τους ζητοῦν ζεστασιά γιὰτὶ ἔχουν μεγαλύτερη παγωνιά ἀπὸ αὐτὴν ποὺ ἔχουν οἱ ἄστεγοι τὸν χειμῶνα. Ἄνθρωπο ζητοῦν καὶ ἄνθρωπο δὲν ἔχουν. Ἀλήθεια, ποῖον νὰ λυπηθεῖς τέτοιες μέρες ἀλλὰ καὶ κάθε μέρα; Ἐκείνους ποὺ ζοῦν στὸ δρόμο ἢ ἐκείνους ποὺ ἔμειναν «ἄστεγοι» ἀγάπης καὶ ἐπικοινωνίας μέσα στὸ «ζεστό τους» σπίτι. Φαινόμενο στὶς μέρες μας ἡ ἀποξένωση, ἡ μοναξιά καὶ ἡ ἀπογοήτευση. Φαινόμενο καὶ ἡ τόση ἀδιαφορία.

Ἐρχονται Χριστούγεννα, ποὺ γιὰ τὸν καθένα τελικὰ σημαίνουν κάτι ἐντελῶς διαφορετικὸ. Χριστούγεννα



εἶναι τὸ νὰ βγεῖς ἀπὸ τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου. Χριστούγεννα σημαίνει δόσιμο καὶ ἂν ἔτσι τὰ ζήσεις, ζεῖς τὴν ἐσωτερικὴ πληρότητα καὶ αὐτὸ γίνεται κάθε φορᾷ ποὺ θὰ κινεῖσαι στὰ ὄρια τῆς προσφορᾶς γιὰ τὸν ἄλλον. Χριστούγεννα ἔρχονται, ἂς κάνουμε ὄχι τὸ δεδομένο ἀλλὰ μία ὑπέρβαση, τὸ κάτι παραπάνω καὶ τὸ διαφορετικὸ. Καὶ αὐτὸ

βιώνοντάς το προσωπικὰ καὶ μυστικά.

Ἄς βοηθήσουμε μὲ τρόπο μυστικὸ, κάποιον ποὺ μάθαμε ὅτι εἶναι μόνος τούτη τὴν χρονιά, ποὺ εἶναι στὸ νοσοκομεῖο, ποὺ πενθεῖ ἀπὸ τὸν θάνατο κάποιου ἀνθρώπου. Αὐτὸς ἂς γίνε γιὰ μᾶς Χριστούγεννα καὶ ὁ «καλὸς μας χρόνος». Δύο κορυφαῖες συναντήσεις ἂς γίνουν αὐτὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα: μιὰ μὲ τὸν Ἐνανθρωπήσαντα Χριστὸ στὸ κοινὸ ἅγιο Ποτήριο καὶ ἄλλη μιὰ μὲ τὸν κάθε «χριστὸ» δίπλα μας.

Αὐτὰ εἶναι ἀληθινὰ, πραγματικὰ Χριστούγεννα, ποὺ δὲν ἔχουν πολλὰ φῶτα ἀλλὰ τὸ «*φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν*»!



**Χ**ριστούγεννα! Περίχαρα ἢ καμπάνα κρᾶζει κι ἡ Μάνα τὸ παιδὶ καὶ τὸ παιδὶ «Χριστούγεννα» στὴ Μάνα κι ὁ κόσμος ὅλος τραγουδεῖ.

**Κωστὴς Παλαμᾶς**

## NATIVITY EPISTLE OF 1962

By Saint John, Archbishop of Shanghai.

*Thou, Who art the God of peace and the Father of compassions, didst send unto us the Angel of Thy great Counsel, granting us peace.*

† † †



The Angel-Messenger of the pre-eternal Counsel of the Holy Trinity comes to the earth. This is not an ordinary messenger; it is the Only-begotten Son of God Himself. He brings peace to men. *Peace be unto you*, He said more than once to His disciples. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, He says to the apostles at the

Mystical Supper, *not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. And appearing after His Resurrection, again He says: *Peace be unto you*.

For He is our peace, the holy Apostle Paul says concerning Him. *He came to the earth to reconcile man unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. And having come, He preached peace to those afar off and to those near, because through Him we both have access unto the Father.*

The wall that separated heaven and earth is destroyed; the sword that barred the way to the tree of life disappears. Unto man that had sinned comes his Creator, calling him into His embrace! By the mouths of the apostles, the Holy Spirit cries out: *In Christ, be ye reconciled to God*. You that had sinned came not to God, but the Son of God, before Whom you sinned, came to you! He calls everyone to Himself; He gives forgiveness to everyone who merely thirsts for this. For without the desire of man himself, without at least his little effort, God's peace cannot settle in him. The Lord forces no one to come to Him, but calls everyone: *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. Come all ye who are heavy laden with sins, who are exhausted from your labors and who do not find rest. You shall find that inner peace, which you will find nothing on earth more desirable than. The soul will feel unearthly peace and joy.

The Magi who worshipped the Babe experienced that joy; the shepherds, finding Him lying in a manger, also felt it. But neither peace nor joy touched the heart of Herod and those who wanted to destroy the Babe. For

evil desire and malice are incompatible with inner peace. And whoever does not have inner peace, also sows strife and malice about.

The Church now calls us to meet Christ Who comes from heaven. What can we do in order to meet Him like the Magi, and not like Herod? *Ye that desire life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it*. It tends to be hard to do this; we are weak when it comes to everything good. But the Son of God even came for this: in order to strengthen us. Not for naught was He born in Bethlehem, which signifies *house of bread*. He feeds us with heavenly food, His flesh. *God, the Lord and Creator of all, as a babe in the flesh, is worshipped in a poor manger, crying out: eat My body and through faith be made steadfast*. These words of the divine Babe are directed to us.

Let us hearken to His call! Let us follow the Magi; let us hasten with the shepherds! Our churches are now that cave of Bethlehem. Not illusory, but in reality does He, Who is now being born in His most pure flesh, rest in them. Let us worship Him; let us offer as a gift our thoughts and desires; let us confess our sins, and let us taste of His immaculate Body and Blood. Whoever did not do this earlier, let him at least accomplish it now, when the star of Bethlehem is already shining! Our minds will be enlightened and the heart will hear:

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!*



Thus the immaculate fruition issuing forth from the womb occurred from an infertile mother, and then the parents, in the first blossoming of her growth brought her to the temple and dedicated her to God. The priest, then making the order of services, beheld the face of the girl and of those in front of and behind, and he became gladdened and joyful, seeing as it were the actual fulfillment of the Divine promise. He consecrated her to God, as a reverential gift and propitious sacrifice and, as a great treasury unto salvation, he led her within the very innermost parts of the temple. Here the Maiden walked in the upright ways of the Lord, as in bridal chambers, partaking of heavenly food until the time of betrothal, which was preordained before all the ages by Him Who, by His inscrutable mercy, was born from her, and by Him Who before all creation and time and expanse Divinely begat Him...

St. Andrew of Crete  
*Homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos*

## THE VALUE OF TIME

(THE NUMBER 8,760)

*By the Rev. Metropolitan Avgoustinos of Florina (+2010), from the weekly bulletin "Kyriaki" («Κυριακή», "Sunday"), January 1, 2005 [translated from Greek by the staff of the Greek Orthodox Brotherhood of St. Poimen].*



On midnight of December 31<sup>st</sup>, when the clocks reach exactly 12:00, one full year—with all of its joys and sorrows—is fully erased, and a new year rises. The previous year becomes part of history; all of its 365 days are left behind, a simple memory.

My dear brethren, did you ever think, I mean truly contemplate about the time period of these 365 days that on each December 31<sup>st</sup> becomes part of our own history? What have we truly accomplished during its duration? Let me assure you that all of us are immensely indebted for all of these days. In an effort to provide a notion of our responsibility as well as accountability for each year of our earthly lives, I will draw you a picture and provide you a comparative example; I will present a small parable.

There was a king with many subjects who carried great fondness and devotion for all of his kingdom's citizenry. He loved them all very much, every single one of them, without any exception. One day, he decided to give them all a gift. He prepared and distributed purses filled with gold coins, one to each citizen. The grateful subjects opened the purses up and begun counting the coins within. They each counted them, over and over, again and again... All of them had the exact same quantity of gold within their respective purse: 8,760 coins! This was a significant amount of gold. The good and loving king gave it to them out of his goodwill and love, so that they could each use it for their own benefit and the benefit of their fellow men. And do you know what each of them did with their respective small fortune? You could have never guessed it! Instead of using this blessed inheritance for their home, neighbor or society, they each went by the river bank, opened up their purses and began throwing the gold coins away into the deep river water, one by one, until all of their small fortune was completely gone and their purses stood empty. If any one of us had been there observing them, what might we have said? Surely all of us would have assumed that they had all gone mad.

My brethren, this is where my simple parable ends. Now who is this loving king? He is our God. Who are these

senseless citizens? We are the King's citizenry. And what is this 8,760 number? Grab a pencil and paper and figure it out. Every day that passes by has 24 hours and all of the year has 365 days. If we multiply the 365 days with the 24 hours of each day, we then determine that an entire year contains 8,760 hours; these are then the hours that each year of our life has to offer. From January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to the next December 31<sup>st</sup> that follows 8,760 hours will have passed. I thus repeat my question: What have we truly accomplished during the duration of the year we are about to leave behind? Have we made it a worthwhile year? Did we add any value? Or, perhaps we are all like those foolish citizens that threw away all of their 8,760 gold coins. Let us then make an examination, each one of us on our own, and let us evaluate and estimate the usefulness of last year's 8,760 hours that are about to draw to a close.

Among all of these hours, was there any time set aside for listening to the divine word of God and for the study of Holy Scriptures? Were there any days that we ran to a Church to listen to sermons or attend Church services? How about opening and studying the Bible? Did we do that? If the answer is yes, then we may consider ourselves blessed. This is how the Psalter begins. We read that "blessed" is that person, happy and with good fortune. Who does the Psalmist refer to? Is it the person that has lots of money, apartment buildings, businesses, limousines, and enjoys the finest of worldly entertainment? Not quite; the Psalmist says: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* (Ps 1:1-2). Blessed is he who takes time to place the Holy Bible in his hands and read it. I thus ask all of us: During the year that is coming to an end, did our angel see us hold the Holy Gospel in our hands and read it on a regular basis? Christ Himself tells us: *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* (Lk 11:28).

We are coming to the close of this year's 8,760 hours. I ask another question: During this entire year, were there hours regularly devoted to prayer? During the earlier years of Christianity, the faithful would dedicate hours upon hours for the purpose of prayer. Does our angel ever "catch us" on our knees, in prayer to our Heavenly Father? Oh if we only knew the great power of prayer and how much we truly lose by not making prayer a companion to our daily life. There would have been so many unsolved problems (personal, family, professional, etc) that would simply find rapid solutions if, and only if, we used this invaluable key to unlock such solutions; the key of prayer is just another valuable gift granted to us by our God and Creator. What great comfort and consolation can be found when we whisper *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior, through the*

*intercessions of the Holy Theotokos and all of Your saints, have mercy upon me!*

This year's 8,760 hours are rapidly coming to an end. During this time, were there any hours or days of fasting? There are certain days such as Wednesdays and Fridays, and others that are even more significant, such as Holy Friday, that must be days of fasting for all of us. A politician dedicated 15 straight days for his campaign, and vested several towns. When he returned to his office, he proudly announced: "I traveled for 15 days straight and toured 15 different towns, In every single one I was treated and fed as royalty; freshly slaughtered meat every single day..." And one of the villagers that heard him, a shepherd, asked him in a soft tone: "Your Excellency, how can there be no Wednesday and no Friday for 15 days straight? Was every day a Pascha?..." You see, my brethren, fasting is nowadays not even a "custom" among many of our faithful—there is no desire or will to fast even on Great Friday! Satan has gotten hold of the special eraser and wiped out fasting from the daily lives of Christians.

This year's 8,760 hours are ending. Among these hours was time set aside for repentance and confession? These hours would have been the year's most blessed ones for that is the time that we placed the devil on the ground and stamped him while angels in Heaven are singing divine victory hymns. It was during those hours that we the sinful ones, full of contrition and in utmost humility, knelt in front of our spiritual father and opened up our lips to whisper not words of criticism and condemnation but the ones that our Lord thrives to listen to: I sinned my Lord, please, grant your mercy upon me the wretched one... And all of us have so many sins to repent for and confess... So, I ask all of us, during this last year, did we manage to spend time with our confessor, to open our heart, to tearfully confess our sins and then say *God be merciful to me a sinner* and *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*? (Lk 18:13 & 23:42). Did we do this? If not, we better ask ourselves why not.

This year's 8,760 hours are rapidly coming to an end. Is it possible that we might have also forgotten the other golden hours of the year that are coming to a close? Which hours are these, you ask? These are the hours of almsgiving and mercy towards our fellow man. Did you reach into your pocket and silently, secretly and with as little attention as possible place a few crumbs from your many blessings into the hands of a less fortunate man? Did you dedicate a few moments in prayer for a neighbor or a colleague who was in a moment of crisis? Did you spend a few dimes from your earthly blessings towards a Christian mission or cause? Never forget that the hands that spread goodness and alms are the hands of God, the hands of Christ!

This year's 8,760 hours are rapidly coming to an end. During these hours were there any of the most significant

and spiritually highest moments, the moments of receiving Holy Communion, our Lord's holy Body and most precious Blood? These are indeed blessed moments; once we repent and confess our sins, once we are cleansed with tears of true repentance, once we embrace and make peace with our enemies, we approach the Royal Gate with the look of the thief on the cross and receive the Holy Mysteries: *Take, eat; this is my body... Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* (Mt 26:28). These are the moments that carry a unique and incomparable weight and significance; there is no price for them and can neither be purchased nor sold. They are truly above all other hours of our life.

So now we all need to ask: Were there such hours for any of you my brethren, and most pointedly for me the wretched one? I am greatly afraid that in reality we have no such hours. Our hours are almost exclusively hours of sin, the devil's hours; they are everything and anything except one thing: hours of God. Let us not kid ourselves; we waste each year's hours like all those who threw their gold coins into the river.

We truly are inexcusable. Our Holy Gospel says that, during the time of our Lord's time on earth, the citizens of Jerusalem showed great interest in spiritual matters. When they heard that a preacher and confessor came to the area, St. John the Forerunner, they closed their shops, took their wives and children, walked for several miles past the Jordan river, and came to the desolate desert to listen to his sermons and confess their sins. And all of them *were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins* (Mk 1:5). In comparison with the faithful of those days, most of the so-called Orthodox Christians today remain completely indifferent on such matters. The bells ring yet they stay away from Churches. In the not-too-distant past, when the faithful could find no confessor in their area, they would travel for days to go to the Holy Mountain to find a spiritual father and partake of the Holy Sacrament of confession. In our days, this is an extremely rare occurrence for most of our neighbors and friends.

One year is comprised of 8,760 hours and each week has 168 hours. My fellow brethren, let us dedicate to God a couple of hours each week and make our way to our local Church so we can at least attend Liturgy. We anxiously throw away so many hours each week on worldly matters; is it not proper to devote at least a couple of hours for our God? We have completely forgotten Him and have literally pushed Him out of our lives. Putting it simply, we have forgotten Him. We are an adulteress generation, like trees that bear no fruit and are fit to be only fuel for fire. Our Lord represented this type of condition very accurately during His homily at the mountain: *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* (Mt 7:19).

What is it then that we should do, you ask. Why are you asking me or any of your clergy? The answers lie elsewhere, in black and white, as written by St. John the Evangelist. What does he have to tell us? One simple word that is the one and only key: Repent! (*Repent ye: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, Mt 3:2). In other words, change your mind, your behavior, your life, your daily spiritual path; the road that our ultra-progressive society has carved for the citizens of our days leads the faithful to the deep, dreaded canyon of eternal damnation, Hell. That is the destination towards where most of us are marching; unless we choose here and now to change, re-program our lives, use wisely every minute granted to us by our Lord. Let us stop wasting time now, let us stop throwing our gold coins senselessly into the river.

My dear brethren, if we could hear the repeated petitions of those judged to eternal damnation, those countless souls in Hades, do you know what we would hear them ask? To return to life for a little time, a few moments, a few seconds, so that they can emphatically pronounce: *Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son and Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom* (Lk 15:21 & 23:42). Let us therefore waste no more time. Let us all comprehend how much we have lost, the countless hours we have wasted. Let us repent, let us shed tears of contrition and kneel in the sight of a spiritual father, let us confess our sins. Starting with this January 1<sup>st</sup>, let us commit to make full use of our God-granted time, let us not waste a single one of next year's precious hours. Let us promise God that this year, we will not grant or allow the devil to take possession of even a single hour. All of next year's hours, all of next year's days, all of next year's weeks, and all the days of our lives will be spent near God, near His angels, near His Most Holy Mother so that we can be worthy of the blessings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ unto the ages of ages. Amen.



**T**ruly never before has the cross of each person who wants to be a true Christian been as heavy as in this time of the triumph of falsehood which we are experiencing.

Never before on this earth has there been such a huge number of people who freely and easily, without any shame, without any pangs of conscience *call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isa 5:20).

**Archbishop Averky of Blessed Memory (+1976)**

## DEALING WITH THE SECULARIZATION OF CHRISTMAS

*From "The Veil," Vol. 12, No. 3 (Nativity Fast, 2005).*

**Q**uestion: I hate the secularization of Christmas. How can I and my family keep the Nativity Fast and celebrate Christmas without getting into all the commercialization that surrounds it in society?

**A**nswer: Almost all of what can be said in reply to this question is very obvious and simple, but can be difficult to implement. For those with families, it would be advisable to talk over all these points together and to encourage each other in adhering to everything as we draw nearer and nearer to the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. If a beginning in the following suggestions has not already been made, it is never too late to start.

First of all, be sure to keep the fast! In following the fast as we should, many of the intrusions which the world makes into our homes during this time will automatically be eliminated. Remember, a "fasting" day or period is not limited only to food, but includes vain entertainment as well.

With this in mind, we would like to stress that no one should look at "fasting" as something negative: "we can't do...", "we can't eat...", "we can't go." Instead we need to redefine the way we see a fasting period, such as this time before the Nativity of the Lord. This is a preparation period and a time for spiritual growth—and this idea is certainly not something negative!

The world in which we live is constantly intruding into our innermost lives as it attacks all of the bodily senses; this is never more obvious than during this time of the year. We are encouraged to see, hear, taste, touch and smell all sorts of things that take our minds off of traveling the road to Bethlehem for the birth of Christ.

Obviously, for those who are either single, widowed or have no young children in the home, all of what we need to do to make the Nativity Fast a true time of spiritual growth is much easier. The target for so much of the advertising during this period is aimed directly at those who are most vulnerable—the children—and the things which are advertised are usually the very things that we need to avoid. Each household is a unique situation, and this will have to be kept in mind when trying to implement the suggestions we would like to make.

Those with children at home often find the actual fasting from foods difficult during this time when it seems that so many rich, enticing and definitely non-fasting foods are pushed at us. It often helps to have special Lenten foods that the family enjoys and which are served only during this and other fasting periods. We do not, however, want to dwell only on the culinary aspects of the fast in this article;



we assume that all reading this are indeed adhering to this aspect of the fast, since it is not optional.

A fast only from specific foods is certainly not the sum total of our preparation for the Nativity. Fasting includes avoiding entertainment—another thing which abounds during this season. It is possible in almost all circumstances to avoid office parties and other gatherings by truthfully stating that as Orthodox Christians we do not begin to celebrate until the Feast has arrived. If attendance at such an event absolutely cannot be avoided, then it is always possible to find things to eat that do not break the fast, and also to simply excuse yourself early.

This is certainly a time when we should be intensifying our reading and daily prayers. We find a number of great saints whose feast days fall within this fast: St. Nicholas on December 6<sup>th</sup>, Saint Spiridon on December 12<sup>th</sup>, St. Herman on December 13<sup>th</sup>, St. Ignatius on December 20<sup>th</sup> to name just a few. Read their lives and truly pray to them. Also, within the time of this fast there are quite a few of the prophets whose feast days are also commemorated: read their prophecies as well from the Old Testament. The *Katavasia* of the Nativity are sung beginning on November 21<sup>st</sup>—whether you are a singer or not, get the words and music from your priest and learn them, singing them throughout the day when you are alone or with your family. They are very beautiful and uplifting.

These are just a few of the things that can be read as a family, as well as individually, and our daily prayers can—and should—include a petition to God to keep us from all which would harm the soul.

Many parishes offer a retreat or seminar during this time. If your own parish is not having something like this, there is a good chance that a surrounding parish is! Speak with your priest and ask him about this. If there is not a retreat or seminar (and even if there is!) it would be a good idea for several people, like yourself, who want to redirect their priorities during the Nativity Fast to meet together in a reading group. Accountability always tends to make us read and pray more!

The so-called “Christmas specials” on television and the bombardment of commercials that tell us of all the things we absolutely must have or must buy to be a good mother, father, brother, relative, friend, etc., are enough reason for everyone to turn off the television! The “Christmas specials” seem to emphasize that the “true meaning of Christmas” involves being loving, caring, self-giving, etc (sandwiched in between commercials which appeal to greed) and mention nothing of the fact that God has become flesh in His love for mankind in order to restore us to that image that was lost!

Now we finally come to the most obvious aspect of the secular celebration of Christmas—presents. While it is now too late to implement this suggestion, it is certainly some-

thing that can be remembered and acted upon for next year purchase gifts before the Fast begins!

Limit gifts to a minimum. Certainly everyone has said at one point or another that the proverbial “next year” will be different and more simple. Begin now. There are so many ways in which this can be done, and again, every situation is unique. Most people like gift certificates or a donation made to their favorite charity in their name. Within families, it can be as easy or as difficult to limit the frenzy of gift-giving as you decide to make it.

Above everything, remember that we begin to celebrate when the world around us is finished celebrating! On December 25<sup>th</sup> we hear non-Orthodox people saying, “Well, that was a nice Christmas, but I’m glad it’s over.” For us, having fasted and anticipated the Lord’s birth for forty days, we are just beginning to celebrate, to sing carols and to comfort our weary bodies with richer foods.

Let us celebrate the feast of the Lord’s Incarnation with spiritual joy instead of being so tired and burned out that we echo the sentiments of those outside the Faith who are glad to see these days, which are so holy to us, come to an end.

*Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ is come from the heavens, receive Him! Christ on the earth. Rejoice, all the earth, sing to the Lord, for He has covered Himself in glory!*



Now the day of mercy has shown forth! Let no one persecute his neighbor with revenge for the wrong he has caused him! The day of joy has arrived! Let no one be guilty of causing sorrow and grief to another person. This is a cloudless and bright day!

Let anger be stilled for it disturbs peace and tranquility. This is the day in which God descended to sinners! Let the righteous man be ashamed to exalt himself over sinners. This is the day when the Lord of creation came to servants! Let the master of the house humble himself in similar love to his servants. This is the day on which the Wealthy One became poor for our sake! Let not the rich be ashamed to share their table with the poor.

#### **St. Ephraim the Syrian**

He who sits at the right hand of the Father goes without shelter at the inn, that He may for us prepare many mansions in the house of His heavenly Father... He was born, not in the house of His parents, but at the inn, by the wayside, because through the mystery of the Incarnation He is become the Way, by which He guides us to our home.

**Venerable Bede**

## ST. MARK OF EPHESUS AND THE FALSE UNION OF FLORENCE

*By Archimandrite Amvrossy Pogodin (+2014). Father Ambrosius was a prolific writer, translator, and scholar, and he regularly contributed articles and translated works of the Greek Fathers to various learned Russian periodicals and also published Russian translations of a variety of Greek historical material. This article, albeit lengthy, is mandatory reading for all Orthodox Christians during these dark days of Ecumenism and the papal-like behaviors of the Patriarch of Constantinople, the architect of today's great schism within His Bride*

### The Conclusion of the False Union

To the other afflictions which the Orthodox delegation suffered in Florence was added the death of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Patriarch was found dead in his room.

On the table lay (supposedly) his testament, *Extrema Sententia*, consisting in all of some lines in which he declared that he accepted everything that the Church of Rome confesses. And then: "In like manner I acknowledge the Holy Father of Fathers, the Supreme Pontiff and Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Pope of Old Rome. Likewise, I acknowledge purgatory. In affirmation of this, I affix my signature."

**There is no doubt whatever that Patriarch Joseph did not write this document.** The German scholar Frommann, who made a detailed investigation of the "Testament" of Patriarch Joseph, says: "This document is so Latinized and corresponds so little to the opinion expressed by the Patriarch several days before, that its spuriousness is evident." The "Testament" appears in the history of the Council of Florence quite late; contemporaries of the Council knew nothing of it.

And so the Greek delegation lost its Patriarch. Although the Patriarch was no pillar of Orthodoxy, and though one may reproach him in much, still one cannot deny that with his whole soul he grieved for Orthodoxy and never allowed himself or anyone else to injure St. Mark. Being already in deep old age, he lacked the energy to defend the Church of which he was head, but history cannot reproach him for betraying the Church. Death spared him from the many and grievous humiliations which the Orthodox Church subsequently had to endure. And on the other hand the absence of his signature on the Act of Union later gave occasion for the defenders of Orthodoxy to contest the pretension of the Council of Florence to the significance and title of "Ecumenical Council," because the Act of every Ecumenical Council must be signed first of all by the Patriarchs.

After the death of the Patriarch, as Syropoulos informs us, Emperor John Paleologos took the direction of the Church into his own hands. This anticanonical situation, although often encountered in Byzantine history, as well in a positive as in a negative manifestation, was strictly condemned by St. Mark in one of his epistles, where he says: "**Let no one dominate in our faith: neither emperor, nor hierarch, nor**

false council, nor anyone else, but only the one God, Who both Himself and through His Disciples has handed it down to us."

Let us set forth in brief the further history of the negotiations between the Orthodox and the Latins—or, to speak more truly, the history of the capitulation of the Orthodox. The Orthodox were obliged to accept the Latin teaching of the *filioque* and acknowledge the Latin dogma of the Procession of the Holy Spirit, in the sense of His Existence, from the Two *Hypostases*. Then the Orthodox were obliged to declare that the *filioque*, as an addition within the Symbol of Faith, had always been a canonical and blessed act. By this alone there were reduced to naught all the objections of the Greeks from the time of Patriarch Photios, as well as the works of St. Mark of Ephesus and the interdictions for changing the Symbol of Faith which had been made at the Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils. One should also note that not all the Roman Popes had approved of the *filioque*, and several had considered its introduction into the Symbol of Faith completely uncanonical. But now all this was forgotten. Everything was sacrificed to the demands of Pope Eugenius and his cardinals.

Further, it was demanded of the Orthodox to accept the Latin teaching concerning the consecration of the Holy Gifts and renounce their own as expressed in the performance of the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Church. Besides, this was expressed by the Latins in disdainful declarations concerning the Liturgical practice of the Eastern Church.

Finally, the Orthodox were obliged to sign and acknowledge a confession of Papism, expressed thus: "We decree that the Holy Apostolic Throne and Roman Pontiff possess a primacy over the whole earth, and that this Roman Pontiff is the Successor of the blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is the true Vicar of Christ, the Head of the whole Church, Pastor and Teacher of all Christians; and that our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of St. Peter has given him full authority to shepherd, direct and rule the whole Church, as is likewise contained in the acts of the Ecumenical Councils and in the holy canons." The Orthodox were likewise forced to acknowledge purgatory.

And so Orthodoxy was to cease to exist. Something even more painful was the fact that Orthodoxy had been sold, and not merely betrayed. For when a majority of the Orthodox delegates had found that the Vatican's demands were completely unacceptable, certain warm partisans of the Union had asked the Pope to inform them openly what advantages Byzantium would derive from the Union. The Pope grasped the "business" side of the question and offered the following: (1) The Vatican would provide the means to send the Greeks back to Constantinople. (2) 300 (!) soldiers would be maintained at Papal expense in Constantinople for the defense of the capital against the Turks (3) Two ships would be maintained on the Bosphorus for defense of the city.

(4) A crusade would go through Constantinople. (5) The Pope would summon the Western sovereigns to the aid of Byzantium. The last two promises were purely theoretical. However, when the negotiations came to a dead end, and the Emperor himself was ready to break off further negotiations, the whole affair was settled by four metropolitans, partisans of the Union; and the affair was concluded with a lavish entertainment given by the Pope; theological disputes concerning the privileges of the See of Rome were conducted over wineglasses.

The end came at last. An Act of Union was drawn up in which the Orthodox renounced their Orthodoxy and accepted all the Latin formulas and innovations which had only just appeared in the bosom of the Latin Church, such as the teaching on purgatory. They accepted also an extreme form of Papism, by this act renouncing the ecclesiology that was the essence of the Orthodox Church. All the Orthodox delegates accepted and signed the Union, whether for themselves or, in the case of some, for the Eastern Patriarchs, by whom they had been entrusted to represent them. The signing, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1439, was accompanied by a triumphant service, and after the solemn declaration of the Union, read in Latin and Greek, the Greek delegates kissed the Pope's knee.

Administratively speaking, the whole Orthodox Church signed: Emperor John, the metropolitans and representatives of the Eastern Patriarchs, the Metropolitan of Kiev Isidore, and the Russian Bishop Abraham. **Only one hierarch did not sign. It would be superfluous to mention his name: St. Mark of Ephesus.** But no one paid the least attention to him. What was one man, and he humiliated and fatally ill, in comparison with the all powerful Vatican, headed by the mighty Pope Eugenius IV? What was this one Greek in comparison with the whole multitude of Greek dignitaries headed by Emperor John, and the Greek metropolitans?

There is a Russian proverb: "One alone on the field is no warrior." However, **in this one man was represented the whole might of the Orthodox Church.** This one man represented in himself the whole Orthodox Church. He was a giant of giants, bearing in himself all the sanctity of Orthodoxy and all its might! And this is why, when Pope Eugenius was

solemnly shown by his cardinals the Act of Union, signed by all the Greek delegates, he said, not finding on it the signature of St. Mark: "And so we have accomplished nothing." All the success of the Vatican was illusory and short-lived. The Pope attempted by every means to compel St. Mark to sign the Union, a fact that is attested both by Andrew of Rhodes and Syropoulos. The Pope demanded that St. Mark be deprived of his rank then and there for his refusal to sign the Act of Union. But Emperor John did not allow him to be harmed, because in the depths of his heart he respected St. Mark.

Syropoulos relates the final meeting of St. Mark with the Pope. "The Pope asked of the Emperor that St. Mark appear before him. The Emperor, having summoned him beforehand, persuaded him, saying:

'When the Pope asks you to appear before him already two and three times, you must go to him; but have no fear, for I have spoken and requested and arranged with the Pope so that you will be given no offense or injury. And so, go and listen to everything he says, and reply openly in whatever manner will seem to you the most suitable.' And so Mark went to appear before the Pope, and finding him sitting informally in his own quarters with his cardinals and his bishops, he was uncertain in what fashion he should express respect to the Pope. Seeing that all who surrounded the Pope were sitting, he said: 'I have been suffering from a kidney ailment and severe gout and have not the strength to stand,' and proceeded to sit in his place. The Pope spoke long with Mark; his aim was to persuade him also to follow the decision



of the Council and affirm the Union, and if he refused to do this, then he should know that he would be subject to the same interdictions which previous Ecumenical Councils laid upon the obstinate, who, deprived of every gift of the Church, were cast out as heretics. To the Pope's words Mark gave an extensive, commanding reply. Concerning the interdictions with which the Pope threatened him, he said: *The Councils of the Church have condemned as rebels those who have transgressed against some dogma and have preached thus and fought for this, for which reason also they are called "heretics"; and from the beginning the Church has condemned the heresy itself, and only then has it condemned the leaders of the heresy and its defenders. But I have by no means preached my own*

*teaching, nor have I introduced anything new in the Church, nor defended any foreign and false doctrine; but I have held only that teaching which the Church received in perfect form from our Saviour, and in which it has steadfastly remained to this day: the teaching which the Holy Church of Rome, before the schism that occurred between us, possessed no less than our Eastern Church; the teaching which, as holy, you formerly were wont to praise, and often at this very Council you mentioned with respect and honor, and which no one could reproach or dispute. And if I hold it and do not allow myself to depart from it, what Council will subject me to the interdiction to which heretics are subject? What sound and pious mind will act thus with me? For first of all one must condemn the teaching which I hold; but if you acknowledge it as pious and Orthodox, then why am I deserving of punishment?* Having said this and more of the like, and listened to the Pope, he returned to his quarters.”

#### After the Council

St. Mark returned to Constantinople with Emperor John on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1440. What a sorrowful return it was! No sooner had the Emperor managed to set foot on land than he was informed of the death of his beloved wife; after this the Emperor out of sorrow did not leave his quarters for three months. None of the hierarchs would agree to accept the post of Patriarch of Constantinople, knowing that this post would oblige one to proceed with the Union. The people who met them, as the Greek historian Doukas testifies, asked the Orthodox delegates who had signed the Union: “How did the Council go? Were we victorious?” To which the hierarchs replied: “No! We sold our faith, we bartered piety for impiety (i.e., Orthodox doctrine for heresy) and have become azymites.” The people asked then: “Why did you sign?” “From fear of the Latins,” “Did the Latins then beat you or put you in prison?” “No. But our right hand signed: let it be cut off! Our tongue confessed: let it be torn out!”

A painful silence set in. Despite the Great Lent, the season most filled with prayer, churches were empty and there were no services: no one wished to serve with those who had signed the Union. In Constantinople revolution was ripening. St. Mark alone was pure in heart and had no reproach on his conscience. But he too suffered immeasurably. Around him united all the zealots for Orthodoxy, especially the monks of the Holy Mountain (Athos) and the ordinary village priests. The whole episcopate, the whole court—all was in the hands of the Uniates, in absolute submission to the representatives of the Vatican, who came often to inspect how the Union was being carried out among the people. The Church was in extreme danger; as St. Mark wrote: “the night of Union encompassed the Church.”

St. Mark became weak in body, but in spirit he burned, and because of this, as John Eugenikos writes, “by Divine Providence he miraculously escaped danger, and the radiant one radiantly returned and was preserved for the father-

land, being met by a universal enthusiasm and respect.” The Byzantine people did not accept the Union: while all the exhortations of the partisans of the Union were ignored, the flaming sermons of St. Mark found an enthusiastic response, as Professor Ostrogorsky notes. Contemporaries of these events, passionate Uniates, note with indignation and perplexity St. Mark’s activity for the harm of the Union. Thus Joseph, Bishop of Methonensis, writes: “Having returned to Constantinople, Ephesus disturbed and confused the Eastern Church by his writings and addresses directed against the decrees of the Council of Florence.” Andrew of Rhodes calls the letters of St. Mark, which he sent out for the strengthening of Orthodoxy, “most noxious” and “seductive.” And present-day Church historians, both Orthodox and Latin, acknowledge that the shattering of the Union of Florence was due to the writings and activity of St. Mark.

St. Mark did not remain long in Constantinople, but soon, without informing the Emperor, left for Ephesus, his see, which it is possible he had not yet visited, since immediately after his consecration in Constantinople he had left for the Council in Italy. Two reasons, it would appear, impelled St. Mark to leave Constantinople for Ephesus: pastoral concern for his flock, which found itself under the Turks in the most woeful circumstances; and the desire to unite spiritually around himself those who were zealous for Orthodoxy, in so far as in Constantinople he had actually been under house arrest. It would appear that it is precisely from Ephesus that St. Mark sent his letters, his confession of faith, and his account of his activity at the Council of Florence. All these documents are to be found in my book in Russian translation.

Concerning the activity of St. Mark in Ephesus, John Eugenikos writes briefly thus: “Actively traveling everywhere throughout the regions of the great Evangelist and Theologian John, and doing this over long periods and with labor and difficulty, being sick in body; visiting the suffering holy churches, and especially constructing the church of the metropolis with the adjoining buildings; ordaining priests; helping those suffering injustice, whether by reason of persecution, or of some trial from the side of the unrighteous; defending widows and orphans; shaming, interdicting, comforting, exhorting, appealing, strengthening; he was, according to the divine Apostle, everything for everyone.” John Eugenikos further declares that inasmuch as the Saint had sufficiently sacrificed himself for his flock, while his constant desire had been monastic solitude and seclusion, he finally desired to go to the Holy Mountain. But there was yet another reason, a more weighty one, about which John Eugenikos was silent for political reasons; St. Mark himself relates this in one of his letters: he had no mandate from the authorities and for this reason his stay in Ephesus was as it were illegal, and he was compelled to leave his flock, this time forever.

The ship on which St. Mark sailed to Athos put in at the island of Limnos, one of the few islands that still belonged to Byzantium. Here St. Mark was recognized by the police authorities and, by a directive which they already possessed from Emperor John Paleologos, was arrested and imprisoned. For the space of two years St. Mark suffered in confinement. John Eugenikos thus informs us of this period in the Saint's life: "Here who would not deservedly marvel, or would not acknowledge the greatness of soul and enduring of misfortunes which he showed: suffering in the burning sun and struggling with privations of the most necessary things and tormented by diseases that came one upon the other, or enduring painful confinement while the fleet of the impious Moslems surrounded the island and inflicted destruction." Once the island was threatened by imminent disaster from a Turkish fleet which surrounded the island. But the danger unexpectedly passed, and the saved inhabitants ascribed their salvation to the prayers of St. Mark, imprisoned in the fortress.

St. Mark never complained about his miserable condition; only in one letter can we see how he suffered and how he was wanting in support from people. He writes thus to the previous Abbot of Vatopedi Monastery: "We have found great consolation from your brothers who are here, the most honorable ecclesiarch and the great economos and others, whom we have seen as inspired images of your love and piety; for they have shown us love and have calmed and strengthened us. May the Lord grant you a worthy reward for their labor and love!"

Finding himself in such painful circumstances, St. Mark continued his battle for the Church, as he writes in one of his letters: "I have been arrested. But the word of God and the power of Truth cannot be bound, but all the stronger flow and prosper, and many of the brethren, encouraged by my exile, overthrow the reproaches of the lawless and the violators of the Orthodox Faith and the customs of the fatherland." He knew that his confession was indispensable, because, as he wrote: "If there had been no persecution, the martyrs would not have shone, nor would the confessors have received the crown of victory from Christ and by their exploits strengthened and gladdened the Orthodox Church." In two years Emperor John ordered St. Mark released and allowed to go where he wished. This liberation occurred on the day when the Seven Martyr-Youths of Ephesus are commemorated, and St. Mark dedicated to them a poem of thanksgiving. St. Mark no longer had the physical strength for ascetic labors on the Holy Mountain; he had become quite feeble, and so he left for his home in Constantinople.

The last year and a half or two years of his holy life, St. Mark spent in painful circumstances of disease and persecution by the Uniate episcopate and Court. At this time he restored

many to Orthodoxy by his personal influence. Especially beneficial for the Church was the return of George Scholarios, who subsequently occupied the position of leader in the battle for Orthodoxy; after the fall of Constantinople, he was elected Patriarch of Constantinople.

During this time, i.e., the last two years of St. Mark's life, much happened. The Eastern Patriarchs condemned the Council of Florence and named it "tyrannical and foul," and refused to recognize the Union. When Metropolitan Isidore, one of the most unprincipled betrayers of Orthodoxy, appeared in Moscow preceded by the Papal cross, he was arrested by the Grand Prince of Moscow Vassily Vassilievich, and subsequently he was helped to flee to Rome, where he received a cardinal's hat. A tradition is preserved that St. Mark was much gladdened by the conduct of the Grand Prince of Moscow and set him up as an example to the Byzantine authorities.

In Constantinople itself, however, the Union was being significantly strengthened. One may say that the Union not only became the State Church of Byzantium, but also gradually took possession, through the episcopate, of the whole of Church life. Only certain individuals, grouped around St. Mark, represented at that time the Orthodox Church. Permanent representatives of the Vatican, including Cardinal Isidore, saw to the official loyalty to the Union of the Byzantine Church and Court, placing in connection with this the fulfillment also of the Papal promises to Byzantium. The danger to the Church was immense, and St. Mark was aware of this. He was aware that before everything else should be placed the battle for Orthodoxy, for, as he said, "murdered souls which have been tempted concerning the sacrament of Faith." And he, the leader of the battle, marching at the head of the army, was scarcely able to walk, exhausted by disease and harassed by the wiles of men. But the power of God is accomplished in weakness!

#### **The Death of St. Mark**

St. Mark died on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1444, at the age of 52. George Scholarios writes thus of St. Mark's death: "But our sorrow was increased yet more by the fact that he was taken away from our embrace before he had grown old in the virtues which he had acquired, before we could sufficiently enjoy his presence, in the full power of this passing life! No defect nor cunning had the power to shake his mind, nor to lead astray his soul, so strongly was it nourished and tempered by virtue! Even if the vault of heaven should fall, even then the righteousness of this man would not be shaken, his strength would not fail, his soul would not be moved, and his thought would not be impaired by such difficult trials."

He suffered terribly for fourteen days before his death. Of St. Mark's death itself there has been preserved the account of his brother, the Nomophilax John, who relates: "Thus, having lived with love of God and in everything excelled

in his sojourn from his youth to the divine Schema: in the most holy Schema, in the degrees of priestly service, in the hierarchal dignity, in arguments concerning the Orthodox Faith and in devout and passionless confession, having attained fifty-two years of bodily age, in the month of June on the twenty-third day he fell asleep; he departed rejoicing to Him to Whom he wished, according to Paul, to be dissolved to be with Him, Whom he glorified by good works, Whom he theologized in Orthodox fashion, Whom he pleased his whole life long. He was sick for fourteen days, and the disease itself, as he himself said, had upon him the same effect as those iron instruments of torture applied by executioners to the holy martyrs, and which as it were girdled his ribs and internal organs, pressed upon them and remained attached in such a state and caused absolutely unbearable pain; so that it happened that what men could not do with his sacred martyr's body was fulfilled by disease, according to the unutterable judgment of Providence, in order that this Confessor of Truth and Martyr and Conqueror of all possible sufferings and Victor should appear before God after going through every misery, and that even to his last breath, as gold tried in the furnace, and in order that thanks to this he might receive yet greater honor and rewards eternally from the Just Judge."

Although his agony was painful in the extreme, death itself came easily, and the Saint joyfully gave to God his blessed and radiant spirit. John Eugenikos tells us this: "Long before his death, he gave instructions and like a father gave commands to those present concerning the correction of the Church and our piety and open preservation of the true dogmas of the Church, and concerning turning away from innovation; and adding his final words: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, into Thy hands I commit my spirit*, he thus departed to God." Before the end, on the very day of his death, St. Mark gave over to his former student and spiritual son the leadership of the Orthodox Church, although George Scholarios was at that time still a secular prince. St. Mark was buried in the Mangana Monastery in Constantinople. "Amidst a throng of people and guards with numerous marks of respect, there was placed in the sacred monastery of Mangana dedicated to the divine Martyr George, with honor, as a

treasure, the sacred and greatly honored vessel of a sanctified soul and a temple to the glory of God, Who is glorified and wondrous in His Saints."

From the funeral address of George Scholarios we may see the depth of the sorrow that overcame Orthodox people with the loss of such a great pillar of the Church and such a good and noble man, such a meek and approachable and such a learned man, who, in the expression of John Eugenikos, drew all to himself as a magnet attracts iron. But the triumph of Orthodoxy was accomplished only after the death of St. Mark. The successor of Emperor John, his brother Constantine, openly announced his desire to preserve Orthodoxy in its purity. Not long before the Fall of Constantinople, a Council was convoked at which the Union and its promoters were triumphantly condemned and the Union itself overthrown, and the memory of St. Mark honored by all. This Council was more nominal than actual, and was composed of a quite small number of participants; historically it did not present itself as much, but as an expression of the Orthodox Church it has a great significance as the triumphant conclusion of the battle that St. Mark waged, as a Council of the Orthodox Church, however small she may have been at that time.

### Commemoration and Miracles of St. Mark

The solemn commemoration of St. Mark of Ephesus belonged at first to the family Eugenikos. Every year, probably on the day of the Saint's death, the Eugenikos family celebrated a "Service" (*Akolouthia*) and a

synaxarion was read consisting of a short Life of the Saint. It should be noted that in Byzantium the *Akolouthia* was not necessarily connected with a canonization of the dead; it was simply a eulogy of the dead. *Akolouthiai* were written by students to their teachers, to their benefactors and to people close to them, who were of righteous life. These *Akolouthiai* were for domestic use, and they exist for many who were never canonized by the Church; there is one dedicated to Emperor Manuel II Paleologos that was probably written by St. Mark himself.

And so the solemn commemoration of St. Mark of Ephesus was celebrated at first in the Eugenikos family circle. A wider glorification of St. Mark was aided by George Scholarios



The Three Pillars of Orthodoxy

in his capacity of Patriarch of Constantinople. Decades passed, and then centuries, and the memory of St. Mark ever more broadly became glorified among devout people, in holy monasteries and churches; and finally, nearly 300 years after the death of the Saint, in 1734, the Holy Synod of the Church of Constantinople, under the presidency of Patriarch Seraphim, brought out a decree of canonization of St. Mark of Ephesus January 19<sup>th</sup> was instituted as the date of the Saint's commemoration. As a result, to the two ancient services that already existed (translated in our book into Church Slavonic for use in Church services), were added six more services, but they are inferior to the ancient services to the Saint.

In the book of Doukake, *Iapsis Tou Noetou Paradeisou* for the month of January there is found the following miracle performed by St. Mark many years after his death. "A very honorable man named Demetrios Zourbaios had a sister who became grievously ill. Wherefore he called in all the doctors of Mesolongion and spent much money on them. They, however, brought no benefit to his sister, but rather she became worse. For three days she lost all speech and movement, being totally unconscious, so that even the doctors decided that she was going to die. Then he and the rest of her relatives began preparing the necessities for the funeral. However, most unexpectedly, they heard a voice and a great groan coming from her, and turning towards them she said, 'Why don't you change my clothes, since I have been drenched?'

Her brother became overjoyed upon hearing her speak, and running to her he asked what was the matter and how she became so wet. She answered, 'A certain bishop came here, took me by my hand, and led me to a fountain and put me inside a cistern. After he had washed me, he said to me: Return now; you no longer have any illness.' But her brother again asked her, 'Why didn't you ask him that granted you your health who he was?' And she said, 'I asked him: Who are you, your holiness?, and he told me: I am the Metropolitan of Ephesus, Markos Eugenikos.'

And having said these things, she arose immediately from the bed without any remnant of illness. When they took her to change her clothes, they were all amazed—O, the wonder!—seeing that not only were her clothes soaked, but even the bed and the other blankets upon which she had lain. After this miracle, the above-mentioned woman made an icon of St. Mark for a memorial of the miracle, and having lived piously for fifteen more years, she departed to the Lord."

We shall conclude our short sketch of the life and activity of St. Mark of Ephesus with the invocation with which the ancient biographer of the Saint ends his Synaxarion:

**By thy prayers of St. Mark, Christ our God, and all Thy holy Fathers, Teachers and Theologians, preserve Thy Church in Orthodox confession unto the ages!**

## THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Source: The web pages of the "Orthodox Christian Information Center," (<http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/>)—in our view the finest English Orthodox website.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, eight days after the Holy Nativity of our Lord, we celebrate His Circumcision, one of the Feasts of the Lord, on which—in accordance with Hebrew tradition—He received the name "Jesus": *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the Angel before He was conceived in the womb* (Lk 2:21).

The name "Jesus," which our Lord received at His Circumcision, means *Savior*; that is, in Greek, the name of our Lord is "Soter—σωτήρ," i.e., *Savior*. (Mt 1:21): *For this name (Jesus), when translated into the Greek language, is rendered 'salvation of God'; 'Jesus,' therefore, is translated as 'Soter' ['Savior']*. (St. Theophylact, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CXXIII, col. 704AB).

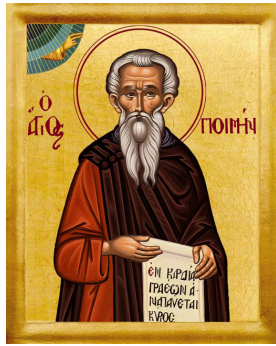
The true descendants of the Patriarch Abraham were separated from the other nations by the sign of circumcision (a prefigurement of Baptism: *the circumcision made without hands*. [Col 2:11]) and thereby became members of the God-ruled community of the Old Testament; that is, through circumcision, they entered among the chosen People of God.

Christ was now *made under the law*, being conformed to the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law (Gal 4:4) and *fulfilling the Law* (Mt 3:15), in order to elevate the Church of the Law into a Church of Grace, into a new *Israel of God* (cf. Gal 6:16), into a Theanthropic organism—into His Body.

The Circumcision of our Lord inspired our Holy Church to institute a beautiful and deeply symbolic custom for the newborn children of Christians: at eight days, the Priest reads the *Prayer for the Signing of a Child Who is Receiving a Name on the Eighth Day After His Birth* (see the *Small Evchologion*); in such a way the first "Seal" of Grace is given to the infant: *Let the light of Thy countenance be signed upon Thy servant (name), and let the Cross of Thine Only-begotten Son be signed in his heart and his thoughts....* A worthy thing it would be were parents not to neglect this most blessed tradition of our most Holy Orthodox Church, so that newborn children might immediately be "sealed" in Christ through the blessing of a Priest.

It is truly a pity that the profound symbolism of this Feast should be "lost" in the "worldly tumult" and secularized celebrations of the twelve-day period between the Nativity and Theophany, and particularly on New Year's Day; and that we should lose, as well, an opportunity for us to enter more deeply into the *circumcision made without hands* of our Holy Baptism.

GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN  
BROTHERHOOD OF ST. POIMEN  
PO Box 38688  
PHOENIX, AZ 85069-8688



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

US POSTAGE  
PAID  
TUCSON, AZ  
PERMIT NO 690

A 501(c)(3) ORGANIZATION  
[HTTP://WWW.ORTHODOXHERITAGE.ORG](http://www.OrthodoxHeritage.org)  
POIMEN@MAIL.COM

MERRY CHRISTMAS

ΚΑΛΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN

## ON APOSTASY

*By Archbishop Averky of Blessed Memory (+1976)*

We have neither the strength nor the authority to stop Apostasy, as Bishop Ignatius stresses: “Do not attempt to stop it with your weak hand...” But what then should we do? “Avoid it, protect yourself from it, and that is enough for you. Get to know the spirit of the times, study it so that you can avoid its influence whenever possible” This is what the same Bishop Ignatius teaches us.

And do not his words, written more than 100 years ago and so obviously related to our time, exude genuine prophetic inspiration and undoubted enlightenment from on high: “Judging by the spirit of the age and the intellectual ferment, one must suppose that the structure of the Church, which has long been wavering, will collapse terribly and quickly. There is no one to stop or oppose this. The means adopted to support it are borrowed from the elements of the world which are hostile to the Church and will hasten its fall rather than prevent it. May the merciful Lord defend the remnant of those who believe in Him. But this remnant is tiny, and it becomes more and more so.”

Thus we evidently have lived to see this “terrible and quick collapse of the structure of the Church!” The enemy of the human race is employing all his efforts and all his means to pull it down, and he is widely supported in this by open and secret apostates from the true faith and Church, including even those who have

betrayed their high vocations and oaths as clergymen and even as hierarchs heading certain individual churches.

In truth, we are experiencing a terrible time, a time such as has never before been seen in the history of Christianity, in the history of mankind! A time of almost total instability!

And insofar as we wish to remain faithful to true Orthodoxy, many obligations are placed upon us. We must, as Bishop Ignatius instructs us, avoid and protect ourselves from the Apostasy which is growing so rapidly in the world. We must defend ourselves against the corrupting spirit of the times to avoid its influence.

And to this end we must first of all understand and never forget: that at the present time not everything that bears the most holy and most dear name of Orthodoxy really is Orthodoxy. **There now also exists pseudo-Orthodoxy, which we must fear and from which we must flee as from fire;** that true Orthodoxy is only that which does not accept and does not permit in anything, either in teaching or in church practices, any sort of innovations opposed to the Word of God and the decrees of the Universal Church; that true Orthodoxy does not bless and does not indulge modern fashion—the morality and customs of the modern, corrupt world, which, even more than in Apostolic times, is lying in evil, for it is a world which has abandoned God; that true Orthodoxy considers only pleasing God and saving souls, not arrangements for temporary, earthly happiness, a career, and earthly advantages and possessions; that true Orthodoxy is spiritual, not natural and carnal, not attached to the earth—to earthly feelings and experiences.