

Orthodox Heritage

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

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

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Brotherhood of St. Poimen

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EPIPHANY

By the late Rev. Nikon D. Patrinos.

In the Orthodox calendar the feast of the Epiphany is called "Theophania" (Θεοφάνεια), meaning the manifestation of God. After Pascha, Epiphany is the most ancient feast relating to our Lord and is observed by the Christian Church on January 6th.

The first evidence attesting to the feast of the Epiphany comes from Clement of Alexandria (+215). He relates that a Gnostic (heretical) group observed the Baptism of our Lord on January 6th, believing that it was at the time of Baptism that Divinity took the flesh in Christ.

The date of January 6th was selected because according to some ancient reckoning, the day began to grow longer on that date and so it was celebrated by pagans as the day of victory of light over darkness. In Rome, though, the day of the birth of the Invincible Sun was celebrated on December 25th. These two pagan festivals were thus replaced by a Christian feast signifying the epiphany (manifestation) of the Sun of justice and of the True Light of the world.

The 25th of December began to be celebrated in early Christian Rome as the day of the Nativity, while in the East January 6th remained as the Epiphany day, including both the Nativity and Baptism of our Lord. By the end of the 4th century, December 25th as the day of the Nativity in most of the East, and January 6th remained as the feast of our Lord's Baptism.

When the Eastern Epiphany day was introduced in the West, the already celebrated Nativity on December 25th remained as such, and January 6th, although accepted as the day of Baptism, took the character of manifestation of Christ's Divinity to the pagan world. Hence, the Magi, figuratively representing the entire heathen world, were taken to be the recipients of the saving grace of the newly manifested Christ. Only the Armenian Church in the East still celebrates the Nativity and Epiphany together on January 6th.

The most characteristic feature of the Orthodox day of Theophania is the sanctifying of waters by invoking the Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove over Christ at the time of His Baptism. The Orthodox receive sanctified water at the end of the special service of Epiphany and with it sanctify their homes, gardens, and other possessions while some preserve it for the entire year partaking of it at times of illness and other personal or family adversities.

The twelve days between the Nativity of our Lord, December 25th, and the day of the Epiphany, January 6th, is called *Dodekaemeron* (twelve days) and is considered to be one continuous festive period. On December 26th, the Most Holy Virgin Mary and Mother our Lord is honored, and on January 1st, the day of our Lord's Circumcision is celebrated. The festive character of the period is often observed by abolishing all kinds of fasts, apart from the day prior to the Epiphany when the service of the Great Agiasmos is performed.

The staff of "Orthodox Heritage" and the Brotherhood of St. POIMEN wish our readers a blessed and prosperous New Year. As we start our ninth year of publication, we wish to thank our supporters for their prayers, ideas, feedback and monetary support throughout the last eight years.

We remind our readers that this periodical is made possible through your donations and thus ask that you not forget your 2011 subscription contributions. Please refer to the top of page 2 for contribution and payment information.

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

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THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS: THE TRUE STORY

By Philip Jones, 29 Oct 2007.

This past weekend, MSN has been running a "forum" entitled "Should the 24-Week Abortion Limit Be Reduced" referring to UK guidelines on the time limit up to what point an abortion may be carried out. This "time-scale" has been in effect since 1967. Pro-Life campaigners in the UK are saying that owing to medical advances, babies of 24 weeks have a better chance of survival and this upper limit should be reduced. It also publishes a thought provoking statistic; 186,000 "legal" abortions were carried out last year (2006, *Ed.*) in the UK.

In his book "The Death of the West" Patrick Buchanan states that between 1973 and 2000, 40 million legal abortions were carried out in the US, and a third of all pregnancies now end up at the "clinic," making abortion the most practiced surgical procedure in the US.

I went and made my own contribution to the "forum" whilst it was at a fairly early stage. What shocked me is the arrogance and vehemence of the "Pro-Choice" comments. Then there are the "Apologists" for abortion with remarks like "Isn't it better for the fetus to be aborted, rather than be born unwanted, or in bad or poor circumstances." I wonder if they would feel the same if their parents had had the same idea. But then, they wouldn't be here to make such banalities...

What is evident throughout, is that no matter which way people view this subject, almost none have any grasp of the "Big Picture."

In 1960, people of European stock constituted a quarter of the earth's population of three billion.

By 2000, whilst the world population doubled, the "Euro stock" had stopped reproducing. Only Albania in Europe maintained a replacement level birth-rate. Between 2000 and 2050, the world population is expected to rise to nine billion. This increase will come almost entirely from the developing world, while 100 million people of European decent will die un-replaced. By 2050, Western peoples will make up only one tenth the world populace and will begin to feel minorities in many of their own cities.

This decline has awesome implications for the West. People there will be faced with stark choices; import millions of immigrants to work and pay the taxes needed to support a burgeoning elderly population, or keep on raising taxes, and push back the "retirement" age ever further.

Together with the contraceptive pill, "Planned Parenthood," and the almost maniacal promotion of feminism and homosexuality throughout all avenues of the media and state education, women in the West have been indoctrinated into believing that a valid life can only be attained via career, and that marriage and motherhood is somehow a poor choice.

One of the most staggering factors in all this is how self-ish and callous many women have become. Now, one can almost hear the "Feminazi's" preparing their "men should step up to the plate and take some responsibility" tirade. But hold on a minute; these are the very same types, who have been encouraging males to "get in touch with their feminine side" for decades. After being "nanny'd" much of their lives, is it any wonder that young men today are unable, or at the very least reluctant to take on the burden

of a family. More to the point, even if they so desired, where would they find a young woman so inclined.

The “Pro-Choice” lobby cannot be taken in isolation. It is part of a long running and long-term UN coordinated war on population. The contention that the Earth is overpopulated is one of the great “hoaxes” of the past 100 years. Overpopulation is a crucial link in the “One-World” agenda, which the UN uses to justify far reaching controls over economy, environment and our reproductive lives. “World Bank” loans are given to “developing” nations on the condition that they partake in “family planning,” and “Third World” countries have suffered greatly from this ideology, along with the economic exploitation of their peoples and natural resources.

Convincing women in the west not to have babies has been easy. The full spectrum of the mass media has been coordinated to ensure that the feminist view is always given the fullest and most positive coverage. In education, films, TV and popular music, nowhere is marriage and motherhood encouraged.

Young women are told “behave just as the boys do,” practice “safe sex,” and if all goes wrong, well there is always the abortion clinic. Many women treat their wombs like “trash-cans.” They show no regard for themselves, nor the life growing inside them. Then they moan that modern men have no respect for them. Little wonder that the relationship between the men and women has never been more strained.

But of course, this is exactly what the “Lords of Money” want. A strong family, is a “bulwark” against their plans for the world control of sad and isolated people.

Divide and rule is an age old song, and the feminists have danced well to it. What will happen to all the Ms’ when they have served their purpose, (having largely assisted in the depopulating of our planet, the emasculation of the male, the alienation of millions of young men and women, who will never know how it is to find lifelong love and companionship, and the needless and malevolent slaughter of the innocents growing in the wombs) and find their services “no longer required” when the Draconian State, imposed with their complicity, drags them back into a new “Dark Age.”

The saddening aspect in all of this is how effective the whole thing has been. Mention abortion, or marriage or family to the vast majority of women and the almost “robot like” response is so uniformly predictable in its support of the “feminist ideal” expounded by Ms. Freidan and Co. Women are of course among the primary victims in this “scam,” together with those helpless souls who have no voice, nor say as to whether they live or die. Millions of them sentenced to death for the simple “crime” of being conceived.

THE HOLY ORTHODOX FATHERS ON ABORTION

From the Editor: On January 22nd, our Nation will observe the grievous 38th anniversary of that ungodly Supreme Court decision that has given legal status to the slaughter of God’s most precious and innocent human beings. In the defense of the millions who may yet perish before our civilized Western culture recognizes this murderous act for what it truly is, we present a handful of related writing by the Church’s Holy Fathers on this evil act. May His divine mercy be upon all of us and may 2011 become a year of renewed interest and activism by all Orthodox Christians against the evil practice of abortion.

Thou shall not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten; for “everything that is shaped, and has received a soul from God, if it be slain, shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed.”

Ante-Nicene Fathers: Vol. VII, Moral Exhortations

Concerning women who commit fornication, and destroy that which they have conceived, or who are employed in making drugs for abortion, a former decree excluded them until the hour of death, and to this some have assented. Nevertheless, being desirous to use somewhat greater lenity, we have ordained that they fulfill ten years [of penance], according to the prescribed degrees.

314 AD, Council of Ancyra, Canon 21

I cannot bring myself to speak of the many virgins who daily fall and are lost to the bosom of the Church, their mother... Some go so far as to take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception. Some, when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when, as often happens, they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder.

396 AD, Jerome Letters 22:13

And near that place I saw another strait place... and there sat women... And over against them many children who were born to them out of due time sat crying. And there came forth from them rays of fire and smote the women in the eyes. And these were the accursed who conceived and caused abortion.

137 AD, The Apocalypse of Peter 25

The law, moreover enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten, or to destroy it afterward; and if any woman appears to have so done, she will be a murderer of her child, by destroying a living creature, and diminishing humankind.

Flavius Josephus, Against Apion, Book 2:25

Christians marry, like everyone else, and they beget children, but they do not cast out their offspring.

250 AD, Letter of Diognetus 5:6

ON ANGELS, THEIR CREATION, ESSENCE AND NATURE

By St. John the Damascene, from "An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith."



God is Himself the Maker and Creator of the angels; He brought them out of nothing into being and created them after His own image, an incorporeal race (having no material body or form, *Ed.*), a sort of spirit or immaterial fire. In the words of the divine David, *He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.* And He has described their lightness and the ardour, and heat,

and keenness and sharpness with which they hunger for God and serve Him, and how they are borne to the regions above and are quite delivered from all material thought.

An angel, then, is an intelligent essence, in perpetual motion, with free-will, incorporeal, ministering to God, having obtained by grace an immortal nature; and the Creator alone knows the form and limitation of its essence. But all that we can understand is, that it is incorporeal and immaterial. For all that is compared with God Who alone is incomparable, we find to be dense and material. For in reality only the Deity is immaterial and incorporeal.

The angel's nature then is rational, and intelligent, and endowed with free-will, change, able in will, or fickle. For all that is created is changeable, and only that which is uncreated is unchangeable. Also, all that is rational is endowed with free-will. As it is, then, rational and intelligent, it is endowed with free-will; and as it is created, it is changeable, having power either to abide or progress in goodness, or to turn towards evil.

It is not susceptible of repentance because it is incorporeal or uncarinate, i.e., without the nature of a body or substance. For it is owing to the weakness of his body that man comes to have repentance.

It is immortal, not by natures but by grace. For all that has had beginning comes also to its natural end. But God alone is eternal, or rather, He is above the Eternal; for He, the Creator of times, is not under the dominion of time, but above time.

They are secondary intelligent lights derived from that first light which is without beginning, for they have the power

of illumination; they have no need of tongue or hearing, but without uttering words they communicate to each other their own thoughts and counsels.

Through the Word, therefore, all the angels were created, and through the sanctification by the Holy Spirit were they brought to perfection, sharing each in proportion to his worth and rank in brightness and grace.

They are circumscribed; for when they are in the Heaven they are not on the earth; and when they are sent by God down to the earth they do not remain in the Heaven. They are not hemmed in by walls and doors, and bars and seals, for they are quite unlimited. Unlimited, I repeat, for it is not as they really are that they reveal themselves to the worthy men to whom God wishes them to appear, but in a changed form which the beholders are capable of seeing. For that alone is naturally and strictly unlimited which is un-created. For every created thing is limited by God Who created it.

Further, apart from their essence they receive the sanctification from the Spirit; through the divine grace they prophesy; they have no need of marriage for they are immortal.

Seeing that they are minds, they are in mental places, and are not circumscribed after the fashion of a body. For they have not a bodily form by nature, nor are they tended in three dimensions. But to whatever post they may be assigned, there they are present after the manner of a mind and energize accordingly; however, they cannot be present and energize in various places at the same time.

Whether they are equals in essence or differ from one another we know not. God, their Creator, Who knoweth all things, alone knoweth. But they differ from each other in brightness and position, whether it is that their position is dependent on their brightness or their brightness on their position; and they impart brightness to one another, because they excel one another in rank and nature. And clearly the higher share their brightness and knowledge with the lower.

They are mighty and prompt to fulfill the will of the Deity, and their nature is endowed with such celerity that wherever the Divine glance bids them there they are straightway found. They are the guardians of the divisions of the earth; they are set over nations and regions, allotted to them by their Creator; they govern all our affairs and bring us succour (help or assistance, especially in time of difficulty). And the reason surely is because they are set over us by the divine will and command and are ever in the vicinity of God.

With difficulty they are moved to evil, yet they are not absolutely immovable; but now they are altogether immovable, not by nature but by grace and by their nearness to the Only Good.

They behold God according to their capacity, and this is their food.

They are above us for they are incorporeal, and are free of all bodily passion, yet are not passionless; for the Deity alone is passionless.

They take different forms at the bidding of their Master, God, and thus reveal themselves to men and unveil the divine mysteries to them.

They have Heaven for their dwelling-place, and have one duty, to sing God's praise and carry out His divine will.

Moreover, as that most holy, and sacred, and gifted theologian, Dionysios the Areopagite, says, all theology, that is to say, the holy Scripture, has nine different names for the heavenly essences. These essences are divided into three groups, each containing three. And the first group, he says, consists of those who are in God's presence and are said to be directly and immediately one with Him, viz., the Seraphim with their six wings, the many-eyed Cherubim and those that sit in the holiest Thrones. The second group is that of the Dominions, and the Powers, and the Authorities; and the third, and last, is that of the Rulers and Archangels and Angels

Some, indeed, like Gregory the Theologian, say that these were before the creation of other things. He thinks that the angelic and heavenly powers were first and that thought was their function. Others, again, hold that they were created after the first heaven was made. But all are agreed that it was before the foundation of man. For myself, I am in harmony with the theologian. For it was fitting that the mental essence should be the first created, and then that which can be perceived, and finally man himself, in whose being both parts are united.

But those who say that the angels are creators of any kind, they are the mouth of their father, the devil. For since they are created things they are not creators. But He Who creates and provides for and maintains all things is God; He is the only One Who alone is uncreated and is praised and glorified in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Fallen Angels, the Devil and Demons

He who from among these angelic powers was set over the earthly realm, and into whose hands God committed the guardianship of the earth, was not made wicked in nature but was good, and made for good ends, and received from his Creator no trace whatever of evil in himself. But he did not sustain the brightness and the honour which the Creator had bestowed on him; his free choice was changed from what was in harmony to what was at variance with his nature, and became roused against God Who created him, and determined to rise in rebellion against Him; and he was the first to depart from good and become evil.

Evil is nothing else than absence of goodness, just as darkness also is absence of light. Goodness is the light of the

mind, and, similarly, evil is the darkness of the mind. Light, therefore, being the work of the Creator and being made good (for God saw all that He made, and behold they were exceeding good) produced darkness through free-will. But along with him (the devil) an innumerable host of angels subject to him were torn away and followed him and shared in his fall. Wherefore, being of the same nature as the angels, they became wicked, turning away at their own free choice from good to evil.

Hence they have no power or strength against any one except what God in His dispensation hath conceded to them, as for instance, against Job and those swine that are mentioned in the Gospels. But when God has made the concession they do prevail, and are changed and transformed into any form whatever in which they wish to appear.

Of the future both the angels of God and the demons are alike ignorant; yet they make predictions. God reveals the future to the angels and commands them to prophesy, and so what they say comes to pass. But the demons also make predictions, sometimes because they see what is happening at a distance, and sometimes merely making guesses; hence much that they say is false and they should not be believed, even although they do often, in the way we have said, tell what is true. Besides they know the Scriptures.

All wickedness, then, and all impure passions are the work of their mind. But while the liberty to attack man has been granted to them, they have not the strength to over master any one. We all have it in our power to receive or not to receive the attack. Wherefore there has been prepared for the devil and his demons, and those who follow him, fire unquenchable and everlasting punishment.

Note, further, that what in the case of man is death is a fall in the case of angels. For after the fall there is no possibility of repentance for them, just as after death there is for men no repentance.



Blessed is he who is not attached to anything transitory or corruptible. Blessed is the intellect that transcends all sensible objects and ceaselessly delights in divine beauty. If you make *provision for the desires of the flesh* (Rom 13:14) and bear a grudge against your neighbor on account of something transitory, you worship the creature instead of the Creator.

St. Maximos the Confessor

THE LEPERS' PRIEST IN THE ISLAND OF SPINALONGA

From the English novel "The Island," by Victoria Hislop.

Much is being said recently about the Greek island of Spinalonga, on account of the book entitled "The Island," by the English authoress Victoria Hislop, which became a series on Greek television. It is a historical novel, set on the island of Spinalonga, off the coast of Crete, and on the village of Plaka which lies within swimming distance across it. The Island tells the story of a woman on the cusp of a life-changing decision. She knows little or nothing about her family's past and has always resented her mother for refusing to discuss it. She knows only that her mother, Sophia, grew up in Plaka, a small Cretan village, before moving to London. Making her first visit to Crete to see the village where her mother was born, Alexis discovers that the village of Plaka faces the small, now deserted island of Spinalonga, which, she is shocked and surprised to learn was Greece's leper colony for much of the 20th century.

† † †



St. Panteleimon Church, in the island of Spinalonga

One of the historical facts that we were informed of is that the lepers who lived on Spinalonga island were angry at God, the reason being that their ailment was a huge, unbearable ordeal. A priest from the town of Ierapetra in Crete had dared to visit them once, to perform a Liturgy together with the colony's new settlers, at the church of Saint Panteleimon that existed on the island and was falling into ruin. They say that not a single soul turned up at the first Liturgy.

The lepers listened to the chanting, stubbornly remaining inside their cells, sometimes drowning it out with their groans and sometimes with their curses. But the priest went there again. During that second visit, one of the patients bravely showed himself at the doorstep of the church, with the following statement:

"Priest, I will sit through your Liturgy, but only under one condition. At the end, you will give me Communion. And if your God is as almighty as you say, you will afterwards conclude the Liturgy (=by partaking of the same Chalice) and not be afraid of my leprosy."

The priest nodded compliantly. These words were overheard from the neighboring cells and various individuals began to gather near the side of the church, where there was a small gap in the crumbling wall that offered them a limited view of the inner sanctum. The lepers remained in

waiting until the end of the Liturgy and watched the priest, in tears and kneeling before the Sacred Table of Offering, as he concluded the ritual.

A month went by. The lepers waited for him. They were convinced that this time he would come as a patient and not as a priest. And yet, the priest returned, healthy and rosy-cheeked, and with his morale invigorated began to ring the church bell of the old chapel.

From that time on, and for at least ten years, Spinalonga island had a priest of its own. The lepers restored the church by themselves, and along with the church, they restored their faith. They took Holy Communion regularly and they would always secretly observe their priest during the conclusion of the Liturgy, to make sure that their personal "miracle of Spinalonga" was repeated, over and over again.

In 1957, with the discovery of antibiotics and the cure for leprosy, the leprosarium was shut down and the island was deserted. Only the priest remained on the island, until 1962, offering memorial services for the lepers, until five years after their death.

Behold, therefore, a contemporary, discreet hero; one who was never honoured for his work by anyone and—in case you didn't notice—whose name we haven't stated, quite simply because... we do not know it! But we are quite sure that God knows it, and that is good enough!



THE HAND OF THE PRIEST

By Bishop Nicholas of Achrida.

Your Priest may only be 25 years old. But, his priesthood is from the foundation of the earth. Therefore, when you kiss his hand, you reverence his priesthood, which reaches and extends successively from Christ and the Apostles until your Priest.

When you kiss the hand of your Priest, you kiss the entire chain of righteous and holy priests and hierarchs, from the Apostles until today. You kiss and reverence Saint Ignatius the God-bearer, Saint Nicholas, Saint Basil, Saint Sava and all of the *angels upon earth and heavenly men*, who, adorned the Church while on earth and now array Heaven. It is a holy kiss, just as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. Therefore, you should kiss the hand of the Priest which blesses you. It is blessed by God. With the grace of the priesthood. With the grace of the Holy Spirit. You should kiss the hand of your Priest. No matter how young he is. And, listen to him.

A LIVING ANGEL WITH THE GIFT OF INSIGHT

From "Ascetics in the World," a publication of the Sacred Monastery of St. John the Forerunner, Metamorphosis, Chalkidiki, Greece.

In September of a certain year, there was a great deal of turmoil observed in the Department of Oncology of the University Hospital of Rion. Little Dimitri was asking urgently for the Hospital's priest. He was insisting on immediately receiving Holy Communion...

He was 13. He had been in that specific clinic for about one and a half years. A minor headache had led him there. The doctors had diagnosed brain cancer. His native town was Fieri of Albania; his parents unbaptized. They had lived in Patrae for several years. Shortly after his admission to the Hospital, the young boy had asked to be baptized. He had heard about Christ, and wanted to become a "child" of His. He was baptized, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," after the necessary catechesis of course.

Everyone in the clinic was extremely fond of him. The cancer had progressed considerably and had by now deprived him of his sight. He was entirely unable to see, anything and anyone. But he could listen, with the utmost and amazing patience. He never complained. He would say that God loved him very much. He prayed, and would ask his parents to do the same.

All those who visited him could perceive that there was something different in that boy. He spoke constantly about God. He was always courteous and happy. His face shone. He wanted to partake of the Precious Gifts frequently. When his mother would sometimes be in another area of the clinic, he would shout out to her:

"Mother, come quickly! Papa is coming, with Christ! He is coming up the stairs! Come and get me ready!"

And that was exactly what would happen: the priest would come, and he would find little Dimitri sitting upright in his bed, with his mouth wide open and crossing himself with reverence. Even though he never knew the exact time of the priest's arrival, he could "see" him coming, with his gift of insight; this was despite the two closed doors that came between his room and the corridor that the priest was coming from. This has been verified by the pious Mrs. Maria Galiatsatou, who had volunteered to look after that boy.

"Mrs. Maria, I want to tell you something," he said to her one day. "When Papa comes together with Christ, I can see him approaching as he walks up the stairs, and next to him are two tall, beautiful people with pure white gowns, who lean towards the Holy Chalice to protect it, with their arms outstretched."

One time, when the doctor asked him: "How are you, my little Dimitri?"

He replied: "Mister Doctor, can I tell you something privately? I am just fine. But you shouldn't worry so much because your wife went away. God will be with you, because you are a good person."

The doctor remained frozen for an instant. No-one else knew about the grievous incident that had occurred the previous day at his place: that his wife had abandoned him, to be with another man.....

"Now that is a child of God" was what those who had met him would say.

The last time that he received Holy Communion, he was unable to sit up in his bed, but he did receive Christ with joy and longing as he lay there.

"Thank you very much," he whispered and then went to sleep forever. When the priest went to the morgue the next day to read the Trisagion Prayer over little Dimitri, he remarked:

"It's the first time in my life that I have seen a corpse like this. His face was smiling...it was aglow.... and it had the colour of amber (the color of a reposed saintly person, Ed.)."

His parents came to love Christ very much, and they now want to be baptized also...

May we all be worthy of little Dimitri's intercessions!



Have patience, my children; do not lose your courage in the struggle, and do not let your knees weaken under the pressure of temptations, for our good God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength. Why do you give room to Satan to war against you with greater intensity? Have faith in God, and whatever He permits will be to our advantage. Do we perhaps know better than He?

Cast your care upon the Lord, and He will take care of you. Do not put forth your will, for faith is the offspring of grace and divine visitation. Has not each one of us experienced personally miracles of God's divine providence? Didn't divine grace visit N.? If you had not sacrificed yourselves, would N. be in the army of Christ now? Didn't Christ sacrifice Himself for us? Certainly! And had He not given Himself to death on the Cross, we would not be what we are by divine grace.

This shows that things that are very good, those that are on a higher spiritual level, are bought with blood. But their reward is so great that it cannot be measured, and their glory is equal to the angels!

I feel for you, and this is why I also suffer. In times of temptation, man forgets everything and is brought to a state that he did not want in times of peace.

Elder Ephraim, "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

LOST TO THE WEST

An Introduction to the book "Lost to the West," by Lars Brownworth.

Rome never fell, it simply moved five hundred miles East, to Byzantium. For over a thousand years the Byzantines commanded one of the most visceral and vivid empires the world has ever known. The once common idea that the lights went out on classical and Western civilization when Rome fell in 476 A.D. has long since been debunked, but Mr. Brownworth weighs in to illustrate that the Roman Empire's center of power simply shifted to Constantinople. In a narrative by turns spellbinding and prosaic, Mr. Brownworth marches us through centuries of history and introduces the successive rulers of Byzantium, detailing a culture he describes as both familiar and exotic. He follows religious, political and cultural change up through the Islamic conquest of 1453. Christian refugees fled Byzantium into Europe, taking with them their long-standing love of ancient culture and introducing Western Europe to Plato, Demosthenes, Xenophon, Aeschylus and Homer, fanning the flames of the renaissance of Hellenistic culture that had already begun in various parts of Europe.

The book—see the cover displayed (available at Amazon.com)—is recommended reading for those Orthodox Christians wishing to explore some of the historical aspects of our Faith and its great significance on the western culture's formation.

† † †

I first met Byzantium in a pleasant little salt marsh on the north shore of Long Island. I had paused there to read a book about what was innocently called the "later Roman Empire," prepared to trace the familiar descent of civilization into the chaos and savagery of the Dark Ages. Instead, nestled under my favorite tree, I found myself confronted with a rich tapestry of lively emperors and seething barbarian hordes, of men and women who claimed to be emperors of Rome long after the Roman Empire was supposed to be dead and buried. It was at once both familiar and exotic; a Roman Empire that had somehow survived the Dark Ages, and kept the light of the classical world alive. At times, its history seemed to be ripped from the headlines. This Judeo-Christian society with Greco-Roman roots snuggled with immigration, the role of church and state, and the dangers of a militant Islam. Its poor wanted the rich taxed more, its rich could afford to find the loopholes, and a swollen bureaucracy tried hard to find a balance that brought in enough money without crushing everyone.

And yet Byzantium was at the same time a place of startling strangeness, alluring but quite alien to the modern

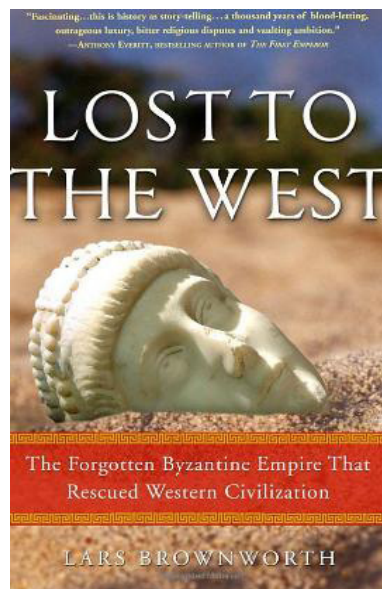
world. Holy men perched atop pillars, emperors ascended pulpits to deliver lashing sermons and hairsplitting points of theology could touch off riots in the streets. The concepts of democracy that infuse the modern world would have horrified the Byzantines. Their society had been founded in the instability and chaos of the third century, a time of endemic revolts with emperors who were desperately trying to elevate the dignity of the throne. Democracy, with its implications that all were equal, would have struck at the very underpinnings of their hierarchical, ordered world, raising nightmares of the unceasing civil wars that they had labored so hard to escape.

The Byzantines, however, were no prisoners of an oppressive autocratic society. Lowly peasants and orphaned women found their way onto the throne, and it was a humble farmer from what is now Macedonia who rose to become Byzantium's greatest ruler, extending its vast domains until they embraced nearly the entire Mediterranean. His successors oversaw a deeply religious society with a secular educational system that saw itself as the guardian of light and civilization in a swiftly darkening world. They were, as Robert Byron so famously put it, a "triple fusion:" a Roman body, a Greek mind, and a mystic soul.

It's a better definition than most, in part because the term "Byzantine" is a thoroughly modern invention, making the empire attached to it notoriously difficult to define. What we call the Byzantine Empire was in fact the eastern half of the Roman Empire, and its citizens referred to themselves as Roman from the founding of Constantinople in to the fall of the city eleven centuries later.

For most of that time, their neighbors, allies, and enemies alike saw them in this light; when Mohammed II conquered Constantinople, he took the title Caesar of Rome, ruling, as he saw it, as the successor of a line that went back to Augustus. Only the scholars of the Enlightenment, preferring to find their roots in ancient Greece and classical Rome, denied the Eastern Empire the name "Roman," branding it instead after Byzantium, the ancient name of Constantinople. The "real" empire for them had ended in 476 with the abdication of the last western emperor and the history of the "impostors" in Constantinople was nothing more than a thousand-year slide into barbarism, corruption, and decay.

Western civilization, however, owes an incalculable debt to the scorned city on the Bosphorus. **For more than a millennium**, its capital stood as the great bastion of the East, protecting a nascent, chaotic Europe, as one after another would-be world conqueror foundered against its walls.



Without Byzantium, the surging armies of Islam would surely have swept into Europe in the seventh century, and as Gibbon mused, the call to prayer would have echoed over Oxford's dreaming spires.

There was more than just the force of arms to the Byzantine gift, however. While civilization flickered dimly in the remote Irish monasteries of the West, it blazed in Constantinople, sometimes waxing, sometimes waning, but always alive. Byzantium's greatest emperor, Justinian, gave us Roman law, the basis of most European legal systems even today, its artisans gave us the brilliant mosaics of Ravenna and the supreme triumph of the Hagia Sophia, and its scholars gave us the dazzling Greek and Latin classics that the Dark Ages nearly extinguished in the West.

If we owe such a debt to Byzantium, it begs the question of why exactly the empire has been so ignored. The Roman Empire fractured—first culturally and then religiously between East and West—and as the two halves drifted apart, estrangement set in. Christianity was a thin veneer holding them together, but by 1054, when the Church ruptured into Catholic and Orthodox halves, the East and West found that they had little to unite them and much to keep them apart. The Crusades drove the final wedge between them, engendering lasting bitterness in the East, and derision in the West. While what was left of Byzantium succumbed to Islamic invasion, Europe washed its hands and turned away, confident in its own growing power and burgeoning destiny. This mutual contempt has left Byzantium consigned to a little-deserved obscurity, forgotten for centuries by those who once took refuge behind its walls.

Most history curricula fail to mention the civilization that produced the illumination of Cyril and Methodios, the brilliance of John I Tsimiskis, or the conquests of Nikephoros II Phokas. The curtain of the Roman Empire falls for most with the last western emperor, and tales of heroism in Greece end with the Spartan king Leonidas. But no less heroic was Constantinos Dragases, standing on his ancient battlements in 1453 or Belisarius before the walls of Rome. Surely we owe them as deep a debt of gratitude.

This book is my small attempt to redress that situation, to give voice to a people who have remained voiceless far too long. It's intended to wet the appetite, to expose the reader to the vast sweep of Byzantine history, and to put flesh and sinew on their understanding of the East and the West. Regrettably, it can make no claims to being definitive or exhaustive. Asking a single volume to contain over a thousand years of history is taxing enough, and much must be sacrificed to brevity. In defense of what's been left on the cutting-room floor, I can only argue that part of the pleasure of Byzantium is in the discovery.

Throughout the book I've used Latinized rather than Greek names: Constantino instead of Konstandinos on the grounds

that they'll be more familiar and accessible to the general reader. I've also used a personality driven approach to telling the story since the emperor was so central to Byzantine life; few societies have been as autocratic as the Eastern Roman Empire. The person on the imperial throne stood halfway to heaven, the divinely appointed sovereign whose every decision deeply affected even the meanest citizen.

Hopefully, this volume will awaken an interest in a subject that has long been absent from the Western canon. We share a common cultural history with the Byzantine Empire, and can find important lessons echoing down the centuries. Byzantium, no less than the West, created the world in which we live, and—if further motivation is needed to study it—the story also happens to be captivating.



It is becoming increasingly more obvious that the spirit of the Church is being supplanted and replaced by the spirit of occultism and para-religion... Occultist groups already number in the hundreds; their spirit—which as a trend is widely known with the term “New Age”—influences basic sectors of most aspects of our lives. Entangled in this trend are tens of thousands of sub-sectors and groups, exactly like the junctions in an immense network... This network has been characterized by the “apostles” of this trend, as a “silken conspiracy.”

We are already living in an era like the one that the original Church was in, where everything around Her was determined by “another spirit.” As such, the Church is once again called upon today, to give Her apologetics ministry the place that this ministry held during the proto-Christian Church. In that Church, apologetics had a central place in ecclesiastic life. It was a basic concern, not only of the major theologians and pastors of the Church, but also of every faithful.

It has already been underlined in the New Testament, that the duty of all the faithful is that they *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* (1 Pet 3:15)

Our apologetics ministry cannot possibly be conducted in a drastic manner and in accordance with the tradition of the Church, if it is not supported by an in-depth study and a proper understanding of every external provocation. It is unfortunate, that there is no Research Centre that preoccupies itself with this matter.

Fr. Anthony Alevizopoulos (+1996)

SACRED SCRIPTURE AND SACRED TRADITION

By Fr. Michael Pomazansky.

Sacred Scripture

“Sacred Scripture” is a term we apply to those books written by the holy Prophets and Apostles under the action of the Holy Spirit; therefore they are called “divinely inspired.” They are divided into books of the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament.

The Church recognizes 38 books of the Old Testament. After the example of the Old Testament Church, several of these books are joined to form a single book, bringing the number to two books, according to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. These books, which were entered at some time into the Hebrew canon, are called “canonical.” To them are joined a group of “non-canonical” books—that is, those which were not included in the Hebrew canon because they were written after the closing of the canon of the sacred Old Testament books.

The Church accepts these latter books also as useful and instructive and in antiquity assigned them for instructive reading not only in homes but also in churches, which is why they have been called “ecclesiastical.” The Church includes these books in a single volume of the Bible together with the canonical books. As a source of the teaching of the faith, the Church puts them in a secondary place and looks on them as an appendix to the canonical books. Certain of them are so close in merit to the Divinely-inspired books that, for example, in the 85th Apostolic Canon the three books of Maccabees and the book of Joshua the son of Sirach are numbered together with the canonical books, and, concerning all of them together it is said that they are “venerable and holy.” However, this means only that they were respected in the ancient Church; but a distinction between the canonical and non-canonical books of the Old Testament has always been maintained in the Church.

The Church recognizes twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament. Since the sacred books of the New Testament were written in various years of the apostolic era and were sent by the Apostles to various points of Europe and Asia, and certain of them did not have a definite designation to any specific place, the gathering of them into a single collection or codex could not be an easy matter; it was necessary to keep strict watch lest among the books of apostolic origin there might be found any of the so-called

“apocrypha” books, which for the most part were composed in heretical circles. Therefore, the Fathers and teachers of the Church during the first centuries of Christianity preserved a special caution in distinguishing these books, even though they might bear the name of Apostles.

The Fathers of the Church frequently entered certain books into their lists with reservations, with uncertainty or doubt, or else gave for this reason an incomplete list of the Sacred Books. This was unavoidable and serves as a memorial to their exceptional caution in this holy matter. They did not trust themselves, but waited for the universal voice of the Church. The local Council of Carthage in 318, in its 33rd Canon, enumerated all of the books of the New Testament without exception.

St. Athanasius the Great names all of the books of the New Testament without the least doubt or distinction, and in one of his works he concludes his list with the following words: “Behold the number and names of the canonical



books of the New Testament. These are, as it were, the beginnings, the anchors and pillars of our faith, because they were written and transmitted by the very Apostles of Christ the Savior, who were with Him and were instructed by Him. Likewise, St. Cyril of Jerusalem also enumerates the books of the New Testament without the slightest remark as to any kind of distinction between them in the Church. The same complete listing is to be found among the Western ecclesiastical writers, for example in Augustine. Thus, the complete canon of the New Testament books of Sa-

cred Scripture was confirmed by the catholic voice of the whole Church. This Sacred Scripture, in the expression of St. John Damascene, is the “Divine Paradise.”

Sacred Tradition

In the original precise meaning of the word, “Sacred Tradition” is the tradition which comes from the ancient Church of Apostolic times. In the second to the fourth centuries this was called “the Apostolic Tradition.”

One must keep in mind that the ancient Church carefully guarded the inward life of the Church from those outside of her; her Holy Mysteries were secret, being kept from non-Christians. When these Mysteries were performed—Baptism or the Eucharist—those outside the Church were not present; the order of the services was not written down, but was only transmitted orally; and in what was preserved in secret was contained the essential side of the faith. St. Cyril of Jerusalem (4th century) presents this to us especially clearly. In undertaking Christian instruction for those who

had not yet expressed a final decision to become Christians, the hierarch precedes his teachings with the following words: “When the catechetical teaching is pronounced, if a catechumen should ask you, ‘What did the instructors say?’ you are to repeat nothing to those who are without (the Church). For we are giving to you the mystery and hope of the future age. Keep the Mystery of Him Who is the Giver of rewards. May no one say to you, ‘What harm is it if I shall find out also?’ Sick people also ask for wine, but if it is given at the wrong time it produces disorder to the mind, and there are two evil consequences; the sick one dies, and the physician is slandered” (Prologue to the Catechetical Lectures, ch. 12).

In one of his further homilies St. Cyril again remarks: “We include the whole teaching of faith in a few lines. And I would wish that you should remember it word for word and should repeat it among yourselves with all fervor, without writing it down on paper, but noting it by memory in the heart. And you should beware, lest during the time of your occupation with this study none of the catechumens should hear what has been handed down to you” (Fifth Catechetical Lecture, ch. 12).

In the introductory words which he wrote down for those being “illuminated!”—that is, those who were already coming to Baptism, and also to those present who were baptized—he gives the following warning: “This instruction for those who are being illumined is offered to be read by those who are coming to Baptism and by the faithful who have already received Baptism; but by no means give it either to the catechumens or to anyone else who has not yet become a Christian, otherwise you will have to give an answer to the Lord. And if you make a copy of these catechetical lectures, then, as before the Lord, write this down also” (that is, this warning, End of the Prologue to the catechetical Lectures).

In the following words St. Basil the Great gives us a clear understanding of the Sacred Apostolic Tradition: “Of the dogmas and sermons preserved in the Church, certain ones we have from written instruction, and certain ones we have received from the Apostolic Tradition, handed down in secret. Both the one and the other have one and the same authority for piety, and no one who is even the least informed in the decrees of the Church will contradict this. For if we dare to overthrow the unwritten customs as if they did not have great importance, we shall thereby imperceptively do harm to the Gospel in its most important points. And even

more, we shall be left with the empty name of the Apostolic preaching without content. For example, let us especially make note of the first and commonest thing, that those who hope in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ should sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross.

Who taught this in Scripture? Which Scripture instructed us that we should turn to the east in prayer? Which of the saints left us in written form the words of invocation during the transformation of the bread of the Eucharist and the Chalice of blessing? For we are not satisfied with the words which are mentioned in the Epistles or the Gospels, but both before them and after them we pronounce others also as having great authority for the Mystery, having received them from the unwritten teaching.

By what Scripture, likewise, do we bless the water of Baptism and the oil of anointing and, indeed, the one being baptized himself. Is this not the silent and secret tradition? And what more? What written word has taught us this anointing with oil itself? Where is the triple immersion and all the rest that has to do with Baptism, the renunciation of Satan and his angels to be found? What Scripture are these taken from? Is it not from this unpublished and unspoken teaching which our Fathers have preserved in a silence inaccessible to curiosity and scrutiny, because they were thoroughly instructed to preserve in silence the sanctity of the Mysteries? For what propriety would there be to proclaim in writing a teaching concerning that which it is not allowed for the unbaptized even to behold?”

From these words of St. Basil the Great we may conclude: first, that the Sacred Tradition of the teaching of faith is that which may be traced back to the earliest period of the Church, and, second, that it was carefully preserved and unanimously acknowledged among the Fathers and teachers of the Church during the epoch of the great Fathers and the beginning of the Ecumenical Councils.

Although St. Basil has given here a series of examples of the “oral” tradition, he himself in this very text has taken a step towards the “recording” of this oral word. During the era of the freedom and triumph of the Church in the fourth century, almost all of the tradition in general received a written form and is now preserved in the literature of the Church, which comprises a supplement to the Holy Scripture.

We find this sacred ancient Tradition:

(1) in the most ancient record of the Church, the Canons of the Holy Apostles;



(2) in the Symbols of Faith of the ancient local churches;
 (3) in the ancient Liturgies, in the rite of Baptism, and in other ancient prayers;

(4) in the ancient Acts of the Christian martyrs. The Acts of the martyrs did not enter into use by the faithful until they had been examined and approved by the local bishops; and they were read at the public gatherings of Christians under the supervision of the leaders of the churches. In them we see the confession of the Most Holy Trinity, the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, examples of the invocation of the saints, of belief in the conscious life of those who had reposed in Christ, and much else;

(5) in the ancient records of the history of the Church, especially in the book of Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea, where there are gathered many ancient traditions of rite and dogma—in particular, there is given the canon of the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments;

(6) in the works of the ancient Fathers and teachers of the Church;

(7) and, finally, in the very spirit of the Church's life, in the preservation of faithfulness to all her foundations which come from the Holy Apostles.

The Apostolic Tradition which has been preserved and guarded by the Church, by the very fact that it has been kept by the Church, becomes the Tradition of the Church herself; it “belongs” to her, it testifies to her; and, in parallel to Sacred Scripture it is called by her, “Sacred Tradition.”

The witness of Sacred Tradition is indispensable for our certainty that all the books of Sacred Scripture have been handed down to us from Apostolic times and are of Apostolic origin. Sacred Tradition is necessary for the correct understanding of separate passages of Sacred Scripture, and for refuting heretical reinterpretations of it, and, in general, so as to avoid superficial, one-sided, and sometimes even prejudiced and false interpretations of the books that comprise our Sacred Scripture.

Finally, Sacred Tradition is also necessary because some truths of the faith are expressed in a completely definite form in Scripture, while others are not entirely clear and precise and therefore demand confirmation by the Sacred Apostolic Tradition.

The Apostle commands, *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.* (2 Thess 2:15).

Besides all this, Sacred Scripture is valuable because from it we see how the whole order of Church organization, the canons, the Divine Services and rites are rooted in and founded upon the way of life of the ancient Church. Thus, the preservation of “Tradition” expresses the succession of the very essence of the Church.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Mt 11:15)

HELL AND PARADISE

By Elder Paisios the Athonite.

We asked the Elder to tell us a few words about Hell and Paradise.

- Elder, what is Hell like?

- Let me tell you a story that I've heard:

Once there was a simple man who kept asking God to show him what Paradise and Hell are like... So, one night, in his sleep, he heard a voice saying: “Come, let me show you what Hell looks like.”

He suddenly found himself in a room, where many people were seated around a table. In the middle of that table was a pot filled with food. But all those people were hungry, because they were unable to eat. They each held a very long spoon in their hand. They were able to take food out of the pot, but due to the spoon's length, they couldn't bring the spoon to their mouth. Because of this, some were complaining, others were shouting, others were weeping...

Then he heard the same voice saying to him: “Come now, and let me show you what Paradise also looks like.”

He again found himself suddenly in another room, where many people were seated around a table, just like the one before, and in the middle of that table was—again—a pot full of food. Those people also held the same kind of long spoon in their hand. But every one of these people was full and happy, because each would dip his spoon in the pot and feed the person near him...

Do you understand now, how you too can feel that you're living in Paradise, from this lifetime? Whoever does a good deed feels gladness, because he is rewarded with a divine consolation. Whoever does bad things suffers, and he makes the terrestrial Paradise a terrestrial Hell. Do you have love, kindness inside you? Then you are an angel, and everywhere you go or stand, you will be carrying Paradise with you. Do you have passions, meanness? Then you have the devil inside you, and everywhere you go or stand, you carry Hell along with you.

We begin to live Paradise or Hell from this life, here...



When St. Paul says *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice* (Phil 4:4) or be people of joy—what do you think, that this is something optional? Did you think, I can have joy if I want to and if I do not feel like it, I can be miserable? No, rejoice is a commandment. As a Christian, you are not allowed to be miserable! You must be a joyful Christian, a cheerful Christian.

Fr. Athanasios Mitilinaios
 From his homilies on the “Book of Revelation”

Τὰ Ὀκτὼ Θανάσιμα Ἀμαρτήματα τῆς Σύγχρονης Ἑλλάδας

«*Αδέσμευτος Τύπος*», 2 Αὐγούστου, 2010.

Νέα δυναμική παρέμβαση ἀπὸ τὸν μητροπολίτη Θεσσαλονίκης Ἄνθιμο, ὁ ὁποῖος στὸ κυριακάτικο κήρυγμά του ἀπὸ τὸν Ναὸ τῆς Παναγίας Ἀχειροποιήτου ἀναφέρθηκε στὰ ὀκτὼ θανάσιμα ἀμαρτήματα τῆς σύγχρονης ἐποχῆς. Ὅπως τόνισε ὁ δυναμικὸς ἱεράρχης, τὰ σύγχρονα «ἀμαρτήματα» εἶναι ἡ ἀπληστία, ἡ φιλοχρηματία, οἱ ἐκτρώσεις, τὰ κοινὰ ἐγκλήματα, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ εἰς βάρος τῆς πατρίδας προδοσία.

«Ἡ κρίση δὲν εἶναι οἰκονομικὴ μόνον ἀλλὰ εἶναι, ὄντως, σὲ ὅλες τὶς διαστάσεις τῆς ἠθικῆς, γιατί καὶ ἡ κλοπὴ τῶν χρημάτων, ὅταν ἔγινε, ὅπως ἔγινε, ἐὰν ἔγινε... ἔγινε γιατί ὑπῆρχε κρίση ἠθικῆς», εἶπε χαρακτηριστικὰ ὁ μητροπολίτης Θεσσαλονίκης, ὁ ὁποῖος ἄρχισε νὰ ἀπαριθμεῖ καὶ νὰ ἐρμηνεύει τὰ γνωρίσματα τῆς ἐποχῆς:

1. Εὐκόλος πλουτισμός.

2. Ἀπληστία.

3. **Εὐδαιμονισμός, καλοπέραση.** «Ταξίδια, διακοπές, διασκεδάσεις, γλέντια, ποτά, ἔξοδα, δάνεια ἀπὸ τὴν τράπεζα γιὰ διακοπές, δάνεια διακοπῶν. Τὸ 2005 εἶπα σὲ κήρυγμα, στὸν Ἅγιο Δημήτριο, μὴν παίρνετε δάνεια ἀπὸ τὶς τράπεζες, θὰ σᾶς βγοῦν ξινά. Ὅπως καὶ βγῆκαν, καὶ πολλοὶ ἀπὸ ἐσᾶς ἔχασαν τὰ σπίτια τους».

4. **Φιλοχρηματία,** ἡ ἀγάπη ἀποκτήσεως περισσοτέρων χρημάτων πάνω στὴν ὁποία ἄνθισε ὁ συνδικαλισμὸς τῶν ἐργαζομένων. «Ὅλοι εἴμαστε ἐργαζόμενοι καὶ ὅλοι ἀγαποῦμε καὶ τιμᾶμε τοὺς ἐργαζομένους. Ἀλλὰ σὲ ὅλα τὰ ἐπαγγέλματα καὶ σὲ ὅλες τὶς τάξεις τῆς πατρίδας μας, ὁ ἐπαγγελματισμὸς αὐτῶν ποὺ ἀσκοῦν τὸν συνδικαλισμὸ ὁδήγησε στὴ διαρκὴ ἐπιδίωξη γιὰ αὐξηση τῶν ἐσόδων, εἰς βάρος τῆς ἀντοχῆς τοῦ κράτους, ποὺ ξεκίνησε ἕναν “δρόμο” ἀλλὰ δὲν ἄντεξε νὰ τὸν βγάλει εἰς πέρας. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ ἀλήθεια».

5. **Σαρκολατρεία καὶ φιληδονία.** «Τὴν σαρκολατεία τὴν ξέρετε, ποὺ ὁδηγεῖ στὴ φιληδονία, τὴν πορνεία καὶ τὴν μοιχεία ποὺ εἶναι τόσο πολὺ διαδεδομένα».

6. **Ἐκτρώσεις ἢ ἀμβλώσεις.** «Μέσα σὲ ἕναν χρόνον ὑπολογίζεται ὅ,τι οἱ ἐκτρώσεις στὴν Ἑλλάδα φτάνουν τὶς 150.000. Βάλτε 10 χρόνια ἐπὶ 150 χιλιάδες, χάσαμε ἑνάμισι ἑκατομμύριο πληθυσμὸ. Αὐτὸ εἶναι κρῖμα, ἔγκλημα ἔναντι τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔναντι τῆς Πατρίδος, ἔναντι τῆς Κοινωνίας, ἔναντι τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μας. Ψυχρὴ δολοφονία ἀνθρωπίνων υπάρξεων».

7. Κοινὰ ἐγκλήματα.

8. **Ἡ εἰς βάρος τῆς Πατρίδος μας προδοσία.** «Λένε μερικοὶ καὶ τὰ γράφουν. Γράφουν φοβερὰ πράγματα. Καὶ ἐναντίον ἡμῶν. Καὶ ὅσο καὶ ἂν εἴμεθα λίγοι ποὺ

ὀμιλοῦμε γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα, γιὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα, γιὰ τὸν πολιτισμὸ μας, γιὰ τὴν ἱστορία μας, γι' αὐτὸ τὸ ἔθνος τὸ μεγάλο τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ, ποὺ ἔχει χιλιάδες χρόνια ἱστορία, δὲν ὑπάρχει ἄλλος λαὸς στὴν Βαλκανικὴ μὲ τέτοια ἱστορία. Καὶ μετὰ τὸ προδίδουμε; Ἔ, αὐτὸ εἶναι σατανοπληξία. **Εἶναι σατανοπληξία νὰ ἀπορρίπτεις τὸ γένος σου**», κατέληξε ὁ κ. Ἄνθιμος.



Ἡ Ἀληθινὴ Ταπείνωση

Εἶπα κάποτε στὸν Γέροντα Πορφύριο:

—Γέροντα, δὲν μπορῶ νὰ συνεργασθῶ μ' αὐτὸν τὸν ἀδελφό... εἶναι γκρινιαρῆς.

—Μωρὲ ἐσὺ ἔχεις ἐγωισμό. Τὸ ξέρεις; Ἀπ' αὐτὸν τὰ παθαίνεις ὅλα.

—Τὸ ξέρω, Γέροντα, τὸν ἔχω ἀπὸ μικρός. Εὐχέστε νὰ μοῦ δώσει ὁ Θεὸς ταπείνωση στὴν καρδιά μου.

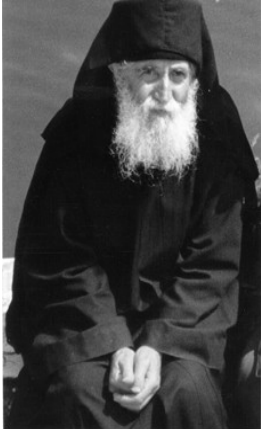
—Παιδί μου, ὄντως ταπείνωση χρειάζεσαι. Ἀλλὰ ὄχι αὐτὴ τὴ ταπείνωση ποὺ τὴ λέμε μὲ λόγια, οὔτε αὐτὴ ποὺ νομίζουμε ὅ,τι ἀποκτήσαμε. Ἡ ταπείνωση ἢ ἀγία, εἶναι δῶρο Θεοῦ στὴν ψυχὴ. Τὸ δίνει ὁ Θεὸς ὅταν εὐρεῖ καθαρὴ προετοιμασία. Τότε ἐπιβλέπει μὲ εὐχαρίστηση καὶ ἔλκει τὴν ψυχὴ αὐτὴ πρὸς ἑαυτόν.

—Λοιπὸν κι ἐσὺ μὴ λὲς «αὐτὸς εἶναι γκρινιαρῆς, αὐτὸς ζηλιάρης, αὐτὸ θυμώνει» κ.λ.π. Μὴ λὲς «δὲν μπορῶ νὰ κάνω μαζί του, δὲν κάνω ποτέ». Αὐτὸς δὲν εἶναι τρόπος. Αὐτὸ δὲν εἶναι ὀρθόδοξο, δὲν εἶναι Χριστιανικὸ. Ἔτσι ξεχωρίζεις τὸν ἑαυτό σου ἀπὸ τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ, διότι τὸν ξεχώρισες ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου. Ἀντίθετα, θὰ παραβλέπεις τὶς ἀδυναμίες τους καὶ χωρὶς νὰ τὶς μμείσαι, θὰ γίνεσαι ἕνα μὲ αὐτοὺς στὴ συνεργασία. Ὅ,τι θέλουν καὶ ὅπως τὸ θέλουν. Ἔτσι τὸ θέλουν; Ἔτσι. Ἀλλιῶς; Ἀλλιῶς. Μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο καταστρέφονται τὰ τεῖχη ποὺ μᾶς χωρίζουν ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀδελφούς μας. Ἔτσι συνδεόμεθα μὲ τὸ Χριστό. Ὅσο πιὸ πολὺ συνδέεσαι καθημερινὰ μὲ τοὺς ἀδελφούς σου, τόσο περισσότερο εἰσέρχεσαι μυστικὰ μέσα στὴν Ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

—Σοῦ ἔχει δώσει πολλὰ χαρίσματα ὁ Θεός. Σὲ προίκισε μὲ δῶρα σπάνια. Τὸ νιώθεις; Νὰ τὸν εὐχαριστεῖς συνεχῶς καὶ νὰ ταπεινώνεσαι στὴν Ἀγάπη Του. Παρακάλα τὸ Θεό, νὰ σοῦ στείλει τὴν ἀγία ταπείνωση. Ὅχι αὐτὴ ποὺ λέει, «εἶμαι τελευταῖος, εἶμαι τιποτένιος». Αὐτὴ εἶναι σατανικὴ ταπείνωση. Ἡ ἀγία ταπείνωση, ἐπαναλαμβάνω, εἶναι δῶρο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἀκοῦς; Δῶρο, χάρισμα. Ὅχι ἀπὸ δικές μας προσπάθειες. Ἐσὺ προετοίμαζε τὸν ἑαυτό σου, καὶ ζήτα ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ αὐτὸ τὸ ἅγιο δῶρο. Μὴ λὲς, ἔχω αὐτὸ τὸ ἐλάττωμα, τὸ προσφέρω στὸ Θεό. Τίποτα. Ἐσὺ, ἀγωνίσου, ἐξουθένωνε τὸν ἑαυτό σου, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα

Ὁ Καλὸς καὶ ὁ Κακὸς Λογισμὸς

Ἀπόσπασμα ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίο τοῦ Γερομονάχου Χριστοδοῦλου, Ἀγορεύειν με τίτλο «Ὁ Γέρον Παΐσιος».



Ρωτήσαμε μιὰ μέρα τὸ Γέροντα Παΐσιο γιὰ τὸ ἐξῆς πρόβλημα ποὺ ἀντιμετωπίζουμε:

—Γέροντα, μᾶς λέτε συνέχεια νὰ ἔχουμε καλὸ λογισμό. Θὰ σᾶς ποῦμε, ὅμως, μιὰ περίπτωση, γιὰ νὰ δοῦμε τὶ μᾶς συμβουλευέτε νὰ ἀπαντοῦμε. Ἔρχονται μερικοὶ ἄνθρωποι καὶ μᾶς λένε: Ὁ τάδε ἱερέας παίρνει πολλὰ λεφτὰ ἀπὸ τὰ μυστήρια, ὁ δεῖνα καπνίζει πολὺ τσιγάρο καὶ πηγαίνει στὰ καφενεῖα, ὁ ἄλλος λένε

πὼς εἶναι ἀνήθικος καί, γενικά, βγάζουν ἓνα δριμὺ κατηγορητήριο ἐναντίον τῶν κληρικῶν, καὶ μάλιστα παρουσιάζουν μαζὶ κι ἀποδείξεις τῶν ὧσων λένε. Σ' αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τί μπορούμε νὰ λέμε;

Τότε, ὁ Γέροντας ἄρχισε νὰ μᾶς λέει:

—Γνώρισα ἐκ πείρας ὅ,τι σ' αὐτὴ τῆ ζωῆ οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶναι χωρισμένοι σὲ δυὸ κατηγορίες. Τρίτη δὲν ὑπάρχει—ἢ στὴ μιὰ θὰ εἶναι, ἢ στὴν ἄλλη. Ἡ μία, λοιπόν, κατηγορία τῶν ἀνθρώπων μοιάζει μὲ τὴ μύγα. Ἡ μύγα ἔχει τὴν ἐξῆς ιδιότητα: νὰ πηγαίνει πάντα καὶ νὰ κάθεται σὲ ὅ,τι βρώμικο ὑπάρχει. Γιὰ παράδειγμα, ἂν ἓνα περιβόλι εἶναι γεμάτο λουλουῖα, ποὺ εὐωδιάζουν, καὶ σὲ μιὰ ἄκρη τοῦ περιβολιοῦ κάποιον ζῶο ἔχει κάνει μιὰ ἀκαθαρσία, τότε μιὰ μύγα, πετώντας μέσα σ' αὐτὸ τὸ πανέμορφο περιβόλι, θὰ πετάξει πάνω ἀπὸ ὅλα τὰ ἄνθη καὶ σὲ κανένα δὲν θὰ καθίσει. Μόνο ὅταν δεῖ τὴν ἀκαθαρσία, τότε ἀμέσως θὰ κατέβει καὶ θὰ καθίσει πάνω σ' αὐτὴν καὶ θὰ ἀρχίσει νὰ τὴν ἀνασκαλεύει, ἀναπαυόμενη στὴ δυσωδία ποὺ προκαλεῖται ἀπὸ τὸ ἀνακάτεμα αὐτό, καὶ δὲ θὰ ξεκολλᾷ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ.

—Ἄν τώρα ἔπιανες μιὰ μύγα, καὶ αὐτὴ μπορούσε νὰ μιλήσει καὶ τὴ ρωτούσες νὰ σοῦ πεῖ μήπως ξέρει ἂν πουθενὰ ὑπάρχουν τριαντάφυλλα, τότε ἐκείνη θὰ ἀπαντοῦσε πὼς δὲ γνωρίζει καν τί εἶναι αὐτά. «Εγώ, θὰ σοῦ πεῖ, ξέρω πὼς ὑπάρχουν σκουπίδια, τουαλέτες, ἀκαθαρσίες ζῶων, μαγειρεῖα, βρωμιές». Ἡ μία λοιπὸν μερίδα τῶν ἀνθρώπων μοιάζει μὲ τὴ μύγα. Εἶναι ἢ κατηγορία τῶν ἀνθρώπων ποὺ ἔχει μάθει πάντα νὰ σκέφτεται καὶ νὰ ψάχνει νὰ βρεῖ ὅ,τι κακὸ ὑπάρχει, ἀγνοώντας καὶ μὴ θέλοντας ποτὲ νὰ σταθεῖ στὸ καλὸ.

—Ἡ ἄλλη κατηγορία τῶν ἀνθρώπων μοιάζει μὲ τὴ μέλισσα. Ἡ ιδιότητα τῆς μέλισσας εἶναι νὰ βρίσκει καὶ νὰ κάθεται σὲ ὅ,τι καλὸ καὶ γλυκὸ ὑπάρχει. Ἄς ποῦμε,

γιὰ παράδειγμα, πὼς σὲ μιὰ αἴθουσα, ποὺ εἶναι γεμάτη ἀκαθαρσίες ἔχει κάποιος τοποθετήσει σὲ μιὰ γωνιὰ ἓνα λουκοῦμι. Ἄν φέρουμε ἐκεῖ μιὰ μέλισσα, ἐκείνη θὰ πετάξει καὶ δὲν θὰ καθήσει πουθενὰ ἕως ὅτου βρεῖ τὸ λουκοῦμι. καὶ μόνον ἐκεῖ θὰ σταθεῖ.

—Ἄν πιάσεις τώρα τὴ μέλισσα καὶ τὴ ρωτήσεις ποῦ ὑπάρχουν σκουπίδια, αὐτὴ θὰ σοῦ πεῖ ὅτι δὲ γνωρίζει. Θὰ σοῦ πεῖ «ἐκεῖ ὑπάρχουν γαρδένιες, ἐκεῖ τριαντάφυλλιες, ἐκεῖ θυμάρη, ἐκεῖ μέλι, ἐκεῖ ζάχαρη, ἐκεῖ λουκοῦμια» καὶ γενικὰ θὰ εἶναι γνώστης ὅλων τῶν καλῶν καὶ θὰ ἔχει παντελὴ ἄγνοια ὅλων τῶν κακῶν. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ δευτέρη ομάδα τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκείνων ποὺ ἔχουν καλοὺς λογισμοὺς καὶ σκέπτονται καὶ βλέπουν τὰ καλά.

—Ὅταν σ' ἓνα δρόμο βρεθοῦν νὰ περπατοῦν δυὸ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ὁποῖοι ἀνήκουν στὶς δυὸ αὐτὲς κατηγορίες, τότε, φτάνοντας στὸ σημεῖο ἐκεῖνο ὅπου ἓνας τρίτος ἔκανε τὴν «ἀνάγκη» του, ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς πρώτης κατηγορίας, θὰ πάρει ἓνα ξύλο καὶ θ' ἀρχίσει νὰ σκαλίζει τὶς ἀκαθαρσίες.

—Ὅταν, ὅμως, περάσει ὁ ἄλλος, τῆς δευτέρας κατηγορίας, ποὺ μοιάζει μὲ τὴ μέλισσα, προσπαθεῖ νὰ βρεῖ τρόπο νὰ τὶς σκεπάσει μὲ χῶμα καὶ μὲ μιὰ πλάκα, γιὰ νὰ μὴν αισθανθοῦν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι περαστικοὶ τὴ δυσωδία αὐτὴ, ποὺ προέρχεται ἀπὸ τὶς βρωμιές.

Καὶ κατέληξε ὁ Γέροντας:

—Εγώ σὲ ὅσους ἔρχονται καὶ μοῦ κατηγοροῦν τοὺς ἄλλους—καὶ μὲ δυσκολεύουν—τοὺς λέω αὐτὸ τὸ παράδειγμα καὶ τοὺς ὑποδεικνύω νὰ διαλέξουν σὲ ποιά κατηγορία θέλουν νὰ βρίσκονται καὶ ἀναλόγως νὰ ψάξουν νὰ βροῦν καὶ τοὺς ἀνάλογους ἀνθρώπους τῆς κατηγορίας τους.



Ο πρ. Κλεόπας Ἰλίο εἶχε πάει τὸ 1977 στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος γιὰ νὰ προσκυνήσει. Πῆγε σὲ πολλὰ μοναστήρια, καὶ ὅταν ἔφθασαν στὸ γέροντα Παΐσιο, ὁ πρ. Κλεόπας τοῦ ζήτησε μιὰ συμβουλή:

—Πατέρα Παΐσιε, θὰ ἤθελα νὰ παραμείνω στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος, ἐσεῖς τί συμβουλή μοῦ δίνετε;

Ὁ γέροντας Παΐσιος εἶχε τὸ διορατικὸ χάρισμα καὶ τοῦ εἶπε:

—Πατέρα Κλεόπα ἂν μείνεις στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος θὰ εἶσαι ἓνα λουλοῦδι ποὺ θὰ προστεθεῖ στὰ ἄλλα πνευματικὰ λουλοῦδια τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὅρους. Ἀλλὰ ἂν θὰ πᾶς στὴ Ρουμανία—καὶ αὐτὸ νὰ κάνεις, νὰ πᾶς—θα θεωρεῖσαι ἓνας ἀπόστολος.

Καὶ τότε ὁ πρ. Κλεόπας ὑπάκουσε, βλέποντας πὼς αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος βγήκε ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἂν καὶ εἶχε μεγάλη ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος καὶ τὴν Παναγία...

Ἀπὸ τὸ «Ρουμᾶνοι Γέροντες»

Ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλαος Πλανᾶς

Αρχιμ. Αλέξανδρου Μοστράτου (ἀπὸ ἓνα Ἑλληνορθόδοξο φυλλάδιο).

Ἀπὸ τὸν Συντάκτη: Ἀγαπητοὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδερφοί, ἀκόμα καὶ στίς μέρες μας κυκλοφοροῦν Ἅγιοι ἀνάμεσά μας, δὲν εἶναι ὑπερβολή. Ἄς προσπαθήσουμε νὰ τοὺς μιμηθοῦμε, κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν φυσικά.

† † †

Χαίροις ὁ τῆς Νάξου θεῖος βλαστός καὶ τῶν Τερέων ὁ ἐν πᾶσιν ὑπογραμμός, ἐλεημοσύναις, νηστείαις, ἀγρυπνίαις καὶ προσευχαῖς σχολάζων, πάτερ Νικόλαε.



Κορυφαία ἔκφραση τῆς ἀληθινῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ζωῆς τοῦ κάθε συνειδητοῦ πιστοῦ καὶ πιδὸ πολὺ τοῦ πραγματικοῦ καὶ τελείου ἱερέως, ἀποτελεῖ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ τὸ ἔργον τοῦ Ἁγίου ἱερέως Νικολάου τοῦ Πλανᾶ, ἁγίου τῶν ἡμερῶν μας.

Ἦ εὐάνδρος καὶ Ἁγιοτόκος Νάξος εἶχε τὴν θεία εὐνοία καὶ εὐλογία νὰ εἶναι ἡ γενέτειρά του. Γεννήθηκε τὸ ἔτος 1851. Οἱ γονεῖς του, καπετάν Γιάννης καὶ Αὐγουστίνα, ἦταν ἄνθρωποι εὐποροὶ, εὐσεβεῖς καὶ καλοκάγαθοι, ὅπως ὅλοι οἱ νησιῶτες. Εἶχαν καὶ ἓνα ἐμπορικὸ καΐκι ποὺ πῆγαινε ἀπὸ τὴ Νάξο στὴ Σμύρνη, Κωνσταντινούπολη, ἀκόμα καὶ στὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια τῆς Αἰγύπτου.

Ἦ ὅλη του ζωὴ, ἀπὸ τὰ παιδικὰ του χρόνια ἀκόμα, προέλεγε τὴ μέλλουσα ζωὴ καὶ πολιτεία του. Τισ θεῖες θαυματουργικὲς δυνάμεις ἔλαβε μὲ τὴν χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπὸ τὰ παιδικὰ του χρόνια. Ἔτσι, γνῶριζε τὸν καταποντισμὸ τοῦ καΐκιου τους ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν Πόλη καὶ τὸ εἶπε στοὺς γονεῖς του.

Τὰ πρῶτα γράμματα ἔμαθε ἀπὸ τὸν παπποῦ του—πατέρα τῆς μητέρας του—ἱερέα Γεώργιο Μελισσοργό, κοντὰ στὸν ὁποῖο ἔμαθε νὰ διαβάξει τὸ ἱερὸ Ψαλτήριον. Μαζὶ του ἐπίσης πῆγαινε στίς θεῖες Λειτουργίες καὶ τὸν διακονοῦσε στὸ Ἱερὸ Βῆμα, ἐνῶ παράλληλα δεχόταν τὰ νάματα τῆς Θεῖας Λατρείας. Ὄταν ὁ Νικόλαος ἦταν δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν, ὁ πατέρας του ἄφησε τὸν κόσμον αὐτό. Ἔτσι ἡ μητέρα του μαζὶ μὲ τὴν ἀδελφή του ἦρθαν στὴν Ἀθήνα καὶ πῆγε καὶ ὁ ἴδιος μαζὶ τους. Ἔμεναν στὴν περιοχὴ ποὺ εἶναι μεταξὺ τοῦ Ἱ. Ναοῦ τοῦ Ἁγ. Ἰωάννη τῆς Πλάκας καὶ τοῦ Ναοῦ τοῦ Ἁγ. Παντελεήμονος Ἰλισσοῦ, ὅπου ὑπῆρχαν πολλοὶ Ναξιῶτες.

Μοίρασαν μὲ τὴν ἀδελφή του τὴν πολὺ ἀξιόλογη πατρικὴ τους περιουσία. Ἀλλὰ τὸ μερίδιό του τὸ ἔβαλε

ἐνέχυρον γιὰ κάποιο φτωχό, ποὺ δὲν τοῦ τὸ ἐπέστρεψε ποτέ. Ἔτσι παρέμεινε γιὰ ὅλη του τὴ ζωὴ φτωχός. Σὲ ἡλικία δεκαεπτὰ ἐτῶν συνῆψε τίμιον γάμον κατόπιν πιέσεων τῆς μητέρας τους μὲ τὴν Ἑλένη Προβελεγγίου ἀπὸ τὰ Κύθηρα. Ἀπὸ τὸν γάμον αὐτὸ ἀπέκτησε ἓνα γιό, τὸν Ἰωάννη. Ἔστερα πέθανε ἡ σύζυγός του. Στίς 28 Ἰουλίου τοῦ ἔτους 1879 χειροτονήθηκε διάκονος στὸν Ἱ. Ναὸ Μεταμορφώσεως Σωτῆρος Πλάκας. Στίς 2 Μαρτίου τοῦ 1885 χειροτονήθηκε πρεσβύτερος καὶ τοποθετήθηκε στὸν Ἱ. Ναὸ Ἁγ. Παντελεήμονος Ἰλισσοῦ. Ὑπηρετήσε ἐπίσης στὴν Ἐνορία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννη τῆς ὁδοῦ Βουλιαγμένης. **Στὸν δὲ Ἱ. Ναὸ Ἁγ. Ἐλισσαίου λειτουργοῦσε καθημερινά, μὲ ψάλτες τὸν Ἀλέξανδρο Παπαδιαμάντη καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρο Μωραϊτίδη!**

Ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλαος ὑπῆρξε ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ ἄοκνος ἱεροουργός καὶ λάτρης τοῦ Τριαδικοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἦ μεγάλη του εὐλάβεια, ἡ ἀπεριόριστη καλωσύνη του, ἡ υπερβολικὴ του ἀφιλοχρηματία, ἡ ἀπλότητά του, τὸ ἀκτινοβόλο ἱερατικὸ του ἦθος, ἡ ἀφθαστη ἱεροπρέπεια του, ἡ ταπείνωσή του, ἡ ἀγάπη του γιὰ τὴ θεία λατρεία καὶ οἱ λοιπὲς ἀρετὲς του τὸν καταξίωσαν στὴ συνείδηση τοῦ λαοῦ.

Δὲν ἀγάπησε ποτέ του τὰ πλούτη. Ὅσα τοῦ ἔδιναν ἀμέσως τὰ ἔδινε στοὺς φτωχοὺς. Εἶχε μισθοδοτήσει ἔνδεκα οἰκογένειες χηρῶν καὶ ὀρφανῶν. Χρόνια καὶ χρόνια τοὺς ἔδινε ἐπίδομα μέχρι ποὺ τὰ παιδιά τους ἔγιναν δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν. Βοηθοῦσε νεαροὺς διακόνους στίς σπουδὲς τους. Ἐνίσχυε ὑλικά καὶ πνευματικὰ ὅσους εἶχαν ἀνάγκη. Ὑπῆρξε ἀκαταπόνητος. Γιὰ μισὸ καὶ πλέον αἰῶνα λειτουργοῦσε καθημερινά. Λιτός, ἀπέριττος σὲ ὅλες τους τὶς ἐκδηλώσεις!

Πλοῦτος του καὶ θησαυρός του, κέντρο τῆς ζωῆς του, ἡ λειτουργικὴ ζωὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας! Ἄνθρωπος προσευχῆς, τοῦ ὁποῖου ἡ ζωὴ ἦταν μιὰ διακονία πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης. Ἦταν νηστευτής. Ἐνήστευε ὅλες τὶς Σαρακοστὲς καὶ τὸ λάδι. Ἀπλός καὶ πανέξυπνος, εὐστοχος στίς ἀπαντήσεις του, συνδύαζε τὴν ἀπλότητα καὶ τὴν ἱεροπρέπεια, τὴν ἀφέλεια μὲ τὴν ἀγιότητα. Δὲν εἶχε σπουδάσει σὲ Πανεπιστήμια, οὔτε σὲ Ἐκκλησιαστικὲς Σχολές, οὔτε σὲ Λύκεια καὶ Γυμνάσια. Καὶ ἴσως νὰ μὴ φοίτησε καὶ σὲ καμμιά τάξη τοῦ τότε Ἑλληνικοῦ Σχολείου. Κατεῖχε ὁμως ἄριστα τὴν σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ὁ Θεός δόξασε τὸν Ἅγιο Νικόλαο μὲ τὸ νὰ θαυματουργεῖ. Εἶναι ἀμέτρητα τὰ θαύματά του. Ἔθεράπευε ἀσθενεῖς, ἀπομάκρυνε δαιμόνια, προέλεγε τὰ μέλλοντα, ἔλυνε δύσκολα θέματα, συμβούλευε πρεπόντως.

Ἐημέρωσε ἡ Κυριακὴ τοῦ Ἀσώτου, 28^η Φεβρουαρίου τοῦ ἔτους 1932. Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ μέρα ποὺ λειτουργήσε γιὰ τελευταία φορὰ στὸ ἐπίγειο θυσιαστήριον. Μετὰ τὴ Θεία Λειτουργία ἔχασε τὶς αἰσθήσεις του. Ἦταν δέκα

ή ώρα τὸ βράδυ τῆς 2^ας Μαρτίου. Ἔκανε τὸ σημεῖο τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ καὶ εἶπε: «Τὸν δρόμον τετέλευκα. Δόξα σοι ὁ Θεός! Ἡ θεία χάρις νὰ σὰς εὐλογεῖ». Μὲ αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ἄφησε τὸν κόσμον τοῦτο.

Τὸ πρωὶ ἔφεραν τὸ ἱερό του λείψανο στὸν Ναὸ τοῦ Ἁγ. Ἰωάννου τῆς ὁδοῦ Βουλιαγμένης, ὅπου ἐτέθη σὲ λαϊκὸ προσκύνημα γιὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρες. Οἱ λαϊκὲς ἐκδηλώσεις ἦταν πρωτοφανεῖς καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ ἀναρίθμητο. Χιλιάδες λαοῦ κατέφθασαν ἀπὸ τὸ λεκανοπέδιο Ἀττικῆς γιὰ νὰ ἀποχαιρετήσουν τὸν σύγχρονον Ἅγιο.

Στὶς 29 Αὐγούστου τοῦ 1992, τὰ ἱερώτατα καὶ θαυματουργὰ λείψανα τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου τοῦ Πλανᾶ τοποθετήθηκαν σὲ ἀσημένια λάρνακα, ποὺ σήμερα βρίσκεται στὸ δεξιὸ κλίτος τοῦ παραπάνω Ναοῦ. Ἡ Ἁγία μας Ἐκκλησία τὸν ἀνεκήρυξε καὶ ἐπισήμως ὡς ἅγιο κατὰ τὴν 135^η Συνοδικὴ Περίοδο (1991 - 1992) τοῦ Πανσέπτου Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, ἔπειτα ἀπὸ εἰσήγηση τοῦ Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Πατρῶν κ. Νικοδήμου καὶ μὲ φροντίδα τοῦ Σεβ. Ποιμενάρχου μας κ. Ἀμβροσίου. Ἡ μνήμη του τιμᾶται κατὰ τὴν καθιερωμένη πανήγυρη τῆς 2^ας Μαρτίου. Ἐάν ἡ ἡμέρα τῆς ἐορτῆς συμπίπτει κατὰ τὴν περίοδο τῆς Μ. Τεσσαρακοστῆς, τότε ἡ μνήμη του ἐορτάζεται κατὰ τὴν ἐπόμενη Κυριακῆ. Ὡσαύτως στὴ Νάξο ἐορτάζει τὴν πρώτη Κυριακῆ τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου, ἐνῶ στὴν Πάρο τὴν τρίτη Κυριακῆ τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου, κατὰ τὴν καθιερωθεῖσα προσφάτως Σύναξη τῶν Πέντε Ἁγίων τῆς Ἱ. Μ. Παροναξίας.

Παραθέτουμε ἐλάχιστα ἀπὸ τὰ πολλὰ θαυματουργικὰ περιστατικὰ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ Ἁγ. Νικολάου.

Ἐμφάνιση τῶν

Ἁγ. Ἰωάννου καὶ Παντελεήμονος

Κατὰ τὸ ἔτος 1923, ἓνα πνευματικοπαίδι του ἐξαιρετικῶς ἀγαπημένο ἀπὸ τὸν γέροντα, ἄνθρωπος γεμᾶτος ἀπὸ υἰεῖα καὶ δράση, ἔπαθε διάρρηξη σκοληκοειδίτιδος καὶ ἔζησε ὀκτώ ἡμέρες. Μέσα σ' αὐτὲς τὶς λίγες ἡμέρες ὁ Ἁγ. Νικόλαος «κατέβασε» τὸν οὐρανὸ στὴ γῆ, ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδιάκοπη καὶ ἐγκάρδια προσευχὴ γιὰ νὰ ζήσει τὸ ἀγαπημένο πνευματικὸ του παιδί.

Τὸ βράδυ, ὅταν πῆγε στὸ σπῆτι του, λέει καταλυπημένος στοὺς δικούς του: «Ὁ Ἡλίας θὰ πεθάνει, μοῦ τὸ εἶπαν ὁ Ἁγ. Ἰωάννης καὶ ὁ Ἁγ. Παντελεήμων».

Πέρασαν τρεῖς μῆνες, ὥσπου νὰ μπορέσει ἡ ἀδελφὴ τοῦ θανόντος—λόγω τοῦ πένθους—νὰ τὸν ρωτήσῃ πῶς ἀκριβῶς εἶδε τὴν ὀπτασία. Τῆς λέγει, λοιπόν, ὅ,τι «τὴν

ώρα ποὺ λειτουργοῦσα, εἶδα ἀπέναντι, ὀπισθεν τῆς Ἁγ. Τραπεζῆς, τὸν Ἁγ. Ἰωάννη καὶ τὸν Ἁγ. Παντελεήμονα καὶ μοῦ εἶπαν: “Διαβιβάσαμε τὴν αἴτησή σου στὸν Δεσπότη Χριστό, ὁ Ὅποιος μᾶς εἶπε ὅ,τι θὰ πεθάνει”. Ἀνωτέρα διαταγὴ, μοῦ εἶπαν».

Δέν Πατάει στὴ Γῆ

Δύο μικροὶ φίλοι, καθὼς βάδιζαν στὸ δρόμο, συνάντησαν τὸν Ἁγ. Νικόλαο. Ὁ ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς δύο ἦταν τύπος ἀγαθός καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἦταν ἀγαθός οἱ φίλοι του τὸν ἔλεγαν βλάκα· ἀλλὰ δέν συνέβαινε αὐτό, ἦταν ἀπλῶς ἀθῶος καὶ πολὺ θρησκευόμενος. Στὸ δρόμο ποὺ συνάντησαν τὸν Ἁγ. Νικόλαο, λέει ὁ ἀγαθὸς στὸν φίλο του: «Κοίταξε νὰ δεῖς, ὁ παπᾶς δέν πατάει στὴ γῆ!» Καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀγαθὸς ἔβλεπε τὸν Ἅγιο 30 πόντους πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ ἔδαφος, ὁ δὲ ἄλλος δέν μποροῦσε νὰ τὸν δεῖ.

Ἐπάνω σὲ Σύννεφο

Τὸ 1920, τὴν ἡμέρα τῶν Χριστουγέννων, λειτουργοῦσε ὁ Ἁγ. Νικόλαος στὸν Ἱ. Ναὸ τοῦ Ἁγ. Ἰωάννου Βουλιαγμένης. Κοινώνησε μιὰ δεκαπεντάχρονη ὀνόματι Ἰουλία καὶ μιὰ κυρία κοινώνησε τὸ βρέφος τῆς, καὶ μετὰ τὸ δίνει στὴν Ἰουλία γιὰ νὰ κοινωνήσει καὶ ἡ ἴδια.

Παίροντας τὸ βρέφος ἡ

Ἰουλία στὰ χέρια τῆς, γυρίζει τὸ βλέμμα τῆς πρὸς τὸν ἱερέα καὶ παραλίγο νὰ τῆς φύγει τὸ παιδί ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια. Τῆς λέει τότε ἡ κυρία: «Πρόσεξε, τὶ ἔπαθες». Καὶ ἡ Ἰουλία τῆς ἀπαντᾷ: «Βλέπω τὸν παπᾶ νὰ στέκει πάνω σ' ἓνα σύννεφο».



Εἶστε Δυσारेστημένοι μὲ τοὺς ἱερεῖς σας;

Ἐσεῖς ἄραγε τὶ κάνατε γιὰ τοὺς ἱερεῖς γιὰ νὰ εἶστε εὐχαριστημένοι; Ζητήσατε ἀπὸ τὸ Θεὸ ἓνα τουλάχιστον παιδί γιὰ νὰ τὸ ἀφιερῶσετε σ' Αὐτόν; Νομίζετε ὅ,τι φταῖνε μόνο οἱ ἱερεῖς; Μὰ εἶναι παιδιά σας! Ὅπως τοὺς γεννήσατε ἔτσι τοὺς ἔχετε. Γιατί ρίχνετε τὸ φταῖξιμο μόνο σ' ἐκείνους;

Χρειαζέται καλύτερους ἱερεῖς; Γεννήστε τους! Ὅλος ὁ λαὸς εἶναι ὑπεύθυνος. Ὁ λαὸς ἔχει τοὺς ὀρμηνευτὲς ποὺ τοῦ ἀξίζουν.

Ἐπαναλαμβάνω: Χρειαζέστε καλύτερους ἱερεῖς; Γεννήστε τους!

Πρ. Ἀρσένιος Μπόκα (+1989)

Υπάρχουν ἄνθρωποι, σπάνιο φυσικά, ποὺ ἔρχονται στὸν κόσμο, ἔτοιμοι γιὰ τὴ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, εὐλογημένοι καὶ μακάριοι. Ἔρχονται καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ εἰρηνοποιοί. Ὁ Παπα-Νικόλας Πλανᾶς ἀπὸ τὴ νῆσο Νάξο, ποὺ ἔζησε στὶς τελευταῖες δεκαετίες, τοῦ 19^{ου} αἰῶνα καὶ τὶς πρώτες δεκαετίες τοῦ 20^{ου} αἰῶνα, ἀνήκει σ' αὐτὴ τὴν κατηγορία ἀνθρώπων.

Δρ. Κλεῖτος Ἰωαννίδης

Μητροπολίτης Αύγουστίνος Καντιώτης: Ὁ Πύρινος Προφήτης

ΠΗΓΗ: Ελληνορθόδοξο περιοδικό «Ο ΣΩΤΗΡ».



Καὶ ἐξάρας τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ἔτελεύτησεν» ὁ ὑπεραιωνόβιος Μητροπολίτης πρ. Φλωρίνης Αὐγουστίνος (Καντιώτης). Ἐπειτα ἀπὸ 104 ἔτη ζωῆς σίγησε ὀριστικῶς πλέον ἢ προφητικῆ φωνῆ του στὴ γῆ, τὸ βροντῶδες ἀφυπνιστικὸ κήρυγμά του. Ἀλλὰ τὸ πλουσιότατο κοινωνικὸ καὶ συγγραφικὸ του ἔργο—ἔγραψε περισσότερα ἀπὸ 80 βιβλία—καὶ τὸ φωτεινὸ

παράδειγμά του θὰ συνεχίζουσαν νὰ ἐμπνέουσαν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ...

Σελάγισε ὡς ἀστέρας φωτεινότατος στὸ στερέωμα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας καθόλου σχεδὸν τὸν περασμένο αἰῶνα. Λαμπρὸς καὶ ἀκατηγόρητος, εὐθύς καὶ ὀλόφωτος, ἀκαμπτος, πύρινος καὶ πνευματοφόρος, ἀτρόμητος καὶ ἀνυποχώρητος, οἰκοδομοῦσε τὸν λαό. Συγκινοῦσε, συνήγειρε, ἠλέκτριξε τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ὁ μακαριστὸς Ἱεράρχης μόνον τὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τὴν Ἐκκλησία του εἶχε πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν...

Μιμούμενος τὸν Ἱερό Χρυσόστομο δὲν φοβήθηκε νὰ ἐλέγξει κατὰ πρόσωπο τὸν τότε βασιλέα Παῦλο καὶ τὸν τότε πρωθυπουργό Κων. Καραμανλῆ, γιὰ τὴ φανερὴ καὶ σκανδαλώδη ὑποστήριξή τους πρὸς τὴ Μασωνία. Οὔτε τὴ βασίλισσα Φρειδερίκη δίστασε νὰ ἐλέγξει γιὰ τὴ στάση της καὶ τὴν πρόσκλισή της πρὸς τὸν Βουδισμό... Στὰ χρόνια τῆς Κατοχῆς, μόνον στὴν Κοζάνη λειτουργοῦσαν συσσίτια ὑπὸ τὴν ἐποπτεία του μὲ 8.000 σιτιζομένους καθημερινῶς...

Ὁμολογητῆς καὶ ὑπερασπιστῆς τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων δογμάτων, τόλμησε νὰ διακόψει, μὲ ἄλλους δύο Ἱεράρχες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τὸ μνημόσυνο τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου Ἀθηναγόρου, γιὰ τὰ ἀνοίγματα καὶ τὶς ὑποχωρήσεις του πρὸς τοὺς Παπικοὺς καὶ τὸν Οἰκουμενισμό...

Ὅσα καὶ ἂν γραφοῦν διὰ τὸν ἀνεπανάληπτον «πατέρα Αὐγουστίνου», ὅπως ἀπεκαλεῖτο ὑπὸ πάντων—ἔνδειξις καὶ αὐτὴ τῆς ταπεινοφροσύνης του—θὰ εἶναι, ὄχι μόνον ὀλίγα, ἀλλὰ ὀλίγιστα. Διὰ νὰ χρησιμοποιήσωμεν θεόπνευστον φράσιν: «Τοιοῦτος ἡμῖν ἔπρεπεν Ἀρχιερεὺς». Διό, καὶ μακαρίζοντες αὐτόν, δοξάζομεν τὸν Κύριον, δοξάζομε καὶ εὐχαριστοῦμεν τὸν Θεό, διότι ἐχάρισε στὴν Ἑλλάδα καὶ στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία τέτοιον πύρινον προφήτη—Ἐπίσκοπο.

Ἐννέα Πατρικὲς Νουθεσίαι πρὸς Πιστοὺς

Γέροντα Ἰωαννικίου Μπαλάν.

(1) Εἶπε ὁ γέροντας σ' ἓναν νέο δόκιμο ποὺ μόλις εἶχε λάβει δῶρο ἓνα κομποσκοῖνι ἀπὸ ἓναν ἄλλο πατέρα. «Αὐτὸ τὸ κομποσκοῖνι θὰ σοῦ ζητήσῃ πολὺ κόπο...»

(2) Οἱ ἀρχάριοι στὴν προσευχὴ νὰ λένε ὅσο πιὸ συχνὰ τὸ «Πάτερ ἡμῶν» ἢ τὸν Ν' ψαλμὸ ἢ κάποια ἄλλη προσευχὴ χωρὶς νὰ ἐπιμένουν στὴν ἀρχὴ τόσο στὴν εὐχὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἀλλὰ προσπαθώντας ν' ἀποκτήσουσαν κατάστασι ἐγρήγορσις στὴν παρουσία τοῦ Θεοῦ.

(3) Καλλίτερα νὰ εἶσαι στὸν κόσμον μὲ τὸν πόθο νὰ γίνῃς μοναχὸς παρὰ νὰ εἶσαι στὸ μοναστήρι μὲ τὸ μυαλὸ στὰ ἐγκόσμια. Ὅποιος εἶναι στὸν κόσμον καὶ δοκιμάζεται ἔτσι, ἄς βάλῃ ὡς στόχο τουλάχιστον τὰ τελευταῖα χρόνια τῆς ζωῆς του νὰ τὰ περάσῃ στὸ μοναστήρι.

(4) Νὰ κοινωνᾶτε τὰ παιδιά σας κάθε Κυριακῆ. Κι ἂν κατὰ τὴ διάρκειά της ἐβδομάδας εἶναι καμιά μεγάλη γιορτὴ νὰ τὰ κοινωνᾶτε καὶ τότε.

(5) Διαβάζεται τοὺς βίους τῶν ἁγίων. Ἐκεῖ θὰ βρεῖτε μεγάλη πίστι καὶ συμβουλές περὶ προσευχῆς. Θὰ βρεῖτε τὴν ἱστορία καὶ τὴν ἀληθινὴ φιλοσοφία, κατανοητὴ γιὰ ὅλους. Καὶ πάνω ἅπ' ὅλα, θὰ βρεῖτε μορφές ἀνθρώπων μέσω τῶν ὁποίων ἐργάστηκε τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα.

(6) Ἐὰν ὅλοι οἱ Χριστιανοὶ στὴ χώρα μας νήστευαν μίαν ἐβδομάδα, ἂν θὰ σταματοῦσαν τὶς ἐκτρώσεις καὶ τὶς ἀνομιές, ἂν θὰ μετανοοῦσαν εὐλικρινῶς, ἂν θὰ ἐξομολογοῦνταν καὶ θὰ κοινωνοῦσαν, θὰ βλέπατε μεγάλα θαύματα. Θὰ γύριζε ὁ Θεὸς τὸ πρόσωπό Του πάλι πρὸς τὴ χώρα μας.

(7) Πιὸ λίγη τηλεόρασι καὶ πιὸ πολλὴ προσευχὴ. Ὅποιος δὲ βλέπει καθόλου τηλεόρασι κάνει τὸ καλλίτερο.

(8) Ἀπὸ τὸν καθημερινὸ κανόνα προσευχῆς νὰ μὴ λείπει τὸ Ψαλτήριον, τουλάχιστον 1-2 καθίσματα.

(9) Ἡ μητέρα νὰ προσεύχεται μαζὶ μὲ τὸ παιδί της. Νὰ τὰ μάθει ἀπὸ μικρὰ νὰ προσεύχονται. Ὁ καθένας μὲ ὅ,τι ταιριάζει στὴν ἡλικία του, ἀλλὰ πρέπει νὰ ἐπιμένῃ σ' αὐτό. Ἔτσι τὰ παιδιά μεγαλώνουν μὲ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τὰ μεγαλώνει Ἐκεῖνος.



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψι τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοσι τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οικονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντες κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυσι τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».

Ὁ Καλόψυχος Χαρτοπαίχτης

Ἐνα χαριτωμένο Κυπριακὸ διήγημα (παραμῦθι), καταγραφὲς ἀπὸ τὸν Χαράλαμπο Ἐπαμεινώνδα.

Ἐξέβηκεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μὲ τοὺς μαθητὲς Του νὰ γυρίσει τὰ χωριά, νὰ δεῖ τὶ γίνεται. Ἦρθεν ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκραν ἑνὸς χωριοῦ πρὸς τὰ πάνω. Ἐνα ἀπὸ τὰ σπίτια ἦταν ἀνοικτό. Τοὺς λέγει:

—Δὲν ἔχετε λίγο τόπο νὰ μείνουμε κι ἐμεῖς ἐδῶ;

—Δὲν ἔχουμε, ἀπάντησαν αὐτοί.

Πῆγαν εἰς ἄλλο σπίτι.

—Δὲν ἔχουμε, δὲν ἔχουμε, μέχρι ποὺ τελείωσαν τὰ σπίτια τοῦ χωριοῦ.

Εἰς τὴν τελειωμὴ τοῦ χωριοῦ, εἶχε τὸ μικρὸ σπιτάκι του ἕνας ἄνθρωπος. Τοῦτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἦταν χαρτοπαίχτης. Πρὶν λίγο καιρὸ εἶχε παίξει τὸ περβόλι του στὰ χαρτιά καὶ ἐπῆραν τοῦ το. Μετὰ ἔπαιξε τὴ φρακτὴ του τὴν ἄλλη, ἐπῆραν τοῦ τὴν καὶ ἐκείνη. Στὸ τέλος ἔπαιξε καὶ τὸ σπῆτι του, ἀλλὰ ἐπῆραν τοῦ το καὶ τὸ σπῆτι. Πῆγε τότε ὁ φτωχὸς στὴν ἄκραν τοῦ χωριοῦ, ὅπου ἦταν μία πλατεία ποὺ δὲν τὴν ὀριζε κανένας. Ἐκαμε μία μικρὴ δόμη, ὅπως-ὅπως, καὶ περνοῦσε μὲ τὴ γυναῖκα του καὶ τὰ δυὸ του μωρά.

Ἵτε κι ἐξέβη ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ ἔκαμε πρὸς τὰ πάνω, καὶ ρωτοῦσε, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἀπάντηση εἰς τὸ ἕνα σπῆτι ἦταν «δὲν ἔχουμε» καὶ στὸ ἄλλο σπῆτι «δὲν ἔχουμε», ἔφθασε στὴ τελειωμὴ τοῦ χωριοῦ μόνος Του ἀφοῦ οἱ μαθητὲς του ἔκοψαν πίσω. Ἡῦρεν ἐκεῖνον τὸν φτωχὸ τὸν χαρτοπαίχτη καὶ τὸν ρωτᾷ.

—Δὲν ἔχεις λίγο τόπο νὰ μείνουμε καὶ ἐμεῖς;

—Ἐ, ἐκεῖ ποὺ θὰ μείνουμε ἐμεῖς, νὰ μείνεις καὶ Ἐσὺ.

Κι ἐνέβη ἔσσω ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς. Λέγει τότε ἡ γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀντρός της:

—Δὲν ἔχουμε τίποτε. Ἐβαλα κάτι κρομμύδια ὄφτὰ καὶ πατάτες. Τὶ θὰ τοῦ βάλουμε νὰ φάει;

Ἰσά, ἐκείνη τὴ ὥρα ἀναφανίσκουν ἀπὸ τὸν πόρον τῆς αὐλῆς τοῦ σπιτιοῦ, ἕνας, ἀλλόνας-ἀλλόνας μαθητῆς δώδεκα μαθητῆς. Μὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστὸ δεκατρεῖς.

—Τὶ θὰ κάμουμε τώρα; Λαλεῖ του ἡ γυναῖκα.

—Τὶ θὰ κάμουμε τώρα; Οὔσσου, φρῖσσε, μὴν πεῖς τίποτα.

Σιώπησε ἡ γυναῖκα. Ὑστερα παραμέρισαν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐδῶ, καὶ ἄπλωσε ἕνα ψαθὶ χαμαὶ καὶ ἔβαλε πάνω ἕνα τραπεζομάνδυλον. Σκόρπισε κατόπι πάνω, ἐκεῖνα τὰ κρομμύδια καὶ τὶς πατάτες καὶ τὰ ψωμιά.

—Ἐ, λέγει ἡ γυναῖκα, θὰ χορτάσουν; Δὲν ἔχουμε τίποτα ἄλλο. Τὶ νὰ κάμω;

Ἐκασαν, ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ οἱ μαθητῆς Του καὶ ἔτρωγαν. Μῆτε τὰ κρομμύδια ἔλειψαν, μῆτε οἱ πατάτες, μῆτε τὰ ψωμιά ἔλειψαν. Ἐφαγαν, ἔφαγαν κι ἔμειναν καὶ κάμποσα κομμάτια περισσεύματα. Εὐλόγησέν τα ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς. Μποροῦν νὰ λείψουν;

Μόλις ἔφαγαν, σηκώθηκαν.

—Ἐ, ποῦ θὰ ξαπλώσουν τώρα; Λαλεῖ του ἡ γυναῖκα.

Νὰ τοὺς ἀπλώσουμε κάμποσα ροῦχα χαμαὶ στὸ ψαθὶ καὶ ὁ Δάσκαλός τους νὰ κοιμηθεῖ μέσα στὴ μονὴ μας. Ἐμεῖς νὰ βγοῦμε ἔξω. Εἶναι καλοκαίρι, λαλεῖ της, θὰ βροῦμε νὰ κουλουρωθοῦμε πούποτε.

Βολεύτηκαν ἔτσι. Κοιμήθηκαν ἄλλοι ἐκεῖ, ἄλλοι ἐδῶ, πέρασε ἡ νύκτα. Μὲ τὸ χάραμαν τοῦ ἡλίου, ἐσηκώθησαν. Πρὶν νὰ ξεβεῖ τῆς πόρτας γιὰ νὰ φύγουν, ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς λαλεῖ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου:

—Τὶ καλὸ θέλεις νὰ σοῦ κάμω;

—Καὶ τὶ σᾶς ἔκαμα ἐγώ;

—Ποῦ μᾶς φιλοξένησες.

—Μά...

—Ὅχι, καὶ τοῦτο ποῦ μᾶς ἔκαμε καλὸν ἐνὶ. Εἰπέ μου τὶ θέλεις.

—Περνᾷ σου νὰ μὲ κάμεις νὰ κερδίω στὰ χαρτιά;

—Γιὰ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ! Εἰπέ μου ἄλλο πράγμα νὰ σοῦ κάμω νὰ σάσεις τὰ παιδιὰ σου.

—Ὅχι, λαλεῖ του, εἶχα δυὸ φρακτῆς, ἐπῆραν μοῦ τες, εἶχα ἕνα

σπῆτι, ἐπῆραν μοῦ το καὶ ἐκεῖνο. Τώρα τοὺς ἔχω ἄχι νὰ τὰ πάρω πίσω.

—Ἐ, πήγαινε παίξε καὶ θὰ κερδίσεις, εἶπεν του, κι ἀποχαιρετίστηκαν.

Στὸ μετὰξ, ἔκαμε κανένα μῆνα ποὺ δὲν πῆγε στὸν καφενέ. Μόλις ἔφυγε ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, μάνι-μάνι πῆγε βουρητὸς.

—ὦ! Μὰ ποῦ ἦσουν τόσο καιρὸ; Τοῦ εἶπαν οἱ συγχωριανοὶ του μόλις τὸν εἶδαν. Ἐλα νὰ παίξουμε χαρτιά.

—Νὰ παίξουμε, ἀπαντᾷ ἐκεῖνος.

Ἐβαλαν ἀπὸ μία λίρα πάνω. Παίξουν, κέρδισε. Βάλλουν ἀπὸ δυὸ, κέρδισε. Βάλλουν τρεῖς, κέρδισε. Βάλλουν παραπάνω, κέρδισε πάλι.

—Ὅχι λαλεῖ τους. Τοὺς παραδες ἀφήστε τους. Νὰ βάλουμε τὸ περβόλι μου. Ἄν μὲ κερδίσετε νὰ σᾶς δώσω τοῦτα ποὺ κέρδισα.

Βάλλουν τὸ περβόλι, τὸ κέρδισε. Βάλλουν καὶ τὸ ἄλλο, τὸ κέρδισε καὶ ἐκεῖνο.



—Νὰ βάλουμε τὸ σπίτι.

Ἔβαλαν καὶ τὸ σπίτι, κέρδισε καὶ τὸ σπίτι. Πῆγε τότε στὴ γυναίκα του καὶ λαλεῖ της.

—Νὰ σηκωθοῦμε, νὰ πάρουμε τὰ πράγματα στὸ σπίτι μας, γιατί παίζαμε χαρτιὰ καὶ κέρδισα πίσω ὅλη τὴ περιουσία μας.

Ἔτσι, πῆγαν ἔσσω τους. Πέρασε ὁ καιρὸς, μεγάλωσαν τὰ παιδιά τους, γέρασαν αὐτὸς κι ἡ γυναίκα του. Μίαν ἡμέρα κάλεσε τὰ παιδιά του.

—Ὅταν πεθάνω λαλεῖ τους, νὰ μοῦ βάλετε μία τράπουλα χαρτιὰ μέσα στὸν κόρφο.

—Νὰ σοῦ βάλουμε πατέρα.

Ἔ, μετὰ ἀπὸ κάμποσο καιρὸ, πέθανε. Ἐφεραν μία τράπουλα χαρτιὰ καὶ τοῦ τὰ ἔβαλαν μέσα στὸν κόρφο. Σὰν πῆγε εἰς τὸν Ἀφέντη μου τὸ Θεὸ ἐκεῖ πάνω, ἦρθαν κοντά του οἱ Σατανάδες.

—Ἐλα ᾧδε, θὰ σὲ πάρουμε στὴ Κόλαση. Θὰ σὲ πάρουμε στὴ Κόλαση.

—Θὰ μὲ πάρετε στὴ κόλαση; Νὰ παίξουμε χαρτιὰ, κι ἂν μὲ κερδίσετε νὰ μὲ πάρετε.

—Οὐ! Ἐμεῖς τὰ δείξαμε τὰ χαρτιὰ. Εἶναι δική μας εὐρετὴ αὐτὰ τὰ χαρτιὰ πὺν ἔχεις πάνω σου.

Κάθονται παίζουν, κέρδισε. Ξαναπαίζουν, κέρδισε πάλι.

—Ὁ κύρης μου εἶναι μέσα στὴν κόλαση;

—Ναὶ εἶπαν αὐτοί.

—Βγᾶλτε τον καὶ φέρτε τον ἐδῶ.

Ἐφέρον τον.

—Ἡ μάνα μου εἶναι μέσα στὴν Κόλαση;

—Εἶναι μέσα.

—Ἐ, νὰ παίξουμε ξανά.

Παίζουν ξανά, κέρδισε. Ἐβγαλαν καὶ τὴ μάνα του. Ξαναπαίζουν, κέρδισε πάλι.

—Ὁ παπποῦς μου εἶναι μέσα;

Εἶναι μέσα.

—Ὁ ἄλλος ὁ παπποῦς μου εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸς μέσα;

—Ναὶ εἶναι καὶ αὐτός.

—Φέρτε τους ἔξω.

Ἔτσι, ἕναν-ἕναν ἔβγαλε δώδεκα νομάτους. Στὸ μεταξὺ ἦρθεν ὁ Ἄγγελος νὰ τὸν πάρει στὴν Παράδεισο. Ἀκολουθοῦν πίσω του καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι.

—Τοῦτοι οὗλοι ἴντα λογοῦνται; Ρωτᾶ τον ὁ Ἄγγελος.

—Ἐ, τοῦτος εἶναι ὁ παπποῦς μου, τούτη ἡ μαμμοῦ μου, τοῦτος εἶναι ὁ κύρης μου, τούτη εἶναι ἡ μάνα μου. Εἶναι οὗλοι δικοί μου.

—Μά, μόνον ἐσένα πρόσταξε ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς νὰ πάρουμε. Τούτη ἡ σουρμαγιὰ οὐλή;

—Μὰ εἶναι δικοί μου. Ποῦ ἐνὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός;

—Ἐνὶ δαμαί.

—Φωνάξετέ του νὰ ἔρθει.

Ὅταν ἦρθε ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ τὸν εἶδε, λαλεῖ του.

—Μὰ ἐσὺ εἶσαι ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός! Δὲν εἶσαι αὐτὸς πὺν ἦρθες ἔσσω μας!

—Εἶμαι, τοῦ λέγει ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.

—Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ μου, λαλεῖ τοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, μὰ ὅταν ἦρθες ἔσσω μας, ἦσουν μόνος Σου. Ὑστερα πὺν ἦρθαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι οἱ δικοί σου, Σοῦ εἶπα νὰ βγεις ἔξω; Τοῦτος εἶναι ὁ κύρης μου, ἡ μάνα μου, ὁ ἀδελφός μου, ὁ νουνός μου, ὁ τάδε, ἡ δείνα. Τοὺς ἔβγαλα ἀπὸ τὴν κόλαση.

—Ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τὸν κοίταξε, χαμογέλασε καὶ τοῦ εἶπε.

—Κέρδισες τὴ Βασιλεία Τοῦ Θεοῦ γιατί εἶσαι καλόψυχος καὶ ἄς εἶσαι καὶ χαρτοπαίχτης.

Ἔτσι αὐτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος τοὺς πῆρε οὐλοὺς μέσα στὸ Παράδεισο. Εἶδες τὶ κάμνει ἡ καλοσύνη! Ἐνα χωριὸ δὲν τὸν ἔβαλε μέσα στὸ σπίτι τους τὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστό, ἐκεῖνος ὁ φτωχὸς ἔβαλέν Τον κι φιλοξένησέν Τον. Εἶδες;



Γιὰ κάθε πράγμα ὑπάρχει ὁ κατάλληλος καιρὸς, ὅπως εἶπε καὶ ὁ Σολομών (Ἐκκλ. 3:1, 17). Γιὰ τὴν προσευχὴ ὅμως κάθε καιρὸς εἶναι κατάλληλος καὶ κανένας ἀκατάλληλος. *Εὐλογῆσω τὸν Κύριον ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ, διαπαντὸς ἡ αἰνεῖσις αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ στόματί μου.* (Ψαλμ. 33:2). Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος μᾶς προστάζει νὰ προσευχόμεστε *ἀδιάλειπτα* (Α΄ Θεσ. 5:17), ἐπειδὴ κάθε καιρὸς εἶναι κατάλληλος γιὰ δέηση. Τὸ ἴδιο μᾶς παραγγέλλει καὶ ὁ Κύριος λέγοντας: *Ἀγρυπνεῖτε ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ δεόμενοι ἵνα ἀκατακρίτως στήτε ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.* (Λουκ. 21:36).

Ὅποιος θέλει λοιπὸν νὰ καθαρίσει τὴν καρδιά του, ἄς τὴ φλογίζει συνεχῶς μὲ τὴ μνήμη τοῦ Κυρίου, πὺν πρέπει νὰ τὴν ἔχει μοναδικὴ νοερὴ μελέτη καὶ ἀκατάπαυστη ἐνασχόλησή του. Γιατὶ ὅσοι θέλουν ν' ἀποβάλουν τὴ σαπίλα τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ τους, δὲν πρέπει ἄλλοτε νὰ προσεύχονται καὶ ἄλλοτε ὄχι, ἀλλὰ νὰ καταγίνονται πάντα μὲ τὴν προσευχὴ καὶ νὰ τηροῦν τὸ νοῦ τους (σὲ καθαρότητα καὶ σὲ συνεχὴ μνήμη τοῦ Θεοῦ), ἀκόμα κι ὅταν εἶναι κάπου ἔξω ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἱερὸς Ναοῦς.

Ἀντιόχου τοῦ Πανδέκτη

Χριστιανοί Δίχως Χριστόν

Πρεσβ. Διονυσίου Τάτση.

Πόσο Χριστιανική είναι η κοινωνία μας; Πόσο Χριστιανοί είναι οι Χριστιανοί μας; Μήπως ή όποια πίστη τους έχει νεκρωθεί; Μήπως ο Χριστός έπηρεάζει ελάχιστους ανθρώπους;

Τὰ έρωτήματα απασχολούν τους άληθινούς Χριστιανούς και τους καλοπροαίρετους, που θέλουν να στραφούν στο Χριστό. Ο Νήφων, προβληματισμένος όπως κι εγώ, άπάντησε: «Μπορώ ν' άπαντήσω με εύκολία. Προφανώς η κοινωνία μας δεν είναι Χριστιανική, για να μη πω ό,τι είναι αντιΧριστιανική. Οί άνθρωποι, παρόλο που φέρουν τη σφραγίδα του Χριστιανού, είναι άδιάφοροι. Η πίστη τους δεν έπηρεάζει καθόλου τη ζωή τους. Ο Χριστός γι' αυτούς άπουσιάζει. Θα τολμούσα να πω ό,τι ο Χριστός άπουσιάζει και άπ' τη ζωή πολλών κληρικών! Και άπ' τη ζωή πολλών μοναχών! Κάθε φορά που παρατηρώ ή μαθαίνω τον τρόπο ζωής των ανθρώπων, πέφτω σε κατάθλιψη και άνησυχώ. Πόση δουλειά άλήθεια χρειάζεται για να βελτιωθεί ή εικόνα. Και δεν φτάνει μόνο ο λόγος. Άποτελεσματικότερος είναι ο άγιος τρόπος ζωής. Όλοι δέχονται ό,τι τρεις Άγιοι γέροντες σε μία μεγάλη πόλη μπορούν να πετύχουν περισσότερα άπ' ό,τι δεκάδες ιεροκήρυκες».

«Ο λόγος του Θεού αντικαταστάθηκε άπ' τον λόγο του κόσμου και της ματαιότητας. Οί σύγχρονοι άνθρωποι έγκατέλειψαν τον Ίερό Ναό του Θεού και στράφησαν στα θέατρα, στα κέντρα διασκέδασης, στα γήπεδα, στις πολιτικές συγκεντρώσεις και στις κοσμικές εκδηλώσεις. Έκει περνούν πολλές ώρες την εβδομάδα, αλλά για τον εκκλησιασμό τους την Κυριακή δεν έχουν ούτε μισή ώρα διαθέσιμη. Δεν έχουν δίψα Θεού, γι' αυτό και δεν νιώθουν ό,τι τους λείπει ή Θεία Λατρεία», είπα συμπληρωματικά. «Μένουν άνεπηρέαστοι και άπ' τὰ πρότυπα της Έκκλησίας. Οί ιερές εικόνες των Αγίων δεν τους συγκινούν. Στη θέση τους μπήκαν τὰ πορτρέτα των συγγραφέων, των ήθοποιών, των τραγουδιστών, των ζωγράφων, των πολιτικών, των φιλοσόφων κ.λπ. Αυτούς προσέχουν και έκτιμούν. Αυτούς μιμούνται και αυτών γίνονται όπαδοί. Γνωρίζουν και λεπτομέρειες άπ' την προσωπική τους ζωή. Άποδέχονται και όλα τὰ άρνητικά τους και αυτό τους οδηγεί σε πολλές πτώσεις και δυστυχίες. Δυστυχώς οί περισσότεροι άνθρωποι έμπιστεύονται τὰ πρόσωπα της δημοσιότητας και όχι τους Άγίους της Έκκλησίας».

«Πρέπει να έπισημάνω ό,τι τὰ πρόσωπα αυτά, ένώ έχουν κάποιο χάρισμα και παράγουν κάποιο έργο, δεν έχουν ήθος. Είναι φιλόδοξα και φιλήδονα. Πολλές φορές έχουν και άρμοδιότητες στο δημόσιο

τομέα και θέλουν να προβάλλονται και να ρυθμίζουν τὰ πράγματα όπως εκείνοι θέλουν. Άπέναντι δε στους συνειδητούς Χριστιανούς αντιδρούν με τρόπο άπαξιωτικό, πως τάχα είναι περιορισμένης αντίληψης και άρνητες κάθε κοσμικής χαράς. Δεν βρίσκουν σχεδόν τίποτα τὸ θετικό και τους θέτουν στο περιθώριο», είπα ένοχλημένος.

«Η αντίδραση αυτή θα έλεγα ό,τι είναι φυσιολογική, αφού οί Χριστιανοί άρνούνται όλα όσα εκείνοι επιλέγουν και κάνουν. Όστόσο, βλέπω ό,τι στο βάθος της ψυχής τους έχουν κάποιο σεβασμό γι' αυτούς, γιατί θαυμάζουν τη συνέπεια στη ζωή τους, αλλά και την άθωότητα και άγάπη τους. Δεν έχουν όμως τον ήρωισμό να τον εκδηλώσουν ή να τους μιμηθούν. Τὸ κοσμικό φρόνημα τους έχει αίχμαλωτισμένους».

«Νήφων, θα ήθελα να μου πεις τὰ χαρακτηριστικά του Χριστιανού, του ανθρώπου δηλαδή που είναι κοντά στο Χριστό».

«Τὰ συνοψίζω σ' ένα. Είναι στραμμένος στο Χριστό με πίστη και άγάπη, γι' αυτό και προσεύχεται όσο γίνεται περισσότερο, αλλά και αγαθοποιός είναι σ' όλες τις εκδηλώσεις του. Βέβαια, τὰ πράγματα δεν είναι εύκολα στην καθημερινή πράξη. Οί βιοτικές μέριμνες περιορίζουν τὸ έλεύθερο χρόνο, που πρέπει ν' αφιερώνει στην προσευχή και την έμπρακτη άγάπη προς τους άδελφούς του. Αυτό όμως δεν είναι ένοχο. Άπ' τη στιγμή, που υπάρχει ή άγαθή προαίρεση, ο Θεός αυξάνει την πρόνοιά του στον άληθινό Χριστιανό, του άνοίγει δρόμους και του δίνει νέες δυνατότητες».

«Τὰ πράγματα δεν βελτιώνονται. Η κατρακύλα είναι μεγάλη. Χάνονται και οί εκλεκτοί. Και μακάριοι είναι εκείνοι, που άντιστέκονται και διατηρούν τη λυχνία τους αναμμένη», είπα σχεδόν απογοητευμένος.

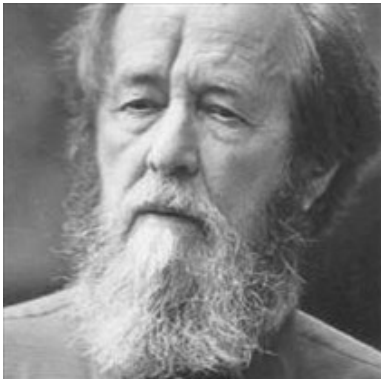


Ο σκοπός μας δεν είναι να καταδικάζουμε τὸ κακό, αλλά να τὸ διορθώνουμε. Με την καταδίκη ο άνθρωπος μπορεί να χαθεί, με την κατανόηση και τη βοήθεια θα σωθεί. Τὸν άμαρτωλό πρέπει να τὸν αντικρίζουμε με άγάπη και με σεβασμό στην έλευθερία του. Όταν ένα οικογενειακό μας πρόσωπο ρίχνει ένα βάζο άπὸ τὸ τραπέζι και τὸ σπάει, συνήθως όργισζόμαστε. Άν εκείνη τη στιγμή, την κρίσιμη, με μιὰ κίνηση ψυχικής άνύψωσης μας, δείξουμε κατανόηση και δικαιολογήσουμε τὴ ζημία, κερδίσαμε και την ψυχή μας και την ψυχή του άδελφού μας. Κι αυτή είναι όλη ή πνευματική ζωή μας: Μιὰ κίνηση άνύψωσης μας, μέσα στις δοκιμασίες των θλίψεων, άπὸ την άγανάκτηση του έγωισμού στην κατανόηση της άγάπης.

Γέροντας Πορφύριος (+1991)

MEN HAVE FORGOTTEN GOD...

By Alexander Solzhenitsyn (+2008).



The 1983 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion was awarded to Alexander Solzhenitsyn for being “a pioneer in the renaissance of religion in atheist nations.” At the awards ceremony in Buckingham Palace on May 10, 1983, Solzhenitsyn delivered a short speech, followed later that day by an address at Guild-hall.

They are printed here with several abbreviations for lack of space. In spite of the fall of the Soviet Communism (which had been a central focus of Mr. Solzhenitsyn’s work) his words are ever more applicable for our days and especially for our western society.

† † †

Your Royal Highness: Permit me to express my appreciation to you for taking part in this ceremony. Your participation lands special dignity to these proceedings.

This is the first time that the Templeton Prize has been awarded to an Orthodox Christian... And I am very much aware that Eastern Orthodoxy, which, during the 65 years of Communist rule, has been subjected to persecution even fiercer and more extensive than that of early Christian times, has had—and still has today—many hands worthier than mine to accept it.

In this persecution-filled age, it is appropriate that my own very first memory should be of Chekists in pointed caps entering St. Panteleimon’s Church in Kislovodsk, interrupting the service, and crashing their way into the sanctuary in order to loot. And later, when I started going to school—passing on my way a kilometer long compound of the Cheka-GPU and a glittering sign of the League of Militant Atheists—school-children egged on by Komsomol members taunted me for accompanying my mother to the last remaining church in town and tore the cross from around my neck.

Orthodox churches were stripped of their valuables in 1922 at the instigation of Lenin and Trotsky. In subsequent years, including both the Stalin and the Krushchev periods, tens of thousands of churches were torn down or desecrated, leaving behind a disfigured wasteland that bore no resemblance to Russia such as it had stood for centuries. Entire districts and cities of half a million inhabitants were left without a single church. Our people were condemned to live in this dark and mute wilderness for decades; groping their way to God and keeping to this course by trial and error...

More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explana-

tion for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: **Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.**

Since then I have spent well over fifty years working on the history of our Revolution; in the process I have read hundreds of books, collected hundreds of personal testimonies, and have already contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: **Men have forgotten God; that’s why all this has happened.**

What is more, the events of the Russian Revolution can only be understood now, at the end of the century, against the background of what has since occurred in the rest of the world. What emerges here is a process of universal significance. And if I were called upon to identify briefly the principal trait of the entire twentieth century, here too, I would be unable to find anything more precise and pithy than to repeat once again: **Men have forgotten God.**

The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century. The first of these was World War I, and much of our present predicament can be traced back to it. It was a war (the memory of which seems to be fading) when Europe, bursting with health and abundance, fell into a rage of self-mutilation which could not but sap its strength for a century or more, and perhaps forever. The only possible explanation for this war is a mental eclipse among the leaders of Europe due to their lost awareness of a Supreme Power above them. Only a godless embitterment could have moved ostensibly Christian states to employ poison gas, a weapon so obviously beyond the limits of humanity.

The same kind of defect, the flaw of a consciousness lacking all divine dimension, was manifested after World War II when the West yielded to the satanic temptation of the “nuclear umbrella.” It was equivalent to saying: Let’s cast off worries, let’s free the younger generation from their duties and obligations, let’s make no effort to defend ourselves, to say nothing of defending others, let’s stop our ears to the groans emanating from the East, and let us live instead in the pursuit of happiness. If danger should threaten us, we shall be protected by the nuclear bomb; if not, then let the world burn in Hell for all we care. The pitifully helpless state to which the contemporary West has sunk is in large measure due to this fatal error: the belief that the defense of peace depends not on stout hearts and steadfast men, but solely on the nuclear bomb...

Today’s world has reached a stage which, if it had been described to preceding centuries, would have called forth the cry: “This is the Apocalypse!” Yet we have grown used to this kind of world; we even feel at home in it.

Dostoevsky warned that “great events could come upon us and catch us intellectually unprepared.” This is precisely what has happened. And he predicted that “the world will be saved only after it has been possessed by the demon of evil.” Whether it really will be saved we shall have to wait and see: this will depend on our conscience, on our spiritual lucidity, on our individual and combined efforts in the face of catastrophic circumstances. But it has already come to pass that the demon of evil, like a whirlwind, triumphantly circles all five continents of the earth...

In its past, Russia did know a time when the social ideal was not fame, or riches, or material success, but a pious way of life. Russia was then steeped in an Orthodox Christianity which remained true to the Church of the first centuries. The Orthodoxy of that time knew how to safeguard its people under the yoke of a foreign occupation that lasted more than two centuries, while at the same time fending off iniquitous blows from the swords of Western crusaders. During those centuries the Orthodox faith in our country became part of the very pattern of thought and the personality of our people, the forms of daily life, the work calendar, the priorities in every undertaking, the organization of the week and of the year. Faith was the shaping and unifying force of the nation.

But in the 17th century, Russian Orthodoxy was gravely weakened by an internal schism. In the 18th, the country was shaken by Peter’s forcibly imposed transformations, which favored the economy, the state, and the military at the expense of the religious spirit and national life. And along with this lopsided Petrine enlightenment, Russia felt the first whiff of secularism; its subtle poisons permeated the educated classes in the course of the 19th century and opened the path to Marxism. By the time of the Revolution, faith had virtually disappeared in Russian educated circles; and amongst the uneducated, its health was threatened.

It was Dostoevsky, once again, who drew from the French Revolution and its hatred of the Church the lesson that “revolution must necessarily begin with atheism.” That is absolutely true. But the world had never before known a godlessness as organized, militarized, and tenaciously malevolent as that practiced by Marxism. Within the philosophical system of Marx and Lenin, and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions. Militant atheism is not merely incidental or marginal to Communist policy; it is not a side effect, but the central pivot.

The 1920’s in the USSR witnessed an uninterrupted procession of victims and martyrs amongst the Orthodox clergy. Two metropolitans were shot, one of whom, Veniamin of Petrograd, had been elected by the popular vote of his diocese. Patriarch Tikhon himself passed through the hands of the Cheka-GPU and then died under suspicious circumstances. Scores of archbishops and bishops perished. Tens of thousands

of priests, monks, and nuns, pressured by the Chekists to renounce the Word of God, were tortured, shot in cellars, sent to camps, exiled to the desolate tundra of the far North, or turned out into the streets in their old age without food or shelter. All these Christian martyrs went unswervingly to their deaths for the faith; instances of apostasy were few and far between. For tens of millions of laymen access to the Church was blocked, and they were forbidden to bring up their children in the Faith: religious parents were wrenched from their children and thrown into prison, while the children were turned from the faith by threats and lies...

It is true that millions of our countrymen have been corrupted and spiritually devastated by an officially imposed atheism, yet there remain many millions of believers: it is only external pressures that keep them from speaking out, but, as is always the case in times of persecution and suffering, the awareness of God in my country has attained great acuteness and profundity. It is thus here that we see the dawn of hope: for no matter how formidably Communism bristles with tanks and rockets, no matter what successes it attains in seizing the planet, it is doomed never to vanquish Christianity.

The West has yet to experience a Communist invasion; religion here remains free. But the West’s own historical evolution has been such that today it too is experiencing a drying up of religious consciousness. It too has witnessed racking schisms, bloody religious wars, and rancor, to say nothing of the tide of secularism that, from the late Middle Ages onward, has progressively inundated the West. This gradual sapping of strength from within is a threat to faith that is perhaps even more dangerous than any attempt to assault religion violently from without.

Imperceptibly, through decades of gradual erosion, the meaning of life in the West has ceased to be seen as anything more lofty than the “pursuit of happiness,” a goal that has even been solemnly guaranteed by constitutions. The concepts of good and evil have been ridiculed for several centuries; banished from common use, they have been replaced by political or class considerations of short lived value. It has become embarrassing to state that evil makes its home in the individual human heart before it enters a political system. Yet it is not considered shameful to make dally concessions to an integral evil.

Judging by the continuing landslide of concessions made before the eyes of our very own generation, the West is ineluctably slipping toward the abyss. Western societies are losing more and more of their religious essence as they thoughtlessly yield up their younger generation to atheism. If a blasphemous film about Jesus is shown throughout the United States, reputedly one of the most religious countries in the world, or a major newspaper publishes a shameless caricature of the Virgin Mary, what further evidence of godlessness does one need? When external rights are completely unrestricted,

why should one make an inner effort to restrain oneself from ignoble acts?

Or why should one refrain from burning hatred, whatever its basis—race, class, or ideology? Such hatred is in fact corroding many hearts today. Atheist teachers in the West are bringing up a younger generation in a spirit of hatred of their own society. Amid all the vituperation we forget that the defects of capitalism represent the basic flaws of human nature: allowed unlimited freedom together with the various human rights; we forget that under Communism, the identical flaws run riot in any person with the least degree of authority; while everyone else under that system does indeed attain “equality”—the equality of destitute slaves.

This eager fanning of the flames of hatred is becoming the mark of today’s free world. Indeed, the broader the personal freedoms are, the higher the level of prosperity or even of abundance—the more vehement, paradoxically, does this blind hatred become. The contemporary developed West thus demonstrates by its own example that human salvation can be found neither in the profusion of material goods nor in merely making money.

The deliberately nurtured hatred then spreads to all that is alive, to life itself, to the world with its colors, sounds, and shapes, to the human body. The embittered art of the twentieth century is perishing as a result of this ugly hate, for art is fruitless without love. In the East, art has collapsed because it has been knocked down and trampled upon, but in the West the fall has been voluntary, a decline into a contrived and pretentious quest where the artist, instead of attempting to reveal the divine plan, tries to put himself in the place of God.

Here again we witness the single outcome of a worldwide process, with East and West yielding the same results, and once again for the same reason: **Men have forgotten God.**

With such global events looming over us like mountains, nay, like entire mountain ranges, it may seem incongruous and inappropriate to recall that the primary key to our being or non-being resides in each individual human heart, in the heart’s preference for specific good or evil. Yet this remains true even today, and it is, in fact, the most reliable key we have.

The social theories that promised so much have demonstrated their bankruptcy, leaving us at a dead end. The free people of the West could reasonably have been expected to realize that they are beset by numerous freely nurtured falsehoods, and not to allow lies to be foisted upon them so easily.

All attempts to find a way out of the plight of today’s world are fruitless unless **we redirect our consciousness, in repentance, to the Creator of all:** without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain. The resources we have set aside for ourselves are too impoverished for the

task. We must first recognize the horror perpetrated not by some outside force, not by class or national enemies, but within each of us individually, and within every society. This is especially true of a free and highly developed society, for here in particular we have surely brought everything upon ourselves, of our own free will. We ourselves, in our daily unthinking selfishness, are pulling tight that noose...

Our life consists not in the pursuit of material success but in the quest for worthy spiritual growth. Our entire earthly existence is but a transitional stage in the movement toward something higher, and we must not stumble and fall, nor must we linger fruitlessly on one rung of the ladder. Material laws alone do not explain our life or give it direction. The laws of physics and physiology will never reveal the indisputable manner in which the Creator constantly, day in and day out, participates in the life of each of us, unfailingly granting us the energy of existence; when this assistance leaves us, we die. And in the life of our entire planet, the Divine Spirit surely moves with no less force: this we must grasp in our dark and terrible hour.

To the ill-considered hopes of the last two centuries, which have reduced us to insignificance and brought us to the brink of nuclear and non-nuclear death, we can propose only a determined quest for the warm hand of God, which we have so rashly and self-confidently spurned. Only in this way can our eyes be opened to the errors of this unfortunate twentieth century and our bands be directed to setting them right. There is nothing else to cling to in the landslide: the combined vision of all the thinkers of the Enlightenment amounts to nothing.

Our five continents are caught in a whirlwind. But it is during trials such as these that the highest gifts of the human spirit are manifested. If we perish and lose this world, the fault will be ours alone...



As soon as you wake up in the morning, pray for a while, saying: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.* Then your first work should be to shut yourself in your own heart, as if taking up position in an arena.

Having established yourself there, bring yourself to the consciousness and feeling that your enemy and the passionate urge against which you struggle at the moment is already there, on your left, ready for immediate attack; therefore rouse against them a firm resolve to conquer or die, but never to submit.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite (+1809)

A DEAD NEW YEAR'S BABY IS FOUND...

By Angela Michael, Jan. 1, 2010.

*From the Editor: The article below appeared exactly one year ago; it received no headlines and it was read by just a handful of our fellow citizens, albeit it should have been the lead story by at least the media that proclaims itself to defend conservative values. We are including it in our publication and entreat all of our brethren to contemplate the treacherous topic of abortion for what it truly is: the willful, first-degree murder of the most innocent and defenseless of His creation, a baby in his or her mother's womb. We implore all of our readers to join the rest of our citizenry on January 22nd, as we all make our voice heard on the treacherous anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision anniversary. Let us comprehend and teach ourselves, our family, our brethren that **abortion is not a political issue, but a moral issue that has become politicized!***

† † †

A fresh blanket of snow covered the ground as a speeding ambulance chased down a two lane country road in the cold night, leading to a small Illinois metro-east hospital in Maryville, Illinois transporting a newborn baby boy. He had been born within the hour and first-responders were working feverishly to revive his tiny body. Inside the emergency room they were met with resuscitation equipment, but it was too late. He was pronounced dead on arrival.

Another late-term botched abortion. The mother, a 16 year old, delivered him in the toilet after starting her three-day abortion procedure over at Granite City's little slaughterhouse, Hope Clinic for Women, on Tuesday. Missouri abortionist and former felon Allen Palmer was the hired assassin. She stated that the abortion staff kept giving her injections. The next night, she went into full term labor, went into the bathroom, and delivered her baby boy into the cold waters of the toilet. She left him to call Hope Clinic. She notified the on-call person of the situation. They told her to, "Bring the baby in a bag back to the clinic in the morning." She panicked and called 911.

At the hospital, emergency personnel took one look at the baby and were saddened and disgusted. They listened to the mother's abortion sequence and the abortion mill's response to her emergency home delivery. Just on appearances, this

little one was perfectly formed, but dead on arrival. He was 3 lbs. 5 oz. and 31 weeks gestation. In just nine weeks he would have been considered full-term.

The hospital has called for a full investigation. Illinois supposedly does not allow babies to be killed after viability at 24 weeks, so we have placed several calls to local law enforcement demanding a thorough investigation. Who is policing and regulating abortion mills in Illinois? No one. Do we expect the abortion mill to use the scout's honor code? That's like asking the fox to guard the hen house.

This baby would have survived. It appears his mother let him drown. She told paramedics she couldn't handle picking him up out of the toilet, so she left him to die. He was a boy. The abortion mill may try and soothe her and buy her silence. They will whisper, "You just had a miscarriage." I would agree partly; it was a terrible miscarriage of justice for that little boy. Who will be his voice? The revelers are busy with welcoming the new year and the world will go on, but I don't know how much longer God's justice can sleep while such savagery abounds.

This horrific incident did not have to happen, but it does every day across our nation, especially inside late-term slaughterhouses such as Hope Clinic. This is not the only late-term baby that has been brought to this very same hospital after a botched abortion from Hope Clinic. The abortion mill gets by with murder and make a lot of money off it. Not only do the death merchants make money off of the abortion fee, but they turn around and sell the baby's body for medical research and cosmetic firms. That is why they told her to bring the baby back in a bag to the clinic the following day.

This is despicable. Just hours from putting the old year away, and looking forward to welcoming the New Year... This is a wake-up call. This has not only traumatized the young mother for having to face the truth of what she did and having to peer at her little boy's face lying in the toilet, but also to the first responders who are trained to rescue and save lives. Abortion is evil. It has a rippling effect on everyone involved, even the innocent by-stander sworn to preserve and save lives and do no harm.

It has outraged this metro-east hospital. Hopefully they will not be intimidated by the abortionist and his empire, or their silenced sealed. They need to pursue this complaint and hold the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation accountable for the discrepancies and inhumane treatment



As of the day we celebrated Thanksgiving in 2010, America had seen over 53 million abortions "legally performed" since the 1973 Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision

inside abortion mills such as Hope Clinic and the less than standard medical ethics. Clean house inside Granite City's little slaughterhouse, Hope Clinic for Women. Medical professionals know that abortion is the "red-light" district of medicine. Pray for all those involved, especially the eyewitnesses to this senseless event that they have the courage to persevere in their duty to expose the barbaric death of this baby, no matter the cost.

Let this little boy's short life not fade in vain; let it make a difference in Illinois and in society on how we treat the weakest among us. Let his voice be the messenger. This atrocity must stop! We must bring sanity back into the picture. We are all too aware "What an irony that a society confronted with plastic bags filled with the remains of aborted babies should be more concerned about the problem of recycling the plastic." (W. Egan).

This is morally and ethically wrong! Anyone with a working heart knows this is wrong. This is not healthcare. With the acceptance of each and every abortion the conscience of our nation is dying. There are two victims in every abortion: A dead baby and a dead conscience...

Innocent blood has a voice, and that voice cries out for justice.



I've noticed that everybody that is for abortion has already been born.

Ronald Reagan

If it isn't a baby, then you aren't pregnant, so what are you aborting?

Author Unknown

Only half the patients who go into an abortion clinic come out alive.

Author Unknown



When the devil fights us, we ought to fight him back. Our greatest weapon is prayer. Do not be negligent; kneel immediately and pray to God, and quickly you will feel strong. Prayer is conversation with God. When we experience the joy of prayer, then we will feel great exultation. It is a foretaste of the life of Paradise. But you have to struggle, in order to experience that joy. And, if you struggle mightily, God will give it to you.

Elder Ieronymos of Aegina (+1966)

THE BRICK

Author Unknown.

A young and successful executive was traveling down a neighborhood street, going a bit too fast in his new Jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something.

As his car passed, no children appeared. Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door! He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing? That's a new car and that brick you threw is going to cost a lot of money. Why did you do it?"

The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister... please, I'm sorry but I didn't know what else to do," he pleaded.

"I threw the brick because no one else would stop..."

With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. "It's my brother," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up."

Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him everything was going to be okay.

"Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message: **Don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!**



You find yourself in a darkened room and you try to move your hands so as to brush away the darkness, which, of course, does not move. If, however, you open a window and light enters, the darkness disappears. The same when one studies Holy Scripture, the lives of the Saints and the writings of the Holy Fathers; they are the light that chases away the darkness of the soul.

Blessed Elder Porphyrios (+1991)

REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND

By ROCOR Archbishop Alpy (Gramanovich) of Chicago.

After His Baptism by John, the Lord Jesus Christ began to preach, calling men to repentance: *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* This call to repentance remains in effect up to now; it refers to each one of us.

What is the meaning of repentance? One must recognize one's own untruth and make God's truth the aim of one's life. Repentance is usually accompanied by confession. John the Baptist acted thus when he baptized, because his baptism was unto repentance. Confession was thus in practice from the very foundation of the Christian Church.

How should one repent? Is it enough to repent within oneself before God, and not in the presence of a man, for example, a priest? Some think this: "I repent before God, and there is no need of a priest or anyone else."

Such an approach is incorrect. First of all, it does not correspond to the human psyche. It often happens that someone who has performed a serious sin, even though he repents within his soul, supposing that he is doing this before God, still finds no rest for himself; his sin follows him everywhere. And then a man looks for a way out; he wants to speak to someone about his heavy state of soul. And if there is no priest, or if he himself is not ready to turn to a priest, he seeks out at least a friend or simply any man, and tells him, and he feels better. This can be called a "natural" confession.

This device of natural confession is often used in literature. The great Russian writer Dostoevsky, for example, used it in his novel "Crime and Punishment." Raskolnikov, after performing a terrible murder and enduring great moral suffering because of it, confessed to Sonia Marmeladov, and this confession was the turning point in his correction.

One must look at repentance and confession also from the religious-church point of view. Confession is a Mystery, Church Sacrament, a kind of small judgment. The priest who hears a confession is a witness of it, but at the same time he is a judge, because he gives forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus. The significance of this small judgment is this: a man must endure some kind of shame for his sin. Often it happens that a man confesses small things but is silent about the adultery he has committed. Why? Because he is shameful to speak about it. However, through this small shame before a single witness a man is delivered from eternal shame after the Fearful and Universal Judgment, when the Lord will come to judge the living and the dead.

Let us not spare our sins; why carry around an unneeded burden? Because it is shameful? But this is a false shame. One should be ashamed of sin. And only through shame can one be delivered from sin. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* (Mt 6:14-15).

Great Lent will be approaching soon; this is a time of increased prayer and repentance. At this time we must make use of all our spiritual powers to ask from God forgiveness of our sins. However, so that our repentance might be fruitful, we ourselves must be reconciled with our close ones.

What is the most obvious sign of reconciliation? It is when we ask forgiveness of our neighbor. On the Sunday which is the eve of Great Lent, the Holy Church has established the custom of asking forgiveness of each other; this day is popularly called "Forgiveness Sunday."

From whom should the initiative for reconciliation come, if there is some evident hostility between people? Most people would say "From the guilty party." And the innocent one will agree with this and will say: "He offended me; he began it, and therefore he should ask forgiveness of me. In my heart I forgive him, but I do not see why I should ask forgiveness of him."

In every conflict between men, even as just a principle of law, one must recognize one party as guilty and the other as innocent; but as a principle of morality, or rather, proceeding from the spiritual knowledge of things, the innocent party to some degree is also guilty, because he may have done some evil himself previously, and now it has fallen upon him like a boomerang. And if we look at it from the psychological side, it turns out that when the innocent party is the first to ask forgiveness of the guilty one for the conflict that has occurred, the guilty one will be touched by this and will most certainly hasten to be reconciled.

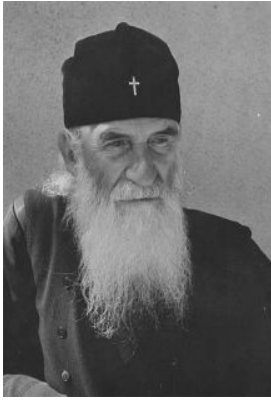
It is even easier for the innocent one to ask forgiveness, since the guilty one is more inclined to self-justification, so as in some degree to soften his guilt and not appear before others in a bad light. Therefore, for reconciliation it makes no difference from whom the initiative proceeds, whether from the guilty or the innocent party.

And this is why 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.* (Mt 5:23-24). But before God we are always guilty. If we ask forgiveness, by this we open the door for God's mercy towards us.

Can self-love really be dearer to us than God's mercy? Let us think on this...

FROM TIME TO ETERNITY: THE INTERNAL MISSION OF OUR CHURCH

By St. Justin Popovich (+1979).



St. Justin was a renowned Serbian theologian, a patristic scholar, a poet and a true philosopher, who had command of several languages. He devoted his many talents to defending the Faith against ecumenism—for which he was called “the conscience of the Serbian Church”—and unmasking the true face of humanism as a regression to ancient paganism. As an antidote, he vigorously preached the eternal truth of

Christ the God-man. Appropriately, this “holy messenger of glad tidings” was born and died on the Feast of Annunciation.

† † †

It is difficult, very difficult, for infinite and eternal life to enter the narrow human soul and the even narrower human body. The imprisoned inhabitants of earth stand with suspicion before everything that is beyond here. Imprisoned in time and place, they cannot bear anything beyond time, anything beyond space to enter into them, anything eternal. They regard such an invasion as an attack, and they respond with war. Furthermore, given the fact that the “rust” of time corrupts man, he does not like the intervention of eternity in his life and he adapts to it with difficulty. He often regards this intervention as an act of violence, an unforgivable audacity. At times he becomes a harsh rebel against eternity, because he sees that in the face of it, he is insignificant, while at other times he lashes out against it in vehement hatred because he views it through a very human, very earthly, inner-worldly prism.

Submerged with the body in matter, tied by the force of weight in time and space, his spirit withdrawn from eternity, the worldly man abhors the difficult excursions towards the beyond and the eternal. The chasm between time and eternity is for him unbridgeable, because he lacks the necessary ability and strength to step over it. Besieged from all sides by death, man mocks those who tell him: “Man is immortal and eternal.” Immortal as regards to what? His mortal body? Eternal as regards to what? His feeble spirit?

For man to be immortal, he must feel himself immortal in the center of his self-awareness. Without this, both immortality and eternity are for him conditions imposed from outside. And if man once had this sense of immortality and the recognition of eternity, this occurred so long ago, that already it has atrophied under the weight of death. And truly,

it has atrophied: this is what the whole mysterious structure of human existence tells us.

Our whole problem thus lies in how to rekindle that quenched feeling, how to resurrect that atrophied recognition. People cannot do it on their own, neither can the transcendent gods of philosophy. Only God can do this, He Who incarnated His immortal Self in the human self-awareness and His eternal Self in human self-consciousness. Through His Person, the God-man Christ bridged the chasm between time and eternity and reinstated the relations between them. For this reason only that person truly feels himself immortal and truly knows himself to be eternal who organically unites himself with the God-man Christ, with His Body, the Church.

Hence, for man and humanity, Christ became the unique crossing and passage from time to eternity. For this reason, in the Church, the Orthodox Church, the God-man Christ became and remained the unique way and the unique guide from time to eternity, from the self-awareness of mortality to the self-awareness of immortality.

The eternal living personality of the God-man Christ is precisely the Church. The Church is always the personality, and furthermore the theanthropic personality, the theanthropic spirit and body. The definition of the Church, the life of the Church, its purpose, its spirit, its program, its methods—all have been given in that wondrous Person of the God-man Christ. Therefore, the mission of the Church is organically and personally to unite all its faithful with the Person of Christ; to make their self-awareness Christ-awareness and their self-knowledge (self-consciousness) Christ-knowledge (Christ-consciousness); for their life to become life in Christ and through Christ; so that not they themselves live in themselves but *Christ lives in them* (Gal 2:20).

The mission of the Church is to secure for her members immortality and eternity, making them *partakers of the Divine nature* (II Pet 1:4). The mission of the Church is furthermore to create in each member the conviction that the normal condition of the human personality is comprised of immortality and eternity and not temporality and mortality, and that man is a sojourner who through mortality and temporality journeys towards immortality and eternity.

The Church is the theanthropic eternity incarnated in the boundaries of time and space. It is in this world, but *it is not of this world* (Jn 18:36). It is in this world to elevate this world to the world above, from which she herself came. The Church is ecumenical, catholic, theanthropic, eternal, and for this reason it entails a blasphemy, an unforgivable blasphemy against Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the Church a national institution, to narrow her to the small, finite, and temporal purposes and methods of a nation. Its purpose is supra-national, ecumenical, panhuman: to unite in Christ all people, completely, regardless of nationality or race or social stratum. There is *neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free,*

there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28), because *Christ is all, and in all* (Col 3:11).

The methods of this panhuman-theanthropic union of all people in Christ have been given by the Church in her holy Mysteries and in her theanthropic words (asceses, virtues). And truly, the Mystery of Divine Eucharist composes and defines and comprises the method of Christ and the means for uniting all people: through this Mystery man is organically united with Christ and with all faithful.

Through the personal exercise of the theanthropic virtues—faith, prayer, fasting, love, meekness, and utter compassion and charity, man makes himself firm in this union, he preserves himself in this holiness, he lives Christ as the unity of his personality and as the essence of his unity with the other members of the holy Body of Christ, the Church.

The Church is the personality of the God-man Christ, a theanthropic organism, not a human organization. The Church is indivisible, just like the person of the God-man, just like the body of the God-man. Therefore, it is a fundamental mistake for the indivisible theanthropic organism of the Church to be divided into small ethnic organizations.

It is the twelfth hour, it is time for our ecclesiastical representatives to cease being exclusively slaves of ethnicism, and to become hierarchs and priests of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The mission of the Church which is given by Christ and realized by the Holy Fathers is: for the awareness and realization to be planted and cultivated in the soul of our people that each member of the Orthodox Church is a catholic person, an eternal and theanthropic person, that he belongs to Christ and for this reason is a brother of all human beings, and a servant of all men and creatures.

This is the purpose of the Church given by Christ. Every other purpose is not of Christ but of the antichrist. For our local Church to be the Church of Christ, the catholic Church, she must constantly realize this purpose in our people. By what means can she realize this theanthropic purpose? Only through theanthropic means, never with human means or any other whatsoever. On this point the Church differs essentially from everything human and earthly.

The Theanthropic Virtues of the Church

The **theanthropic means** are none other than the theanthropic asceses-virtues. Only the theanthropic virtues exist among them in an organic relation. The one springs from the other, the one completes the other.

The **first** among the asceses-virtues is the ascesis of faith. Through this ascesis the soul of our people must pass and constantly pass: that is, this soul must be given up to Christ without reservations and compromises, must go deeply into the theanthropic depths, and be elevated to the theanthropic heights. The awareness must be created in our people that the faith of Christ is a supranational, ecumenical and catholic,

trinitarian virtue, and that for one to believe in Christ means to serve Christ and only Christ, in all aspects of one's life.

The **second** is: the theanthropic virtue of prayer and fasting. This virtue must become a method of life for our Orthodox people; it must become the soul of its soul, because prayer and fasting are the almighty means given by Christ for purification from every impurity—not only of the human being, but also of society and of the people, and of humanity. Prayer and fasting are able to cleanse the soul of our people from our impurities and from our sins. The soul of our people must be identified with the Orthodox life of prayer. Prayer and fasting must be performed not only for individuals, not only for the people, but for everyone and for everything (*in all and for all*): for friends and enemies, those who persecute and kill us, because this is what distinguishes Christians from pagans.

The **third** theanthropic virtue is the theanthropic virtue of love. This love has no boundaries. It does not ask who is worthy and who is not; it loves everyone: it loves friends and enemies, it loves sinners and criminals (but it does not love their sins and crimes); it blesses those who curse, and like the sun it enlightens both the wicked and the good. Christian love is distinguished from the love of the other self-styled and relative loves: from pharisaical, humanistic, altruistic, ethnic, animal love. The love of Christ is always total love. This love is acquired only through prayer, because it is a gift of Christ. And the Orthodox heart prays with intensity: *O Lord of love, give me Thy love for all people and for all things!*

The **fourth** is the theanthropic virtue of meekness and humility. Only he *who is meek in heart* makes rebellious and wild hearts meek. Only he who is humble in heart humbles proud and haughty souls. To *show meekness towards all people* is the obligation of every true Christian (Tit 3:2). But man becomes truly meek and humble when he makes the meek and humble Lord Jesus the heart of his heart, He who alone *is truly meek and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). The soul of the people must be made meek with the meekness of Christ. Every man must learn to pray: *O most meek Lord, make my wild soul meek!* The Lord humbled Himself with the greatest humility: He became incarnate, He became man. If you are Christ's, humble yourself to the utmost, to a worm; incarnate yourself in the pain of every pained person, in the affliction of every afflicted person, in the sufferings of every tortured person, in the grief of every animal and bird. Humble yourself below everyone: be everything to everyone—through Christ and according to Christ. When you are alone, pray: *O Humble Lord, humble me through Thy humility!*

The **fifth** is the theanthropic virtue of patience and humility. That is, to forbear evil, not to return evil for evil, to forgive with total compassion the curses, the slanders, the wounds. This is Christ's: constantly to feel crucified in the world, persecuted by the world, cursed and spat upon. The world cannot bear Christ-bearing people, just as it could not bear

Christ. Martyrdom is the atmosphere in which the Christian bears fruit. We must teach this to our people. For Orthodox, martyrdom is purification. It is Christian not only to bear sufferings with joy, but also to forgive with total compassion those who cause them, to pray for them to God, just as did Christ and the Archdeacon Stephen. For this reason, pray: *O long-suffering Lord, give me long-suffering, magnanimity and meekness!*

The Mission of our Church Is...

...to make these virtues-ascetes the methods of life for the people, to weave the Christ-like theanthropic virtues into the soul and life of the people. In this lies the salvation of the soul from the world and from all soul-corrupting, homicidal, atheistic movements and worldly organizations. Against the "educated" atheism and the gentlemanly cannibalism of contemporary civilization, we must array Christ-bearing personalities, which with the meekness of a sheep will be victorious over the excited passions of the wolves, and with the innocence of doves will save the soul of the people from the cultural and political stench.

For this reason the main obligation of our Church is to create Christ-bearing ascetics. The voice which must be heard in it today is: Go back to the Christ-bearing ascetics, towards the Holy Fathers! Go back to the ascetes and virtues of the Holy Fathers! Go back to the virtues of Saints Anthony and Athanasios, of Saints Basil and Gregory, of Saints John Chrysostom and Damascene, of Saints Sergei and Seraphim, of Saints Savva, Prochor and Gabriel, and others! Because these theanthropic ascetes-virtues created all of these saints, and today, only they alone are capable of sanctifying every soul and the soul of our whole people.

This theanthropic purpose is eternal and unalterable, and its means are also eternal and unalterable, because *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever* (Heb 13:8). Here is the difference between the human world and the world of Christ: the human one is finite and temporal, while Christ's is unalterable and eternal.

Orthodoxy, as the unique bearer and guardian of the perfect and all-radiant Person of the God-man Christ, is realized exclusively with the theanthropic-Orthodox means, the ascetical virtues in grace, not with means lent by Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. The latter are "Christianities" according to the version of the proud European man, and not of the humble God-man.

God Himself facilitates this mission of our Church, because in our people there exists a spirit of asceticism, as Orthodoxy created it through the ages. The Orthodox soul of our people inclines towards the Holy Fathers, towards the Orthodox Ascetics. The personal, familial, and parochial asceticism, especially in prayer and fasting, is characteristic of Orthodoxy. Our people, the Orthodox people, are the people of Christ because, like Christ, they summarize the Gospel in these two

virtues: prayer and fasting. They are convinced that every impurity, every impure thought, every impure desire, every impure spirit, can be *chased out of man only by prayer and fasting* (Mt 17:21). In the depths of their hearts our people know Christ, they know Orthodoxy, know what it is that makes the Orthodox man Orthodox. **Orthodoxy always creates ascetical rebirths; it does not recognize other rebirths.**

The ascetics are the only missionaries of Orthodoxy. Asceticism is the only missionary school of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is asceticism and life, for this reason only with asceticism and life does she reach and realize her mission.

Asceticism must be developed by all of our people. The parish must become an ascetical center. But this can only be done by an ascetic parish priest. Prayer and fasting, the ecclesiastical life of the parish, the liturgical life—these are the chief means by which Orthodoxy brings about rebirth in people. The parish, the parish community must be reborn, and in Christ-loving and brother-loving love humbly serve Christ and all people with meekness and humility, with sacrifice and self-denial. This service ought to be saturated and nourished by prayer and a liturgical life. This is fundamental and absolutely essential.

But all of these demand as a prerequisite that our hierarchs, our priests, our monastics become ascetics, and for this: Let us beseech the Lord.



I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (Pss 121:1).

Observe a soul at a loss and bewildered from being in trouble, and wishing to attain comfort from God, Who is not unaware. This again is a good effect and advantage of temptations, exciting and stirring up the soul, making it look for influence from on high and sever connections with everything of this life.

I mean, if the Jews, materialistic and attached to the earth as they were, became so zealous by hardship in captivity and set their eyes on heaven, much more would it be right for us to do this in our situation and have recourse to God, required as we are to display a greater diligence than they. Since, you see, they were isolated in the midst of their enemies, and had no city of their own, no rampart, no tower, no weapons, no human assistance, no abundance of resources, nothing else of this kind, but dwelt as captives and slaves amidst people who were their masters and enemies together, they took refuge in the invincible hand when oppressed by the magnitude of the disasters, and deprived of human help they began to come to their senses from this isolation.

St. John Chrysostom

HAVING COMPASSION

By St. John Cassian (*The Philokalia Vol. 1; Faber and Faber pgs. 105-106*).

There was once a very zealous brother who was greatly troubled by the demon of unchastity. He went to a certain father and confessed his private thoughts to him; but this father, being inexperienced, became angry when he heard about them and told the brother that he was contemptible and unworthy of the monastic habit for having entertained thoughts such as these.

When the brother heard this, he lost heart, left his cell and set off back to the world. Through God's providence, however, Abba Apollos, one of the most experienced of the elders, chanced to meet him and, seeing him over-wrought and very despondent, asked him why he was in this state. At first the brother did not reply because he was so depressed but, after the elder had pleaded with him, he told him what was wrong, saying: "Because I was often troubled by evil thoughts, I went to tell them to the elder; and as he said I have no hope of salvation, I have given up and am now on my way back to the world."

When Abba Apollos heard this, he comforted and encouraged him, saying: "Do not be surprised, my child, and do not lose hope. I too, old and grey as you see me, I am still troubled much by these thoughts. Do not be discouraged by this burning desire, which is healed not so much by human effort as by God's compassion. Please do this for me: go back to your cell just for today."

This the brother did; and Apollos, after leaving him, went to the cell of the elder who had caused his despair. Standing outside he implored God with tears and said: "O Lord, who puts us to the test for our own benefit, let this elder be given the brother's battle, so that in old age he may learn through experience what he has not been taught over these many years: how to feel sympathy with those who are under attack by the demons."

As he finished his prayer, he saw a dark figure standing near the cell shooting arrows at the elder. Wounded by the arrows, the elder at once began to stumble back and forth as though drunk. Unable to withstand the attack, he finally left his cell and set off for the world by the same road that the young monk had taken.

Seeing what had happened, Abba Apollos confronted him, and asked him where he was going and why he was so troubled. Although he realized that the holy man knew what was wrong with him, he was too ashamed to say anything. Abba Apollos then said to him: "Return to your cell, and in the future recognize your own weakness. The devil has either not noticed or has despised you, and so not thought you worth fighting. Not that there has been any question of a fight: you could not stand up to his provocation even for a

day! This has happened to you because, when you received a younger brother who was being attacked by our common enemy, you drove him to despair instead of preparing him for battle. You did not recall that wise precept: "*Deliver them that are being led away to death; and redeem them that are appointed to be slain*" (Prov 24:11). You did not even remember the parable of our Savior, which teaches us not to *break a bruised reed or quench smoking flax* (Mt. 12:20). None of us could endure the plots of the enemy, or allay the fiery turmoil of our nature, if God's grace did not protect our human weakness. Seeing, then, that God has had this compassion for us, let us pray to Him together and ask Him to withdraw the whip with which He has lashed you. *For he maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.* (Job 5:18)."

After Abba Apollos had said this and had prayed, the attack which had been launched against the elder was at once suspended. Finally, Abba Apollos advised him to ask God to give him *the tongue of the learned* so as to *know how to speak a word in season.* (Isa 50:4).



ST. HERMAS

One of the Seventy, he is mentioned in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (16:14). A Greek by birth, he spent a long time in Rome. He was bishop in Philippoupolis, and finished his life a martyr. He compiled the very instructive book "The Shepherd" through revelations from angels of God.

Hermas was a rich man, but fell into extreme poverty through his own sins and those of his sons. A man appeared to him, clad in white and with a staff in his hand, and told him that he was the angel of repentance, sent to him before the end of his life. The angel gave him twelve "commandments:"

1. To believe in God.
2. To live in simplicity and innocence.
3. To love truth and flee from falsehood.
4. To guard his thoughts in chastity.
5. To learn patience and magnanimity of soul.
6. To know that a good and an evil spirit attend every man.
7. To fear God, but not the devil.
8. To perform every good deed and to restrain himself from every evil one.
9. To pray to God in faith from the depths of his heart, so that his prayer might be heard.
10. To preserve himself from melancholy, the daughter of doubt, and from anger.
11. To try true and false prophecies.
12. To preserve himself from every evil desire.

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A REFLECTION ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

By St. Alexander Hotovitzky, January 1902.

Again I stand on the threshold of a New Year; I stand on the crest of a mountain, where I may make a halt and review, before I walk again on my path. I shall halt, I shall rest, I shall hush my troubled heart, be it only for this short moment, I shall hide from the blizzard, which had followed me ever since I set out, and will meet me again the moment I leave my seclusion. Oh, Lord! Help me calmly examine my soul and Thy creation.

I gaze at God's creation, at everything which He had sent to me, which has been placed close to me, which, through His will, has come together in my life, and, with my hand on my heart, from the depth of my heart and conscience, I say: all this is very good! Yonder is my happy childhood—how brightly it shines, diffusing its aroma from the distant long ago, how it lights up my path before me, how it freshens my soul, during spells of exhaustion! Yonder is my ardent youth and with it all that brought to my soul the first raptures of feeling. Here are my lessons, my joys, my bitter losses, here are the people to like with whom is my happiness, here are others, whom I have buried in the damp earth, almost unconscious with grief; here are all in whose company I grew up, with whom I worried, from whom I have received gifts of love and of wrath, from whom have I accepted honour and dishonour; here is Nature, which, at times, appeared to me more alive and more responsive, which had more power to energize my spirit, than living beings themselves; here are my pleasures, my connections, my illnesses.

All, all this is very good. All was good, that God's Providence sent into my life. Nothing was in vain. Everything was for good.

My past! How far it stretches back in the wondrous country, whence come to me a glad sound, or a beloved image, consolation, and hope, and bitter remorse. I gaze at it and I smile for joy, I gaze at it and I cover my face with my hands for shame. Yet I know: it is mine, it is myself, it is a part of my life, and no power can take it from me or erase what is written in it. And that which is written in it is the future, it is the fate of man.

Many are the lives in it, whose mysterious meaning will be disclosed at some future time, at the time when the seed that was sown, will come to ripeness, when, in letters of fire, it will bring forward the word, traced on it by eternal wisdom, un-revealed as yet to mind and conscience, but not to be separated from life. Whilst man lived his days, whilst he worked and slept, whilst he laughed and cried, whilst he moved and rested—eternal Wisdom traced this word on his life and sealed it with a seal of its own, putting a magic spell on it, until the time comes for the seal to be broken, and for a dark corner of a man's life to be lit up by the light of God's understanding, which lies hidden in life.

It is an agony to read some of these words, but once you have read them, your heart will know, that those are words of God's love, of God's solicitude for man. And with every new word, a mystery is revealed, a veil is drawn away and man is made able to understand the thoughts and longings of his own heart.

All is very good. Yet, even now, my restless heart is throbbing with unknown longing and straining to see into the distant future. Oh Lord! Let Thy blessing rest on us...