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Saints Peter & Paul

СѢТЫЙ ДѢЛЪ ПЕТРЪ

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«ΛΥΧΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ» ΨΑΛΜ 118, 105

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ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



Chosen Vessels

Saints Peter and Paul, the great pillars of Christianity, share one of the Church's great feast days on 29 June.

As twin lights shining Christ's radiant grace, they have stood for 2,000 years as great mountains of faith encouraging Christians to continue to witness the Word. Although they lived in a different time and place to now, the lives and teachings of Peter and Paul fill us faithful with spiritual energy to fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

But how did a fisherman and a former Pharisee become such symbols of the faith?

As chosen vessels (Acts 9:15) found worthy, despite their apparent unworthiness, to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles and the children of Israel, Peter and



Paul followed very different paths towards their ultimate love of Christ and their endurance for His Church.

Peter began his journey on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Christ approached Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew as they were fishing and called them with the words *"follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"* (Matthew 4:19).

From there, Peter the fisherman became a devoted disciple of the Lord, following Him throughout Israel in the fulfilment of His earthly mission. Peter had his own crises of faith and also many contrasting, profound and living proclamations of faith. He witnessed the Lord's transfiguration, the raising of Jairus' dead daughter, countless miracles, the agony the Lord faced in Gethsemane, but he denied the Lord three times and was absent when He was crucified. On the Lord's resurrection, Peter joined John in running to the tomb to witness the empty cave and the folded grave cloth. He exclaimed his faith with the immortal words *"you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"* to which Jesus responded with the words *"blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:16-17). He also proclaimed his great love for Christ by thrice proclaiming *"yes, Lord; You know that I love You"* (John 21:15).

This great love that Peter had for Christ led him to Rome to serve the Church and to his eventual martyrdom during the reign of Nero. Peter asked to be crucified upside down as he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as his Teacher. From the moment the humble and uneducated fisherman was called, his life was defined by his love and devotion to his Teacher.

Throughout the Gospels, Peter provides us with many examples of human weakness, spirited strength and

Even after His death and resurrection, the Lord continues to work via His chosen vessels towards growing the faith of the elect and illuminating those in darkness.

Saints Peter & Paul



ultimate reliance on God. He is like a friend we know, a fellow struggling Christian, a flame of hope, and, yet, a vessel of Christ chosen to serve His Church. May we have his intercessions to God that our faith may be strengthened as was his own time and time again.

Paul of Tarsus was a Pharisee, a zealot for the traditions of his fathers, a witness to the stoning of Stephen and a persecutor of Christians. On the road to Damascus to slaughter followers of the "Way", the Lord struck him to the ground with light from heaven (Acts 9:3) and asked him the question, "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*" After the Lord reveals Himself as the object of Paul's persecution, Paul utters the beautiful words "*what will you have me do?*" in similar fashion to the words of the Virgin, "*behold the handmaid of the Lord*" (Luke 1:38). In other words, he placed himself entirely in the hands of God. With those beautiful words of surrender, Saul allowed the Lord to mould him into a soldier of the Church. He was converted and soon after commenced his legendary missionary work all over Asia Minor, Greece, Rome and other regions. This work was unrelenting and led him to dedicating his entire life to Christ's Church. He helped form the teachings of the early Church at the Council of Jerusalem, he taught brilliantly, established numerous churches, suffered greatly, reprimanded the churches with love, expounded the theology of the Church and was ultimately beheaded in Rome at the same time as Peter.

The former persecutor of the Church left as an inheritance to the Church numerous epistles filled with inspired teachings that helped form Orthodox tradition and faith. God's divine plan to elect Saul of Tarsus as His vessel reveals God's great mercy and love for the faithful.

The lives of these holy Apostles reveal God's persisting co-operation with man and His enduring salvific work. Even after His death and resurrection, the Lord continues to work via His chosen vessels towards growing the faith of the elect and illuminating those in darkness. May we continue to commemorate with great splendour the holy feast of the two great pillars of Christianity and give thanks to the great Shepherd for the care He gives to His flock throughout the ages.



ΟΙ ΠΡΩΤΟΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΙ

Ο μήνας Ιούνιος σφραγίζεται από τη μνήμη των Πρωτοκορυφαίων Αποστόλων, Πέτρου και Παύλου.

Αλήθεια, τι σημαίνουν οι δύο αυτοί Ιουδαίοι για τους χριστιανούς από την αρχή του Χριστιανισμού μέχρι σήμερα; Πάντως, όλοι μας φέρουμε το όνομά τους με ξεχωριστό σεβασμό και τιμή στο στόμα και στην καρδιά μας.

Προσέξτε τους καλά. Ο ένας, στα νιάτα του, ήταν ψαράς. Έβγαζε με ιδρώτα το ψωμί του. Όπως λέει ο λαός μας, «του κυνηγού και του ψαρά το πιάτο

δέκα φορές είναι αδειανό και μία φορά γεμάτο». Δεν γνώριζε πολλά γράμματα, ούτε κατείχε κάποια υπολογίσιμη θέση στην κοινωνία της εποχής του.

Ο άλλος ήταν σπουδασμένος, κυρίως στα εβραϊκά γράμματα, αλλά και ευρύτερα μορφωμένος. Είχε τίτλους που θα μπορούσαν να τον αναδείξουν σε δάσκαλο του Μωσαϊκού Νόμου, εκεί, στην απόμερη Παλαιστίνη.

Όμως ο Πέτρος και ο Παύλος άστραψαν και θάμπωσαν τον κόσμο. Και το πιο σημαντικό είναι ότι η αστραπή και η λάμψη τους παραμένουν αναλλοίωτες μέχρι σήμερα. Είναι οι Πρωτοκορυφαίοι Απόστολοι, οι μεγάλοι της Χριστιανοσύνης, οι θεμέλιοι λίθοι της Εκκλησίας.

Ποια είναι η αιτία του μεγαλείου τους;

Το ότι είδαν «το Φως το αληθινό». Είναι εκείνοι που έγιναν «ἐπόπται γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος» (Β' Πέτρ. 1,16). Δηλαδή, όπως ερμηνεύει ο Π. Τρεμπέλας, είδαν με τα μάτια τους τη μεγαλιότητα του Χριστού κατά τη Μεταμόρφωσή Του.

Έτσι δηλώνει με ιερή καύχηση ο Απόστολος Πέτρος. Είδαν το Φως, που είναι ο Χριστός, πίστεψαν σε Αυτό, το εγκολπώθηκαν και μεταμορφώθηκαν. Έγιναν οι ίδιοι φως Χριστού και βγήκαν στον κόσμο ως Απόστολοι και κήρυκες του θείου Φωτός, για να φωτίσουν την οικουμένη.

Το έργο αυτό το εργάστηκαν με φόβο και τρόπο, με αγρυπνία ψυχής, αλλά και με ενθουσιασμό, χαρά και

ελπίδα. Με κόπο, με μόχθο, με πόνο και στέρση. Με θεία μέριμνα και με φλόγα στην καρδιά. Με πορείες ατέλειωτες, με κινδύνους στη στεριά και στη θάλασσα. Με δαρμούς, με δεσμά και φυλακές. Με την καθημερινή θυσία της ζωής τους.

Εδώ βρίσκεται το μεγαλείο τους. Αγάπησαν με τη μείζονα αγάπη τον Χριστό. Περιφρόνησαν όλα τα αγαθά του κόσμου για να κερδίσουν τον τίτλο «δοῦλοι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ». Απαρνήθηκαν όχι μόνο τον κόσμο, αλλά και τον ίδιο τους τον εαυτό.



Και έτσι ο λόγος τους έγινε λόγος Θεού, λόγος στοργής και αγάπης για τον άνθρωπο κάθε εποχής. Έγιναν «σπλάγχνα Χριστοῦ».

Γι' αυτό, καθώς ο Χριστός αναζητεί τα «πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα», έτσι και εκείνοι αναζητούν τα χαμένα πρόβατα και τα οδηγούν στα χλοερά λιβάδια της αλήθειας του Ευαγγελίου και της πίστεως στον Χριστό.

Για αυτά τα πρόβατα ο ένας θα αποκεφαλισθεί και ο άλλος θα σταυρωθεί ανάποδα. Οι Πρωτοκορυφαίοι μαρτύρησαν για το Φως και υπέγραψαν τη μαρτυρία τους με ιδρώτα, δάκρυ και αίμα μαρτυρικό.

Μα το Φως, που είναι ο Χριστός, τους φόρτωσε με δόξα και τιμή. Το όνομά τους έγινε πασίγνωστο και αθάνατο. Η επίδρασή τους στην ιστορία είναι φανερή και οι διδαχές τους παραμένουν πάντοτε επίκαιρες και σωτήριες. Και φθάνουν μέχρι και σε εμάς. Η πίστη και η αφοσίωσή τους στον Χριστό έγιναν το μέτρο που κρίνει όλους όσους καλούνται από τον Θεό στη σωτηρία.

Γι' αυτό ας κρατήσουμε ως ιερή παρακαταθήκη όσα μας παρέδωσαν. Και ας μη λησμονούμε ποτέ ότι, ως ζωντανά μέλη της Μίας, Αγίας, Καθολικής και Αποστολικής Εκκλησίας, οφείλουμε να γίνουμε, ο καθένας και η καθεμία από εμάς, μικροί απόστολοι στο περιβάλλον μας. Άξιοι συνεχιστές αυτών των μεγάλων διδασκάλων της πίστεώς μας.

Με αυτόν τον τρόπο και τους τιμούμε και τους δοξάζουμε.



Q & A

WITH Fr S. D.

How do I better understand what's being said in Church?

The services of our Orthodox Church are, by the testimony of countless converts, the most reverential, sublime, and awe-inspiring worship found anywhere in the world.

When Prince Vladimir of Russia sent emissaries in 987 AD to survey the religions of Europe, they returned with this account of the Byzantine Liturgy: *"...but we beheld no glory there. Then we went on to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty!"*

For Orthodox Christians, Church worship expressed in the Divine Liturgy is the very source of our spiritual life - direct communion with Christ and participation in the Kingdom of Heaven. God grants us His grace to enter into His presence, and we, through humility and repentance, leave the Liturgy as renewed persons.

A concern sometimes raised is that our services are conducted mainly in Greek - in a form not spoken in everyday life - making them difficult to follow. Before addressing practical remedies, it is worth appreciating why Greek holds such an irreplaceable place in our worship. Greek is the language in which the entire New Testament - the four Gospels, the Apostolic Letters, and the Book of Revelation - was written. This is why it is taught in seminaries throughout the world, including Protestant ones. One recent author of a Greek grammar textbook captured this well: *"After all, what is more exciting than reading the very words that God inspired?"*

Greek was also the language of the Church Fathers, who employed its precision to defend the Faith against heresy and to articulate the dogmas of the Holy Trinity

and the two natures of Christ, as proclaimed by the seven Ecumenical Councils. Much of this theology lives on in our hymnography today - and from personal experience, even when rendered into English, these hymns demand careful prior study before their full meaning can be grasped in worship.

So how can we better understand what is being said in Church? The most practical step is to study the services in advance. As the Psalmist writes: *"Blessed is the man... whose will is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night"* (Psalm 1:1-2). Two resources are particularly helpful. The first is the bilingual "Divine Liturgy" book published by our Archdiocese in Australia, with Greek and English in parallel, which can also be carried into church and followed during the service. The second is the free Digital Chant Stand (dcs.goarch.org), maintained by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, which offers downloadable PDFs - in Greek, English, or both - for virtually every service throughout the liturgical year, including the Divine Liturgy, Matins, and Vespers. These can be studied at home and possibly printed as a personal service booklet.

Finally, and most importantly, the true understanding of our Church services is not merely a matter of language but of the heart. When the priest at every Divine Liturgy calls out *"Let us lift up our hearts,"* and the faithful respond *"We lift them up to the Lord,"* something deeper than comprehension is being asked of us: the free and willing offering of ourselves to God. This is the true prerequisite for understanding what takes place in our worship. As Christ Himself declared, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* (Matt 13:9) - an invitation not to the learned, but to the receptive. Let us therefore bring to our preparation for Church not only our minds, but above all our humbled heart, as the Psalmist declares: *"A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; a broken and humbled heart God will not despise."* (Psalm 50:19)



THE MAN OF GOD: PROPHET ELIJAH

THE TISHBITE

*The Incarnate Angel,
The Cornerstone of the Prophets,
The Second Forerunner of the Coming of Christ,
Glorious Elijah who from above sent down to Elisha
the grace to dispel sickness and cleanse lepers,
abounds therefore in healing for those who honour him.*

DISMISSAL HYMN OF PROPHET ELIJAH

The holy and glorious prophet Elijah the Tishbite remains one of the most beloved and revered figures from the Old Testament, with a deep connection to the life and ministry of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Celebrated on the 20th of July, his name comes from the Hebrew Eliyahu, meaning “My God is Yahweh”.

Throughout the ages of the Earth, few men have lived up to their name as well as Elijah: he was a great confessor of the faith, a champion of God against idolatry and sin, and a man of uncompromising zeal and boldness before both kings and warriors.

Elijah’s dismissal hymn confers three titles upon him: the Incarnate Angel, the Second Forerunner of the Coming of Christ, and the Cornerstone of the Prophets.

Each reflects a theme in the prophet’s life and works: his monastic way of life, his connection to John the Forerunner and Christ Himself, and his status among the prophets.





THE INCARNATE ANGEL



The monastic life - celibacy, ascetic struggle, and self-denial - is described by the fathers as the angelic life. Elijah, the incarnate angel, lived as a monastic long before the institution of Christian monasticism. He was a celibate living in the wilderness, clothed in poor and rough garments and renouncing worldly possessions, who entrusted his life entirely to God.

Elijah also performed great ascetic labours of fasting. The hymnology of the church attests that "Through fasting, Elijah closed the heavens", causing a drought to come over Israel for three and a half years. He was a man who did not give a single thought to his own sustenance; he put complete trust in God, who miraculously provided him with food on many occasions. On one of these occasions the scriptures say that he walked in the strength of a single meal for forty days to Mount Sinai, where he saw God in the "still, small voice".

In the scriptures, there is only one other man who is attested to have fasted entirely from food for forty days: the great prophet Moses, who, along with Elijah, appeared at the Transfiguration of our Lord.



THE SECOND FORERUNNER



Malachi prophesied, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes". The Jews were keenly aware of this prophecy, and were awaiting Elijah as a sign of the Messiah. When John the Baptist came forth from the wilderness, the people asked him: "Are you Elijah?" John humbly denied this, but was nevertheless identified as such by Christ Himself, who said, "He is Elijah who is to come."

John lived in the spirit of Elijah: Both men were zealous and uncompromising preachers of repentance, both were desert-dwelling ascetics. But Elijah is not only described as the second forerunner of Christ because of his similarities with John. His life also contains parallels and prefigurements of the life and miracles of Jesus Himself.

As Christ fasted in the desert for forty days, so Elijah fasted for forty days while walking to Sinai. As Christ multiplied bread and fish to feed thousands, so Elijah multiplied the flour and oil of Zarephath's widow. As Christ raised a widow's son from the dead, and indeed as He resurrected Himself from the dead, so Elijah resurrected the son of the widow.

This resurrection was one of only three in the Old Testament. The first was performed by Elijah, and the other two were performed by Elisha: the man who inherited a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Finally, as Christ ascended into heaven, so too Elijah ascended.



THE CORNERSTONE OF THE PROPHETS



The prophet Elijah is numbered among the great miracle-workers of the faith. He performed many great works: he caused a drought to punish Israel, he called down fire from the heavens, first to provide God a burnt offering against the empty prayers of the idolaters, and later to destroy two companies of soldiers who were seeking to take him. He resurrected a child from the dead, and he parted the river Jordan with his mantle, before ascending in a flaming chariot.

God gave the glorious prophet Elijah the blessing and authority to perform such great works, heralding the coming of Christ, because Elijah made himself worthy through the single-minded and relentless love he had for God. May the blessed prophet Elijah intercede for us, granting us a small measure of his spirit, so that through his prayers we may flee from our own wickedness and sins, and boldly confess God before men.



It is July 1991. Albania, the world's first constitutionally atheist state, has entered a new era. The Communist regime has fallen and for the first time in more than two decades, the Albanian people are free to practice religion. In the midst of a nation devastated by decades of dictatorship and anti-religious persecution, an Orthodox bishop arrives at the airport of Tirana.

He is met by a small group of about twenty people. They are the remains of the Orthodox Church. They take the bishop to what used to be their cathedral but has now been converted into a gymnasium. The bishop looks around and sees their faces, each marked by the suffering of the last few decades, all turned towards him in hope.

He does not speak Albanian, but he turns to an old man next to him who understood Greek and asks him how to say "Christ is Risen" in Albanian. He gestures for each of them to take a lit candle and, lighting his own, shouts, "Krishti u Ngjall!" (Christ is Risen), to which they all reply, "Vertet u Ngjall!" (Truly He is Risen). Standing there together, they all begin to weep.

For as the bishop would later reflect, "There was nothing and we had nothing. In fact, less than nothing. And yet we had everything, because Christ was Risen from the dead."

This bishop would come to be known throughout the Orthodox world as Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, a man whose life was dedicated to our Lord's final commandment to 'go forth and make disciples of all nations'.



Archbishop of Anastasios of Albania (1929-2025)

Archbishop Anastasios was born Anastasios Yannoulatos on 4 November 1929, in Piraeus, Greece. When he was fourteen, Greece was suffering under the German occupation. There was great anguish everywhere, and such suffering stirred deeper questions in the heart of the young Anastasios. He began to read extensively, searching for the answer to this burning question inside of him: what is the meaning of this life?

One evening, after having combed through many books, Anastasios

knelt before an icon of Christ and prayed, "Do You exist? If You exist, reveal Yourself to me. Show me something." Throughout the night he remained there, repeating the same prayer.

He would later say, "Don't expect me to tell you that God sent an angel. But the next morning I felt an entire shift within me that gave me an inward certainty of God. I cannot fully articulate what it was or exactly how I felt, but deep in the core of my being I simply knew that God existed, and I wanted to respond to His calling."



Divine Liturgy in Durrës, 1993

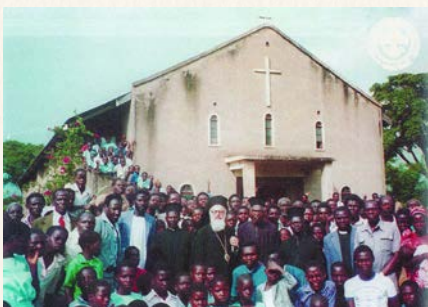
Anastasios entered the Theological School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in 1947 and graduated in 1952 with the highest honours in theology. During his years at school and

university, he was actively involved in the mission work of the Zoe Brotherhood, becoming a youth group teacher, a camp leader, and a member of the brotherhood.

Having excelled in his studies, Anastasios was called to the diaconate in 1960. Despite initially asking to go to Africa to assist with the Orthodox mission there, he was requested to join the Apostoliki Diakonia, the missionary arm and publishing house of the Church of Greece while also continuing his studies in missionary theology.

In 1964, Fr Anastasios was ordained a priest, and that very same night he received the blessing to depart for Africa.

On 24 May 1964, he left for Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya to investigate the possibilities for systematic Orthodox mission. At the time, he faced a great deal of criticism. Some dismissed the idea as youthful enthusiasm, misguided zeal, or even a kind of romantic escapade. Yet he ignored these criticisms, convinced that Orthodoxy was for all people and not merely the privilege of a few



After the Divine Liturgy, Saint Spyridon Church, Njinze, Uganda, 1988

After six years in Africa, a severe bout of malaria forced Fr Anastasios to return to Greece. On 19 November 1972, Fr Anastasios was consecrated as the Bishop of Androussa. He was appointed specifically to serve as

General Director of the Apostoliki Diakonia.

Despite becoming a bishop and professor, Anastasios would often remind himself: "Anastasios, do not forget to remain a deacon and a student for the rest of your life." It was a principle he carried throughout his ministry, never seeking honours or positions for their own sake.

In 1991, rather unexpectedly, the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios appointed Bishop Anastasios as Patriarchal Exarch to Albania.



Vespers at the ruins of the Holy Monastery of Saint Vlasios in Durrës, 1993

It is difficult to do justice to what took place in Albania under Archbishop Anastasios' guidance. At the time of his arrival, organised religious life had been almost completely eradicated. The Orthodox Church, which had been autocephalous since 1937, had been devastated by decades of communist persecution. There was no functioning hierarchy, only a handful of surviving clergy, and almost all churches had either been destroyed or turned into gyms, warehouses, cinemas, stables, or other secular buildings.

Yet through his leadership and complete commitment to the mission in Albania, Archbishop Anastasios oversaw the restoration of more than 450 buildings, including over 150 new churches,

monasteries, and schools.

He established the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, helping to educate a new generation of clergy and laity. He ordained 159 new Albanian priests, reviving a clergy that had essentially been annihilated. These things, however, are only the tip of the iceberg.



Assembly of the Clergy of the Church of Albania, 2011

After more than thirty years of tireless service in Albania, Archbishop Anastasios fell seriously ill at the age of ninety-five. His illness involved multiple organ failure, complicated by a seasonal virus and gastrointestinal issues. He was taken back to Athens, to Evangelismos Hospital, where he later reposed on 25 January 2025.

Ultimately, what Archbishop Anastasios did in his life for the Church is almost beyond belief. However, despite his many accomplishments and missionary initiatives, it is only just to remember Archbishop Anastasios first and foremost as a man of deep love.

A man whose heart was wounded by love to the point where Saint Paul's words rang true for him also: "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).

As Archbishop Anastasios himself wrote, "Our supreme concern must be not what we will do, but how we will be a living witness to the presence of the Lord in the world."

The Miracle of Saint Euphemia at the Fourth Ecumenical Council



The Holy Great Martyr Euphemia suffered for Christ in Chalcedon in the year 304, during the fierce persecution of the emperor Diocletian. However, God would call her to bear witness a second time. A century and a half later, when the Church was at peace within the Byzantine Empire but divided internally, St Euphemia was again made a confessor of the Orthodox faith.

In the year 451, the bishops of the Church gathered for the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon, in the very church where St Euphemia's relics rested. The Council was convened to settle a great dispute about the person of Christ. A heresy known as Monophysitism had spread, teaching that in Christ there was only one nature, the Divine, and that He was God but not truly man.

Against this error, the Orthodox Fathers confessed what the Church has always held, namely that the Lord Jesus Christ is one Divine Person in two natures, fully God and fully man, "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." On this rested our salvation, for unless Christ had truly taken on our humanity, our humanity could not be healed and saved.

The 630 bishops gathered for the Council debated long, but the two sides could not reach agreement. At last, the holy Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople proposed that they submit the matter to God Himself, through St

Euphemia. Both sides wrote their confessions of faith on separate scrolls, and these were placed upon the breast of the Saint within her tomb. The tomb was sealed with the imperial seal and guarded for three days, during which both parties kept a strict fast and prayed earnestly.

When the emperor Marcian and the Fathers opened the tomb, they beheld a wondrous sight. The scroll bearing the Orthodox confession was held fast in the right hand of St Euphemia, while the scroll of the heretics lay cast down at her feet – showing the correct faith. The miracle did not end there. The Saint raised her hand and gave the true confession to the Patriarch. Many bishops who had wavered now embraced the Orthodox faith, and the truth of Christ was upheld.

What strikes us about St Euphemia is her steadfast confession of the truth. In life she confessed Christ with her blood, and in death she stretched out her hand to defend His truth once more.

She teaches us that the truth of our faith is not ours to bend or soften for the sake of convenience, but is to be guarded and held fast, even unto death.

In our own day, when so many voices urge us to compromise what the Church teaches, may we hold fast to the truth with the same courage, and confess Christ faithfully in all things.



The conversion of the British isles to Christianity



In 597 AD, a band of monks arrived from Rome to convert England's pagans. They were surprised to find that their biggest obstacle was not the heathens they had expected, but instead the Christians who were part of an older Church to the west and north that had kept its own ancient traditions and had no intention of changing.

The Britons were the native Celtic inhabitants of Great Britain whom the Romans had governed for nearly four centuries. Under Rome, many had become Christian, and when imperial rule fell away in the early 400s, their faith survived, despite being isolated from the broader Church. Beginning in the fifth century, Anglo-Saxons crossed the North Sea from what is now northern Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark to settle in the east and centre of Britain, founding the kingdoms of Kent, Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex and others. They were pagans, worshipping gods such as Woden and Thor. The British Christians, resenting the invaders, never tried to convert them.

While the Anglo-Saxons remained heathen, Christianity flourished on the Celtic fringe. Ireland had been evangelised in the fifth century (St Patrick being its most famous missionary) and became a centre of monastic learning. St Columba (c.521–597) was an Irish

prince turned monk, who sailed into voluntary exile and founded a monastery on the island of Iona in the Hebrides. From there, he preached to and converted the northern Picts, an early people of Scotland, and his disciples established a network of monasteries across Great Britain and Ireland. Iona became the spiritual heart of the Celtic Church.

Meanwhile, the future Pope St Gregory the Great had seen a group of fair-haired slave boys in a Roman market. Upon learning they were from Britannia and belonged to the Angle tribe, he remarked: "They are not Angles, but angels." Once he became pope, he sent a mission to England, headed by the monk St Augustine, who arrived in 597 with around forty companions. Landing in Kent, St Augustine preached to King Æthelberht, whose queen was already a Christian and worshipped at a church near Canterbury that had stood since Roman times. The king was baptised, Canterbury became Augustine's seat, and he is remembered as the first Archbishop of Canterbury and the "Apostle to the English."

When King Oswald of Northumbria wanted his people converted, he sent not to Canterbury but to Iona for a bishop. The first man they sent returned after some time, claiming that it is an impossible task to convert the English as they are an uncivilised, stubborn and barbaric people. Hearing this, the monk Aidan spoke up, saying that perhaps he ought to try being more gentle in his preaching, giving them the milk of more easy doctrine till they can practice the faith fully. Hearing this, they decided to send St Aidan as bishop instead.

Aidan, the "Apostle of Northumbria," embodied the Celtic ideal. He was gentle, ascetic and generous to the point of giving away gifts he received from the king to the poor. In 635 he founded a monastery on the island of Lindisfarne, which became the Iona of England and would produce the famous bishop and hermit St Cuthbert, amongst other saints.

The Roman and Celtic Churches in England would eventually clash over points of custom and tradition, most notably the date of Easter. The council of Whitby was convened in 664 to settle many points of difference. Whitby bound the English Church firmly to Roman Christianity, and Celtic practices were gradually abandoned. In recent times, interest in Celtic Christianity has been revived, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which honours the ascetic virtues of those early saints of the British Isles.

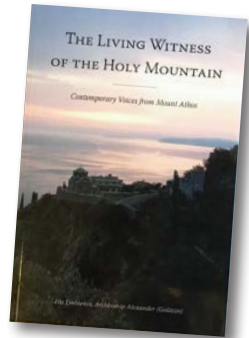


BOOK REVIEW:

The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain:

Contemporary Voices from Mount Athos

by Archbishop Alexander (Golitzin)



Mount Athos has been called the spiritual capital of the Orthodox world; the centre of monasticism; the beacon of the Church. It is a UNESCO world heritage site, inaccessible to passers-by, tourists, and even women. For various reasons it does not occupy a neat role or place in the 21st century, and many people struggle to understand how and why it still operates in our modern society.

“The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain” was written to address these questions and controversies through the eye of the West. It was written by Alexander Golitzin, a North American citizen who came to Mount Athos to join Simonopetra Monastery. Over his time there he was ordained a hieromonk and is at this time an Archbishop in America. Due to his background he was a firsthand witness to the curiosity and questioning about Mount Athos.

The aim of this book is to reveal, through a collection of various stories, saints, talks and essays, the relevance and deep importance of Mount Athos to the contemporary world.

As an example is the beautiful story of Fr Placide Deseille, a well-known French Catholic monk who converted to Orthodoxy with a larger group of Catholic monks in the 1970s. He then returned to France and formed a French Orthodox Monastery under the Abbacy of Elder Aimilianos. His story, in his own words, is told in this book in a simple yet moving way which both honours Western Christian tradition, yet sees its origin and fulfilment in Orthodoxy. Rather than summarising his story, however, we have chosen to include an excerpt of a speech given by Fr Placide, which is also included in the book. This excerpt was chosen for its grace-filled words, and most of all, the wisdom of experience.

“The pilgrim who visits the large monasteries of the Holy Mountain discovers there, apart from the tensions and difficulties that no human group can hope to escape, harmonious communities where the unity of the collective does not attack the integrity and the blossoming authenticity of the persons who comprise it. The stability of such societies through the centuries, their capacity for renewal after periods of decline that were thought to be fatal, strikes us especially as all the factors for disintegration - differences in age, culture, origin, and race - are not lacking there. Mount Athos does not give us only the promise of a new world and an alternate society: it is not merely theoretical, but delivers the real experience to us. It manifests to us that a real transformation in human relationships can be accomplished if we let the Holy Spirit, Who makes all things new, act.

The key to this harmony is without doubt the fact that the Athonite monk listens to the Gospel and to the masters of the spiritual life - St Basil the Great, St Theodore the Studite, St Athanasius of Mount Athos, St Gregory Palamas - in which the integrity of the person and his ultimate happiness is insisted upon. It is not found in the satisfaction of self-interest and the pursuit of every pleasure. On the contrary, because the human person is made in the image of God, who is love (1 John 4:8), it cannot find its true happiness except in God, and in the free and joyful renunciation of all individualism, in entering into communion with others and blossoming in all those who are united. The monk knows that the renunciation of his tastes, and his own preferences, of his individual interests, is a life-giving death that opens up the joy of the communion (*koinonia*) of persons, of the true *koinonia* of all, in God.

This teaches us that the institution of a just and happy fraternal society does not depend primarily on the reform of structures and the mastery of economic processes. It depends above all on what the Gospel calls *metanoia*, change of spirit, interior transformation. It demands that each person struggle each day, with the help of God, in the ordinary and humble circumstances of his existence, against his egoism, against his thirst for pleasure, against his individualistic tendencies, and to attend to hearing the inner voice which whispers that only then will true joy be found - this joy which is visible to anyone who visits the Athonite monasteries today.

Thus are the words of the psalmist fulfilled: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ”

On Marriage

based on the teachings of Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia

Part 3



We continue our series *"On Marriage"*, based on the teachings of **Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki**, a respected hierarch in the Greek Orthodox Church known for his background in astrophysics and engineering. He is a prolific writer and speaker on many contemporary issues in our Church and community.



*W*e hear 'Bless them O Lord and keep them..,' repeated many times in the marriage ceremony. The whole Church is calling on God to bless the young couple, to protect them, to help them. We are not asking for an easy life, but to be cultivated in the love and virtue that the Lord grants us by His grace.

Metropolitan Nikolaos advises couples that their love should be their main priority, even over their children. Children will grow to be healthy and well-balanced if they see their parents respect one another, rather than being the centre of their parent's world.

The mystery of marriage is preserved when the couple renew themselves continuously and do not fall into complacency nor confine their marriage to routine, boredom and taking the other for granted. He calls to mind the priest, who in the beginning liturgises and serves the people of God with zeal and love. Over time, he might become lukewarm, irritable, tired, and drag his feet. The ideal is a priest full of joy, even though he may be tired. Each time he liturgises, the priest is renewed and overwhelmed with God's love, overpowered with gratitude. He lives the mystery, he breathes the grace of God, his heart is aflame, full to the brim. He may be tired, but he never tires to love and to give, to serve God. In holy marriage we are also called to the same ideal. A husband and wife are called to give and to serve God

and their partner, despite the pressures of daily life. The mysteries of the Church also renew us and help our marriages remain vibrant.

A prayer in the marriage service describes the joy of St Helen when the Holy Cross was found. Using the metaphor of 'digging', Metropolitan Nikolaos recalls how often couples who come to him for Holy Confession, 'dig a grave and bury' their spouses with their criticisms and accusations. When they are invited to reflect on what they can change about themselves, they begin to see things differently and they no longer try to 'bury' their spouses. This is the mystery of Holy Confession working with the mystery of Holy Marriage to bring about change and transformation.

The Metropolitan reflects that he sees fine qualities in both the husband and the wife which tragically the couple themselves do not see. He says the couple need to begin another type of 'digging', to discover in their spouse the qualities that have been buried because of conflicts, disagreements, neglect or indifference. Instead of looking for weaknesses and faults we should look for the beauty, talents, and strengths of the other and to rejoice in them, be proud of them and to give them room to develop. To bring out the best in the other will bring such joy.

Finally, the Gospel reading of the Wedding of Cana is the climax of the marriage service. Jesus fills the pots to the brim; it is noted by the head servant that the wine of the miracle is superior to the wine which is usually served at weddings. Similarly, with Christ present in our marriages, the relationship is made superior. This first sign of Jesus, his first miracle as we read in the Bible 'reflects the glory of God.' This is the kind of marriage we aim for, a marriage that reflects the glory and joy of the Lord.

The *First* QUIZ

Crossword

1



Across

1. First saint to visit Australia in 1977
4. First Monastery established on Mt. Athos was the Great ____
8. First Patriarch of Constantinople to serve 35 years
9. First (in the beginning) there was the ____
12. First son of Isaac
13. First Book of the Old Testament
14. First man to enter Heaven, not Christ
18. First man
19. First Archbishop of Australia and New Zealand
22. First King of Israel
24. First woman
25. First Christian Emperor
27. First disciple to reach the empty tomb of Christ
29. First among women
30. First Ecumenical Council was held in ____
31. First thing Christ ate after His resurrection

Down

2. First disciple called to follow Christ
3. First Book of the New Testament is the Gospel of ____
5. First Orthodox Monastery in Australia is dedicated to Saint ____
6. First man to ignore the injured man in the Good Samaritan parable
7. First word in the Divine Liturgy
10. First miracle of Christ took place in ____
11. First son of Abraham
15. First Martyr
16. First female Martyr
17. First son of Jacob
20. First Person of the Holy Trinity
21. First "birthday" of the Church
23. First place where people were called Christians
26. First day of Lent is called ____ Monday
28. First letter of Saint Paul in the New Testament

ΟΙ ΜΙΚΡΟΙ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΣ

Ο ΟΒΔΙΟΥ

Όπως μας λέει στο πρώτο στίχο, το βιβλίο του Οβδιού γράφτηκε «όρασις Οβδιού». Δε γνωρίζουμε πολλά για τον προφήτη. Το όνομά του σημαίνει «δούλος του Θεού». Οι Εβδομήκοντα που ερμήνευσαν την Παλαιά Διαθήκη τον αναφέρουν και με τα ονόματα Αβδιού, Οβδία και Αβαδία.

Από το περιεχόμενο του βιβλίου μπορούμε να υποθέσουμε ότι ο Οβδιού καταγόταν από το νότιο βασίλειο του Ιούδα, στο οποίο και έδρασε. Και ήταν πολύ φυσικό ως Ιουδαίος να δοκίμασε πολύ μεγάλο πόνο για την καταστροφή της Ιουδαίας και της Ιερουσαλήμ και για την εγκληματική συμπεριφορά των Ιδουμαίων από το βασίλειο της Εδώμ.

Σύμφωνα με τις Εβραϊκές γραφές οι Ιδουμαίοι ήταν απόγονοι του Ησαύ, ο οποίος ήταν αδελφός του Ιακώβ και γιος του Ισαάκ. Το όνομα Εδώμ, από το οποίο προέρχεται το όνομα 'Ιδουμαία' σημαίνει κόκκινος στα Εβραϊκά, και ήταν το παρατσούκλι του Ησαύ επειδή είχε κοκκινωπό χρώμα.

Δε γνωρίζουμε πώς κλήθηκε ο Οβδιού στο προφητικό αξίωμα, αλλά θεωρείται ότι το βιβλίο γράφτηκε μετά το 586 ΠΧ, όταν εμφανίζεται το μίσος των Ιδουμαίων.

Οι Ιδουμαίοι είχαν επαναστατήσει το 847/6 ΠΧ εναντίον του Ιωράμ, ο οποίος ήταν βασιλιάς του Ιούδα (849 – 842 ΠΧ). Τον ίδιο χρόνο έγινε εισβολή στην Ιουδαία και στην Ιερουσαλήμ από τους Φιλισταίους, τους Άραβες και άλλους.

Όσα αναφέρει ο Οβδιού για την Ιδουμαία είναι γεγονότα τα οποία θα συμβούν στο μέλλον και όχι γεγονότα που είχαν ήδη συμβεί στο παρελθόν.

Το βιβλίο του Οβδιού είναι το συντομότερο απ' όλα τα βιβλία της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης. Αποτελείται μόνο από 21 στίχους κι έχει ως περιεχόμενο τις σχέσεις του λαού του Θεού με τους Ιδουμαίους, τους οποίους ο προφήτης ονομάζει «αδελφούς του Ιακώβ». Η περιγραφή του είναι πολύ ζωηρή και ποιητική και δείχνει ότι το εθνικό του συναίσθημα, όπως και του λαού, είναι βαθιά πληγωμένο.

Το κύριο θέμα του βιβλίου είναι ότι ο Θεός τιμωρεί όσους ανθρώπους παραβιάζουν την ηθική τάξη. Το βιβλίο χωρίζεται σε τρία μέρη:

1. Η απόφαση του Θεού κατά της Ιδουμαίας όπου αναγγέλλει την καταστροφή των Ιδουμαίων για την εχθρική τους στάση και γιατί δεν βοήθησαν τον λαό του Θεού να πολεμήσει τους εχθρούς (στίχοι 1-9).
2. Η αιτία της απόφασης του Θεού όπου αναγγέλλει επίσης παρόμοια τύχη για όλους τους άλλους εχθρούς του Ιούδα (στίχοι 10-16).
3. Η θαυματουργική λύτρωση της Σιών όπου αναγγέλλει ότι οι Ισραηλίτες θα καταλάβουν τις χώρες των εχθρών τους και ο Θεός θα βασιλεύσει με δόξα στη Σιών (στίχοι 17-21).

Στο βιβλίο του Οβδιού παρουσιάζεται ολόκληρο το μεγαλείο του Θεού ως δίκαιος Κριτής ο οποίος αποδίδει στον καθένα ανάλογα με τα έργα του. Γι' αυτό ο Οβδιού έχει απόλυτη και σταθερή πεποίθηση ότι οι Ιδουμαίοι θα τιμωρηθούν για την εχθρική στάση τους προς τους Ιουδαίους. Ξέρουμε, ιστορικά, ότι η Ιδουμαία εξαφανίστηκε και έγινε έρημος. Το ίδιο θα πάθουν όλοι οι λαοί στην κρίση των εθνών την Ημέρα του Κυρίου.

Γιορτάζεται ο Προφήτης Οβδιού στις 19 Νοεμβρίου.



News & Events



Annual Sunday School Picnic of NSW

In a Christ filled atmosphere of joy and unity, and with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the Annual Sunday School Picnic for 2026 was held at Gough Whitlam Park in Earlwood, on Monday 8th of June 2026.

Over 300 Sunday School children from across the parishes of NSW came together with their parents and families. The day began with a series of games and activities for each age group, followed by a picnic lunch with their families and our Parish Priests.

Representing His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia was His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis who conveyed the paternal blessings and love of His Eminence to the children, parents, and teachers. His Grace encouraged the children and reminded them that they all belong to the family of the Church. Referring to the Feast of All Saints that we celebrated the day prior, Bishop Iakovos inspired the children to pray to the saints and communicate with them. Following his talk, he blessed each of the children and gave them a small icon of All Saints as a gift.

The children then participated in mini-Olympics styled activities of races, relays, and tug-of-war with much enthusiasm. Different Sunday School Parishes teamed up to form alliances, with the team of the Parishes of The Resurrection of our Lord Kogarah, Archangel Michael Crows Nest and St Savvas Banksia scoring the most points on the day to be crowned the Sunday School Picnic Champions for 2026.



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