



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

«Λύχνος τοῖς ποσὶ
μου ὁ νόμος σου
καὶ φῶς ταῖς
τρίβοις μου»

Ψαλμ 118, 105

Volume 32, Issue 2

FEBRUARY 2017 – MARCH 2017

A NEW YEAR

Has It A Meaning For You?

Time is passing us by imperceptibly. The years follow one another and we would not know what year it is, were it not for the information abounding around us about its pending arrival.

The New Year 2017 is already here and we all hope it will be better than the one before it. All of us were born at a particular moment in time, and entered the present world, inside which we will grow, develop qualities, knowledge, and abilities. Eventually, we will run the period of our stay here, and will disembark into the unending eternity, which is our permanent and natural abode.

But, what is the substance of time, which we all feel we know the meaning of, and yet if we try to describe it to someone else, we find it quite difficult, and unable to describe its nature? The difficulty lies in the fact that time is so evanescent, it has many phases. Events are transient, they come and go, and they form the Past. Events expected to arrive, form the Future. Finally, if the present was always present and would not move into the past, there would be no time, but Eternity (St. Augustine, "The Confessions").

For the people of the World (those without spiritual pursuits), time means material success of one form or another. On the other hand, for the faithful Christian, time is the most valuable gift given to us by God. The Son of God became man in time, "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). And Jesus Christ worked His liberating mission in time, and made reality the salvation of man.

For each and every one of us, our time on earth is meant to be in the Arena. In the Stadium, within the life of the Church, training for Eternity. From there one becomes



"a son of light", a friend of the Saints and familiar to God. He lives and works, so he can come to know Christ in his life, and adorn himself with Christian Virtues.

Yes, time has great value, and we, the people of God, should make the most of it. St John Chrysostom says: "If you spend your money or even waste it, it is possible for you to gain such in the future. But, if you lose your time, it is very difficult that you will be able to find it again".

A New Year has been given to us, so we can work for our Spiritual Perfection. This involves:

- 1. The Inner Transformation of ourselves**, which incorporates the Christian Virtues into our character. In this battle we are not alone, Jesus is there to protect and strengthen us: "*I am with you always, even to the end of ages*" (Matt 28:20). "*I do not pray for the World, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours*" (John 17:9).
- 2. To generate Missionary Activity**, which spreads the saving message Jesus Christ, brought to the World: "*Go into the World and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" (Mark 16:15).

But how is it that we have reached this deplorable state of affairs, where the Message brought down from Heaven by the Son of God and which fired the hearts of His Disciples to spread the Gospel to all Nations, is only occasionally heard, and is not as a major item of our Christian life?

This state of affairs has to be reversed. We are not like the people who have no spiritual interests. We have been selected to be the "light of the World", and the "Salt of the earth". Our life should be a life of effort and struggle, and we will succeed if fighting in the Arena. ❖

Οσία Μαρία η Αιγυπτία

«**Υ**πόδειγμα μετανοίας
σέ έχοντες πανοσία
Μαρία, Χριστόν δυσώπει έν τῷ
καιρῷ τῆς νηστείας, τοῦτο
ήμῖν δωρηθῆναι ὅπως έν
πίστει καί πόθῳ σέ ἄσμασιν
εὐφημῶμεν.» (Εξάπ. Ὁρθρου,
Κυρ. Ε' Νηστειῶν)

Κεντρικό θέμα της Μεγάλης
Τεσσαρακοστής είναι η
Μετάνοια.

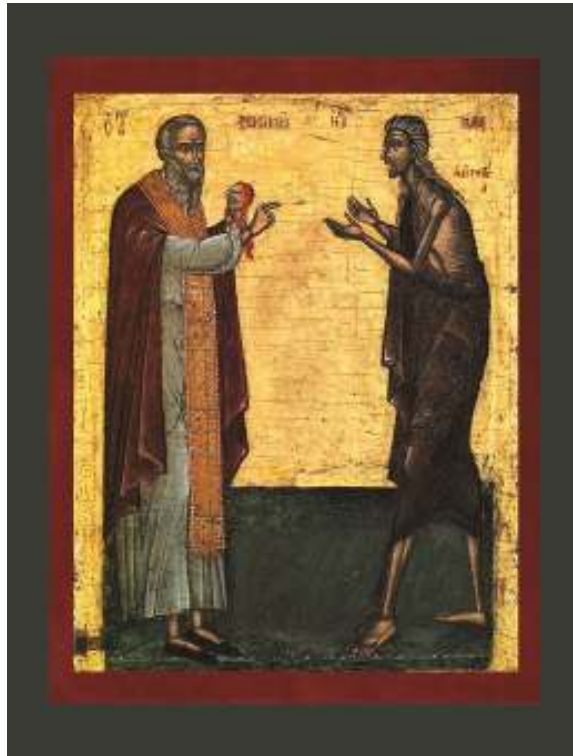
Η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας
βλέπει το βίο της Οσίας
μητέρας μας Μαρίας της
Αιγυπτίας, σα το πιό γνήσιο
«υπόδειγμα» μετανοίας και
μας το προβάλλει για νουθεσία
αλλά και σαν επίκληση μαζί
«τοῦτο ήμῖν δωρηθῆναι...»
δηλ. να δώσει και σε μας ο
Θεός τέτοια θαυμαστή
μετάνοια.

Η πέμπτη Κυριακή της Μ.Τ. είναι αφιερωμένη στη
μνήμη της. Η θαυμαστή βιοτή της περιληπτικά όπως η
ίδια την διηγήθηκε στον Άγιο Γέροντα Ζωσιμά έχει ως
εξής:

Γεννήθηκε στην Αλεξάνδρεια της Αιγύπτου τον 4ον μ.
Χ. αιώνα. Η Μαρία ήταν πανέμορφη παιδούλα, αγνή
και χαριτωμένη. Μα αμέσως, τι φρίκη! Από 12 χρονών
την κερδίζει ο διάβολος. Τη ρίχνει στο βούρκο της
αμαρτίας. Για 17 ολόκληρα χρόνια στον οίστρο της
ακολασίας! Τη ψυχή και το σώμα αμαυρώνουν η
λάσπη της σαρκικής ηδονής.

Αλλά «**Ἔ**ο βάθος πλούτου καί σοφίας Θεού!» (Ρωμ. ΙΑ'
33). Η Μαρία πηγαίνει με πλοίο στα Ιεροσόλημα. Και
κατά το ταξίδι ακόμη η ζωή της ασελγείας και της
διαφθοράς συνεχίζεται.

Είναι η γιορτή της Υψώσεως του Τιμίου Σταυρού.
Λαοθάλασσα πλημμυρίζει τον αυλόγυρο της
Εκκλησίας. Τα πλήθη σπρώχνονται να μπουν στο Ναό,
να προσκυνήσουν το Τίμιο και Ζωοποιό Ξύλο. Μα η
Μαρία δεν μπορεί να μπει. Προσπαθεί ξανά και ξανά.
Μα η ίδια πάντα μυστική δύναμη, αόρατα την
εμποδίζει. Σεισμός γίνεται μέσα της. Πάει παράμερα
και κλαίει. Άφθονα και πικρά τα δάκρυα της. Ζει την



αμαρτωλότητά της. Σημαίνει
γι' αυτή η ώρα της Χάριτος.
Ανοίγουν τα μάτια της,
κατανοεί το έλεος του Θεού.
Δειλά τα χείλη τη ψυθιρίζουν
προσευχή μαζί και υπόσχεση
στη Παναγία Μητέρα του
Θεού.

«Δώσε εντολή Δέσποινα
ν' ανοίξει και σε 'μένα η πόρτα
να προσκυνήσω το Σταυρό του
Υιού σου και Θεού μου και
βάζω εσένα εγγυητή στο Θεό
που γέννησες, πως ποτέ πιά
δεν θα υβρίσω τη σάρκα μου
με αισχρή πράξη».

Από δω αρχίζει η έμπρακτη
μετάνοια της Μαρίας. Εισήλθε
στο Ναό και προσκύνησε τον
Τίμιον Σταυρόν του Κυρίου. Η
συναίσθηση της ενοχής την
συγκλονίζει. Εξαγορεύεται τα

ανομήματά της σε Άγιο Γέροντα, παίρνει την άφεση.
Μεταλαμβάνει Σώμα και Αίμα Χριστού.

Γεμάτη από το Χριστό, με θεία καθοδήγηση προχωρεί
προς την έρημο του Ιορδάνου. Στην έρημο της
μετανοίας της. Εκεί για 17 χρόνια - όσα και τα χρόνια
της αμαρτωλής ζωής της - θα παλέψει με τους
δαίμονες. Θα χτυπηθεί. Θα πληγωθεί μα θα σηκωθεί
πάλι να συνεχίσει τους ασκητικούς αγώνες της. Ο
Σταυρός του Κυρίου τη δυναμώνει. Στα χείλη της
πάντα η προσευχή - Κύριε Ιησού σώσε με την
αμαρτωλή.

Στην έρημο του Ιορδάνου θα ζήσει η Μαρία η Αιγυπτία
συνολικά 47 χρόνια άθλησης. Εκεί στα βάθη της
ερήμου έμαθε και διδάσκει και μας: «**Υπερορῶν μὲν
σαρκός, παρέρχεται γάρ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι δὲ ψυχῆς
πράγματος ἀθανάτου**».

Έγινε η Μαρία όλη φως, γέμισε από το Άγιο Πνεύμα,
πετούσε πάνω από τη γη. Τη σταυροαναστάσιμη ζωή
της θα τη σφραγίσει η τελευταία της εξομολόγηση
στον Άγιο Ζωσιμά και η ψυχή της λευκή σαν το χιόνι -
αφού κοινωνήσει Σώμα και Αίμα Χριστού - θα
φτερουγίσει ανάλαφρη στη κατάπαυση των Αγίων.

Νά'χουμε τις ευχές της και τις μεσιτείες της.

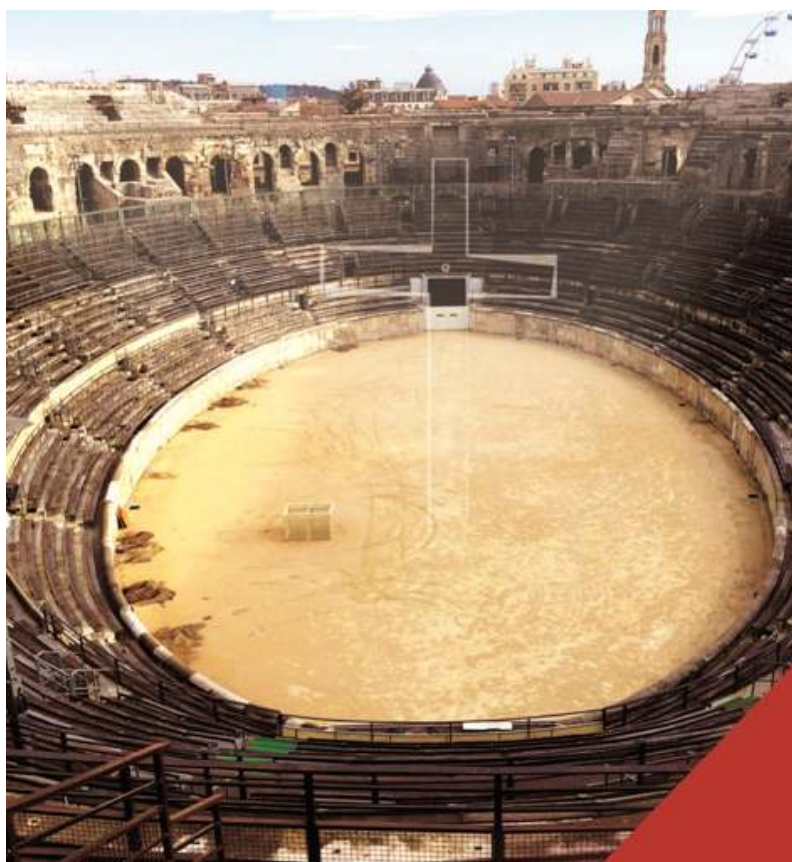


THE ARENA OF VIRTUES

*For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His face come knowledge and understanding;
and He stores up salvation for the upright. He will protect their journey.*
(Prov 2:6-8, reading during the first Wednesday of Holy Lent)

We tend to think of an arena today as a place where athletes compete in order to attain a precious prize. Winning such a prize requires practice, strenuous exercise, discipline and great determination. In the great sporting arenas of our times, superhuman effort is required to actually become a winner. The arena of virtues, in contrast to the sports arena, refers to the period of Great Lent and it specifically has to do with the spiritual contest in which Orthodox Christians are called to exercise all of the above attributes. The Christian, in contrast to the worldly athlete however, does not compete for a worldly crown but instead seeks to attain a closer relationship with Christ, the Wisdom of the Father. Here there is no sense of human superiority but the need to look inwards and strive for humility. This requires prayer, ascetic practice and renunciation of all worldly honours. Athletes and Christians both need to be disciplined, but their goals are very different; the former seek self-glory, the latter want to glorify their Lord and God while renouncing self.

What are the real benefits of seeking such a humble relationship? Will such a striving for Wisdom offer the type of joy that an athlete has when he or she wins a worldly prize, or does the attainment of Christian virtues represent something which is not valued by most people, even those who are close to us? In the above excerpt from Proverbs we are told that Christ, who is the Wisdom of the Father, places the crown of virtues upon those who reverence Him, who seek Him, who fear Him, who actively set out to find the treasure that is hidden in God's paths. Very few know and appreciate the true value of undertaking such a journey because there is not a tangible crown made of gold or precious metal at the end of such a spiritual contest. For struggling Christians there is no applause, and in particular the period of Great Lent, appears austere because its hymns are mainly prayers of contrition not songs of triumph. For those willing to undertake this path, however, of self-



denial and self-reflection, the crown offered by Christ is far greater in worth than any material treasure; it is the acquisition of understanding, an understanding of righteousness and judgement and a realisation of the promise by God to His children that He will protect them; He will aid them in their struggle to follow the path of virtue and renounce the evil road of vices.

Our Church, during this period referred to as "the arena of virtues", has given us so many tools to help us undertake the spiritual struggle through fasting, repentance and contrition. Holy and Great Lent reminds us of the promises of our Lord, His great sacrifice and our eternal debt towards Him and it gives us the opportunity to sacrifice our self-will in order to strive for a higher goal.



Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος του Τήρωνος
(και το θαύμα των Κολλύβων)

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος γεννήθηκε το 303 εις την πόλη Απαμεία του Πόντου. Ονομάσθηκε Τήρων, διότι ήτο από τους νεοσυλλέκτους αξιωματικούς του Ρωμαϊκού στρατού. (Tiro or Tyro comes from the Latin and means new or "rookie" to a service). Φωτισμένος από τον Θεό, ο Θεόδωρος θεώρησε καθήκον να υπερασπίσει την πίστη του, και τους χριστιανούς που υπέφεραν από τους διωγμούς των Ρωμαίων Αυτοκρατόρων, αλλά και από ένα τεράστιο και τρομερό θηρίο που ζούσε στο δάσος του Ελλησπόνδου. Με το σημείο του Σταυρού σαν ασπίδα του, κυνήγησε το τρομερό ζώο, το οποίο και σκότωσε με το τόξο του. Μετά απ' αυτό το κατόρθωμα, ο Θεόδωρος ετοιμαζόταν να κάνει γνωστή την πίστη του, η οποία θα τον βοηθούσε να επιτεθεί και εναντίον θηρίων πνευματικών πειρασμών.

Το κατόρθωμα του έγινε γρήγορα γνωστό, και ο Διοικητής του στρατού τον διέταξε να θυσιάσει στους θεούς των ειδώλων, για την βοήθεια που του έδωσαν να σκοτώσει το θηρίο. Ο Θεόδωρος αρνήθηκε να βγει έξω από την σκηνή του, λέγοντας ότι **«Εγώ λατρεύω τον Χριστό. Αυτός είναι ο βασιλιάς που υπηρετώ, και σ' αυτόν μόνο είμαι διαθέσιμος να θυσιάσω»**.

Ο Διοικητής διέταξε να δικάσουν τον Θεόδωρο για ασέβεια προς τους Θεούς. Στην σκοτεινή φυλακή που τον έβαλαν, έψελνε ύμνους στο Θεό, αλλά ούτε έτρωγε ούτε έπινε καθόλου. Τελικά τον έδεσαν σε ένα στύλο, στον οποίον έβαλαν φωτιά και κήκε ζωντανός μαζί με τον στύλο.

Περίπου 30 χρόνια μετά τον θάνατο του Αγίου, Αυτοκράτορας στο Βυζάντιο ήταν ο *Ιουλιανός ο Παραβάτης*, ο οποίος διέταξε όλες οι τροφές στην αγορά την πρώτη εβδομάδα της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής να ραντίζονται με αίμα από ζώα που είχαν θυσιάσθει στα είδωλα – ώστε να μολύνει την νηστεία των χριστιανών, και να καταστρέψει την ασκητική πράξη της νηστείας τους.

Ο Άγιος τότε παρουσιάστηκε στον Πατριάρχη Ευδόξιο, του φανέρωσε το σχέδιο του Αυτοκράτορα, και τον διέταξε να πληροφορήσει τους χριστιανούς να μη φάνε τίποτε από τις αγορές εκείνο τον καιρό, αλλά να τρώνε **κόλλυβα** (από βραστό σιτάρι), και έτσι δεν μολύνθηκαν από την ειδωλολατρία.

Ο Θεός όμως ο Οποίος δίνει δύναμη στα φυτά, και που δυναμώνει και το σιτάρι που σπέρνουμε, με το να διατάζει τους χριστιανούς να φάγουν **κόλλυβα**, τους απεκάλυψε συνάμα και την δική τους Ανάσταση. Η Εκκλησία γιορτάζει το θαύμα αυτό των **κολλύβων το πρώτο Σάββατο της Μεγάλης Νηστείας** του Πάσχα, ώστε οι πιστοί με νηστεία και υπακοή, να έχουν την δύναμη να καθαρίσουν την ψυχή τους από τις αμαρτίες τους. ❖

From the Saints of our Church

St Theodore Tyron
(and the Miracle of the Kollyva)

St Theodore was born under Emperor Maximian's rule around 303 AD. His epithet, of Tyron, is derived from the Latin "tiro", meaning "newly enlisted soldier". His Christian faith was kept secret whilst he was a Roman legionary in Pontus. Enlightened by God, Theodore knew that it was time for martyrdom when he heard about a frightening dragon in the forest of Helenopontus. With the sign of the Cross as his guide, Theodore speared the dragon and killed it. Subsequently he was prepared to reveal his faith, which would conquer other beasts of temptation. When the commander ordered a sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, Theodore refused to leave his tent, exclaiming: "I adore only Christ. He is the King whom I serve, and to Him only am I willing to offer sacrifice!"

Then began a series of trials for Theodore. In the confines of his gloomy dungeon, he sang hymns constantly and refused to eat the bread or drink the water provided. He eventually was sent to be burnt at the stake. As the holy martyr approached the flames, he prayed for his fellow Christians who he encouraged to confess without fear.

Around thirty years after his repose, the emperor Julian the Apostate ordered that all the food sold in the markets be sprinkled with the blood of animals sacrificed to the idols, in order to desecrate the first week of Lent for the Christians. Appearing in a vision to Patriarch Eudoxius (360-364), Saint Theodore instructed him to warn the Christians to eat *kollyva* instead, the boiled grains of



wheat. Thus the Christians were guarded against idolatry. Just as God faithfully gives body to the bare grain sown in the earth, so *kollyva* symbolise the promise of the Resurrection. The Church commemorates this miracle on the first Saturday of Great Lent, in order to remind the faithful that fasting and obedience have the power to cleanse all the stains of sin. ❖

Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

Why Does the Orthodox Church Value Asceticism?

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them two commandments: (1) to tend and keep the garden, and (2) to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit. Both of these commandments were ways of practising asceticism. There were further instances of asceticism in the Old Testament, for example, with Jonah and the Ninevites. In the New Testament, we read about the ascetical life of St John the Baptist. Christ Himself fasted for forty days prior to starting his ministry, and at other times, he would retreat at night to pray. He had stated that his followers were to fast as well (Matthew 9:15). The early Christians also gave emphasis to fasting and prayer (e.g., Acts 10:30, 13:2-3, 27:21). Asceticism was taken up in full fervour by those who left the cities to go to the deserts as monks, nuns or hermits. Countless Saints have been formed by the ascetic tradition, which has been preserved in the Orthodox Church.

But what is asceticism? Asceticism consists of spiritual labours that include prayer, fasting, prostrations, vigils, hardships or canons of various sorts, and contemplation. Acts of asceticism combine physical undertakings in conjunction with focusing the heart and mind towards God.

Why fast? Why subject the body to such exercises? How does asceticism help? And is it just for monks and nuns?

The purpose of our lives is deification, which means to become saints. In order to be deified, we need to be illumined with Christ. And in order to be illumined, we need to be cleansed from our spiritual stains; those blotches on our souls separate us from the love of God. Those stains are our sins; our bad habits and evil inclinations.

Ascetic practices are the methods of cleansing our hearts. They are our gymnasium; the training program for the spiritual Olympics, which is the great and final judgement. They are the true and trusted method of cleansing the body, mind, heart and soul.

Asceticism is the antidote to the idolatries of materialism and egotism that pervades our contemporary life.

Asceticism is not the goal of the spiritual life but simply



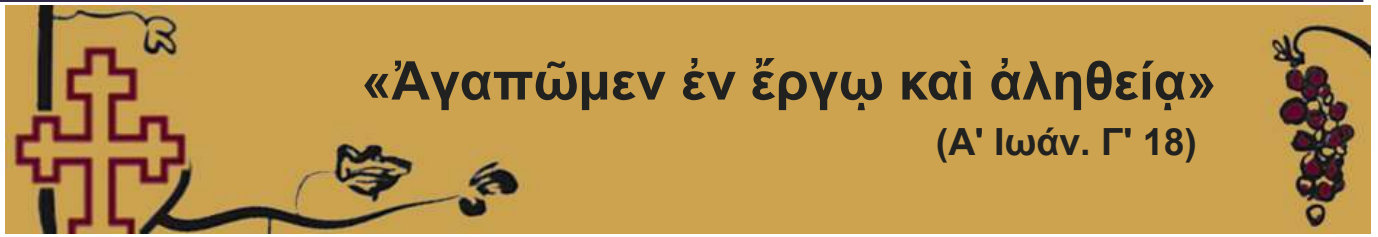
the method. Asceticism is not about building “points” or achievements of spiritual feats; such an approach often leads to pride. Instead, it is the product of our repentance. We remember the example of Zacchaeus, whose repentance was realised through his almsgiving and hence his personal deprivation.

And just as an athlete requires a coach to guide them to train and preparing correctly, any ascetical endeavour requires spiritual coaching. These coaches are our spiritual fathers. Without such guidance, our ascetical efforts are likely to miss the mark.

Whilst monks and nuns have very specific methods of asceticism, we too can benefit from the ascetical *phronema*, or mindset. We can try and live simply, without excesses. We can try to observe the prescribed fasts of the Church. We can attend Church services as much as possible. We can practise almsgiving. We can familiarise ourselves with the prayer rope (*χομπσοκλίνι*) and the Jesus Prayer. And as stated, these efforts need to be guided by our spiritual father.

When done properly, asceticism gives us the wings to soar into the embrace of God’s love. We thus pray that the good Lord inspires and guides us to espouse an appropriate ascetical *phronema*. Amen.

† Fr G. L. ✠



Το φετινό μας σύνθημα μας αναγκάζει και μας προκαλεί να κάνουμε μιά βαθύτερη και πιο υπεύθυνη αναθεώρηση της Ιεραποστολής μας.

Στη διάδοση του Λόγου του Θεού, με την κατήχηση και τις χριστιανικές ομάδες, στις εσωτερικές και εξωτερικές ιεραποστολές μας, στις φιλανθρωπικές μας δραστηριότητες και όπουδήποτε αλλού, καλούμεθα πρωτίστως να αγαπούμε, έτσι ώστε τα έργα μας να είναι και ευεργετικά αλλά και αληθινά.

Στη συνέχεια ο Ευαγγελιστής της Αγάπης μας τονίζει ότι με την ειλικρινή αγάπη και την ευεργεσία στους άλλους, γνωρίζουμε ότι καταγόμαστε από την Αλήθεια και έχουμε αναγεννηθή από το Θεό.

Η ποιότητα του έργου μας και ο τρόπος που το επιτελούμε καθορίζουν τις σχέσεις μας με το Θεό-Πατέρα που είναι η Αυτοαγάπη και η Αυτοαλήθεια.

Στις σχέσεις μας με τους άλλους πρέπει να είμαστε τίμιοι και ειλικρινείς τόσο στα λόγια όσο και στα έργα. Διαφορετικά η ζωή μας θα είναι ανώφελη και ίσως και σκανδαλώδης.

Η Αγάπη του Θεού είναι διάχυτη. Κυκλοφορεί μέσα μας και ανάμεσά μας. Μας δίδει ζωή και μας καλεί να την εκφράζουμε στους αδελφούς μας με την ιεραποστολή - ο καθένας από το πόστο του.

Αυτή η προσφορά της Αγάπης αγκαλιάζει ολόκληρο το ανθρώπινο πρόσωπο **«ψυχή τε και σώματι»**. Είναι «έμπρακτη» αγάπη και φανερώνει αφ'ενός ότι όλοι ενός πατέρα είμαστε παιδιά και αφ'ετέρου την παρουσία του Κυρίου ανάμεσά μας. Μόνο μέσα σ'ένα τέτοιο κλίμα αγάπης και προσφοράς ευδοκιμούν οι καρποί της ιεραποστολής, και με τη χάρη του Κυρίου μας σώζονται ψυχές.

Το γεγονός ότι η ιεραποστολική μας δράση, είναι συνεργός σωτηρίας για τους αδελφούς μας, αποδεικνύει πως το «έργο» μας ανήκει στα **«καλά και ωφέλιμα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις» (Τίτον Γ' 8)**. Έτσι τα χαρακτηρίζει ο Απ. Παύλος στον αγαπητό του μαθητή τον Τίτο.

Μια καλή πράξη αξίζει, γιατί εκφράζει την κοινωνία της αγάπης του Χριστού ανάμεσα στους ανθρώπους. Σ'αυτή τη κατεύθυνση κινούμεθα μέσα από τις διάφορες μορφές της ιεραποστολής μας που μας οδηγούν σε μιά ζωντανή σχέση και προσωπική γνωριμία με τους αδελφούς μας. Άλλωστε ο

χριστιανισμός δεν είναι μόνο θεωρία, είναι και πράξη. Απαράμιλλο παράδειγμα γι'αυτό ο ίδιος ο Κύριος Ημών Ιησούς Χριστός.

Η επί του όρους ομιλία του - ανεξάρτητα πόσο υπέροχη και μεγαλειώδης - δεν θα είχε τόση απήχηση αν δεν σφραγιζόταν με το αίμα της θυσίας του πάνω στο Γολγοθά. Τι κι αν πολλοί δεν τον πίστεψαν; **Είναι δυνατόν κανείς να κρύψει την Αλήθεια;** Όποιος θέλει να σβύσει το φως της αλήθειας σβύνει πρώτος αυτός. Η αλήθεια εξακολουθεί να λάμπει και να φωτίζει γιατί ο Χριστός είναι η πηγή της Αλήθειας.

«Ἐγὼ εἶμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ» (Ιωάν. ΙΔ' 6)

Γι'αυτό ό,τι είναι αληθινό εξακολουθεί να παραμένει να καθοδηγεί να φωτίζει. Έχουμε ανάγκη από την αλήθεια του Θεού δηλαδή από το Λόγο Του διότι **«ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθεια ἔστι» (Ιωάν. ΙΖ' 17)**. Αυτή την Αλήθεια πρέπει να αποκτήσουμε.

Απαιτούνται δύο βασικές προϋποθέσεις.

Ειλικρίνεια και ταπεινωση. Ο ειλικρινής άνθρωπος ομολογεί τα σφάλματά του, καθαρίζει τη καρδιά του με τη μετάνοια και έρχεται σε επαφή με την αλήθεια.

Ο ταπεινός άνθρωπος αναγνωρίζει την υπεροχή της Αλήθειας και δέχεται να τον κυβερνά στη ζωή του.

Ορίστε οι προκλήσεις του Νέου μας συνθήματος. **«Ἀγαπῶμεν ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ»**.

Ας ευχηθούμε το φετινό μας σύνθημα να αποτελέσει μια συνεχή υπενθύμιση χρέους και καθήκοντος προς όλους τους συνανθρώπους μας. ❖

ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΧΡΙ

ΦΙΛΙΚΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΥΚΛΟΣ

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EN EPT



IN DEED



“Let us love in deed and in truth”

(1 John 3:18)

Ap^ostle John’s Epistle underscores the close relationship between the first great commandment - love of God, and the second - love of others. Words, thoughts and feelings are of lesser importance. Rather ACTS of love and mercy are the hard evidence of faith in God. It is with this background that St John advises his flock: “My little children, let us not love in **word or in tongue, but in deed and truth**” (1 John 3:18).

Love is the fundamental and determining characteristic of Christianity. Our Lord Jesus is the ultimate example of love – he came to earth to serve, to teach and ultimately

give his life out of love. So St John reprimands those who *say* they love others, but when it comes down to practical sacrifices, don’t do them. That’s what he means by loving “in word and tongue.” It’s not real. Deeds of sacrifice validate words of love. Love **MUST** take ACTION.

It is the deeds in our life that materialize our love and make it real. In fact, our Christian identity is proven when we put our love into action, as Christ himself tells us: “by this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another (John 13:35). Christian deeds of love involve giving with no expectation of receiving anything in return. In this way we mimic God’s pure love, and not the self-interested love of the world. St Paisios explains: “For our love to be genuine, we must purify it; we must take our self out of our love”. Furthermore, deeds of pure love require self-sacrifice. “Christianity

has value when it costs us” writes Father Epiphanius in the well-known Counsels for Life. Is it costing us? Are we paying a price? Are we willing to help at home after a long day of work or school? Do we go above and beyond the job we’ve been asked to do out of love for our mother or father or wife or husband? Do we give up our time when we are busy to help someone else? Do we get involved in volunteer or charitable work even when we

have such busy lives? Our Lord says: “When someone compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matt 5:41). St Kosmas Aitolos is crystal-clear in his direction to us modern Christians: “The Martyrs won Paradise through their blood; the Ascetics, through their ascetic life. Now you, my brethren, who have children, how will you win Paradise? By means of hospitality, by giving to your brothers who are poor, blind, or lame.” Loving in deed means loving through generosity and hospitality. St John’s words speak to us today personally just as they did to the Christians of the early Church. We all know the truth of the old saying: “actions speak louder than words”. At the final judgment, no matter how many good intentions we had in our life, the only thing that will count will be the actions we performed towards others and before God himself: “For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me”... Assuredly I say to you in as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me” (Matt 25:35-36, 40)

This year may we all strive to love in deed and in truth – cultivating pure and genuine love for God and all people – so that we too, with God’s grace may hear at the final day: “Come, all you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34).



ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΙΣ

Ω ΚΑΙ ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ
Α ΙΩΑΝ 3:18



AND IN TRUTH
1 JOHN 3:18

Θ Η Μ Α
17

ΧΡΗΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΕΣ ΝΕΑΝΙΚΕΣ ΟΜΑΔΕΣ

Προσευχή και Νηστεία

Η νηστεία, δεν είναι μια ανθρώπινη ιδέα, είναι **εντολή του Θεού**. Η πρώτη. Την έδωσε ο Θεός στον Αδάμ μέσα στον Παράδεισο (**Γεν Β' 16-17**) Ο Ιησούς Χριστός με την διδασκαλία του αλλά και τις πράξεις του μας φανέρωσε πως η νηστεία μαζί με την προσευχή είναι πανίσχυρο όπλο κατά των διαφόρων πειρασμών και του Διαβόλου. Στην Αγία Γραφή, (**Μαρκ Θ' 17-31**), αναφέρεται ότι: Ένας δυστυχισμένος πατέρας, με δακρυσμένα μάτια και πικραμένη καρδιά, είχε φέρει το άρρωστο παιδί του στο Χριστό:

Διδάσκαλε, σου έφερα τον γιο μου, που τον κυρίευσε δαιμονικό πνεύμα και του πήρε τη φωνή. Υποφέρει πολύ! Όταν τον πιάσει, τον ρίχνει στη γη, τον κάνει ν' αφρίζει, να τρίζει τα δόντια του και τον αφήνει ξερό και αναίσθητο. Κύριε, εάν μπορείς να κάνεις κάτι, λυπήσου μας και βοήθησέ μας. Ο Χριστός που είναι γιατρός των ψυχών και των σωμάτων ημών, το γιάτρεψε. Και όταν μαθητές Του Τον ρώτησαν: Γιατί, Κύριε, εμείς δεν μπορέσαμε να κάνουμε αυτό το θαύμα; Εκείνος τους λέγει **ότι τα πονηρά πνεύματα απομακρύνονται μόνο με προσευχή και νηστεία.**

Ο άνθρωπος που νηστεύει, δεν δυσκολεύεται να



προσευχηθεί, δεν κουράζεται από το βάρος των φαγητών ή από το βάρος των τύψεων, αλλά είναι ανάλαφρος. **Η νηστεία που ορίζει η Εκκλησία μας δίνει φτερά στην προσευχή, διότι ταπεινώνει τον άνθρωπο. Τον γυμνάζει σωματικά και ψυχικά.** Απονεκρώνει τις σαρκικές επιθυμίες και ηδονές και προετοιμάζει το σώμα κατάλληλα για να μην καταστεί εμπόδιο, αλλά να υπηρετήσει την ψυχή την ώρα της προσευχής. Μια τέτοια προσευχή, που γίνεται με νηστεία τροφών και παθών, επειδή έχει το στοιχείο της ταπεινώσεως, αυξάνει

και την πίστη. Και γίνεται έτσι μια ζωντανή εμπειρία, αυξάνει τη θερμότητα της καρδιάς μας, μας κάνει να αισθανόμαστε την παρουσία του Θεού μπροστά μας. Και φέρνει τη χάρη του Θεού και το θαύμα.

Αυτά ακριβώς τα δυο πνευματικά όπλα, την προσευχή συνδυασμένη με τη νηστεία, μας καλεί η Εκκλησία μας να χρησιμοποιήσουμε περισσότερο τώρα κατά την περίοδο της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής.

Ας συνεχίσουμε λοιπόν τον αγώνα μας στον πνευματικό στίβο με τα όπλα αυτά και θα έχουμε μαζί μας την ακατανίκητη δύναμη της Χάριτος του Θεού.



A Letter from Sunday School...

Dear Parents,

Our children are our hope. We believe in their purity and their enthusiasm, their courage and their strength. Today's young generation is faced with difficult issues. Unprecedented challenges, modern technology, social media (Facebook, Instagram). All these influence our children, the negative effects are already emerging (change in behaviour, complexes of isolation/loneliness, etc.).

From its very beginning, Sunday School was indispensable for the proper upbringing of our youth. We believe that in our days, the need for Sunday Schools is immensely more intense and most imperative. Our youth need to know Christ. Every child is a mystery and can be brought up properly only within the Sacraments (Mysteries) of our Church. This sacramental life has the strength to transform these tender young souls.

Along with the knowledge that the world gives our children, we must also equip them with an upbringing that is spiritual, mystical, and Christocentric.

This is how we and our children are saved.

*With Christ's love,
Sunday School*



(Classes for children aged 4-16 are held every Sunday morning at all parishes, either from 9-10 am or immediately after the Church service. For more information, contact your local parish priest.)



Gospel Reading February 5th
(Luke 18:10-14)
Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee

The Lenten Triodion, marking the period of ten weeks leading up to Pascha, begins with the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee. During this time, the Church calls us to focus on our personal repentance and relationship with Christ.

In this parable, the Pharisee had kept correctly all the external rules of uprightness. For example, he was not an adulterer, he fasted twice a week, and he regularly gave away one tenth of all he possessed. Outwardly he did all the right things, and he thought these external actions would justify him before God.



In contrast, the tax collector had broken all the Commandments of God. In fact, tax collectors at the time of Christ were held up as a template of what it was to be a sinner - they were Jews who betrayed their own people by working for the Romans, collecting excess taxes than they needed to, keeping the extra money for themselves. So this tax collector really was a sinner. He failed to keep the Commandments, stealing money from the poor and needful.

However when this man came into the Temple to pray, he did not dare stand in front like the Pharisee: he did not dare thank God that he was not like other people. At that moment, the tax collector knew *who* he was and *what* he was, because he had had a real encounter with the living God. In that moment, he knew his sin, humbled himself and said: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Unlike the Pharisee, he left the Temple justified before God because he recognised his faults, humbled himself and asked for mercy from the all-merciful Christ.

The lesson for us is that the narrow path, the royal path, is to be like that Pharisee and to keep the rules our Church has gifted us, but to keep those rules with humility and gratitude. Fasting-prayer-almsgiving, when done with humility and gratitude, **should open to us the grace of God**. And then, when we keep those rules with a humble heart, the strange thing is, no matter how righteous we are externally, we will still pray the Publican's prayer: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" the eternal song of the Saints!



Elder Ephraim of Katounakia (1912-1998)

Elder Ephraim of Katounakia, Mt Athos, is one of the greatest and most memorable elders of the twentieth century. He was a giant of Athonite hesychasm, renowned for his obedience and his gifts of clairvoyance.

The Elder began his life on Athos in 1933 at Katounakia, the desert of Mt Athos, and remained there until his repose in 1998. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1936.



Even though he did not live in the brotherhood of Elder Joseph the Hesychast, Elder Ephraim was wholeheartedly devoted to Elder Joseph. His own elder, Elder Nikiphoros, was an extremely severe and simple monk who could not offer the young Father Ephraim guidance in the frequent spiritual states he was experiencing. Father Ephraim found the water he had long thirsted for in the teachings and guidance of his beloved Elder Joseph. He found answers to all his questions, receiving direction in the patristic tradition. Elder Joseph taught him about the Jesus prayer, about the fruits of obedience, about the life of divine Grace, and opened for him the doors to an earthly paradise.

But what a dilemma for Father Ephraim! He lived in a brotherhood of elders ignorant of the treasures he had discovered. He had thoughts of leaving to join the brotherhood of Elder Joseph, but the wondrous fruits of spiritual progress were to be won through the life of absolute obedience and so, he remained with Elder Nikiphoros. Elder Joseph once whispered to him: "I know your thoughts and your entire spiritual state. Don't be afraid; I'll never leave you alone". Such words sufficed to comfort the young priestmonk.

Thus, a life of obedience saw this holy man receive gifts beyond belief. He became a luminary for the entire Holy Mountain and the Orthodox faithful who made the journey to receive his blessing. From lived experience, Elder Ephraim repeated to all who would listen that "obedience is life; disobedience, death".





What we Hear in Church



FROM THE HOLY FATHERS...

Prayer from the Compline Service to our Guardian Angel

«Άγιε Άγγελε, ό έφρεστώς τής άθλίας μου ψυχής και τα-
λαιώρου μου ζωής...»

*“Holy Angel, overseer of my wretched soul and miser-
able life...”*

In the daily cycle of prayers in the Orthodox Church, there exist the services of the Great and Small Compline (απόδειπνο), which are performed after the evening meal and before the nightly sleep. The Great Compline (Μέγα Απόδειπνο) is usually performed in our Churches during the weekdays of Great Lent. The Small Compline can be performed in Church with a priest, however its structure lends itself to being performed as part of personal prayer in one’s home or in one’s own cell in monastic practice.

Just before the conclusion of the service, a personal prayer to our Guardian Angel is read. This begins: “Holy Angel, overseer of my wretched soul and miserable life...” The prayer is written as a plea, largely penitent in tone and reveals the following truths about our relationship with our guardian angel.

Firstly, our guardian angels provide great protection against demonic temptations and attacks. St John Chrysostom in his sermon on the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels states: “The Angels are honoured, for they are our allies against the opposing foes that war against us.”

Angels are Holy beings in Orthodox understanding, immaterial creations of God endowed with free will. However as Saint Basil explains in his treatise on the Holy Spirit: “their sanctification, being external to their substance, causes their perfection through the communion of the Spirit. They keep their rank by their abiding in the good and true, and while they retain their freedom of will, never fall away from their patient attendance on Him who is truly good.” The Angels can strengthen us, as the prayer states, in our fear of God, because they utilize their will to stay firmly obedient and attached to the will of God. This fear is not to be scared of God Himself, but to be fearful of being sinful in the eyes of God. Our Guardian Angel not only protects us from the Devil, he also bears witness to our whole life, our birth, our rebirth through Baptism, the rises and falls of our spiritual life and eventually the separation of soul and body in death. ❖

Elder Sophrony - On Prayer

The practice of prayer has been described widely by many Church Fathers. It is common to all practising Christians, traceable even to the first-created Adam and Eve. The practice of prayer remains pertinent to all of us in the modern age. For example, the Jesus Prayer (‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’) continues to be widely used by monastics and lay Orthodox living in the world.

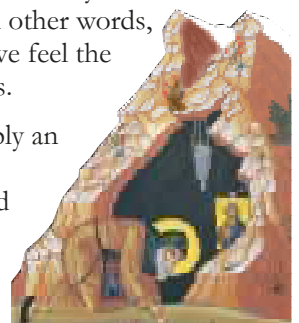


Prayer is often described as vital - the oxygen of the soul, the fuel of the spirit. And yet if we ask ourselves what is true prayer, often our definitions are found wanting. Elder Sophrony, a modern day father who died in 1993 and founder of the Monastery of St John the Baptist in Essex England, offers a refreshing and moving testimony to his understanding of prayer.

For the Elder, prayer is a creative effort, far superior to any form of art or science. It is the means by which we enter into communion with God, our Creator. It is a bridge between our all-loving Creator and His creation.

The Elder does acknowledge that often, prayer can be difficult. “At times prayer seems over-slow in bringing results” the Elder sympathises, “and life is so short”. However, he highlights that prayer must initially stem from a repentant heart. In particular, we must acknowledge that our sins have created a distance from God, leading us to a state of ‘blessed despair’. We then seek out God, in a way “by force” (Matthew 11:12), travelling “the hard road of ascetic effort for the Divine gift to grow in us. And when this wondrous gift starts to ripen and its fragrance penetrates the pores of our ‘body of sin’ (Rom 6:6), the fear of death departs and we are delivered from bondage. And in the holy freedom thus found, we wish all men well”. In other words, it is with a repentant heart that we feel the spirit of prayer and reap its fruits.

For the Elder, prayer is not simply an act done by obligation. It is an experience yearned for and relied upon for our minds to rise to God, and there be comforted and guided. ❖





Kollyva (Κόλλυβα)

In the loving arms of our Mother church **no-one**, living or dead, is forgotten.

Why do we pray for the dead? We know that there is **no repentance** after we die. A person's eternal destiny is determined immediately upon death. Praying for them is an expression of **love** - a love that survives and transcends death. We pray for those who have died, just as we pray for those who are living because we are all members of Christ's Church.

The family of the departed prepare a plate of kollyva (κόλλυβα - boiled wheat), which is placed on a table in front of the altar. The kollyva can be mixed with several ingredients, including pomegranate, sesame, almonds, walnuts, cinnamon, sugar, sultanas, parsley and shaped into a mould to resemble a grave with a cross decorated on top. A list of first names of the deceased loved ones is given to the priest. At the end of the service, the kollyva are distributed to the faithful who respond with "May God rest his/her soul".

The connection between wheat and memorial services is based on the words of Jesus in reference to the resurrection: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

Just as new life rises from the buried kernel of wheat, so the Church believes that the one buried will rise one day to a new life in God. The wheat is covered in sugar and sultanas to symbolise the bliss of eternal life in heaven. Memorial services with kollyva are conducted for the dead on the 40th day after their departure, and then again on the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12 months and every year just prior to the anniversary of their passing.

Every Saturday in the Orthodox Church is dedicated to remembrance of the dead. In addition, we have general commemorations for all the departed (known as the Saturday of souls) on the second Saturday preceding Great Lent and the Saturday before Pentecost. The Saturday at the end of the first week of Lent is the remembrance of the miracle of the kollyva by St Theodore of Tyron.

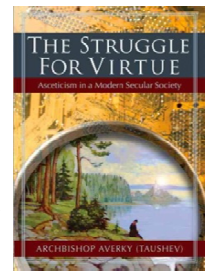
Exactly to what extent our prayers for our departed loved ones bring any benefit to them we do not know. We leave this to the mercy of God. But one thing we are certain. Such prayers do benefit those who pray for the departed. They remind us that we too are going to die. They assist our spiritual struggle by making us more diligent and cautious in getting ready for that ultimate journey.



The Struggle for Virtue: Asceticism in a Modern Secular Society

By Archbishop Averky Taushev, Published by Holy Trinity Publications, 2014

In *The Struggle for Virtue: Asceticism in a Modern Secular Society*, Archbishop Averky Taushev has skilfully gathered the teachings of the Orthodox Church Fathers on the spiritual struggle, and has presented it in a clear and very personal way that touches, teaches, and inspires.



Archbishop Averky addresses the question: 'What is asceticism?' He counters the many false understandings that exist. He explains how it heals and transforms the human person and how it is integral to the spiritual life and the path to blessed communion with God.

'The Holy Fathers say that he who desires to be victorious in unseen warfare must establish the following four dispositions or inclinations in his heart: (1) never in any way rely on yourself; (2) always have in your heart complete, resolute hope in the One God; (3) work unceasingly; and (4) always be in prayer.'

He writes wisely, with simplicity and great clarity from his personal experience on asceticism, freedom, virtue, how to keep trying, never despairing, and in a troubled world holding belief in the God of Love.

'Man's personal efforts are like a receiver for the grace of God. The greater and more decisive these efforts are, the greater is the grace-filled help from God that they attract.'

The various topics covered include: the essence and meaning of asceticism; Christian humility; spiritual discernment; acquiring Gospel Love; reawakening our conscience; freedom; guarding the heart amidst the distractions of life; resisting evil; the Christian struggle in waging unseen warfare; and, the Holy Fathers' advice on combating the passions.

It is a compelling book that confronts us and helps us to reflect and contemplate. It puts our actions, thoughts, and focus in perspective as to where we are going and what is meaningful to us. It kindles a desire to root out evil and the passions within, to live a life of virtue, and grow spiritually in Christ.

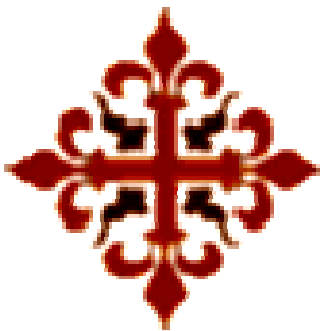


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NEWS and VIEWS

Summer Camps

During the months of January and February, the Boys and Girls Ομάδες (Youth Fellowships) as well as the Men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society held their annual Camps at Mangrove Mountain, about 90 minutes north of Sydney. The Boys and Girls Camps were held on the 16-20/21st January, whilst the Men's Camp was held on the weekend of the 3-5th February. The theme of the Camps was "love in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18) (see pages 6-7 of this issue). A particular blessing of all the Camps were the Divine Liturgy Services officiated by Fr Eusebios, Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery, as well as the Compline Service at Holy Cross Monastery for the Girls. The Camps were also privileged to have several local, interstate and overseas visitors from Mangrove Mountain, Sydney, Adelaide and New Zealand, including Fr Jeremy Krieg from St Nectarios Parish, Croydon Park, Adelaide. ☩



Members of the Boys Ομάδα Camp with Fr Eusebios, following the Divine Liturgy Service at Pantanassa Monastery.



The men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society, with Fr Eusebios and Fr Jeremy Krieg (Adelaide), at their annual Camp.



Participants of the Girls' Camp, surviving the heat wave with cool water!

Ακούτε το ραδιοφωνικό πρόγραμμα
«Η ΦΩΝΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑΣ»

κάθε **Κυριακή**:

10:45 π.μ. στο 2MM-AM 1665

11:00 π.μ. στο 2ERA-FM 151.675 (scanner)

5:30 μ.μ. στο Galaxia FM 151.850 (scanner)

κάθε **Πέμπτη**:

3:30 μ.μ. στο Radio Club AM 1683

« ΛΥΧΝΟΣ »

is a bimonthly publication of the
Greek Orthodox Christian Society,
under the auspices of the

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.

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