



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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

Ψαλμ 118, 105

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THE GREATEST SORROW

The month of August is known otherwise as the month of Panagia. It is the month of her Dormition and her Ascension, for the Mother of our Lord truly ascended and was enthroned upon her heavenly throne, next to the majestic throne of her Son. Thus, becoming the queen of the heavens, the joy of the angels, the boast of the Apostles, jubilation of the Martyrs, glory and honour of the Saints, and for us, our hope and protection and unceasing mediator.

She mediates because she cares. She cares because she is our mother and the mother of our Lord. She too suffered much in her life and was greatly tempted, but her purity, patience and humility overcame all temptations. She was left an orphan at a young age, she faced the possibility of becoming a single mother due to the suspicions of Joseph (in a time when women were second-class citizens), she gave birth under difficult circumstances in a cave in the middle of winter, she became a refugee in a foreign country to flee from the manic insecurities of Herod, and having returned she lived having no luxuries in Nazareth. Furthermore, after accompanying her Son in His ministry across the rough countryside, she witnessed His unjust trial and humiliating passion. Finally, she was heartbroken at the foot of the Cross seeing her innocent child suffer a slow asphyxiating death as though He were a criminal.

She truly felt the greatest pain a mother could feel simply because no other mother before or after her would ever

raise a child like Jesus - full of virtue, always obedient, submitting to her in all things. This pain is captured in the icon of Panagia Thrinodousa (pictured; Gr. Θρηνώ - to mourn). But the greatest sorrow that Our Lady the Theotokos feels is when she is unable to help those who need her most, the people who do not appreciate the magnitude and significance of the sacrifice her Son made for them.



Most people walk the path paved by the enemy of mankind - willingly or unwillingly. They are seduced by his prideful flatteries, lustful desires and materialistic indulgences, most being completely unaware or ignorant of Satan's grasp on their soul. And so, while they refuse to accept it with their mind, their works, acts and deeds clearly indicate who they honour and to whose will they remain blindly obedient. Thus, having rejected Christ as Lord and Saviour, the intercessions of the Theotokos for such people remain fruitless - this being the cause of her greatest sorrow.

Once again, we celebrate the Feast of the Dormition. Once again, we have the opportunity to come near to the icon of Panagia and

implore her to forgive us for the pain we have caused her and her Son. To repent and run to confession, to attend a Paraklisi service and to make that necessary change which is bringing Panagia so much sorrow. Let us therefore make the most of the time we have before us to sweeten her glance, resting assured that her intercessions will bring us many joyful blessings.

Στη Μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου

Η Μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου έγινε λίγες μέρες πριν από το Πάθος Του. Έπρεπε οι μαθητές Του να ετοιμασθούν για να αποδεχθούν το εκούσιο Πάθος Του, χωρίς να δειλιάσουν και να απογοητευτούν.

Βέβαια μετά την Ανάσταση, την Ανάληψη και ιδιαίτερα τη Πεντηκοστή, μπόρεσαν οι μαθητές να κατανοήσουν καλύτερα το θαυμάσιο και λαμπρό γεγονός της Μεταμόρφωσης.

Το Σώμα του Κυρίου προς στιγμήν, διαπεράσθηκε από τη Θεότητά Του. Όχι με όλη την αίγλη της, αλλά μόνο «**καθώς ήδύναντο**». Δηλ. τόσο μόνο, όσο οι μαθητές Του μπορούσαν να αντέξουν. Και έγινε το Σώμα του Κυρίου λαμπρό, φωτεινό, μεγαλειώδες.

Η Μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου δεν είναι μόνο ένα θαύμα που έγινε για να στηρίξει τους μαθητές την ώρα του Πάθους Του, αλλά έχει συμβολισμό και διδακτική σημασία για τους Χριστιανούς όλων των αιώνων. Λέγει ο Απόστολος Παύλος στους Ρωμαίους: **«Μὴ συσχηματίζεσθαι τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφουῖσθαι τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς ὑμῶν»** (Ρωμ. ΙΒ'2). Δηλ. μη γίνεσθε όμοιοι με τους ανθρώπους τους υλόφρονες που παρασέρνονται από τη ματαιότητα του κόσμου, αλλά να μεταμορφώνεσθε με νέες σκέψεις και φρονήματα στη ζωή σας.

Η μεταμόρφωση είναι ένα ιδανικό που κάθε χριστιανός πρέπει να αγωνίζεται να βιώσει. Δυστυχώς στην εποχή μας στην ηθική και πνευματική κατάσταση που βρισκόμαστε, θάπρεπε να μιλούμε για **παραμόρφωση μάλλον παρά μεταμόρφωση**.

Παραμορφώσαμε την εικόνα του Θεού μέσα μας. Όταν μας έπλασε ο Δημιουργός και μας προίκισε

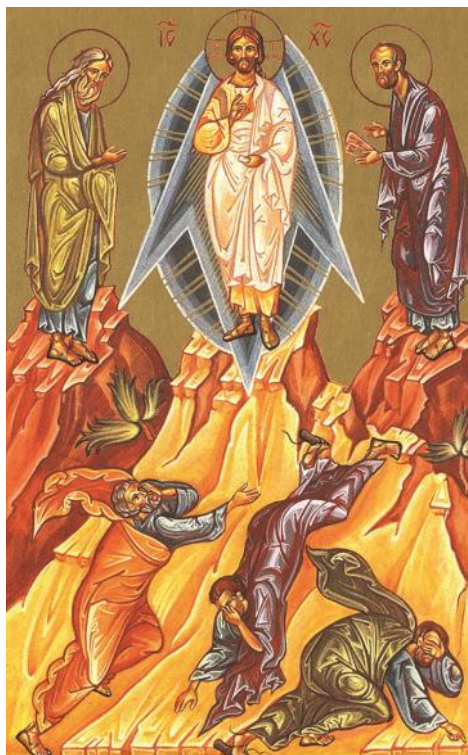
με την εικόνα Του, ήταν όλα **«καλὰ λίαν»**. Μα από τη στιγμή που πέσαμε στην αμαρτία της ανυπακοής η εικόνα αυτή αμαυρώθηκε - παρεμορφώθη.

Από τότε όλοι μας κουβαλούμε πάνω μας την εικόνα του Θεού αλλά γεμάτη στίγματα, κηλίδες, αδυναμίες και κακίες. Σε τέτοιο βαθμό που το **«ἀρχαίο κάλλος»** - η πρώτη ωραιότης - νάχει τελείως παραμορφωθεί. Να γιατί μας φωνάζει και προτρέπει ο Απ. Παύλος να καταβάλουμε κάθε προσπάθεια για να μεταμορφωθούμε ψυχικά. Να σταματήσει η κακή αλλοίωση της εικόνας του Θεού μέσα μας και στη θέση της νάρθει η ποθητή **«καλή αλλοίωση»**, η ευλογημένη μεταμόρφωση. Να σταματήσω να ζω για τα μάταια πράγματα του κόσμου τούτου και αντί γι'αυτά να ζητώ να εφαρμόζω το θέλημα του Θεού καθημερινά.

Ο δρόμος της μεταμόρφωσης είναι δύσκολος και ανηφορικός. Μα όποιος αρχίζει να ανεβαίνει αφήνει πίσω του το βάρος των παθών του, ανεβαίνει από αρετή σε αρετή και προχωρεί από δόξα

σε δόξα: **«τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ Κυρίου πνεύματος»** (Β' Κορ. Γ' 18). Δηλ. μεταμορφωνόμαστε και παίρνουμε την ένδοξη εικόνα του Κυρίου. Και προοδεύουμε από δόξα σε δόξα όπως ακριβώς προοδεύει αυτός που φωτίζεται από το Άγιο Πνεύμα που είναι ο Κύριος (ερμηνεία κ. Τρεμπέλα).

Όσο πιο ψηλά ανεβαίνουμε, τόσο πιο κοντά στη κορυφή του Θαβώρ φθάνουμε. Καταυγαζόμαστε από τη λαμπρότητα του Κυρίου μας. Η πρώτη εκείνη ωραιότης της εικόνας του Θεού μέσα μας αρχίζει να διακρίνεται και με τη χάρη του Θεού να αποκαθίσταται.



Current Issues

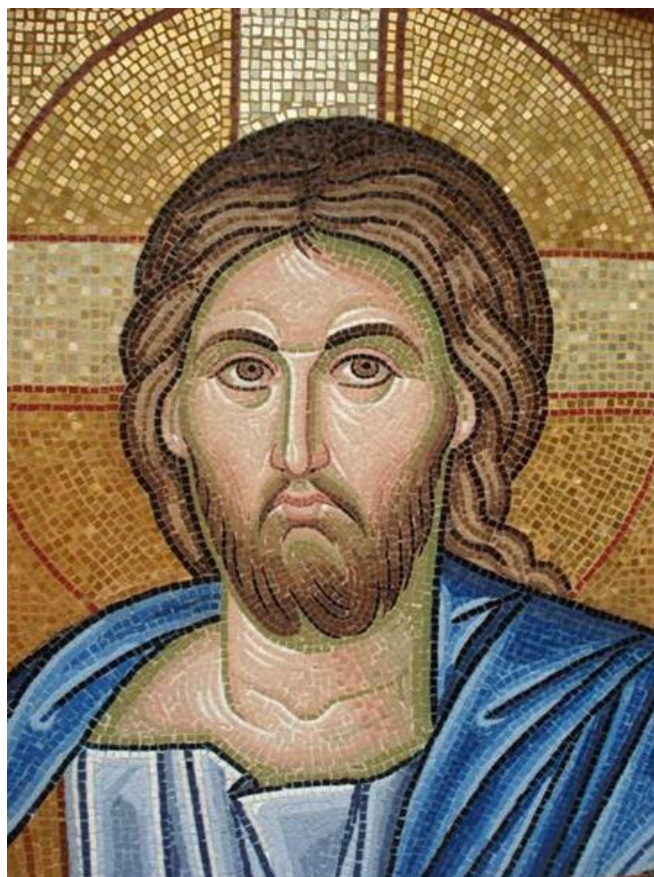
Salvation: Do We Need It In Our Times? - Part B

Salvation is the greatest gift of God to man, and this became a reality through Jesus Christ. His sacrifice liberates man from the tyranny of sin, the main instrument of the Devil, which degrades the human person spiritually, and afterwards bodily, leading to Death first of the soul and then of the body.

Since man was created by God with the potential of living eternally, but lost this potential after his Fall, he can no longer attain Salvation, as he no longer has the support of God. **And yet, Salvation has become possible through Jesus Christ, our Mediator with God.** The problem that this enormous and eternal gift is hardly understood and accepted by many people, is due to their ignorance of the information contained in the Bible.

How does Jesus Christ save us?

1. **We can all attain Salvation** - *if we accept that Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for us, despite the fact we were His enemies because of our sins. Jesus reconciled us to God the Father, according to the Apostle Paul - "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing (considering) the trespasses of men to Him" (2 Cor 5:19).* This implies that we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and repent for our sins.
2. **Jesus Christ saved us** - *by teaching us the truth about God.* Until Jesus made the revelation that God is Love, all people were afraid of God, as they had come to view Him, through their ignorance, as a vindictive God. And yet, *"Christ was the true Light, which gives light to every man coming into the World" (John 1:9).*
3. **Jesus Christ paid with His own blood the ransom for our sins** - *Willingly He had done everything throughout His life. The sacrifice of His life, was an offering of thanks (ευχαριστία) to God for the completion of the task of saving man, and NOT as the Western Christians believe, for the satisfaction of God. Christ sacrificed Himself out of pure love, unconditional love, unlimited love, suffering love. Real love is not a subjective feeling, but is created, and changes me and the other person, as I am changed by the love of Jesus Christ.*
4. **Jesus Christ, the Substitute Offering** - *John the Baptist had said: "Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).* Instead of me paying for my sins, Christ did that for me! - by ascending and dying on the Cross, if in fact, I truly believe in Him.
5. **Christ was the Victor on the Cross** - When Jesus saw



that all the prophecies were fulfilled, His work had been completed to the full, everything He had to suffer He did suffer, and the Salvation of men had been fully secured, He then cried: *It is Finished* - Everything has been completed, it has been fulfilled.

After all that, what can we say? *Salvation is an organic change in us (2 Pet 1:4), by healing our illnesses, our wounds, our brokenness, our loneliness. It does change our inner and outer world. We become new people.*

However, it cannot be an isolated personal event. It is a Social event, taking place inside the Church, with the Grace of the Sacraments and the help of the Holy Spirit. Now, can one ever say - *I am saved?* NO. Because Salvation is not a matter of a momentary decision, a decision of a point in time. It is a matter of a lifetime struggle.

But one can say, *with the mercy of God, I hope that I am on the road to be saved!*

Do any of you have a better answer?

Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

From the Saints of our Church

**Η Μετάσταση του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Θεολόγου
(Εορτάζεται 26 Σεπτεμβρίου)**

**The Metastasis of St John the Theologian
(Commemorated 26th September)**

Ο Άγιος Απόστολος και Ευαγγελιστής Ιωάννης, ο Θεολόγος, έζησε τα τελευταία χρόνια της ζωής του στην Έφεσο (μια πόλη στα παράλια της Τουρκίας). Όταν έγινε περίπου 100 χρόνων, δεν μπορούσε πια να κηρύττει, αλλά συνεχώς έλεγε στους μαθητές του την εντολή του Κυρίου - «Παιδιά μου, αγαπάτε ο ένας τον άλλον» [Άγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθώς ἔδωκεν ἐντολήν] (Α' Ιωαν. Γ' 23).

Ο βιογράφος του και μαθητής του, ο Άγιος Πρόχορος, μας λέγει ότι όταν ο Θεός πληροφορήσε τον Ευαγγελιστή ότι πλησιάζει το τέλος της ζωής του, κάλεσε επτά από τους μαθητές του, και πήγαν όλοι μαζί σε ένα μέρος έξω από την πόλη. Έφτασαν στο μέρος εκείνο πριν ανατείλει ο ήλιος. Ο ίδιος, έφυγε από τους υπολοίπους και προσευχήθηκε μόνος του για λίγη ώρα. Όταν επέστρεψε, είπε στους μαθητές να σκάψουν ένα τάφο σε σχήμα σταυρού. Τους έδωσε τις τελευταίες του συμβουλές, τους ασπάσθηκε όλους, και ξάπλωσε ο ίδιος μέσα στον τάφο, λέγοντας τους να σκεπάσουν τα πόδια του με χώμα μέχρι τα γόνατα. Τους ασπάσθηκε πάλι και τους είπε να σκεπάσουν τώρα το σώμα του με χώμα μέχρι τον λαιμό του. Τέλος, τους παρήγγειλε να σκεπάσουν το πρόσωπο του με ένα ελαφρό πέπλο.

Οι μαθητές τον ασπάσθηκαν για τελευταία φορά με δάκρυα στα μάτια. Την στιγμή εκείνη ανέτειλε ο ήλιος, και ο Άγιος τότε παρέδωσε το πνεύμα του στο Θεό.

Οι επτά μαθητές επέστρεψαν στην Έφεσο, και περίλυποι ανήγγειλαν στους Χριστιανούς τι συνέβη. Τότε όλοι ήθελαν να πάνε στο μέρος όπου εκοιμήθη ο Άγιος. Όταν όμως έφτασαν στον τάφο, ανακάλυψαν ότι ήταν άδειος. Η χριστιανική ευσέβεια και παράδοση, πιστεύει ότι ο Άγιος ανέβηκε σωματικώς στους Ουρανοί [Metastasis], όπως ακριβώς και στην περίπτωση της Παναγίας, εκπληρώνοντας έτσι την δήλωση του Κυρίου προς τον Απόστολο Πέτρο - «ἐάν αὐτὸν θέλω μένειν ἕως ἔρχομαι, [μέχρι την δευτέρα παρουσία μου], τί πρὸς σε; [εσένα τι σε ενδιαφέρει;]» (Ιωαν. ΚΑ' 22). Ο Κύριος δεν εννοούσε ότι ο αγαπημένος Του μαθητής δεν θα πεθάνει, αλλά ότι θα του δώσει ειδική θέση στους Ουρανοί, ξεχωριστή από τους άλλους Αποστόλους, μέχρι την Δευτέρα Παρουσία Του.

Τhe Holy Apostle and Evangelist St John the Theologian spent the last years of his life in the city of Ephesus. When he grew weak from old age, he was no longer able to preach publicly as he used to. His unceasing sermon to his disciples was the constant repetition of the Lord's commandment: "My little children, love one another".

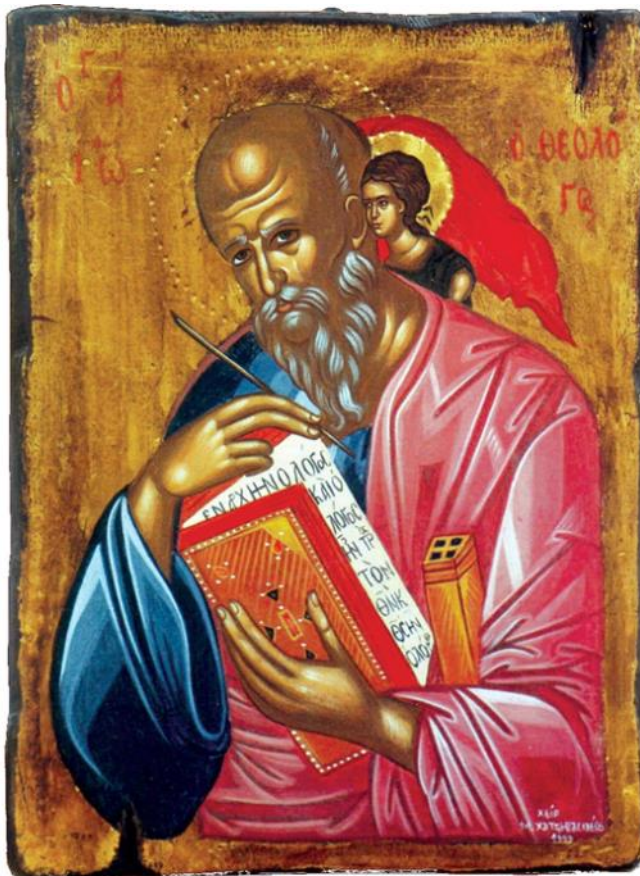
According to Saint John's biography by his beloved companion and disciple Saint Prochorus, when the Apostle had reached the age of 105 years and received from God the knowledge of his approaching departure from this life, he called seven of his disciples together and led them to a certain place outside of the city. They reached their destination early in the morning before sunrise.

Saint John withdrew from his disciples to a quiet place and prayed for a little while. When he returned to them, he instructed them to dig a grave in the sand in the shape of a cross. He gave his last counsels to his disciples and then embraced each of them. He lay down inside the grave and instructed them to cover him with earth as far as his knees. He embraced them once again and instructed them to cover him up to his neck, and finally he asked them to cover his face with a thin veil. They followed his instructions and embraced him for the last time with tears. At that moment, the sun

rose and St John surrendered his spirit.

The seven disciples returned weeping to Ephesus and told the Christians in the city, who begged them to take them to the site of his burial. When they returned, they discovered that the Saint's tomb was empty.

According to pious tradition, Saint John had been translated to heaven just like the Theotokos, fulfilling Christ's enigmatic words to the Apostle Peter: "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?" (John 21:22). The Saviour did not mean that his beloved disciple would not die, but that He would reserve for him a special place, separating him from the other Apostles until His Second Coming.



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

How can we reduce anxiety in our children, and can the Church help?

It appears that anxiety in children is on the rise. Whereas as recently as a generation ago, childhood was considered a carefree age, today, many children are frightened, stressed or anxious.

Anxiety can look very different from one child to the next. Some children get physical symptoms such as a racing heart, palpitations or shaking. Others just have a sense of dread that something bad will happen. In severe cases, children are not able to go to school or get out of the house.

Reasons for children getting anxious are varied and complex but it appears that the modern-day lifestyle has a lot to answer. In the “old days”, children learnt to develop emotionally and socially through free play, and this has all but disappeared. Instead, the internet has brought the evils of the grown-up world into the eyes and minds of our children. Social media and messaging platforms make children compete with each other, from comparing their appearance to managing the hostilities of cyberbullying.

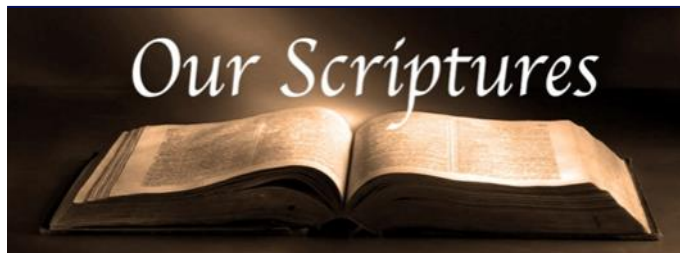
Treatments for childhood anxiety focus on building the child-parent relationship and improving resilience in the child. Therapeutic strategies range from examining thought processes, developing assertive communication styles and practising mindfulness exercises. Medication may be used in older children with more severe symptoms. For the believing Christian family, the

Church can provide significant guidance and strength to help children with anxiety. Jesus instructs us not to have anxiety, but to simply trust God, who as the Creator maintains the universe through His loving kindness. Just as He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, He promises to look after us. He simply urges us to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matt 6:33) and He will take care of the rest.

The trouble is that in the modern world, Christian parents often struggle to inspire children to trust in God. As parents we are all conditioned, by the spirit of the world, to be people-pleasing rather than God-pleasing. We become vainglorious and materialistic. We become attached to worldly things that are temporary or of little substance, and this breeds insecurity. Children then learn from this, and become insecure themselves.

† Fr G. L.





8th Sunday of Matthew Gospel Reading (Matthew 14:14-22)

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

In this Gospel passage, Christ has been followed by a large crowd, and the disciples believe that there is no way to feed all the people present. Christ then takes two fish and five loaves of bread and multiplies them, feeding the people with twelve baskets left to spare.

When Christ heals the sick among the crowd (v 14), He does not test their faith as He usually does by asking whether they wish to be cured. By following Christ into the wilderness straight after the beheading of John the Baptist, without even bringing food with them, the crowd have shown their faith.

We must also remember how unexpected the miracle of the loaves was. St John Chrysostom remarks that even though the disciples had seen Christ heal the sick, they did not believe that He could feed so many. This was the source of the disciples' concern (v 17).

A key question which arises is why Christ looked up to heaven (v 19) before performing this miracle, when many greater ones, such as the raising of the dead, were accomplished without visible prayer. He did this for many reasons, primarily to highlight His oneness with the Father and to make clear the need for prayer before meals.

His final act in this passage is to dismiss the disciples (v 22). St John Chrysostom states that the purpose of this was to hide the miracle from the multitudes, remembering that the food was multiplied in front of the disciples only (v 19). This need for privacy stems from Christ's humility and from Christ's desire to pray alone afterwards. By dismissing the disciples and the crowd, Christ can pray privately, and shows that we too must remove anything that will stop us from communing with God, our Father in Heaven, in prayer, from the depths of our being.



The Mother of Christ: The Mother of God by Archimandrite Vassilios Bakoyannis.

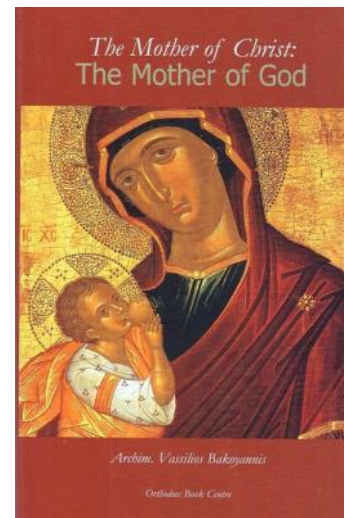
Published by Orthodox Book Center, 2005.

In *The Mother of Christ: The Mother of God*

Archimandrite Vassilios Bakoyannis examines the conception, upbringing, and spiritual life of the Theotokos, her impact on society, and her importance to us personally - particularly when we depart from this life. He primarily draws from the apocryphal *Protoevangelium of St James*, ascribed to the 'Brother' of our Lord, writing from his personal daily experience of the Virgin Mary, who had adopted him upon her betrothal to his widowed father Joseph. These writings are also the source of services and hymns for various feasts to the Mother of God, such as her Conception, Nativity, Entry into the temple, and at the Christmas service.

In Part I, Archimandrite Vassilios covers the key events in the Mother of God's life over 18 succinct chapters commencing with her parents, their persistence in prayer and disposition, through her years in the temple, annunciation, birth of Christ, flight to Egypt, the years of our Lord's earthly mission and crucifixion. It continues post His resurrection, to her dormition, burial, and assumption. The focus in the 12 Chapters of Part II cover Panagia's virtues, what they were, how she manifested them in her life, how she related to others, and her relationship to us.

The book provides us with a closer appreciation and sense of awe of the Mother of God: 'thanks to her personal watchfulness and her own struggle she completely conquered the inclination, the propensity to sin directing it towards good, not even sinning in thought'. We are drawn by her virtue, pureness, love, and dedication to God and mankind: 'because of her great loving kindness towards us the Mother of God never stays in heaven. She leaves paradise and hastens to the ends of the earth. Blessed are Christians who set all their hope on our merciful Mother. She will never let them down.' This author successfully assists in bringing us closer to Panagia in gratitude and reverence and inspires us to ask for her intercession and to assist her in her mission to bring us closer to her Son and to our salvation.





A migrant woman reminiscing on her past

There are no names in this story, because, even though this is a specific case, it is also a shared history of many nameless migrant women who put up with very difficult circumstances in their married lives...

She spoke simply about her adult life and there was no sense of regret, nor was there any anger in her tone. Now she is a widow and has three caring children and their spouses, as well as seven grandchildren who love her dearly.



She recounts her tale to me:

‘All I wanted prior to marriage was to raise a good Christian family one day.

When I arrived in Australia, I lived with my brother and his wife. They were good to me and we lived peacefully.

After an introduction from a family friend, and a fair bit of coaxing, I finally agreed to marry the man who had been introduced to me. His rough voice was the initial reason why I felt hesitant about agreeing to marry him, even though his work ethic did recommend him to my family - he would be a good provider.

We married and after the birth of our first child, at the forty days period, we moved into our new shop in inner Sydney. There, we worked seven days a week for the next twenty five years. I would open up the shop every morning after taking our three children to school, and when they returned from school, they would be upstairs, while I attended to the customers down stairs.

There was no reprieve from the seven-day work load. If only he would have given me time off on Sunday morning to take the children to church I would have kissed his feet. He saw no point and did not want to hear my point of view. Work was all that mattered to

him in order to pay off every new mortgage he acquired. The only thing I did then was to cry silently when he was not around. But I never said anything negative about him to our children, he was their father, and work was, after all, the only thing he ever

knew, as he had been orphaned at a young age and had to provide for his large family in Greece.

Did the children do well at school? How could they, as I could not oversee their studies and homework. Upstairs they may have been watching television, when I was busy in the shop. They did however, become, industrious and responsible adults.

He developed cancer after many years and went through tremendous suffering. I nursed him till the very end. Before he died he begged my forgiveness, saying he had burdened me.

It was not the burden of the cancer and my attending to him in this difficult phase of our life that he referred to, but he had realised that he had been a tyrant. This moment of true repentance has remained with me forever. It has given solace to my soul as it was his greatest gift to me, because at the very end of his life, he asked for forgiveness, and so his life had not been in vain. I only think with great pity for him now, but with no sense of bitterness at what had been our life.’

Η Αποτομή της Τιμίας Κεφαλής του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Προδρόμου

Η Εκκλησία μας στις 29 Αυγούστου, τιμά την ιερή μνήμη της αποκεφάλισης του Βαπτιστή Ιωάννη. Είναι μέρα πένθιμη και τηρούμε αυστηρή νηστεία σε ένδειξη πένθους για τον άδικο θάνατο του αγιοτέρου ανθρώπου της παγκόσμιας Ιστορίας.

Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος δεν είναι μόνον ο κήρυκας της μετανοίας, και ο προάγγελος της χαράς του ερχομού του Χριστού, η φωνή ανθρώπου που κράζει δυνατά στην έρημο και λέγει: **Ετοιμάσατε τον δρόμο του Θεού ή καλύτερα, ετοιμάσατε τον εαυτό σας με την μετάνοια για να δεχτεί η ψυχή σας καθαρή, την διδασκαλία του Χριστού, αλλά είναι συγχρόνως και μια φωνή ελέγχου.**

Ο μεγαλόστομος αυτός Προφήτης, ο άγγελος της ερήμου, φρίττει από την ανηθικότητα των αρχόντων.

Δεν σου επιτρέπεται από το νόμο του Θεού να έχεις τη γυναίκα του αδελφού σου, ο οποίος ζει ακόμα. Τα Λόγια του αποτελούσαν μαχαιριές στις διεφθαρμένες συνειδήσεις του βασιλιά Ηρώδη Αντύπα και της παράνομης συζύγου του Ηρωδιάδας που ήταν γυναίκα του αδελφού του Φιλίππου.

Ο Ηρώδης, μη ανεχόμενος τους ελέγχους του Προδρόμου τον συλλαμβάνει και τον ρίχνει στη φυλακή. Μέσα από τη φυλακή ο Πρόδρομος, διδάσκει τον λαό και ελέγχει την παρανομία των ανακτόρων.

Η κακιά Ηρωδιάδα θέλησε να τον εκδικηθεί και βρήκε την ευκαιρία.

Ο Ηρώδης γιόρταζε τα γενέθλιά του και είχε καλεσμένους όλους τους άρχοντες και προύχοντες της Γαλιλαίας. Εκεί που διασκεδάζαν στη μεγάλη αίθουσα, μπήκε η Σαλώμη, η κόρη της Ηρωδιάδας και χόρευε ένα χορό έξαλλο και προκλητικό. Ο χορός της, ενθουσίασε τόσο πολύ τον Ηρώδη που της είπε: **Ζήτησέ μου ότι θέλεις και εγώ θα στο δώσω, ακόμα και το μισό βασίλειό μου στο ορκίζομαι.**

Η Σαλώμη τότε ρώτησε τη μητέρα της και εκείνη την προέτρεψε να ζητήσει το κεφάλι του προφήτη Ιωάννη μέσα σ' ένα πιάτο.

Έτσι ακολούθησε ο αποκεφαλισμός.

Μετά το φρικιαστικό αυτό έγκλημα, οι μαθητές του Προδρόμου τρέχουν στη φυλακή. Αψηφούν τους κινδύνους και παίρνουν το ασκητικό κορμί του Προφήτη. Με συγκίνηση και λύπη το

θάβουνε κι έπειτα πηγαίνουνε στο Χριστό και του αναφέρουν τα καθέκαστα.

Ο άγιος Ιωάννης ο πρόδρομος θα παραμένει στους αιώνες υπόδειγμα σε όλους όσους θέλουν να υπηρετούν την αλήθεια και να αγωνίζονται κατά της διαφθοράς, ανεξάρτητα από κινδύνους και θυσίες.



GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SOCIETY



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From The Old Testament



Prophet Elijah on Mt Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-16)

One story of the Prophet Elijah particularly stands out from his life. Elijah was on the run – almost the whole of Israel had embraced paganism and no one who held to the true faith was safe. The Prophets were particularly a target. Elijah must have truly thought he was the only faithful servant of God left, and so he fled into the desert and was immediately overcome by profound despair. Our Lord then took compassion upon him and sent an angel to encourage him. Strengthened spiritually and physically, Elijah walked to Mt Horeb, fasting as he went. He did not know what to do; he was hoping that God would give him an answer.



Mt Horeb is significant because it is another name for Mt Sinai - the mountain so closely associated with Moses. God was present there - God had spoken there. Elijah would have known this, and so spent the night on the mountain in a cave. Indeed, God spoke to him asking what he was doing there. Elijah poured out his complaint before the Lord. At that time, no answer was given to him other than that he should leave the cave: "Go out tomorrow and stand on the mountain before the Lord; and behold, the Lord will pass by" (1 Kings 19:11).

When Elijah left the cave, God sent a powerful wind that started to tear the mountain apart - but God was not in the wind. He then sent an earthquake that shook the very ground under Elijah's feet – but the Lord God was not in the earthquake. He then sent fire, like He had earlier sent on Mount Carmel at the time of Elijah's greatest victory - but God was not in the fire. Finally, something far more insignificant happened - some English translations call it "a still, small voice", others "a gentle whisper". In Greek, it is written as «φωνὴ αὔρας λεπτῆς» - the sound of a gentle breeze. And behold, God was in the breeze - a moment in which Prophet Elijah profoundly experienced the Lord's peace.

He had learnt that to truly serve God, particularly in times of anxiety and persecution, requires the ability to listen. His despair, which was due in this case to trusting in himself, was entirely overcome. Elijah not only received a new call from God, but also the strength, the grace and the wisdom to accomplish it. This new mission was a little different to the one which had so overwhelmed him before - he was to anoint new leaders for the people, and Elisha as his own successor as prophet. Before this encounter with God on Mt Horeb, this task seemed utterly impossible. But now, having experienced the might of the "gentle breeze" of the Lord's Holy Spirit, he knew with certainty that with God, all things are possible.

Holiness In Our Times



Gerontissa Macrina (1921-1994)

The life of Gerontissa Macrina is one marked by the vibrant experience of God's grace which permeated through daily encounters with her fellow person.

Born in 1921 in Asia Minor, Macrina came to Greece with her parents in the 1922 Exchange of Population, growing up in the city of Volos. At



age nine Macrina was an orphan left to fend for herself and her four-year old brother. During the war she endured particular hardship, almost starving to death several times and becoming ill with pleurisy from which she was miraculously cured by the Mother of God. As a young girl, she enjoyed reading the Scriptures, the lives of the Saints and the writings of the Church Fathers.

In her late thirties, Macrina, together with a group of young women, founded the Holy Monastery of Panagia Odigitria (Directress) in Volos through the blessing of their spiritual father Elder Joseph the Hesychast.

During her life Macrina was highly respected by several modern-day ascetics and Saints of our Church including St Paisios the Hagiorite, St Porphyrios of Kapsokalyvia, Elder Iakovos Tsalikis and Elder Ephraim of Arizona. In her first meeting with St Paisios, upon making a full prostration before him, the Elder responded by making a full prostration before her and would not rise until she had risen first. St Ephraim wrote: *'She had a wondrous purity of mind. I have never seen such pure thoughts in any other person.'*

In 2013, the monastery of Panagia Odigitria published a book 'Λόγια Καρδιάς' (Words from the Heart) on the life and teachings of Gerontissa Macrina. In it she emphasises the need for patience, obedience to one's spiritual father, to pray for those who hate us, and not to judge others:

'Let's be very watchful concerning passing judgement!... Even if we don't have virtues, Christ will save us, He will take us into Paradise if we abstain from judging.'

Gerontissa Macrina reposed on May 22nd 1994, a true witness to the calling we all have - to become holy.



What we Hear in Church



From the Holy Fathers...

Hymn of Lauds, Sunday Matins

Κύριε, ὄπλον κατὰ τοῦ διαβόλου, τὸν Σταυρόν σου ἡμῖν δέδωκας· φρίττει γὰρ καὶ τρέμει, μὴ φέρων καθορᾶν αὐτοῦ τὴν δύναμιν· ὅτι νεκροὺς ἀνιστᾷ καὶ θάνατον κατήργησε· διὰ τοῦτο προσκυνοῦμεν, τὴν Ταφήν σου καὶ τὴν Ἑγερσίν.

Lord, you have given us your Cross as a weapon against the devil; for he quails and trembles, unable to contemplate your power; for you raise the dead and made death of no effect: therefore we worship your Burial and your Rising.

The Cross is the trophy of the Orthodox Church, intimately linked with the life of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is also the symbol of the utter defeat of the devil as the above Matins Hymn in the Plagal 4th mode so poetically describes.

How was the devil defeated by the Cross of Christ? The tradition of the Holy Fathers of our Church contains the teaching of Christ's Crucifixion and Death being the culmination of an act of "Divine Deception", the devil being the one deceived.

Let us hear the Fathers on this theme, beginning with St Gregory of Nyssa: "therefore, in order to secure that the ransom on our behalf might be easily accepted by him who required it, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, that so, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh, and thus, life being introduced into the house of death, and light shining in darkness, that which is diametrically opposed to light and life might vanish..." (Great Catechism 24).

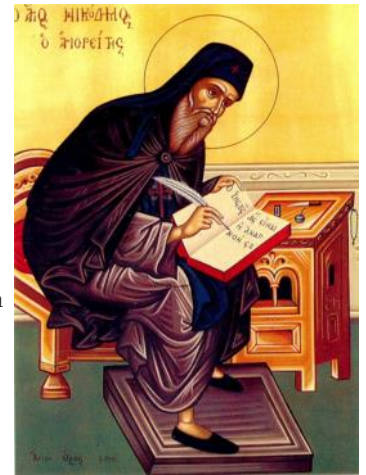
St Maximos the Confessor expounds on the same theme: "Moreover, the Lord mounted His flesh on the fish-hook of His Divinity as bait for the devil's deceit, so that, as the insatiable serpent, the devil would take His flesh into his mouth (since its nature is easily overcome) and quiver convulsively on the hook of the Lord's divinity, and, by virtue of the sacred flesh of the Logos, completely vomit the Lord's human nature once he swallowed it." (Ad Thalassium 64: On the Prophet Jonah and the Economy of Salvation).

St John of Damascus continues: "Wherefore death approaches, and swallowing up the body as bait, is transfixed on the hook of divinity, and after tasting of a sinless and life-giving body, perishes, and brings up again all whom of old he swallowed up." (An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Bk. 3.27).

Christ's death on the Cross is the completion of this act of deception, the devil having been defeated for all time by the Divine Nature of Christ even as Christ's Human body perishes on the Cross (only to rise again in three days).

St Nicodemus – on Frequent Communion

St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain was born in 1749 on the island of Naxos. He was baptised Nicolas and received his early education from the local priest. He entered Dionysiou Monastery on Mt Athos in 1775, and soon after was clothed with the Monastic Habit and given the name Nicodemus.

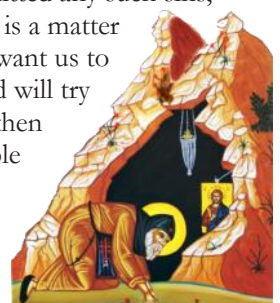


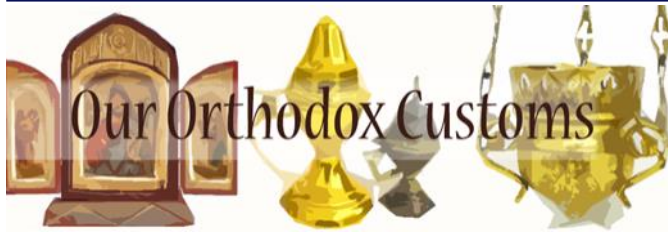
As a monk, he revised and annotated many patristic manuscripts, including the well-known "Concerning Frequent Communion of the Immaculate Mysteries of Christ". This book had as its purpose to defend the tradition of frequent Communion in the divine Mysteries at a time when many – both monks and laypeople – believed Holy Communion should only be taken three or four times a year.

In response, St Nicodemus writes of the benefits of frequent participation in Holy Communion to both the body and the soul. He states that when Christ dwells within us through frequent Communion, "He pacifies and calms the fierce war of the flesh, ignites piety toward God, and deadens the passions".

To those who claim frequent Communion leads to a 'relaxed' approach to the Sacrament, he persists that the opposite occurs: in preparation for Communion one takes great care and watches over one's soul to partake with a clean conscience. Afterwards one dares not sin adding "zeal to zeal, self-control to self-control, vigilance to vigilance, labours upon labours" struggling as much as possible.

Concerning how often we should partake of Holy Communion, it is imperative that one consults a spiritual father. St Nicodemus writes that while pardonable sins are forgiven in Holy Communion, grave, impure sins require Holy Confession and sometimes a period of abstinence. However, when one has not committed any such sins, abstaining from Holy Communion is a matter for caution, for the devil does not want us to partake of the divine Mysteries, and will try and persuade us otherwise. Let us then put our hope in God's immeasurable love and draw near, as the priest exclaims in every Divine Liturgy, with "fear of God, faith and love".





Paraklisis to Panagia

Paraklisis is a supplicatory prayer that is chanted, at any time of distress or sorrow, for the benefit of the faithful. It can be chanted to a specific Saint, but prayers to Panagia are the most popular.

Early Christians recognised the Theotokos as a powerful intercessor for those suffering and in need of protection.

Christians have been seeking her intercessions from the time of the ancient Church up to this very day: “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48).

During the first 14 days of August every year, the Orthodox faithful recite the paraklisis or supplication prayers to the Most Holy Mother of God. These alternate between the Small Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, composed by Theosterictus the Monk in the 9th century, and the Great Supplicatory Canon composed by Emperor Theodore I Doukas Laskaris in the 13th century.

The hymnographers use poetic language to express the Orthodox veneration of Mary who devoted herself entirely to God, bore the Son of God, and who experienced the grace of the Holy Spirit more than anyone else in the world.

In the language of the Church she is called ‘most blessed’, ‘more honoured’, ‘most gracious queen’. Her icons are on the iconostasis, ceiling and walls of the church and in the homes of the faithful. Hymns of praise are offered up to honour, thank, adore and implore her as she sits near the throne of God and intercedes to her Son, and our God, on our behalf.

In the paraklisis, we chant the hymn in Tone 4: “To the Theotokos, let us run now most fervently, as sinners and lowly ones, let us fall down in repentance, crying from the depths of our soul: Lady, come and help us, have compassion upon us; hasten now for we are lost in the host of our errors; do not turn your servants away, for you alone are a hope to us”.

Learning to chant the Paraklisis and having a prayer relationship with Panagia is another way that we can gain help in our spiritual path to salvation in the Church.



Living Prayer

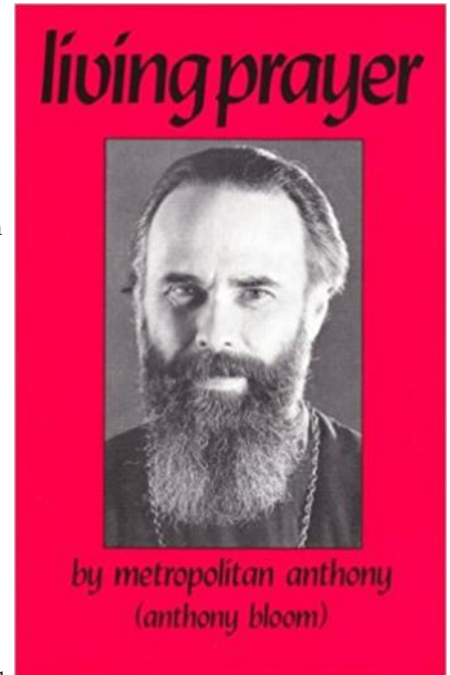
Living Prayer by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom covers many topics relating to prayer and gives advice on how to begin and maintain a life of prayer. Bloom highlights the power of well-known prayers such as The Lord’s Prayer and The Jesus Prayer as ‘complete’ prayers which affirm our Faith.

Metropolitan Bloom uses Biblical examples to highlight the great faith of certain people. One example used is the prayer of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46), when the blind Bartimaeus exclaims, “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon me”. Metropolitan Bloom uses the perseverance of Bartimaeus, who as a blind man was ignored and told by others to keep quiet and not to bother Jesus, to inspire us to keep praying even if the desired outcome might not be happening straight away. As well as this, Metropolitan Bloom uses the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:22-28) to show that just as Christ tested her and her faith, God also tests our faith.

Metropolitan Bloom also talks about the difference between prayer and meditation, which is important considering many modern Christians often confuse the two. He makes the sharp distinction that “Meditation is an activity of thought; prayer is rejection of thought”.

Finally, Metropolitan Bloom looks at silent prayer. Silent prayer is the attempt to discover God in us. Silent prayer is so useful that the Church Fathers say it is both the starting point and the ending point of prayer, further affirming its importance in our relationship with God.

I encourage everyone to read this book as it considers the multi-faceted nature of prayer, and has the potential to educate and enlighten us all about what fruitful prayer is.



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NEWS and VIEWS

Visit to St Nicholas Parish, Darwin

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, a group of around 30 members of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society and their families, visited the parish of St Nicholas, Darwin, on the weekend of July 1-3. The group was very warmly received by Fr Joel Xanthos and the entire parish community. On the Saturday, the group took part in the Divine Liturgy commemorating St Kosmas and St Damianos, in which the President of the Society and lay-preacher, Dr John Psarommatis, delivered the sermon. After vespers on that day, a talk was given on the topic of “Spiritual Life”. During the Sunday Liturgy, following another sermon, four Sunday School classes were held for different age groups, and were very well attended by the local children. On the Sunday evening, a presentation including a play, songs, video and a talk on the “Orthodox Christian Family” was given. The visit concluded on Monday with a talk on “Contemporary Issues facing the Orthodox family”. All talks were very well attended, giving ample opportunity for formal and informal discussions to take place. The Society is extremely thankful to Fr Joel and the parish community for their hospitality and the love shown towards the group. We pray that the Christian friendships formed during this visit will continue for the mutual benefit of both group communities.



Young men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society chanting at the parish of St Nicholas.



Teaching primary school students in Sunday School



Attending a talk in the School Hall



Discussions following one of the talks



Members of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society and their families outside the church of St Nicholas

**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

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