



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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

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THE CHRISTMAS WITHIN YOU

“A new child was born for us, who was the pre-Eternal God”

The Kontakion of Christmas equates the young Christ-Child with the pre-Eternal God.

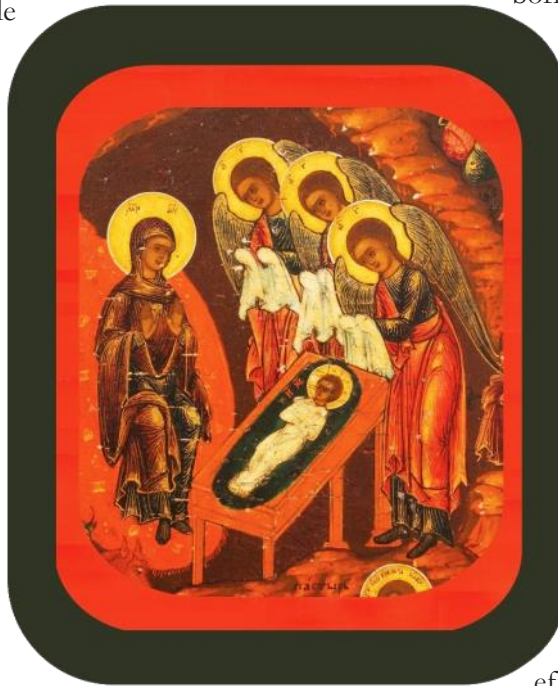
The child as God, the God as a child... Why during the period of Christmas is a strong emotion felt inside us, when all people, even those with a weak or those with no faith, view the unique spectacle of the young mother holding the child in her lap, surrounded by the Magi, the shepherds, the open skies and the Star from the East?

Why are we so certain that there is nothing more beautiful and more joyful on our woeful planet as this spectacle, which the passing of the centuries proved unable to erase from our memories? We return to this spectacle whenever we have no other refuge, whenever we have worries in life, and we search for that which will deliver us from our impasse.

The words “Child” and “God”, are the two words that are the most revealing of the mystery of Christmas. Why? Because they are a mystery that is directed to the child, which continues to live secretly inside every adult. The child continues to listen to God and responds joyfully to Him, whereas the adult stopped listening: whilst in the material world, tired and full of cynicism, he is unable to listen, and feel any spiritual uplifting.

There is no doubt that Christmas is a feast for children, not because of the decorated Christmas tree, but because they are not surprised that God came to earth as a child! The pictures everywhere, and the innumerable works of art worldwide, show us that

what is really important and more joyful in Christianity is found exactly here, in this eternal childishness of Christianity. The adults demand a clever and serious religion, together with explanations and analytical data. So they make themselves unsuitable to accept the Christian message. Only the children understand it - but when they grow up they become serious and boring, like the adults.



But Christ said, “*become as little children*” (Matt 18:3). What does this mean? Simply, that the adults have strangled and suppressed the ability of the child inside them to adore, admire and rejoice. The children take seriously those things which the adults cannot accept: those mysterious things of the world, which are revealed only to the children and the Saints.

Those of us who want to make our own the joyful mystery of the birth of God this Christmas, with all its spiritual blessings, will have to make every effort to enter into the child within

us, because the “God-child” will be coming once again as a “child”.

The world is governed by power, authority, fear and dominance. The “God-child” liberates us from all of these. He only asks us to give Him our heart. And that we offer it to a Child, who inspires enormous confidence.

With the celebrations of Christmas, the Church reveals the mystery of joy: the mystery of love which makes man to see, to recognise and to love God in the person of the divine Child, who offers to the believer as a Christmas gift - a New Life.

Πώς να δεχτούμε το Λυτρωτή

Χριστούγεννα! Οι Χριστιανοί, όπου γης ετοιμάζονται για τη μεγάλη γιορτή της Χριστιανοσύνης. Ο ερχομός του Λυτρωτή στο κόσμο πραγματοποιήθηκε πριν 21 αιώνες: **«έπεφάνη γάρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις»** (Τιτ. Β' 11). Δηλαδή εμφανίστηκε η χάρις του Θεού που σώζει όλους τους ανθρώπους.

Με πόση λαχτάρα η ανθρωπότητα τον περίμενε! Και να που το **«πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου»** (ο καιρός που όρισε ο πάνσοφος Θεός) ήλθε, και έστειλε το μονογενή Του Υιό στο κόσμο, για να μας εξαγοράσει από την αμαρτία και να μας κάνει κατά χάριν παιδιά Του.

Αυτή την αλήθεια η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία την προβάλλει συνεχώς μπροστά μας, όμως ιδιαίτερα τις μέρες τούτες που μας έρχονται.

Έρχεται ο Χριστός, ο Σωτήρας, ο Λυτρωτής – Άραγε πώς Τον δεχόμαστε;

Προσδοκούμε τη Λύτρωση;

Αναλογιζόμαστε τη σωτηρία;

Σκιρτούν οι καρδιές από συγκίνηση;

Μιά σύντομη ματιά γύρω μας θα μας απαγοητεύσει. Παντού βλέπουμε και ακούμε για Χριστουγεννιάτικες διασκεδάσεις, Χριστουγεννιάτικες εκδηλώσεις, κάλαντα, τραπέζια, δώρα, ευχητήριες κάρτες. Μα όλα αυτά είναι επιφανειακά, εφήμερα και παροδικά.

Εκφράζουν ένα Χριστό **«άχριστο»**, που δεν έχει καμιά σχέση με την ιστορική πραγματικότητα, με την αλήθεια του Ευαγγελίου. Με το Χριστό που κήρυξαν οι Απόστολοι, που έζησαν οι άγιοι. Με το Χριστό που ξεδιψά τις ψυχές μας.

Βέβαια υπάρχουν και οι θρησκευόντες άνθρωποι που δεν παραλείπουν τα θρησκευτικά τους καθήκοντα. Φρονούμε πως αν μόνο τυπικά, και από συνήθεια, εκκλησιαζόμαστε, νηστεύουμε, κοινωνούμε τότε ο Χριστός εξακολουθεί να παραμένει για μας ένας Άγνωστος.

Τί κρίμα! Έρχεται ο Χριστός στο κόσμο, φορά την ανθρώπινη σάρκα. Από Υιός Θεού γίνεται Υιός

ανθρώπου. Ψάχνει να βρεί τον πληγωμένο από την αμαρτία άνθρωπο, να τον σώσει, να τον λυτρώσει και εμείς επηρεασμένοι από το κοσμικό πνεύμα και με αμβλυμένα τα πνευματικά μας αισθητήρια αδυνατούμε να τον καταλάβουμε και να τον δεχτούμε.

Τί πρέπει να κάνουμε;

Η ιστορία του Αγ. Ιερώνυμου μας συγκινεί και μας διδάσκει. Τη νύχτα των Χριστουγέννων βρέθηκε μέσα στο σπήλαιο της Γεννήσεως. Όλη τη νύχτα προσευχόταν. Και ενώ η καρδιά του και ο νους του ήταν βυθισμένα στη προσευχή, σαν ν'άκουσε τη φωνή του Θεού Βρέφους να του λέει: **«Ιερώνυμε, ποιό δώρο θα μου δώσεις στη γιορτή της Γεννήσεώς μου;»** Γεμάτος δέος ο Άγιος απαντά: **«Κύριε γνωρίζεις πως τίποτα δεν κράτησα για τον εαυτό μου. Όλα τα έχω δώσει στην αγάπη Σου».** Μα η φωνή του Θεού Βρέφους ακούστηκε ξανά: **«Ιερώνυμε έχεις κάτι δικό σου! Δός μου τις αμαρτίες σου. Αυτό το δώρο σου ζητώ. Για να σου τις συγχωρήσω!».**

Πραγματικά Χριστούγεννα, γιορτάζουν ουσιαστικά μόνο οι ψυχές που διψούν τη λύτρωση. Οι ψυχές που έχουν τη διάθεση να απαλλαγούν από την αμαρτία. Να ελευθερωθούν απ'ότι αμαρτωλό καταπιέζει τον «έσω άνθρωπο».

Χωρίς αμφιβολίες και επιφυλάξεις. Χωρίς αμφιταλάντευση και κλονισμό της πίστης τους, αυτοί οι ευλογημένοι άνθρωποι δέχονται το μήνυμα των Χριστουγέννων. Έχουν ακλόνητη τη πεποίθηση πως όντως εγενήθη ο Λυτρωτής του κόσμου, ο Υιός του Θεού του ζώντος. Πλησιάζουν με ταπείνωση και ειλικρινή μετάνοια το Θείο Βρέφος. Εξομολογούνται στον πνευματικό τους. Αποθέτουν τις αμαρτίες τους μπροστά στο πετραχήλι - φάτνη του Χριστού - και Εκείνος τις δέχεται καλύτερα και από τα πολύτιμα δώρα των μάγων και ανταποδίδει σ'αυτούς την ανείπωτη χαρά της ελεύθερης και λυτρωμένης ψυχής.

Αυτή την χαρά, αυτή την αγαλλίαση όλοι μας μπορούμε τα φετινά Χριστούγεννα να την αισθανθούμε και να την ζήσουμε.



Current Issues

What was Wrong by Voting “NO”?

On November 15, the results of the plebiscite concerning SSM (Same Sex Marriage) were announced, showing a majority for the Yes vote at 61.6%. At the same time, the campaign was conducted more or less respectably on both sides, and accepted as won by the **Yes** advocates.

What has become a matter of contention since the publication of the results is the continuous comments by the print and electronic media, discussing the fact that of the 17 national electorates who voted **No**, 12 were in NSW, whilst 7 of these were in Western Sydney.

The Media began analysing the reasons for this disparity. How was it that several adjoining electorates, most of them held by the Labor party, managed to produce such a result? There have been several assumptions and speculations on the matter. Let us look at some of them, as they were described in the article *Same-sex marriage vote paints stark picture of two Sydneys* by Keely McDonough and Jack Houghton in the Daily Telegraph of 18 November 2017:

1. There was concern how large and concentrated the **No** vote in Western Sydney had been. The central belt of the west could have been from another country entirely.
2. The reason is attributed to religious conservatism among ethnic communities, but other factors could have included a blue-collar demographic, an older population, ethnic cultural differences, lower margin of university education, and low familiarity with the issue.
3. The population living in Western Sydney has a high number of recently arrived migrants from conservative countries (comment by David Borger, Western Sydney Business Chamber) which are impoverished, where minorities are persecuted, and for many of them the idea of spending much time debating SSM is ludicrous (comment by Mr George Zakhia, Bankstown councillor).
4. These multicultural seats in the west are not people who are Chinese or Indian or Muslim, but include plenty of people from an Anglo-Celtic background, Eastern Europe, the Balkans (comment by GetUp! analyst, Ben Raue).
5. One very astute voter in the Bella Vista area hit the nail on the head by saying: “Voting **Yes** without legislation alongside it, **was like signing a blank Cheque!**” Needless to say, that person had voted **No!**
6. A Lebanese Christian truck driver, who on his admission was not religious, voted **No**, because he believes in traditional marriage between a man and a woman, and believes in the value of the family.
7. Ben Raue had the temerity to say that the **No** campaign focussed on letterboxing and pamphlets that contained factually incorrect material to whip up fear and division! Really? Is this true or is he talking through his hat?



The most concerning admission told by the **Yes** side is that of **Ms Masha Gessen**, uttered at the Sydney Writer's Festival in 2012: “Fighting for gay marriage generally involves **LYING** about what we are going to do with marriage when we get there. Because **we lie that the institution of marriage is not going to change**. And **that is a lie**. The institution of marriage is going to change, and it should change, and again I don't think it should exist” (Radio National, June 11, 2012, www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/why-get-married/4058506 at 6.20min).

Knowing that the most sinister lies have been told, and continue to be told, by the **Yes** camp, we return to the unusual **No** vote in Western Sydney.

Assuming all the reasons offered for that voting pattern - conservative ideas, recently arrived migrants, religion, ethnicity, low levels of education and ethnic customs - are more or less correct, the article implies that all these features of Western Sydneysiders make them appear as uncivilised, their poor education renders them inferior citizens, and their customs are a hindrance to integration into the Australian Society.

Who can say that to have conservative ideas, a religious faith, keeping your social customs, or have low level of University education, makes you a person inferior in terms of human value, compared to our Society, where telling lies and more lies, so as to socially engineer a radical change based on hypersexuality and not voting **Yes** in the plebiscite?

Have the authors considered the fact, that the above attributes protected these people from the difficulties of the environment in which they lived and are now living?

And what is worse, they are presented as a backward mass of people who could not see the “wood for the trees” by not voting **Yes** for SSM, as the rest of our “enlightened community” has done, and therefore delay the arrival of the “magnificent” type of Marriage and Family pattern, a la Masha Gessen?

It would be advisable if the Daily Telegraph were more careful in judging social issues, and took guidance from people with experience of how society functions, particularly in such a delicate area as multiculturalism.

Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

From the Saints of our Church

**Ο Άγιος Μάρτυς Θεμιστοκλής
(η μνήμη του τιμάται 21 Δεκεμβρίου)**

**Holy Martyr Themistocles of Myra
(Commemorated 21st December)**

Ο άγιος Θεμιστοκλής έζησε κατά τον 3ο αιώνα στα Μύρα της Λυκίας, όταν αυτοκράτορας στη Ρώμη ήταν ο Δέκιος. Ο ίδιος ήταν βοσκός, και έβοσκε τα πρόβατα του στα βουνά της Λυκίας, ζώντας μια ήσυχη Χριστιανική ζωή. Τον καιρό εκείνο, ο διοικητής της Επαρχίας, ο Ασκληπιός, εκήρυξε διωγμό εναντίον των Χριστιανών.

Μία μέρα ένας Χριστιανός από την πόλη, και γνωστός του Θεμιστοκλή, ο Διοσκορίδης, παρουσιάστηκε στην πόρτα του σπιτιού του Θεμιστοκλή ζητώντας καταφύγιο, ενώ σε λίγα λεπτά φτάνουν και οι στρατιώτες του Ασκληπιού που τον κυνηγούσαν. Απαίτησαν από τον Θεμιστοκλή να τους παραδώσει το Διοσκορίδη, αλλά ο Θεμιστοκλής τους παρακαλούσε να δείξουν έλεος.

«Αφήστε τον να φύγει, αδελφοί... Μη τον παραδίνετε στον δικαστή, έτσι τον δίνετε το δώρο της ζωής. Μολονότι είναι Χριστιανός σαν κ' εμένα, είναι άνθρωπος σαν κι εσάς».

Οι στρατιώτες θύμωσαν πολύ, και ο Θεμιστοκλής δέχτηκε να παραδοθεί εκείνος, παρά ο φίλος του.

Στο δικαστήριο, μπροστά στον Ασκληπιό, ο Θεμιστοκλής κατέπληξε όλους. Με τα φτωχά του ρούχα, ο άνθρωπος του Θεού μίλησε με πολύ σοφία. Ο Ασκληπιός απαιτούσε μα μάθει την αλήθεια που ήταν ο Διοσκορίδης. Αλλά ο Θεμιστοκλής απαντά:

«Την μόνη αλήθεια που ξέρω είναι ο Χριστός, που είπε - Εγώ είμαι η αλήθεια και η ζωή».

Περιφρονώντας την λατρεία των ειδώλων, ο Θεμιστοκλής εστάλει στα βασανιστήρια. Αυτό τον γέμισε με πολύ χαρά.

«Θέλεις να με βασανίσεις, εμπρός λοιπόν. Θα προσφέρω μια θυσία για την δόξα του Κυρίου μου, και μια για την σωτηρία του δούλου Του, Διοσκορίδη».

Οι βασανιστές ξεκόλλησαν τα χέρια και τα πόδια του από το σώμα του, τον κρέμασαν και τον χτυπούσαν. Τότε λέγει στον Ασκληπιό:

«Δεν ξέρεις ότι η ζωή που έχουμε, σώθηκε από το ξύλο του Σταυρού! Ο κόσμος σώθηκε από τον Χριστό, ο Οποίος δοξάζεται σε όλο το σύμπαν».

Ο Ασκληπιός διάταξε να τον τραβούν πάνω σε αγκάθια, μέχρις ότου έφυγε η ψυχή του στον Ουρανό.

Ευσεβείς Χριστιανοί πήραν το σώμα του Θεμιστοκλή, το έθαψαν με τιμές, και την μαγκούρα του την έμπηξαν πάνω στο μνήμα του. Το ξύλο έβγαλε ρίζες, μεγάλωσε, άνθισε και έγινε μια ωραία αμυγδαλιά που θεράπευε τις αρρώστιες των ανθρώπων.

Themistocles was a shepherd during the reign of Emperor Decius in the 3rd century, quietly attending to his sheep in the mountains of Lycia. It was at this time that the governor of the region, Asclepius, began to persecute Christians. Dioscorides was a fellow Christian from the city who appeared at Themistocles' door seeking refuge. Just minutes behind him were Asclepius' soldiers. They commanded Themistocles to give him up, but Themistocles asked them to show mercy:

“Let him go, brothers... Don't hand him over to the judge, and you'll have given him the gift of life... Even though he's a Christian like me, he's a man like yourselves”.

The soldiers only responded with anger, so Themistocles offered to be arrested in the place of Dioscorides.

At the tribunal before Asclepius, Themistocles astonished the onlookers! Appearing in his simple shepherd's dress, the holy man of God spoke with great wisdom. Asclepius demanded the truth of Dioscorides' whereabouts, to which Themistocles responded:

“The only truth I know is Christ, who said, I am the Truth and the Life!”

Decrying the vain worship of idols, Themistocles was sent to be tormented. He responded with joy:

“You want to torture me, so get on with it... I shall offer a sacrifice to the glory of my Master, for my salvation and for that of the servant of God Dioscorides...”

The tormentors tore his limbs from their sockets. He was beaten, hung and scraped. Despite these sufferings, Themistocles was increasingly hopeful. He said to Asclepius:

“Don't you know that Life has appeared to us and we have been saved by the Wood of the Cross? The world has been saved and Christ is glorified by the whole universe!”

Asclepius ordered that he be dragged through a mass of thorns until he died. After his martyrdom, the faithful planted his shepherd's staff on his grave. It took root there, blossomed into an almond tree and its fruit had miraculous healing powers.



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

How do we preserve our Orthodox Faith in a multicultural society?

Collectively, Australians speak over 200 languages. Other than English, the most common languages spoken today are Chinese, Italian, Greek and Arabic. So many cultures and so many beliefs! Christianity is the most commonly reported religion (52.1% of the population). The Islamic population with 2.6% of the total population is the second largest religion, closely followed by Buddhism (2.4%). However, as many as 30% of Australians reported that they had 'no religion'.

How can we preserve our Orthodox Christian Faith in such a multicultural society?

In a MONOCultural society, where everyone adheres to one culture, one language and one religion, it is much easier to just do what the others do, to believe what the others believe and to be one of the group. In a monocultural society you may even be an outcast if you do not follow the main group and its beliefs. In some ways, it is like being a boat, safe in a protected harbour.

However, in a MULTICultural society, it is like being out in the open ocean. In a multicultural society, you are exposed to every possible belief and you need to make the right choices. You need to be conscious and sure of your identity and you have to constantly work to cultivate and nurture it. You must be strong in who you are. In our multicultural society we are invited to search for the spiritual and divine Truth amongst many options that parade as truth, but which are falsehoods.

So again, I ask myself, how can we preserve our Orthodox Christian Faith in such a multicultural society?

The truth is that we only preserve something if we

think it is of value to us. Our Faith, our belief in the one true God, must be something we value. If it is, then we naturally protect it, nurture it and grow it. We do this by using prayer, reading, Holy Communion, acts of charity, Confession, liturgical life and fasting. Is this you? Keep going! You are on the right path.

However, if you do not value your Faith, it will be impossible to preserve it. In fact, you probably do not even have the desire to preserve it. The evidence is that

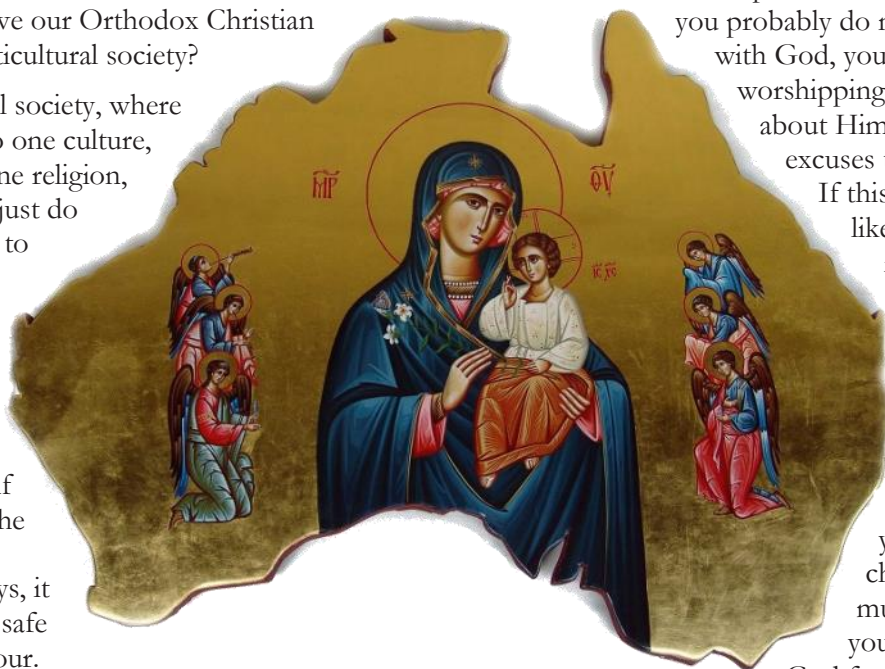
you probably do not want to connect with God, you cannot be bothered worshipping or even learning about Him, and you find excuses to justify your sins.

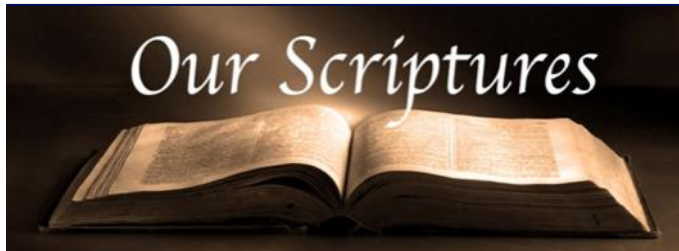
If this is you, then you are like a rudderless boat in the open sea. Any fake and false belief can sweep you away and you will be lost. If this is you and you realise that you are in danger, but you really want to change, then you must start building up your faith. First, ask

God for help. Start with a

small program of prayer and some easy spiritual reading each day. Then build up slowly. Keep company with people who have the same faith and practice. Find a spiritual father, a priest confessor, to coach you how to reconnect with our Lord. Ask him how to receive Holy Communion to give you strength to keep going. Slowly, slowly your faith will become stronger and even though you live in a multicultural, multi-faith society, you will 'stand firm'. You will know God. You will know your identity. You will be at peace.

It is indeed possible, desirable and beneficial to preserve your Orthodox Christian Faith in a multicultural society.





The Genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-17)

The first passage we read in the first chapter of the first Gospel of the New Testament is the genealogy of Jesus Christ. St Matthew begins his Gospel by calling Jesus the Christ - which means the anointed one - “the son of David, the Son of Abraham” (v1). The first title, “Son of David” is echoed throughout the Gospel of Matthew, because the Evangelist was writing primarily to the Jewish community to impress the fact that Jesus is a descendant of King David. This would have immediately identified Jesus as this prophesied Messiah, or Christ. That is, the audience of this Gospel would have been familiar with the Psalms (89:3-4) and various prophetic books (Isaiah 16:5; Jeremiah 23:5-6) which recorded God’s promise to establish a righteous King from the house of David on the throne of Israel forever.



The reference to Abraham, who is considered to be the father of the Hebrew people, also links Jesus with the fulfilment of God’s promise to the Patriarch. This promise stated that “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3), thus Jesus being the “Son of Abraham” is the seed which will bless all the nations.

The Evangelist then starts the genealogy from the Patriarch Abraham, tracing the ancestors of Jesus in three groups of fourteen generations. Much has been debated regarding these generations and what they could mean, but it is suffice to say that the genealogy goes from a period of Patriarchs chosen by God, to a period of Kings appointed by God, then to a period of exile and captivity due to the apostasy of the people. The final group leads us to a period of restoration and fulfilment of God’s promises through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This is precisely the message of the Gospel, and it is especially evident in the final chapter, just before the Ascension, in the Great Commission where Jesus firstly proclaims his Kingdom having all authority over heaven and earth, and secondly, commands his disciples to baptise all the nations in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit so that all who believe may be blessed forever in his eternal Kingdom.



Blueprints for the Little Church: Creating an Orthodox Home

By Elissa Bjeletich and Caleb Shoemaker
Published by Ancient Faith, 2016

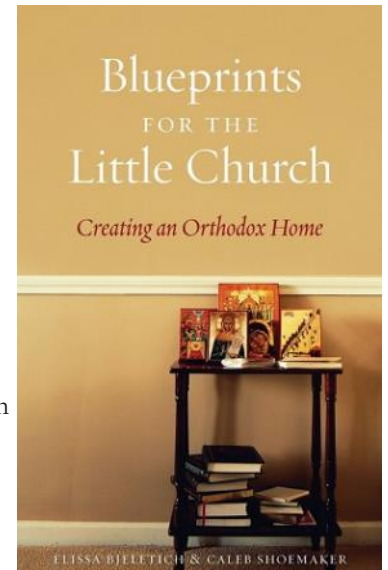
Blueprints for the Little Church addresses the critical question parents face: how do we provide our children with the spiritual foundations that will keep them close to Christ throughout their lives?

A child’s spiritual nurturing comes through their involvement in the life of the Church, both in the parish and at home – the ‘Little Church’.

Creating an Orthodox home is about raising saints: ‘It’s not about manners – it’s about holiness. It’s not about ‘good behaviour’ – it’s about a life given completely to God in loving humility and peace.’

The wisdom of the Church Fathers are scattered throughout the book, supplemented by practical guidance and examples from Orthodox parents of ‘how our family is living this concept.’ At its core are the three disciplines in which we are to continually grow as Orthodox Christians: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. No hard line of ‘what everyone must do to be really Orthodox’ is presented. There is no one ‘right’ way to incorporate Orthodox spirituality into the home. Each family is different, therefore home lives will look different. The authors are mindful about creating realistic expectations and caution us to go slowly, to be patient with small steps. We are encouraged, rather than being made to feel as if we’ve missed the mark if we do not have the perfect Orthodox home and family life. Importantly, we are sent again and again to check with our own priest: ‘your spiritual Father knows you best and therefore can most wisely help you know how to apply this.’

There is much richness in this book. It encourages us to move from inherited ways of doing things toward more purposeful and meaningful Orthodox practices that help us centre our lives as members of the Body of Christ. We are encouraged to live as if we dwell in His Church, so that our home looks, feels and sounds at all times a harmonious Orthodox ‘Little Church’.





The Enduring Legacy of Faith

Kyrria Leah migrated to Australia from her home town of Kozani in the post war era. Like many other women from the north eastern regions of Greece she had vivid memories of the war years, even though she was a young girl at the time. Most families had suffered tragic losses, especially during the Greek civil war years. Many families had lost a loved one, and in some cases more than one member of the family.

In a slow, measured tone, Kyria Leah recalls the two brothers she had lost within the space of one month around 1947. One of her brothers, an eighteen-year old youth, had been targeted by the andartes (communist fighters), and as he ran to escape from them, he was hurled against barbed wire fencing and injured both of his legs in the razor-sharp wire. His family were never to see him again. Some townspeople said he had been taken to the Eastern bloc countries by the andartes, while others whispered that he had been shot while trapped in the fencing. This brother had stood out in Kyria Leah's imagination because of the family's story about him. When he was a small child he had been lost overnight. He had fallen asleep in the church during the vespers service. The family had gone home separately, not aware that he had remained asleep inside the church. Each family member believed that one of the other siblings had taken him home. During the night, when he awoke, he realised that he had been locked inside the church. He did not alarm himself, but remained resting in a small corner until the morning when the priest came to open up. The church for him was the same as home and he knew he was safe in his Father's house. His mother had raised all of her children to love the Church but this child, even from a very young age, seemed to be different from the others in his simple faith and trust in God and the Saints. When he was killed by andartes, his family mourned for him deeply.

Within a month, another one of Leah's brothers returned home after having spent a long period in Vienna in a German internment camp. He had managed to escape after a bomb had blown up the camp he had been sent to. Upon his return home, he wanted to go and see the family's tobacco fields, as this had been his responsibility prior to the war. His mother, aware that the area was surrounded by andartes, tried to keep him away, but his desire to experience some sort of normality after his long absence in a foreign land caused him to disregard his mothers' words of caution. There was a shed at the very end of the field, and as he approached it he noted there were men inside. They were in ragged cloths, desperate, afraid and very hungry. He did not know how to respond to them, whether to approach or to go back the way he had come.

They called out to him, 'Have you no bread to bring to us? We are starving!'



He felt their hunger deeply, as he too had experienced hunger, but he had experienced it as a prisoner in a foreign place. Here these men were in their own country, yet desperate for something to eat. He could not stand to see people hungry and so, instinctively, he acted upon impulse and went back home to get some freshly baked bread for them.

"No, my son, do not feed them! Do not go back there, as you will be seen by some people around here as a traitor for feeding and aiding the enemy", Kyria Leah's mother pleaded in vain with her son. He was not aware of the fatal consequences of a humane act of feeding a hungry group of men. He had been absent from Greece for long enough, and did not understand the politics of the civil war. Within days he was denounced for this act of kindness as an act of betrayal by some of his neighbours. He was sentenced and killed for aiding andartes by those on the other side.

Kyria Leah was a young girl when this happened, but she recalls that her mother and father could not utter anything in defence of their sentenced son. Furthermore, they were not given their son's body to bury after he was executed. When asked about how her parents responded to this tragedy, Kyria Leah stated that her parents did not ever stop believing in God, despite the incomprehensibility of what had just happened. Many years later, when she decided to migrate to Australia, her parents would say that they had lost three children. Yet Kyria Leah was never lost, since the legacy of her parents' deep and abiding faith had taught her to endure whatever hurdles life presented to her. It was her early experiences that had shaped her, and so she was able to transmit her parents' faith and beliefs to her own family and her grandchildren in the Antipodes.

Τα Άγια Θεοφάνεια

Τα Άγια Θεοφάνεια είναι η αρχαιότερη δεσποτική γιορτή μετά το Πάσχα και η τρίτη και τελευταία γιορτή του Δωδεκαημέρου των Χριστουγέννων.

Τα Θεοφάνεια είναι γιορτή δόξας και φιλανθρωπίας.

Ο Χριστός δέχεται να βαπτιστεί στον Ιορδάνη ποταμό, σαν άνθρωπος αμαρτωλός. Καταδέχεται να ακολουθήσει ο αναμάρτητος την ίδια διαδικασία με τους αμαρτωλούς για να εκπληρώσει τον νόμο, και ζητά από τον Πρόδρομο να υπακούσει και να τον βαπτίσει. Όχι για να καθαρισθεί, αλλά για να καθαρίσει κάθε ανθρώπινο ρύπο.

Τότε ανοίγουν οι ουρανοί και αποκαλύπτεται η **Αγία και Ομοούσιος Τριάδα στον κόσμο**. Ο Τριαδικός Θεός φανερώνεται, και γίνεται αντιληπτός από τους ανθρώπους. Ο μονογενής **Υιός** του Θεού βαπτίζεται ως ταπεινός άνθρωπος, στον Ιορδάνη ποταμό, το **Άγιο Πνεύμα** καταβαίνει σαν περιστέρι επάνω Του και ο ουράνιος **Πατήρ** τον παρουσιάζει στον κόσμο λέγοντας, **«Αυτός είναι ο Υιός μου ο αγαπητός. Σ' Αυτόν εγώ ευαρεστούμαι»**.

Από αυτά τα γεγονότα η γιορτή ονομάστηκε Θεοφάνεια, που σημαίνει φανέρωση του Θεού στους ανθρώπους. Ο Χριστός βαπτίσθηκε, αγίασε όλη τη φύση των υδάτων. Η άκτιστη θεία ενέργεια αγίασε ολόκληρη τη δημιουργία και μετέδωσε στον κόσμο ευλογία.



Απ' αυτή τη σεβάσμια και αγία ημέρα χρονολογείται και το βάπτισμα των χριστιανών.

Την παραμονή των Θεοφανείων, την νύκτα, οι Κατηχούμενοι πήγαιναν στο Βαπτιστήριο, με λαμπάδες που συμβόλιζαν τον φωτισμό της ψυχής. Έτσι η εορτή ονομάστηκε και **Φώτα**.

Από τα Θεοφάνεια ξεκινά το σωτήριο κήρυγμα της βασιλείας των ουρανών που επαναφέρει τον άνθρωπο μέσα στον Παράδεισο. Τον καθιστά

«κατά χάριν» **υιό του Θεού** και του ανοίγει μια νέα προοπτική ζωής μέσα στην δόξα των παιδιών του Θεού. Του υπενθυμίζει την υποχρέωση να φυλάει λευκό τον χιτώνα της ψυχής, που ντύθηκε κατά το βάπτισμά του, «άσπιλο» και «αμόλυτο» από κάθε αμαρτία, με την τήρηση των εντολών του Θεού.

Την αλήθεια αυτή εκφράζει πολύ ωραία ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Δαμασκηνός στο τροπάριο, που συνέταξε για τα Άγια Θεοφάνεια: **«Ας ασπροφορέσει κάθε ανθρώπινη, κάθε γήινη φύση, γιατί μετά την έκπτωσή της από τους Ουρανούς, σήμερα μπορεί πάλι να ανέβει στο πρότερο ύψος της. Ας χαίρεται, γιατί ο Θεός Λόγος, ο Χριστός, την ξέπλυνε μέσα στα νερά του Ιορδάνη και την καθάρισε από όλα τα πταισμάτά της, την βοήθησε να ξεφύγει από κάθε σκοτεινή σκιά αμαρτίας και την έκανε πάμφωτη και πεντακάθαρη»**.

For Adults who Seek a Deeper Understanding of their Faith

The Greek Orthodox Christian Society and Orthodox Ladies Groups of Sydney hold Talks, Lessons and Bible Study groups weekly so that those who participate can:

- Learn to live our Orthodox Christian Faith within the life of the Church
- Have fellowship with one another
- Participate in voluntary mission work, such as Sunday Schools and Youth Groups, Camps/Retreats, distribution of Orthodox Christian books, Orthodox radio programmes, visiting the sick and similar activities.



Meetings are held at the Orthodox Mission Centre, 217 Bexley Rd Kingsgrove, for those 18 years and over, in several age groups:

- For women: 4 to 5:30 Saturday afternoons
- For men: 8 to 9:30 Saturday evenings.



Psalm 103 – Ο Προουμιακός (Introductory Psalm read at Vespers)

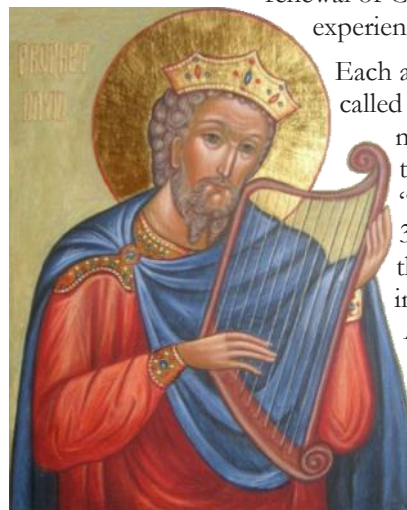
The start of the Psalm provides us with a description of God's Creation, and through it, revealing His might and glory. We read of clouds, winds, waters and mountains, all highlighting God's glory and contrasting small humanity against His greatness and magnitude.

But that is not the only image the Psalm projects. Subsequent verses provide a softer image of the Lord's greatness through all the beautiful elements of Creation such as grasses, springs and trees. There are birds singing and an "earth that is satisfied with the fruit of your work" (v 13). There is also the image of God feeding all His creatures (v 27-28), which reminds us of God nourishing the Israelites with manna and quail during the forty years in the desert.

However, the Psalm is not just about God's glory and the greatness of His Creation. The idea of God hiding His face (v 29) is a possible reference to all the times God did not help Israel, such as during their constant struggles against foreign oppressors. The hiding of the Lord's face is His reaction to the idolatry of the Israelites.

The Psalm then returns again to Creation. The use of the word "breath" (v 29) reminds us of how we were created through the breath of God, and "dust" (v 29) also hearkens back to Genesis and where God said to Adam, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19).

This Psalm is not without hope, for in verse 30 there is prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: "You shall send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created". Through the coming down of the Holy Spirit, God has renewed "the face of the earth" (v 30). This is a renewal of Creation which we experience at our Baptism.



Each and every one of us is called to "sing to the Lord all my life" (v 33), hoping that our words be "pleasing to Him" (v 34). If we do these things, we "shall be glad in the Lord" (v 34).

After calling for the destruction of sin, the Psalm ends precisely as it began - "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" (v 35).



Elder Tychon the Athonite (1884-1968)

Father Tychon was born in 1884 in the Russian town of Novaya, Mikhalovka. His God-fearing parents, Paul and Helen, taught him from a young age to love God with all his heart. Such was his longing to devote his whole life to God that from childhood, he wanted to become a monk. Due to his young age however, his parents hesitated to give their son a blessing to join a monastery. He made endless pilgrimages to many monasteries in Russia, where he often refused to accept hospitality, both to cultivate his own asceticism and to avoid burdening others. On one occasion, he was exceedingly tired, not having eaten for several days. Panagia then appeared to him and gave him some bread to eat, and this experience remained with him for the rest of his life.



At the age of twenty, he was finally given the blessing by his parents to go to Mount Athos to follow his monastic calling. He spent most of his years in a cell at Kapsala, on the southern tip of Mount Athos, where he was also ordained a priest. During this time, he struggled intensely to live an angelic life by cultivating obedience and humility. As a "city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt 5:14), Father Tychon radiated divine grace, with monks and laymen flocking to him to be comforted by his great love. When he served the Divine Liturgy, he would ask the monk who chanted for him to step outside during the cherubic hymn, as he would often be taken up in spiritual contemplation where he saw the Cherubim and the Seraphim glorifying God. As his spiritual child, Saint Paisios would say: one would always hear from the lips of Elder Tychon either "Glory to Thee O God", or "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me". After Saint Sergius and Panagia had appeared to him, Elder Tychon fell asleep in the Lord on September 10, 1968, in the presence of his spiritual child, Saint Paisios. May the prayers of Elder Tychon help us to cultivate the simplicity, holiness, and great love for God that he maintained throughout his entire life.



What we Hear in Church



From the Holy Fathers...

From the Service of the Royal Hours of Christmas - Hymn of the 1st Hour

Ἦχος πλ. δ', Ποίημα Σωφρονίου Πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων

Βηθλεὲμ ἑτοιμάζου· εὐτρεπιζέσθω ἡ φάτνη· τὸ Σπήλαιον δεχέσθω, ἡ ἀλήθεια ἦλθεν· ἡ σκιά παρέδραμε· καὶ Θεὸς ἀνθρώποις, ἐκ Παρθένου πεφανέρωται, μορφωθείς τὸ καθ' ἡμᾶς, καὶ θεώσας τὸ πρόσλημμα. Διὸ Ἀδὰμ ἀνανεοῦται σὺν τῇ Εὐᾷ, κράζοντες· Ἐπὶ γῆς εὐδοκία ἐπεφάνη, σῶσαι τὸ γένος ἡμῶν.

Tone 8. By Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem
Bethlehem make ready; let the Manger be prepared; let the Cave receive. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away, and God has appeared among men from a Virgin, formed as we are and making divine what he has put on. And so Adam is renewed with Eve as they cry, 'God's good pleasure has appeared on earth to save our race'.

Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David and his father Jesse. It is located southwest of Jerusalem and in Biblical times belonged to the tribe of Judah. Due to its small number of inhabitants, it was not listed alongside the more prominent cities of the kingdom of Judah. However it is by no means an insignificant place because it is here the salvific act of the birth of Christ took place.

This small town is heralded by the Prophet Micah who prophesied as far back as the 8th century before Christ: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Micah 5:1).

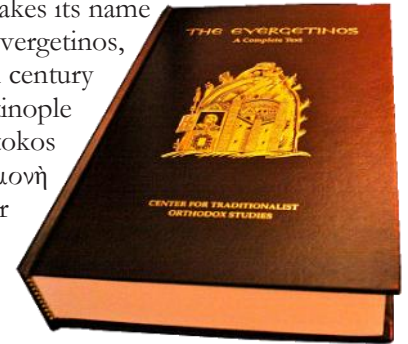
The hymnology of our Church highlights the importance of Bethlehem as the birthplace of our Lord frequently, not only to praise it directly but to highlight the truth that Christ came to be born in a humble manner in a lowly, almost insignificant place. Another hymn from the Royal Hours asks: "Joseph, tell us, how is it that you are bringing to Bethlehem great with child the Maiden you received from the Holy Place?" (Glory Hymn, 3rd Hour).

St Romanos the Melodist, the most mellifluous of our Church's Hymnographers interprets in a deeply theological manner the importance of Bethlehem, not only as a physical place but as a spiritual gateway for all mankind:

"Bethlehem has opened Eden, come, let us see;
We have found delight in secret, come let us receive
The joys of Paradise within the cave;
There the unwatered root has appeared whose blossom is forgiveness,
There has been found the undug well
From which David once wished to drink;
There a Virgin has borne a babe
And has at once quenched Adam's and David's thirst.
For this let us hasten to this place where there has been born
A little Child: God before the ages" (Oikos from the Kontakion of Christmas Day).

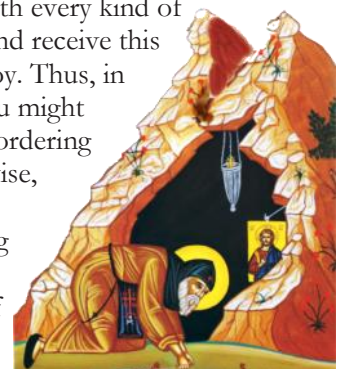
The Evergetinos

The great treasure of Christian literature known as the Evergetinos takes its name from the monk Paul Evergetinos, the founder of an 11th century monastery in Constantinople dedicated to the Theotokos "the Benefactress" (ἡ μονὴ τῆς Εὐεργέτιδος). Elder Paul undertook the compilation of a vast collection of the writings of the Church Fathers and the Lives of the Saints, arranging them methodically into two hundred chapters which he called "hypotheses", which each refer to a single practical aspect of the spiritual life.



The great ascetics of the Egyptian desert feature in almost every hypothesis, with excerpts from the Apophthegmata of the Fathers, the Lausaic History of Palladius, the writings of St Cassian and the Lives of St Euthymius the Great, St Pachomius the Great and Amma Syncletica, which are complemented by extracts from the Dialogues of St Gregory the Great (the "Latin Gerontikon"). The writings of Saints Isaac and Ephraim of Syria, St Mark the Ascetic, St Basil the Great, St Diadochus of Photike, St Maximus the Confessor, St Isaiah of Scetis, St Zosima of Palestine and Saints Barsanuphius and John are combined with excerpts from the lives of many popular Saints and Martyrs in a remarkable synthesis which enriches each hypothesis with a multitude of proven, living examples of Orthodox Christian spirituality.

The Evergetinos became a much-loved practical spiritual guide for countless monastics and laypeople throughout the ages, but was in danger of falling into obscurity during the years of the Turkish occupation, until St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain brought it to the light of publication. In his prologue to the first edition (1783), he concludes with the following words: "All of you who are partakers of the heavenly Orthodox calling, who desire to adorn your souls with every kind of virtue, put forth your arms and receive this sacred embrace with much joy. Thus, in your love for the Fathers, you might everyday seek their counsel, ordering your life according to their wise, time-tested and God-given instructions; and in becoming practitioners of virtue, you may give glory to the God of all."





Throwing the Cross in the Waters

On the sixth of January each year we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany or more accurately, Theophany, which is the manifestation of the Trinitarian God. At the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended on Christ the Son of God, and the voice of God the Father was heard.

For all Orthodox Christians around the world it is called the Blessing of the Waters Day. It is not just a commemoration of a historical event in the life of Jesus, because in the Christian Faith everything is present, here and now, just as our Lord Jesus Christ is with us here and now. It is Christ who we call upon to sanctify the water, and all men and all creation. In the Lord's epiphany, all creation becomes good again the way God Himself made it.

In honour of the baptism of Christ, water is blessed and distributed among the faithful in small bottles to take home (αγιασμό). In most countries this feast day is followed (normally the Sunday after the feast) by the blessing of waters and immersion of a cross in seas, lakes and rivers... whatever is easily accessible to the Parish church.

In Sydney, we have the annual Blessing of the Waters at Yarra Bay where all the Parishes of Sydney come together as one people of God, under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, and all the priesthood. The Troparion of the Feast is chanted three times:

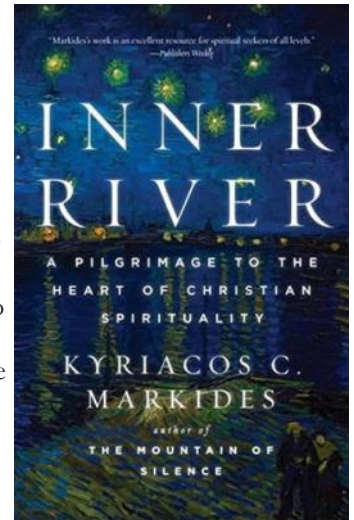
“When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee his Beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of his Word. O Christ our God, who hast revealed Thyself and hast enlightened the world, glory to Thee”

and the cross is then thrown into the water. Many young boys and men, who have been patiently waiting for the signal, then dive into the water to retrieve the cross, and he who finds it first is considered to be blessed for that year.



Inner River: a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Christian Spirituality, by Kyriacos C. Markides, Published by Image Press, 2012

Inner River addresses Christian Mysticism – and specifically the unbroken Orthodox Tradition – as naturally concurrent to mainstream science; revealing that the fundamentals of Christianity preserved by Orthodoxy hold the means to come into a relationship with our Creator and are the medicine in ‘resurrecting’ both God and man who humanity ‘killed’ in the 19th and 20th centuries, according to the socialists.



The author, himself a professor of sociology, enquires into monasticism on Mt Athos, Sinai and Cyprus, the spiritual realm as understood by the Fathers of the Church, the practice of prayer, and the notions of *Theia Pronia*, *death*, *metanoia* and *Theosis*, which he treats as legitimate study material in his research as a sociologist. His work weighs up Western thought alongside the Christian East, creating a very perceptive, innovative account of Orthodox spirituality that is not afraid to ask genuine questions about doctrine and practice. Consequently, Markides acquires exceptional responses about our Faith from his conversations with the Metropolitan of Cyprus, Father Athanasios, that are core to *Inner River*, the series of informal symposiums on the Fruits of the Spirit that St Paul outlines in his Epistle to the Galatians, the conversations with abbots, a hermit, monks and lay people that he meets on his pilgrimage, and the interesting comments made by Saints, bishops, historians, philosophers and scientists – from Sorokin to Elder Ephraim Philotheou – that he includes in his work.

It is not only informative to read such a variety of thoughts and experiences about the treasures of our Orthodox Faith interspersed with scientific reasoning, but spiritually edifying, and also encouraging in one's spiritual life; witnessing a yearning to be one with God from people of all different walks of life, expressed with flair and insight.

A wide range of Orthodox Christian books is available from the Orthodox Mission Bookstore, 217 Bexley Road, Kingsgrove.
Tel: (02) 9787 9779 E-mail: editor@lychnos.org
Internet: www.orthodoxbookstore.org.au

NEWS and VIEWS

Sunday School Camp

This year's Sunday School Camp was held again at Vision Valley Conference Centre, Arcadia, from Wednesday 27th to Friday 29th of September. The theme of the Camp was "Heroes for Christ" and 83 children, along with 21 volunteer adult leaders, participated. The children enjoyed the activities of rock climbing, archery, and sport, and the thrill of leaping off the



Participants of this year's Sunday School Camp with Fr Eusebios

edge with "power fan" and "flying fox" jumps. Particular blessings were the formal visits and lessons provided by Dr John Psarommatis and Mr Asimakis Tsomis. As always, the highlight of the Camp was the Divine Liturgy Service presided by Abbot Eusebios and the fathers from Pantanassa Monastery on Friday morning.

Sunday School Annual Picnic

On Monday 2nd October, the Sunday Schools of Sydney held their annual Picnic at Centennial Park, attended by His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, His Grace Bishop Iakovos, numerous clergy, parents, teachers and children. Following lunch, His Eminence and His Grace warmly addressed the gathering, which was followed by various athletic races for the children! The day was a very enjoyable experience for all!



His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos and His Grace Bishop Iakovos (left) addressing the parents and children at the picnic



His Eminence (left) with Fr Kyrillos Zisis handing out icons to the children

**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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