



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 LENTEN LADDER

In the lead up to Pascha, we are slowly but steadily initiated into the Orthodox way of life through the period of Great Lent. Throughout these six weeks preceding Holy Week we are encouraged to: *fast* in order to detach from our desires; *give alms* so that we may connect with our neighbour; and, *pray* more than we usually do to be filled with the grace of God.

As Pascha is the greatest feast on the liturgical calendar, it is also the best time to grow spiritually and to use each and every lead-up opportunity to step up to new heights. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* is the perfect guide for this journey. This masterpiece is held in such high esteem by the Church that it honours its author on the fourth Sunday of Great Lent.

It was composed by St John of Sinai who is commonly referred to as St John Climacus (from the Greek word 'κλιμαξ' for ladder). He describes the spiritual life as a thirty step ladder. Each step is one chapter describing a virtue and how to cultivate it or a passion and how to overcome it. As each is mastered, the disciple is raised one step closer to Christ who awaits at the top of the ladder.

The *Ladder* is a very powerful weapon which arms its reader with invaluable spiritual wisdom. It does this by

providing an in depth analysis of the causes and effects of the common passions and shows how they are interrelated and how they develop into more severe passions, thus educating the reader to diagnose the symptoms of each passion and empowering them to defeat their weaknesses before they develop.

Just as we require someone to hold a ladder to provide us with confidence to climb up, we similarly need the direction of a good spiritual father, who is familiar with this work, to prop us up. This is because its original audience were people wholly devoted to God in a monastic community whilst receiving daily guidance.

As the *Ladder* proved to be a treasure for monastics, it has also become beneficial for Christians in the world and has been incorporated into the daily readings of Great Lent. This lenten *Ladder* is read from start to finish in small sections with reading plans easily found on the internet. However it can also be

read chapter by chapter in any order.

The *Ladder* is one of the most highly influential works used by the faithful for centuries. It is the most direct and proven guide to enable us to take our spiritual struggle to the next level as we ascend through Lent to the peak of Pascha.



ΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΠΑΤΕΡΕΣ

Η εποχή μας θα μπορούσε να χαρακτηριστεί σαν εποχή των μεγάλων αναθεωρήσεων. Όλα τα παραδεδομένα ελέγχονται και συνήθως απορίπτονται. Αισθανόμαστε πολλές φορές τόσο σαν άνθρωποι, αλλά και σαν κοινωνία να βουλιάζουμε μέσα στο χάος του παραλογισμού.

Οι σύγχρονες φωνές του κόσμου της ύλης και της φθοράς, προπαγανδίζουν τις πράματιες τους: την αφθονία των υλικών αγαθών, το κυνήγι της ηδονής, τον εγωκεντρισμό, που παρασύρουν τους πολλούς και ιδιαίτερα τους νέους μας. Συνοπτικά ο σημερινός κόσμος κατήντησε σαν τον άφρονα του Προφήτη Δαβίδ που ισχυρίζεται: "Δεν υπάρχει Θεός." **«Είπεν άφρων εν τη καρδιά αυτού ουκ έστι Θεός» (Ψαλμ, 13:1).**

Όμως οι συνέπειες μιάς τέτοιας αποστασίας είναι και φοβερές, και ανυπολόγιστες. Ο σημερινός άνθρωπος ενώ τεχνολογικά και επιστημονικά έφτασε σε πρωτοφανή ύψη, τη ίδια στιγμή υποφέρει και αγωνιά στα βάθη της ψυχικής απομόνωσης και απογοήτευσης. Έγραφε ο Κωστής Μπαστιάς στον "Παπουλάκο" του:

«Η περηφάνεια του ανθρώπου και η αμαρτωλή του λαχτάρα να σηκωθεί ως το Θεό και ψηλότερα του ακόμα, είναι η πιό φαρμακερή σαϊτιά του Σατανά. Χάρη σ' αυτό η γη κινδυνεύει να καταντήσει το πιό πυρωμένο καζάνι της κολάσεως.»

Και όμως, μέσα σ' αυτή τη σύγχρονη κόλαση, υπάρχει η ελπίδα της σωτηρίας. Πιστεύουμε πως μέσα στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας, μπορεί να βρει καταφύγιο και αποκούμπι ο σημερινός ταλαίπωρος και κουρασμένος άνθρωπος.

Πιο συγκεκριμένα, οι συμβουλές και οι παραινήσεις των πατέρων της Εκκλησίας μας, είναι πραγματική ψυχοθεραπεία. Γιατί οι Πατέρες είναι η ζωντανή πνοή και δύναμη της Εκκλησίας μας και παραφράζοντας έναν απ' αυτούς (τον Αγ. Κύριλλο

Αλεξανδρείας): **«Οι Πατέρες είναι διδάσκαλοι της ευσέβειας, οι στύλοι της Πίστewς, οι πύργοι οι ασάλευτοι, τα λιμάνια της γαλήνης, οι σοφοί αρχιτέκτονες.»**

Ο Μέγας Αντώνιος μας μιλεί για την αληθινή ελευθερία. Ο Αγ. Νικόδημος ο αγιορείτης για το πώς η ζωή μας θα γίνει θεάρεστη. Ο Αγ. Γρηγόριος ο Νύσσης για τα βάθη και τα ύψη της θεολογίας. Ο Μέγας Βασίλειος για τον αληθινό ανθρωπισμό. Ο Αγ. Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος για το πώς να αναθρέψουμε τα παιδιά μας κτλ.

Οι Πατέρες μας είναι δυστυχώς, για τους πολλούς, οι ξεχασμένοι θησαυροί της Εκκλησίας μας. Και όμως, αυτοί έχουν αποκρίσεις πνευματικές στα σύγχρονα ερωτήματά μας. Αυτοί μπορούν να

ξαναστηλώσουν τις καρδιές των σημερινών ανθρώπων. Να μας δείξουν το δρόμο της τιμής του πνεύματος που τον έχουμε χάσει μέσα στα σκοτάδια του παραλόγου της σύγχρονης Αθεΐας.

Γιατί τίποτα από τ' ανθρώπινα δεν μπορούμε αληθινά να

γνωρίσουμε ούτε τί είμαστε, ούτε γιατί ζούμε, ούτε που πάμε, αν δεν ακούσουμε τη φωνή του Πατέρα και Δημιουργού μας. Αυτή τη "Φωνή" του Θεού μας δείχνουν έμπρακτα με τη διδαχή τους και πιό πολύ με τη ζωή τους, οι Πατέρες μας.

Φρονούμε πώς οι Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας μας είναι οι άριστοι ιατροί και θεραπευτές του σημερινού ανθρώπου. Να τον απαλλάξουν από της αγωνίες του, να του ξαναδώσουν τη ψυχική γαλήνη και ηρεμία του. Να ειρηνεύσει με τον εαυτό του, με τους γύρω του και με όλο το κόσμο.

Άλλες λύσεις δεν υπάρχουν.

Στροφή στους Πατέρες μας. Για να ξαναγαπήσουμε και με το Θεό και με τους ανθρώπους.



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

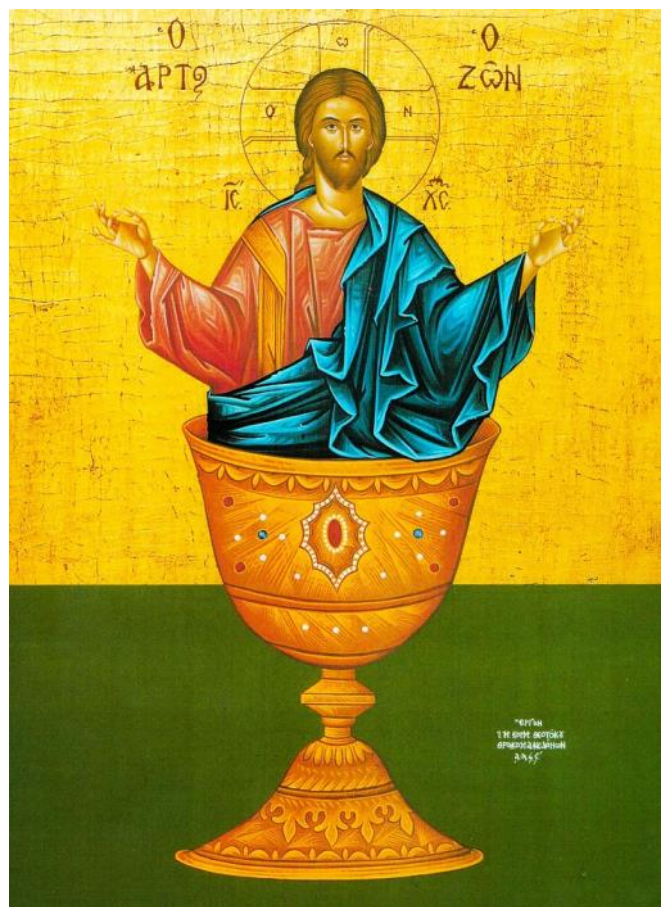
Is it necessary to prepare for Holy Communion?

Holy communion, also called the Eucharist, is not merely one of a number of sacred actions. It is at the very heart of the Church, without which the Church cannot be imagined. In this sacrament we receive the very Body and Blood of Christ. The fruits of worthy participation in Holy Communion are huge. Worthy participation is “for the forgiveness of our sins”. We receive a new life, the life of the Spirit, the life of sanctity. Jesus said: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:53-56).

None of us are worthy to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. However, it is because we are unworthy that we need Holy Communion. Holy Communion gives us strength. It is not right how many have Holy Communion only a few times a year. The way of the Church is to have frequent Holy Communion, but to prepare well each time. The Apostle Paul made this clear: “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself” (1 Corinthians 11:27-31).

The Prophet Isaiah during a vision of the throne of God, saw the following, “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.’” (Isaiah 6:6-7) Holy Communion is indeed a live coal, that burns the unworthy, but if we have prepared properly, it cleanses us.

Preparation involves deep repentance - not excusing ourselves or blaming others, but acknowledging and regretting our sinfulness, and making a firm decision to change. Confession to a canonical priest is also very important and beneficial. One does not have to go to Confession before every Holy Communion, however, if it has been a very long time since we have



been to Confession, or, if we have committed a particularly grave sin, then we should go to Confession before approaching the Holy Cup. We cannot receive Holy Communion if we have in our heart any bitterness or anger against anyone. Prior to receiving Holy Communion we need to read the prayers before Holy Communion, which can be found in most prayer books. It is also important that we turn up to Church early that day. Fasting before Holy Communion is also important. The particular fasting rules vary, for example if someone fasts every Wednesday and every Friday, and has frequent Holy Communion, then the Eucharistic fasting rules may be less strict. May we strive to be worthy to partake of our Lord.

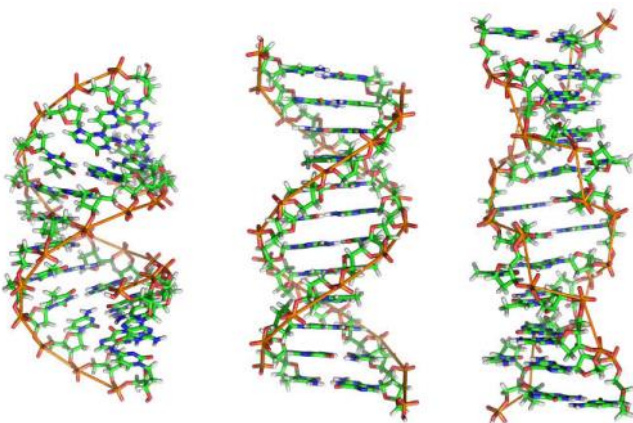
† Fr D. K.

CURRENT ISSUES

The theory of evolution was developed by Charles Darwin (and supported by others such as Alfred and Wallace, Joachim Barrande). It proposes that all life is related and descended from a common ancestor. Darwin states in *The Origin of Species* that evolution is a gradual process where complex creatures have naturally evolved over time from more simplistic ancestors. He purports that as random genetic mutations occur within the genetic code of an organism, the beneficial mutations are preserved because they aid survival. Over time, the beneficial mutations accumulate, resulting in an entirely different organism.

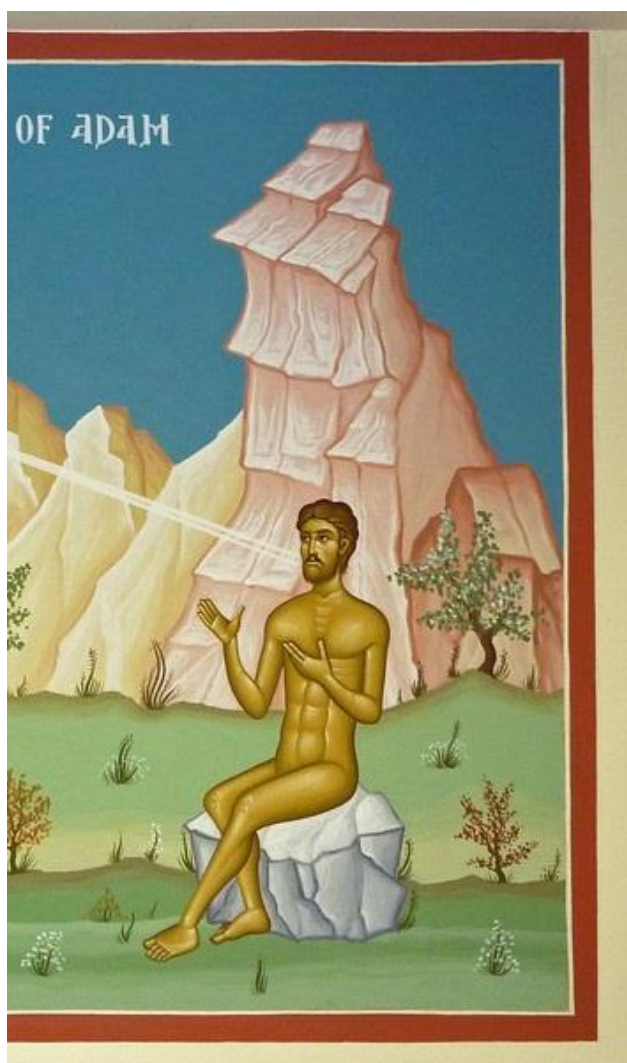
Proponents of the theory of evolution have gone as far as to suggest that the development of life from non-life is from inanimate matter. Such matter never attempted to survive or tried to maintain its integrity under any circumstances. Atheist biologists would have us believe that evolutionary processes are mindless and purposeless, but the problem is how such purposeless processes result in such a purposeful result as **survival**.

The other contribution of Darwin to the philosophy of life was a new mechanism to explain the origin of species, which he called “**Natural Selection**”. This implies that members of a species who have accumulated some advantageous genetic mutations are going to survive, passing them onto their offspring, and they onto theirs, whilst the inferior members of the same species would gradually die out. Because of the assumption of Natural Selection, Darwin concluded that such a mechanism could produce variations in animal populations, and could therefore explain all of the variety of living organisms we observe in biology. Darwinists have even gone so far as to suggest that the common



denominator of the origin of life evolved from non-life matter! This assertion was strenuously resisted both by Gregor Mendel as well as Luis Pasteur, quite successfully.

In the 152 years that have elapsed since Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* (1867) there have been enormous advances in molecular biology, biochemistry and genetics, which make the flaws in Darwin's theory stand out quite clearly.



At the superficial level, Darwinism is not an unreasonable explanation regarding the origin of living organisms. However, to the critical mind it does appear to possess significant gaps which cannot be explained, even by the best of intentions.

There are two main objections:

1. Natural Selection and Survival.

If all living matter has a common ancestor, developed through “mindless and purposeless” accumulation of atoms, how could such a process produce a very purposeful and beneficial result as **survival**? Darwinists would possibly answer that this is the result of “**Natural Selection**”. **Survival depends on evolution, and evolution depends on survival**. Now, everyone can see that the discussion becomes a circular argument, and the problem remains unresolved. So, the question is resolved in the negative – **proving Darwin incorrect!**

2. The Role of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid).

This molecule is the building block of all living matter (discovered by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953). It is the messenger system in all organisms. To allege that DNA arose by random material forces is to say that information can arise by such forces. DNA is a molecule with two

strands twisted into a helix, like a spiral staircase, whilst the steps of the staircase are made up of amino acids, to which are attached pairs of molecules, each pair containing the genetic information of the individual. This information is transmitted to the various cells of the living organism as necessary. With the continuous study of the DNA molecule, we now understand that organic life is based on a vast system of complex information code, and this single-handedly defeats any theory that assumes life arose through materialistic forces. Such information cannot be created or interpreted without a Master Designer at the cosmic keyboard. In fact, Dr Francis Collins, eminent scientist and leader of the international Human Genome Project which first sequenced human DNA in 2003, helped write the US President’s speech announcing this important milestone: “Today we are learning the language in which God created life. We are gaining ever more awe for the complexity, the beauty, and the wonder of God’s most divine and sacred gift”!



Ο προορισμός του κάθε ανθρώπου είναι γραμμένο στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο της Αγίας Γραφής, την στιγμή που δημιούργησε ο Θεός τον άνθρωπο: «εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν» (Γεν. Α' 26). Μας έπλασε δηλαδή ο Θεός κατ' εικόνα Του, με ελεύθερη βούληση και αυτεξούσιο. Αυτό που απομένει τώρα είναι να πετύχουμε το «καθ' ὁμοίωσιν», την αγιότητα δηλαδή. Με άλλα λόγια να ομοιωθούμε προς τον Χριστόν, ο οποίος είναι η κατ' εξοχήν εικόνα και η ομοίωσις του Θεού.

Ο Χριστός μας συνιστά: «Μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτός εἰμι καὶ ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ· καὶ εὐρήσετε ἀνάπαυσιν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν» (Ματθ. ΙΑ' 29). Να μάθετε ἀπὸ Εμένα, ἀπο το παραδειγμά μου, ἀπὸ τα λόγια μου. Όλοι έχουμε ἀνάγκη μαθήσεως, ἀλλὰ τα πιά σπουδαία μαθήματα τῆς ζωῆς πολλές φορές διαφεύγουν ἀπ' τὴν προσοχή μας, καὶ δὲν μας ἀφήνουν νὰ εκπληρώσουμε τὸν πραγματικό προορισμό μας. Το εἶπε ο Χριστός κάποτε σὴν Μάρθα, ἡ οποία προσπαθοῦσε νὰ Τον διακονήσῃ καὶ νὰ Τον ευαρεστήσῃ, τουλάχιστον εξωτερικά, θα λέγαμε σήμερα κοινωνικά: «Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ τυρβάζῃ περὶ πολλὰ» (Λουκ. Ι' 41) - ασχολεῖται ο νους σου ἀπὸ πολλές φροντίδες καὶ ἀνησυχίες. Καὶ τα ἐπόμενα λόγια του Κυρίου, που ἀποτελοῦν τὴν θεραπεία τῆς ψυχῆς τῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν δική μας θεραπεία, εἶναι καὶ το φετινό μας σύνθημα:

«Ἐνὸς δὲ ἔστι χρεία» (Λουκ. Ι' 42).

Ἐνα εἶναι τὸ χρήσιμο καὶ ἀναγκαῖο, τῆς λέει ο Χριστός, Εγώ καὶ ἡ Βασιλεία μου, «Εγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ» (Ιωάν. ΙΔ' 6), εἶπε στους μαθητάς Του. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἄλλος δρόμος, ἄλλη ἀλήθεια, ἄλλη εὐτυχία καὶ ζωὴ. «Χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν» (Ιωάν. ΙΕ' 5).

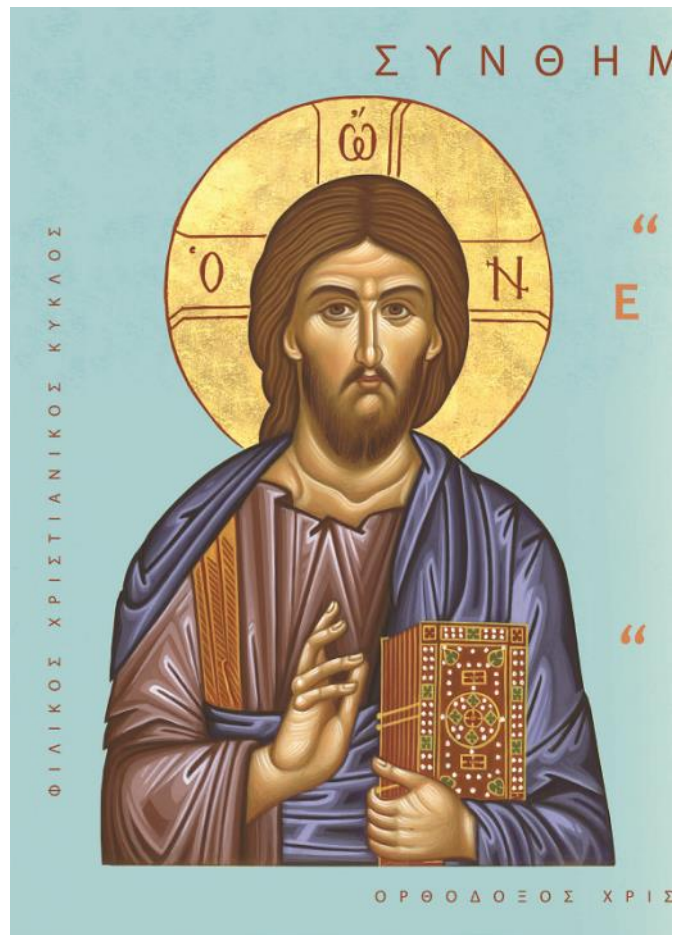
Ο Ἅγιος Κοσμάς ο Αἰτωλός, σὴν Δ' Διδαχὴ του, γράφει τα ἀκόλουθα λόγια:

«Τὸ κορμί σας ἄς τὸ καύσουν, ἄς τὸ τηγανίσουν· τὰ πράγματά σας ἄς σᾶς τὰ πάρουν· μὴ σᾶς μέλλει· δώσατέ τα· δὲν εἶνε ἰδικὰ σας. Ψυχὴ καὶ Χριστὸς σᾶς χρειάζονται. Αὐτὰ τὰ δυὸ ὅλος ὁ κόσμος νὰ πέσῃ, δὲν ἔμπορεῖ νὰ σᾶς τὰ πάρῃ, ἐκτὸς καὶ τὰ δώσετε μὲ τὸ θέλημά σας. Αὐτὰ τὰ δυὸ νὰ τὰ φυλάγετε, νὰ μὴ τὰ χάσετε.»

Νὰ ἔχουμε πάντα τὸ βλέμμα μας στραμμένο, ὅπως λέγει τὸ τραγούδι, «στου Χριστοῦ τὴ μορφή», νὰ μὴ ἀφήσουμε τὴν καρδιά μας νὰ σαγηνευθεῖ ἀπὸ τα περιττά καὶ ἀνωφελῆ πράγματα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου καὶ ἀστοχεύσουμε.

Ευχόμαστε σ' ὅλους μια εὐλογημένη χρονιά, πιά κοντὰ στον Χριστό ἀπ' ὅποια ἄλλη χρονιά, για νὰ εκπληρώσουμε τὸν ἀπώτερο σκόπο τῆς ζωῆς μας, τὸ «ἐνὸς δὲ ἔστι χρεία», που εἶναι ο Χριστός καὶ ἡ Βασιλεία Του.

Καλό παράδεισο, ἀδελφοί!



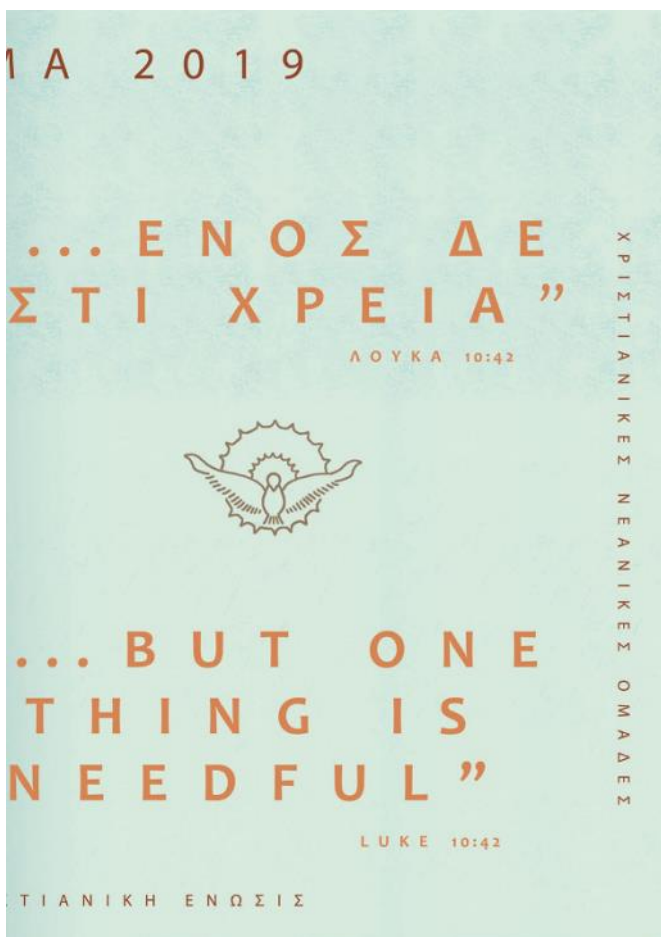
¹ Ἅγιος Κοσμάς ο Αἰτωλός, Διδαχὴ Δ'

ΣΥΝΘΗΜΑ 2019

We need and want many things in our life. Yet, Christ says, “but one thing is needful”. What is this one thing that we need?

The one thing that is needful is the salvation of our souls. This is our first priority. The needs and wants of the body are of secondary importance. Indeed the needs of the body are few and limited.

“But one thing is needful” is a timely reminder that our primary concern should be to lead a God-pleasing life and to draw near to Him in prayer and sacramental life. “But one thing is needful” acts as a compass in our lives. Just as a compass shows us directions, this phrase shows us where we should be going.



“But one thing is needful” reminds us of our calling to theosis. We are called to be little gods, in His likeness, by grace. The way to theosis is by prioritising our spiritual life in our daily actions. It is by having a clear focus and goal which then allows us to make better decisions on a daily and even hourly basis. When we know where we are going, we know the road to take. When we are ambivalent then we go down various paths and do not reach our destination.

On this journey to theosis, we are not left on our own. The Church provides the tools for our salvation. These include:

- ✘ Prayer which forms the basis of our spiritual life
- ✘ A sacramental life accompanied by sincere repentance
- ✘ Holy Confession to clean our soul
- ✘ Holy Communion to bring Christ Himself inside us thus purifying and sanctifying us
- ✘ A spiritual father to guide us in our spiritual journey
- ✘ Reading the Holy Bible and other spiritual books
- ✘ Reading the lives of saints and imitating them.

St Paisios says that the devil always wants us to become busier and busier with worldly activities and cares and eventually to forget our true destination. The answer to this trap of being too busy is to simplify our lives and to give priority to the things that are the most helpful for our salvation.

We have been influenced by the consumer society in which we live and have created false needs. These false needs govern our thoughts and actions and shape our behaviour as well. The creation of false needs is a great danger for our spiritual health.

So let's take the opportunity provided by this year's synthima (motto), “but one thing is needful” and make the salvation of our soul our priority for the coming year.

Η Κλίμαξ του Ιακώβ

Ο Πατριάρχης και προπάτορας του Χριστού, Ιακώβ, καθώς πήγαινε στη Μεσοποταμία, έφτασε σ' ένα τόπο, όπου έμεινε για να διανυκτερεύσει. Εκεί έβαλε μια πέτρα για προσκέφαλο και κοιμήθηκε.

Στον ύπνο του είδε μια πανύψηλη σκάλα, που στηριζότανε στη γη και η κορυφή της άγγιζε τον ουρανό. Πάνω της ανέβαιναν και κατέβαιναν άγγελοι. Ο Θεός στάθηκε στο πιο ψηλό μέρος της και του είπε: **«Εγώ είμαι ο Κύριος, ο Θεός των πατέρων σου, Αβραάμ και Ισαάκ. Μη φοβάσαι· αυτή τη χώρα που κοιμάσαι θα τη δώσω σ' εμένα και στους απογόνους σου, που θα αυξηθούν πάνω στη γη και θα ευλογηθούν στο πρόσωπο σου και μέσω ενός των απογόνων σου, όλα τα έθνη της γης... Να! Εγώ θα είμαι μαζί σου για να σε προστατεύω...»**. (Γεν. 28, 13-15).

Σύμφωνα με τους Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας μας «η κλίμαξ» είναι η πιο παλαιά και πιο χαρακτηριστική προφητική προεικόνιση της Θεοτόκου, η οποία με την ταπείνωσή της υψώθηκε μέχρι τον ουρανό και με τη γέννηση του Χριστού έγινε η νοητή σκάλα που ένωσε τη γη με τον ουρανό. Ψάλλουμε στους Χαιρετισμούς, τη Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή:



**«Χαῖρε κλίμαξ ἔπουράνιε,
δι' ἧς κατέβη ὁ Θεός»
«Χαῖρε γέφυρα μετάνουσα τούς
ἐκ γῆς πρὸς οὐρανόν»,
«Χαῖρε κλίμαξ γῆθεν πάντας
ἀνυψώσασα χάριτι·»**

Η εκκλησία μας μέσα από τις ακολουθίες των Χαιρετισμών, ζητά να κοιτάξουμε ψηλά και να μη φοβηθούμε, να αφήσουμε πίσω μας ότι μας χωρίζει από τον Θεό, ότι μας κρατά δέσμιους στη γη. Με θάρρος να ξαναδούμε τις προτεραιότητές μας και να αγωνιστούμε να ανεβούμε την κλίμακα των αρετών. Με αγώνα και προσπάθεια με ταυτόχρονη εκζήτηση του ελέους του Θεού, και της χάριτος του Αγίου Πνεύματος, ώστε να έρθουμε πιο κοντά Του μέσα από τις δοκιμασίες της ζωής.

Φυσικά αυτό δεν είναι κάτι το εύκολο. Δεν μπορούμε μόνοι μας να ανεβούμε την κλίμακα αυτή. Είναι πολλά όσα μας τραβούνε στη γη. Έχουμε όμως προστάτη και βοηθό την Υπεραγία Θεοτόκο. Μέσα από αυτήν ο Θεός κατέβηκε σε μας, έγινε άνθρωπος και την κατέστησε γέφυρα, οδό, κλίμακα για να μεταβούμε εμείς στον Ουρανό. Ας την παρακαλούμε να πρεσβεύει στον Υιό της για την σωτηρία μας.

Greek Orthodox Sunday Schools

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:14)

Dear Parents,

All of us wish to see our children grow up to be happy and able to face life's challenges. Sunday School can help by fostering in your child a love for God and His Church, which is the basis for a happy and successful life.

It provides a variety of activities your children will enjoy, and is a place where they will find good friends.

Even if your children receive Scripture education at School or attend our Greek Orthodox Colleges, they will still benefit enormously from Sunday School.

Classes for children aged 4-18 are held every Sunday morning at all parishes. For more information, contact your local parish priest.





What we Hear in Church



Lenten Hymn of Great Compline

Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός, γνῶτε ἔθνη καὶ ἠττάσθε. Ὅτι μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός.

God is with us, learn you nations and be defeated, for God is with us.

In our Church's daily Services cycle the Compline service is performed after supper, hence the name *Ἀπόδειπνο*. There are Small and Great versions of this service.

The Great Compline is performed in Monasteries and Parishes alike, from Monday to Thursday of each week of Great Lent and this hymn, "God is with us" is chanted during the service. This ancient hymn is derived from verses in the 8th and 9th chapters of the Book of Isaiah with the refrain, "for God is with us."

In Chapter 8 Isaiah speaks about the Assyrian invasion of Syria and Samaria. His mention of the prophetess who conceived and bore a son led early Christian commentators to interpret Christ into the text. Therefore, the Fathers in unison attribute the phrase, "God is with us" to Jesus. Saint Basil the Great is characteristic: "Accordingly, the phrase 'God is with us!' refers to the Saviour. For earlier, He who was born of the Virgin was called this name in the Hebrew language: Emmanuel, which is translated 'God is with us'."

Another commentator, Origen sees the allegorical reference to all Christians in the phrase, "learn you nations and be defeated": "For we who are from the nations have been conquered and overcome. And we who bend our necks beneath his grace stand forth as a kind of spoils of his victory."

Great Lent is the greatest opportunity to allow us to be 'defeated' by the Word of God who dwelt amongst us, Emmanuel. An opportunity to be 'conquered' by fasting, more intense prayer and the grace of the Holy Spirit. St Cyril of Alexandria explains: "Now, those who are defeated and agree to concede the victory to the teachers of truth will readily accept their message, and by believing in Christ they will advance directly in every good, and by practicing virtue that is pleasing to Him they will inherit a glory that is splendid and worthy of emulation."

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

From The Old Testament



Proverbs 1:7 - The Beginning of Wisdom is the Fear of God

This phrase from the Proverbs of King Solomon, written towards the end of his life, provides an insight into how the spiritual life is to be approached.

What is wisdom? St Ambrose of Milan in commenting on this verse identifies wisdom as the path of virtue, as does St John Chrysostom. Following the path requires that we first cut off the passions that Chrysostom calls "a result of a lack of wisdom". Essentially, it means looking towards the true source of joy and not to the pleasures of the world that Solomon knew all too well.

The main catalyst for turning to God is fear. Upon accepting the truth of God, according to Venerable Bede, one accepts the fact that one could be subject to eternal punishment if one does not lead a virtuous life. "Unless a man fears the Lord," writes St Ambrose, "he is unable to renounce sin".

This, however, is only the beginning of wisdom. If fear of God's punishment is the beginning, what is the end? The next step of the three is the fear of not receiving the reward of eternal life. This is much like the first step, but a necessary step on the path to wisdom.

True wisdom lies in the final step on the path of virtue. The fear at this step, according to the Venerable Bede, is akin to the fear of not meeting one's father's expectations. A person at this stage regards God as a father present in their life, and is afraid of disappointing God in any way.

The final section of the verse, "only fools despise wisdom and instruction", serves to emphasise the consequences of not leading a virtuous life. May we imitate the Saints who were wise in Christ but were considered foolish in the world.





Holiness In Our Times



Hieromonk Isaac (1937 - 1983)

Hieromonk Isaac was born Fares Atallah in Lebanon in 1937. His brother Anthony later wrote that as a child “he was already finding all his happiness in nearness to God and His Church”. At the age of twenty-five, after a previous unsuccessful attempt, he joined the Monastery of the Dormition

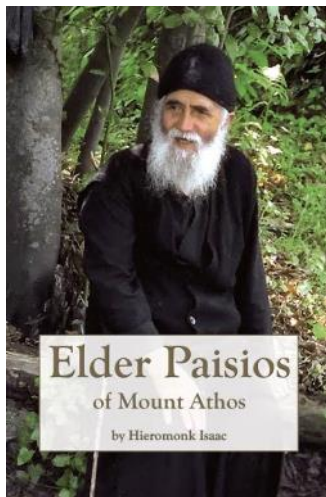
in Bkeftin. When he arrived, he exclaimed, “I give thanks to the Lord for having now granted me my desire.”

He then went on to study at the theological college attached to the Balamand Patriarchal Monastery, where he was ordained deacon and received the name Phillip. Later, he continued his studies in Patmos and Thessaloniki. Whilst there he encountered Mount Athos and the Elder who changed his life, Saint Paisios.

After completing his studies in 1973 he returned to Lebanon and was ordained a presbyter. He lived in the Monastery of St George in North Lebanon, restoring it and bringing a spiritual renewal to the area. However, his stay was short lived as the Civil War forced Fr Phillip to flee for Thessaloniki in 1975. There, he was elevated to the rank of Archimandrite and served in the Parish of St Barbara.

In 1978, he obtained permission from his Metropolitan to transfer to the Monastery of Stavronikita on Mount Athos, where he received the name Isaac. There, he was able to follow Saint Paisios who lived nearby. After a year, he started living in the cell which he would call his home for the rest of his life. For four years he lived as a solitary, being constantly tested and tempted. He defeated these thoughts by thinking of his death, and he censed the grave he dug for himself outside his hermitage every day until the day he died on 16 July 1998.

Hieromonk Isaac is best known for his biography of Saint Paisios, which has been translated into many languages, but should also be remembered as a representative on Mount Athos of the monastic tradition of Lebanon and Syria.



From the Holy Fathers...

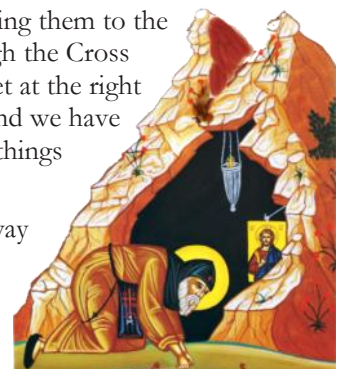
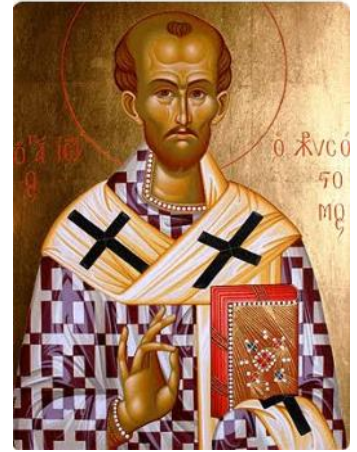
St John Chrysostom - On The 40 Day Fast

Why do we fast for forty days? Formerly many believers approached the sacraments without any particular preparation, especially at the time when Christ first gave them to us. But when the fathers realised the harm that could result from such neglect, they took counsel together and decreed that a period of forty days of fasting be set aside, during which the people would meet to pray and listen to the word of God. During this Lenten season each of the faithful would undergo a thorough purification by means of prayer, almsgiving, fasting, watching, repentant tears, confession, and every other remedial measure. Then when they had done all in their power to cleanse their consciences, they could approach the sacraments.

It is certain that the fathers did well to use such lenience in their desire to establish us in the habit of fasting. As we know, we could proclaim a fast throughout the whole year, and no one would pay any attention. But now, with a set time for fasting of only forty days, even the most sluggish need no exhortation to rouse themselves to undergo it; they accept it as a regular observance and recurring encouragement.

So, when someone asks you why you fast, you should not answer: because of the Passover, or because of the Cross. Neither of these is the reason for our fasting. We fast because of our sins, since we are preparing to approach the sacred mysteries. Moreover, the Christian Passover is a time for neither fasting nor mourning, but for great joy, since the Cross destroyed sin and made expiation for the whole world. It reconciled ancient enmities and opened the gates of heaven. It made friends of those who had been filled with hatred, restoring them to the citizenship of heaven. Through the Cross our human nature has been set at the right hand of the throne of God, and we have been granted countless good things besides.

Therefore we must not give way to mourning or sadness; we must rejoice greatly instead over all these blessings.



Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

From the Saints of our Church

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ο Στρατηλάτης (η μνήμη του τιμάται 8 Φεβρουαρίου)

The Great Martyr Theodore the General (Commemorated 8th February)

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ο Στρατηλάτης ζούσε στην πόλη Ηράκλεια του Ευξεινού Πόντου (η σημερινή Μαύρη Θάλασσα) όπου υπηρετούσε σαν στρατηγός κατά τη βασιλεία του Αυτοκράτορος Λικινίου (308-324 μ.Χ).

Great Martyr Theodore the General (Ο Στρατηλάτης) lived in the Black Sea coastal city of Heraclea Pontica, where he served as a military commander during pagan emperor Licinius' reign (308 – 324 AD).

Όταν ο Λικίνιος έμαθε πως ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ήταν Χριστιανός ο οποίος είχε φέρει πολλούς στο Χριστό με τον ηρωισμό του και το εντυπωσιακό κήρυγμα του, τον κάλεσε στη Νικομηδία να εξηγηθεί. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος απάντησε: «Αδυνατώ να έρθω προς στιγμή διότι οι Ηρακλεινοί είναι σε ανταρσία. Έχουν εγκαταλείψει τους θεούς μας και προσκυνούν τον Χριστό. Επομένως, σε ικετεύω να έρθεις εσύ και να φέρεις τους πιο επιφανείς θεούς να αποκαταστήσεις την αρχαία μας θρησκεία.»

When Licinius learnt that St Theodore was a Christian who had converted many through his heroic actions and eloquent preaching, he summoned him to Nicomedia. St Theodore responded: "I cannot come at present, because the Heracleans are in an uproar. They have forsaken our gods and are worshipping Christ.

Therefore, I entreat you to come, and to bring with you the most eminent gods to help re-establish our ancient beliefs."

Ο αυτοκράτορας, ευχαριστημένος με τούτη την απάντηση αμέσως ξεκίνησε για την Ηράκλεια, συνοδευόμενος από οχτώ χιλιάδες στρατιώτες μαζί με τα πολυτιμότερα χρυσά και αργυρά είδωλα που είχε. Στη συνάντησή τους, ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος επιβεβαίωσε στον Λικίνιο ότι θα θυσιάζε στους θεούς δημοσίως εφόσον είχε θυσιάσει στα είδωλα κατ' ιδίαν στην οικία του. Εκείνη τη βραδιά, ο Άγιος συνέτριψε τα είδωλα σε κομμάτια και τα απένειμε κρυφά στους φτωχούς.

The delighted emperor immediately set out, accompanied by eight thousand soldiers and his most precious gold and silver idols. Upon their greeting, St Theodore assured Licinius that he would sacrifice to the gods publicly after privately sacrificing to the idols at home. That night, St Theodore smashed the idols into pieces and secretly distributed them to the poor.

Μετά από δύο ημέρες, ένας εκατόνταρχος ανάφερε πως είχε δει έναν ζητιάνο να κρατάει το χρυσό κεφάλι της θεάς Αρτέμιδος. Συνέβαλαν τον Άγιο Θεόδωρο και τον διέταξαν να δώσει εξήγηση. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ομολόγησε τη Χριστιανική πίστη του και κατηγορήσε την ειδωλολατρία τους, λέγοντας στον Αυτοκράτορα: «Είναι φανερό πως αν τα είδωλα δεν ήταν σε θέση να προστατεύσουν τους εαυτούς τους, δεν θα μπορούν να βοηθήσουν εσένα ποτέ.»

Two days later, a centurion reported that he had seen a beggar holding goddess Artemis' golden head. Arrested, and summoned to give an explanation, St Theodore confessed his Christian faith and denounced the idolatry of the pagans saying to the emperor: "It is clear that if the idols were

unable to help themselves, they will never be able to help you."

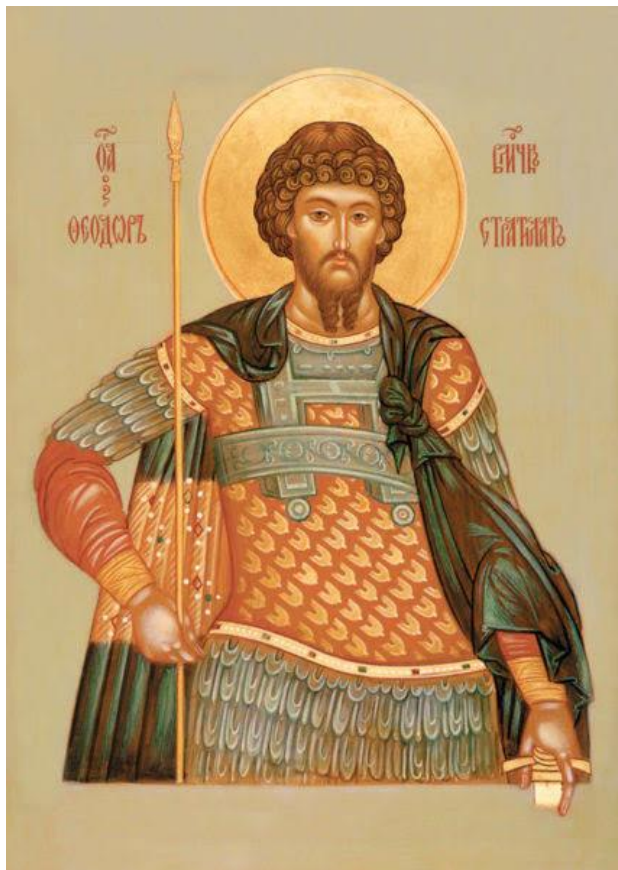
Ο εξοργισμένος αυτοκράτορας έδωσε εντολή να απογυμνώσουν τον Άγιο, να τεντώσουν το σώμα του και να τον μαστιγώσουν αδιάκοπα. Αφού ο Άγιος έμενε σταθερός στην πίστη του, τον καθήλωσαν σε σταυρό, σχίσανε το σώμα του με σιδερένια νύχια, εκτόξευσαν βέλη στα μάτια του και σπρώξανε καρφιά στην κοιλιά του.

The infuriated emperor commanded that the Saint be stripped naked, stretched out and flogged ceaselessly. As he remained steadfast in his faith, St Theodore was then nailed to a cross where his flesh was torn with iron claws, arrows were shot at his eyes, and spikes were driven into his bowels. During the night an angel healed his body and took him down from the cross.

Κατά τη διάρκεια της νύχτας ήρθε άγγελος Κυρίου στον Άγιο, θεράπευσε τα τραύματα του και τον κατέβασε από το Σταυρό.

Seeing St Theodore unharmed the next morning, seventy centurions immediately believed in Christ and were subsequently executed. St Theodore was finally beheaded on the 8th of February 319 surrendering his holy soul to Christ.

Βλέποντας τον Άγιο Θεόδωρο την επαύριον, σώο και αβλαβή, εβδομήντα εκατόνταρχοι αμέσως πίστεψαν στο Χριστό και ακολούθως εκτελέστηκαν. Τελικά στις 8η Φεβρουαρίου 319 μ.Χ., ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος αποκεφαλίστηκε και παρέδωσε την αγία του ψυχή στο Χριστό.



NEWS and VIEWS

Summer Retreats

During the Months of January and February, the Boys' and Girls' Ομάδες (13 to 18 years of age) as well as the Men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society held their annual retreats at Mangrove Mountain, north of Sydney. The Boys' retreat was held from the 8th - 12th January, with 41 boys and 16 leaders attending. The program included talks and bible studies, as well as sport, group and other recreational activities.

The Girls' retreat was held from the 14th - 18th January, with 47 girls and 10 leaders in attendance. They commenced with a Παράκλησις (Compline) Service to the Mother of God at Holy Cross Monastery, and their retreat included activities such as time of friendship, spiritual reading, group games, along with much singing and chanting.

The Men's retreat was held from the 1st - 3rd February, with the added blessing of a large group of interstate visitors from Adelaide.

Highlights of all three retreats were the Divine Liturgy services officiated by Fr Eusebios of Pantanassa Monastery, along with many spiritual opportunities for renewal in a Christian atmosphere based on the theme: "... one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42), as expanded on pages 6-7 of this issue.



Participants of the Boys' Ομάδα Retreat, with Fr Eusebios



Comradery during lunch at the Men's Retreat



Participants of the Girls' Ομάδα Retreat, with Fr Eusebios



The men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society at their Annual Retreat

**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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