



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

«Λύχνος τοῖς ποσὶ
μου ὁ νόμος σου
καὶ φῶς ταῖς
τρίβοις μου»
Ψαλμ 118, 105

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Christ is Risen

Christ is Risen! Today a Sacred Pascha has been revealed to us! These are the triumphant words that our Church repeats tirelessly for the forty days between Easter and the Ascension of our Lord. These three words bring the joyous message that “No one need fear death; the Saviour’s death has freed us from it” (St John Chrysostom).

The message of Easter is one of eternal life and salvation. It overshadows all the problems we face in this life, whether they be health issues, economic downturns, social problems, etc.

This is why Easter, or Pascha, is the most important day in the Orthodox liturgical year. It is called the “Feast of Feasts” and represents the moment when the time of preparation gives way to the time of fulfillment. The Church’s hymnology is rich with passages that illustrate this. One of the hymns that we chant at the conclusion of the Matins of Easter begins with the victorious message that “Today a sacred Pascha has been revealed to us.”

The sacred Pascha is revealed to us “Today”, not yesterday, not 2,000 years ago, but today! Easter is not merely a historical event but also a transformative experience that we need to live now, in 2020. We do not go to Church to solely commemorate the past, or to merely reflect on the promise of the future. We also go to begin experiencing the resurrection now and in this life.

This year the Covid-19 pandemic has required us to visit Church remotely, via video, but that has not stopped us from experiencing the joy of our Lord’s Resurrection.

Through Christ’s resurrection, the gates of Paradise which were previously shut have now been broken up. Now that these gates are open, the potential for our “theosis” – our journey to become like God – is unlocked. We, who were made in the “image of God” (Gen 1:27), can now begin approaching His likeness, by His Grace. This is the aim of our lives.

For this reason Easter should be transformative for us. In the Third Ode of the Easter Canon, we

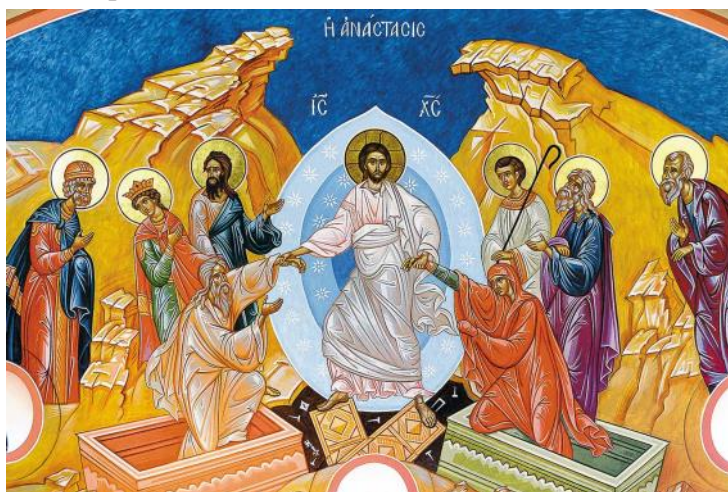
chant “today I arise in Your resurrection.” We should make it our mission to “arise” – to ascend higher – as a result of Easter.

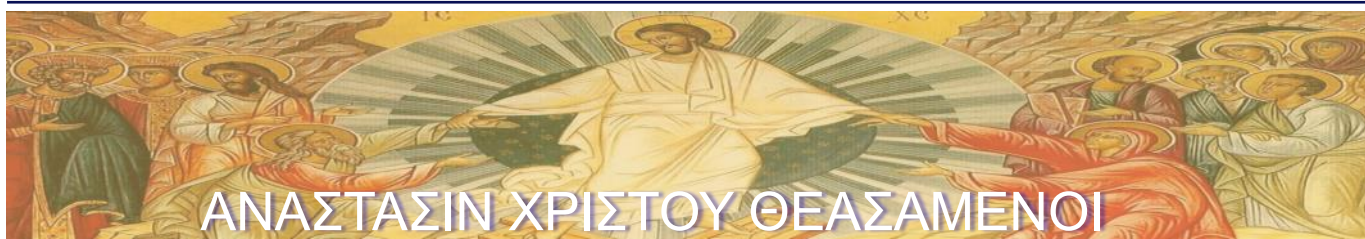
This personal resurrection involves us choosing to no longer be corrupted by the sensual pleasures and have our thinking distorted by worldly cares. Instead, we

should purify ourselves with a life of virtue and repentance.

The most beautiful Easter is the one in which we are all transformed by the joy of Christ’s resurrection and become living icons transmitting that message to the world! How can we be such icons? Another beautiful hymn in the Easter service has the answer:

“It is the day of the Resurrection. Let us shine brightly for the festival, and also embrace one another. Brethren, let us say even to those who hate us, ‘Let us forgive everything for the Resurrection. And thus let us cry aloud, ‘Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life’.”





ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΘΕΑΣΑΜΕΝΟΙ

Προβάλλοντας αυτή τη φράση «**Ἀναστασιν Χριστοῦ Θεασάμενοι**», η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας, σα να μας καλεί μαζί με τα σωματικά μας μάτια, να δούμε βαθύτερα και με τα πνευματικά μας μάτια, όλα εκείνα τα θαυμαστά και εξάισια που η «**Εορτή των εορτών**» φέρνει στη ζωή των πιστών.

Η Ανάσταση του Κυρίου είναι, σύμφωνα με τους πατέρες μας «**τα γενέθλια ολόκληρης της ανθρώπινης φύσης**». Αποτελεί το έσχατο και ύψιστο σημείο στο έργο του Κυρίου μας για τη σωτηρία των ανθρώπων.

Ο Απόστολος Παύλος το επισημαίνει ως εξής: «**ίνα διά του θανάτου καταργήση τον το κράτος έχοντα του θανάτου τούτ' ἐστι τον διάβολον, και απαλλάξη τούτους, όσοι φόβω θανάτου διά παντός του ζην ἐνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας**» (Εβρ. Γ'15) δηλ. διά να καταργήσει με τον θάνατό Του εκείνον που έχει τη δύναμη του θανάτου δηλ. τον διάβολο, και να ελευθερώσει εκείνους, που από το φόβο του θανάτου ήταν υποδουλωμένοι σε όλη τη ζωή τους.

Βλέπετε, το πρόβλημα του θανάτου παραμένει το μέγα, το κεφαλαιώδες πρόβλημα της ζωής μας. Ζούμε χωρίς καμία έγνοια τη ζωή μας, όλα πάνε **ρολόϊ**, οι κοσμικές γοητείες μας ζαλίζουν και ξαφνικά, προβάλλει αιφνίδια, η πραγματικότητα του θανάτου. Πώς αλλάζουμε στη στιγμή... Κατάθλιψη, απογοήτευση, απελπισία. Μαυρίζει μέσα μας η ομορφιά του κόσμου. Η μεγάλη «**ύβρις**» των αρχαίων Ελλήνων έρχεται και ξανάρχεται μέσα στο κόσμο.

Τις μέρες που περνάμε ζούμε ακόμη πιο «**χειροπιαστά**» αυτή τη «**κατάρρα**» του ανθρωπίνου γένους, με τόσους θανάτους σ'ολόκληρο τον πλανήτη μας από την πανώλη του κορωνοϊού.

Ε, λοιπόν, σήμερα εμείς, φωνάζουμε για να τ'ακούσει ο κόσμος όλος και με πρόσωπο γεμάτο φως «**Ἀναστασιν Χριστοῦ θεασάμενοι...**»!

Γιατί ο Χριστός με το Σταυρό Του «**θανάτω θάνατον ὤλεσεν**» δηλ. με τον θάνατό Του αφάνισε τον θάνατο.

Εμείς που γείραμε μια ολόκληρη βδομάδα κάτω από τη βαριά οδύνη των Παθών του Κυρίου, νιώθουμε σήμερα τα μάτια μας στεγνά από δάκρυα, και στα βάθη της καρδιάς μας μια καμπάνα χαρμόσυνη τραγουδά τη νίκη του Χριστού, την εξουθένωση του θανάτου.



«**Πλάκες που στέκατε βαριές στα μνήματα και στις καρδιές, σας έσπασ' ο Χριστός μου**» (Γ. Βερίτης).

Αυτή η αθάνατη δόξα της Ανάστασης ανασταίνει μέσα απ' τα σκοτάδια του σύγχρονου παγκόσμιου πένθους και την καρδιά μας. Το μήνυμα της Αναστάσεως διαπερνά ολόκληρη την ύπαρξή μας. Η απειλή του θανάτου που πλανιέται πάνω στις ζωές των ανθρώπων, δεν μας τρομάζει πια. Γιατί

«**θανάτου εορτάζομεν νέκρωσιν, Ἄδου την καθαίρεσιν**» (Καν. Πάσχα) δηλ. γιορτάζουμε τη νέκρωση του θανάτου, την κατάργηση του Ἄδου.

Όμως για να μπορέσουμε ν'ακολουθήσουμε τον Αναστημένο Χριστό μας, για να κάνουμε την Ανάστασή Του και δική μας Ανάσταση, μας χρειάζεται άλλη όραση, και καρδιά που διψά για Θεό. Κανείς δεν μπορεί να πλησιάσει το μέγα θαύμα με αισθήσεις ακάθαρτες, με φρόνημα κοσμικό, με τη καρδιά δοσμένη στα εφήμερα. Τότε η Ανάσταση δεν είναι παρά μια τυπική και κοσμική γιορτή.

Όχι έτσι! Τέτοιες μέρες που «**ο πόνος άπλωσε τα πέπλα του παντού**», «**Όσοι πιστοί!**» ψάλλουμε το «**Χριστός Ανέστη**» και μέσα μας γίνεται σεισμός.

Οι καρδιές μας σκιρτούν και αγάλλονται, τα μαύρα σύννεφα σκορπίζονται, στις ψυχές μας ανθίζει η ελπίδα, γιατί

«**Ἀνέστη Χριστός και νεκρός ουδείς εν τω μνήματι**» (Κατ. Λόγος Ι. Χρυσοστόμου).

Current Issues

THE CANDLES OF EASTER

On midnight of Holy Saturday, the Orthodox welcome the Resurrection of Christ with large white candles (lambades). This custom goes back many centuries, and its origin fades into the depths of history. The people light their Easter candles on hearing the priest chanting “Come and receive the Light ...” Their light fills the Church, and with the hundreds outside it, bestows a serene glow to the faces of the faithful. Everybody repeats “Christ is Risen”, as sung by the priest, and raises their Easter candle into the air. This movement signifies the abolition of Hades, and the future resurrection of the human race.

The custom of holding a candle on that glorious night-day of the Resurrection of Christ has more than one meaning. The light disperses the darkness of the night, as well as the darkness of mind, which is due to the spiritual ignorance of many people. With the Resurrection of Christ, the faithful acquire knowledge about the great mysteries which the human mind cannot search. Death, illnesses, attrition of body, time, the past, present and future – they all assume a new meaning and a new explanation.

At the same time, the light of the Easter candle denotes the optimism which the faithful have during the difficult and tragic events of their life.

The light of the Easter candle shows the light that dwells inside ourselves. The frightful Hades has no place in our hearts, because the heart is filled by the new life of the Resurrection.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and sat on the head of each of the Apostles, like a tongue of fire.

Likewise, the light of the Easter candle, declares the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart of those who are in constant communion with God through the Prayer of the heart! It also shows us that our bodies on earth die and are buried, but there will come a time when they will rise into a new life.



Saint Gregory the Theologian adds another meaning to the Easter candles. The lit candles produce a spectacular illumination, reflecting our illumination in the next life. We Christians do not shut ourselves in the darkness of despair and hopelessness. Our existence is not controlled by the power of evil, nor by the darkness of Hades. All this has been defeated by the Resurrection of Christ.

Despite the joy and spiritual liberation of the Resurrection of Christ, the Christians are surrounded by the people of this world, the majority of whom suffer from loneliness and despair. For these people, true happiness is rare and short-lived. They wait for someone to infuse them with the meaning of life and the joyful significance of the Resurrection of Christ.



They lack genuine ideals in their life and true morality in their hearts. Only the Christians can give them these things. But do they? It seems the majority of us are oblivious to the plight of these people! Mostly in silence, and occasionally loudly, such people want us to take the light of our Easter candles to them, to illuminate the depths

of their hearts, to dispel their loneliness and despair, and to convince them that Christ has defeated death through His Resurrection. All they have to do to overcome their plight is to sincerely repent and believe in Him.

Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ο Ηγιασμένος
(η μνήμη του τιμάται 16 Μαΐου)

Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ήρθε από την Αίγυπτο και ήταν γιος πλούσιων χριστιανών γονέων. Σε πολύ μικρή ηλικία επέδειξε μια λαχτάρα για τη μοναστική ζωή. Οι γονείς του κάποτε έκαναν ένα μεγάλο γλέντι στο σπίτι τους κατά τη διάρκεια της γιορτής της Θεοφανίας. Αλλά ο Θεόδωρος δεν ήθελε να λάβει μέρος στις εορταστικές εκδηλώσεις, λυπημένος που λόγω τις γήινες χαρές θα μπορούσε να στερηθεί τις χαρές στη ζωή που θα ακολουθήσει. Τελικά εγκατέλειψε το σπίτι του όταν ήταν δεκαεσσάρων ετών και εισήλθε σε ένα από τα μοναστήρια κοντά στη σύγχρονη πόλη Εσνά, στην Αίγυπτο. Όταν έμαθε για τον Μεγάλο Παχώμιο, καίγεται με την επιθυμία να δει τον ασκητή.

Ο Άγιος Παχώμιος έλαβε τον νεαρό με αγάπη, έχοντας ενημερωθεί εκ των προτέρων από τον Θεό για την έλευση του. Η μητέρα του Θεόδωρου, μαθαίνοντας ότι βρισκόταν στο μοναστήρι του Τανιέση, ήρθε στον Άγιο Παχώμιο με επιστολή του επισκόπου, ζητώντας να δει τον γιο της. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος δεν ήθελε να σπάσει τον όρκο του να παραιτηθεί από τον κόσμο, οπότε αρνήθηκε να συναντηθεί με τη μητέρα του.

Ο Άγιος Παχώμιος του είπε κάποτε να διδάξει στους αδελφούς την Αγία Γραφή όταν ήταν μόνο είκοσι χρονών. Κάποιοι από τους παλαιότερους αδελφούς αισθάνθηκαν προσβεβλημένοι που ένας νέος μοναχός τους δίδαξε, και αναχώρησαν. Ο Άγιος Παχώμιος τους είπε: «δεν απορρίψατε τον Θεόδωρο, αλλά μάλλον το Λόγο του Θεού και στερήσατε τον εαυτό σας από το Άγιο Πνεύμα».

Ο Άγιος Παχώμιος διόρισε τον Άγιο Θεόδωρο ως επιτηρητή του μοναστηριού Τάμνησι, και αποσύρθηκε σε ένα πιο μοναχικό μοναστήρι. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος φρόντισε τον Άγιο Παχώμιο στην τελική του ασθένεια. Μετά το θάνατο του Αγίου Παχώμιου, ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος τακτοποίησε το μοναστήρι του Τανιέσι και αργότερα ήταν επικεφαλής όλων των μοναστηριών του Θεάμ. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος ο Ηγιασμένος φημιζόταν για την αγιότητα της ζωής του και το θαυματουργικό δώρο του, και ήταν γνωστός στον Μέγα Αθανάσιο, Πατριάρχη Αλεξανδρείας. Ο Άγιος Θεόδωρος αποχώρησε στα γηρατιά του το έτος 368.

From the Saints of our Church

St Theodore the Sanctified
(Commemorated 16 May)

Saint Theodore came from Egypt and was the son of wealthy Christian parents. At a very young age he displayed a yearning for monastic life. His parents once held a large party at their house during the feast of Theophany, but Theodore did not want to take part in the festivities, grieving that because of earthly joys he might be deprived of joys in the life to come. He secretly left home when he was fourteen and entered one of the monasteries near the modern town of Esna, in Egypt. At this monastery, hearing about Pachomius the Great, he burned with the desire to see the ascetic.

Saint Pachomius received the young man with love, having been informed by God beforehand about his coming. Theodore's mother, learning that he was at the Tabennisi monastery, came to Saint Pachomius with a letter from the bishop, asking to see her son. Saint Theodore did not wish to break his vow to renounce the world, and so he refused to meet with his mother.

Saint Pachomius once told him to instruct the brethren on Holy Scripture when he was then only twenty years old. Some of the older brethren took offence that a new monk should teach them, and they departed. Saint Pachomius said to them, "you

have not rejected Theodore, but rather the Word of God, and have deprived yourselves of the Holy Spirit."

Saint Pachomius appointed Saint Theodore as overseer of the Tabennisi monastery, and withdrew to a more solitary monastery. Saint Theodore looked after Saint Pachomius in his final illness. After the death of Saint Pachomius, Saint Theodore directed the Tabennisi monastery, and later on he was at the head of all the Thebaid monasteries. Saint Theodore the Sanctified was famed for his holiness of life and a great gift of wonder working, and he was well known to Saint Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria. Saint Theodore reposed in his old age in the year 368.



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

Why does the date for Pascha (Easter) change every year?

The Christian feast of Pascha (Easter) has its origins in the Hebrew feast of the Passover, in which the Jews commemorate the deliverance of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt. This connection is profound - not only did the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection happen around the time of the feast of the Jewish Passover, but the events of the original Passover are a prefigurement of Jesus' death and resurrection. Just as the Jewish Passover celebrated freedom from worldly slavery, Jesus' resurrection, the new Passover, celebrates the freedom from spiritual slavery, which is death.

In the early Church, different Christian communities celebrated Pascha on different days, but always in association with the Jewish Passover. The Passover is celebrated on a fixed date, on the 15th of Nisan (Nisan being the first month of the Jewish calendar). According to the Gospels, the Lord was crucified the day before the Passover, which that year was on a Saturday, and resurrected the day after the Passover. We remember the Scriptural accounts whereby Christ resurrected early in the morning on the first day of the week, which we now call Sunday, or in Greek, Kyriake (Κυριακή), which means "the Lord's Day."

The inconsistency across communities in the early Church as to when Pascha was celebrated was related to emphasis. Some communities celebrated on the 14th of Nisan, the day on which the Lord has crucified, to emphasise the Crucifixion. Other Churches celebrated Pascha on the

Sunday after the 14th of Nisan, emphasising the resurrection. There were other differences, based on different calendars being used by different Churches.

The issue was finally resolved at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Fathers of the Council decreed that Pascha was to be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox (the day where sunrise and sunset are 12 hours apart). They were to use the Alexandrian calendar to determine the spring equinox, and hence the date of Pascha. As both the date of the spring equinox and the date of the following full moon change from year to year, the date of Pascha also

changes. The Orthodox Church continues to maintain this order.

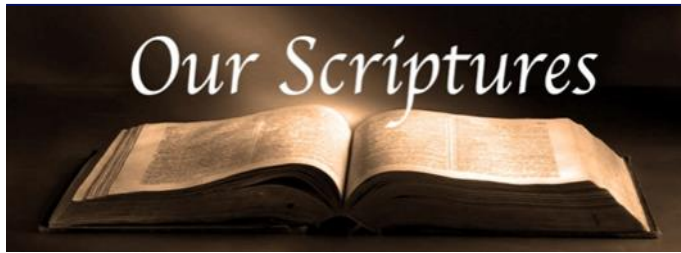
Whilst the Orthodox Church has been very diligent in maintaining the decree of the First Ecumenical Council, it is just as important to remember that our living of the Paschal events goes beyond what is on the yearly

calendar. The life in Christ is one ongoing death and resurrection: the death of the old, sinful, worldly, carnal self, and the resurrection of the new person in Christ. If we do not live this, then Pascha becomes just a set of customs and rituals. If we do live the daily crucifixion and resurrection, then each year, Pascha can become a transformative experience of identifying with and living out Christ's salvific death and resurrection.

May Christ's resurrection be such a transformative experience for us!

† Fr G. L.





Sunday of Thomas (John 20:19-31)

The Sunday of St Thomas follows after Easter Bright Week (Lambri Evdomada).

The Gospel reading commences with the disciples



assembled together in fear. Jesus comes and shows them His wounded hands and side (v 20). In doing so he dispels all doubt about who He is.

Thomas was not present at Jesus' appearance. When told by the others, Thomas showed his doubt (v 25).

Jesus appeared again to the assembled disciples.

This time Thomas was present (v 26-27). Like the Good Shepherd in the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus came back especially for Thomas. As a hymn of our Church states, "Jesus did not want Thomas to drown in the storm of disbelief." He also manifests again His love for mankind, which was proven in His crucifixion. The high point of the passage is Thomas' confession of Christ's divinity: "My Lord and my God!" (v 28), which showed that he was open and willing to accept this truth.

It is easy to emphasise Thomas' doubt in Christ's resurrection. When we look deeper we obtain an understanding that Thomas was driven by his pain of not being amongst the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them. We understand that Thomas had a readiness to believe.

Nevertheless, doubt is human and is not a weakness. It can be the impetus to search for answers and the truth. Some people unfortunately respond to doubt by giving up the search or becoming complacent and despondent.

Let us, who have not seen the resurrected Christ with our physical eyes, always search diligently for the truth with our spiritual eyes. If we do this, by careful daily reading of the Bible, by partaking in the Church's liturgical life, and by seeking guidance from a spiritual elder, Jesus will approach each of us to answer our doubts. Then we too will be blessed, for though we have not seen with our physical eyes, we will have seen with our spiritual eyes, and will believe.



From the Holy Father...

St John of Damascus On the Resurrection

In the *Exact Exposition of the Christian Faith*, St John of Damascus (675-749) takes readers methodically through Orthodox dogma and enhances our understanding of much of what is often taken for granted. This is particularly evident in Books 3 and 4 where he elaborates on what actually happened at the Resurrection.

A key focus of St John is that Christ took on "death on our behalf" in both of His natures: human and divine. Death did not corrupt Christ's body. It was a normal human body

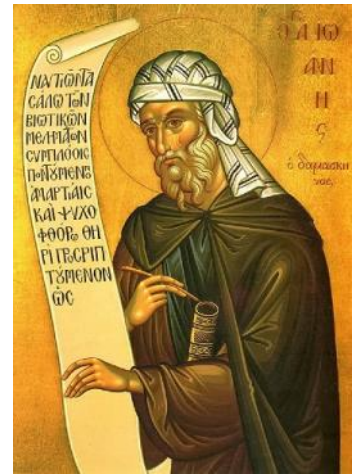
subject to the wounds of the flesh such as: hunger, thirst; weariness; the piercing with nails; and death, but it did not rot like a normal human body. This is the same as the human body when holiness is present, as evidenced by the incorrupt remains (Holy Relics) of many saints, some of whom have wholly intact bodies.

St John also explains why Christ's human body was so different after the Resurrection. It was not bound by any of the needs which we have in our fallen state, like hunger or thirst. It was the same body with none of the previous human frailties.

Christ took on our "curse and desertion" – the unnatural consequence of the Fall – yet did not Himself fall into it. He offered Himself to the Father on our behalf. He was not offered to sin, hades or, as St John puts it: "God forbid ... the Tyrant." He was offered as a "ransom", to Him whom we humans had sinned against.

Christ then descended into hades, with St John teaching that Christ did in hades what He did in His earthly ministry by bringing "light to those who sit under the earth in darkness and the shadow of death."

But death could not contain Christ, the Source of Life. As St John writes: "For just as darkness disappears on the introduction of light, so is death repulsed before the assault of life, and brings life to all, but death to the destroyer."



Orthodox Saints of the World

Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century

The last of our series about the spread of Christianity throughout the ages will reflect upon: how Orthodox Christianity came to Australia; and, on certain individuals preaching and spreading the word of God today throughout the world.

In the great commission (Matthew 28:19), our Lord Jesus Christ commands the disciples to “make disciples of all nations”, “baptising them”, and “teaching them” the commandments of God. This commandment applies to all Christians, in every nation, in the past, present and future.

Orthodoxy's arrival in Australia

The Orthodox Faith spread to our homeland Australia through mass migration from Europe, as people fled severe poverty, hardship and world wars. It began in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Fr Roman Braga, a Romanian Orthodox Priest who was imprisoned and tortured for 11 years in Romania during the Communist regime, says this was all part of God's plan to bring Orthodoxy to America, and by extension to Australia. In a 1995 talk at Franklin, Tennessee, USA Fr Braga said:

“The Greek people in America (and for us, Australia) think they came ... to make

money to go back ... Sure, maybe they thought this way, but God had another plan ... God is moving the historical events.”

Spreading God's word to all nations

Today, we are blessed with new apostles and missionaries in countries where Orthodox Christianity is unknown or being rediscovered. Some of the many include: Archbishop Anastasios in Albania; Fr Themistocles Adamopoulos in Sierra Leone; Former Metropolitan of New Zealand Amphilochios and Archimandrite Meletios in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga; Fr Chrysostomos Manalu in Medan, Indonesia; Fr Savvas Marcelino in East Timor; and, Archbishop Makarios of Kenya.

May we keep them in our prayers.

A search of various websites will provide information on current Orthodox missionary work throughout the Pacific, Asia, and Africa.



ΤΟ ΠΑΣΧΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΠΑΛΑΙΑ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ

Το Πάσχα των Εβραίων είναι μια πολύ παλαιά εορτή. Αυτοί οι νομαδικοί άνθρωποι, έσφαζαν αρσενικά αρνιά ως θυσία προς τον Ήλιο, μετά την πρώτη πανσέληνο του Νίσαν, δηλαδή γύρω στον Απρίλιο.

Αφού ο ήλιος ήταν αυτός που έδινε ζωή σ' όλη τη φύση.

Όταν έγιναν μετά γεωργοί οι Εβραίοι, μετέφεραν το Πάσχα στον εορτασμό της εαρινής ισημερίας. Επίσης, όταν έπαψαν να λατρεύουν τον ήλιο και προσαρμόστηκαν στην λατρεία του αληθινού Θεού, το έκαναν από ευγνωμοσύνη σ' Αυτόν που έφερνε την Άνοιξη.

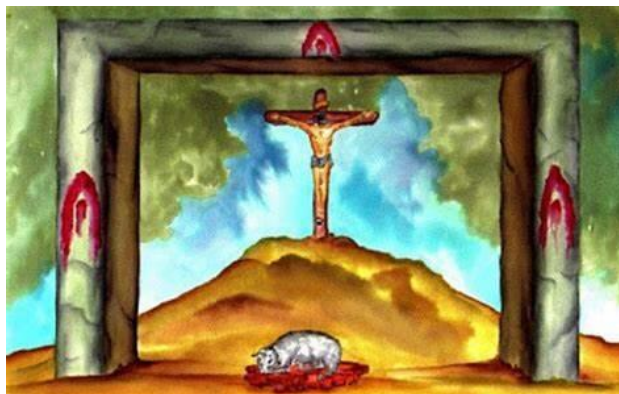
Αργότερα διαβάζουμε στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη ότι όταν ο Θεός τιμωρούσε τους Αιγύπτιους με τις δέκα πληγές, η δεκάτη και η πιο σκληρή, ήταν που ο Άγγελος Κυρίου επρόκειτο να σφάζει τα πρωτότοκα παιδιά των Αιγυπτίων.

Ο Μωυσής πληροφορήθηκε να ειδοποιήσει τους Ισραηλίτες να σφραγίσουν την πόρτα του σπιτιού τους με το αίμα σφαγμένου αρνιού. Έτσι μόνο θα αποφεύγαν την ποινή του αγγέλου που τελικά πήγε μόνο στους



Αιγύπτιους. Ο Άγγελος προσπέρασε τα σπίτια των Εβραίων.

Από την ημέρα εκείνη, οι Εβραίοι έσφαζαν αρνιά την ημέρα εκείνη, ως ανάμνηση της ευεργεσίας του Θεού προς τον εκλεκτό λαό Του – προσφέροντας μαζί την βαθιά ευλάβεια και τον θείο φόβο που είχαν απέναντι του Θεού.



Η θυσία και η Ανάσταση του Ιησού όμως, τοποθέτησε το Πάσχα στην σωστή του θέση ολοκληρώνοντας και εκπληρώνοντας όλες τις προεικονίσεις και προτυπώσεις τού Πάσχα της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης.

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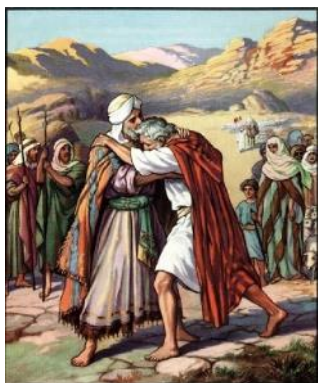
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From The Old Testament



Jacob, Esau, and Birthright

Certain people in the Old Testament who had deep reverence towards God experienced moments which gave them a foretaste of the grace, and truth, that would ensue in the fullness of time. The story of Esau and Jacob, twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, is an example.



Esau loved to hunt and became Isaac's favourite. Jacob, who was quieter, was Rebekah's favourite.

One day, Esau returned home after working in the fields. He was famished and asked Jacob for bread and a bowl of stew. Jacob seized the opportunity to obtain the advantage awarded only to the firstborn of the Jews. He asked Esau to "trade" his birthright for the food. Esau agreed ... "Behold, I am at the point to die – and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (Gen 25).

Later, Rebekah guided by the Holy Spirit and God's preference that Jacob and not Esau be the one to lead the Jews, tricked the blind Isaac to give his blessing to Jacob instead of Esau (Gen 27).

So that the infuriated Esau wouldn't kill Jacob, Rebekah sent Jacob into the desert where he labored long and hard. However, he longed to return to his father's house but could not due to Esau's rage. The night before the confrontation, he took refuge in unceasing prayer. He felt the presence of God early in the morning. Intensifying his prayer, he told God that he will not leave him unless He provided him with His blessing! God replied, "Because you have been strong with God, you will also be strong with men" (Gen 32).

The next day, under God's protection, Jacob went to meet Esau, who was pursuing him with an army to annihilate him. On approaching Esau, Jacob made seven full prostrations. Esau's heart softened and he fell on Jacob's neck sobbing as brotherly love was re-established.

Jacob had humbled himself before God through prayer and also before his brother, receiving divine blessing as the next Patriarch of God's chosen people.



Holiness In Our Times

Elder Ephraim of Arizona

Born in Volos, Greece in 1927 on the eve of the nativity of St John the Baptist, Elder Ephraim was given the name Ioannis and raised with a deep love for God. At the age of nineteen with nothing more than his mother's blessing he left home for the Holy Mountain.



Upon his arrival at Mt Athos, St John the Baptist appeared to Elder Joseph the Hesychast informing him that he was entrusting him with a lamb called little Ioannis. He

remained in Elder Joseph's care for twelve years.

Ephraim followed a stricter ascetical life than other monks and unconditional obedience, as the elder knew that after his repose Ephraim would have to render obedience to Christ himself for what awaited him.

In 1973 Ephraim was chosen to become abbot of the Holy Monastery of Philotheou. His quick revival of the spiritual life in this monastery attracted many new novices like bees to a beehive. This success was swiftly noticed by the Council of Mount Athos, which was looking for gifted elders to revive some of the other monasteries on the Holy Mountain.

Like the good and faithful servant in the parable of the talents, the elder was vouchsafed several more monasteries to re-ignite their spiritual life and enlarge them. This gift would prove to be his greatest virtue.

In 1979 the elder was forced to travel to Canada for health reasons. His stay there moved him with compassion for the Christians of the new world who had strayed away from the essence of our faith. He would return to Canada and the US for up to two months every year until he decided to permanently move there in the late 1980s.

Taking the sacred heritage of Mount Athos with him, Elder Ephraim established eighteen monasteries across the US and Canada within fifteen years. He chose the desert of Arizona as his residence where he built his finest monastery dedicated to St Anthony the Great. From there, this spiritual giant of our times guided over thirty monasteries and several sketes, as well as thousands of spiritual children across the world. He reposed on December 7 2019.



What we Hear in Church



The Seventh Eothinon of Pascha

“Behold, it is early and still dark. And why, O Mary, are you standing outside at the tomb, with much darkness covering your mind, such that you seek where Jesus has been laid? But see, how the Disciples, who ran together, understood the resurrection from the linen cloths and the napkin, and then remembered the scripture concerning this. With them and through them, we also have believed, and we extol You, Christ the Giver of life.”

Τὸ Ζ' Ἑωθινόν Ἦχος βαρύς (Grave Mode)

«Ἰδοὺ σκοτία καὶ πρωΐ, καὶ τί πρὸς τὸ μνημεῖον Μαρία ἔστηκας, πολὺ σκότος ἔχουσα ταῖς φρεσίν; ὅφ' οὗ τέθειται ζητεῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς. Ἄλλ' ὅρα τοὺς συντρέχοντας Μαθητάς, πῶς τοῖς ὁθονίοις καὶ τῷ σουδαρίῳ, τὴν Ἀνάστασιν ἐτεκμήραντο, καὶ ἀνεμνήσθησαν τῆς περὶ τούτου Γραφῆς. Μεθ' ὧν, καὶ δι' ὧν καὶ ἡμεῖς, πιστεύσαντες, ἀνυμνοῦμέν σε τὸν ζωοδότην Χριστόν.»

The hymn commences with «Ἰδοὺ», which commands us to “behold.” God’s message is always within reach, but sometimes we just need to be willing to see it and to accept it within us.

We behold Mary Magdalene standing at the tomb of Jesus, who is not there, and “much darkness [is] covering” her mind. This does not suggest that Mary was spiritually dark! On the contrary, her extraordinary devotion and faith was so strong that she got up to visit Jesus when it was “still dark.”

It was when she did not find Jesus that “much darkness” came over her and she wondered what had happened. She showed her human anxiety, which is shared by all of us.

How often when life events do not go as we thought they would, do we lose trust in Jesus? Without Jesus, “it is dark.” When we understand Jesus’s word (the Scripture), and trust Him, we are no longer in a spiritually dark and worried state.

Why did Jesus fold the napkin and neatly fold the linen burial clothes? To show that His body was not taken by thieves, as they would not have had the time to fold the clothes that would have been stuck to His skin (because of the myrrh). Thus, when Peter and John entered the tomb they immediately understood that Jesus was living, and that His Resurrection is real.

Our Merciful Lord gives us “linen cloths” and a “napkin,” being the signs that prove he is alive and with us. It is our challenge to “behold” them.



If There is Life, I Want to Live

Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavroetiki

This short book contains the encounters of Metropolitan Nikolaos, and addresses a question that concerns many: “How can the Church address the doubts of the younger generation and interest them in matters of faith?”

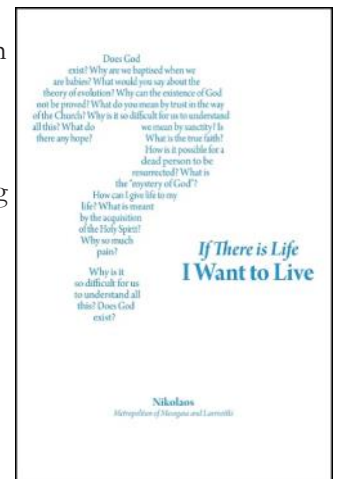
The book recalls authentic conversations between the author and a group of young people. They are mostly skeptical of the Church, yet are interested in the life journey of Metropolitan Nikolaos, who went from being a successful scientific researcher in America to becoming a monk and hierarch. It is presented as 100 questions and answers on matters of faith, yet is recorded as a natural and frank dialogue interspersed with the Metropolitan’s personal thoughts and impressions.

The book’s value derives from the charming approach of Metropolitan Nikolaos who delicately and humbly engages with those he encounters, always making sure to respect them as equals and not to preach to them.

He confesses that when he was younger he had many similar issues with the Faith. In fact, he refused to have something so important imposed on him, preferring to discover the truth himself through a personal search. It was this natural skepticism that attracted Metropolitan Nikolaos to science.

The questions themselves range from disputes on the existence of God, or the possibility of human resurrection, to more personal concerns such as whether it is possible to follow the commandments of our Faith in the modern age. Instead of engaging in debates, the Metropolitan steers their questions away from secondary concerns to more important matters and attempts to clarify by offering his own understanding. He never tries to convince them to believe, but he attempts to open his heart to them and their hearts to God by relaying his own experiences.

Overall, Metropolitan Nikolaos gives excellent answers to these common yet difficult questions. But above all, his inspiring example shows us the correct way to approach these discussions – with humility and love.



SACRAMENTS

HOLY UNCTION

The mystery of Holy Unction or the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick is also called euchelaen and means “blessed oil.” This sacrament is the Church’s specific prayer for healing.

When we are ill and in pain, this can very often be a time of life when we feel alone and isolated.

Holy Unction reminds us that when we are in pain, either physical, emotional, or spiritual, Christ is present with us through the ministry of His Church. He is among us to offer strength to meet the challenges of life, and even the approach of death.

Christ came to the world to “bear our infirmities.” One of the signs of His divine Messiahship was to heal the sick. The power of healing remains in the Church because Christ himself remains in the Church through the Holy Spirit.

As with Chrismation, oil is also used in this Sacrament as a sign of God’s presence, strength, and forgiveness.

The sacrament is conducted on Holy Wednesday afternoon, or at any other time deemed necessary.

Ideally seven priests are gathered, but it can be performed by a few, or even one priest.

After the reading of seven Epistle lessons, seven Gospel lessons and the offering of seven prayers, which are all devoted to healing, the priest anoints the body with the Holy Oil. He makes the sign of the

cross on the forehead and top and palms of the hands saying “For the healing of soul and body.”

The biblical basis for the Sacrament is found in James 5:14-15:

“Is any among you sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing

him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

The express purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Unction is healing and forgiveness.

As Orthodox

Christians we pray, neither commanding God to heal or doubting His ability to heal, but pleading for His promised mercy upon all who are ill.

Since it is not always the will of God that there should be physical healing, the prayer of Christ that God’s will be done always remains as the proper context of the Sacrament.

It is indeed the case that death inevitably comes. All must die, even those who in this life are given a reprieve through healing in order to have more time on the earth.

Thus, the healing of the sick is not itself a final goal, but is merely “instrumental” in that it is given by God as a

sign of His mercy, and as a grace for the further opportunity of man to live for Him, and for others in the life of this world.



NEWS and VIEWS

Youth Conference

Many members of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society attended and contributed to the Archdiocese's Assemble 2020 Youth Conference which took place on Saturday February 2020 and was hosted by the parish of St Euphemia, Bankstown. This was the fourth in a series of local Conferences which have been held ahead of the National Youth Conference scheduled for 2021.



Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic News

Cessation of Church Services

Following the 11 March 2020 communique, the Ecumenical Patriarchate announced on 18 March that all divine services, events, and rites would cease during the coronavirus pandemic.

In his Patriarchal Encyclical for Holy Pascha His Holiness Bartholomew of Constantinople referred to the impact of the pandemic. He described those who sacrifice themselves, for those who are suffering, as radiating resurrection and hope.

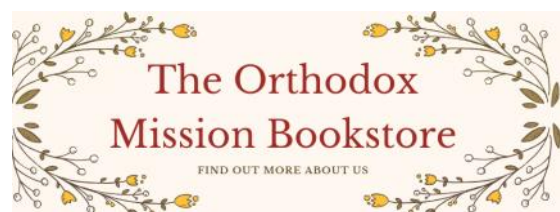
In his Paschal message His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia said that "God allowed this to happen in this way for reasons that He Himself knows. We glorify Him and we give thanks to Him, because we know that, even from within this trial, something good for our salvation will most certainly transpire ... in the end, we must not lose sight of our daily and living fellowship with the person of Christ."

Greek Orthodox Christian Society

Whilst regular adult meetings, Sunday Schools, and Omades have closed, the Society's missionary work has continued through electronic platform meetings. This has opened the door for Christians to participate from interstate.

A new series of podcasts on the "Journey to Pascha" were issued. They provided daily reflections during Great Lent. A similar series will be cast for Pentecost.

The Orthodox Mission Bookstore continues to fulfill online orders and can be accessed via: <https://www.orthodoxbookstore.org.au/>



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