



The Narrow and the Wide Gate

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt 7:13-14).

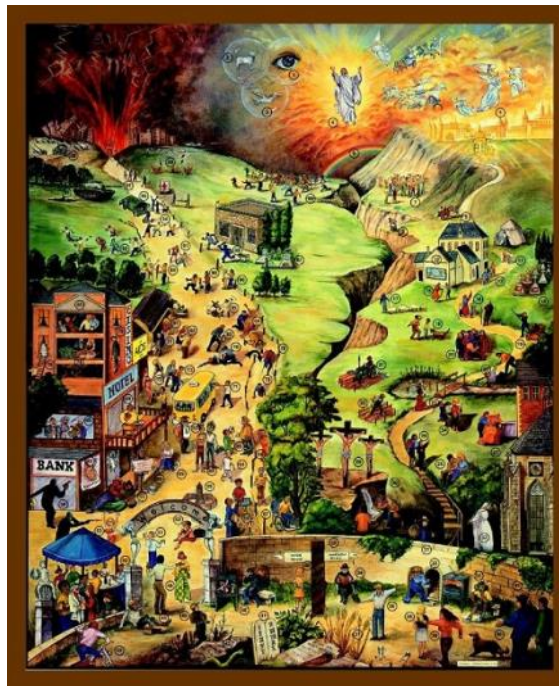
How are we to understand these words and apply them to our daily lives? Jesus is telling his followers that the main aim of our earthly life is to find the road that leads to “life”. True life is the Kingdom of God, being in the presence of God.

The wide gate and the easy road is the way of the world. St John Chrysostom in *On Wealth and Poverty* defines this as those “who have no care for self-control and give no thought for virtue, who wish to behave recklessly, who yield themselves to luxury and gluttony, who spend themselves every day in madness and frenzy for money, who strain after the things of the present life.” St John’s words still resonate strongly in our modern world.

Some people mistakenly think the difficulties in earning a living and accumulating wealth must mean that this is the narrow gate with the hard road: “it’s a tough world out there.”

Many people think that striving for the pleasures of this world will bring them happiness and contentment. Paradoxically, the opposite is the reality. Christ said, “take heed and beware of covetousness [materialism, greed or desire to accumulate possessions], for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

The characteristics of those who enter the narrow gate and travel on the difficult road are the opposite of those outlined above. They strive for self-control, concern themselves with gaining virtues, do not long for luxury, moderate their intake of food and alcohol, do not have the accumulation of wealth as their main goal, and do not seek after authority, reputation or power.



St John Chrysostom tells us that we can identify such people by the good deeds in humility that they perform.

So the question remains, why would one choose the narrow gate and the difficult road? It is definitely contrary to the world and the opinion of the many who see it as foolish and backward.

There are many ways to answer this. Let’s look at the lessons of the Lenten Period and Pascha. Why do we fast, attend church services and give money to the poor during the Lenten Period? They are tools to give us insight into our weakness and

provide a way to overcome our faults. These things are not an end in themselves. If they were, it would be worse than following the way of the world. We would become like the Pharisees.

We walk on the narrow path so that we can experience the joy of the living presence of Jesus, our personal Saviour. The great paradox is that this way of life is more satisfying than the earthly way.

The question that Christ poses to everyone, all of us, is how will I end up if I continue on the road I am on now?

ΓΛΩΣΣΑΙ ΩΣΕΙ ΠΥΡΟΣ

Με αυτό το απλό σχήμα λόγου, ο συγγραφέας του βιβλίου «Πράξεις των Αποστόλων», (Ευαγγελιστής Λουκάς), μας περιγράφει την κάθοδο του Αγίου Πνεύματος επί των μαθητών του Κυρίου.

Είναι ένα άλλο αισθητό σημείο της παρουσίας του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Τέτοια αισθητά σημεία της παρουσίας του Αγίου Πνεύματος είναι: Στο ίδιο το περιστατικό - «**εκ του ουρανού ήχος πνοής βιαίας**» ή στη Βάπτισμα του Κυρίου, η κάθοδος του Αγίου Πνεύματος «**ωσει περιστέρα**».

Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος μας επεξηγεί: «**Μη περάσει από το νου σας πως το Άγιο Πνεύμα είναι ένα αέρας, ή ένα περιστέρι, ή μία πύρινη γλώσσα. Ακούστηκε σαν δυνατός αέρας, φάνηκε σαν περιστέρι και σαν πύρινη γλώσσα, αλλά δεν ήταν το Άγιο Πνεύμα ούτε αέρας, ούτε περιστέρι, ούτε φωτιά**».

Η εμφάνιση λοιπόν των πύρινων γλωσσών συμβολίζει το τρόπο της παρουσίας και επενέργειας του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Το πυρ – φως είναι το κατ'εξοχήν σημείο της εμφάνειας και παρουσίας του Θεού στους ανθρώπους.

Το εξαποστειλάριο της Κυριακής της Πεντηκοστής μας θυμίζει: «**Φως ο Πατήρ, Φως ο Λόγος, Φως και το Άγιο Πνεύμα, όπερ εν γλώσσαις πυρίναις τοις αποστόλοις επέμφθη και δι' Αυτού πας ο κόσμος φωταγωγείται Τριάδα σέβειν Αγίαν**». Δηλ. φως ο Θεός Πατέρας, φως και ο Υιός και Λόγος του Θεού, φως και το Άγιο Πνεύμα, το οποίο σαν πύρινες γλώσσες εστάλει στους Αποστόλους και που με αυτό όλος ο κόσμος γεμίζει φως και οδηγείται στη προσκύνηση της Αγίας Τριάδος.

Εδώ φανερώνεται η φωτιστική ιδιότητα του πυρός που συνοδεύεται από τη καυστική και καθαρτική του δύναμη. Μ'αυτό το τρόπο μας καθαρίζει «**από πάσης κηλίδος**» και κάνει τη καρδιά μας διαφανή και καθάρια, για να ομολογεί με πίστη το Χριστό.

Οι μαθητές γέμισαν από το Άγιο Πνεύμα και άρχισαν να μιλούν διάφορες γλώσσες καθώς το Πνεύμα τους έδινε τρόπο να εκφράζονται.

Δεν είναι τυχαίο το γεγονός ότι η παρουσία του Αγίου Πνεύματος εκδηλώθηκε με πύρινες γλώσσες. Λέγει ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς: «**Το Άγιο Πνεύμα φανερώθηκε με το σχήμα της γλώσσας για να δείξει τη συγγένεια Του με το Λόγο του Θεού**». Για να δείξει, λέγει, το ομοούσιο του Αγίου Πνεύματος προς τον Πατέρα και τον Υιό, αφού ο Θεός είναι «**πυρ καταναλίσκον**» - φωτιά που κατακαίει, και για να δείξει τη διπλή ενέργεια του κηρύγματος των Αγίων Αποστόλων. Γιατί όπως η φωτιά αφ'ενός φωτίζει, αφ'ετέρου δε κατακαίει, έτσι και ο λόγος της διδασκαλίας του Χριστού, αυτούς που υπακούουν τους φωτίζει. Εκείνους όμως που απειθούν, τους παραδίδει στην κόλαση και το πυρ το αιώνιον.

Ο συμβολισμός αυτός των πύρινων γλωσσών με το Άγιο Πνεύμα, μας μεταφέρει πολύ πίσω, στον πύργο της Βαβέλ. Εκεί ο εγωισμός και η ασυνεννοησία της αμαρτίας οδήγησε τους ανθρώπους να μη καταλαβαίνει ο ένας τον άλλον, παρ'όλο που μιλούσαν την ίδια γλώσσα.

Τώρα όμως με την επιφοίτηση του Αγίου Πνεύματος πάνω σ'όλη την Εκκλησία, αποκτούμε την ενότητα και μιλάμε όλοι την ίδια γλώσσα. Αυτή τη κοινή γλώσσα μιλούσαν και μιλούν οι Άγιοι οπουδήποτε και οποτεδήποτε έζησαν.

Δυστυχώς στις μέρες μας επικρατεί στις ανθρώπινες κοινωνίες η κατάσταση της Βαβέλ. Προσπαθούμε να κατασκευάσουμε με τις ανθρώπινες εγωιστικές δυνάμεις μας και μακριά από το Θεό, τους δικούς μας επίγειους παραδείσους. Και να που ένας μικροσκοπικός ιός έφτασε να φέρει τόση πρωτοφανή σύγχυση και ταραχή στο κόσμο.

Ακόμη και οι Χριστιανοί, αφού δεν έχουμε αποκτήσει την ενότητα του Αγίου Πνεύματος, μιλάμε ακατανόητα και δεν συνεννοούμεθα.

Καλούμεθα λοιπόν πάντοτε, αλλά ιδιαίτερα την ημέρα της Πεντηκοστής, να προσευχηθούμε θερμά στον Παράκλητο να μας επισκεφθεί, να μας παρηγορήσει και να μας φωτίσει, και να φέρει την ομόνοια, τη χαρά και την ειρήνη στη ζωή μας.





THE RESURRECTION IS A REVOLUTION

Every year has several days of celebrations, or festive days, during which we honour a religious, national or social event. These are meant to instil in our minds the deeper meaning of the occasion.

For us Orthodox Christians the Resurrection, or Pascha, is a joyful and enthusiastic celebration. On the one hand there is a strong religious preparation (Great Lent, Holy Week) accompanied on Easter day by centuries-old customs, such as: the Easter candles; red eggs; Easter bread (tsourekli); lamb on the spit; and the exuberant spirit of friendship, joy, forgiveness and closeness with one another. All these customs are external signs of celebration and human relations, albeit short and temporary.

The Church, however, does not celebrate the Resurrection in this manner. Rather, it celebrates the Resurrection of Christ, which denotes three major truths of our Faith:

1. The shattering of the power of the devil;
2. The victory of Christ over death; and,
3. The possibility that man himself can be resurrected.

The Resurrection of Christ proves His divinity, since neither death nor the tomb can contain or restrict Him in any sense. At the same time we appreciate the possibility that man himself can breach the barrier of death.

Imagine that death is a wall, a flat screen, dark and impenetrable. The Resurrection of Christ makes it **transparent** and **penetrable**, which means that you can see through it and behind it. And furthermore, what is unimaginable, you can go through it into the real life, which is Life Eternal.

Whilst death is an undeniable reality which everyone has to face some time, at the same time it is not darkness invisible, nor the end of everything – it is a passage from one place to another. After all, Pascha means passage from: the temporary to the eternal; the material to the incorruptible; the world of spiritual bankruptcy to the Kingdom of God.

In our time, the matter has become taboo, people do not like to think about it, let alone to talk of it. When the matter is raised the answer of most is, “knock on wood!”

The world has yet to find a solution to the problem of departure from this life. One cannot entirely blame people, as the idea of death is inherent in human nature. And yet the solution is staring at people, the only difficulty being that they are not willing to accept it. It is the **faith in the Resurrected Christ**. It is one thing to

passively accept that one day your life will end and nothing remains after that, and another to believe that after your life on earth, there is a better one, brighter and really blessed. The **revolutionary idea** is that Faith should not be theoretical, but born out of personal experience, where Christ is the centre of one's life. Whoever has this Faith should never lose it.

And he who does not have it should search to find it. There is no other way to confront the end of life.

Apostle Paul never met Christ in person, and yet he preached his experience of the Resurrection with such force and certainty, that it brought God to whole nations.

When you read the lives of saints or live next to a Saint Paisios, they “steal” your confidence, you become certain that they have experience of what they say.

The Resurrection of Christ is a **revolution**. It is the spiritual “Coup d’etat” that the human race was expecting for centuries. It happened so as to defeat our worst enemy and the evil that was introduced into our life – death. Since then, that evil has become transparent and penetrable, we can breach its barrier and enter the gate to Eternal Life.

To succeed we need Faith – real Faith, deep Faith, strong Faith, and above all, **saving Faith** – like that which all those who were cured and healed by Jesus Christ had, who were told, “your Faith has saved you.” Let us pray that this will happen to us all.



Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

From the Saints of our Church

Ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος ο Πάριος
(η μνήμη του τιμάται 24 Ιουνίου)

St Athanasius of Paros
(Commemorated 24 June)

Γεννημένος από ευσεβείς γονείς στο μικρό χωριό Κώστος στο νησί της Πάρου το 1722, ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος εκπαιδεύτηκε στη Σμύρνη στην Αθωνική Ακαδημία κάτω από δύο από τους μεγαλύτερους μελετητές της εποχής: Νεόφυτο των Καυσοκαλυβίων και Ευγένιο Βούλγαρη.

Έγινε γνωστός για τη μελέτη της Αγίας Γραφής και το κήρυγμα, και σύντομα έγινε δάσκαλος στην Ακαδημία. Στη συνέχεια διορίστηκε ως επικεφαλής της Σχολής της Θεσσαλονίκης όπου έλαμψε λόγω της πίστης του στον Θεό, που έδειξε στα κηρύγματα του.

Λόγω μιας πανούκλας, ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος πήγε στο νησί της Κέρκυρας όπου σπούδασε στη φιλοσοφία, τη φυσική και τη ρητορική. Όταν επέστρεψε, ο Πατριάρχης τον ώρισε Κοσμήτορα της Αθωνικής Ακαδημίας και χειροτονήθηκε ιερέας - ενάντια στη θέλησή του - από τον Άγιο Μακάριο της Κορίνθου. Σε αυτόν τον ρόλο ηγήθηκε της αποκατάστασης της Ορθόδοξης πνευματικότητας παράλληλα με τον Άγιο Νικόδημο τον Αγιορείτη και άλλους πατέρες γνωστούς ως «Κολυβάδες».

Αυτό το κίνημα αντιτάχθηκε εκτέλεση μνημοσύνων την Κυριακή. Προωθούσε τη συχνή συμμετοχή στη Θεία Κοινωνία και υπερασπίστηκε εναντίον ενός κοσμικού πνεύματος που εισήλθε στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία. Οι Κολυβάδες συκοφαντήθηκαν, απομακρύνθηκαν από τα μοναστήρια και εξορίστηκαν. Ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος έγραψε μια έκθεση τόσο πειστική που κηρύχθηκε αθώος. Επέστρεψε στη Θεσσαλονίκη και του προσφέρθηκε η θέση του Διευθυντή της Πατριαρχικής Σχολής της Κωνσταντινούπολης και μια επισκοπική θέση, αλλά αρνήθηκε.

Μετά από αυτό πήγε στο νησί της Χίου για να βρει ησυχία, αλλά κατέληξε να διδάξει εκεί. Ο Άγιος Αθανάσιος διέυθυνε τη Φιλοσοφική Σχολή Χίου έως το 1812, δίνοντάς της μια φήμη που προσέλκυσε μαθητές από όλο τον κόσμο της Μεσογείου. Στα γηρατιά του, υποχώρησε σε ένα μοναστήρι για να προσευχηθεί και να συνεχίσει το γράψιμό του. Εκεί του συνέβη εγκεφαλικό επεισόδιο και λίγες μέρες αργότερα στις 24 Ιουνίου 1813 κοιμήθη εν Κυρίου. Στο κελί του βρέθηκαν μόνο ένα απλό παλιό ράσο, μία λάμπα και ένα μελανοδοχείο.

Born to devout parents in the small village of Kostos on the island of Paros in 1722, St Athanasius was educated in Smyrna at the Athonite Academy under two of the greatest scholars of that age: Neophytus of Kavsokalyvia and Eugenius Voulgaris. He became known for his study of Holy Scripture and preaching, and soon became a teacher at the Academy. He was then appointed to head the School of Thessalonica where he shone because of his faith in God, which showed in his sermons.

Because of a plague, St Athanasius went to the island of Corfu where he studied further in philosophy, physics, and rhetoric. When he returned, he was named Dean of the Athonite Academy by the Patriarchate, and was ordained a priest against his will by St Macarius of Corinth. In this role he led a restoration of Orthodox spirituality alongside St Nicodemus the Hagiorite, and other fathers known as the “Kollyvades.”

This movement opposed the commemoration of the departed on Sundays, promoted the frequent partaking of Holy Communion, and defended against a secular spirit

entering the Orthodox Church. The Kollyvades were slandered, removed from office, and exiled. In response St Athanasius wrote a defence so convincing that he was declared innocent. He returned to Thessaloniki and was offered the position of Director of the Patriarchal School of Constantinople, and an episcopal position, but he refused.

After this he went to the island of Chios to find solitude but was prevailed upon to teach there. St Athanasius directed the Philosophy School of Chios until 1812, giving it a reputation that attracted students from around the Mediterranean world. In his old age, he retreated to a monastery to pray and continue his writing. There he was seized by a stroke and reposed a few days later on 24 June 1813. His cell was found to contain only a simple old habit, a lamp and an inkstand.



Book Review

Lord and Master of my Life By Archbishop Makarios of Australia

“O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.”

This prayer of Saint Ephraim which is repeated frequently in the period of Lent, is the framework upon which the author builds the structure of this beautiful and spiritually uplifting small book.

After briefly touching on the biography of Saint Ephraim, Archbishop Makarios begins to unpack each of the petitions made in this short prayer. Starting with each of the passions of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk, he uses his own spiritual experiences, those of the Church and desert fathers and many modern life examples to show the reader how these passions are evidence of being distant from our Lord, and absent from both His will and His Kingdom.

The chapters that follow elaborate on the virtues requested in the prayer being, chastity, humility, patience and love. With each virtue, he pries open the doors of our heart with warmth and light, with simple, loving counsel, showing the path to salvation is full of joy, and peace. The reader is strengthened and inspired.

Some of the key messages in this enlightened work are that it is key to have the desire to rid oneself of the passions as well as the desire to attain virtues. Also that every good thing for the soul has as its foundation the emptying of oneself for the love of others and thus for the love of God.

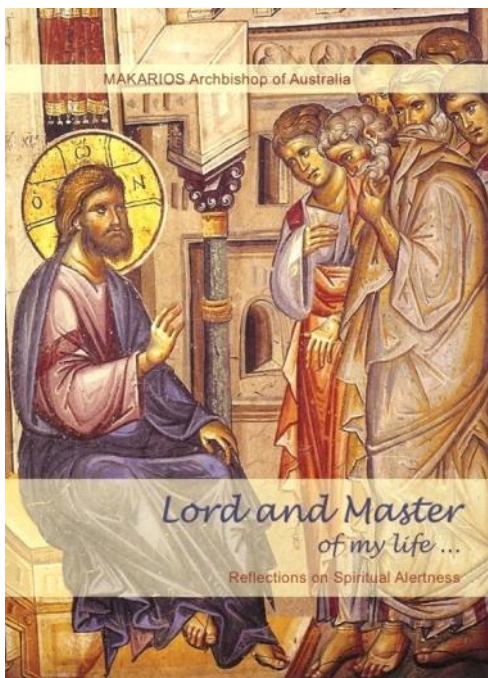


The language is simple and easy to understand. The concepts the author is helping us to embrace are part of everyday life and living, both with other people and with ourselves. He touches the reader, because he explores elements of our heart and of our behaviour that we keep deeply to ourselves. However, he does this in a manner that encourages and strengthens.

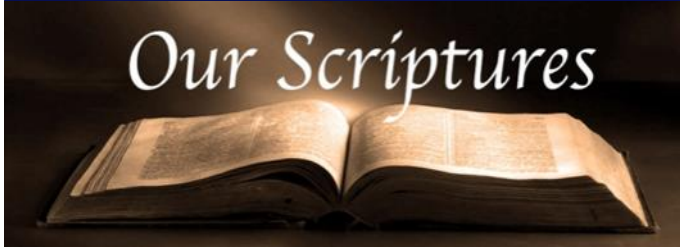
The book and the prayer itself is presented as a small microcosm of the Lenten experience, which itself is a miniature version of the life of a person. That is, by working on our passions, taking on virtues, seeing our sins and not judging others, we build a new person and arrive at the Resurrection, blessing our Lord and Master for all ages.

We can use this wonderful book to inspire and enlighten our journey during Lent, but also as a regular reference point for the most basic elements of building our life in Christ.

† Fr N. S.



Our Scriptures



Epistle Reading of the Birth of St John the Baptist – June 24 (Epistle to the Romans 13:11-14, 4:1-4)



Our Church has assigned this reading for the Birth of the Forerunner. Whilst St Paul does not directly refer to St John the Baptist, he is nevertheless an excellent example of all the virtues St Paul is referring to.

When St Paul writes that, “now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed” (13:11), it reminds us of St John the Baptist’s mission in calling the Jews from their spiritual sleep with “repent”, so that they might be ready to receive Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should also “cast off the works of darkness” (13:12).

And so we are told to “walk properly” (13:13) and not fall into sin. This reminds us of the virtues of St John, who boldly told Herod it was wrong to take his brother’s wife.

We are subsequently told to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh” (13:14). This reminds us of three key works of St John. Firstly, he pointed his disciples towards Christ and later preached Christ in Hades. Secondly, he baptised by the Jordan. In the baptism service we chant the hymn, “As many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ”, reminding us of St John’s mission. Finally, St John lived in such a way that he made “no provision for the flesh”, eating only wild honey and locusts and wearing camel’s hair.

The remaining verses remind us that not all Christians have the same rigor and discipline. We are encouraged to accept all and not judge because “who are you to judge another’s servant?” (14:4). Our weaknesses are overcome as we move closer to Jesus. As St John Chrysostom commented, St John the Baptist directed his disciples to Jesus so that their faith would grow (Matthew 11:2-14).



From the Holy Father...

St Clement’s Epistle to the Corinthians

At the end of the first century AD, the Christian congregation of Corinth was so divided that the younger members of the local church formed a rebellion against their appointed elders.

When news of this reached St Clement, the Bishop of Rome, he felt deeply that the only way to preserve the unity of the Church was to respect the Ministry established by the Apostles. He therefore wrote a letter to the Corinthians: “How blessed and marvelous are the gifts of God, dear friends!”

St Clement called to the Corinthians to study the God-given examples of righteousness in the Old Testament, in the life and teachings of Christ and the Apostles, and even from nature and contemporary life. He reminds his audience of the advice St Paul gave them a generation earlier in the Epistles to the Corinthians. He emphasises the importance of humility, love and repentance for maintaining unity in the church.

The language of St Clement’s letter is strikingly similar to that used by his predecessors in the Epistles of the Bible, as he lived and breathed the teachings of the Apostles. His words still resonate with us today: “So, since we have this pattern, let us unhesitatingly conform ourselves to His will; let us with all our strength do the work of righteousness.” St Clement’s epistle is beautiful not only for its content but also for his spirit of love which is still evident to us many centuries later.

We must remember that the late first century was a period of transition when the Apostles were no longer physically present among the Church on earth. Alongside other early Apostolic Fathers, St Clement was instrumental in preserving the continuity of the Apostolic teachings and traditions. Let us remember his God-inspired teachings about unity in our churches today.



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

What Key Tips can Help a Teenager Navigate Life?

The teenage years can be very special and beautiful. Teenagers often have very noble ideals. Teenagers however can make wrong choices, which they later deeply regret.

The only way to live is to be close to Christ and to His Church. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Blessed Augustine states, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You."

What follows is some advice from a priest who has learnt a lot not only from life but also from listening to people who come to him for Confession or for a chat. He has often been deeply moved by young people who had fallen astray but have then come to their senses: they can then see clearly the emptiness of a worldly life, and by the Grace of God they want with all their hearts to return to the Church.

1. Be aware that the devil is very good at tricking us: A worldly life, the way most young people live, seems very glamorous and "cool." We do not see however "what is happening behind closed doors." Far from Christ, people get irritated at each other, they have a lot of anger and hatred, there is often dishonesty and cheating on each other, and they feel a deep emptiness.

2. Be careful of electronic media and social messaging: Excessive time spent behind screens and on social media can become a true addiction, depriving young people of their opportunity to reach their potential.

3. Bad company: The most common reason why young people fall astray is that they get mixed up with bad company. We all need friends, so the secret is to find friends who love God.



4. Youth Groups/Ομάδα: Going regularly to a Youth Group such as Ομάδα is a huge spiritual support. It protects from the many temptations in the world. Young people that go to these groups and the camps find them very enjoyable and uplifting. They make good and lasting friendships and get a deep sense of belonging to the Church.

5. Spiritual Father: For us Orthodox, there can be no spiritual progress without a Spiritual Father. We go to our spiritual Father for Confession, but also to open our heart, to talk about our problems, and to receive guidance.

6. Other ways to feed our faith: As part of our daily routine, we need fervent prayer and reading of the New Testament and other spiritual books. Regular and fervent attendance at the Divine Liturgy and other Church Services is also essential. Once we have come to experience true prayer and the worship of our Church it is no longer difficult to keep away from bad company – we come to realise that we do not belong there.

7. Striving to grow in virtue: Throughout our life we all need to strive to grow in humility, in patience, in forgiving and tolerating one another, and in selflessness and love. We need vigilance in keeping away carnal thoughts: we must never look at pornography, inappropriate movies etc. Teenagers need to respect their parents, communicate with them well and honestly, and they should help with the housework, no matter how busy they are.

† Fr D. K.

ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ ΑΝΑΡΓΥΡΟΙ ΚΟΣΜΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΑΜΙΑΝΟΣ ΟΙ ΕΚ ΡΩΜΗΣ

Οι Άγιοι αυτοί, έζησαν επί της ηγεμονίας του Βασιλέως Καρίνου κατά το έτος 284μΧ και ήταν αδελφοί κατά σάρκα.

Σπούδασαν και οι δύο την ιατρική επιστήμη, καθώς είχαν κοινές κλίσεις και ικανότητες. Και σαν ιατροί στο επάγγελμα επεδόθησαν στην εξάσκηση της επιστήμης τους, στην οποία αφιερώθηκαν. Μάλιστα την εξάσκησαν όχι σαν επικερδές επάγγελμα, αλλά σαν φιλανθρωπική διακονία. Χρήματα δεν εδέχονταν ούτε από τους πτωχούς αλλά ούτε και από τους πλούσιους.

Αυτό έπρατταν οι Άγιοι όταν παρουσιάστηκαν στον ειδωλολάτρη Βασιλέα Καρίνο απολογούμενοι κατά της συκοφαντίας, ότι δήθεν εθεράπευαν χρησιμοποιώντας την τέχνη της μαγείας.

Οι Άγιοι όχι μόνον δεν πείστηκαν να αρνηθούν τον Χριστό, αλλά και τον Καρίνο απήλαξαν από την απιστία του όταν προσέφεραν την ίαση και σε εκείνον. Διότι την ώρα που τους ανέκρινε και τους απειλούσε για να αρνηθούν την πίστη τους, το πρόσωπο του άλλαξε θέση και το κεφάλι του έγερνε προς τα πίσω όποτε οι Άγιοι τον θεράπευσαν, γεγονός που έκανε τους παρευρισκόμενους να πιστεύσουν στο Χριστό.

Και μαζί με αυτούς, ομολόγησαν την πίστη στον Χριστό και ο Βασιλιάς με όλους τους οικείους, και συγγενείς του, και ακόμη με περισσότερες τιμές τους απέστειλε πίσω στο σπιτικό τους.

Ύστερα όμως από αυτά, αυτός που επιστατούσε την ιατρική τέχνη τους φθόνησε γιά αυτό, κι όταν τους ανέβασε σε ένα βουνό τάχα γιά συλλογή ιατρικών βοτάνων, τους επιτέθηκε και με λίθους τους σκότωσε.

Γι' αυτό και η υμνολογία της ημέρας αφενός τους προβάλλει με εγκωμιαστικούς επαίνους γιά να δείξει το μέγεθος της αγιότητας τους. Και αφετέρου οι αγιογράφοι τονίζουν τα βασικά στοιχεία της κατά Χριστόν αγίας βιοτής, που φωτίζει με συνοπτικό τρόπο την παρρησία που έχουν οι άγιοι ενώπιον του Θεού.

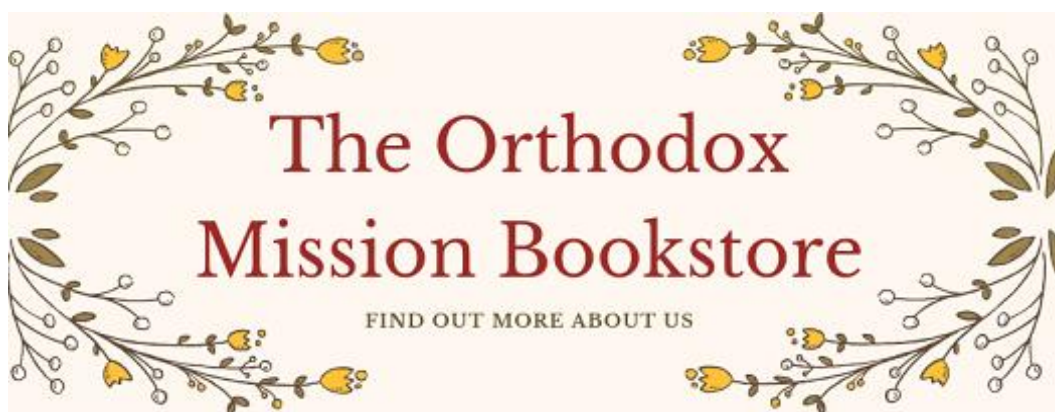
Οι Άγιοι Κοσμάς και Δαμιανός αγίασαν διότι έμειναν σε όλη τους τη ζωή στην πορεία της αγιότητος που σημαίνει ότι δέχτηκαν στην ύπαρξή τους όλη την Αγία Τριάδα «Πνεύματι Θείω χρυσωθέντες» διότι αποφάσισαν στη ζωή τους να κάνουν υπακοή στο Χριστό.

Και ποια είναι τα σημάδια της υπακοής στο Χριστό; Μα τίποτε άλλο πέρα από αυτό που βλέπουμε στη ζωή του Ίδιου: την αγάπη στον άνθρωπο και την ταπείνωση. Οι άγιοι αποτελούν κυριολεκτικά τη συνωνυμία της Αγάπης. Όπου υπήρχε νόσημα και πρόβλημα, εκεί και η παρουσία Του λειτουργούσε ιαματικά και θεραπευτικά, πάντα εις ευεργεσίαν. Και όχι μόνον όσο ήταν εν ζωή, αλλά και μετά θάνατον.

Το αποτέλεσμα μιάς τέτοιας αγίας ζωής είναι πάντοτε το ίδιο: η παρρησία που έχουν οι άγιοι ενώπιον του Θεού μας. Παρρησία, δύναμη και θάρρος δηλαδή μπροστά στον Θεό, για να πρεσβεύουν αδιάκοπα για μας που βρισκόμαστε ακόμη στο πέλαγος του βίου μας.

Και έτσι οι άγιοι γίνονται κατά κάποιο τρόπο παντοδύναμοι λόγω της χάρις του Θεού. «Πάντα ισχύω εν τω ενδυναμούντι με Χριστώ», που λέει και ο απόστολος Παύλος. Κυρίως όμως τονίζουν την αλήθεια αυτή τα λόγια του Κυρίου: «Εάν μείνητε εν εμοί και τα ρήματα μου εν υμίν μείνη, ο εάν θέλητε αιτήσασθε, και γενήσεται υμίν». Αμήν.





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From The Old Testament



Psalm I

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. These words start the book of Psalms. In the words of St Nicodemus the Hagiorite, “It contains a blessing and praise of the pious and righteous, but for the impious and sinful is condemnation and unhappiness.”



St Athanasius the Great says that David the prophet and king devotes this first Psalm to Christ, who was anticipated to be born from his lineage. He alone can be considered

blessed because he was outside of all of the death and corruption of sin. Through this psalm, however, we gain further insight into what we should do in order to imitate Christ and avoid the “way of sinners” and the “seat of the troublesome.”

It teaches us to conform our will to that of God so that the virtues – the fruits of the Holy Spirit – might take root in us. In this manner we may become fruit bearing trees (verse 3), which are nourished by the “living water” of Christ’s teaching. On the other hand, the ungodly (verse 4) do not bear fruit or draw near to Christ but are like the chaff “which the wind drives away.”

Furthermore, when stating that the ungodly shall not rise up with the righteous, the Greek word used also means “resurrect.” This highlights an important aspect of this psalm in that it does not just look to the present or to our temporary earthly life, but also to the eternal where the ungodly shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, nor shall the sinful stand in the “congregation of the righteous” – which we can understand to mean the Church.

In the final verse, David makes clear that no man is able to escape God’s notice and hide from Him. To quote St Nicodemus, “The virtues and deeds of the righteous and holy people will remain forever as their wealth and crown. The sins and deeds of the evil and impious ... are destroyed and become ineffective.”

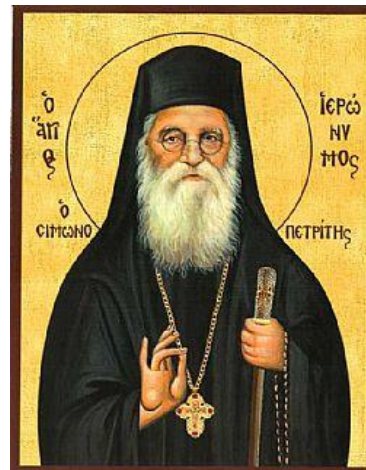


Holiness In Our Times

St Ieronymos of Simonopetra

St Ieronymos of Simonopetra is one of the most recent saints of our Church, having been canonised on 28 November 2019.

He was born with the name John in 1871 in Reis-Dere of Asia Minor. His parents, Nicholas and Maria, were very pious Christians, and many members of John’s family became monks and nuns. From a young age, John grew up in poverty and learnt to depend entirely on the Lord.



This dependence, along with the joy which he found in it, brought him to the Holy Mountain in 1888. He became a novice at Simonopetra Monastery at the age of 16, and quickly distinguished himself through his obedience, his humility and his ascetism. He would never lie down, instead choosing to sleep for short periods on his chair. He spent the remaining time in prayer, in counselling others, in studying, and in performing even the most menial tasks.

In 1920, having been at the Monastery for 32 years, he was unanimously elected Abbot by the brotherhood. Despite his added responsibilities, as well as worsening health conditions, he continued living an inspiring example of humility and discernment. After 11 years, however, he was exiled due to slanderous accusations of financial management. He thus joined the company of many great Saints of our Church who were also exiled, such as St John Chrysostom, St Athanasios the Great, and St Nektarios of Aegina.

Instead of staying on Mt. Athos, he was sent to the Metochion of the Divine Ascension in Athens. Here, he lived as a godly messenger: confessing and advising the faithful, giving away everything he possessed, and performing many miracles. He did this until his death on 6 January 1957, all without paying any attention to his own comforts, tiredness, and constant ill-health.

We commemorate St Ieronymos’ feast day on 9 May, being the day his Holy Relics were translated.

May he intercede to God for us.



What we Hear in Church



Blessed are You, O Christ our God

Apolytikion of the Feast (Mode pl. 4)

“Blessed are You, O Christ our God.

You made the fishermen all-wise
by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit
and through them You drew the world into Your net
O Lover of mankind, glory to You.”

Ἀπολυτίκιον τῆς Ἑορτῆς (ᾠχος πλ. δ')

«Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, Χριστέ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν,
ὁ πανσόφους τοὺς ἀλιεῖς ἀναδείξας,
καταπέμψας αὐτοῖς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,
καὶ δι' αὐτῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην σαγηνεύσας,
φιλάνθρωπε, δόξα σοι.»

This *Dismissal Hymn* of Pentecost is chanted at the end of the Vespers service on the night preceding Pentecost and then throughout the feast itself and the week following.

The Hymn declares the gathering of the world's people into God's net through the work of the Apostles.

The Holy Spirit fulfilled Christ's promise to His Disciples by coming on the day of Pentecost. The Apostles received “the power from on high” (Luke 24:49) and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the Lord and Saviour. This moment has traditionally been referred to as the birthday of the Church.

The Apostles were simple, uneducated people, mostly fishermen. As they were noble, and decent, when the Holy Spirit came down upon them it transformed them. It made them able to not only become intelligent and wise, but it gave them the ability to fearlessly share and preach to the world the good news that is Christ and His resurrection. Although they faced so much hostility, they succeeded in converting large parts of the then known world to Christianity, which has grown ever since.

The traditional Pentecost icon shows the Apostles sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of the ‘kosmos’ - the world. With the Holy Spirit they were able to preach to the ‘kosmos’ and draw people into the net of Christianity and personal encounter with Jesus and His messages of peace, love, hope, repentance and compassion.

Apostle Paul tells us that the “fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

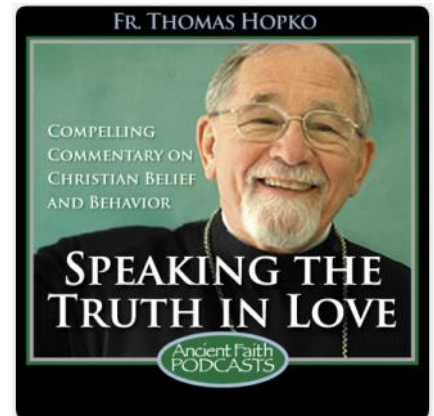
The Holy Spirit is fulfilled in people by their becoming Saints, which is of course the purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. “Thus says the Lord: Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy” (Lev 11:44-45). To become Saints we must know God and do our utmost to achieve theosis - a likeness in union with God. The Apostles made this possible for us by preaching God and drawing us into their net.



Fr Thomas Hopko

Podcasts are increasingly becoming an important way to access Christian teachings. This series will review a presenter's style and content.

Fr Thomas Hopko (1939-2015) was Dean at St Vladimir's seminary in the United States of America between 1992-2002. He was a prolific podcaster. Many of his talks can be found on Ancient Faith Radio (AFR) or on CD (via St Vladimir's Seminary Press).



Fr Thomas Hopko was a respected theologian and a gifted public speaker. In his podcasts, he weaves together historical facts, theological truths and dogmas to point the listener along the path of salvation. His Biblical knowledge is extensive, quoting widely from the Old and New Testaments. His great gift is his ability to explain Christianity to those of us who are not theologians. His message is powerful because it is Christ centred and rooted in the Bible.

His podcasts are passionate, fast paced and dynamic. You may find yourself overwhelmed, sighing inadvertently at the clarity and the deep truths that Fr Hopko lays before you. Many of his podcasts are worth listening to repeatedly.

Each of his podcasts are between 45-60 minutes long, covering a broad range of subject matter. His series on the Theotokos covers her role in God's plan for our salvation, how she relates to God and how we relate to her. He has 55 talks, one on each of the Biblical names and titles of Jesus, such as the Good Shepherd, the Christ, the Lamb of God and the True and Faithful Witness. There are a series of talks on the structure and style of the four gospels and the rest of the New Testament books. There are a series of audio CDs on: the book of Revelation (Apocalypse, a verse by verse analysis); the Word of the Cross; and, the Lord's Prayer.

Fr Hopko's podcasts are for those who are keen to find out more about the Orthodox Faith, who thirst for the knowledge that will lead to a new creation, to the Kingdom. Be warned, what you hear may change your life.

Download the Ancient Faith Radio app onto your device and search podcasts for “Fr Thomas Hopko.”

SACRAMENTS

ORDINATION

During His ministry Jesus appointed the twelve Apostles to continue his work. As eye witnesses of the Death and Resurrection of Christ they became confessors of the Truth of the Gospel. The Apostles were sent to proclaim the Gospel through preaching, teaching, bearing witness to the Kingdom of God, and through miracles in the Holy Spirit. “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Mt 10:7-8).

The Apostles were not just conveying Christ’s teachings and preserving the purity of the faith, but also, through the sacramental nature of the Holy Spirit, they were given authority to administer the Eucharist, administer membership into the Church through Baptism, as well as oversee the other Sacraments of the Church. As church membership increased the needs of the laity had to be met. The Apostles in turn ordained their successors through the Sacrament of Ordination, or the ‘laying on of hands.’ This Apostolic Succession, as it is known, guarantees the continuity and unity of the Church from the time of Christ to this present age, and to the age to come. All candidates for ordination are men who have been chosen from within the Church for service to the Church. These candidates must possess spiritual gifts of leadership, and lead by example to help strengthen the Church.

Through the laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit descends upon the candidate for Holy Ordination, sanctifying him and empowering him to be a shepherd and minister of Christ, to preach and to teach the Word of God, to administer the sacraments, and to guide God’s people towards salvation.

The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:12-16).



The Holy Spirit acts in this Apostolic Succession to ensure the spreading of the Word throughout the world: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you,’ and when he said this, he breathed upon them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’ ” (Jn 20:21-23).

Following the custom of the Apostolic Church, there are three major orders, each of which requires a special ordination. These are Bishop, who is viewed as a successor of the Apostles, Priest and Deacon, who act in the name of the Bishop.

The Greek word for Bishop (episkopos) means “overseer.” The Holy Orders are a calling to “oversee” the teaching and sacramental presence of Christ in the Church. The Bishop is seen as the father of the Local Church – the Shepherd who manifests the place of Christ in the Church. Only a Bishop may ordain and this is done during the Divine Liturgy, with the congregation proclaiming Axios! (He is

worthy!) Even a Bishop must be ordained with the assent and laying of hands of at least two other Bishops. Since the sixth century Bishops have been chosen from the celibate clergy. No Bishop is considered infallible or superior to other Bishops but rather they are servants of Christ and the Church.

The Priests of the Church, also known as presbyters, assist the Bishop in his work and Pastor the local church. They teach, preach, counsel and perform the Sacraments of the Church. The Orthodox church permits men to marry before they are ordained.

The Deacons serve both the Priests and Bishops in assisting with liturgical functions as well as philanthropic ministry. The Deacon cannot preside over the Eucharist in the absence of the Bishop or Priest. In the Acts of the Apostles we have a record of the appointment of the first seven Deacons in the Church.

The fact that every Orthodox Priest, Bishop, and Deacon in the present day can trace back their Priesthood to the Apostles through Apostolic Succession, is a great testimony to the one and undivided Church of Christ that has always existed since apostolic times, and that is truly, “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

NEWS and VIEWS

Recommencement of Church Services

Following the successful petitions of the faithful, the grace of the all merciful, benevolent, and loving Holy Trinity, and the enlightened management of the Federal and State Governments, the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has been successfully managed.

Our Orthodox Churches across Australia have commenced to accept limited numbers of the faithful to partake in the Divine Liturgy services, with some being provided the opportunity to attend the Pentecost service.

Greek Orthodox Christian Society

The missionary activities of the Orthodox Mission Centre have continued through electronic platform meetings for the regular adult meetings, Sunday Schools, Omathes, and the Byzantine Chanting classes. The radio programmes have continued to broadcast, as has the new series of Orthodox Journey podcasts.



The Orthodox Mission Bookstore has now re-opened to the public and continues to fulfill online orders. Face to face meetings will commence on a staggered basis for the various adult groups across different days of the week.



Visit our website at www.lychnos.org for Orthodox resources. Read past issues and articles of Lychnos and the lives of the Saints, keep up to date with an Orthodox calendar and explore our collection of podcasts, songs, videos and photo gallery. Find out more information about the history and activities of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society such as Sunday Schools, Youth Fellowships, the Sydney School of Byzantine Chant and Orthodox Bookstore, and subscribe to our bi-monthly update.

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