



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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

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When Christ was transfigured on Mount Tabor, His chosen disciples were blinded by the light which emanated from His person such that they could not bear to face Him. And yet that same light warmed them and attracted them, prompting Peter to plead with the Lord that they be allowed to remain there.

In the dismissal hymn we call our Lord the “Giver of light.” Why is He the “Giver of light”? Christ’s teachings, His sacrifice and His resurrection are all light but more importantly, God Himself is the Light. Christ is Light and He was sent to share His Light. In other words, to reveal God to man and bring man to salvation.

That same light which we understand to be an expression of Christ’s divinity - His uncreated energies - is shared with us on the feast day of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour. We are called to receive this light which the Lord in His endless goodness reveals to us, so that we don’t walk afar in spiritual darkness.

That is why we chant in the dismissal hymn, “show us sinners your light which is everlasting.” On this day we glorify Him – we recognise Him as our king and God and we ask Him to show us His light so that we can become partakers in the mystery of His transfiguration.

We read in the Creed that Christ is “light from light, true God from true God.” Christ was sent to deliver us. By delivering us, He revealed the light, giving it to us in abundance. We realise that Christ was sent to reveal the Father. We read in the gospels that “no one comes to the Father, except through Me” (John 14:6). In other words, Jesus is the pathway to our salvation. He enlightens our mind’s eye to the realisation of God and the need to be participants in His body.



In receiving this light, we realise that we cannot do anything without Christ. He illumines our hearts and minds to follow after Him. Man is only a creature of receptivity.

We are candles which bear the light when we are open to receiving what God has in store for us. Without His assistance, we remain in darkness, lost and without bearings.

In the Gospel of John we hear Jesus say, “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (12:46). But just before this He says “And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.” In other words, Christ shows us that He is sent by the Father, the source of light, to be the giver of light and to pull creation out of darkness.

May we also receive the true Light and exclaim “it is good for us to be here” (Luke 9:33).



Μ'αυτή τη μεγαλειώδη φράση, αρχίζει το εξαποστειλάριο της Γιορτής της Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου, και διακηρύττει το μέγεθος του γεγονότος της κοιμήσεως της Παναγίας – Μητέρας του Κυρίου μας.

Την απευθύνει η Ίδια η Θεομήτωρ προς τους **«αυτόπτας του Λόγου και υπηρέτας»**. Δηλαδή αυτούς που Τον είδαν, Τον έζησαν για τρία χρόνια και τώρα υπάκουοι στο πρόσταγμά Του, ήσαν διασκορπισμένοι σ'όλο το κόσμο υπηρετώντας το Ευαγγέλιο Του.

Αυτούς λοιπόν που μαθήτευσαν κοντά Του και τώρα ως Απόστολοι οργώνουν όλη την οικουμένη, και μαθητεύουν τα έθνη, τους προσκαλεί η Πανάμωμος Μητέρα του Θεού να συναθροισθούν **«ενθάδε, Γεθσημανή τω χωρίω»**.

Εδώ θα 'ρθείτε, στη Γεθσημανή. Αλήθεια πόσα φοβερά και θαυμάσια δεν έλαβαν χώρα στη Γεθσημανή; Ακόμη και σήμερα, τα αιωνόβια δένδρα των ελαιών μαρτυρούν τα ιστορούμενα και προκαλούν ρίγη συγκινήσεως στους επισκέπτες των Αγίων Τόπων. Εδώ η αγωνία του Κυρίου μας προ του Πάθους Του, ο ιδρώτας Του που έμοιαζε με θρόμβους αίματος. Η τελευταία προσευχή στον Πατέρα Του. Τελικά η προδοσία και η σύλληψή Του.

Σ'αυτό «το χωρίον», τον τόπο, τον γεμάτο από οδύνη και μυστήριο, η Παναγία θέλει τους Αποστόλους να μαζευτούν και να κηδεύσουν το σώμα της.

Η υμνολογία της ημέρας βασισμένη σε πρωτοχριστιανική παράδοση, μας πληροφορεί πως οι Θεοφόροι Απόστολοι από τα διάφορα μέρη της γης, άρχισαν να καταφθάνουν στα Ιεροσόλυμα **«αιρόμενοι υπό νεφών»** (δηλ. πάνω σε σύννεφα).

Ενώ γίνεται λόγος και για τη συμμετοχή τόσο του Κυρίου και Υιού της, όσο και των αγγέλων στη Κοίμηση της **«αι δε υπέρτατοι των ουρανών δυνάμεις συν τω οικίω δεσπότη παραγενόμεναι...»** (Δοξ. Του Εσπερινού).

Όλα τα δρώμενα γύρω από την Κοίμηση της Θεοτόκου, όντως θαυμάσια και πρωτόγνωρα. Εν τούτοις τα λόγια απλά, απέρριπτα χωρίς περιστροφές.

Όπως η κάθε μάννα στο νεκροκράβατό της απευθύνει τις τελευταίες επιθυμίες της, το ίδιο και η Πανάμωμος Μητήρ του Λυτρωτή. Εσείς οι Απόστολοι του Υιού και Θεού μου **«κηδεύσατέ μου το σώμα»** και προς τον Κύριο και Θεό που όμως αυτή Τον γέννησε ως άνθρωπο, απευθύνεται σαν κάθε μάννα προς το γιό της **«και συ υιέ και Θεέ μου παράλαβε μου το πνεύμα»**. Η φράση αυτή κρύβει την ιδιαίτερα συγκινητική και τρυφερή σχέση της Παναγίας Μητρός με τον Υιόν και Θεό της.

Η Εκκλησία μας λέγει ότι ο Χριστός κυοφορούμενος πήρε από την Παναγία Μητέρα Του, **«σάρκα εμπυχωμένην ψυχή λογική τε και νοερά»**. Δηλ. ο Κύριος προσέλαβε την ανθρώπινη φύση μαζί με όλες

τις ψυχικές και σωματικές ενέργειες. Η μητρότητα δεν εξαντλείται στη φυσική γέννηση. Έχει και τη πνευματική της όψη, γιατί μια μητέρα δεν δανείζει στο παιδί της μόνο

το σώμα αλλά οικοδομεί ολόκληρη τη ψυχοσωματική του ύπαρξη.

Η Παναγία ταύτισε τη ζωή της με την άκτιστη ζωή του Θεού Δημιουργού. Γι'αυτό η θέση της ψυχής και του σώματός της είναι απ' αυτόν τον κόσμο θεωμένη και αναστημένη. Με την **«Αθάνατον Κοίμησιν»** πραγματοποιήθηκε η έσχατη και ύψιστη δόξα της Θεομήτορος πριν από το τέλος του κόσμου. Γι'αυτό και οι πρεσβείες της είναι υπεράνω πάντων των Αγίων.

Κάθε Δεκαπενταύγουστο, μαζευόμαστε οι Ορθόδοξοι απ' όλα τα πέρατα της γης και στο λειτουργικό χρόνο της Εκκλησίας μας ξαναζούμε την Κοίμησή της.

Τα χείλια μας είναι αδύναμα να την υμνήσουν πρεπόντως. Όμως αφού σιωπηλά της υποσχεθούμε να μιμηθούμε έστω και στο ελάχιστο κάποιες αρετές της – σεμνότητα, ταπείνωση, αγνότητα, υπακοή, κλπ – ας την παρακαλέσουμε να μεσιτέψει για μας και τον κόσμο μας. Για την δύσκολη, υλόφρονη και απνευμάτιστη εποχή μας. Για την μάστιγα της πανδημίας. Για μετάνοια και επιστροφή στο δρόμο του Θεού. Τότε θα νιώσουμε και άγια παιδιά της μεγάλης Μητέρας μας.



Current



Issues

Divine Providence and Human Anxiety

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus proposes that the life of the faithful should depend entirely on the Providence of God. This concept appears to be in direct contrast with the contemporary way of materially focused life. Whereas all those who want to follow Him should live a life exclusively dedicated to God, and not care about money and wealth (mammon).

This clear-cut attitude of Jesus appears to imply that the Christian life and the pursuit of wealth, even if created by dedicated and honest work, are incompatible. Jesus could not have meant these words in this way, having regard to His love and compassion for mankind. However, these ideas are not meant for the Apostles or monastics alone, but it is an invitation to all those who wish to be called disciples of Christ.

Here, the topic is the cultivation of a true relationship of man with God through true and sincere almsgiving (6:1), prayer (6:5), forgiveness (6:14), and fasting (6:16).

Jesus does not ask us to trust the true God in contrast to some false deity, but in contrast to material wealth. In the Gospel we read “You cannot serve God and mammon” (6:24). Mammon which is the most powerful of all idols. Wealth and plutocracy were, are, and will be, the permanent ruler of the world, the constant antichrist.

Where wealth is not gratefully acknowledged as being bestowed by God’s providence and is not deployed for godly purposes, but rather is attained as a product of greed and desire, that wealth produces injustice, feeds crime, corrupts souls and bodies.

To become His disciples, Jesus warns us to weigh our needs carefully and make our choices accordingly.

The problem for us is to establish a true relationship with God, since the central problem is not whether one can acquire material wealth or not, but the excessive anxiety and agony it produces in those who live away from God Himself. That is why Jesus concludes His advice: ‘do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things’ (6:31-32).

Matthew Chapter 6 contains a declaration of Jesus that everything depends on the manner we judge things of the world. “If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole

body will be full of darkness.” (6:22-23). Jesus warns us to avoid this blindness of the mind caused by avarice and greed at all costs, as it makes one unable to distinguish between the true and the faulty.

It is not possible for people to be attached to wealth whilst remaining attached to God. The power of wealth will eventually deprive them of all forms of spiritual life. For this reason we hear the Apostle Paul saying: “put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

When thinking about worldly matters, we would do well to ask: “Can one be an idolater and a disciple of Jesus at the same time?”



Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

From the Saints of our Church

**Ο Άγιος Μύρων, Επίσκοπος Κρήτης
(Η μνήμη του τιμάται στις 8 Αυγούστου)**

**Our Holy Father Myronas, Bishop of Crete
(Commemorated 8 August)**

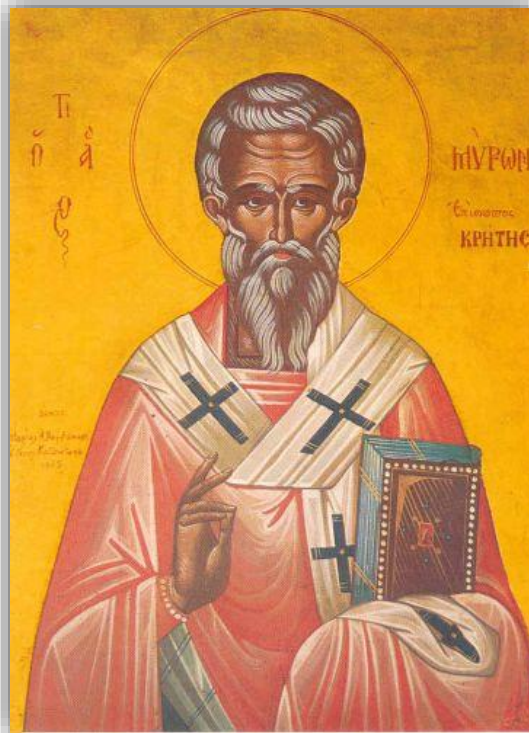
Το 250 μ.Χ., μέσα στη βρωμιά και το σκοτάδι της ειδωλολατρίας, εμφανίστηκε ένα γλυκό άρωμα στο νησί της Κρήτης. Ήταν ο Άγιος Μύρων, που γεννήθηκε σε μια αγροτική οικογένεια στο χωριό Ράφκος (κοντά στην Κνωσό). Οι γονείς του ήταν ευσεβείς και έμαθε από νεαρή ηλικία να έχει πίστη στον Θεό. Ο Άγιος Μύρων διακρίθηκε για φιλανθρωπία και συμπόνια και έλεγε ότι όπου υπήρχε φτώχεια, η απληστία υπήρχε προηγουμένως εκεί.

In 250 AD, amidst the stench and darkness of idolatry, a sweet smelling aroma emerged on the island of Crete. It was St Myronas, who was born into an agricultural family in the village of Rafkos (near Knossos). His parents were devout and he learnt from a young age to have faith in God. St Myronas distinguished himself in charity and compassion and he used to say that wherever there are poor, greed had previously been there.

Παντρεύτηκε νωρίς και καλλιέργησε τόσο τη γη, όσο και όλες τις αρετές. Κάθε χρόνο ξεχωρίζει μέρος του σιταριού του για τους φτωχούς, και κάθε χρόνο με τη χάρη του Θεού η απόδοσή του θα αυξανόταν με το ποσό που έδωσε. Μια φορά, όταν οι κλέφτες έσπασαν στο αλώνι του, σήκωσαν τους σάκους από σιτάρι, ένας κλέφτης στον ώμο του άλλου. Ο άγιος παρατήρησε ότι δεν υπήρχε κανένας να βοηθήσει τον τελευταίο κλέφτη να φορτώσει το σιτάρι στον ώμο του, οπότε σήκωσε και το έβαλε στον ώμο του κλέφτη.

He married early and cultivated both the land and all the virtues. Every year he set apart some of his grain for the poor, and every year by the grace of God his yield would increase by the amount he gave. On one occasion thieves burst in upon his threshing floor and stole the sacks of grain, one thief lifting a sack onto the shoulder of another. The saint noticed that there was no one to help the last thief load a sack, so he assisted by lifting and placing it on the thief's shoulder. Freely he received, and freely he gave.

Καθώς ο άγιος έκανε πολλά θαύματα, οι ντόπιοι ζήτησαν να προσχωρήσει ο Άγιος Μύρων στην ιεροσύνη. Αφού η σύζυγός του πέθανε πρόωρα, δέχτηκε και παραδόθηκε σε ασκητική ζωή προσευχής, μελέτη των γραφών και φιλανθρωπία.



As the saint performed many wonders the locals requested that St Myronas join the priesthood. After his wife prematurely died, he accepted and gave himself to an ascetic life of prayer, the study of the scriptures, and charity.

Όταν οι διωγμοί εναντίον του Χριστιανισμού τελικά τελείωσαν, άρχισε να κηρύττει ανοιχτά με λόγια και έργα. Όταν πέθανε ο Επίσκοπος Κρήτης, όλοι οι άνθρωποι στράφηκαν σε αυτόν, και παρόλο που ήταν ήδη 70 ετών και επιθυμούσε να συνεχίσει μια ήσυχη ασκητική ζωή, έβαλε τις ανάγκες της Εκκλησίας πριν από τις δικές του. Αποδέχθηκε το αξίωμα του Επισκόπου της Γόρτυνας, και η θαυμάσια εργασία του έφερε πολλούς στην πίστη και έστειλε εκπροσώπους στην 1η Οικουμενική Σύνοδο.

When the persecutions against Christianity eventually ended, he started preaching openly teaching by word and deed. When the Bishop of Crete died, all the people turned to him, and although he was already 70 years old and wishing to continue a quiet ascetic life, he put the needs of the Church before his own. He accepted the office of Bishop of Gortyn, shining forth as a wonder worker bringing many to the faith. He also supported the First Ecumenical Council by sending representatives to attend on his behalf.

Τελικά αποσύρθηκε σε μια σπηλιά για μοναξιά και συνέχισε να υπηρετεί σε μια μικρή εκκλησία κοντά. Εκοιμήθη ειρηνικά σε ηλικία εκατό ετών στις 8 Αυγούστου 350 μ.Χ. Θάφτηκε κάτω από την εκκλησία όπου υπηρέτησε, η οποία σήμερα είναι μια από τις παλαιότερες εκκλησίες σε όλη την Ελλάδα.

He eventually retired to a cave for solitude and continued to serve in a small church nearby, sleeping peacefully at the age of one hundred on August 8, 350 AD. He was buried under the church where he served, which today is one of the longest serving churches in all of Greece.

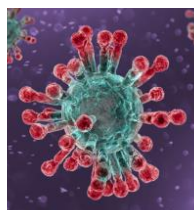
Κάποιος μπορεί ακόμα να μυρίσει το γλυκό άρωμα του μύρου και να δει τη βρύση των θαυμάτων που συνεχίζεται μέχρι σήμερα στο χωριό, που τώρα φέρει το όνομά του, «Άγιος Μύρωνας».

One can still smell the sweet aroma of myrrh and witness the fountain of miracles which continue to this day in the village which now honourably bears his name, "Agios Myronas".

Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

How has COVID-19 created opportunities for spiritual growth?



Almost every person who has taken the time to reflect on COVID-19 notices that these are unique times. For the first time, many of us have been required to socially distance, or wear face masks.

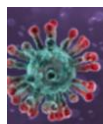
But diseases and pandemics have been a part of human life since the beginning. Our opportunity lies in how we deal with them and how we use these unique times for our benefit.

Let's start with the simple things. We were asked to keep away from each other to limit the risk of infection. Social places closed down, schools were barely operational, workers and students were working from home. At first it was frustrating, but then we realised this could be a great blessing!

Why? Our lives had become so frantic. There was no time for anything and yet we were expected to do everything. Suddenly, COVID-19 forced us to stop. We stayed home. We sat. We listened. We communicated with each other. Perhaps we thought about God. Maybe we reached out to Him.

Do you see how we have been given a chance to stop and appreciate creation, our families, reading, praying, cooking something nice? Suddenly life is pleasant. We can breathe again.

COVID-19 has brought with it something more challenging: not being allowed to go to Church. Again, this is not the first time in history. Churches were closed in the wartime and during plagues. Worshipping together is a beautiful bonding part of our faith and life. Receiving



Holy Communion is our spiritual medicine. Missing out on these things should hurt a little. But hopefully we have used this time as an opportunity to pray together at home and to do extra worship in our room. Hopefully missing out on common worship has helped us realise that we have taken it for granted. Just like when we return to food after fasting and the humble egg tastes so good, so too when we return to the church we appreciate what we missed.



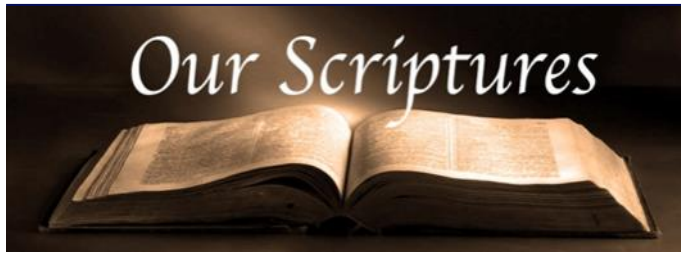
Finally, for some people COVID-19 has meant sickness and suffering. Even here there is a great opportunity to benefit our soul. At the point of sickness, our body is weak, but our soul can be enriched. Many sick people use the wonderful opportunity of illness to turn to God with even more fervour. They lie in bed, reflect on their spiritual weaknesses, and make promises to God. They feel sorry for their sins. They re-evaluate their priorities in life and figure out what really matters. Hopefully, when their health returns, they will not forget how deeply spiritual they were in their time of need. Hopefully they will keep their promises to God. Hopefully they will return to the Lord

and thank him for all that they have that is good.

As a large family on this little planet, we have the duty, the honour and the pleasure of helping each other in times of need. COVID-19 has given us so many opportunities to help each other, and that makes us feel great because it brings our souls closer to God. Why do our souls feel great when we help each other? Because that is what He would do.

† Fr N. S.





The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:23-35)

This parable where the servant whose debt is forgiven by his master, but does not himself forgive the debt owed to himself, emphasises the centrality of forgiveness in a Christian's life. What is the debt owed by the servant to the king? Jesus gives the answer with



the greatest commandment "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37). The debt is the inequality of love between God and man. Simply put, He loves us much more than we love Him. Our passions and weaknesses prevent us loving God as we should.

Once again God shows the enormity of His love and compassion when He forgives the servant's debt completely. St John Chrysostom remarks "What power prayer has! This debtor ... only asked his Lord, then he succeeded in inclining him to mercy. Let us not weaken in our prayers."

The servant "went out" from his state of humility and repentance, forgetting about God and the great miracle of forgiveness he had just experienced. He finds one of his fellow servants who owed him a trivial amount. The fellow servant begs him, using the identical words the first servant had used with the king. However, the response was very different. Instead of compassion, harshness. Instead of forgiveness, exacting judgement. Instead of love, cold heartedness. We want to be forgiven, yet find it hard to forgive others. The prerequisites of forgiveness are avoidance of anger, of judging others and holding grudges. Forgiveness is a mindset, a continuous way of life.

Finally, the king says "Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" (verse 33). This is the heart of the kingdom of God. If we ask for mercy, He gives us much more than we ask for. Many times, ungrateful as we are, we don't appreciate or remember this mystery of forgiveness. God wants us to treat other people the same way that He treats us. Then, we enter into the deep meaning of the Lord's Prayer "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (Matt 6:12).



From the Holy Fathers...

St John of Damascus on the Dormition

This great Saint of our Church gave three homilies on the Dormition, which are believed to have been given at the all-night vigils held at the Church of the 'Theotokos' tomb in Gethsemane (pictured outside and inside).



The first homily delves into the life of Panagia and her role in the Incarnation. After going through her connection to the Old Testament and her life, it ends on a description of her tomb as a place of life and healing.



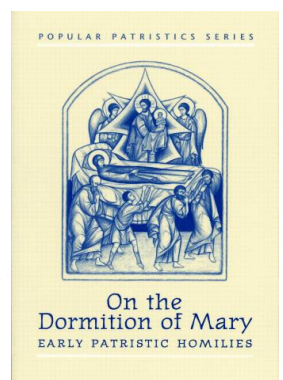
The second homily is the longest. It covers in greater detail the death, funeral and glorious assumption of the Theotokos. A key focus here is on the tomb being unable to contain the birth-giver of the Source of Life.

The third homily focuses more heavily on the importance for all of humanity of the Theotokos being the first human to rise from her tomb to share in the eternal life of her Son.

What comes through more than anything else in these homilies is the great love of St John for the Theotokos. We can see this through the many titles he gives her, such as "lady" and "queen", as well as when he asks, "But what is sweeter than the Mother of my God? She has captivated my mind; she has kidnapped my tongue!"

It is for this reason that St John begs his listeners to flee from sin by describing the revulsion the Theotokos has for evil and the great love she has for virtue. The way for us to "make our own remembrance of her into a rich monument," is to adopt purity as a way of life in the same way that she did.

These homilies and many others can be found in *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* published in the Popular Patristics Series by St Vladimir's Seminary Press.





The Holy Icon of the Dormition

“From the moment Christ is born of a Mother who can be depicted, He naturally has an image which corresponds to that of His Mother. If He could not be represented by art, this would mean that He was not born of a Mother who can be depicted, but was born only of the Father and that He was not Incarnate. But this contradicts the whole divine economy of our salvation.”

These inspired words of St Theodore the Studite help us in two ways. Firstly, they emphasise the importance of the Theotokos in God’s plan for our salvation. Secondly, they uphold the importance of icons in our Church.

The Dormition is the final major feast in the liturgical cycle of the Church. Beginning with the birth of the Theotokos at the start of the church calendar, we end the year with the falling asleep of the Theotokos and the ascension of her body and soul to heaven.

As we look upon the icon of the feast, the events of the ‘whole divine economy of our salvation’ that we celebrate throughout the past year are in our minds.

The Theotokos lies on her deathbed with her head slightly raised. Apostles Peter and Paul are at the head and base of the bier. The other disciples, bishops, and women surround the Theotokos. This image of mourners gathered around the body of a loved one is something that all people from every age experience and understand.

All who are present fix their eyes sorrowfully and reverently on the Mother of God, directing our eyes also to her. Jesus Christ is framed by a colourless double mandorla (an almond-shaped halo). The

outer mandorla is filled with the angels who were also present at the dormition.

Our attention is drawn from the body of the Theotokos to her soul cradled by Christ, who is clothed in golden robes at the centre of the icon. This image is a beautiful reversal of the typical depiction of the Theotokos holding the Christ-child.



Instead of Panagia ‘Hodegetria’ showing us Christ as “the way”, our Lord is reminding us of the fulfillment of the way, “I expect the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come” (Nicene Creed).

The Mother of God ascended to heaven, both in soul and in body three days later. Through her deification the Theotokos brings us much hope, encouragement and

awe at the mystery of God’s plan for us.

This icon depicting the Dormition is a 14th Century mosaic from the Chora monastery in Constantinople. It decorates the western wall of the nave of Chora, above the door through which the faithful exit following the divine services.

Having foretasted heaven on earth through the Divine Liturgy, the faithful pass under this icon which proclaims life beyond the grave, eternal joy, and God’s love for His children.

14 ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ Η ΕΟΡΤΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΓΚΟΣΜΙΑΣ ΥΨΩΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ

Ο Σταυρός του Κυρίου μας είναι το «Καύχημα» και η «Δόξα της Ορθοδοξίας».

Χρονολογικά προτυπώνεται στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη.

Ο Πατριάρχης Ιακώβ ευλογεί τα εγγόνια του Εφραίμ και Μανασσή Σταυροειδώς.

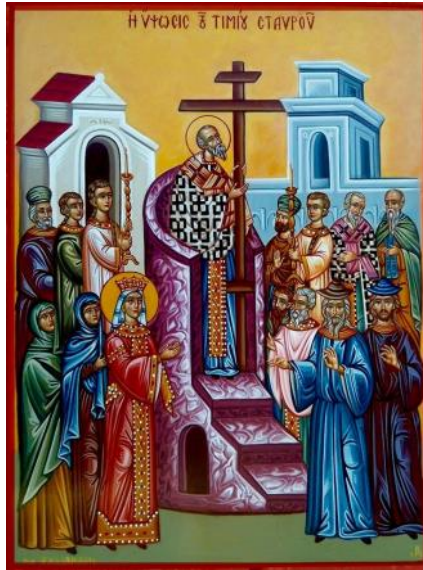
Ο Μωσής νικά τους Αμαληκίτες προσευχόμενος με χέρια απλωμένα σε σχήμα Σταυρού.

«Και καθώς Μωσής ύψωσε τον όφιν εν τη ερήμω, ούτως υψωθήναι δει τον υιόν του ανθρώπου, ίνα πας ο πιστεύων εις αυτόν μη απόλλυται, αλλ έχη ζωήν αιώνιον». (Ιω. 3,14-15).

Ο Κυριος επικυρώνει την Σωτηρία μας. Όμως στο «Ός ου λαμβάνει τον Σταυρόν αυτού και ακολουθεί όπισω μου, ουκ έστι Μου άξιος». Ο Κύριος προειδοποιεί, ζητάει Ομολογία Πίστεως. (Ματθ. 1,38).

«ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ» τον διαβεβαιώνει και διατάζει το σημείο αυτό να γίνει το Σύμβολο του Στρατού του.

Το 326 η Αγία Ελένη επισκέπτεται τους Αγίους Τόπους. Στον Γολγοθά βρίσκει τρεις Σταυρούς. Βεβαιώνεται όταν ανασταίνεται μια νεκρή γυναίκα με το άγγιγμα του Τρίτου Σταυρού!



Χτίζει λαμπρότατο Ναό της Αναστάσεως. Ο αρχιεπίσκοπο Μακάριος ύψωσε τον Τίμιο Σταυρό στον Γολγοθά στις 14 Σεπτεμβρίου 335.

Το 613 οι Πέρσες κυριέψαν την Παλαιστίνη και πήραν τον Τίμιο Σταυρό. Λόγω των θαυμάτων οι Πέρσες τον θεώρησαν «μαγικό»!

Της 14 Σεπτεμβρίου 626, ο Αυτοκράτορας Ηράκλειος νικά τους Πέρσες και παραλαμβάνει με ευλάβεια τον Τίμιο Σταυρό. Στην Ιερουσαλήμ ο Πατριάρχης Ζαχαρίας τον ύψωσε εκ νέου στον Ναό της



Καταμαρτυρείται η κεντρική θέση του Τιμίου Σταυρού στις Επιστολές του Αποστόλου Παύλου. Στις κατακόμβες χαραγμένοι Σταυροί εμπύχωναν τους Μάρτυρες.

Την 28η Οκτωβρίου 312 ο Μέγας Κωνσταντίνος νικά τον στρατό του Μαξεντίου όταν ΟΡΑΜΑ στον ουρανό του Σταυρού και το

Αναστάσεως.

Ο Σταυρός που ανήκει σε όλη την χριστιανοσύνη τεμαχίστηκε και διανεμήθηκε σε όλες τις εκκλησίες έκτοτε. Η κεντρική θέση του Σταυρού στην λατρεία μας είναι διάχυτη και αποτελεί «Το Σύμβολο της Οικουμένης» γιατί αγιάζει όλες τις Λατρευτικές μας Τελετουργίες. Η Θεία Χάρις του Σταυρού μας ευλογεί και μας χαριτώνει σε όλες τις πτυχές της ζωής μας.

Αυτόν λοιπόν τον Τίμιον Σταυρό του Κυρίου μας υψώνουμε μπροστά μας και το «εν τούτω νικά» είθε να γίνει τρόπος ζωής για όλους μας.



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From The Old Testament



Ezekiel's Vision

The Prophet Ezekiel ministered to Israel in the 6th century BC. He was a contemporary of the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah.

The Book of Ezekiel records several visions he saw from God. Visions are difficult to understand and interpret as they involve an attempt to describe – with human language – things that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard” (1 Corinthians 2:9). One such vision was Ezekiel’s vision of God and the four creatures in Chapter 1.

Ezekiel describes seeing “four living creatures”, each with four faces and four wings (v5 and 6). We later learn that these creatures are Cherubim – the angels that guard the throne of God and unceasingly cry out “Holy, holy, holy” to God. The four faces were of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (v10). We might think that this is a strange scene. However, in the Revelation, St John also describes seeing four living creatures with a similar appearance (Revelation 4:6-8).



The Church Fathers see these creatures as representing the Four Evangelists. They also show the characteristics of Christ Himself which we are called to emulate, being the human reason He had, the sacrifice He made like an ox, the lion-like bravery He had and the contemplation of higher things we achieve through Him, symbolised by the eagle.

Ezekiel then sees “one wheel on the earth next to each living creature,” designed in a way that there was a “wheel within a wheel” (v14 and 15). Those wheels went wherever the living creatures went (v20). St Gregory the Dialogist sees the wheels as illustrating that the “New Testament lay hidden by allegory in ... the Old Testament,” which is carried by the Evangelists and helps us to understand God.

Finally, Ezekiel sees a man surrounded with brightness “like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day” (v27). This represents the glory of the New Covenant brought by Jesus’ Incarnation – where before there was darkness, now there is brightness and glory.



St Kallinikos of Edessa

St Kallinikos of Edessa is a very recent Saint of our Church who was canonised on 23 June 2020.

He was born in the village of Sitaralona, Agrinio in 1919 and was named Dimitrios Poulos.

After graduating from high school, he entered the Theological School of the University of Athens where he excelled. In 1946, aged 27, he enlisted in the Special Forces of the Greek Army and served with distinction. Returning to the Holy Diocese of Aetolia, he again assumed the duties of Secretary and a layman preacher.

He was tonsured as a monk in November 1957 at the Holy Monastery of the Entrance of the Theotokos in Myrtia and was elected Metropolitan of Edessa and Pella in June 1967.

He worked enthusiastically and tirelessly to properly prepare the clergy under his care. He established a boarding school for young students and a nursing home for the elderly. He also promoted monasticism in his diocese and reconstituted the first monastery, in honour of the Archangel Michael.

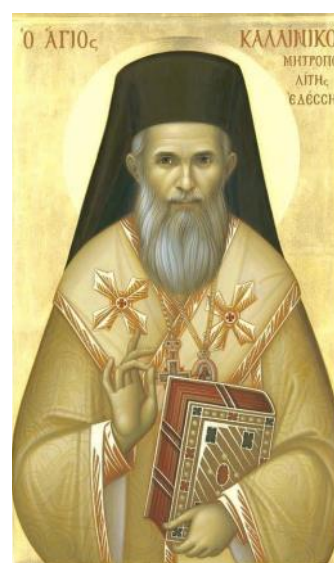
Despite his virtuous life and integrity, he was subjected to unjust and defamatory attacks. Even through these trials, he displayed his saintly virtues by treating his attackers with meekness and love. He reposed on 8 August 1984 after a seven-month illness.

St Kallinikos was a humble person characterised by almsgiving and prayer. As an ascetic bishop, he was full of missionary and self-sacrificing zeal. His speech was deeply theological and spiritually moving.

He was buried in the Edessa Public Cemetery at his own request, because he wanted to be close to the people he served and loved.

The expulsion of demons through his prayer and his miraculous interventions on the sick after his death testifies to his glorification by God.

The celebration of his canonisation took place in Edessa on his feast day, 8 August 2020. May St Kallinikos intercede to God for us.





What we Hear in Church



Ἄξιόν ἐστιν/Axion Estin

«Ἄξιόν ἐστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς μακαρίζειν σε τὴν Θεοτόκον, τὴν ἀειμακάριστον καὶ παναμώμητον καὶ μητέρα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν. Τὴν τιμιωτέραν τῶν Χερουβειμ καὶ ἔνδοξοτέραν ἀσυγκρίτως τῶν Σεραφείμ, τὴν ἀδιαφθόρως Θεὸν Λόγον τεκοῦσαν, τὴν ὄντως Θεοτόκον, σὲ μεγαλύνομεν.»

“Truly it is right to call you blessed, Theotokos, ever blessed and all-pure and the Mother of our God. More honourable than the Cherubim, incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, who undefiled gave birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify you .”

This hymn is one of the most well-known chants in honour of the Theotokos.

The second part of the hymn – beginning with “More honourable than...” – was composed by St Kosmas in the 8th century. Tradition tells us that St Kosmas felt the need to compose this hymn as a comfort for the Theotokos who



suffered pain and agony on seeing Her Son on the Cross.

Upon composing this hymn, St Kosmas was visited by the Theotokos Herself, who proceeded to thank him, saying that she found comfort in this hymn and that she is present wherever it is chanted, blessing in return those who bless her in chanting it.

The first part was added much later as a result of a great miracle. A monk of Mount Athos called Father Gabriel was performing an all-night Vigil service. During the service, an unknown monk knocked at his cell and asked to participate in the service with him. As Father Gabriel was about to chant the hymn “More honourable than the Cherubim...”, the unknown monk suddenly broke out into the chant, “Truly it is right to call you blessed...”

Father Gabriel was amazed as he had never heard this hymn before. At the end of the service, he asked the unknown monk to write out the hymn, however there was no ink or paper. The monk then inscribed the hymn onto a piece of wood with his finger and vanished. Tradition says the unknown monk was the Archangel Gabriel, who revealed the hymn to humanity to show us the truly right way to praise and magnify the Bearer of God.

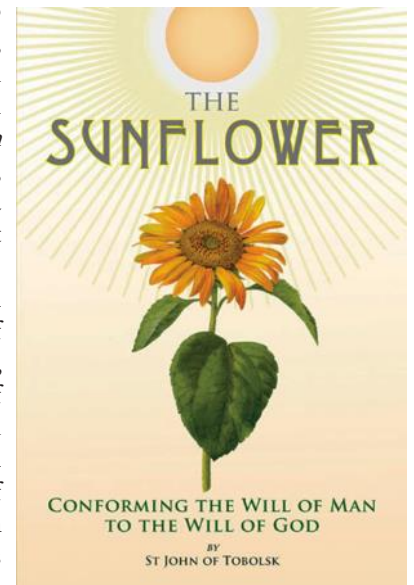


The Sunflower by St John of Tobolsk

The beginning of all wisdom, given to us by the most exalted Divine Wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ, is our faithful fashioning of ourselves - in all actions and words - to the will of God. So begins *The Sunflower*, a guide on how to turn the human will towards God.

It starts by focusing on understanding what the will of God is, including why God allows evil, and how the human will can conform to the will of God. It turns to the benefit for humanity of conforming to God’s will and how to remove any obstacles to fashioning the human will to that of God. It then concludes with an examination of how the human will can learn to act in conformity with the divine will.

The Sunflower has a very different origin to most Orthodox books, as it is derived from the seventeenth century *Heliotropium* (Latin for sunflower), which was written by a Roman Catholic Jesuit named Jeremias Drexelius. St John (Maximovitch) of Tobolsk (1651-1715), Archbishop of Chernigov and ancestor of St John Maximovitch of Shanghai and San Francisco, read this book and decided to make it Orthodox in



the same way St Nicodemus the Hagiorite and St Theophan the Recluse did for *Unseen Warfare*. The result is a deeply Orthodox book, quoting heavily from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers.

One striking aspect of the book is how comprehensively it delves into the finer aspects of both the human and divine wills, answering many of the questions that we might have about divine providence such as how to determine God’s will in all events or actions, and what signs indicate that our will agrees with God’s will. This is a valuable resource that one can turn to when times are easy or tough.

Despite the depth of the messages being conveyed *The Sunflower* is well written, easy to read and to comprehend.



The following is an introduction to a multi-edition series which will focus on our Creed.

The Creed is one of the most ancient prayers of the Orthodox Church. The word creed comes from the Latin credo which means “I believe.” The early Christians realised the need for a public, authoritative interpretation of the Bible that remained faithful to what Christ taught and what the Apostles intended.

It was needed to instruct new converts, nurture the believers and protect the church against false teachings.

It was composed, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by the Fathers of the First and Second Ecumenical Councils, at a time when various heretical doctrines attempted to overthrow the true faith in the Trinity.

The main reason for the convening of the First Ecumenical Council (Nicea 325 AD), under the auspices of Emperor Constantine the Great and with 318 Bishops in attendance, was the appearance and growing strength of the false teaching of the Alexandrian priest, Arius. It potentially could have split the Byzantine empire. The basic theory of his false teaching was that the Son of God was created, that His existence had a beginning, and that He was inferior to the Father.

The Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople 381AD) condemned the false teaching of the Pneumatomachi (Adversaries of the Spirit), whose chief representative was Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople. The Pneumatomachi called the Holy Spirit the servant and fulfiller of God’s wishes and they did not recognize Him as a Hypostasis (Person) of the Holy Trinity.

“The doctrinal definitions of an Ecumenical Council are infallible. Thus in the eyes of the Orthodox Church, the statements of faith put out by the seven councils possess, along with the Bible, an abiding and irrevocable authority.”

The Orthodox Church (Timothy Ware [p.202])

The Holy Church made a decisive stand to protect the purity of the Christian faith, setting out the basic saving truths of Christian teaching in the Creed, which is supposed to be a constant guide for all Christians in their spiritual life. It was agreed to never change it. It has remained unchanged in our Orthodox Tradition.

It is recited during the Divine Liturgy, in many of the prayer services of the faithful such as the Midnight Office, morning prayers and Compline and is the official confession of faith made by a person or his godparent at his baptism.

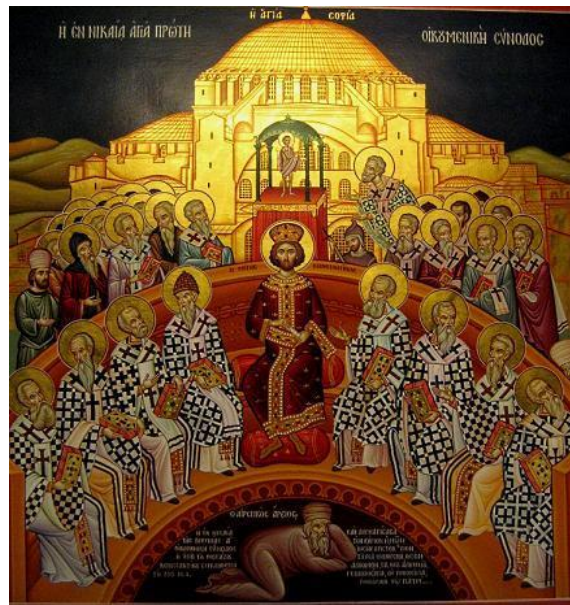
It is a “symbol of faith” stating what we believe as Christians. It covers major themes of scripture including Creation, the Trinity, and Redemption. Each statement has its source from the Bible. We recite it together to show that we are united in heart and mind in our beliefs about God.

The Creed itself is divided into twelve articles, seven of which were formulated at the First Ecumenical Council, the other five at the Second.

The Creed is as follows:

1. I believe in one God, Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father; through whom all things were made.
3. Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became human,
4. and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried,
5. and rose on the third day according to the Scriptures,
6. and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
7. and will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.
8. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, and who spoke through the Prophets.
9. In one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
10. I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
11. I expect the resurrection of the dead,
12. and the life of the age to come. Amen.

In the following issues we will enter a journey in which we will explore each article in more detail.



NEWS and VIEWS

Pandemic continues to disrupt Church Services

Sizeable community transmission of coronavirus COVID-19 has arisen from Victorian quarantine system failures. Melbourne residents have re-entered lockdown. NSW has been impacted by these transmissions, forcing border closures and limiting church attendances to 100 worshippers. Other States and Territories have limited transmissions.

The Greek Orthodox Society's Orthodox Mission Centre has spread its various face to face adult group meetings over several nights. Some Sunday Schools have commenced operating, as have the Omathes and the Byzantine Chanting classes. The radio programmes and Orthodox Journey podcasts have continued, and the bookstore is open.

Hagia Sophia ceases to be a museum



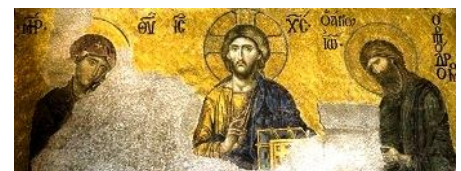
Hagia Sophia (Church of Holy Wisdom) is the third Church built on its site. The first Hagia Sophia church was dedicated on 15 February 360 by Emperor Constantius (337-361). It burned down on 20 June 404 during a riot protesting the exile of Patriarch John Chrysostom by the Empress Eudoxia, wife of the emperor Arcadius (395-408).

The second Hagia Sophia was reconstructed by Theodosius II (408-450), who opened it on 10 October 415. It was so large that it was called the *Megale Ekklesia* (Great Church), a reference that consequently came to be used in Church services. The Theodosian church was destroyed during the devastating Nika Revolt on 15 January 532.

The present structure dates from the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565) who dedicated it to God on 26 December 537, and famously proclaimed: "Solomon, I have outdone thee!" - a reference to Solomon's great temple in Jerusalem. It held 23,000 worshippers, and 525 priests, deacons and chanters served its liturgies. When Prince Vladimir of Kiev's emissaries were looking for the right faith they attended a Divine Liturgy at Hagia Sophia and subsequently declared: "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth."

Following the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, it served as an imperial mosque of the Ottoman Empire. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, it opened as a museum in 1935, and was subsequently added to the UNESCO World Heritage listing in 1985.

On 10 July 2020, the Turkish Council of State revoked its museum status, and Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ordered the reclassification of Hagia Sophia as a mosque. This redesignation has invoked condemnation from the Turkish opposition, UNESCO, the World Council of Churches, the International Association of Byzantine Studies, and many international leaders. Orthodox Churches worldwide conducted dedicated prayers. We trust that the Lord will in His time restore the Church of Holy Wisdom as a rightful Orthodox place of worship to Him.



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