

# The healing power of Forgiveness

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«ΑΥΧΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ» ΨΑΛΜ 118, 105

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A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL





και ικεσίες προς τον αμαρτωλό να εισέλθει στα βάθη της ψυχής του να κινήσει τις ευαίσθητες χορδές της καρδιάς του, να φωτίσει τη σκέψη του και να κινήσει τη θέληση του ανθρώπου. Να τον φέρει στη μετάνοια, στην αληθινή θεογνωσία, και στην επιστροφή στο Θεό. Μας θυμίζει τη μέλλουσα κρίση αλλά και τη θεία αγαθότητα και το έλεος του Θεού, την αγάπη του, την ευσπλαχνία στους αμαρτωλούς πού είναι πέλαγος και ωκεανός που δεν μετριέται και να βοηθήσει τον αμαρτωλό να επιστρέψει με τη μετάνοια κοντά στο Θεό. Μας θυμίζει πώς ο διάβολος, μας πολεμά, πώς μας εμποδίζει από όλα τα καλά έργα, ότι πρέπει να παλεύουμε εναντίον των παθών και τον αδυναμιών μας.

ραθυμίας και της αμέλειας που οδηγούν στον αιώνιο θάνατο, όπως: «Πλησιάζει ψυχή μου το τέλος, πλησιάζει και εσύ δεν φροντίζεις ούτε ετοιμάζεσαι. Ο καιρός είναι σύντομος, σήκω λοιπόν γιατί πολύ κοντά στην πόρτα βρίσκεται ο Κριτής. Σαν όνειρο σαν λουλούδι του αγρού ο χρόνος της ζωής σου τρέχει γιατί λοιπόν εσύ αγχώνεσαι για τα μάτια;»

Συγκινητικότατο είναι το κοντάκι του Μεγάλου Κανόνα. Ομιλεί ο αμαρτωλός στην ίδια του την ψυχή: «Ψυχή μου, ψυχή μου σήκω πάνω τι κοιμάσαι; Το τέλος πλησιάζει και εσύ πρόκειται να περάσεις μεγάλες δοκιμασίες. Ξύπνα λοιπόν για να σε λυπηθεί ο Χριστός, ο Θεός που είναι πανταχού παρών και τα πάντα πληρών».

Ο Μέγας Κανών είναι ο πιο συγκινητικός ο πιο κατανυκτικός και ο πιο πνευματικός από όλους τους κανόνες της εκκλησίας μας. Σκοπό έχει να μεταρσιώσει τον άνθρωπο και να τον υψώσει στους ουραμούς και να τον ενώσει τελικά με το Θεό. Ακούγοντας τον, οι πιστοί πράγματι φεύγουμε συγκινημένοι, διδαγμένοι και ταπεινωμένοι.

Τέλος άλλα τροπάρια απευθύνονται ειδικά στον Εσταυρωμένο λυτρωτή και Σωτήρα και ζητούν το θείο του έλεος: «Εσύ Χριστέ μου που έκανες τον ληστή πολίτη του παραδείσου, όταν πάνω στο Σταυρό που ήσουν φώναξε το «μνήσθητί μου», κάνε με και εμένα τον ανάξιο, άξιο του παραδείσου αφού μιμηθώ την δική του μετάνοια».

Ενδεικτικά παραθέτουμε μερικούς ύμνους από το μεγάλο κανόνα πού εκθέτουν το αγιογραφικότατο και πνευματικότατο περιεχόμενο του. Τα παραθέτουμε σε ελεύθερη μετάφραση.

Αυτά είναι λίγα από τα πολλά ιερά και κατανυκτικά τροπάρια του μεγάλου κανόνα, που συνέθεσε ο Άγιος Ανδρέας ο Κρήτης και τα γέμισε με θείο πνεύμα και φως, με θεία δύναμη και χάρη ώστε πράγματι να αγγίζουν την καρδιά του αμαρτωλού και να φέρνουν μετάνοια και συντριβή στις καρδιές των χριστιανών.

«Όλος ο βίος μου χάθηκε μέσα στην αμαρτία με ανθρώπους της αμαρτίας. Άραγε θα μπορέσω στα γεράματά μου να μετανοήσω για όσα κακά έκανα; Συ κύριε πού είσαι ο δημιουργός των όλων και ο ιατρός των αρρώστων στο σώμα και στην ψυχή πριν να ρθει το τέλος της ζωής μου και πεθάνω ο αμαρτωλός σώσον με για να μη χαθώ αιωνίως».

Να τον μελετούμε και να τον ακούμε με μεγάλη προσοχή όταν ψάλλεται, με ευλάβεια να παρακολουθούμε τα νοήματα του, ούτως ώστε να λάβουμε πολλή ωφέλεια και οικοδομή με τις ευχές και τις πρεσβείες του Αγίου Ανδρέα.

Μερικά τροπάρια είναι μεγάλος θρήνος και κοπετός εξαιτίας της

## Ο ΜΕΓΑΣ ΚΑΝΩΝ

Ο Μέγας Κανών είναι ένα ποίημα που συνέθεσε ο Άγιος Ανδρέας Αρχιεπίσκοπος Κρήτης. Αποτελείται από 250 περίπου τροπάρια. Το κεντρικό τους μήνυμα είναι η μετάνοια, η κατάνυξη, και ο πνευματικός αγώνας του χριστιανού, που χρειάζεται για να επιστρέψει κοντά στο Θεό.

Τεμάχια του μεγάλου κανόνα ψάλλονται στα μεγάλα Απόδειπνα κατά τη διάρκεια της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής. Όμως όλος μαζί ο κανόνας ψάλλεται στον όρθρο της Πέμπτης (δηλαδή το βράδυ της Τετάρτης), την Πέμπτη εβδομάδα της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής. Για αυτό, αυτή η Πέμπτη ονομάζεται και είναι γνωστή σαν ή «Πέμπτη του Μεγάλου Κανόνος».

Στο Μεγάλο Κανόνα ο Άγιος Ανδρέας προσπαθεί με θερμές παροτρύνσεις και παρακινήσεις

# The fastest way to heal ourselves is to freely forget wrongs that are done to us, and to forgive everyone. There is, after all, no one who lives and does not sin.

Forgiveness and repentance are major themes that arise throughout Great Lent. We often focus on receiving forgiveness from God for our sins, rather than giving forgiveness to others for sins they have committed against us. We go to confession with our list of sins, and just a few days later we are full of bitterness and resentment to those that wrong us. This harms both our relationship with God as well as our relationship with those around us.

If we do not forgive others unconditionally, we fall into the sin of remembrance of wrongs. St John Climacus, in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, devotes an entire chapter to this deadly sin. The great saint says that the remembrance of wrongs "is the consummation of anger, the keeper of sins [and the] estrangement of love." There are many examples where resentment and bitterness have entirely consumed a person: Family members have been estranged over small disputes regarding money; friends have avoided talking for years because of a perceived rudeness or slight; Christians have even left the Church because of something they saw other parishioners doing.

The fastest way to heal ourselves, our relationship with God, and our relationship with those around us is to freely forget wrongs that are done to us, and to forgive everyone in our lives for their mistakes. There is, after all, no one who lives and does not sin. Recognising this, and forgiving others with prayer and humility, will bring great joy, peace, and happiness in our lives.

To receive this healing, however, our forgiveness must have no strings attached. We should avoid expressions like: "I'll forgive, but I won't forget"; "I'll forgive, but it better not happen again"; "I'll forgive, as soon as she says sorry." Not only will such 'forgiveness' not restore our relationship with others, it is also incompatible with the Lord's mercy.

The Lord graciously forgives all our sins each time we repent and confess, regardless of how many times we fall into the same sins. We are commanded, not requested, to do likewise. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray that our sins be forgiven "as we forgive those who sin against us." Similarly, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, the Lord makes clear that if we do not forgive our brethren, we will destroy ourselves. The amount of healing and mercy that we receive is determined by the amount that we forgive others.

St John Climacus concludes by noting that someone who dwells on the wrongs of others, but nevertheless thinks he is repenting, is like a man who thinks he is running whilst he is really asleep. As we enter Great Lent, let us pray that the Lord strengthen us to avoid this sin and grant us the healing power of forgiveness. We will then be able to proceed boldly towards His Glorious Resurrection, chanting the words of the Doxastikon of Easter:

*"Brethren, let us say  
even to those who hate us,  
'Let us forgive everything  
for the Resurrection!'"*

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# CURRENT ISSUES

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## The obstacle which cannot be overcome

The Christian message has always been difficult for those who meet it for the first time, but it is also found difficult by those who know it and are trying to adopt it in their life. The common complaint is that the Holy Bible and the writings of the Holy Fathers are so difficult that the Christian teaching is only for the few.

When one examines the problem deeper one discovers that the Holy Bible is the word of Christ, and therefore it is impossible that it is not absolutely true. As for the writings of the Holy Fathers, they are direct revelations received from Christ Himself and they cannot be changed in any way.

That is why Saint Gregory Palamas was unyielding in his views regarding the

uncreated light of God and His energies. The reason being that he received his knowledge by **Revelation from God**, and he was not in any position to change anything!

The Saints do not change their views, and do not even concede in discussing them, in that Jesus is the basis and foundation of the spiritual life of every Christian: **"For no other foundation can anyone lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11).**

Jesus Christ cannot be overcome by anyone because He is:

1. The Second person of the Holy Trinity. He is not a Prophet, neither a Saint, nor a clever man, who perceived the rhythm and aspirations of our times.
2. God-Man, where Divine and Human natures are united. Every virtue must be based on Christ. Anything apart from Him is not worth talking about.



Saint Gregory Palamas

*“For no other foundation can anyone lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11)”*

For us Christians, Christ is the person who secures our salvation. Every virtue



has to have its basis in Christ. Every virtue which is not based on Christ is of reduced value. Every person with a Christian virtue lives and feels Jesus' commands and has in them the power and energy of Christ. Therefore, the expression of every Christian virtue is in fact Christ Himself.

It is not enough to practice our virtues correctly. The Apostle Paul tells us to build our spiritual foundation with valuable materials: **"Now, if anyone builds on this foundation, with gold, silver, precious stones, hay, wood, straw, each one's work will become clear"** (1 Cor 3:12-13).

Saint Maximus the Confessor says that the valuable materials, being "gold, silver, precious stones" are correct theology, pure life, and divine thoughts. In contrast "hay, wood, and straw" are idolatry and a sinful life.



Saint Maximus the Confessor

The other religions of the world are all man-made. They generally expect their followers to perform various external rituals and acts, which are supposed to help them live well and satisfactorily in this life.

The Orthodox Church does have some such external rituals, but it primarily asks for the **internal change** of the person, according to the teachings of Christ. So Orthodoxy is not a "religion", but it is a godly way of living which takes care to save its followers both in **this life** and in **the life to come!**

In spite of what has been said so far, we Orthodox have managed to increase our religious external celebrations. Sometimes these are impressive and spectacular, and are followed by the people, and as they have a sentimental or social value when the people leave, they feel that they have done what is expected by their Faith!

However, when coming out from the Church on a Sunday it is rare to see people going beyond these and talking with one another about matters spiritual or planning a virtuous act. In fact, people often do not differ much in their interactions from those in wider society!

In this way, the effect of Christianity is not felt, nor is it appreciated by those outside the Faith. **The result is that the greatest power which Christ brought into the World IS NOT utilised. And yet Jesus Christ with His Grace became our Father and Brother and wants us to be joined to Him.**

# St Raphael Bishop of Brooklyn

Saint Raphael was born in Syria in 1860 to Orthodox parents. Due to the fierce persecution of Christians, the family was forced to flee to Beirut. Among those persecuted was their parish priest, Saint Joseph of Damascus, and his companions, who were martyred (10 July).

The Saint received his initial theological education at the Ecumenical Theological School of Halki. In 1885, he was ordained a deacon and completed his studies in 1886. He later studied at the Theological Academy of Kiev, Russia.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Syrian-Arab community in North America was growing and in 1895 he was invited by the Syrian Orthodox Benevolent Society of New York to be the pastor of the Syrian-Arab Orthodox community.

Archimandrite Raphael soon founded a chapel in Manhattan dedicated to Saint Nicholas of Myra. He supervised the development of other immigrant communities - Russians, Slavs and Greeks - traveling widely throughout North America performing the sacraments of the church and establishing parishes.

In 1898, Saint Raphael published his first book, an Arabic translation of the Great Euchologion (liturgical

prayer book). Saint Raphael was made Bishop of Brooklyn in 1904, the first Orthodox Christian bishop consecrated in America.

Saint Raphael was tireless in his ministry. He showed love and compassion for the sick, poor and aged, provided encouragement to the young, and protected widows and orphans. His mission took him across North America, Canada and Mexico, faithfully taking up his cross and followed Him to become "a fisher of men."

Saint Raphael was the epitome of an Orthodox bishop. He dedicated his life to conveying the true faith to his flock and putting it into action, for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

After twenty years of service in North America, Saint Raphael passed away on 27 February 1915 in New York. In 2000, the Glorification of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn occurred, following the Proclamation of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.







# “Why is Jesus called the Son of Man?”

Jesus Christ calls Himself “the Son of Man” to emphasize His human nature. “The Son of Man” is by far the most common name that Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ uses to describe himself. The New Testament records Him using the expression over seventy times. It is the name by which the good news of the saviour and redeemer of humanity is declared.

The expression is seen in the earliest writings of the Old Testament. In the Book of Genesis, God curses the snake which was the cause of the fall of humanity, saying that the seed of the woman will crush its head, a reference to Jesus Christ being born of the Virgin Theotokos.

So from the time of the Book of Genesis humanity waited for the Redeemer, who would be its saviour from the tyranny of devil. David, the King and Prophet, refers to the redeemer as “the Son of Man”, as do the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel. In this way, the name “Son of Man” becomes the characteristic name of the future Saviour and it becomes the name that our Lord Jesus Christ chooses to use to describe Himself.

The other names given to our Lord, being ‘Jesus Christ’, ‘Emmanuel’, ‘son of the Blessed’, and ‘son of David’, amongst many others, do not convey the fuller meaning that “Son of Man” expresses. The name ‘Jesus’ articulates the characteristic of the saviour of mankind. The name ‘Christ’ means Messiah, which points to the prophetic, archpriest and regal offices of the Saviour. The name ‘Son of the Blessed’ points to the divine nature and

‘Son of David’ points to His human nature and lineage. None of these names offer a full and complete meaning of the person of our Lord. Each name expresses and refers to only one of His characteristics. So, our Lord, being both God and Man, chooses “Son of Man” as the most effective expression of His characteristics, His person, His lineage and His mission.

The hymnology of the feast of the Annunciation (25 March) helps us to understand this name as we sing joyfully, “the mystery of the ages is revealed today, and the Son of God becomes the Son of Man” and “Gabriel calls out the good news about this gift.” The

Hymns continue, explaining that, “this is what God desires.” What does God desire? Our salvation, of course!

And He has permitted Himself to become a man to achieve this. He comes as one of us to guide us back to the Kingdom which He prepared for us.

This is how much God loves us. By using this name, Jesus is emphasising that He comes as a man to save mankind.

God becomes man so that man could become the son of God and, by God’s grace, He may become like God. God becomes man to offer man his

salvation, to offer life in Christ, to offer the power of the Holy Spirit in his life, to become a saint before God. The church of Jesus Christ is the body of Christ that redeems the believer and unites him with the Lord.

‘The Son of God’ becomes ‘The Son of Man’ for the salvation of the world.



God becomes man so that man could become the son of God

Q&A WITH THE CLERGY | 7



Christians striving to live in accordance with God's message in today's increasingly hostile society have no better words of encouragement than those that Christ gave:

## “Take courage! I have overcome the world.”

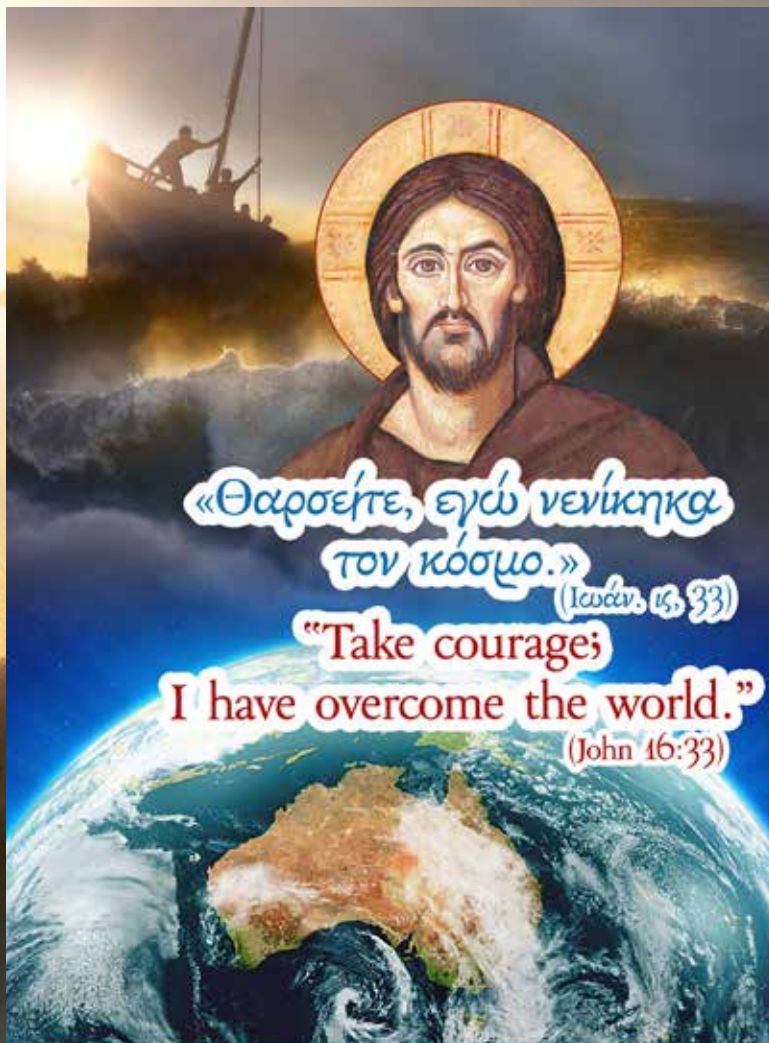
[John 16:33]

At the same time, we are also grounded in the knowledge that it was Christ who overcame the world: not us, not me. I cannot do it with my own power, by intellectualising the problem, nor by my own efforts. There is no human method to overcome the world. Only Christ can conquer it and win it. As Saint Paul tells us, “It is by grace we are saved, not by works, lest any man should boast.”

This, of course, does not negate the worthiness or need for works. The words “Take courage, I have overcome the world!” should reflect the inner disposition of every Christian. We must from the outset be determined to conquer the world's influences through spiritual struggle. We must have the courage to get up and walk away from sin. Christian courage is a call to be active - and the activity required is a constant longing, a searching, a conscious effort to be united with Christ. Only when we take His hand can He lead us courageously through the darkness of this earthly life.

The virtue of courage is expressed in the smallest, most common occurrences of everyday life. In Christ's parable of the talents the man with little lost even the little that he had. He was cast out into darkness because he failed to use his small gift through lack of courage, saying to the Lord, “and I was afraid and hid your talent in the ground.” The master challenged the wicked servant questioning why he didn't at the very least deposit his money with the bankers, so he could earn some interest.

In this parable, the bankers represent other faithful people to whom the man could have turned to, and help him to use his talents wisely. Since help was available to him in the Church, the man has no excuse. The courage to overcome the world is attained when we deeply enter into the life of the Church - Her services, prayers, sacraments, and asceticism.



The life of the Church is the life of Christ. The Church is the only place that remains unenslaved from the worldly spirit. In the Church we have the repository of grace, the very source of higher existence.

Overcoming the world to attain peace, joy, and spiritual stability, is not arrived at when every calamity disappears, nor in the absence of evil, nor death, nor covid for that matter. It is arrived at when in the midst of persecution and suffering, we can maintain the peace and joy of Jesus Christ Who has “overcome the world” of darkness through His saving work.





έλετε να προκόψετε πνευματικά; Βασική προϋπόθεση της πνευματικής προκοπής είναι να ζούμε πνευματικά. Δηλαδή να δίνουμε δικαίωμα στο Θεό πατέρα να επεμβαίνει στη ζωή μας. Θα προκόψουμε πνευματικά όταν έχουμε σχέση με τον Χριστό.

Στο Ευαγγέλιο του Ιωάννη, κεφάλαιο ιστ', στιχ. 33 διαβάζουμε «ταύτα λελάληκα υμίν ίνα εν εμοί ειρήνην έχητε. Εν τω κόσμω θλίψιν έξετε αλλά θαρσείτε, εγώ νενίκηκα τον κόσμον.» Η μετάφραση του κ. Τρεμπέλα έχει ως εξής: Σας είπα αυτά, δια να έχετε ειρήνην δια της κοινωνίας και ενώσεώς σας με εμέ. Εφ' όσον είσθε εν μέσω του κόσμου, θα έχετε θλίψιν. Αλλ' έχετε θάρρος εγώ έχω νικήσει τον κόσμον και με την νίκη μου αυτήν εξασφάλισα και εις σας τον θρίαμβο και την δόξα. Ο Οσιος Θεοφύλακτος μας λέει πως ο Κύριος μιλάει από αγάπη και για να παρηγορήσει τους μαθητές Του. Με την πτώση του Αδάμ όλη η ανθρωπότητα έπεσε. Με την νίκη του Χριστού, του νέου Αδάμ, όλη η ανθρωπότητα νικάει.

Στο χριστιανικό νεανικό περιοδικό Προς την Νίκη περιγράφεται η σκηνή. Οι μαθητές του Κυρίου έχουν σηκωθεί από το Θείο και Μυστικό Δείπνο. Ο Κύριος θέλει να τους προετοιμάσει για τις δυσκολίες που θα συναντήσουν, μετά την θυσία Του, στο αποστολικό τους έργο. Στον κόσμο τούτο, τους λέγει, έχετε ν' αντιμετωπίσετε θλίψεις και πειρασμούς πολλούς και διάφορους. Να μονομαχήσετε με τον αμαρτωλό εαυτό σας. Να παλέψετε με τον εχθρό κάθε ανθρώπου τον διάβολο. Έχετε ν' αντισταθείτε στις απαιτήσεις του κόσμου, που είναι γεμάτος αδικία και μίσος εναντίον σας και εναντίον κάθε καλού. Αλλά θαρσείτε, εγώ νενίκηκα τον κόσμον. Μη φοβάστε. Μη δειλιάζετε. Φανείτε γενναίοι. Εγώ έχω νικημένο τον εχθρό διάβολο. Έχω νικήσει κάθε τι του κόσμου τούτου του αμαρτωλού. Σας βεβαιώνω ότι και σεις μαζί μου θα είστε νικητές. Θαρσείτε φωνάζει και σε μας σήμερα ο Κύριος. Γιατί κι' εμείς έχουμε να συναντήσουμε στη ζωή μας δυσκολίες κι' εμπόδια πολλά και στενοχώριες πολλές. Ο κόσμος στήνει πάντοτε εμπόδια στο δρόμο της αρετής.

Νέος χρόνος ξεπροβάλει με ανανεωμένες τις δυνάμεις και τις αποφάσεις. Τι θα γίνει με τις δυσκολίες που θα ορθωθούν εφέτος μπροστά μας; Το τι θα γίνει εξαρτάται από το πως θα τις αντιμετωπίσουμε. Το αποτέλεσμα θα είναι ανάλογο με τη στάση που θα τηρήσουμε απέναντί τους. Κάθε δυσκολία πρέπει να είναι μια πρόκληση για περισσότερη προσπάθεια. Τα γεγονότα δείχνουν [η ζωή των αγίων μας το βεβαιώνει] πως όταν επιμείνουμε θα νικήσουμε γιατί δεν κάνουμε μάχη μόνοι μας αλλά με την δύναμη του Θεού.

Εννοείται βέβαια πως το «Θαρσείτε» θα συνδυάζεται με το «ελπίζετε», με το «υπομένετε», με το «μετανοείτε», με το «μη συζηματίζεστε» και με το «αγωνίζεσθε». Ο Άγιος Ιωσήφ ο Ησυχαστής λέει στη ια' επιστολή του «πας άνθρωπος χρεωστεί, εάν θέλει την σωτηρία του να βιάζεται, να πολεμεί μετά των παθών ... Ο αγών και πόλεμος ο πνευματικός κατά της αμαρτίας είναι ο ευγενέστερος και ενδοξότερος «πάντα ισχύω εν τω ενδυναμούντι με Χριστώ» [Φιλίπ. Δ'13].

Το φετινό μας σύνθημα είναι κάλεσμα για αγώνα με φιλότιμο. Ο Άγιος Παΐσιος λέγει ότι ο ενάρετος αγωνιζόμενος Χριστιανός δεν κάνει το καλό για κάποιο δικό του όφελος. Το κάνει γιατί το αγαπά και το προτιμά από το κακό. Έτσι η καλή πράξη έχει αρχοντιά. Εκείνο που θα συγκινήσει περισσότερο Τον Θεό την ημέρα της Κρίσεως είναι η εργασία που έκανε ο καθένας μας στον παλαιό του άνθρωπο.

Ω χαρά και αγαλλίαση. Δώσε μας Χριστέ τη χάρη Σου να κατανοήσουμε τα θεία και αληθινά Σου λόγια! Να προχωρούμε μέσα στα εμπόδια νικητές. Ν' ακούμε πάντοτε μέσα στα βάθη της ψυχής μας το θείο Σου σάλπισμα:

**«Θαρσείτε εγώ νενίκηκα τον κόσμον».**

**[Ιω. ιστ' 33]**





**ST EUTHYMIOS** the New Martyr was born in Demitsana during the Ottoman occupation of Greece. He was raised by devout and God-loving parents and desired to become a monk on Mount Athos to live his life in complete service and devotion to God. Euthymios' wish, however was not fulfilled because he fell into a life of pleasure and temptations. His sinful life eventually led to his conversion to Islam.

God, however, did not abandon Euthymios who came to see his erroneous ways. He prayed fervently to the Theotokos

and was eventually able to escape his community, after a few unsuccessful attempts, and leave for Mount Athos.

While at the Great Lavra monastery, Euthymios was blessed with meeting St Gregory the Fifth, the exiled Patriarch of Constantinople. He confessed to him his life of sin, and St Gregory assigned him a spiritual father, Meletios. He was then accepted back into the Orthodox faith, but also tonsured as a monk. He thus practiced an ascetical life, visiting other monasteries. Through his prayers, especially to Panagia and his reading of St Nicodemus' writings on the neomartyrs, Euthymios was inspired to martyr for his faith.

Despite only being twenty years old, he went to Constantinople and confessed his faith before the Grand Vizer, after partaking of Holy Communion on Palm Sunday, 1814.

Euthymios was interrogated, imprisoned and tortured, but stood firm in his faith, not yielding to the demands of Muslims. Upon his execution on March 22, 1814, St Euthymios turned to the east and prayed:

I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, that You found me worthy to receive death for Your sake and to spill my blood for Your love...Grant peace to Your world, Master, and strengthen the Orthodox Christians to the very end.



για να ζήσει τη ζωή του με πλήρη υπηρεσία και αφοσίωση στον Θεό. Η επιθυμία του Ευθυμίου όμως δεν εκπληρώθηκε γιατί έπεσε σε ζωή ηδονής και πειρασμού. Η αμαρτωλή ζωή του τελικά τον οδήγησε στον ισλαμισμό.

Ο Θεός, όμως, δεν εγκατέλειψε τον Ευθύμιο, που ήρθε να δει τους λανθασμένους τρόπους του. Προσευχήθηκε θερμά στην Θεοτόκο και τελικά κατάφερε να ξεφύγει από την κοινότητά του, μετά από δυο ανεπιτυχείς προσπάθειες, και να φύγει για το Άγιο Όρος. Ενώ βρισκόταν στη μονή της Μεγάλης Λαύρας στο Άγιο Όρος, ο Ευθύμιος είχε την ευλογία να συναντήσει τον Άγιο Γρηγόριο τον Ε΄, τον εξόριστο Πατριάρχη Κωνσταντινουπόλεως.

Του εξομολογήθηκε την αμαρτωλή ζωή του και ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος του ανέθεσε πνευματικό πατέρα, τον Μελέτιο. Τότε ο Ευθύμιος έγινε δεκτός ξανά στην Ορθόδοξη πίστη και εκάρη μοναχός. Έζησε ασκητική ζωή και επισκέφτηκε άλλα

μοναστήρια. Με τις προσευχές του, ιδιαίτερα προς την Παναγία, και την ανάγνωση των συγγραμμάτων του αγίου Νικόδημου για τους νεομάρτυρες, ο Ευθύμιος εμπνεύστηκε να μαρτυρήσει για την πίστη του. Παρά το γεγονός ότι ήταν μόλις είκοσι ετών, πήγε στην Κωνσταντινούπολη και ομολόγησε την πίστη του ενώπιον του Μεγάλου Βεζίρη, αφού έλαβε τη Θεία Κοινωνία την Κυριακή των Βαΐων του 1814.

Ο Ευθύμιος ανακρίθηκε, φυλακίστηκε και βασανίστηκε, αλλά στάθηκε σταθερός στην πίστη του.

Όταν ο Άγιος Ευθύμιος επρόκειτο να εκτελεστεί στις 22 Μαρτίου 1814, στράφηκε προς την Ανατολή και προσευχήθηκε:

Σε ευχαριστώ, Κύριε Ιησού Χριστέ, που με βρήκες άξιο να λάβω θάνατο για χάρη Σου και να χύσω το αίμα μου για την αγάπη Σου... Δώσε ειρήνη στον κόσμο Σου, Κύριε, και ενίσχυσε τους Ορθόδοξους Χριστιανούς μέχρι τέλους.





Ἀγγελικῶν δυνάμεων, Στρατηγὸς ἀπεστάλη, ἐκ  
Θεοῦ Παντοκράτορος, πρὸς Ἄγνην καὶ Παρθένον,  
εὐαγγελίσασθαι ξένον, καὶ ἀπόρρητον θαῦμα,  
ὅτι Θεὸς ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἐξ αὐτῆς βρεφουργεῖται,  
ἀνευ σπορᾶς, ἀναπλάττων βρότειον ἅπαν γένος·  
Λαοὶ εὐαγγελίζεσθε, τὴν ἀνάπλασιν κόσμου.

*The chief Commander of the hosts of the  
Angels was sent down by God, the Ruler over  
all, to a pure virgin maiden; and he announced  
the good tidings of the strange secret wonder,  
namely that God will be from her procreated  
as man, without human seed, to refashion all  
of our human nature. Announce the good  
tidings, peoples all, that the  
world is refashioned.*

From the Service of Matins for the  
Annunciation of the Lady Theotokos,  
25th March. 1st Exapostilarion, Mode 2.



As the messenger of good tidings, announcing the conception of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit in her womb, the Archangel Gabriel features heavily in the hymns of the feast of the Annunciation.

Angels as messengers of God are not something unique to the events of the Annunciation. There are many episodes in the Old Testament where Angels are sent for specific purposes, for example, the rescue by two angels of Lot, from the destruction of Sodom, or an Angel appearing to Jacob in a dream.

So why was an Angel, and a “Chief Commander of the Hosts” at that, sent down to deliver this momentous news?

St Gregory Palamas, sermonising on another feast of Panayia, the Entrance to the Temple, gives us insight:

You nourished Him who is the nourisher of the Angels, with food like ours. You fed us with Him the self-same nourisher of angels, who is the truly heavenly and incorruptible food; You made humans share the life of the angels, or rather, you made them

worthy of greater rewards, since you conceived a Theandric form through the Holy Spirit and gave birth to it in a strange manner, making human nature, in a manner which is as one might say beyond words, alike in God with the Divine nature.

Only the highest of God’s immaterial creations, an Angel, in meeting with the highest and purest of God’s material creations, Our Lady Theotokos, could give witness to the amazing “strange, secret wonder” of the conception of Jesus Christ.

Also, as St John Chrysostom tells us in his commentary on a verse from St Pauls Epistle to the Hebrews,

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? So, this then is the purpose of the angels, to do everything for the salvation of our brothers; rather, this is the work of Christ, but He saves as Master, whereas they save as servants. We are also servants, but co-servants of the angels. So why are you staring at the angels, mouths agape?



*Psalm 22 starts by declaring that*  
**“The Lord is my shepherd...”**

In their Epistles Saints Peter and Paul refer to Christ as the chief and great shepherd of our souls. Christ describes Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, as opposed to the hired shepherds who flee at the sign of danger (John 10:11-13).

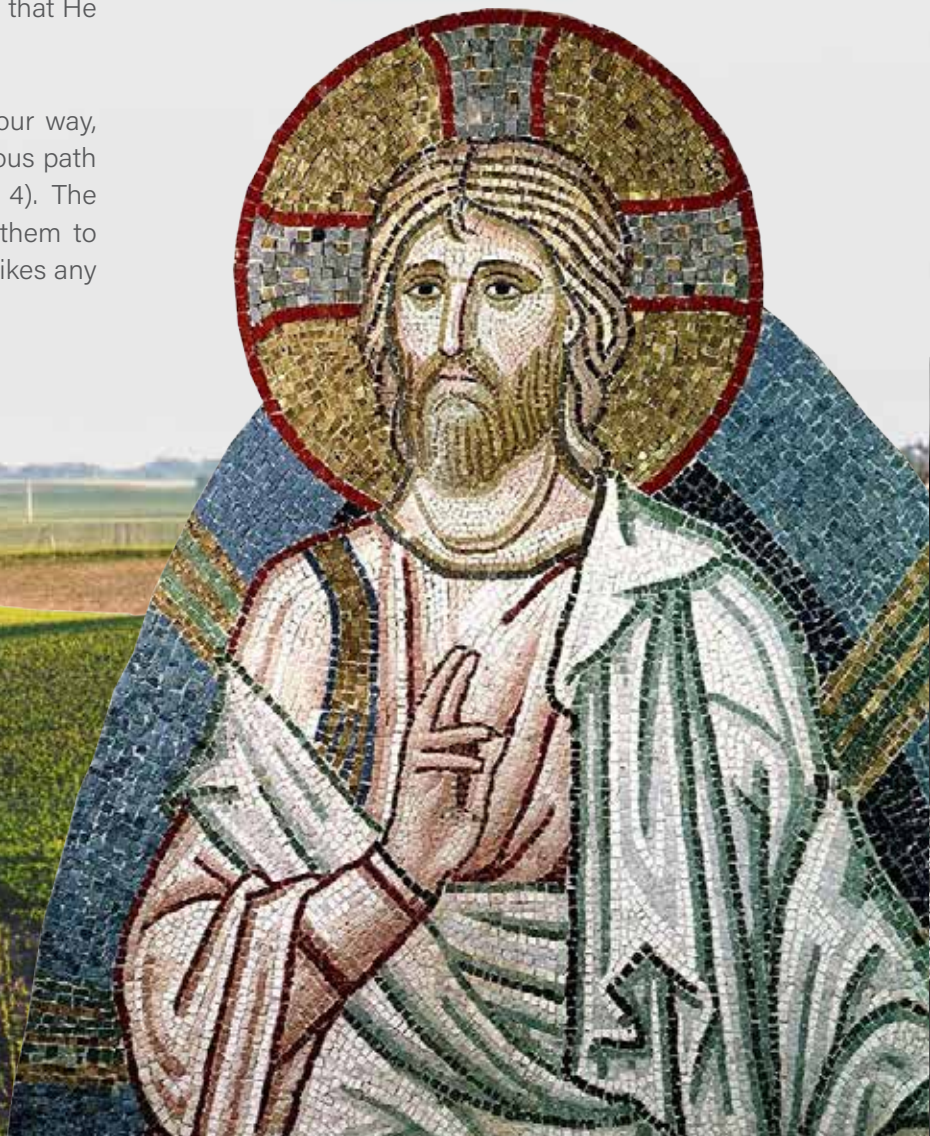
The Lord leads His flock to green pastures and nourishes them by the calm waters (verse 2). Here we understand that Christ provides us with ‘good’ food which nourishes our bodies and souls. In a spiritual sense, there is a lot of ‘bad’ food in the world, which abounds on various media and social platforms. That food does not nourish us but rather makes us spiritually ill. Only the Lord gives us nourishing food.

The Psalmist then tells us that the Lord restores our soul and guides us into the path of righteousness. He assures us that even if we come close to the shadow of death, we are not to be afraid, for we have faith that He is always beside us (verse 3).

If we wander like sheep and happen to lose our way, He brings us back and guides us to the righteous path of salvation by His rod and His staff (verse 4). The shepherd’s rod rounds the sheep and guide them to the pasture, and occasionally pedagogically strikes any

wandering sheep to restore them to the flock. The rod is also used to provide support while standing throughout the long hours of the day, and to readily warn off any danger. Thus, the rod symbolically represents His correction, support, and protection, which ultimately brings comfort to us.

The Psalm forms the basis of the morning prayers before Holy Communion. In the final two verses, we are transferred to the house of the Lord where we read that He prepares a table with excellent wine, He anoints with oil, and His mercy follows us all the days of our lives. This is a clear reference to Holy Communion, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and life as an active and faithful member of the Church (verses 5 & 6).





# “Before there was a West, there was Christendom.”

Thus begins *The Age of Paradise*, the first in a series of four planned books by Archpriest John Strickland, which expand on the Ancient Faith Radio podcast series *Paradise and Utopia*.

This series explores the history of Christianity from an Orthodox perspective, focusing more on culture than on politics and battles. This first volume explores the period of time from Pentecost to the Great Schism in 1054. It traces the development of Christianity and explains how it was so radically different and appealing to the people of the Roman Empire.

The Age of Paradise takes its title from the author's understanding of the paradisiacal culture created in the early Church which was preserved in Orthodox Christianity. This culture is one which fostered spiritual growth and sought to align earthly kingdoms with the Kingdom of Heaven.

Archpriest John Strickland argues that the reason why this transformation of the world has failed is due to the lack of spiritual transformation of one's own life through humility and the virtues, which creates a society with the hope of achieving paradise.

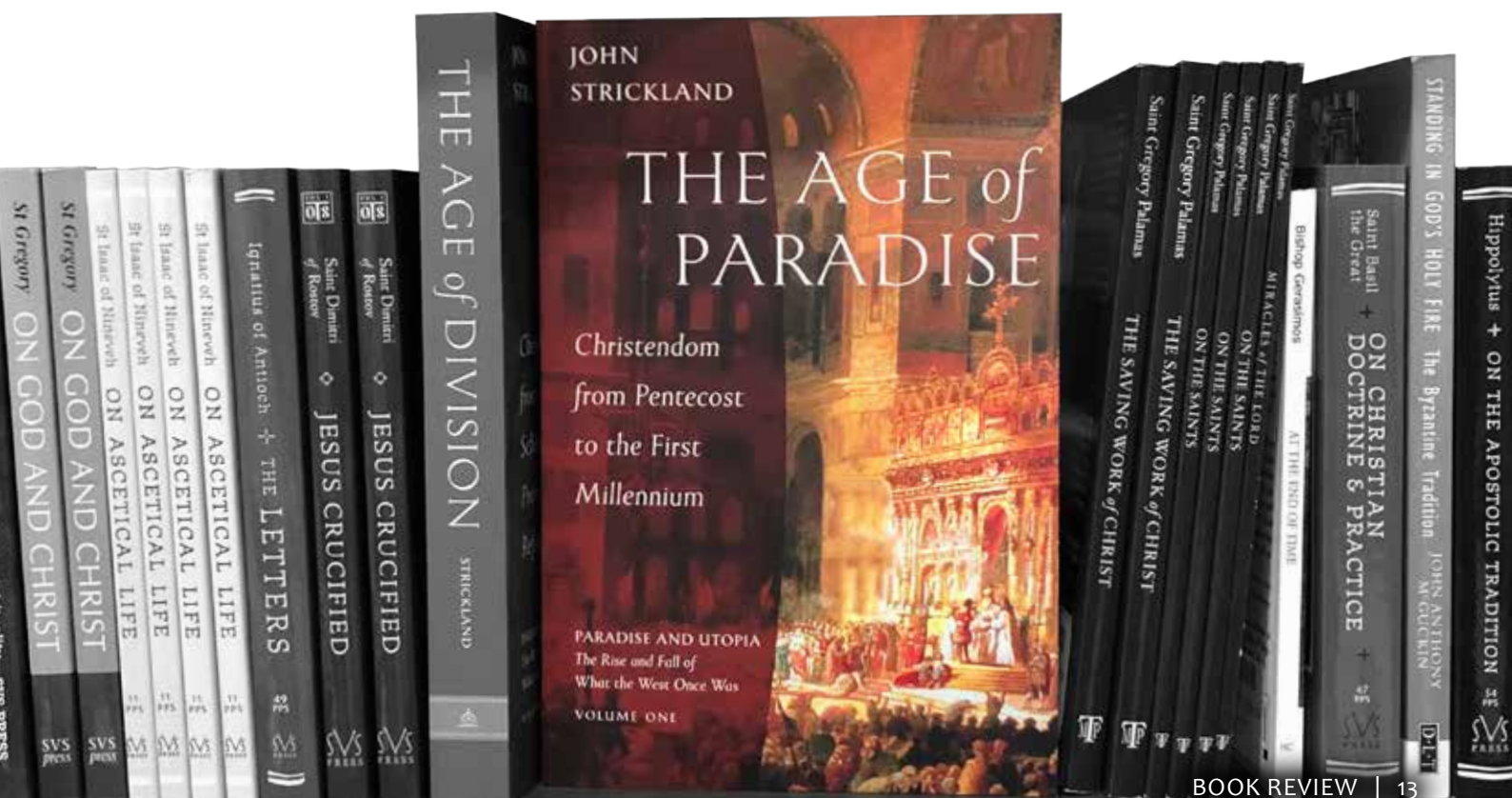
Instead, much of Christendom, especially in the West in the centuries prior to 1054, sought the vain pursuit of external transformation of society without that preceding internal spiritual struggle. Detached from humility and repentance, they sought not paradise, but a utopia (meaning “no place”) – something which continues to impact our modern society. The later books in the series, *The Age of Division* and *The Age of Utopia*, explore how the West deviated from its aim of achieving paradise.

This book, despite the weighty topics it handles, is an easy read and is strongly recommended for all who wish to understand the roots of the changes that have seen the contemporary world depart from the truth – which continues to be found within the Orthodox Church. It is well-researched, makes a coherent argument, and provides unique perspectives on cultural and historical issues.

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**Η** γνωστή παραβολή του ασώτου γιού είναι η κορωνίδα όλων των παραβολών για τη θεολογία της, τη λεπτότητα, τη στοργή, και το βάθος της αγάπης του Θεού προς τον ανυπάκουο αμαρτωλό.

Όπως γνωρίζουμε ο νεότερος γιός ζητάει το μερίδιο της περιουσίας που του ανήκει. Ο στοργικός πατέρας σεβόμενος την ελευθερία του, την μοιράζει. Ο νεαρός σε λίγες μέρες ταξιδεύει σε μακρινή χώρα όπου σπαταλάει όλα ζώντας άσωτα. Πάντοτε οι νέοι θέλουν την δική τους «Οδύσσεια» για διάφορους λόγους. Σπαταλά τα πάντα, λιμοκτονεί αλλά έρχεται «εις εαυτόν» και τελικά επιστρέφει στον πατέρα του για να ζητήσει συγχώρεση.

Ενώ ήταν μακριά τον βλέπει ο πατέρας του και τρέχει και πέφτει με λαχτάρα στο λαιμό του και τον καταφιλάει. Δίνει εντολές ο πατέρας να: ντυθεί ο γιός με την καλύτερη φορεσιά, δαχτυλίδι στο χέρι και υποδήματα (στο λουτρό της Μετάνοιας): «Σφάξτε το καλοθρεμμένο μόσχο να φάμε και να χαρούμε, γιατί αυτός ο γιός μου ήταν νεκρός και ξανάζησε χαμένος και βρέθηκε».

Ο μεγάλος αδελφός ακούει μουσική και χορούς. Κι όταν μαθαίνει την αιτία θυμώνει, αρνείται να μπει μέσα. Ο στοργικός πατέρας βγαίνει έξω και τον παρακαλεί και τελικά λέει: «Παιδί μου εσύ είσαι πάντα μαζί μου κι όλα τα δικά μου είναι δικά σου. Όμως έπρεπε να γιορτάσουμε και να χαρούμε, γιατί ο αδελφός σου αυτός ήταν πεθαμένος και ξανάζησε και χαμένος και βρέθηκε».

Μεγάλη η χαρά στους Ουρανούς μπροστά στους αγγέλους τού Θεού για έναν αμαρτωλό μετανοούντα.

Στην ανάλυση αυτής της παραβολής μπορούμε να επικεντρωθούμε σε τέσσερα βασικά σημεία:

**1. Ο νεότερος αδελφός** βαθεία μετανοημένος ζητά από τον πατέρα του να τον δεχθεί σα δούλο του. Η άκρα κένωσή του τον αποκαθιστά στο «Αρχαίον Κάλλος». Το Σωτήριο μήνυμα της παραβολής επαληθεύεται πάνω στο Σταυρό. Όταν ο εκ δεξιών του Κυρίου ληστής ακούει για Βασιλεία στους Ουρανούς, συνειδητοποιεί ότι ο Κύριος είναι όντως ο Σωτήρας! Συγχωρεί τους σταυρωτές του! Την ύστατη στιγμή με δέος παρακαλεί τον Κύριο: «Μνήσθητί μου Κύριε όταν έλθεις εν τη Βασιλεία Σου». Και «είπεν αυτώ ο Ιησους' αμήν λέγω σοι, σήμερον μετ' εμού έση εν τω Παραδείσω».

**2. Ο φιλεύσπλαχνος πατέρας** είναι ο Θεός-Πατέρας της Τριαδικής Αγάπης που θα πρέπει να είναι πάντοτε το «Σημείον Αναφοράς» για όλους μας. Στην παραβολή του χαμένου προβάτου ο Κύριος είναι ο Καλός Βοσκός, που περιέγραψαν οι Προφήτες. (Ιεζεκ. λδ' και κβ' 6,11-15, Ψαλμ. κγ',1,4) «Επί τους ώμους αυτού» «Τας αμαρτίας ημών εβάστασεν εν τω σώματι αυτού επί το ξύλον» (Α', Πέτρ. β', 24 και Ησ.γγ', 4-6).

**3. Ο πρεσβύτερος αδελφός** είναι περήφανος χωρίς αγαπητική επαφή ούτε με τον πατέρα του. Είναι το αφεντικό (ή παθιασμένος δούλος) στη περιουσία με μελλοντικές βλέψεις. Είναι άκαρδος στον αδελφό του, χωρίς ανθρωπιά, υποκριτής και αμετανόητος, σαν τους Φαρισαίους.

**4. Η θυσία του «Μόσχου του Σιτευτού» και το «Γεύμα»** στην Πατερική ερμηνεία είναι η Σταυρική θυσία του Θεανθρώπου. Το Μυστήριο της Θείας Ευχαριστίας, το κέντρο της Θείας Λειτουργίας, που σώζει τους μετανοούντας αμαρτωλούς.







Following His Resurrection, Christ remained on earth and strengthened the faith of the apostles. After 40 days He was with His disciples on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem, and in their presence "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

The glorious ascent of the Son of God from earth to heaven, and His seating at the right hand of God the Father, signify the fulfilment of the divine economy. By His Ascension, Christ was not abandoning the world, but rather "uniting the earthly with the heavenly" (Kontakion of the Ascension).

St Gregory Palamas states that: "He ascended in glory, entered the Holy of Holies, not made by hands, and sat down on the right hand of the heavenly majesty, making our human substance share His own throne and divinity" (Homily 21 on the Ascension of our Lord).

"The angels were amazed seeing a Man so exalted" (Vespers of the Ascension). Thus, at the Ascension feast we celebrate the triumph of our human nature which the Word of God: assumed in His Incarnation;

deified; and raised to the divine Kingdom.

St Gregory emphasises that all that Christ did, was done for us: "He rose and ascended, preparing our own resurrection and ascension for unending eternity." All who believe in Christ are called to share in His Resurrection and Ascension. Apostle Paul exhorts:

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

In these words, we can perceive the actions of the Apostles in the aftermath of the Ascension. They "returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (Lk. 24:52-53). Their minds were set on heaven, focused on preparing themselves to receive the Holy Spirit as promised by Christ.

There is much we can take from this example of the Apostles to apply to our own spiritual life. St Gregory in his homily, highlights the vigilance and hopeful expectation which all

Christians should strive to have:

"They should persevere in prayers and supplications and have the eyes of their soul lifted up to the Master above the heavens, praising and glorifying Him with irreproachable conduct, and in this manner await His mystical coming."

This state of hopeful expectation and waiting is an important characteristic of our Orthodox faith. Our Orthodox faith teaches her faithful that we are finite, created beings, dependent on God's divine grace, without which we can do nothing. Our struggle is to attract the descent of God's divine energies and enlightenment into our life, to be in communion with Him, so that we may be transformed in Him and thus ascend with Him.

May we marvel together with the Angels at the sight of our human nature, eternally united with the fire of the divinity. May we "lift up our hearts" as we are urged to at every Divine Liturgy, knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philip. 3:20).



# News & Events

# Key Dates



*Are you interested in learning the sacred music of the Greek Orthodox Church?*

Start of Classes:  
**Tuesday 22 February 2022, 7:00 – 8:00pm**  
 For ages 12+ / Cost: Free  
 Classes occur every Tuesday evening between 7:00 – 8:00pm  
 (except school holidays)



*Children from 8 - 12 years old who wish to learn the basic hymns of the Orthodox Church, including the Divine Liturgy, without Byzantine notation are invited to join our Practical Learning Class.*

Start of Classes:  
**Tuesday 22 February 2022, 6:00 – 6:45pm**  
 For ages 8-12 / Cost: Free  
 Classes occur every Tuesday evening between 6:00 – 6:45pm  
 (except school holidays)

Classes take place at the building of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society  
 217 Bexley Rd, Kingsgrove (Cnr Homer St & Bexley Rd, Kingsgrove)

Please email [ssbm@lychnos.org](mailto:ssbm@lychnos.org) or fill in this form to express your interest: <https://lychnos.org/expression-of-interest/>

For more information email [ssbm@lychnos.org](mailto:ssbm@lychnos.org)  
 or call Kosmas Kokkinos on 0400 734 538

## MARCH

<b>6</b> 🍷 Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare)	<b>7</b> 🌿 Monday <b>Lent Begins</b> Holy Hieromartyrs of Cherson
<b>13</b> 🌿 Sunday of Orthodoxy (1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent)	<b>20</b> 🌿 Sunday of St Gregory Palamas (2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent)
<b>25</b> 🐟 Friday <b>ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>	<b>27</b> 🌿 Sunday of the Holy Cross (3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent)

## APRIL

<b>3</b> 🌿 Sunday of St John Climacus (4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent)	<b>10</b> 🌿 Sunday of St Mary of Egypt (5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent)
<b>17</b> 🐟 <b>PALM SUNDAY</b>	<b>24</b> <b>GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA</b>



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- ☎ (02) 9787 9779
- ✉ [editor@lychnos.org](mailto:editor@lychnos.org)
- 🌐 [www.lychnos.org](http://www.lychnos.org)
- 📘 @orthodoxjourneyaustralia
- 📷 @orthodoxjourney\_australia