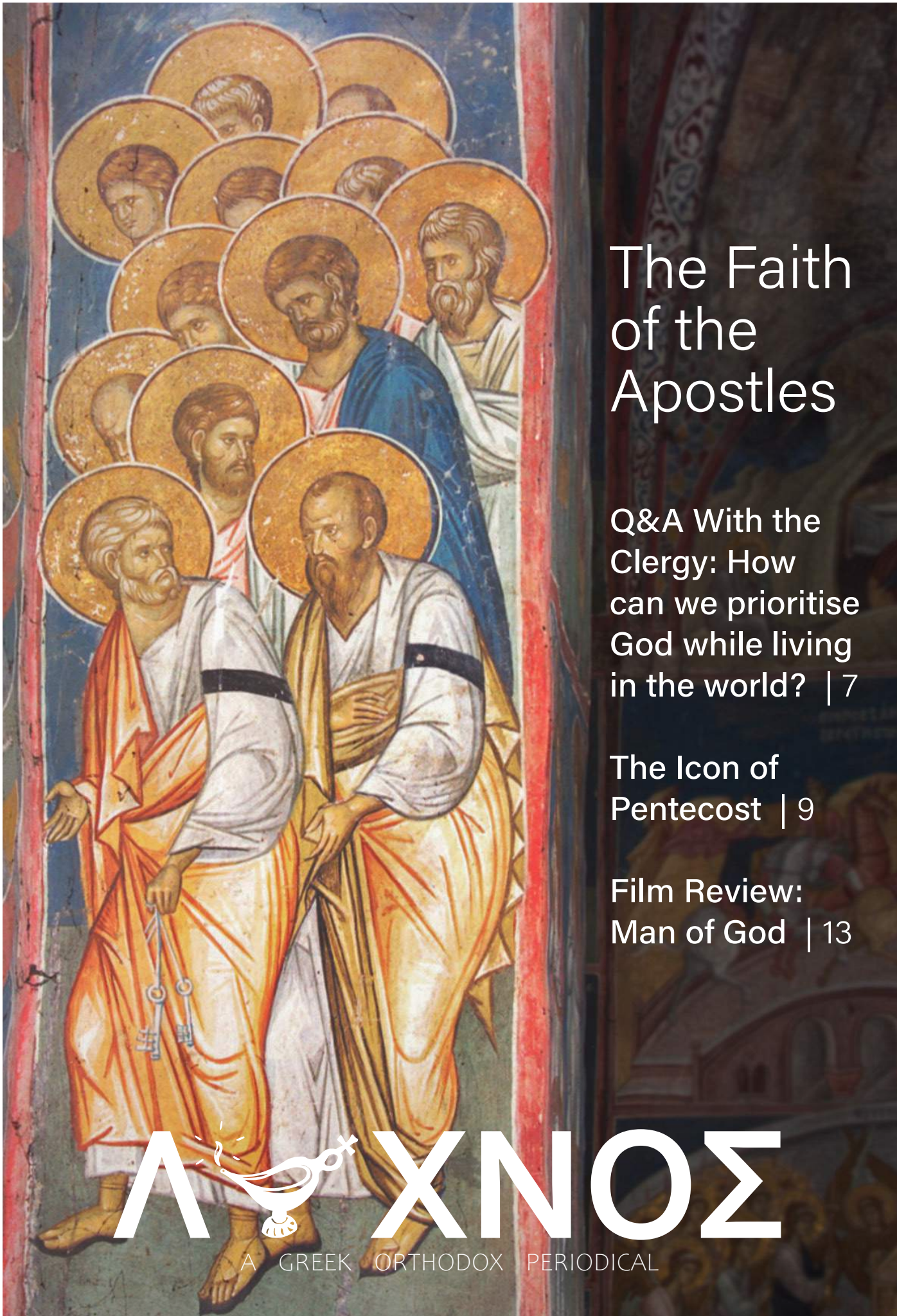


«ΛΥΧΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΟΣΙ ΜΟΥ Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΥΙΣ ΜΟΥ» ΨΑΛΜ 118, 105



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ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



Η Ένδοξη Ανάληψη του Κυρίου

Είχαν περάσει 40 ημέρες από την Ανάσταση του Κυρίου μας. Ο Ευαγγελιστής Λουκάς στον βιβλίο των Πράξεων μας περιγράφει, με απλά λόγια: Ο Αναστημένος Κύριος παρουσιάστηκε πολλές φορές στους μαθητές Του, και με πολλές αποδείξεις ήθελε να τους βεβαιώσει πως πράγματι ήταν ζωντανός. Τους μιλούσε για τα Μυστήρια και τις αλήθειες της αιώνιας Βασιλείας του Θεού. Έτρωγε και συναναστρέφονταν μαζί τους. Τους έδωσε και την εντολή να μην απομακρυνθούν από τα Ιεροσόλυμα αλλά να περιμένουν να πραγματοποιηθεί η υπόσχεση Του σ'αυτούς. Ότι, δηλαδή, θα λάβειαν το Άγιο Πνεύμα που θα τους έστειλε ο Θεός-Πατήρ. Έτσι, θά'παιρναν δύναμη και θα γίνονταν μάρτυρες της ζωής και της διδασκαλίας του



Χριστού στην Ιουδαία, στη Σαμάρεια και σ'όλο το κόσμο.

Ενώ έλεγε αυτά τα λόγια σ'αυτούς, ανυψώθηκε προς τον ουρανό και ένα σύννεφο Τον παρέλαβε και Τον πήρε απ'τα μάτια τους. Τότε, παρουσιάστηκαν και δύο άγγελοι λευκοφορεμένοι που τους είπαν: «Άνδρες Γαλιλαίοι, τί στέκεστε και κοιτάζετε έτσι ακίνητοι τον ουρανό? Αυτός ο Ιησούς που αναλήφθηκε από ανάμεσά σας στον ουρανό θα έλθει με τον ίδιο τρόπο πάλι», προλέγοντας έτσι και την Δευτέρα Παρουσία του Κυρίου μας.

Η υμνολογία της Εκκλησίας μας, στην εορτή της Αναλήψεως του Κυρίου, είναι πολύ κατατοπιστική. Με σαφήνεια γλαφυρότητα αλλά και απλότητα επεξηγούνται τα γεγονότα της Αναλήψεως και αναλύονται τα Θεία Τελεσμένα. Το πρώτο κεκραγάριο του εσπερινού δίνει πλήρη εικόνα των όσων διαδραματίζονται.

1. Ο Κύριος ανελήφθη για να μας στείλει τον Παράκλητο-Άγ. Πνεύμα στο κόσμο.
2. Οι Ουρανοί ετοίμασαν τον Θρόνο Του.
3. Σύννεφα Τον μεταβιβάζουν στον ουρανό (κατα Πατερική ερμηνεία, σύννεφο εδώ σημαίνει τάγμα αγγέλων)
4. Άγγελοι θαυμάζουν βλέποντες άνθρωπο (την ανθρώπινη φύση του Χριστού) να ανεβαίνει πάνω απο αυτούς
5. Ο Θεός-Πατήρ δέχεται στις αγκάλες Του τον μονογενή και συναϊδίον Υιόν Του.
6. Το Άγιο Πνεύμα το συναϊδίον και ομόθρονον με τον Πατέρα και τον Υιό, διατάζει τις Αγγελικές δυνάμεις, «Άρατε πύλας». Δηλαδή, ανοίχτε διάπλατα τις ουράνιες πύλες οι πρώτοι των Αγγελικών Δυνάμεων για να εισέλθω ο Βασιλιάς της δόξης.
7. Και τελικά όλα τα επι της γής

έθνη «κροτήσατε χείρας», δείξτε τον ενθουσιασμό και τη χαρά σας γιατί ανέβη ο Χριστός, τώρα και σαν άνθρωπος, εκεί που βρισκόταν απ'αρχής.

Το κοντάκι της εορτής συνοπτικά μας αναφέρει, πως με την Ανάληψη του Κυρίου ολοκληρώνεται το έργο της Θείας Οικονομίας. Αυτό που ήταν το κρυφό και σιωπηλό Μυστήριο στην προαιώνια βουλή του Θεού. Δηλαδή, να στείλη τον Μονογενή του Υιό στον κόσμο, να σαρκωθεί εκ Πνεύματος Αγίου και Μαρίας της Παρθένου και να αναλάβει όλη την ανθρώπινη φύση. Να πάθω ως άνθρωπος, να σταυρωθεί, να ταφεί και να συναναστήσει με την ένδοξη Ανάστασή Του όλο το Γένος των ανθρώπων. Τώρα, στην ένδοξη Ανάληψη του Κυρίου μας, αυτό το σχέδιο έχει πραγματοποιηθεί.

Δεν υπάρχουν πιο ταιριαστά αλλά και πιο συγκινητικά λόγια για να εκφράσουν αυτή την αλήθεια από τα λόγια του Ιερού Χρυσοστόμου στη Θεία Λειτουργία. Σε απλή μετάφραση «Συ από την ανυπαρξία μας έφερες στη ζωή. Και όταν ξεπέσαμε από το προορισμό μας, δεν μας άφησες στη πτώση και στο θάνατο, αλλά πάλι μας ανέστησες και μας οδήγησες στη ζωή και την αλήθεια. Και δεν έπαψες τη σωτήρια ενέργεια, μέχρι που στο πρόσωπο Του αναληφθέντος Κυρίου μας ανύψωσες και εμάς στους ουραμούς και μας χάρισες την μέλλουσα αιώνια Βασιλεία Σου».

Η θριαμβευτική Ανάληψη του Κυρίου μας αποτελεί κάλεσμα και πρόσκληση για κάθε πιστό, να ακολουθήσει το Χριστό από τούτη τη ζωή στην Αιώνια. Γιατί η Ανάληψη του Χριστού στην ουσία είναι εν δυνάμει η δική μας ουράνια ανύψωσις.

Άραγε θα τολμήσουμε να τον ακολουθήσουμε;...

The Faith of the Apostles was their expectation that Christ would never leave them nor forsake them as they embarked on their mission to evangelise and baptise all the nations.

In enumerating the ministries of the Church, St Paul places apostles first, then prophets, then teachers, and so on (1 Corinthians 12:28). The Apostles are placed first because they conveyed their own personal eyewitness experience of Christ's earthly ministry. When Judas Iscariot's apostleship fell vacant due to his betrayal, the criterion for his replacement was that the person must have been present from the baptism of John through Christ's ministry until His Assumption (Acts 1:22).

In Hebrews 11:1 St Paul wrote that 'faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' When we talk about the Apostles' faith, we do not refer to their eye witnessing of the Person of Christ and His ministerial events. Rather, the faith of the Apostles was their expectation that all that Christ promised would come to pass. That is, that He would never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5) as they embarked on their mission to evangelise and baptise all the nations. In fact, in the Greek text, each negative is emphasised by being doubled, "I will not, never, [οὐ μή] leave you nor will I not, never, [οὐδ' οὐ μή] forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

The trials the Apostles endured while preaching the Gospel reveals their great faith and belief in this promise of Christ. They devoted their entire life for Him, sacrificing all. This faith began as 'a mustard seed' (Matthew 17:20) and by the end of their lives became

the great tree which resembles the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:31-32). To arrive there the Apostles had to water this tree with their toil and tears. Every time their faith was tested it grew little by little.

Repetition is a great way to grow in confidence, and the same is true about faith. Each setback, difficulty and threat gradually re-enforced their faith, just as gold is tested and refined in fire. The genuineness of their faith, which had served to praise, honour and glorify Christ, had solidified by the end of their lives to the point where they no longer preached by faith alone but by experience.

The object of unfaithfulness for unbelievers revolves around the question of Christ's divinity. But for us who believe in the resurrected Lord, the object of our faith revolves around the promises of Christ. At times this faith may be weak due to life's difficulties. However, this faith will grow if we do not lose focus on Christ, for He warned us that 'without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5).

As we embark on the solemn feast of the Apostles, let us imitate the faith and endurance of those men who made His life their life, and became teachers of the faith and models of missionary work. May their life emanate and transmit a pulse to us who are weak. By this common faith may we be united to each other, and to those who went before us, so that our life may also serve to glorify Christ and lead us to His eternal Kingdom.



Baptism: The door

It is through the Holy Mystery (Sacrament) of Baptism that one enters into the fellowship of the Church, and partakes in its powers, its activities, and the treasures of its divine mysteries. In the Orthodox Church the person, usually an infant, is immersed into and elevated out of the holy water of the baptismal font three times, each time in the name of one of the persons of the Holy Trinity.

This Holy Mystery was established by our Lord, Jesus Christ, before His Ascension, when He told His Disciples:

'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all the nations; he who believes and is baptised, will be saved; but he who does not believe, will be condemned.' (Mark 16:15-16).

Baptism has since remained the essential cornerstone for those who are admitted and recognised as members of the Church. When the Apostle Peter spoke to the people after the arrival of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, a large crowd were converted to the faith in Jesus Christ. They asked the Apostle what to do to be saved. He told them:

'Repent and be baptised each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).

The 'fluid' element during Baptism is of great importance. God created the substance of water which has been used since time immemorial for cleaning. Baptism in the Old Testament or New Testament times was always done wherever water was abundant, such as near rivers, lakes, seas or ponds. In our times, the person is wholly immersed in water, removing all physical filth, whilst their immersion signifies the death of their old and sinful self, and their elevation to a new person in Jesus Christ.

This is summarised by Apostle Paul, as chanted in the baptismal service:

'For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ' (Galatians 3:27).

According to Saint Basil the Great, the baptised person becomes new without changing, reconstructed without being crushed, is cured without suffering, reborn without a mother, and reaches the pinnacle of life with youthful exuberance. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the baptised person proceeds towards incorruptibility, whilst still being in their corruptible nature.

All the above conditions become a reality at the time of Baptism (and Chrismation in our next article), whilst we are in infancy. However, by the time we grow up and try to become true believers, we would have committed many sins, some of them quite serious. These may well impede our spiritual efforts, and reduce or nullify the gifts we had received at Baptism.

Saint John Climacus does not let us despair. He reminds us that there is another powerful Mystery (Sacrament) that can forgive and expunge all our sins from infancy until we partake of its divine Grace: [the tears of Repentance](#) as expressed by the outward act of [Confession](#).

Repentance and Confession are of such importance that they have been called a Second Baptism, as it cleanses us from the sins performed since the first Baptism. If the kindness and love of God had not given us this gift, few would have been saved for the Kingdom of God, and indeed would have been rare to find!

to life eternal!

The spiritual blessings of the Mystery bestow upon the person [rebirth](#) and [renewal](#), when he is baptised through water and the Holy Spirit, without which they cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:5). In view of this statement by the Lord, Baptism is the only door to salvation, with the only exception being baptism by the blood of martyrdom.

It was the Apostles who also named Baptism as rebirth, which refers to the [remission](#) of sins, of the baptised person 'into Christ, puts on Christ', which refers to [renewal of life](#). By being adopted by Christ, we acquire the rights of a heir (Galatians 3:27, 29).

Having outlined the nature and significance of Baptism, we should all personally delve much more into its meaning in the life of the Church. In particular, we should examine and consider how this first Mystery of our Faith, which opens the door to salvation, applies to ourselves.



St Savvas of Kalymnos

Saint Savvas was born in 1862 to a poor family in Eastern Thrace, Greece. Although his parents did not approve, the Saint had a deep desire for monasticism from a very young age. In his mid-teens, he left home and travelled to the Skete of Saint Anne on Mount Athos where he displayed total obedience to his superiors.

After some time, Saint Savvas made a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands. He entered the Monastery of Saint George the Chozebite where, in 1890, he was tonsured a monk. After a second period of time spent at the Skete of St Anne, Saint Savvas was ordained a priest and had developed his skills to become an expert iconographer.

Whilst in Athens on business one day, he was told Saint Nectarios of Pentapolis (9 November) had asked that Saint Savvas visit him at his monastery on the island of Aegina, Greece. After meeting with him, Saint Savvas remained on the island and served Saint Nectarios until his blessed repose.

Once after a forty-day period of ascetism, Saint Savvas completed the very first icon of Saint Nectarios. He firmly instructed the nuns of the monastery to place the icon in church to be venerated.

With the increased number of the faithful travelling to the monastery, Saint Savvas relocated to the Monastery of All Saints on the island of Kalymnos in 1926. For twenty-two years he served faithfully and practised extreme ascetism, giving all of his time and energy to the Lord and his brothers and sisters in Christ. During World War Two, for example, he spent

whole nights standing in prayer for the world. Whenever he prayed, an indescribable aroma would surround him; this same fragrance continues from his tomb to this day.

On 7 April 1948, Saint Savvas gave his final counsels to his spiritual children before clapping his hands and repeating, "the Lord, the Lord, the Lord!" One of the nun's present recounts how she saw his soul, surrounded by a golden cloud, rise to Heaven.

When his tomb was opened in 1957, a strong and beautiful fragrance spread from the tomb throughout the entire town. Many miracles have since been worked through Saint Savvas' intercessions.

An example for all present day Orthodox Christians, Saint Savvas was a humble man of prayer who followed God's will and served his neighbour wholeheartedly.





“How can we prioritise God while living in the world?”

Yes, we need to prioritise God while living in the world. The purpose of life is to come to communion with God, to be with Him forever. Being close to Christ and His teachings brings peace to us in this life. As blessed Augustine put it, *‘You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.’*

Of course, most of us are called to live in the world. When Jesus was asked whether to pay taxes or not, He replied: *‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s’* (Matthew 22:21).

So our Lord wants from us integrity and honesty in our dealings. Those that work should do so conscientiously, those who are students should study hard, those who have the sacred calling to be parents, husbands or wives, should do this selflessly. Our priority, however, should always be God and our spiritual journey.

The first aspect in prioritising God is that we need to be vigilant and careful so as not to allow a worldly mindset to change us and to dominate us. ‘Worldly mindset’ refers to a way of thinking and living that emphasises that which does not have eternal value: money, material goods, our appearance, our clothes, what others think of us, a way of life that is very busy with parties, etc.

The Bible often warns us about the dangers of this worldly mindset.

James, the brother of the Lord writes: *‘Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world’* (James 1:27).

True religion is to do works of love and to not allow the world to stain us. Apostle Paul entreats us, *‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’* (Romans 12:2). Apostle John also puts it very strongly, *‘Do not love the world or the things in the world ... For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world’* (1 John 2:15-16).



We will prioritise the Lord while living in the world if we have come to know the love of Christ. We will then be so overwhelmed that giving priority to the Lord will come naturally. We will also clearly see the emptiness of the worldly life that most people live.

How can we come to know Christ and His love? As our Archbishop wrote in this year’s Paschal message, such deep knowing will not come by us trying to prove the Resurrection, or after philosophical or scientific enquiry, such deep faith is a miracle.

What do we need to strive for so that such a miracle can occur in us? We need to clean our heart from the passions; after all Jesus said: *‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’* (Matthew 5:8).

creation, which is tied to the first day of creation, and on this day we see the unalloyed, all-shining presence of God. Pentecost is linked with the eighth day of creation, and on this day we see the unalloyed, all-shining presence of God. This presence abides in those who choose to live in imitation of God and 'have wilfully used the principle of their being contrary to nature.'

ST MAXIMUS + THE + CONFESSOR ON PENTECOST

Ἅγιος Μάξιμος
ὁ ὁμολογητής



Across many of his writings, Saint Maximus the Confessor (580-662 AD) comments on various aspects of Holy Pentecost. In *Ambigua* ('Ambiguities') St Maximus explains the homilies of St Gregory the Theologian: Pentecost is linked with the eighth day of creation, which is tied to the first day of creation, and on this day we see 'the unalloyed, all-shining presence of God.' This presence abides in those who choose to live in imitation of God and 'have wilfully used the principle of their being contrary to nature.'

In his *Responses to Thalassios on Difficulties in Sacred Scripture*, St Maximus examines Pentecost in the context of Christ's commandment to the Apostles to 'make disciples of all the nations' (Matthew 28:19). He explains that St Peter required the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was received at Pentecost, and the divine revelation he received about ministering the Gentiles (Acts 10:9-35). He follows on from this by linking Pentecost, where the promise is made that 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh' (Acts 2:17), with the ability of every person to receive the salvation of God through becoming pure in heart.

St Maximus understands Pentecost symbolically through its numbering, being that the Feast arises fifty days after Pascha. As fifty is five multiplied by ten, this is understood to represent the combination of 'human nature,' identified through the five senses, and 'deification' (theosis) through the grace of God, which was the reason the divine law was given through the Ten Commandments. Through this deeper spiritual insight possessed by St Maximus and the other Church Fathers, we can see that through the grace of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost it was God's will that humanity become 'gods by grace.'

ΠΝΕΥΜΑ

ΚΟΤΗ.

The Icon of Pentecost

Orthodox icons which depict events from the Gospel or the history of the church are not intended to be historical representations of what took place. They show us a theological meaning, becoming windows through which we participate mystically in the spiritual reality of these events. In the same way, the Divine Liturgy calls us to partake in the life of our Saviour.

When we look at the icon of Pentecost, we see twelve Apostles seated on a semicircular bench. The foremost Apostles Peter and Paul are seated at the head, followed by the Holy Evangelists. The Evangelists hold their Gospel books, while the other Apostles hold scrolls which represent the gift of teaching which they received from the Holy Spirit. The fact that St Paul was not present at the historical event of Pentecost hints at the deeper significance of this feast. The descent of the Holy Spirit, which is represented by the twelve rays of light descending from the heavenly sphere at the top of the icon, is not limited by time or space. So St Paul is depicted in the icon to highlight his unity with all the Apostles as a vessel of divine grace and a member of the Body of Christ. The empty seat at the very top of the semicircle is the place of Christ, the Head of the Church. Although He ascended to heaven, He assured us that He would send down the Comforter, and that He will be with us always, unto the end of the ages.

At the bottom of the icon, a dark space is depicted from which emerges an elderly figure wearing royal garments, holding in his outstretched hands a white cloth containing twelve sealed scrolls. An inscription on a 17th century icon of Pentecost explains the symbolism of this enigmatic scene: the old man is the world personified. He was sitting in a dark place which represents the darkness of ignorance which abounded before Christ. He is elderly and bent over with years, grown old with the sin of Adam.

His royal crown represents the tyranny which sin held over the whole world. The white cloth and the twelve scrolls which he bears signifies the Apostolic teaching which brought the world out of darkness into the light of faith.

St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain says the Holy Apostles were like lanterns lit by the fire of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And just as one lantern lights another, passing on the original light unchanged, so the Apostles passed the Holy Spirit to the bishops and priests. Over millennia, they then passed it on to us through the sacraments of the church. Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit lives in us. Like the Apostles, we too can pass on the light of God to our families and neighbours, our friends and enemies, and the whole world around us.



Η ΑΓΙΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑ έζησε τον τρίτο αιώνα. Γεννήθηκε σε πλούσια οικογένεια και ο πατέρας της ήταν κρατικός αξιωματικός και ειδωλολάτρης. Η Χριστίνα μεγάλωσε για να γίνει εξαιρετικά όμορφη και πολλοί ζητούσαν το χέρι της για γάμο. Ωστόσο, ο πατέρας της ονειρευόταν ότι η Χριστίνα θα υπηρετούσε ως ιέρεια σε έναν ειδωλολατρικό ναό. Τοποθέτησε τη Χριστίνα σε έναν ψηλό πύργο όπου σχεδίαζε να ζήσει μέχρι να μεγαλώσει. Έχοντας κάθε άνεση, η Χριστίνα έλαβε εντολή να κάνει καθημερινές θυσίες στα πολλά χρυσά και ασημένια είδωλα που γέμιζαν τον πύργο.

Κατά τη διάρκεια της απομόνωσής της, η Χριστίνα παρατήρησε την ομορφιά του κόσμου έξω από το παράθυρό της. Θαύμαζε ιδιαίτερα

τα αστέρια. Μέσω αυτού, έγινε περίεργη για τον Δημιουργό του κόσμου. Ήταν πεπεισμένη ότι τα είδωλα, που δημιουργήθηκαν από ανθρώπους, δεν μπορούσαν να δημιουργήσουν τον κόσμο. Η Χριστίνα προσευχήθηκε ένθερμα να αποκαλυφθεί ο αληθινός Δημιουργός. Με αυτόν τον πόθο για τον άγνωστο Θεό στην καρδιά της, επισκέφτηκε ένας άγγελος την Χριστίνα και της έδωσε οδηγίες στη χριστιανική πίστη. Η Αγία, πιστεύοντας στον Χριστό, έσπασε όλα τα είδωλα του πύργου της.

Όταν είδε την αλλαγή της κόρης του, ο πατέρας της Χριστίνας

εξοργίστηκε. Την χτύπησε, την βασάνισε ανηλέητα και την έφερε στο δικαστήριο. Η Χριστίνα φυλακίστηκε για την πίστη της στον Χριστό. Ήταν να αποκεφαλιστεί, αλλά ο πατέρας της που ήταν υγιής πέθανε εκείνο το βράδυ. Οι αντιπρόσωποι του αυτοκράτορα που διαδέχτηκαν τον πατέρα της, συνέχισαν να της κάνουν τα ίδια φρικτά βασανιστήρια. Πολλοί άνθρωποι που είδαν τη θαυματουργή επιβίωσή της από τα βασανιστήρια και τη θαρραλέα υπομονή της, έγιναν Χριστιανοί. Μετά από μια παρατεταμένη περίοδο σκληρών βασανιστηρίων, που η Αγία Χριστίνα υπέφερε για τον Χριστό τελικά εμαρτύρησε.

Τη μνήμη της Μεγαλομάρτυρος Χριστίνας τιμούμε στις 24 Ιουλίου.

SAINT CHRISTINA lived during the third century. She was born to a rich family and her father was a high-ranking pagan official. Christina grew to become remarkably beautiful, and many sought her hand in marriage. However, her father envisaged that Christina would serve as a priestess in a pagan temple. He placed Christina in a high tower where he planned that she would live until she reached maturity. Being granted every comfort of life, Christina was commanded to make daily sacrifices to the many gold and silver idols which filled the tower.

During her time in seclusion Christina observed the beauty of the world outside her window. She especially admired the constellations of the stars. Through this, she became curious about the world's Creator. She was convinced that idols, which



were fashioned by humans, were unable to have created the world. Christina earnestly prayed that the true Creator would reveal Himself. With this desire for the unknown God in her heart, Christina was

visited by an angel who instructed her in the Christian Faith. Believing in Christ, the Saint smashed all the idols in her tower.

Upon witnessing his daughter's transformation, Christina's father was enraged. He brought her to trial and beat and tortured her mercilessly. Christina was imprisoned for her steadfastness in the faith. She was to be beheaded, but her healthy father died that night. Her father's successive imperial deputies continued applying the gruesome tortures against Christina. Many people who witnessed her miraculous survival of various tortures, and courageous endurance, came to the faith. After an extended period of harsh tortures, Saint Christina suffered for Christ and was executed for witnessing her faith. We commemorate the Great Martyr Christina on July the 24th.



*And I also say
to you that you are
Peter, and on this rock
I will build My church*

Matthew 16:18

Prior to Christ saying these words, He had asked His Disciples who the people said that He was. When Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,' Christ responded with those famous words.

The Roman Catholic tradition misinterprets this passage to justify the supremacy of the Pope as head of the Church. It erroneously identifies Peter as the 'rock,' and thus considers the Bishop (Pope) of Rome as the supposed successor of Peter to be the 'rock' upon which the Church is founded.

The Greek word used in the Gospel of Matthew for 'rock' is '*petra*,' which is a feminine noun. How then can Peter, a man, be the foundation of the Church when the word used is feminine? The Fathers understand the *petra* to refer not to St Peter but to 'the faith of his confession' (St John Chrysostom). Additionally, the rock is used throughout the Bible to refer to Christ – further proving that it refers to Christ and faith in Him, and not Peter.

Finally, it is inaccurate from a historical perspective to understand Peter and Rome as the rock on which the Church was founded. St Peter was never the Bishop of Rome – Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* states that the first Bishop of Rome was St Linus (Book 3.2). As for the claims of the supremacy of the see of Rome, the fact is that although St Peter founded churches in many cities and Rome was considered the first among equals by the Ecumenical Councils, it was never supreme.

Leaving aside the history, it is important to focus on the deep faith that St Peter had and his confession of Christ as God. Through these, we can truly approach Christ.

“The voice of the Lord is upon the waters”

Psalm 28 was written by King David thousands of years before the birth of Christ. It is best known for containing a prophecy of the proclamation of the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. This is the great feast of Theophany (literally ‘revelation of God’) which our Church celebrates on 6 January each year.

We see this prophecy most clearly in verse 3 where the Psalmist says ‘The voice of the Lord is over the waters; The God of glory thundered; The Lord is upon the many waters.’ Our Church uses this verse on many occasions, including during the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters on Theophany. St Hippolytus of Rome rhetorically asks ‘what voice?’ before answering that it is a ‘voice from heaven’ which proclaimed loudly at Christ’s baptism, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Matthew 3:17).

More broadly, Psalm 28 is a reminder of the power and glory of God, the manner in which he should be worshipped, and the good things that come to those who worship Him.

Verses 1 and 2 begin with a four-fold call for the ‘sons of God’ to ‘bring to the Lord’ their sacrifices, and the glory due His name. The repeated call emphasises the importance of these offerings, especially for those of us who ask ‘what shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me’ (Psalm 116:12), and concludes with the exhortation to worship the Lord ‘in His holy court.’

When following this exhortation to worship the Lord, we are not simply worshipping a powerful ruler or an earthly king, but rather the God of all. This is the focus of verses 3 to 9 which speak of the power of God. King David poetically writes that the ‘voice of God is full of majesty; it ‘shutters cedars; it ‘cuts through fiery flames; it ‘shakes the desert; and it ‘causes deer to calve.’ Here, King David shows the sovereignty of the Lord over all creation: there is no place that his voice does not extend, and no issue that his voice does not bear upon. The world was created through God’s voice: ‘Then God said, “Let there be light” ’ (Genesis 1:3), and is sustained through His voice. More practically, we should see God in all creation, including his power and his benevolence.

Because of this power, Verses 9 and 10 tell us that ‘the Lord shall sit as King forever’ and that ‘in His temple, everyone speaks of His glory.’ Finally, the Psalm concludes by setting out the Lord’s promises to those who love Him - he ‘will give strength to His people’ and ‘will bless His people with peace.’ May we be worthy of such blessings.



Man of God is a 2021 film that follows the life of Saint Nektarios of Pentapolis from his time as Bishop of Pentapolis in Egypt to the end of his life. The great strength of *Man of God* is the extent it goes to highlighting the virtues and endurance of Saint Nektarios in an authentic, Orthodox fashion. It is both enjoyable and edifying.



The emphasis of this film is the remarkable suffering that Saint Nektarios endured, arising from the lies, slander and calumny that came about as a result of the jealous fellow hierarchs in the Patriarchate of Alexandria. This followed the Saint for the rest of his life, and meant that Saint Nektarios could never settle anywhere in peace without having troubles with both Church and state authorities.

Where *Man of God* excels is in showing the viewers how Saint Nektarios found ways to live faithfully amidst these difficulties. Despite all of his troubles, he never allowed these to hinder his love for God - never allowing himself to get into further troubles to do what was correct.

Most of the important moments in the Saint's life are explored in the film, including his time in Egypt, at the



Yelena Popovic

MAN OF GOD

Rizarios School, at the Monastery he founded in Aegina (now the Monastery of Saint Nektarios), and on his deathbed at the Evangelismos hospital in Athens in 1920. Perhaps because of the visual medium, however, it often comes across more powerfully than reading about these parts of the Saint's life.

Man of God is masterfully directed by Yelena Popovic, a devout Orthodox Christian and filmmaker. The imagery, and the filming that occurred in Greece all have an authentic feel and make the viewer feel as though they were in the shoes of the Saint. This is a professional production, and it shows.



Aris Servetalis takes on the role of Saint Nektarios, and truly captures the humility and love for God that the Saint had. Saint Nektarios' assistant at the Rizarios School, Kostas, is played by Alexander Petrov who is a well-known Russian actor. The other notable actor in the film who has a short but vital cameo at the end is the American actor Mickey Rourke.

This film is a great blessing and was filmed in difficult circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece. There were many challenges in having this film produced, and yet the result is nothing short of magnificent. Despite being in English, *Man of God* was the highest-grossing film in Greece for a number of weeks and even made the US box office charts due to the sheer volume of churches that booked out cinemas for their parishioners to view the film.

Many parishes continue to organise screenings of this film, and our recommendation is that all of our readers - young and old - go and see this film.

Η ΜΕΤΑΣΤΡΟΦΗ ΤΟΥ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΥ ΠΑΥΛΟΥ

Όταν ο Παύλος αναθεωρεί την περασμένη του ζωή την διαιρεί σε δύο μέρη, την εποχή χωρίς Χριστό και την εποχή με το Χριστό. Τώρα πλησιάζουμε την μεγάλη καμπή της ζωής του. Τρία συνταρακτικά γεγονότα το ένα πίσω από το άλλο: Ο Φόνος του Στεφάνου, ο διωγμός στην Ιουδαία, το ταξίδι στη Δαμασκό.

Ταξίδευε ήδη οκτώ ημέρες προς την Δαμασκό, έχοντας στο σάκκο του την συστατική επιστολή του Συνεδρίου κατά των εκεί Χριστιανών. Και στην σκέψι του, γυρίζουν αδιόκοπα εκείνα τα λόγια για τον προφήτη, που τα ανέφερε στις προσευχές του, σε όλη την διάρκεια των μαρτυριών τους. «Ως πρόβατον επί σφαγήν ήχθη». Θυμόταν τον πάσχοντα Μεσσία που πεθαίνει, αυτόν που έπρεπε να γίνει ο Σωτήρ και του εαυτού του και του λαού του, από την θρησκευτική και την ηθική του κατάπτωση. Αντιλαμβάνεται ότι κάτι Αόρατο τον πιέζει εσωτερικός. Τότε, αισθάνεται μέσα του να φουντώνη πιο άγριο το μίσος του εναντίον αυτής της αιρέσεως που ξέρει ότι η νίκη της θα προκαλούσε το τέλος της Ιουδαϊκής θρησκείας και των κοσμοκρατορικών σχεδίων της.

Ξαφνικά πάνω από τον ουρανό μια εκτυφλωτική φλόγα. Τα άλογα στήθηκαν όρθια και αλαφιασμένα. Σαν συγκινητικό παράπονο, ακούεται η φωνή, που τον καλούσε με το όνομα του, μία φορά, δύο

φορές, θλιμμένη, γεμάτη παράπονο. «Σαούλ! Σαούλ, τι με διώκεις;» Και σαν αστραπή, η ουράνια επίγνωση τον συνετάραξε. Ο Στέφανος είχε δίκιο! Ο Ιησούς ζη! Είναι να απορή κανείς, που ο Σαύλος, με την όρμη αυτής της επιγνώσεως έπαθε ίλιγγο; Πόσο διάστημα πέρασε μέχρι την στιγμή που βγήκε από μέσα του εκείνη η ερώτησις που δεν δείχνη αμφιβολία, αλλά έκκλησι - «Τίς εί, Κύριε;» - δεν το ξέρομε. Και τώρα ήλθαν τα λυτρωτικά λόγια. «Εγώ - ειμί - Ιησούς!» Και σαν τρυφερό παράπονο αντήχησε ύστερα. «Όν σύ διώκεις!»

Εκείνη την στιγμή, το φωτεινό πρόσωπο του Ιησού του φάνηκε σαν ένα κεφάλι γεμάτο αίματα και πληγές, με πολλές λεπτές ολοπόρφυρες γραμμές. Και πάλι, σαν αστραπή πέρασε μέσα από το μυαλό του η σκέψις ότι το μυστικό σώμα του Χριστού πάσχει με τα παθήματα των δικών του. Το Φώς της πίστεως είχε ανατείλει μέσα του! Ήταν μία ανατολή δυνάμεων όλο μυστήριο, η έναρξις μιάς καινούργιας ζωής, η είσοδος ενός

ανωτέρου κόσμου, η κατεργασία του κατάξερου αγρού της ψυχής του. Είχε ακλόνητη πεποίθησι, ότι είχε πραγματικά ιδή και είχε συνομιλήσει με τον Αναστάντα Κύριο.

Και να, ο Σαύλος ήταν πάλι εντελώς ο ίδιος, όχι κανείς ονειροπαρμένος, αλλά με τις σταθερές του σκέψεις, άνθρωπος της πράξεως. «Τί ποιήσω, Κύριε;» Όχι θρήνοι για την κομματιασμένη ζωή του, ούτε απελπισμένα διαβήματα, αλλά έργα, το μάθημα από την αρχή, ανασύνταξις σε όλη τη γραμμή! «Κύριε, πάρε με και δώσε τον εαυτό μου σε Σένα». Θέλω να είμαι ακόλουθος σου, θέλω να είμαι δούλος σου! Ο ουράνιος κυνηγός τον συνέλαβε, τον εδάμασε όπως δαμάζουν μιά για πάντα εκείνα τα άγρια άλογα, που ύστερα, υπακούουν πρόθυμα στον καβαλάρη τους, πειθαρχούν και στο ελάχιστο νεύμα του. Όταν ο Σαύλος σηκώθηκε από χάμω, ήταν για πάντα ένας πιστός ακόλουθος του Ιησού, για όλους τους αιώνες. Και έγινε ο Παύλος ο Μέγας απόστολος των εθνών.





‘...and His kingdom will have no end...’

God is Eternal, without beginning and without end. Therefore, His kingdom and His rule is eternal also. His kingdom ‘is not of this world’ (John 18:36). It is unlike any earthly kingdom, or period of government, all of which end sooner or later.

Christ revealed God’s kingdom. His public ministry began with the exhortation, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matthew 4:17). Through His words and actions He brought to all mankind a new way of life, a new reality, filled with the spirit of His kingdom. He made it clear to us that ‘the kingdom of God is within’ us (Luke 17:21).

It is found within our heart when we actively participate in the divine Mysteries of the Church and struggle to live according to God’s will. In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask ‘Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

The words ‘within you’ can also be translated as ‘among you’ i.e. God’s kingdom is present in the community of the faithful, in the Church, and especially during every Divine Liturgy where we repeatedly proclaim and affirm the timelessness of His kingdom:

‘Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen’ (Opening words of the Divine Liturgy).

‘May the Lord God remember all of you in His kingdom, always, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen’ (Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy).

It is through our incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church, that we experience a foretaste of the heavenly eternal kingdom, here and now. We cannot yet experience it in its fullness, for this will be fulfilled after the second Coming of Christ.

To be living citizens of this kingdom from now is what Orthodox Christians work towards with vigilance, joy and asceticism, for ‘the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force’ (Matthew 11:12). That is, our desire for Christ needs to be so great that it removes anything which stands as a barrier between ourselves and Him.

Christ highlighted many times the barriers which keep us from

receiving the kingdom of heaven. On seeing the sorrowful reaction of the rich young man He commented, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ (Luke 18:24).

He also provided the key to overcome these barriers: ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it’ (Luke 18:16-17). We are to emulate the simplicity, innocence and complete faith of young children in order to inherit God’s kingdom.

May the words of Apostle Paul encourage us to live each day as citizens of the eternal kingdom: ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal’ (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

News & Events



The Neomartyrs

This was the theme of the sixth presentation commemorating 200 years since the 1821 Greek Revolution presented by the Boys Omathes (Orthodox Youth Fellowship) on Sunday 6 May, with the blessing and presence of His Eminence our Archbishop Makarios of Australia. His Grace Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, other clergy of our Holy Archdiocese and over 500 people were also in attendance.

The presentation focused on the role the 'Neomartyrs' had in preserving our faith through 400 years of Ottoman occupation. We know about them due to the incredible work of St Nicodemus the Hagiorite who compiled and published their lives. This inspired and gave courage to the Greeks who refused to succumb to pressure to compromise their faith. With their resistance and martyrdom, they became the first heroes of the Revolution. The boys related stories of many Neomartyrs in a video presentation, performed songs and dances in their honour, and presented a play on the life of St Pavlos of Peloponnesus, who was martyred in Tripoli in 1818.

Deeply moved, His Eminence congratulated the young people for their efforts. Noting the sad fact that many today have abandoned the Orthodox faith and are disconnected from their Greek heritage, he encouraged everyone to reject pressure to conform to the values of this world, remain firm in our faith, and struggle for our Greek Orthodox heritage and values. Through this, we can help others remain connected to Christ and His church, just like the Neomartyrs did.

"Do not deny your Orthodox Christian faith because there is no greater treasure in this world."

+ St Nicodemus the Hagiorite

Key Dates

JUNE






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| 1  Wednesday After-feast of Pascha | 2 Thursday ASCENSION OF OUR LORD |
| 5 Sunday Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council | 12 Sunday PENTECOST |
| 19 Sunday of All Saints 20-28 Apostles' Fast | 29  Wednesday Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles |

JULY

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| 1  Friday Cosmas and Damianos, the Unmercenarys | 3 Sunday Martyr Hyacinth |
| 10 Sunday 45 Holy Martyrs of Nicopolis | 17 Sunday Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council |
| 24 Sunday Great Martyr Christina | 31 Sunday Joseph of Arimathea |



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-  (02) 9787 9779
-  editor@lychnos.org
-  www.lychnos.org
-  @orthodoxjourneyaustralia
-  @orthodoxjourney_australia