

Protection of the Faithful

«ΥΓΧΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΟΣΙ ΜΟΥ Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ» ΨΑΛΜ 118, 105

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ΑΧΝΟΣ

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Είναι η πιο μαύρη σελίδα της ιστορίας των νεότερων χρόνων του έθνους μας... Εφέτος, 100 χρόνια από τα τρομερά εκείνα γεγονότα της καταστροφής, αναγκαζόμαστε να τα θυμηθούμε και αναλογιζοντάς τα, να αναμετρηθούμε με την αλήθεια. Αυτή η προσπάθεια της μνήμης μας είναι και κουραστική και οδυνηρή. Δάκρυα μας έρχονται στα μάτια για τη χαμένη πατρίδα, για τα χαμένα όνειρα. Τρεις χιλιάδες (και βάλε) χρόνια Ελληνικής παρουσίας στη Μικρασία εξανεμίστηκαν – σαν το φτερό στον άνεμο – μέσα σε λίγες μέρες.

Η Μικρασία ήταν το λίκνο της φυλής μας. Εκεί, ιδιαίτερα στην Ιωνία, κτυπούσε πιότερο η καρδιά του Ελληνισμού. Εκεί κυοφορήθηκε η επιστημονική σκέψη και ένας πολιτισμός πρωτόγνωρος και αξιοθαύμαστος. Και όταν αργότερα ήλθαν τα μαύρα χρόνια της Οθωμανικής σκλαβιάς στη Μικρασία, άσβηστη έκαιγε στις καρδιές των ανθρώπων η Ορθοδοξία. Όσο κι αν κυνηγήθηκαν και ταπεινώθηκαν από τον άξεστο και βάρβαρο κατακτητή, ποτέ στη Μικρασία δεν ξέπεσε η θρησκευτική πίστη του λαού. Γνωρίζουμε πως η παιδεία μέσω της Εκκλησίας, παραστεκόταν και φώτιζε τη ζωή του Έλληνα Μικρασιάτη. Τον αφύπνιζε και τον γέμιζε καθημερινά με πίστη και αισιοδοξία για τη ζωή.

Ονομαστή έμεινε στην ιστορία η «Ευαγγελική Σχολή» της Σμύρνης. Και δεν ήταν μόνο η πρωτιά στη παιδεία, αλλά την εποχή πριν την καταστροφή, η Ιωνία, με κέντρο βέβαια τη Σμύρνη, γνώρισε μια πρωτόγνωρη ακμή σε όλα τα επίπεδα του πολιτιστικού και κοινωνικού βίου. Αύξηση των γραμμάτων, αύξηση των τεχνών. Αύξηση του εμπορίου, με πρωτοφανή οικονομική ευμάρεια, πολιτιστικές εκδηλώσεις, πλούτη, απόλαυση – αλλά – αλλοίμονο και τρυφήλη ζωή. Ζωή που γεννά την αμαρτία. Πριν την καταστροφή παρατηρείται μια ηθική φθορά που οδηγεί σε ακολασία. Γράφει ο Άγιος Αμφιλόχιος της Πάτμου (από το βιβλίο «Πνευματική Συμπόρευσις», Γρηγορίου μοναχού Κουβαρίτη):

«Το πλοίο έφθασε στη Σμύρνη σούρουπο. Η ψυχή μου ήταν γεμάτη χαρά και νοσταλγία που θα έβλεπα από κοντά μία από τις Εκκλησίες της Αποκαλύψεως. Δυστυχώς, οι παραλίες ήταν γεμάτες ανθρώπους άσεμνα ντυμένους που απροκάλυπτα ασελγούσαν. Ρώτησα αν είναι Τούρκοι. Και μου απάντησαν «Έλληνες και μάλιστα Χριστιανοί». Με βαριά καρδιά

κατέβηκα από το πλοίο και άρχισα να περιφέρομαι στη πόλη. Αναρωτιόμουν, «αυτή είναι η Εκκλησία του Πολύκαρπου του ιερομάρτυρος και τόσων άλλων Αγίων και Μαρτύρων;»

Οπότε, ξάφνου παρουσιάστηκε μπροστά μου ένας γέροντας κληρικός και μου λέγει «Αμφιλόχιε, μη λυπήσαι. Θα έρθη εποχή που η φωτιά θα τα κάψει όλα όσα βλέπεις. Θα μη από τη μία μεριά της πόλης και θα βγει στην άλλη». Το γεροντάκι έγινε άφαντο. Πράγματι παιδιά μου, δεν πέρασαν πολλά χρόνια και παντού ακούστηκε «οι Τούρκοι έκαψαν την όμορφη και ξακουστή πόλη της Σμύρνης».

Και μεις σήμερα, αναλογιζόμενοι τις εκατοντάδες χιλιάδες των νεκρών, τους πνιγμένους από τις αναποδογυρισμένες βάρκες, τη προδοσία από τους συμμάχους – δήθεν φίλους μας – τους βιασμούς, τις θηριωδίες, το ξεριζωμό, καλούμαστε να σκεφθούμε βαθιά, σοβαρά και με επίγνωση:

+ Δεν ξεχνούμε την υπερτρισεχλιετή ιστορία του Ελληνισμού της Μικρασίας.

+ Οικτίρουμε τους ανιστόρητους και «προοδευτικούς» πολιτικούς – εκπαιδευτικούς μας που μιλούν περί «συνωστισμού» στο λιμάνι της Σμύρνης.

+ Προσευχόμαστε για τις ψυχές όλων αυτών των αδελφών μας – θύματα της καταστροφής και του ξεριζωμού. Μα πάνω απ' όλα,

+ Παρακαλούμε και εκλιπαρούμε τον Ύψιστο να σκέπει και να περιφρουρεί τον Ελληνισμό και την Ορθοδοξία όπου γης. Γιατί σήμερα πιο πολύ από κάθε άλλη στιγμή της ιστορίας αντιλαμβανόμαστε ότι:

«αι ανομίες μου υπερέραν την κεφαλήν μου, ωσεί φορτίον βαρύ εβαρύνθησαν επ εμέ» (Ψαλ. 37:5).

Οι ανομίες μας σαν κύματα υψώθηκαν πάνω απ' τα κεφάλια μας και μας σκέπασαν ολόκληρους για να μας πνίξουν. Σαν βαρύ και συντριπτικό φορτίο μας πιέζουν και πέφτουν πάνω μας (Μετάφ. κου. Π. Τρεμπέλα).

Την όποια καταστροφή – συμφορά στη ζωή των ανθρώπων, μόνο το έλεος του Παντοδύναμου Θεού μπορεί να εξευμενίσει. Και Αυτός είναι που τελικά θα δώσει τη λύση, τη διέξοδο και τη γαλήνη στις τρικυμισμένες καρδιές μας.



Holy Protection of the Theotokos

The Theotokos watches over and cares for all the faithful who honour her as the Mother of God and call upon her with hope.

Set on the south side of the church of Panagia of Blachernae in Constantinople, a chapel housed the veiled robe (gr. μαφόριον) and the belt of the Holy Virgin. One night in the 10th century, St Andrew the Fool-for-Christ with his disciple Epiphanius saw a glorious vision.

Keeping vigil, at midnight blessed St Andrew saw the Most Holy Theotokos entering from the royal gate and proceeding towards the Altar, accompanied by many angels and saints including St John the Forerunner and the holy Apostle and Evangelist John. When she reached the centre of the Church, she knelt and prayed with tears and supplications to her Son for the salvation of the whole world. Following this, she entered the holy sanctuary where she prayed for the faithful who were keeping vigil. When she finished her prayer, she took off the veil from her head and she spread it over the congregation. Both St Andrew and Epiphanius could see it glowing and radiating divine light. Finally, she ascended to heaven, slowly lifting her veil with her until it completely disappeared.

Evidently this miracle was interpreted to mean that the Theotokos protects all the faithful who call on her for help and delivers them out of danger. It was celebrated on the 1st of October annually. However, in 1952, due

to the overwhelming number of soldiers witnessing how the Theotokos had protected them from imminent danger in the Greco-Italian war, Archbishop Sophronios of Greece made a recommendation to the Holy Synod to integrate the feast day of the Holy Protection with the commemoration of the war on the 28th of October. In many stories, the Theotokos not only saved soldiers from the enemy's attacks but also blanketed them from the extreme cold and provided many supplies.

Protection of this kind is also echoed in the Old Testament when the Israelites were being led to the promised land. At that time, the protection of God came in the form of a cloud which covered the chosen people against the heat of the day, and a pillar of fire to guide them at night and prevent enemy attacks.

In particular, the Akathist Hymn, which we hear on Fridays in Great Lent, metaphorically connects the pillar of fire and the covering cloud to the Theotokos who guides and protects the new Israel, the members of the Church. But the Theotokos does not belong to any place or any people; she watches over and cares for all the faithful who honour her as the Mother of God and call upon her with hope.

Surely, how many icons are dedicated to the Theotokos and by how many unique names! All are illuminated with a candle and have incense rising before them in countless magnificent temples and humble chapels all dedicated to her, each one a manifestation of gratitude towards her holy protection. Therefore, all of us who love her and want her to unceasingly protect, shelter and deliverer us cry out, "All my hope is in You Mother of God, keep me under your protection!"



*“Rejoice,
Pillar of fire
guiding those in
darkness. Rejoice,
Protection of the
world, wider than
a cloud.”*

+ Akathist Hymn



respectful and worshipful honour of extraordinary persons or mysteries. One may well ask:

How does one possibly accept ideas, and worship persons and mysteries we do not even understand?

We base our Faith on the absolute authenticity of Divine Revelation, which offers us the Divine Truths, and we accept them with all our heart. After all, Faith is not 'how' and 'why', as it is not a matter of research nor autopsy, but God reveals the unknown, shows us the hidden truths and we say "Yes, amen", and follow Him.

1. The Christian person **hopes** to experience as real, things such as: Resurrection of the dead, the Second Coming of Christ, the final Judgement, Eternal life, the Kingdom of God, Liberation from sin, and his protection by God in this life.

2. Further, the Christian **believes** without doubt that: God created the World, Christ is a real person and was born of the Virgin Mary, was Crucified, Resurrected and Ascended to Heaven, will come again to Judge all men. He believes in the existence of the Soul, in the reality of Eternal Life and of the Angelic Hosts.

The above attributes lead the person to live a virtuous and holy life, love every person he knows and above all, love God. The problem for every well-intentioned person is:

How does one obtain the true Faith?

Initially and essentially, the first step is our own sincere desire to acquire such Faith. For this, one

Faith: What is its substance?

If one was to debate the details of the Christian Faith with an atheist or unbeliever, it would not be possible to win the argument in his favour. The reason for this would be that the atheist would argue on the basis of rationality, common sense, and material proof, whereas the Christian would do so on a different plane; his comments would be derived from his own Faith.

Two different methods of thinking, and at odds with one another. For us Christians,

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

Our religious Faith is the absolute conviction and certainty that persons, events, and objects which existed in the past, or are to happen in the future, cannot be seen and are incomprehensible. These cannot be understood by our senses or our mind. Further, our faith is the wholehearted acceptance of

needs sincere and fervent prayer, a virtuous life, and good deeds in the name of Jesus Christ. Such deeds are food for the faith, as

“Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

When this occurs, God intervenes with the Grace of the Holy Spirit to breathe into our infantile faith, so it can mature and become active, just as He breathed into the face of Adam, and he became a living person with the Grace of the Holy Spirit. At that stage, the person becomes spiritually powerful, able to resist and defeat the temptations and snares of the Devil. The ability to be able to see and understand with our eyes is of great help for us, so as to survive in this world. However, it proves to be quite weak

compared to faith in God, which is powerful and strong. We read in the Old Testament,

“To fortify your faith, acquaint yourself with your neighbour, and seek the counsel of wise men” (Wisdom Sirach 9:14).

This suggests that we should be careful who we associate with - our friends and social circle should consist of people with ideals such as ours because we want to maintain and keep our Faith powerful and healthy so we can see not only the realities of this world, but to be able to understand with the eyes of our Soul those realities that are Spiritual and Eternal.



Write to us.

Do you have a question for our clergy about our Orthodox Faith? Is there a book you would like to know more about? We would like to hear your suggestions and feedback.

Please email us:
editor@lychnos.org

St Nikolai Velimirovich

The modern Serbian Saint, Nikolai Velimirovich, was an educator, diplomat, and spiritual father, with many commentators drawing comparisons between his life and that of Saint John Chrysostom – naming him a New Chrysostom. He was born in 1880 to pious Serbian Orthodox parents in the village of Lelich in western Serbia. He was greatly influenced by his mother who instructed him in the Faith, an experience Saint Nikolai named among the most influential of his life.

As a child, Nikolai was interested in education and the spiritual life. Although he applied to enter the military academy, he failed the fitness exam as he was born physically weak. This pushed Nikolai towards becoming a spiritual soldier instead, as he soon began studies at the Seminary of Saint Sava in Belgrade. It was from this point that Nikolai began his education journey, eventually becoming a renaissance man. He studied in Switzerland, Germany, England, and Russia and would obtain five doctorates throughout his life.

In 1909, after returning to Serbia, Nikolai suddenly became ill. Hospitalised for two months, the Saint prayed and vowed that if his health returned, he would become a monk. Upon his health improving, he entered the monastic ranks and was quickly ordained to the priesthood. He used his vast knowledge and talents to serve God and the Serbian people and was elevated to Archimandrite. He went on to become a professor in the Seminary of Saint Sava in Belgrade where he wrote several

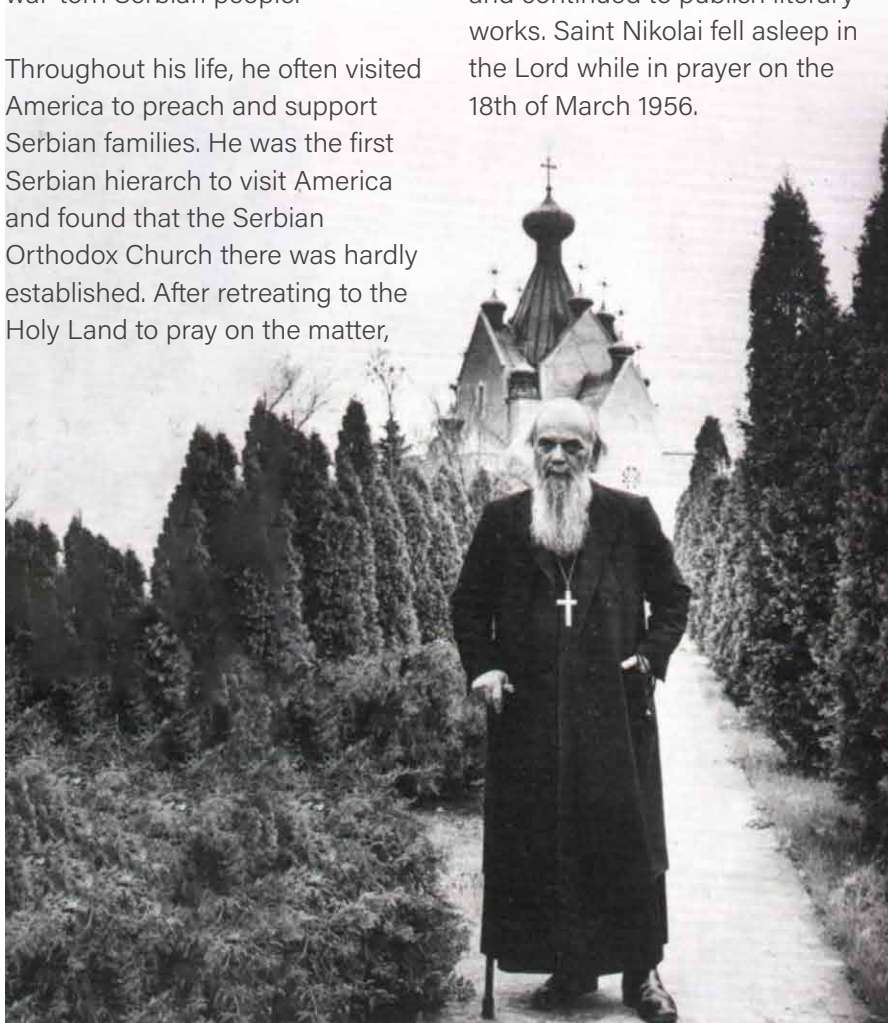
great works which touched many souls. During this time, Saint Nikolai spiritually influenced and guided many students who became monks, clergy, and theologians.

Saint Nikolai became known as a great Serbian literary figure. As a result, when World War I broke out, he was selected as an official diplomat, travelling to England to obtain support for Serbia. After successfully achieving this, he assisted in the formation of the new Yugoslav state. However, he desired to further support the suffering. This was fulfilled in 1919 when Father Nikolai was selected as the new Bishop of Zicha, allowing him to personally heal the war-torn Serbian people.

Throughout his life, he often visited America to preach and support Serbian families. He was the first Serbian hierarch to visit America and found that the Serbian Orthodox Church there was hardly established. After retreating to the Holy Land to pray on the matter,

he nominated a candidate accepted by the synod for the position of Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America.

During World War II, with the German occupation of Yugoslavia, Bishop Nikolai was imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp for two years, attributing his survival to the Virgin Mary. After his release, Saint Nikolai returned to America where he continued preaching and writing spiritual works. This includes the well-known *Prologue from Ohrid*, a collection of the lives of the Saints. He spent the last five years of his life in America in Saint Tikhon's Russian Orthodox Monastery. He lived as a professor, dean, and rector of the seminary and continued to publish literary works. Saint Nikolai fell asleep in the Lord while in prayer on the 18th of March 1956.



"How can we increase in gratitude?"

by Fr G. L.

When Jesus healed the ten lepers, and when only one of them returned to thank Him, He exclaimed: *"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"* (Luke 17:17-18). Jesus indicates here that gratitude is a basic human attribute that we all need to have. It shows decency and humility. It attracts the Grace of God.

According to St Paisios, our gratitude is an indicator of the presence of God in our lives. He says, *"when you see a person who is really anxious, sad or sorrowful, yet they lack nothing, you know that they lack God. If anybody has everything, both material goods and health, and instead of being grateful to God, has unreasonable demands instead, and grumbles, they might as well 'go to hell in their own shoes'"*. They are quite strong words, but they reveal that ingratitude is a spiritual illness that is literally damning!

One area where gratitude is important is in marriage. When asked about what unites a husband and wife most, St Paisios' one-word answer was 'gratitude.' He taught that gratitude cultivates a positive disposition and fondness towards our spouse and is the antidote to the grumbling and negative thoughts that can slowly eat away at a couple's marital bond.

St Paisios also encourages us to be grateful for the trials that we face, and for those persons that persecute or

harm us. We remind ourselves that those difficulties are allowed by God for our salvation: to help us to cultivate the virtues and weed out our passions and bad habits.

So, how do we increase in gratitude? Firstly, we need to remember our debt to God. Each sin that we commit is a debt to God and yet, through His crucifixion, He wiped away our debt. God has also loaned us our talents (Matthew 25:14-30); the gifts and abilities that God has given us, for us to cultivate and multiply. He will ask us to give account for these talents, and hence they form part of our debt. We also have another deficit to God, and these are the good works that we ought to have done but haven't. Moreover, God has given us everything else that we have; our natural world that we live in, our family, our health, everything.

Once we recognise our sinfulness, God's great love and mercy, and our debt to Him, then we naturally become grateful. Gratitude is thus part of our repentance. Therefore, the ultimate way to grow in gratitude is to grow in repentance. Remembering God's gifts to us and His love and forgiveness also helps grow our repentance. Reading the Scriptures reminds us of God's love, condescension, and plan of our salvation. Furthermore, immersing ourselves in nature reminds us of God's splendour and love. All those things foster gratitude.

May the good Lord, therefore, help us to see His love and will in all things, and to grow in gratitude towards Him, and towards the people that He sends in our lives.



The Icon of St Catherine the Great Martyr

During the turbulent years of the 8th century, the monks of Saint Catherine's Monastery in Mount Sinai took great care to compile what is now one of the oldest and most important collections of icons in the world. Having remained unscathed from the consequences of the iconoclastic controversy due to its remoteness from the political centres of the empire, Saint Catherine's Monastery became a sanctuary for icons dating from as early as the 5th century AD. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the centre of Byzantine culture shifted to Crete and the monks of Saint Catherine's Monastery became greatly influenced by the Cretan School of iconography.

This influence is most evident in the ornate iconostasis of the monastery's basilica painted by Jeremias Palladas, a disciple of the Cretan school, in 1612. A key feature of the iconostasis is the icon of the monastery's patron, Saint Catherine, which has served as a prototype for iconography of the Saint in both the East and the West since its creation.

In the icon, Saint Catherine sits atop a throne with her head slightly inclined. This offers us an insight into the character of St Catherine, someone of noble or royal birth who exemplifies humility despite her status as a noblewoman. She is adorned with the traditional Byzantine loros, a ceremonial costume reserved for those in the Imperial family or high-ranking officials, and a regal cloak decorated with the double-headed

eagle, the Byzantine imperial coat of arms, to signify her elevated position in the Byzantine empire. Surrounding her figure are books and scientific instruments which emphasise her profound wisdom and indicate to us the tools which she used to conquer the pagan philosophers.

These, however, are not elevated above the spiked wheel that she rests on and the Crucifix held in her left hand, to remind us that even greater than her wisdom was her glorious martyrdom. This is highlighted by the palm held in her right hand, the symbol of victory.



In the background of the icon, to the left, we can see Prophet Moses on Mount Sinai interacting with the burning bush and receiving the Ten Commandments. Here we see the influence of the famous iconographer Michael Damaskinos and his renowned icon, Virgin of the Burning Bush, a depiction inspired by Saint John of Damascus (c.676-c.750) who identified the Burning Bush as a prefiguration of the Theotokos, bearing the Divine Flame without being consumed. To the right is

Mount Catherine where two angels transported the body of Saint Catherine after her death which remained miraculously incorrupt until its discovery.

The iconographer concludes his work with the inscription: *Αἰκατερίνα καὶ σοφὴ καὶ παρθένος, ἐκ δὲ ξίφους καὶ μάρτυς, ὧ καλὰ τρία* (The three virtues of Catherine: wise, pure, and martyred by the sword).



St John Chrysostom on DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Saint John Chrysostom wrote a treatise entitled *On the Providence of God* when he was in exile in Armenia, after he was unjustly deposed as Archbishop of Constantinople in 404. Despite being mistreated and having his supporters tortured, it is remarkable that he still saw God at work in all things.

Saint Chrysostom commences by writing that God's will cannot be always understood by humans, calling this "madness and folly". However, we should be comforted and satisfied when we read in Genesis that "God saw everything He had made, and indeed, it was very good" (1:31). Patience is required, as "everything will be fulfilled, either in this world or in the age to come".

The reader is also reminded that God has provided for humanity in His love, something that is testified to by creation. Saint Chrysostom points to the stars, and the cycle of the sun, and all their benefits as evidence of this. Finally, Saint Chrysostom brings the reader back to the Cross, which is further evidence of God's love for humanity.

Even the existence of evil can be used for good, so trials can strengthen us and draw us closer to God. However, to react to evil in this way, one must be "genuinely and firmly grounded". Further, people who are evil can also be turned to good, with Saint Chrysostom giving the example of Saint Paul. However, we must be vigilant and pay attention to our actions.

Finally, Saint John Chrysostom brings the reader back to a discussion of trials and tribulations. He recounts the stories of the martyrs, who suffered greatly yet considered martyrdom to be God's will. These seemingly horrible deaths strengthened the faithful and converted the pagans, further showing that God's will cannot be understood at a surface level.



Η ιστορία των Αγίων Μαρτύρων Γαλακτίωνος και Επιστήμης είναι όντως παράδειγμα αληθινής αγάπης και αφοσίωσης στο Χριστό. Η μητέρα του Γαλακτίωνα, η Λευκίππη, μπόρεσε να μείνει έγκυος μόνο όταν βαπτίστηκε χριστιανή. Βλέποντας το θαύμα, ο πατέρας του, ο Κλειτοφών, ακολούθησε το παράδειγμα της συζύγου του και βαπτίστηκε και αυτός. Ακολούθως γεννήθηκε και ο γιος τους ο Γαλακτίων, ο οποίος πρόκοψε με σοφία και πίστη Χριστού.

Όταν ο Γαλακτίων έγινε είκοσι τεσσάρων χρονών, ο πατέρας του τον αρραβώνιασε με την Επιστήμη, μια όμορφη αλλά ειδωλολάτρισσα κοπέλα. Παρόλο που δεν ήθελε να

παντρευτεί, ο Γαλακτίων υπάκουσε στον πατέρα του. Η Επιστήμη βαπτίστηκε χριστιανή, και το ζευγάρι συμφώνησαν μαζί να μοιράσουν όλη την περιουσία τους στους φτωχούς και να διατηρήσουν την παρθενία τους μέχρι θανάτου. Ταξίδεψαν στο όρος Σινά όπου ο Γαλακτίων έγινε μοναχός και η Επιστήμη έγινε μοναχή. Και οι δύο έζησαν ασκητική ζωή, προσδεδυόμενες στην προσευχή, την ταπείνωση και την αγάπη. Μόνο στο μαρτύριό τους ξαναείδαν ο ένας τον άλλον.

Έξι χρόνια αργότερα, ο αυτοκράτορας Δέκιος και ο ηγεμόνας Σεκούνδος, άρχισαν σκληρό διωγμό κατά των χριστιανών και συνέλαβαν μια

ομάδα αγίων ασκητών κοντά στο όρος Σινά. Η Επιστήμη σε όραμα, είχε προΐδει ότι ο Γαλακτίων ήταν να αιχμαλωτισθεί και να μαρτυρήσει. Τότε, χωρίς να διστάσει, ακολούθησε και αυτή τον αιχμάλωτο σύζυγό της, επιθυμώντας να μαρτυρήσει κι αυτή μαζί του. Οι δυο τους μεταφέρθηκαν στην Αλεξάνδρεια, όπου τους μαστίγωσαν και τους βασάνισαν βάνουσα, μη θέλοντας να αρνηθούν τον Χριστό. Σε όλες τις φρικτές δοκιμασίες τους, ενίσχυαν ο ένας τον άλλον. Ομολόγησαν τον Χριστό και δόξασαν το όνομα του Θεού, μεταστρέφοντας πολλούς στην Αληθινή Πίστη με το παράδειγμά τους. Αποκεφαλίστηκαν μαζί στις 5 Νοεμβρίου του έτους 250.



The story of the Holy Martyrs Galaction and Episteme is one of true devotion and love for Christ. Galaction's mother, Lefkippe, was only able to conceive after she was baptised. On seeing this miracle, Galaction's father, Kletophon, followed his wife's example and was also baptised into the True Church. Soon after, their son Galaction was born, who grew in wisdom and faith in Christ.

When Galaction reached twenty-four, Kletophon betrothed him to Episteme, a lovely but pagan girl. Despite not wanting to marry, Galaction obeyed his father. Episteme was baptised and the

married couple mutually agreed to distribute all their wealth among the poor and preserve their virginity until death. They travelled to Mount Sinai where Galaction joined a monastery and Episteme a convent. Both lived an ascetic life, growing in prayer, humility and love. It was not until their martyrdom that they saw each other again.

Six years later, Emperor Decius and Governor Secundus, while engaged in a fierce persecution against Christians, captured a group of holy ascetics near Mount Sinai. After learning in a vision that Galaction was to be captured,

Episteme followed him, desiring to endure and martyr along with him. The two were taken to Alexandria, where they were brutally whipped and tortured, refusing to deny Christ. Throughout their horrific ordeals, they strengthened each other, confessed Christ and glorified God, converting many others through their example of faith. They were beheaded together on 5 November in the year 250.

Holy Martyrs Galaction and Episteme, intercede for us and reveal that to truly love others, we must always place Christ first in our hearts!

I Lifted My Eyes to the Mountains

Psalm 120 (121)

This Psalm is one of the Psalms of Ascent, recited by the Jews as they ascended the steps to the Temple and by Orthodox Christians during the Presanctified Divine Liturgy. It is also commonly prayed in the morning and is part of the prayers of the Midnight Office.

This Psalm begins: "I lifted my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth". In praying this, we remember that God is above and always comes to our aid. This is definite, which is why it says that "help comes". We recognise that God has created heaven and earth and has the power to save us from all afflictions.

We then ask God that we may not slip and fall into sin and that He may always guard us – "Let not your foot be moved; neither let Him who keeps you slumber" (v. 3). Saint Augustine comments that this verse reminds us that Lucifer, the brightest of the angels, fell from heaven, and that we should beware of pride as we progress in our spiritual struggle.

It may appear strange that we pray that God does not sleep in protecting us. After all, God surely does not need sleep? This shows us that while God is always protecting us, we need to seek His help so that our connection with Him is not dormant. We need to call on Him.

When the Psalm states that "the Lord is your shelter at your right hand" (v.5), this shows us that our actions need to be those of the right hand, "sheltering you when doing good" according to Saint Nicodemus the Hagiorite. This follows the connection made throughout the Bible between good and the right hand - epitomised by Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Finally, we are reassured of God guarding us for all eternity – "The Lord shall keep your coming in and your going out from this present time and unto the ages" (v. 8). Praying this in the morning calls upon God's shelter and guidance throughout the day - something we all need!

Love Thy Enemies

Luke 6:31-36

In the Gospel of Luke (6:31-36), Christ lays down the standard by which we are to love. This standard is not defined by how we treat those whom it is easy for us to love but rather how we treat those whom we reject and push away from us, our enemies ("if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?").

Although we are incapable of defining or describing God in human terms, we can be bold enough to say that God is love. This is because all His actions point towards a nature that loves absolutely, unconditionally, and incomprehensively. This is made totally apparent through the life of Jesus Christ and His teachings.

St Silouan the Athonite used to say, 'The Holy Spirit is love, and He gives the soul strength to love her enemies. And he who does not love his enemies does not know God! St Sophrony of Essex outlines that our Lord's love is total and all-embracing, extending to every living thing and even to the depths of hell ("For He is kind to the unthankful and evil"). So then if we reject and dislike our fellow man, we have separated ourselves from God who does not deprive any person of His love. Thus, if we are not where God is and if we do not love who God loves, how then can we truly know Him?

To love our enemies is not an easy task, for it is intrinsically linked to truly knowing Christ. However, our Church and our Saints have provided the blueprint for how we are to treat our fellow man. St Silouan beautifully wrote, 'I want only one thing: to pray for all men as myself'. Let us all earnestly strive to see God in every person, knowing that how we treat our enemies reflects our relationship with Christ.

*I want
only one thing:
to pray for all men
as myself.*

+ St Silouan the Athonite





This word, commonly heard as an exclamation and exhortation in worship, is a loan word from the Hebrew which means 'Praise God.' It is encountered in Scripture most frequently in the Book of Psalms, specifically in the psalms directly praising God, as a refrain.

In the current worship of the Orthodox Church, it is encountered in all the services of the liturgical day, from Vespers through to the Compline Service (Απόδειπνο).

There are however specific hymns known as alleuaria-Αλληλουιάρια, which are melodic repetitions of "Alleluia", chanted after the reading of the Epistle reading during the Liturgy, set to longer melodies usually preceded by verses from the Psalms of David.

In current use in most Parishes, they are sung in a very truncated form, basically a shrunken relic of their original form and usage.

In today's worship we have the benefit of various hymns, composed and set to music over a passage of 1500 years, written by holy men and women.

It is believed that they stem from a time – more specifically the first four centuries after Christ – where the content of what was chanted and read out aloud in public worship services, was largely based on readings from the Old and New Testaments and the Book of Psalms.

It is believed that the longer, drawn-out melodious chanting of "Alleluia", preceded by Psalmic verses specific to the service or Feast-Day being celebrated,

served as a welcome musical interlude amongst the scriptural readings.

However, for the sake of balance in our worship, we have passed down to us canons from various councils of the Church Fathers, for example the 17th Canon from the Council of Laodicea held in the 4th Century, that stipulate that the chanting of psalms should be interspersed with "lessons", that is, passages read out from Scripture. Also, in a similar manner we read in the 57th Canon of Book Two of the Apostolic Constitutions: "In the middle, let the reader stand upon some high place: let him read the books of Moses, of Joshua the Son of Nun, of the Judges, and of the Kings and of the Chronicles, and those written after the return from the captivity; and besides these, the books of Job and of Solomon, and of the sixteen prophets. But when there have been two lessons severally read, let some other person sing the hymns of David, and let the people join at the conclusions of the verses."

At that time, and as is now the case, the Holy Bible served as the foundation of the content of the worship services, the difference being that in today's worship we have the benefit of various hymns, composed and set to music over a passage of 1500 years, written by holy men and women, which expand, comment on and reinforce the messages and dogmas derived from Scripture.

The Alleluaria can be found chanted today as they were originally intended, in the liturgical services held in Monasteries. They have been composed in all modes of the Church Music of the Orthodox Church (also known as Byzantine Chant) and during such services, serve as a glorious introduction to the Reading of the Gospel Reading of the day, not as some insignificant appendage to the conclusion of the Epistle Reading.

“Whenever the war started, I started praying, and I started to see how God is alive.”

This book details the many troubling experiences of Orthodox Christians who have suffered because of the unrest in Syria.

Through interviews with survivors who fled abroad, mostly to the United States, *Syria Crucified* contrasts the lives of the faithful prior to the civil war and their lives during the war. Before the unrest, they lived under a regime which was mostly tolerant of all faiths. During the unrest, however, many faithful Orthodox Christians were killed or subjected to torture, and many holy sites were desecrated.

This is not a history book, yet much of the history of Orthodoxy in Syria from the

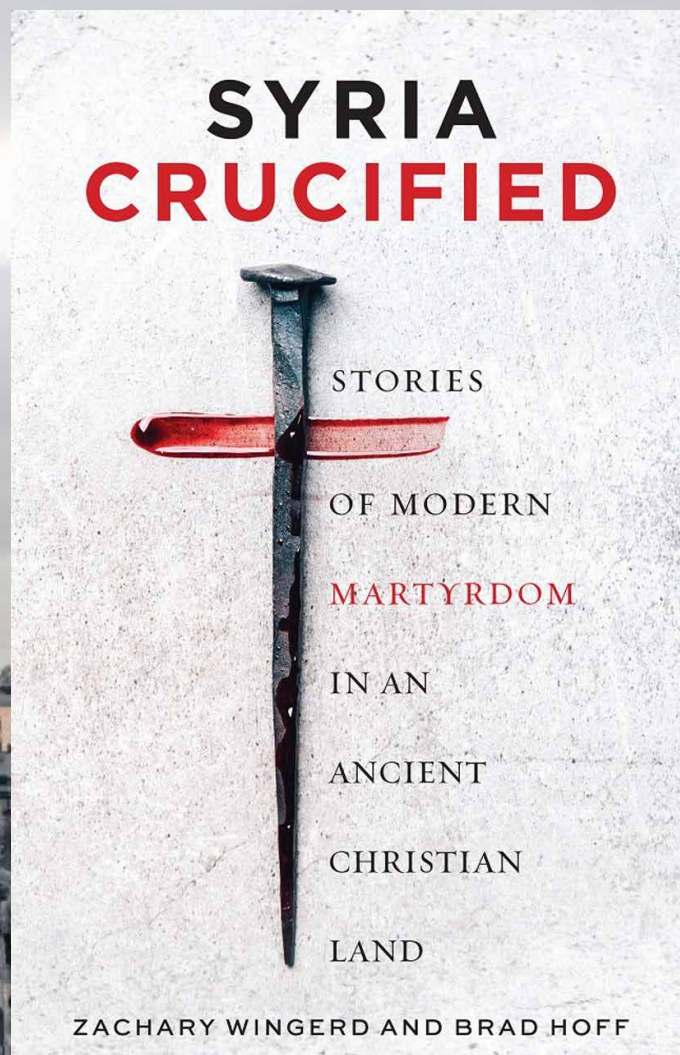
time of the Apostles, as well as during the civil war, is detailed through the stories of survivors. We read stories of centuries-old monasteries such as Maaloula and Saidnaya, which endured so many attacks from terrorists during the war.

We also read about extraordinary feats of bravery, where people knowingly put themselves at risk to save others and to partake in the Divine Services. Finally, we also read of the many miracles which safeguarded the faithful throughout these times.

One story is that of Maria, a teenager who recounts how the war changed her faith: “I would go to church just like any other kid, not believing. So it didn’t really mean anything to me until the war started and I believe there’s a reason for that ... Whenever the war started, I started praying, and I started to see how God is alive.”

This is not your usual spiritual book. It is a brilliant reminder of the many sacrifices that Orthodox Christians continue to undergo from their love for Christ. Through

the stories of the Syrian Orthodox faithful, we can be encouraged in our own faith. May we keep the people of Syria in our prayers.



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‘... And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life...’

“Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things; the Treasury of Good and Giver of life...” (Prayer to the Holy Spirit)

God is Life and the “Giver of life.” In the creation of the world and all living things, the Church fathers describe God the Father as the Initial Cause of their existence, God the Son as the Maker, and God the Holy Spirit as the Perfector. All created things have their being “from” the Father, “through” the Son, “in” the Holy Spirit.

As Co-Creator with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit perfects, confirms, upholds, sanctifies, fills and renews all of Creation. “You send forth your Spirit, and they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 103:30). In the Matins service we hear “By the Holy Spirit, streams of grace are flowing; watering all of the creation, granting life upon it.”

The Evangelist John explains that Christ spoke of the Holy Spirit when He proclaimed “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). It is through the Holy Spirit

that we participate in and commune with God. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

In Oration 41: On Pentecost, St Gregory the Theologian says of the Holy Spirit: “He also fashions the spiritual rebirth.” He goes on to refer to Christ’s striking words to the hidden disciple – Nicodemus:

Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Christ speaks of the necessity for us to be born again, from above, i.e., the spiritual rebirth of our soul which comes through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism where we are joined to Christ, and Chrismation, where we receive the Holy Spirit to reach salvation.

St Basil the Great offers further explanation regarding the significance of “water and the

Spirit”, stating: “the water furnishes the image of death, just as the body is received in burial, but the Spirit infuses life-giving power, renewing our souls from the death of sin to their original life. This, then, is what it means to be begotten again from water and the Spirit”.

The Holy Spirit fills us with vigour and life, cleansing us from sin and evil and converting us to a better life. He is the Life of the Church, of which we are called to be living members. “By the Holy Spirit, every soul is made living, is exalted, and made shining through purification, by the Threefold Oneness [Holy Trinity], in a hidden manner” (Matins).

Without the Holy Spirit, we are unable to know Christ or to advance spiritually; ultimately, we are unable to commune with God and therefore do not truly live. May our hearts never grow so cold and hardened by the pull of sin, that we cease to hope in this regeneration and renewal gifted to us by the Holy Spirit. Instead, may we glorify God’s goodness towards us and earnestly entreat the Heavenly King multiple times each day, to: “...come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls Gracious One.”



Annual Sunday Schools Picnic

On Monday 3rd October, the Sunday Schools of our Archdiocese held their annual picnic at Gough Whitlam Park, Tempe, in Sydney, where record numbers of children, family and friends, gathered from all the parishes across Sydney and beyond for a day of fun, games and competition. His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis blessed the picnic as the representative of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia. With paternal affection, His Grace addressed the children on the importance of prayer and his own Sunday School memories 50 years ago as a student himself!



St Kosmas of Aetolia Concert

On Saturday 27 August, with the blessing of his Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, who was represented by the Chancellor of our Holy Archdiocese, the Very Reverend Fr Christophoros Krikelis, the Orthodox Ladies Group of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society performed the ninth concert in its series honouring of the 200th anniversary of the 1821 Greek Revolution at St Euphemia Greek Orthodox College Hall in Sydney. The concert was entitled 'St Kosmas of Aetolia' and presented the holy life of this ethno-martyr and illuminator of the Orthodox people of Greece who paved the way for its nation-building struggle for independence.

Key Dates

OCTOBER

18 Tuesday Luke the Evangelist	23 Sunday Apostle James, the brother of the Lord
26 Wednesday Great Martyr Demetrios	28 Friday Protection of the Theotokos

NOVEMBER

8 Tuesday Archangels Michael & Gabriel	9 Wednesday Nektarios the Wonderworker of Pentapolis
13 Sunday John Chrysostom	15 Tuesday Fast Begins Thomas the New of Constantinople
16 Wednesday Matthew the Evangelist	21 Monday ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS

- 10 – St Arsenios of Cappadocia
- 14 – St St Gregory Palamas
- 22 – St Iakovos of Evia
- 25 – St Catherine the Great Martyr
- 26 – St Stylianos of Paphlagonia
- 30 – St Andrew the First-Called Apostle



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