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ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



ΕΡΧΟΝΤΑΙ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ



Έρχονται Χριστούγεννα. Οι Χριστιανοί όπου γης ετοιμάζονται για τη μεγάλη γιορτή. Ο Υιός του Θεού γίνεται Υιός της Παρθένου, όπως τον προανήγγειλε ο μεγαλοφωνότατος προφήτης Ησαΐας. Αυτός που θα γινόταν εκ Πνεύματος Αγίου και Μαρίας της Παρθένου θα ήταν ο Εμμανουήλ, που σημαίνει «ο Θεός μαζί μας». Ο Θεός γίνεται άνθρωπος για να σηκώσει το βάρος των αμαρτιών μας. Να μας δώσει τη δυνατότητα να σωθούμε. Αυτό είναι το σχέδιο της Θείας Οικονομίας.

Από τη τρομερή ώρα της παρακοής των Πρωτοπλάστων στην εντολή του Θεού, το γένος των ανθρώπων ζούσε κάτω από το βάρος μιας φοβερής ενοχής. Δεν ήταν μόνο το ότι παρήκουσε στο Δημιουργό του, αλλά οι τρομερές συνέπειες που ακολούθησαν μια τέτοια αποστασία.

Περνούν οι αιώνες πάνω στη γη, με αίματα, με πόνους, με θλίψεις, και με απελπισία. Και νά- έρχεται ο Θεός και φορά την ανθρώπινη σάρκα, μπαίνει στο ποταμό της ιστορίας και γίνεται άνθρωπος, ακριβώς όπως εμάς- που πεινά, που διψά, που κρυώνει- για να καταργήσει από μέσα μας το βάρος της ενοχής και να μας συμφιλιώσει και πάλι με τον Πατέρα. Και όλα αυτά τα θαυμαστά και εξαίσια γίνονται για μας εφέτος το 2022. Γιατί αυτό είναι το θαύμα της θεότητας. Να μην είναι ποτέ παρελθόν, αλλά πάντοτε παρόν- «Σήμερα γεννᾶται ἐκ Παρθένου» (Δοξ. Θ' Ὁρας).

Πώς λοιπόν μπορεί να μείνει καρδιά ασυγκίνητη; Πώς θα σταθούμε μπροστά στο ακατανόητο θαύμα; Πόση δύναμη νου και καρδιάς απαιτείται για να ανέλθουμε στο ύψος του Μυστηρίου της Γεννήσεως; Είμαστε άραγε κατάλληλα προετοιμασμένοι για να δεχθούμε το Θείο Βρέφος της Βηθλεέμ;

Δυστυχώς μια ματιά γύρω μας θα μας πείσει ότι ο Χριστιανικός κόσμος γενικά, όπως και οι πιο πολλοί από μας ξεχωριστά, αγνοούμε τη βαθιά σημασία της Γιορτής.

Τα άσκοπα «πήγαινε-έλα» των ανθρώπων, τα σουπερ-μάρκετς, κατάμεστα με ένα πλήθος παθιασμένο από παροξυσμό Υπερκαταναλωτισμού, οι βιτρίνες- παγίδες που σαγηνεύουν και παρασύρουν, οι κάρτες της τυπικότητας και της επιφάνειας. Τα φαγοπότια και τα παρόμοια... Όλα αυτά τι άλλο δείχνουν από την οδυνηρή

αλήθεια ότι η Μεγάλη Γιορτή δεν άγγιξε την καρδιά μας. Ότι η σημασία της πνίγηκε μέσα στις εξωτερικές δραστηριότητες. Ότι τελικά- κι αυτό είναι το πιο τραγικό – «γιορτάζουμε» Χριστούγεννα χωρίς Χριστό!

Τι κρίμα! Τη γιορτή που σήμανε τη χαρά και το ξανάνιωμα του ανθρώπου, τη μετατρέψαμε σε μια ξερή εκδήλωση τύπων και εφήμερης αισθησιακής ηδονής.

Αλλά οι καρδιές των ανθρώπων νιώθουν την εσωτερική ανάγκη της πνευματικής γιορτής. Κι όταν οι άνθρωποι παύουν να αισθάνονται την ανάγκη μιας τέτοιας γιορτής, σημαίνει λίγο-πολύ πως η ψυχή τους κινδυνεύει να πεθάνει. Παρουσιάζει η Εκκλησία μας τα θεία γεγονότα της Γεννήσεως μπροστά στα μάτια μας και μεις απλά τα παρατηρούμε σαν νά'μαστε πολύ μακριά. Όχι επειδή τα γεγονότα απέχουν πολύ (χρονικά), αλλά γιατί οι καρδιές είναι μακριά από τα γεγονότα της Θείας Οικονομίας.

Νά γιατί ο πολύς κόσμος μεταφράζει τη γιορτή σε διασκέδαση. Αλλά η διασκέδαση, καθώς η λέξη το λέει, σημαίνει σκόρπισμα. Σκόρπισμα της πνευματικής ουσίας του ανθρώπου. Ενώ η Εκκλησιαστική γιορτή είναι ευκαιρία πνευματικής περισυλλογής. Είναι αρχή μιας βαθιάς εσωτερικής και οντολογικής αναγέννησης. Ναι, ζούμε σε δύσκολους καιρούς. Καιρούς που τους προφήτευσε ο Ίδιος ο Χριστός- «καὶ διὰ τὸ πληθυνθῆναι τὴν ἀνομίαν ψυγήσεται ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν» (Ματθ. 24:12). Και επειδή θα πληθύνει η κακία και η φαιδρότης, θα ψυχρανθεί η προς τον Θεόν και τον πλησίον αγάπη του πλήθους των κατόνομα Χριστιανών (Μετάφ. κ. Τρεμπέλα).

Για μας όμως - όσοι Τον αγαπούμε - έρχονται Χριστούγεννα και όλα ντύνονται στο φως. Η καρδιά μας πλημμυρίζει από αγάπη. Ατενίζουμε τον κόσμο με νέο βλέμμα, πλησιάζουμε τον συνάνθρωπο με κατανόηση και επιείκεια. Με καρδιά γεμάτη από την ουράνια εκείνη γλυκύτητα που στάλαξε μέσα μας η Ενανθρώπιση του Θεού και Λόγου. Στα αυτιά μας αντηχεί γλυκοτόνιστη η θεσπέσια αγγελική μελωδία «Δόξα ἐν Ὑψίστοις Θεῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία».

Οι ψυχές αναθαρεύουν. Οι καρδιές γαληνεύουν. Και τα χείλη μας εύχονται «ΚΑΛΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ».



PREPARE, O BETHLEHEM!

When a king embarks on a journey, he makes sure that everything is meticulously planned and prepared: transportation, accommodation, meals, clothing, agenda, and so on. When the King of kings determined to enter His creation, no such things were prepared. In fact, He was born while Mary and Joseph were on their way to Bethlehem to obey the imperial decree which required every person to enrol in the city of their ancestral lineage. They found all the doors in Bethlehem shut. And, not having a suitable place to rest, the One who is seated on the Cherubim is placed in a manger filled with straw. He, whose clothing is brighter than the sun, is arrayed in strips of swaddling clothes. He, who is served by myriads of angels, is in the company of cattle.

Indeed, the Incarnation of the Son of God can only be understood as a movement of divine generosity, an emptying, a divine poverty with the intention of enriching and saving us through His divinity. As Saint Gregory the Theologian notes, “on the one hand, God must descend to us... on the other, we must ascend to Him, so there might be a communion of God with men... For as long as each remains in situ, the One in His Glory and the other in his lowliness, the goodness of God cannot mingle with us, and His lovingkindness is inexpressible”.¹

But how can we ascend towards God in these secular times which seem to have overshadowed the inexpressible, unparalleled, world-saving event of the Incarnation? The consumerism of Christmas has robbed us of one very essential element. That is, the mystery of Christmas takes place within the heart in a spiritual way. Christ, who is the true Light giving light to every person (John 1:9), longs to be born in the darkness of our fallen nature which resembles the darkness of the cave. ‘Christmas lights’ cannot fill the sunless state of our spiritual gloom.

To receive His light, we must first prepare our heart, repairing our broken relationship with God and with those around us. Furthermore, we must find a way to escape all the noise of the holidays. The Christmas narrative teaches us to imitate the shepherds. They left behind all their cares and duties and hastened

obediently to the message of the angels to go and worship the Christ child. They were focused on finding Christ. When they glanced upon Him, having nothing else to give, they bowed down to the ground, offering their very heart as a gift.

Truly this is what Christ wants from us this Christmas. He says “behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev. 3:20). What better Christmas banquet can you prepare! What better company can you hope for! What decorations can compare to the face filled with the joy that He brings!

**This Nativity
season offers us
the opportunity for
the Christ child to
be formed in the
Bethlehem of our
heart.**

This Nativity season offers us the opportunity for the Christ child to be formed in the Bethlehem of our heart. If we truly want to find and to be found by Him, then we must lose the worldly spirit of Christmas. His gentle knock can only be heard in the quiet places away from the loudness of social gatherings and distracting lights. So then, when Christ comes to be born this Christmas, will He find another closed door, or will He find us prepared?

Merry Christmas!

1. Oration 41:12, Discourse on Pentecost.

Most people understand that hope is *wishful thinking*, as in “I hope something will happen”. For the Christian, hope is “*confident expectation*”, and “*firm assurance regarding things that are not clear and unknown*”. The Apostle Paul tells us that “*hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us*” (Rom 5:5). This is not a hope that we can produce or make on our own; instead, it comes as a pure gift of God. Therefore, **Hope is God-given.**

Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

(Rom 5:5)

At our baptism, we receive from God three theological virtues, the mainstay of our spiritual life: **Faith, Love and Hope** (1 Cor. 13:13). While **faith** concerns our trust in God and belief in all He revealed to us, and love concerns our love of God and of our neighbour as ourselves, **hope** is concerned with our confidence in God’s promises to us, that they will in fact be fulfilled.

There are enormous blessings for those who place their hope in God. We are called to “Hope in God”, which means to place our trust on Him and not on anything or any person of this world (Ps. 4:6,9).

Everything in this life is like a dream or like a shadow, which appears and disappears instantly, whilst hope in God is immovable, does not change, and provides great security for him who has it. Because the security offered by God is greater than that depending on a lot of noise. Place all your trust in God, even when surrounded by enormous difficulties, and He will reward you for your trust, for God said, “O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord, there is mercy” (Ps 129: 6-7).

The most prolific writer on the subject of Christian hope is St John Chrysostom. His views on “Faith – Hope – Love”, are published as a book. The chapter on “Two Hopes” says: “Do not trust in men of substance, nor in sons of men, in whom there is no salvation” (Acts 4:12).

“In fact, such men cannot save themselves or control themselves.” That is, he who cannot save himself, how can he save others? On the contrary, devout people do not have any doubt about the gifts of the future. Their hopes are based on Him who lives forever, does not die, and does not change His mind!

Do not trust in men of substance, nor in sons of men, in whom there is no salvation.

(Acts 4:12)

During your trials and tribulations in this life, who saved you? Your hope in God! He gave you so many gifts – it is obvious that He will not deprive you of those of the future. But do not be impatient. “We are saved by our hope” (Rom 8:24). We should not ask to have all our gifts here on earth, but we should hope for them. These are so great and so important, that we cannot acquire them on earth. In any case, God gave you abundant gifts, but only asks of you for one – **Hope**, something which you can contribute to your own salvation. Because, just as God rewards him who suffers many tribulations in this life, He similarly crowns him who hopes.

We are saved by our hope.

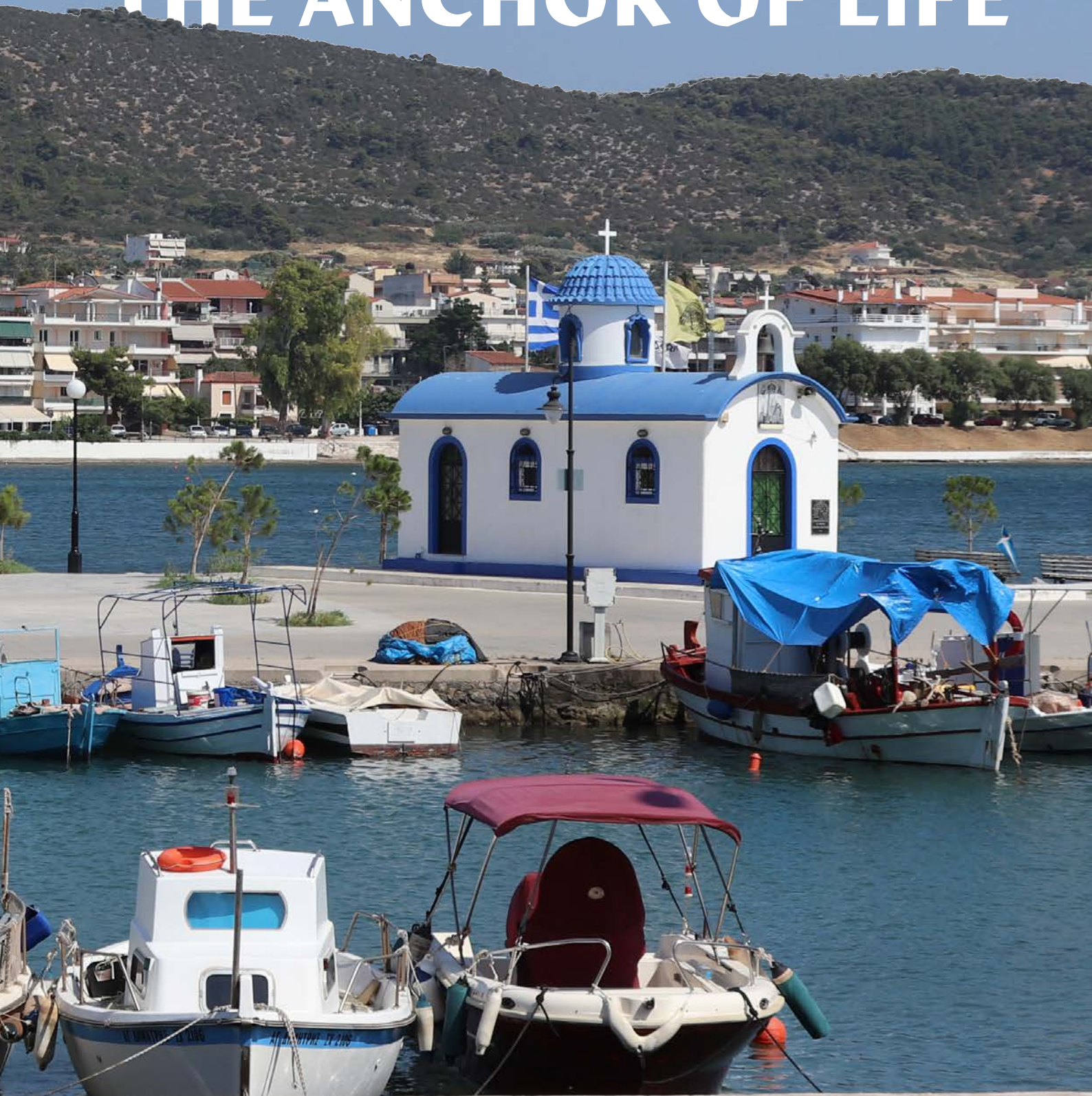
(Rom 8: 24)

In conclusion, we adopt the views of St John Climacus, as outlined in his book “The Ladder”. Hope is the certain acquisition of a treasure, before you actually receive it. It is rest and relief from the difficulties of life, and it kills the despair of the soul. It helps us improve our faith in God and urges us to continually get closer and closer to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Hope and **faith** are not the same but complement one another - one helps develop the other. So, when we make a sincere effort to develop one, we also acquire the other!

HOPE

THE ANCHOR OF LIFE



St Elizabeth the Grand Duchess and New Martyr



St Elizabeth was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria and was born Lutheran into the German royal family in 1864. She married the Orthodox Grand Duke Serge of Russia at the age of 20. During summer months, the couple lived in a country estate and Elizabeth was grieved to see newborn babies die due to poor medical services. She quickly established a maternity clinic on her own estate and compassionately served all around her. In Russia, St Elizabeth began to love the richness of the Orthodox faith and asked to be received into the true Church.

The First Russian revolution of 1905 caused intense turmoil throughout the whole of Russia, and St Elizabeth's husband was assassinated. She visited his murderer in prison, forgave him and even campaigned for his pardon. St Elizabeth left the Royal Court and established a monastery dedicated

to Saints Mary and Martha, in which the nuns combined prayer with charity.

One day, Abbess Elizabeth entered a drinking house where a group of men were talking. St Elizabeth began speaking to one man: "My good man..." when someone else interrupted saying, "what do you mean 'good man'? He's a thief, good for nothing". St Elizabeth ignored this comment and continued "I need some help. My bag is full of money and things to be distributed to the poor, but it is heavy, and I cannot carry it to the monastery by myself. Please carry it to my monastery." St Elizabeth gave the man the bag and left. To everyone's amazement, the man was later found waiting at the monastery gate with the bag's contents untouched. He begged St Elizabeth to grant him work at the monastery and he completely repented of his former life.

In 1917, Bolshevik revolutionaries arrested the Tsar and all his family. St Elizabeth chose to stay with her

nuns in Russia rather than returning to her safe home in Germany. In 1918, when Elizabeth was 54, she was arrested and exiled. She and her companion martyrs were violently captured, forced into an abandoned mineshaft and killed with hand grenades. Local villagers could hear the martyrs chanting and glorifying God.

St Elizabeth is a model example of a modern Saint who went from 'strength to strength' (Ps 83:8). She demonstrated humility as a child, acts of compassion as a grand duchess, willingness in learning about Orthodoxy, forgiveness when faced with her husband's murderer, asceticism as a monastic, leadership as an Abbess and great love for Christ through her martyrdom. She was discerning in every situation and always brought out the good in others. Above all, she teaches us that there is no circumstance in our life which can separate us from being united with Christ. We celebrate her feast on July 18th.



Words of the Heart

Gerondissa Makrina
Vassopoulou

Words of the Heart is a book that introduces the reader to the life and wisdom of Gerondissa Makrina (1921-95), abbess of the Holy Monastery of the Mother of God Odigitria (Directress) in Volos, Northern Greece. The book contains both her biography and a collection of her homilies arranged in chronological order. These consist of talks which Gerondissa gave to the sisterhood during their gatherings between the years of 1971 to 1992, for the purpose of guiding those under her care towards salvation.

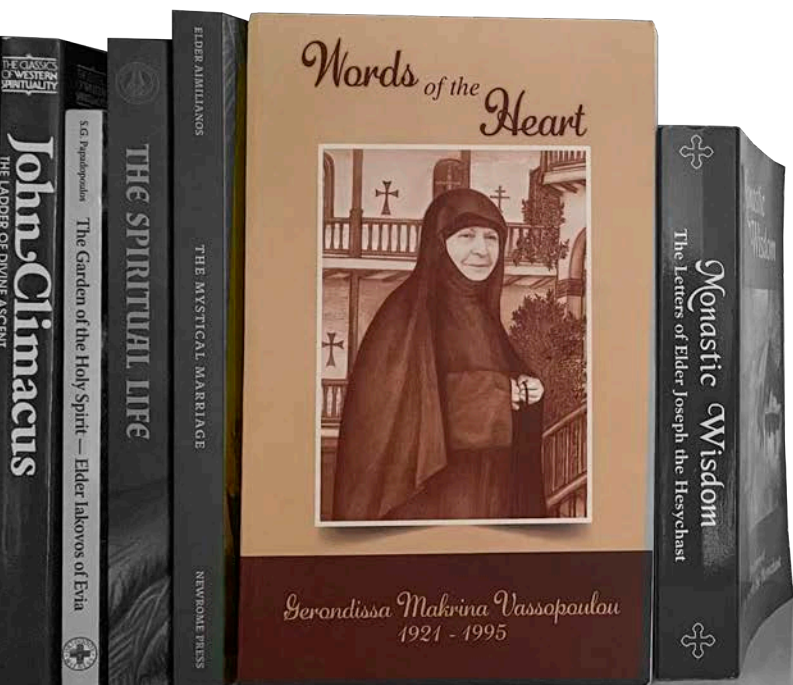
Distinguishing virtues of Gerondissa Makrina are the purity of her life, the humility she showed despite the many struggles she encountered, and her love for prayer and stillness (hesychia). The high spiritual state attained through her virtues inspired her words to be like priceless nuggets of gold for those that strive to live in accordance with the will of God. The spiritual life that Gerondissa cultivated in the monastery bore many fruits, not least that sisters from the monastery helped establish many other monasteries in Greece as well as in America and Canada.

Gerondissa Makrina was born to devout and God-fearing parents Photios and Anastasia. She was baptised Maria and lived in a village known as Hadjileri in Asia Minor.

With the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922, her family, like that of many others, was uprooted and ended up in Volos, Greece. From a young age Maria showed an inclination towards the angelic life of monasticism, and her virtuous parents cultivated this spiritual calling. However, the happy and carefree years of her childhood were very short lived. When she was eight her father passed away and a year later so too her mother. So it was that Maria and her younger brother George were left as orphans during the harsh and bitter years of the German Occupation. In later years, Gerondissa would recall that often they did not even have a piece of bread to eat, and starvation loomed before their eyes.

Despite the numerous difficulties in her life, divine providence carved out the path of her spiritual journey in a wondrous way. While still in the world, Maria met and became a spiritual child of Father Ephraim Karagiannis. Through Father Ephraim, Gerondissa had the great blessing of meeting and having frequent correspondence with Father (now Saint) Joseph the Hesychast. It is through her contact with St Joseph the Hesychast that Gerondissa learnt the gift of stillness and prayer. She also had the great blessing of having a special spiritual relationship with Gerondissa Theophano (Victoria Moraitou) the mother of Elder Ephraim of Arizona.

It was Gerondissa Makrina's continual concern and fervent desire that all people would be saved. In order to carry out this ministry most effectively she prayed to the Lord to be granted experiences so that she would not be teaching only from books but also from personal experience, words from the heart, as these words would have greater effect. She would often say "Lord... just as I ask You to heal my great wounds, likewise, help and heal the soul of my sister", or she would echo the words learnt from her father "...for the worst thing that somebody does to you, you will in turn do the best for him. Show your love to everybody and God will repay you abundantly". And so, through experiences gained from bitter struggles, the counsels of Gerondissa Makrina provide the reader challenging but practical guidance on how to come closer to God by living more harmoniously with oneself and those around us.



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The Icon of the Theophany

Unlike much of the Orthodox world, where a handful of men jump into an icy lake, the feast of the Theophany in Sydney is celebrated by thousands of faithful who flock to Yarra Bay in the heat of summer for the blessing of the waters. Many men line the pier opposite the shore, focused intently on the glistening cross in the Archbishop's hand. Also glistening are the tombstones of Botany Bay cemetery which cascade down the hills above the beach.

The palpable images this setting evokes – of life, death, and blessing on the water's edge – resonate with the imagery of the icon of the feast itself.

The Jordan river is often depicted as a dark mass, resembling the mouth of a cave, remarkably similar to the cave of the Nativity icon and the cavernous depths of the Anastasis icon. On all three occasions Christ descends to raise us up with Him. The Church's hymnography similarly bridges the time and space of Christ's salvific plan: "Christ comes to grant through baptism deliverance to all the faithful...He cleanses fallen Adam and lifts him up" (Compline of the Forefeast). "We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should

walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The Theophany - the revelation of God - is depicted along a vertical line which visually carves through the icon from top to bottom. A small cloud depicts the heavenly realm from which God the Father proclaims, "this is My beloved Son" (Matt 3:17).

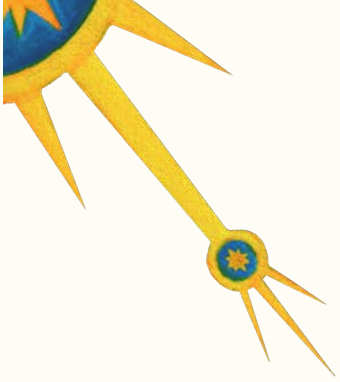


The Holy Spirit is revealed in the form of a dove in the ray of light descending from the parted heavens to rest upon Christ. On either side of the datum line are the witnesses: on one side, St John the Forerunner baptising Christ with his right hand on our Lord's head and, on the other side, angels attending to the mystery with their hands covered in veneration. The way the figures

bow towards the standing Christ highlights the paradox seeing "the Maker of heaven and earth stand naked in the river, and as a servant receive baptism from a servant for our salvation" (Ninth Hour of the Theophany).

In some other icons of the Theophany, additional details based on Biblical references decorate the scene. Two figures riding away from Christ on sea creatures symbolise Old Testament prefigurations of the Theophany: the division of the Jordan river by Elisha (2 Kings 2:14) and the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-15:27). In Psalm 114 (Greek 113) we read "The sea saw them [i.e. the people of Israel leaving Egypt] and fled, the Jordan turned back" (v. 3). The creatures in the icon reference Psalm 74 (73 in Greek), "You crushed the heads of dragons upon the water" (v. 13). The dove "hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2) links the Creation of the world with the New Creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), as well as with the Great Flood in the time of Noah (Gen 6:1 – 8:22) in which God restores His Creation, blessing Noah and his descendants and all life on earth. These details in the icon help ground for us the mystery of God's Plan for our Salvation from the very foundation of the world. They leave us in awe to join in with the angels: Glory be to You, O Lord!





St Theodotus of Ancyra¹

Homily on The Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Today's feast is the mother of all feasts; for today is the starting point of the whole cycle of feasts. For whether we celebrate the memory of martyrs, He in whose name they were martyred, was born today. This day gives the beginning to those feasts.

Whether we celebrate the passions of Christ, seizing our healing from them, today He who has suffered the passions, appeared in our life, and became human to show sympathy to humans.

For indeed, before the birth He was God, and was also present with us, but He was not seen by us. He was with us, but we could not see Him. "For He was in the world," it says, "and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10).

Therefore, He was with us, but He was not seen by us; but after the birth, He Himself was ever-present and we saw Him. This is the reason we profess His presence as an appearance.

For indeed it was at the time He came to us when we were able to see Him; it was then when He came among those who were ignorant of Him, when He was recognised by them.

For it was good to be previously present in His own nature, but to me He was unseen. Since He came to us, now He is seen by us, though He also was previously with us.

Because we ignore the One who is not visible to our senses, being unable to apprehend Him, He who remains invisible in His essence, becomes visible. And He who always is, is born today, so that you might know the One who Is, not so that He might promote Himself into existence.

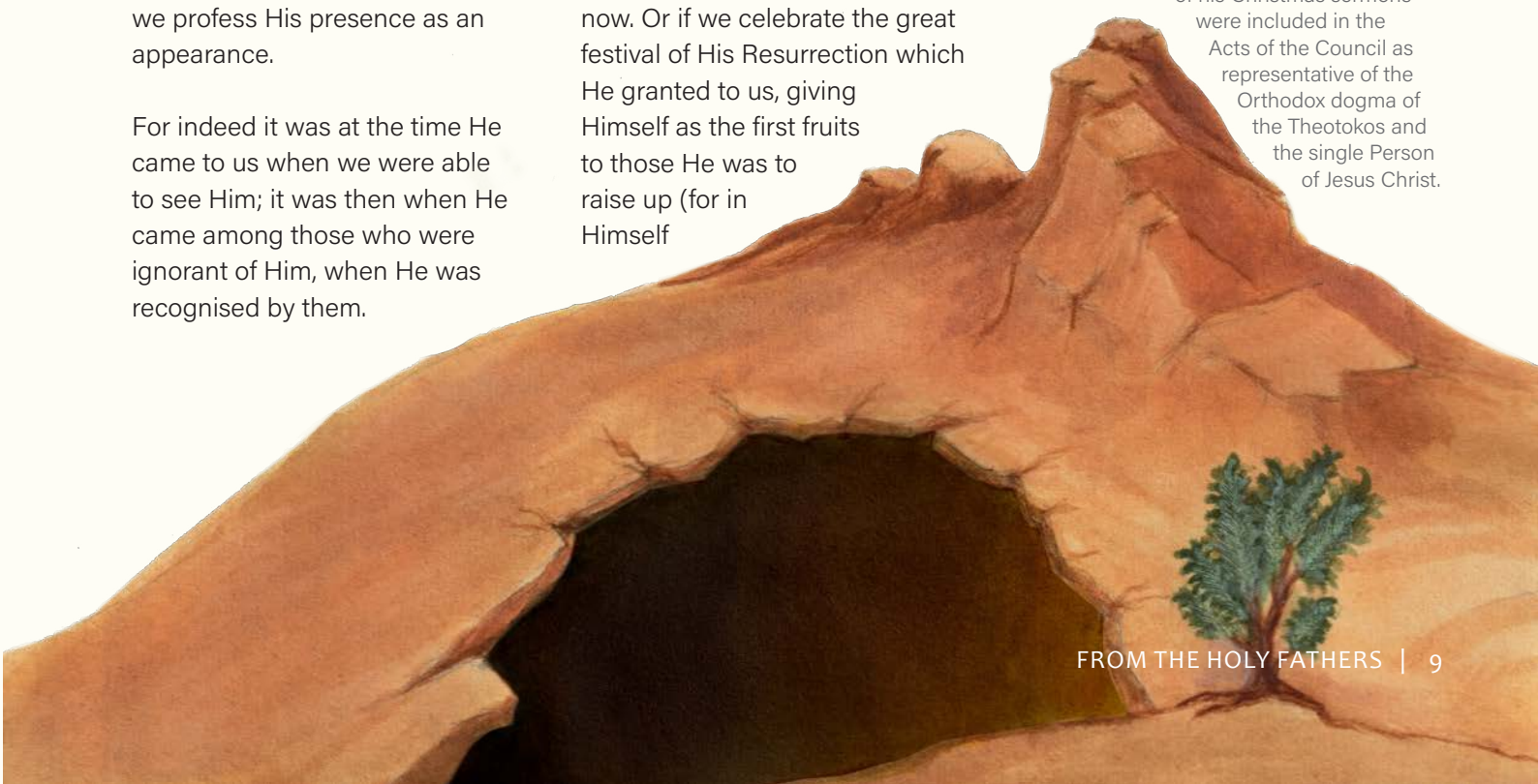
Therefore, whether we keep a feast in memory of the martyrs, today is the mother of feasts such as these; or if we celebrate the passions of the One who suffered for us, He who suffered entered our earthly existence today, and makes the current feast older than the passions.

Or whether we celebrate His life-giving death, He who is to give Himself over to death for us, arrived now. Or if we celebrate the great festival of His Resurrection which He granted to us, giving Himself as the first fruits to those He was to raise up (for in Himself

he raised the nature of all, completing the common promise to all), today's feast is also older than that festival.

For indeed, the Saviour rose from the tomb in three days, not only opening His own grave, but throwing open many graves of the saints. For after He opened his own tomb, He also opened those of the saints, giving his own Resurrection as a guarantee of the common Resurrection. But oh, what a marvellous thing! In raising Himself from the tomb, He opened tombs, but in being born from the womb, He did not open it. For coming up from the bowels of the earth, He opens graves, but in being born from a virgin, He did not open her womb, but is born and leaves it shut.

1. St Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra (in modern day Turkey), was one of the Holy Fathers who took part in the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, condemning the heresy of Nestorius. Three of his Christmas sermons were included in the Acts of the Council as representative of the Orthodox dogma of the Theotokos and the single Person of Jesus Christ.



St Basil was born in 330 AD in Cappadocia, Asia Minor. He had deep Christian roots stemming from his family, as indeed his grandmother, mother and four of his siblings are saints of our Orthodox Church. Yet he faced similar temptations to young Christians today when he left his family to study abroad.

In the chaos of university life, St Basil could have easily been swayed from the faith by his secular education, his own intelligence, and his desire for fame and money. Yet two things helped him: his sense of God's presence, which he inherited from his family, and his close friendship



Ο Μέγας Βασίλειος γεννήθηκε το 330 μ.χ. στην Καππαδοκία της Μικράς Ασίας. Είχε βαθιές χριστιανικές ρίζες που πήγαζαν από την οικογένειά του, καθώς πράγματι η γιαγιά, η μητέρα και τα τέσσερα αδέρφια του είναι άγιοι της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας μας. Ωστόσο, αντιμετώπισε παρόμοιους πειρασμούς όπως οι Χριστιανοί νέοι σήμερα όταν άφησε την οικογένειά του για να σπουδάσει στο εξωτερικό.

Μέσα στο χάος της πανεπιστημιακής ζωής, ο Άγιος Βασίλειος θα μπορούσε εύκολα να παρασυρθεί από την πίστη του Χριστού με την κοσμική του εκπαίδευση, την εξυπνάδα του, και τους πειρασμούς για φήμη και χρήματα. Ωστόσο, δύο πράγματα τον βοήθησαν: η αίσθηση της παρουσίας του Θεού, την οποία κληρονόμησε από την οικογένειά του, και η στενή του φιλία με έναν νεαρό που αργότερα θα γινόταν γνωστός ως Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Θεολόγος. Η φιλία τους δημιουργήθηκε από φοιτητές

with a young man who would later be known as St Gregory the Theologian. Their friendship was formed as students and continued until their deaths.

St Gregory himself writes: "We were always together; we shared a common house, a common table, a common soul. We looked towards one identical goal, always growing in zeal, in such a way that our friendship became stronger and more stable." Even years after they graduated, their zeal for Christ led

Ο ΜΕΓΑΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ



ST BASIL THE GREAT

Commemorated January 1

και συνεχίστηκε μέχρι τον θάνατό τους.

Ο ίδιος ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος γράφει: «Ήμασταν πάντα μαζί. Μοιραζόμασταν ένα κοινό σπίτι, ένα κοινό τραπέζι, μια ψυχή. Σκοπεύαμε τον ίδιο στόχο,

them to become hermits together in the deserts of Pontus, and later still, to strengthen each other as bishops of the Orthodox Church in Asia Minor.

Through their example, we can see that there are two strong forces which lead us towards, or away from, the Church: family and friends. Christian friendships not only preserve, but increase, our faith. We seek friends who are not only connected to us superficially through external likes and dislikes which change over time. We seek friends who understand the deep nature of our soul. St Basil and St Gregory teach us that the true heart of a friendship is God.



αυξάνοντας πάντα το ζήλο μας, με τέτοιο τρόπο που η φιλία μας έγινε πιο δυνατή και πιο σταθερή». Ακόμη και χρόνια μετά την αποφοίτησή τους, ο ζήλος τους για τον Χριστό τους οδήγησε να γίνουν ερημίτες μαζί στις ερήμους του Πόντου και αργότερα να ενισχύουν ο ένας τον άλλον ως επίσκοποι της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας στη Μικρά Ασία.

Μέσα από το παράδειγμά τους, μπορούμε να δούμε ότι υπάρχουν δύο ισχυρές δυνάμεις που μας οδηγούν προς, ή μακριά από την Εκκλησία: η οικογένεια και οι φίλοι. Οι χριστιανικές φιλίες όχι μόνο διατηρούν, αλλά αυξάνουν την πίστη μας. Αναζητούμε φίλους που συνδέονται μαζί μας όχι μόνο επιφανειακά, μέσω εξωτερικών συμπαθειών και αντιπαθειών που αλλάζουν με την πάροδο του χρόνου. Αναζητούμε φίλους που μας κατανοούν στο βάθος του είναι μας. Ο Άγιος Βασίλειος και ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος μας διδάσκουν ότι η καρδιά μιας πραγματικής φιλίας είναι ο ίδιος ο Θεός.

"Glory to God in the highest, and On earth peace, good will to men"

«Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία»

1st Verse of the Doxology, from Luke 2:14



"Since everyone is jumping from joy, I too wish to jump from joy, I want to dance, I want to celebrate. And I dance, not plucking a harp, or waving the thyrsus, or playing a flute, or lighting a torch, but instead of musical instruments I carry the swaddling clothes of Christ. Because these are my hope, these are my life, these are my salvation, these are my harp. This is the reason I come holding these, so that I may take from their power the strength to say together with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest", and together with the shepherds, 'and on earth peace, good-will to men' "

St John Chrysostom,
From his 2nd Homily on Christmas



It can often be a challenge to enter the enthusiastic and joyous atmosphere of Christmas in a world characterised by indifference, cynicism, even outright ignorance of spiritual matters.

Nevertheless, this is the invitation our Church makes to us not just during Christmas, but during all its worship services. For indeed, the Doxology – a hymn of praise which dates to the earliest days of the Christian Church, derived from the gospel account of Christmas – is chanted or read aloud during the service of Matins daily and as part of the daily cycle of personal prayer.

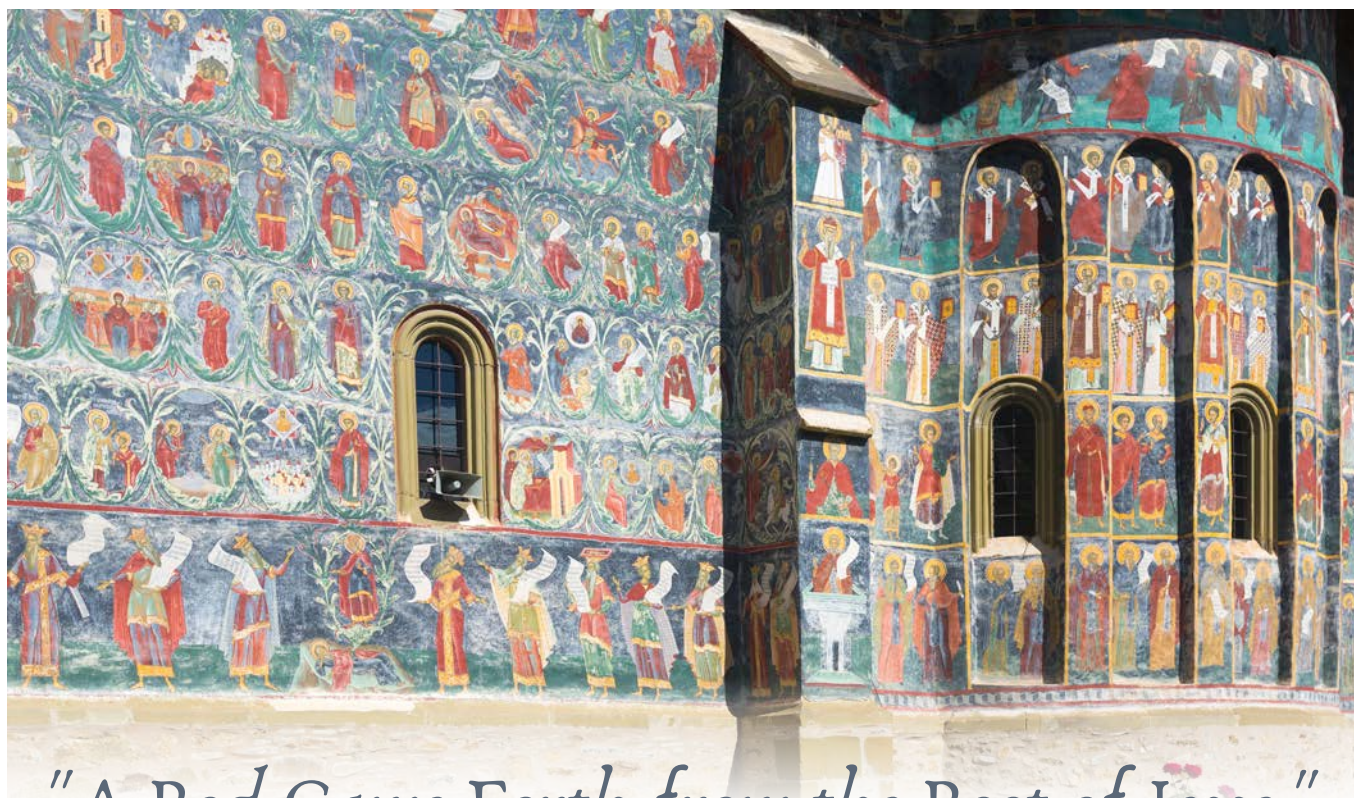
Every day is a cause for us to participate in the initial joy of both the immaterial and material creations of God expressed on that day of his Incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is the most direct appeal to us to participate in the highest form of prayer, the praise of God. While it is angelic in origin - sung by the angels on the day of Christ's Birth - we are called to embrace it joyously like St John Chrysostom, giving song to the feelings of gratitude and happiness that the Feast of Christmas seeks to engender in our hearts.

The opening exclamation, "Glory to God in the highest", affirms the union of God with humans, personified in Jesus Christ. The phrase, "and on earth peace" is best described in the writings of Apostle Paul: "for He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation" (Eph 2:14).

Christ is peace personified. Peace was born on earth on Christmas Day. This is especially relevant for us, because the peace derived solely by human means is not everlasting but is always temporary. In contrast, the peace of Christ is eternal, because it begins here in this mortal existence, but has the potential to last eternally.

Finally, the ending of the verse, "good will to men", indicates that we give glory to God who now expresses his good-will to us in the flesh, in person, as a human Himself.



"A Rod Came Forth from the Root of Jesse"

This opening to the fourth ode of the katavasiae of Christmas references the famous prophecy of Isaiah about the coming of the Christ: *"there shall come forth a rod from the stem of Jesse, and a flower shall grow out of its roots"* (Isaiah 11:1). This prophecy is repeated in many hymns which reference Panagia who, in this prophecy, is represented by the symbol of the rod. The flower is Christ and the root, or the stem, is the people of Israel.

In this poetic way, the prophet tells us that Christ will be born of the royal lineage of the house of David, Jesse's son, by reason of his mother's genealogy.

Isaiah's prophecy is commonly referenced by the church fathers in discussions pertaining to the mystery of Christ's divine and human natures. In a sermon on Isaiah 11:1, St John Velimirovich teaches that: *"in eternity [Christ is] from the Father without a mother,*

in time [He is] from a mother without a father". The Saint explains that Christ's divinity was hidden in His humanity by His Incarnation but His humanity, outside of time, was hidden beneath His divinity. He goes on to provide this example of the hidden character of Christ's divinity in the flesh: *"Pilate gazed in vain at this 'rod from the stem of Jesse' and cried out: 'behold the Man', the same as when one looks at a wire conveying electrical current among many ordinary wires and cries out: 'behold the wire'. Neither does he recognise electrical current in a wire nor did [Pilate] recognise God in man".*

By His miraculous Incarnation, the God-Child, the Son of the eternal Father, for whom no inn was open, reveals God's redeeming love for His people. Christmas, therefore, is a revelation. The incarnation takes place in time, uniting God and His creation in one person, and revealing God's divine plan for the salvation of the world.

St Augustine of Hippo also explores the concept of the revelation of hidden things. He tells us that the New Testament was hidden in the Old, just as Christ was the flower hidden in the root, in the seed of the patriarchs, to be revealed at a certain time. That time is what St Paul refers to in his letter to the Galatians when he says, *"but when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"* (Gal 4:4-5). It is that plan which was hidden of old but made known to us by Christ's coming, and the plan which we must heed if we are to receive the promise.

The feast day of Christmas therefore is an opportunity for us to praise and thank God for the revelation of His Son to us. He has revealed to us on this day the person by and through whom we are to receive our salvation.



The heretical doctrine of the Filioque, from the Boulbon Altarpiece, France, mid-15th Cent.

...Who proceeds from the Father...

The particular phrase of Article 8 – “**who proceeds from the Father**”, describes the Holy Spirit’s mode of existence (τρόπος ύπαρξης), something which the Fathers of the 2nd Ecumenical Council (381 AD) were inspired to clarify in their efforts to shut down the heretics who argued against the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the relationship of the Three Persons within the Holy Trinity, our Orthodox faith teaches that the Father is **unbegotten**, whereas the Son is **eternally begotten** by the Father, and the Holy Spirit **proceeds eternally** from the Father. Whilst these attributes remain exclusive to each Hypostasis and affirm the three distinct Persons, the three are always united by the same divine essence, being co-eternal and equal in honour.

A couple of centuries after the Creed’s formation, the church in the West introduced an addition to Article 8, known as the “Filioque” which is Latin for “and the Son”, i.e. “who proceeds from the Father and from the Son”. This phrase remains in use by the Roman Catholic Church until today, despite the forbidding of any additions to the Creed by the 3rd Ecumenical Council and despite the ardent opposition of the entire Orthodox East, whose chief polemicists against the phrase included St

Photius the Great, St Gregory Palamas, and St Mark of Ephesus.

What was the reason for this addition?

It was an attempt by the Western theologians to deal with the Arian heresy which professed the Son as a creation of the Father. Through the Filioque, they aimed to emphasise the Son’s divinity. Though it constitutes such a minor addition in words, the Filioque’s theological repercussions are terrifying in magnitude:

- > It overthrows the Orthodox Trinitarian dogma of Μοναρχία (μόνη αρχή-αίτία) which proclaims the Father as sole principle-cause of the existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- > It introduces two principles (δυαρχία) into the Holy Trinity i.e. the Father and the Son.

- > It confuses the hypostatic attributes of each Divine Person.

The aforementioned points effectively destroy the equality and unity of the three Divine Persons, and demote the Holy Spirit whose divinity is challenged. This in turn has catastrophic consequences for the salvation of each person, as our goal is to become partakers of divine nature through the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is not God

as the Son and Father are God, how can He sanctify us?

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall **send** (πέμψω) to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who **proceeds** (εκπορεύεται) from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (John 15:26)

It is these words spoken by Christ Himself, which provide the basis of Orthodox teaching on the procession of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit **proceeds** pre-eternally from the Father alone, and is **sent** by the Son, into the world. The difference between these two verbs is something the West could not grasp unfortunately, due to limitations of the Latin language.

It is no wonder that the Church Fathers of the 2nd Ecumenical Council (Constantinople) after completing the formation of the Creed, sealed it with the proclamation that any amendment, addition to, or removal from the Creed would be considered anathema. This continued to be reiterated by successive Ecumenical Councils.

Finally, the Filioque was one of the main factors which contributed to the separation of the western church from the Orthodox, which culminated in the Great Schism of 1054 AD and remains an obstacle to any possibility of reunion.



Η Αγία Γραφή (Βίβλος, Ιερά Γράμματα) μαζί με την Ιερά Παράδοση συνιστούν το κεντρικό θεμέλιο πάνω στο οποίο στηρίζεται η δογματική, ηθική και λατρευτική ζωή της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας μας. Οι δύο αυτές πηγές της πίστης μας είναι στενά συνδεδεμένες μεταξύ τους. Βασικά η παραπάνω έκφραση «δύο πηγές» είναι περισσότερο τεχνική διότι τα δύο αυτά σκέλη στην κυριολεξία αποτελούν μία οντότητα. Τα τέσσερα Ιερά Ευαγγέλια λ.χ. είναι το απόσπασμα της προφορικής διδασκαλίας των Αποστόλων και γράφτηκαν ως απομνημονεύματα όταν διαπιστώθηκε πως η τελική αποκατάσταση της Βασιλείας του Θεού στη γη θα γινόταν μετά την αναχώρησή των από αυτή τη ζωή.

Αρχίζοντας από αυτό το τεύχος του «ΛΥΧΝΟΥ» θα δημοσιεύσουμε μια σειρά άρθρων με τίτλο «Μια εισαγωγή στην Αγία Γραφή», στην οποία θα προσπαθήσουμε να διασαφήσουμε μερικά σημεία αλλά και να δώσουμε απαντήσεις σε τυχόν απορίες γύρω από τη θεοπνευστία, το περιεχόμενο, τις γλώσσες

συγγραφής (συμπεριλαμβανομένης και της Ελληνικής μεταφράσεως της Εβραϊκής Βίβλου (Παλαιάς Διαθήκης) κ.α.

Όλοι μας βέβαια γνωρίζουμε πως η Αγία Γραφή δεν είναι ένα αυτοτελές σύγγραμμα αλλά μια συλλογή διαφόρων βιβλίων που χωρίζονται σε δύο ομάδες: την Παλαιά και την Καινή Διαθήκη (για τις ονομασίες αυτές θα ασχοληθούμε αργότερα).

Το πρώτο μας θέμα είναι: τί διακρίνει αυτά τα συγκεκριμένα βιβλία από οποιαδήποτε άλλα που έχουν θρησκευτικό / πνευματικό περιεχόμενο;

Τα βιβλία αυτά έχουν δύο κοινά χαρακτηριστικά:

- (α) την αποκάλυψη του Θείου θελήματος και του σωτηριολογικού σχεδίου (θεία οικονομία) και
- (β) την θεοπνευστία.

Παράλληλα υπήρξαν και βιβλία που ενώ γράφθηκαν την ίδια εποχή με τα κανονικά και από καλόπιστους συγγραφείς, όμως οδηγούσαν στην πλάνη.

Ποιός λοιπόν αποφάσισε ποιά βιβλία θα συγκαταλεχθούν στα λεγόμενα «κανονικά» βιβλία της Αγίας Γραφής; Τη σπουδαία αυτή απόφαση την έβγαλε η Αγία Εκκλησία που είναι το Σώμα του Χριστού.

Είναι πολύ σημαντικό αυτό το σημείο: η κανονικότητα των θεόπνευστων βιβλίων της Αγίας Γραφής έχει αποφασιστεί από την Εκκλησία. Αυτή η επικύρωση δεν έγινε με μια μόνο συνοδική απόφαση αλλά σταδιακά στους πρώτους αιώνες της ιστορίας της. Μπορούμε δηλαδή να πούμε πως η μεν Παλαιά Διαθήκη προαναγγέλλει την Εκκλησία, η δε Καινή Διαθήκη είναι γέννημα και θρέμμα της Εκκλησίας. Βασικά χωρίς την Εκκλησία δεν θα υπήρχε η Βίβλος στη σημερινή της μορφή – μια θεμελιώδη αρχή που έχει ξεφύγει από τις δοξασίες αρκετών δυτικών χριστιανικών ομολογιών που επιμένουν στην *sola scriptura*, δηλαδή σε αποδοχή μόνο της Γραφής άνευ της Εκκλησίας.

Στο επόμενο τεύχος θα ασχοληθούμε εκτενέστερα με τη θεοπνευστία των Ιερών Γραμμάτων.

Sunday School



Annual Sunday School Camp

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the Annual Sunday School Camp took place from Tuesday 4th to Thursday 6th October. 92 Sunday School students aged 10-12 years, along with 25 teachers from across Sydney and Wollongong participated. The children took part in a range of activities, including canoeing, archery, dodgeball, play performances, and singing. Despite the sporadic poor weather, nothing could dampen the enthusiasm of the children nor the presence of Christ amongst the group!

The camp was centred around the theme of 'The Neomartyrs', in which the children learnt about the inspirational lives of the Saints of our Church who martyred for Christ under the Ottoman occupation. Through lessons given by various guest speakers, it was made clear that we all can imitate the Neomartyrs by taking courage and trying to live as true Christians.

The highlight of the Camp occurred on the last day, with the Service of the Divine Liturgy officiated by Geronda Eusebios, Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery. In his sermon, the Abbot spoke about the most precious gem in the whole world, a jewel of immeasurable value that has been given to all of us and that no one except for ourselves can take away - our faith in Jesus Christ!



SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Children from 8-12 years old who wish to learn hymns of the Orthodox Church as well as Christian songs are invited to join our Children's Choir.

The Sunday School Children's Choir will be launched in 2023. Expressions of interest now open!

Please fill in this online form to express your interest:

<https://lychnos.org/expression-of-interest/>



For more information email ssbm@lychnos.org or call Kosmas Kokkinos on 0400 734 538

News & Events



Poly-Hierarchical Divine Liturgy & First National Clergy Synaxis

On October 18th and 19th, 2022, at the initiative of Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the first National Clergy Synaxis was held in Sydney with the theme: "Priesthood: From Secularization to Ecclesiastical Attitude". On the second day of the Synaxis, a poly-hierarchical Divine Liturgy took place in the hall of the High School of St Spyridon College, presided over by Archbishop Makarios with concelebrants Metropolitan Andrew of the Forty Churches representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, the Assistant Bishops of our Archdiocese, and all Clergy from across Australia.

It was truly a festive and joyous occasion, with so many Bishops, Priests, Deacons, monastics, chanters, and laity coming together to give praise and thanks to our Lord for all the abundant blessings we have in this country – foremost our Holy Orthodox Faith!

Key Dates

DECEMBER






6  Tuesday Nicholas the Wonderworker of Myra	9  Friday Conception of the Theotokos
12  Monday Spyridon the Wonderworker	17  Saturday Dionysios of Zakynthos
25 Sunday NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST	27 Tuesday Stephen the First Martyr

JANUARY

1 Sunday CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST Basil the Great	6 Friday THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
7 Saturday Synaxis of John the Forerunner	18  Wednesday Athanasios & Kyrillos of Alexandria
19 Thursday Makarios the Great Mark of Ephesus	30 Monday Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs



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