

# The Dormition: Awakening to Eternal Life

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# ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



# Η Υπερευλογημένη

«Εύλογημένη σὺ ἐν  
γυναιξί, καὶ εύλογημένος  
ὁ καρπὸς τῆς κοιλίας σου»

Τα λόγια της Ελισάβετ, σαν την επισκέφθηκε η Θεοτόκος Παρθένος ακούγονται σαν απόηχος του χαιρετισμού που πριν λίγο καιρό της είχε απευθύνει ο αρχάγγελος Γαβριήλ («Εύλογημένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξί»).

Πράγματι, «υπερευλογημένη υπάρχει» η Θεοτόκος. Είναι φανερό το γιατί. Το βλέπουμε στο μήνυμα του Αρχαγγέλου: «ἰδοὺ συλλήψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ, καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν» (Λουκ. α' 31). Τρεις σωτηριώδεις αλήθειες περικλείει τούτο το μήνυμα:

**Α) «Ἰδοὺ συλλήψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ» (ἰδοὺ θα μείνεις ἐγκυος...)**

Πρωτάκουστο το μήνυμα. Παρθένος Αυτή, αγνή, άσπιλος και αμόλυντος θα έχει μια ανερμήνευτη, υπερφυσική σύλληψη που υπερβαίνει τους φυσικούς νόμους και τη βιολογική τάξη. Και θα γεννήσει χωρίς τη μεσολάβηση άνδρα τον Θεάνθρωπο Κύριο. Ήταν μια έκτακτη και μοναδική ενέργεια του Θεού. Έπρεπε ο Χριστός να γεννηθεί από «απεΐρανδρο» κόρη, για να μη προσλάβει ο Χριστός τη μολυσμένη από την αμαρτία ανθρώπινη φύση. Γι'αυτό ο Χριστός γεννιέται «ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου» (Σύμβολο της Πίστewς).

**Β) «...καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν» (και θα γεννήσεις υἱόν...)**

Το είχε προαναγγείλει ο μεγαλόπνοος προφήτης Ησαΐας εκατοντάδες χρόνια πριν: «παιδίον ἐγεννήθη ἡμῖν. Υἱὸς καὶ ἐδόθη ἡμῖν...» (Ησ. θ' 6). Ο Υἱός του Θεού, γίνεται διὰ της Θεοτόκου, «ο υἱὸς του ανθρώπου». Αυτό τον τίτλο χρησιμοποιηθεῖ συνήθως ο Χριστός για τον Εαυτό Του. Και μ'αυτό τον



τρόπο τόνιζε πως Αυτός είναι ο Μεσσίας που είχε υποσχεθεί στους ανθρώπους ο Θεός και που θά'φερνε τη λύτρωση. Τό'χε πει στο «πρωτευαγγέλιο» ο ίδιος ο Θεός στους πρωτοπλάστους πριν τη θλιβερή έξωσή τους από τον Παράδεισο. Πως θα έλθει κάποτε ο καιρός που το «σπέρμα της γυναικός» θα συντρίψει το κεφάλι του όφews (διαβόλου) (Γεν. γ' 15).

Ο συνδυασμός των εκφράσεων «ο υἱὸς του ανθρώπου» και «το σπέρμα της γυναικός» δηλώνει σαφώς τον Χριστό, τον σαρκωθέντα Μεσσία και λυτρωτή

του ανθρωπίνου γένους. Όταν ο Κύριος, λίγο πριν το πάθος Του, έλεγε στον Καϊάφα «ἀπ' ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ» (Ματθ. κστ' 64), διεκήρυττε την θεότητα Του. Ότι δηλαδή δεν είναι απλά υἱὸς του ανθρώπου αλλά Θεός και άνθρωπος... Γιατί μόνο σαν Θεάνθρωπος μπορεί να σώσει τον κόσμο.

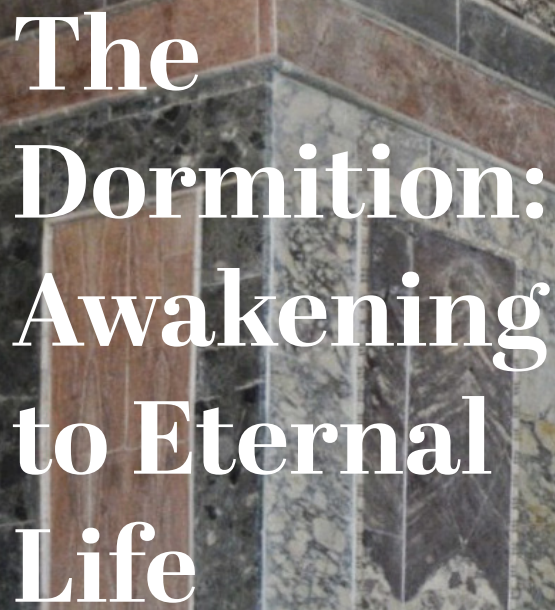
**Γ) «...καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν» (και θα τον ονομάσεις Ἰησοῦν)**

Ιησούς στα Εβραϊκά σημαίνει ο Σωτήρ. Το όνομα Ιησούς εκφράζει και την ιδιαίτερη σχέση που έχει ο Χριστός με τον κάθε ένα από μας. Σχέση προσωπική. Δεν είναι μόνο σωτήρας όλου του κόσμου αλλά και δικός μου και δικός σου και του καθενός από εμάς. «Ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβαν αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ» (Ιω. α' 12).

Δηλαδή: σε εκείνους που τον δέχθηκαν έδωκε την εξουσία να γίνουν παιδιά του Θεού και αυτοί είναι όλοι που πιστεύουν στο Όνομά Του.

Όλα αυτά τα θαυμάσια γίνονται διὰ της Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου. Να, γιατί Αυτή είναι η Υπερευλογημένη. Και μεις μετέχουμε σ'αυτά τα θαυμάσια. Αγιάζεται η ζωή μας. Σωζόμαστε διὰ του Υιού της και Θεού μας.

Ευκαιρία με τις παρακλήσεις του Δεκαπενταυγούστου, να αποδώσουμε στην Παναγία Μητέρα μας την οφειλομένη τιμή και ευγνωμοσύνη μας.



# The Dormition: Awakening to Eternal Life

**T**he feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God gives rise to a new meaning of death. Rather than mourning over the loss of someone dear to us, death becomes a passage into a new blessed life. This is because the death of our Lady the Theotokos was followed by her translation from death to life. Indeed, how could the grave and death contain the life-giving body of the Mother of Life?

Even though the Theotokos did not escape death, as none of us will, and was laid to rest in a grave, as all of us will, her central role to the salvation of all mankind by co-operating with God to give birth to the one who would defeat Death, puts her in a place of honour above all creation. For this reason, it was not fitting for the Theotokos to remain in a tomb and decompose. Saint Andrew of Crete explains that just as the virginity of the Mother of God was preserved during the birth of Christ, so too the incorruption of her body was vouchsafed at the hour of her death.

So even though the Theotokos did suffer death, we call it a Dormition (Κοίμησις), literally a sleep, because she awoke and entered into eternal life. It is for this reason that the place of burial is also called a cemetery (κοιμητήριον) in the New Testament era, literally a place of sleep, where we anticipate the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.

After the glorious Dormition where the heavens rejoiced and the armies of angels exulted (Hymn of Matins of the

Dormition Feast) the Holy Theotokos was translated to the Heavens. Saint John of Damascus notes that 'the source of life goes to life, passing through death'. In fact, she is the only human being who may enjoy the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven at present as she is the only one to have risen after Christ. All other saints and indeed the thief on the Cross, who was the first one to enter the blessed Paradise, are not yet in the Kingdom. This is because the Kingdom is to be revealed after the second coming of Christ and the general resurrection of the dead. It will be occupied by the resurrected transformed bodies of people.

This feast is a cause of celebration not only because it marks the translation of our Lady to Heaven, but also because it gives each and every one of us the comfort, sweetness and hope of our own blessed resurrection. Christ himself says 'my mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God and do it' (Luke 8:21). This presupposes that we strive to do God's will as 'those who have done good, [will rise] to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation' (John 5:29). So, to share in the promises of the blessed age like the Theotokos, we must awaken to our call for eternal life by being obedient to God.

Indeed, a life in Christ transcends even death. If only we knew how pleased Our Lady is when she sees us struggling for our salvation. What joy it brings her! She herself, while on earth struggled in her quiet way with perfect asceticism. Who has surpassed her illuminated prayer or perfect fasting with all the senses? Holy Tradition tells us that in the house where the Theotokos lived, they found indentations in the marble slabs where she would kneel in prayer.

We know that she is close to all those who love and obey her Son, and are reminded of this by the Dismissal Hymn which states: 'in your Dormition you did not abandon the world, O Theotokos... and by your prayers you have delivered our souls from death'. Therefore, let us be inspired by her spiritual struggle, her intense prayer, her watchfulness, her purity and humility and her unconditional love, knowing that she is close by and will intercede for us when we need her most, at the hour of our own death.

The feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God is a message of hope for all people. Her tomb became a place of rest and her Dormition a passage to eternal life. May our Lady Theotokos intercede for us to awaken from the vain and temporal life of this age, to strive for a blessed eternal life in the Kingdom of her Son.



# *Wisdom in Spiritual Fatherhood*

*Epistle Reading Sunday 13 August – 1 Corinthians 4: 9-17*

*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers;  
for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*

*+ 1 Corinthians 4: 15*

The concept of spiritual fatherhood existed well before the coming of Christ to Earth and the institution of the Church on the day of Pentecost. The Old Testament attests to this relationship in quite a few instances.

In 4 Kings, the plea to a beloved spiritual father, "Father, Father! Chariot of Israel and its horseman!"; is mentioned twice, once by Prophet Elisha to his spiritual guide Prophet Elijah, as the latter was being taken up to the heaven, and again by Joash, King of Israel, crying out to Prophet Elisha who had fallen mortally ill and was on his deathbed. The plea describes both father figures as the chariots and horsemen who saved the people of Israel countless times. The book of Proverbs advises, "Hear, my son, your father's discipline, and do not reject your mother's precepts" (Prov 1:8).

In the New Testament, it was

Apostle Paul who expounded on the theme of spiritual fatherhood most of all: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom 8:15). The spirit of grace and adoption which we received through the Holy Spirit causes us to cry out, 'Our Father!'

God the Father is the 'Father' who gives birth to the Son before all ages, and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds. And just as the love that is shared between the members of the Holy Trinity is so infinitely great that it spills out boundlessly into all creation and to human beings, the only creation made in the image and likeness of God - it is this same love that Apostle Paul expresses, by saying to the Corinthians that though they might have many teachers in the faith, they have only him as the human face within the Church of that divine fatherly love.

The Apostles, sealed with the authority given to them by Christ on the day of His Ascension, would pass on that authority to their successors, the Bishops of the ever-expanding Church, and by extension to the other Clergy. The largest collection of ecclesiastical laws to have survived from the early Church, The Apostolic Constitutions, states: "The Bishop, he is the minister of the word, the keeper of knowledge,...He is the teacher of piety; and, next after God, he is your father, who has begotten you again to the adoption of sons by water and the Spirit" (Book 2:26).

Spiritual fatherhood is an important and holy tradition of our Church. It can even be said that the counsels of our spiritual father are able to represent God's will for us, as it is our spiritual father who, like St Paul, 'in Christ Jesus,' leads us safely to the salvation of our souls and bodies.





# THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The history of salvation finds its origins in the creation of man. However, in the book of Exodus that history develops in a most profound way. God leads His chosen people out of the land of slavery and sin, and into the land of His promise. On that journey, we see God reveal His plans for the salvation of mankind in a myriad of ways. Perhaps most especially, it is revealed in the covenant formed between God and His people by the giving of His commandments to Moses. The commandments were given in tablets which Moses brought down from the mountain. Thereafter, they were placed in what became known as the ark of the covenant which God commanded be built with gold within and without. This sacred artefact was housed in the most holy place located within the inner sanctuary of the temple which the Israelites would erect for themselves each time they camped as they journeyed through the desert. Eventually, many years later, Solomon built a temple to house the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem and which became the sole place of formal worship in accordance with the priestly rites.

In Exodus 25:8, God proclaims, "and let them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among

them." The ark of the covenant was not simply a vessel in which the sacred things would be stored. Instead, it was where God Himself would dwell. In the Christian tradition, the ark is a prototype



for the Virgin Mary who, being spotless and undefiled, held God Himself in her womb. In Luke 1:43, we hear Elizabeth say of Panagia, "and why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Compare this to

the Prophet David's words in 2 Samuel 6:9, "how can the ark of the Lord come to me?" The same passage describes David dancing and leaping in the presence of the covenant which is to be compared with the leaping of John the Baptist in his mother's womb upon Panagia's approach. For the Christian faithful, Panagia is the ark of the new covenant. The new covenant is Jesus Christ incarnate. The old covenant was the stone tablets. The new ark bears the new Adam who brings the new law of redemption.

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria makes the following beautiful proclamation about Panagia:

O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all O [Ark of the] Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides.

Thus, the humble Virgin plays a leading role in the history of mankind's salvation.



# Gerontissa Galaktia

Galateia Kanakaki was born in 1926 in the village of Pompia, Crete. Her father Michalis was a compassionate doctor whose practice she frequented as a little girl. It was here that she learnt to be attentive to the needs of others.

Her grandfather, Fr Nikolaos Foustanakis, was a very holy priest with the austerity of the southern Cretan ascetics. As a teenager she once confessed to him that she had upset her father with a disrespectful comment. He scolded her, and this had such an impact on her tender soul that she cried for days pleading for the Holy Spirit to forgive her. She descended the depths of repentance, and then, out of nowhere, a bright comforting light surrounded her. She felt her sin fall away like dead leaves fall from a tree, and from this moment her soul was filled with divine love.

When she was of age, she had no interest in getting married, despite pressure from her parents, as her desire for God exceeded her desire for worldly pleasures. When a young man went to her house to ask for her, she took hold of the Icon of Archangel Michael and pleaded with him to intervene forcefully to end it all. Immediately, there was an earthquake, the doors of the house flew open, and a loud noise scared off her suitor.

Galateia spent 40 years of her life living with her niece Antonoula who had a severe disability, loving her as her own child. She did all this while leading an ascetic life of prayer, fasting, study, silence and self-examination. Many times she suffered insults, ridicule and various attacks from cruel and unloving people. She never criticised, nor

held grudges, but bore it all with an excess of love and forgiveness.

Her acts of mercy were unparalleled. She would say, "I made a deal with Panagia to empty my house out for the poor, and if I had need of anything she would provide it."

Galateia continued to care for the needy up until her old age and true to the scriptures, she was deemed worthy to entertain angels (cf. Heb 13:2). Seven Archangels appeared and formed an arch with their swords. They led her up to a golden palace with a fountain of crystal waters and told her that she had built it by her works of mercy.

In the final 20 years of her life, she acquired such a great depth of foresight that she could see everything regarding those who visited her, but she was never tempted to think she was holy. On the contrary, she considered herself unimportant and felt a sense of responsibility for all the darkness still in the world. For this reason, every morning she prayed fervently for the whole world with her arms outstretched.

In 2017, Galateia fell ill with pulmonary disease and the doctor gave her a few hours. Nine priests conducted the Holy Unction without the use of incense, as Galateia was breathing with difficulty. After the service, the room filled with a heavenly fragrance, and that very night, Panagia appeared and told her that her luggage was ready and her "books" were crystal clear but that she had received a small

extension. With the blessing of the local metropolitan, at the age of ninety, Galateia was tonsured a Great Schema nun taking the name Galaktia. She lived a few more years serving all who visited her with her fiery prayers before permanently departing for her heavenly home on the 20th of May 2021.

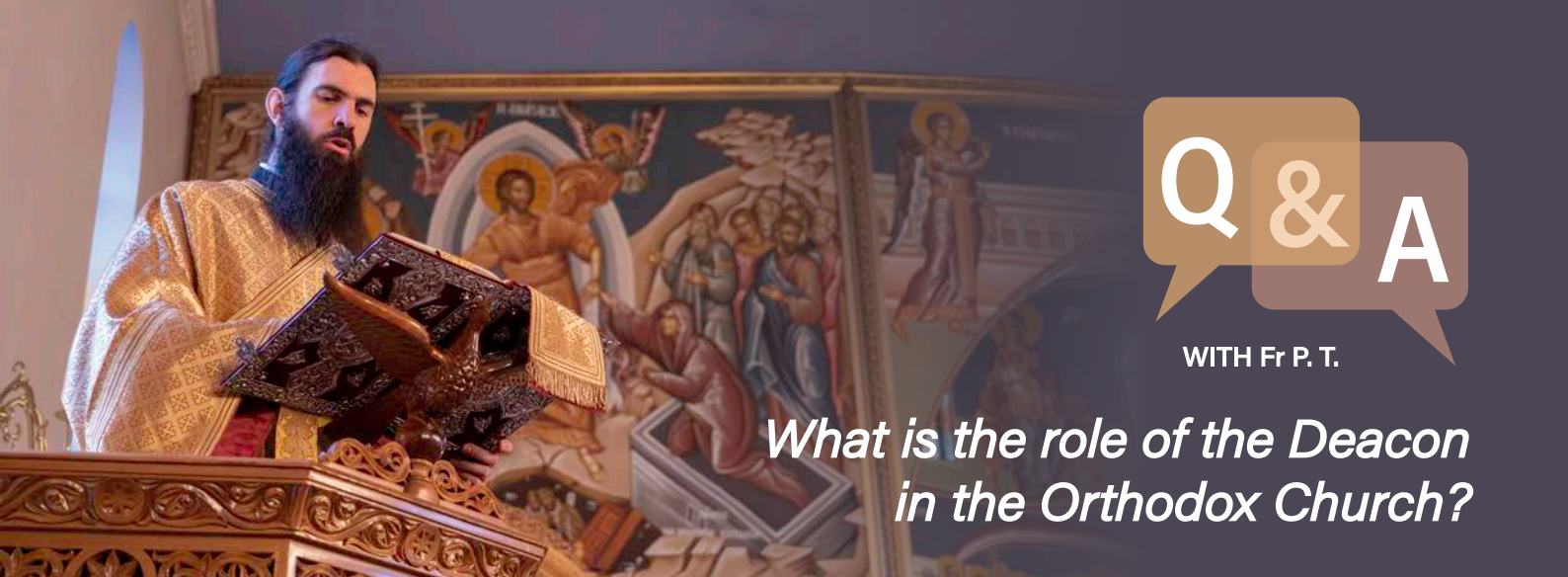
Gerontissa Galaktia's angelic way of life led to many visions and visitations from saints, and she has left us with some of the most descriptive accounts of Christ, Panagia and all the saints she saw, who were her regular companions. Her account of her experience of the Holy Trinity is one of the most impressive and detailed descriptions since the writings of St Symeon the New Theologian.<sup>1</sup>

May her memory be eternal.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Greek book: «Η ὁσία Γερόντισσα Γαλακτία τῆς Κρήτης», by Θεομόρφου publishers of the Metropolis of Morphou, Cyprus, June 2023.





WITH Fr P. T.

## What is the role of the Deacon in the Orthodox Church?

"Deacon" means "servant" in Greek (διάκονος). All Christians are called to be "deacons" or "servants" in their daily life. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus Christ places particular emphasis on being a servant as a defining characteristic of His followers. To be a servant is to imitate Christ Himself: "... whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45). However, the Church has specifically ordained Deacons to serve at the table of our Lord and to embody the role of the servant. Therefore, Deacons are our models of service as Christians.

Deacons are the third rank of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy appointed by the Apostles as described in Acts 6:1-6 to relieve Bishops and Priests from work they are too busy to fully attend to. Deacons can also be viewed as the earthly equivalent of the Angels who are intermediaries between God and man and are often mediators between the laity, Priests, and Bishops.

In the Orthodox Church today, we find deacons assisting in Liturgical services (most notably in the Divine Liturgy), in acts of charity and almsgiving, in the distribution of Eucharist to the faithful and to the sick at home, in the area of preaching and teaching, in helping those in need, in the care of Church buildings and administration, and in accompanying and assisting the Bishops in their role. Deacons are usually seen during the Divine Liturgy and other services

assisting the Priest in the altar, censing and chanting petitions on the Solea in front of the Royal Gates.

If we look at the Theological significance of the Deacon, we will see that the office of the Diaconate completes the triune ministry of the Priesthood established by God Himself. In the Old Testament, those that ministered to God on behalf of Israel were the Aaronites and the Levites. The Aaronites were divided into those that were chosen to be Chief Priests and the 'regular' Priests. Those three offices correspond to the Orthodox Church's three offices of Priesthood today, which are Bishop (i.e.

Chief Priest), Presbyter (i.e. 'regular' Priest), and Deacon (i.e. Levite). It was also common in the early Church to

emulate the Scriptural model and have seven Deacons for every congregation. Yet, today, there are very few Deacons in most Orthodox dioceses around the world.

A consequence of this is that during the Divine Liturgy the Priest must chant the petitions himself which were specifically written for the Deacon and the "dialogue" that is supposed to occur in the Liturgy is completely

removed. Priests may also need to unfortunately rush some of the prayers that are said during the petitions which upsets the balance of the services which was intended for the Liturgy.

From this short explanation, we can see that the office of Deacon is vital and necessary for the proper and healthy functioning of the Church, not only as an institution, but as the Body of Christ.



*"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour" (John 12:26).*





# Panagia Myrtidiotissa



The holy and miraculous icon of Panagia Myrtidiotissa ("of the Myrtles") derives its name from the myrtle bushes amongst which it was found. During the 14th century, on the island of Kythera, the Theotokos appeared in the dreams of a shepherd forty days after the commemoration of her Dormition. She instructed him to go to the valley in Myrtides, full of wild myrtle bushes, where her icon was resting.

After going to the place, he discovered the icon. The shepherd fell to the ground in amazement and thanksgiving to the Theotokos. He wept for joy as he brought the icon home and told his friends and relatives the story of his encounter with our All-Holy Mother.

When he woke the next morning, the icon was missing, and he thought someone may have stolen it overnight. With a heavy heart, he led his sheep back to the spot where he had found the icon. To his amazement, he saw the icon once again in the branches of the myrtle bush. Glorifying God, the man took the icon home with him once more. The next morning, it had disappeared again. When this happened a third time, the shepherd realised that the Mother of God wanted her icon to remain where it had first appeared, and a church was built there.

Two centuries later, there lived a descendant of the shepherd called Theodore who was paralysed. He had immense faith that the Mother of God would one day heal him. Each year

on September 24th, he sent a family member to the church to light candles for him. One year he asked to be carried there by his family so that he might venerate the icon himself. During the vigil, a great noise was heard coming from the direction of the sea. People fled the church as they realised that pirates were attacking. Theodore remained in the church by himself, entreating the Theotokos for protection. Suddenly, he heard a voice from the icon telling him to get up and flee. He stood up and was able to walk out of the church. Soon he was able to run and catch up with his relatives, who were shocked and rejoiced upon seeing this miracle.

Some of the other miracles of Panagia Myrtidiotissa include protection of the island from the plague, ending the infertility of a Jewish woman from Alexandria, and saving many from death. This icon was even venerated

by the Muslims during the Ottoman occupation as the Theotokos interceded for the sultan's wife to fall pregnant. Panagia Myrtidiotissa shows us how the truth of God's love and mercy surpasses all barriers.

The icon is in the style of Hodegetria, traditionally attributed to Apostle Luke. She is showing the faithful the Way to Christ, depicted amongst the myrtle branches. The monastery of Panagia Myrtidiotissa welcomes visitors with the delightful fragrance of the many myrtle bushes beyond the tall gates. Pilgrims come to venerate the icon on the Feast of the Dormition and also on the day of its discovery, September 24th.





# St Gregory Palamas on Panagia



The following excerpts are from two different homilies given by St Gregory Palamas in his capacity as Archbishop of Thessaloniki, the office he held from 1350 until his death in 1359.

The style of his homilies completely differs to his dogmatic treatises, which were written to refute heretical teachings. They are written in a peaceful manner, shorn of rhetorical flourishes but maintaining a brilliant style. Whilst his hesychastic works were addressed primarily to monastic communities, his homilies, addressed to the whole of the Church, reveal that his hesychastic teachings could also be applied by those living in the world.

**From the Homily on the Salvific Birth of our Above-All, Most-Pure Maiden, Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary (Homily 42):**

*May you all in common, to the Virgin who we celebrate today, perfectly present the loveliest and most proper gift, being your sanctification and purity of body through self-control and prayer.*

*You can all see that soundness in mind, fasting and prayer, brought together with compunction, proved Joachim and Anna to be begetters of a divine vessel, a vessel so chosen of God as not only to bear the divine name, like Paul who appeared later, but to bear Him whose name is wonderful. If we also, apart from the other virtues, dedicate ourselves to prayers, attending the temple of God with understanding, we will discover treasured within us the cleanliness of heart which contains and reveals God to us.*

*It is exactly this cleanliness and disposition of the soul towards God, which Isaiah also names as the spirit in the womb which saves, saying to God, "We have conceived, O Lord, because of thy fear, and have been in pain, and have brought forth the breath of thy salvation, which we have wrought upon the earth." (Isaiah 26:18 LXX).*



**From the Homily on the Dormition of the Theotokos (Homily 37):**

*She is the only one who stood between God and the whole human race, for she made God the Son of Man, while causing men to*

*become sons of God, making the earth heavenly and the human race divine, and being shown forth on the one hand, alone of all women, above all nature, as the Mother of God naturally, and on the other hand, through the inexpressible birth, becoming queen of every earthly and supernatural creature and in this way, by herself, raising up those below her and rendering those subjects upon the earth heavenly instead of earthly and taking part in that which is of higher worth and greater power and of her election through the Holy Spirit, which has come from the heavens, being appointed as the highest of the high and most blessed Queen of the blessed human race.*





# The Holy Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna

Joachim, from the royal tribe of Judah, was a righteous man, distinguished by his nobility and reverence. His wife Anna, descending from the priestly tribe of Levi, lived with her husband in unity, being of one mind and spirit with him. A perfect spouse and co-struggler, she can be contrasted to the first woman. And while Eve's forbidden fruit introduced sorrow and pain to the world, through the 'fruit' of Anna, joy was brought into the world.

This great joy was not achieved however without struggle of both body and soul. For divine economy is often revealed only when human effort and patience has been tested, and there remains only a broken-hearted reliance upon the grace of God. Thus, it was with Abraham, who waited until old age before the promise of a son could be fulfilled, only to be asked to sacrifice him to the Lord (Gen 22:1-19). Likewise, Jacob wrestled with the Man until daybreak, suffering defeat and imploring to be blessed by his victor, before receiving the name Israel and a prophecy of greatness among men (Gen 32:22-32).

It was only fitting therefore that the virtues of these holy ancestors of God be tested through the same ascetic struggles as their forefathers, and for the same ultimate purpose: the coming of Christ into the world.

God allowed this holy couple to remain barren and childless for a long time, in order to reveal the 'barrenness' of humanity before the coming of Christ. This, however, was a great sorrow to the couple, and Joachim often prayed for deliverance from the shame of childlessness.

Once, during a great feast, the offerings which Joachim took to the temple were not accepted by the priest, who considered him unworthy to offer sacrifice to God as a childless man. This greatly pained Joachim, and instead

of returning home he went up alone into a mountain, seeking solitude to pray and weep.

Grieved by his disappearance, Anna shed many tears, and knowing the reason for his despair, prayed fervently to God, solemnly promising that if given a child, she would dedicate it to the Lord.

The merciful God heard their prayers with compassion and sent the Archangel Gabriel to Anna to pronounce the good news that she would bear a child in her old age, through whom salvation would come to the world.



*'O blessed couple! You have been  
exalted above all parents, for you  
produced a daughter who exceeds  
all creation.'*

*From the 'glory' hymn of vespers  
for the 9th of September*

Being also informed by an angel, Joachim returned from his solitude and met his wife at the city gate in Jerusalem, where they embraced each other joyfully.

When the time came for the Lord's promise to be fulfilled, Anna gave birth to a daughter, giving her the name Mariam, or Mary. Filled with gratitude, Anna did not forget her vow to the Lord and prepared the child by protecting her from everything unclean and keeping the room where she was kept a holy place.

When Mary reached the age of three, her parents brought her to the high priest of the temple in her finest clothes, escorted by maidens carrying candles and singing psalms.

After entrusting their child to the Lord, Joachim and Anna returned home. During the next seven years, they visited Mary often at the temple until they reposed in their old age, leaving Mary an orphan.

The holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, are celebrated on the 9th of September, the day following the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God.



## Book Review

# The Beginnings of a Life of Prayer

### Archimandrite Irenei

*The Beginnings of a Life of Prayer*, by Archimandrite Irenei, is an excellent book for those beginning to contemplate what it means to live a life of prayer, but also for those who may have begun this journey but need a reminder of the fundamentals required to progress further. Drawing on biblical and patristic references, the author explains eloquently that the beginning of a life of prayer arises from the longing of the heart to know Christ our God, to rest in Him who showed His love for us upon the precious Cross, and to abide in the fullness of communion with Him.

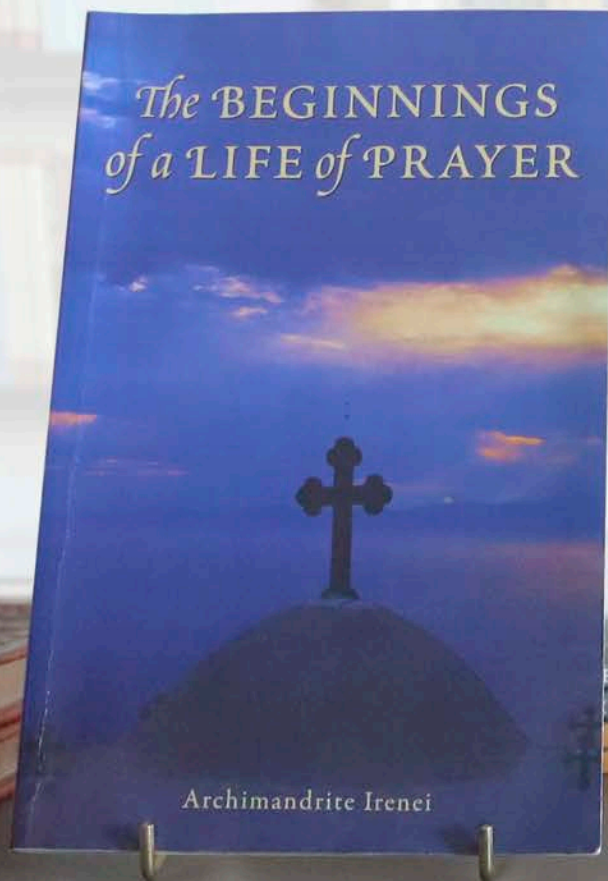
The book is divided into two main parts. Part one, *Taking Stock of our Struggle*, has as a central theme the need for each individual to self-examine genuinely their current spiritual state so that they may better understand the areas they need to improve. In the words of St Basil the Great,

“Be attentive to yourself. That is, observe yourself carefully from every side. Let the eye of your soul be sleepless to guard you... that you may be saved like a gazelle from traps and like a bird from snares.”

If our aspiration is to live an authentic Christian life, a life that seeks prayer and transfiguration in Christ, we need to continually examine ourselves. We need to be able to see our weaknesses and try find a way out by engaging consistently in our own personal ascetical struggle to overcome our passions. This may sound difficult, but the impossible is made possible with Christ. What is needed on our part is genuine and consistent effort and we leave the rest to Christ, who will see our effort and inspire us to make further progress.

In part two, the reader is taken on a wonderful journey through the different aspects of a life of prayer and concludes with practical tips from various patristic writings. The overriding sentiment is that the beginning of prayer does not consist in a method, in a specific style or form of practice but rather it is a cry of the heart, a longing of the soul to know its Creator. If you have discovered this longing within yourself, even if its precise form remains unknown to you, then you have within you the seeds from which prayer can grow.

The book's call to action is then to make a start on your prayer life or, if you have already made a start, to re-examine the journey so far and make any required adjustments. In our contemporary and demanding world, prayer is the antidote as it is the call of God to each of our hearts and the personal response of our heart back to God. Prayer is the rest of which the Saviour spoke: *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*. It is the rest in which the soul and body, which *labour and are heavy laden* by the burdens of this world, abide in the true Sabbath, the comforting bosom of our Lord.



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Σῶσον, Κύριε, τὸν λαόν σου καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν  
κληρονομίαν σου, νίκας τοῖς βασιλεῦσι κατὰ  
βαρβάρων δωρούμενος, καὶ τὸ σὸν φυλάττων  
διὰ τοῦ Σταυροῦ σου πολίτευμα.

*Save, O Lord, Your people and bless your  
inheritance, granting to the kings victories  
over their enemies, and protecting your  
commonwealth by your Cross.*

# SAVE, YOUR O LORD, PEOPLE...

This hymn has been sung by Orthodox Christians through the ages during the feast days of the Holy Cross of Christ, the chief of which are the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14th, and the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross on the 3rd Sunday of Lent.

The first part of the hymn is taken from the last verse of Psalm 27: "Save your people and bless your inheritance; shepherd them and exalt them unto the ages." The fathers have interpreted this psalm both as King David reflecting on his own experiences and as a prophesy for future Kings.

A 5th century Holy Father, Blessed Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus, writes in his commentary that "the psalm was spoken by David when he was pursued by Saul and was the object of schemes on the part of those who seemed to be friends but betrayed him and tried to reveal his whereabouts to Saul, like Doeg the Ziphites and many others in addition to them."

On the other hand, Diodorus, Bishop of Tarsus, mentor of St John Chrysostom, writes that this psalm was "composed from the viewpoint of blessed Hezekiah and directed against the Assyrians. The inspired author David prophesied and adopted this theme on the other's part, using his very words in prophecy and displaying his feelings."

King Hezekiah, who as the Old Testament recounts "did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God", was King of Judah when the armies of Sennacherib,

King of the Assyrians, came to conquer Jerusalem. King Hezekiah exhorted the Israelites to place their hopes in God: "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles" (2nd Chronicles 32:7-8).

The events that followed are recounted in the remainder of Chapter 32 of the Second Book of Chronicles. For our purposes, it suffices to say that God delivered the Israelites from the Assyrians in a miraculous fashion.

Just as King David was delivered from Saul who was pursuing him throughout Israel, and centuries later King Hezekiah and Jerusalem were delivered from the invading Assyrians, the Christian Orthodox inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire turned to Jesus Christ to aid in their deliverance from the many invading armies who would seek to conquer them.

In the spiritual sense, we turn to Christ in our struggles against the temptations of the "enemy" and against our own passions.

And as Orthodox Christians, just like our forebears, we show special reverence and love for the pre-eminent sign of Christ and His Church, the Holy Cross, the sign which permeates all our worship and inspires us, as Blessed Theodoret writes, "to petition God and thereby to secure His providence."





# OUR CREED

## *In one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church*

### Catholic

*"Now it [the Church] is called catholic because it is throughout the world, from one end of the earth to the other; it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; ...it leads to a pious life every class of men, rulers and subjects, learned and unlearned; it universally treats and heals every sort of sins, which are committed by soul or body, and possesses in itself every form of virtue which can be seen in deeds and words and in the various spiritual gifts."*

*(St Cyril of Jerusalem, present at the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 where the Creed was completed, in his Catechetical Lecture 18, 23).*

The word "catholic" comes from the Greek adjective "καθολικόν" (universal) which is derived from "κατά όλον" = "καθόλον" (according to the whole); in opposition to that which is sectarian, partial, or divided.

The Orthodox Church is catholic in both a theological and physical sense. The fullness of truth found in Christ is preserved intact and whole in the Orthodox Church

today. She has safe-guarded her ecclesiastical integrity through many storms (schisms, heresies) by keeping the dogmatic teachings and traditions of the Apostles and early Christian community untouched and unchanged over the centuries. She is not just "a" church, but The Church of Christ.

This is where so-called "Branch Theory" falls flat. That theory proclaims that each Christian denomination in existence today (including the Orthodox Church) possesses only a part of the Truth, thus implying that each is incomplete and in need of the others to form the one true Church of Christ.

Today, this tendency to level down Orthodox Christianity to that of other Christian denominations (or even to that of non-Christian faiths) is especially present through the ever-growing movements of Ecumenism and Religious Syncretism. These expose our Orthodox Church to the danger of dogmatic compromise, which would strip her of her theological integrity (wholeness). This fragmenting of the whole (i.e., the Truth) comprises heresy. Historically, it has always been the placing of an imbalanced emphasis on a *part* of the Truth, which leads to the formation of heresy.

In a physical sense, the Orthodox

Church is catholic because she is not restricted by geography, ethnicity, culture, gender, language, social standing, financial position, etc. Orthodoxy is universal, embracing all people just as God's love does not discriminate, but is open to all. When Christ as the Good Shepherd, spoke to the Pharisees (nationalistic Jewish religious leaders of the time), He clearly stated that salvation is open to all, including the Gentiles (non-Jews): "and other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16).

Just before His Ascension, our Lord commissioned the Apostles to "make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded" (Matt. 28:19-20). This is what the Church is called to do from the day of Pentecost until Christ returns. To live our faith in the embrace of the "catholic" Orthodox Church is a privilege. At the same time, we must be mindful that our boast is *not* that we possess the whole Truth (for God is Truth), but that we *participate* in it, by His grace.

*The fourth attribute given to the Church in Article 9 of the Creed - "Apostolic" - will be discussed in the next issue.*





**Ο**ι Ιουδαίοι κατά την Ελληνιστική περίοδο άρχισαν σιγά σιγά να αφομοιώνονται με τους υπόλοιπους λαούς και να ασπάζονται Ελληνικές συνήθειες και ονόματα. Σύμφωνα με την Ιουδαϊκή Εγκυκλοπαίδεια (Jewish Encyclopedia) "... ο "Χόνι" έγινε "Μενέλαος", ο "Yeshoua" έγινε "Ιάσωνας" ή "Ιησούς". Η ελληνική επιρροή διεισδυσσε στα πάντα, και ακόμη στα ίδια τα οχυρά του Ιουδαϊσμού άλλαξε την οργάνωση της πολιτείας, τους νόμους, και τις δημόσιες σχέσεις, την τέχνη, την επιστήμη, και την βιομηχανία, επηρεάζοντας ακόμη και τις συνηθισμένες πλευρές της ζωής και τις κοινές σχέσεις των ανθρώπων". Μερικοί θεσμοί, όπως π.χ. τα «Γυμνάσια» (γυμναστήρια) όπου εξασκούντο σωματικά οι

άνδρες γυμνοί, ήταν ανάθεμα για τους θρησκευόμενους Ιουδαίους. Το αποτέλεσμα ήταν να ξεσπάσει στη γη του Ισραήλ η Μακκαβαϊκή εξέγερση (η οποία περιγράφεται αναλυτικά στα βιβλία των Μακκαβαίων). Στην Αλεξάνδρεια το πρόβλημα ήταν διαφορετικό. Οι Ιουδαίοι συν τοις άλλοις άρχισαν να χάνουν την επαφή με την Εβραϊκή τους γλώσσα και επομένως με τις Άγιες των Γραφές. Για να διατηρηθεί η επαφή τους με τα Ιερά Κείμενα υπήρχε μόνο μία λύση: η μετάφρασή των στη γλώσσα που μιλούσαν, δηλαδή στην Ελληνική. Σύμφωνα με την παράδοση, 72 Ιουδαίοι λόγιοι της Αλεξάνδρειας της Αιγύπτου άρχισαν το έργο της μετάφρασης αυτής περίπου το 280 π.Χ. Αργότερα και χάριν συντομίας καθιερώθηκε ο αριθμός 70, κι έτσι προέκυψε η ονομασία Μετάφραση των Εβδομήκοντα (Ο'). Στα λατινικά έγινε γνωστή με την ονομασία Septuaginta / Septuagint (LXX). Οι 72 λόγιοι, σύμφωνα πάντα με την παραπάνω Ιουδαϊκή παράδοση, ανέλαβαν αρχικά την μετάφραση της Τορά (Νόμου), καθένας τους χωριστά και απομονωμένοι αλλήλων. Το αποτέλεσμα ήταν αξιοθαύμαστο: 72 πανομοιότυπες μεταφράσεις, πράγμα που ερμηνεύτηκε σαν θαύμα. (Αργότερα δυστυχώς, μετά την διάδοση του Χριστιανισμού, η διάθεση των Ιουδαίων για την παραπάνω μετάφραση πήρε εχθρικό χαρακτήρα και

αποδοκιμάστηκε τελείως). Προφανώς, η μετάφραση αυτή ολοκληρώθηκε μέσα στον 3ο αιώνα π.Χ. κατά τη διάρκεια της βασιλείας του Πτολεμαίου Β' του Φιλαδέλφου. Αργότερα, άλλοι λόγιοι συνέχισαν τη μετάφραση των υπόλοιπων βιβλίων της Εβραϊκής Βίβλου. Γλώσσα της Μετάφρασης των Εβδομήκοντα ήταν η ελληνιστική κοινή που μιλιόταν στην Αλεξάνδρεια της Αιγύπτου κατά τον 3<sup>ον</sup> και 2<sup>ον</sup> αιώνα π.Χ. Αποτέλεσε τη Γραφή που είχαν οι ελληνόφωνοι Ιουδαίοι και χρησιμοποιούνταν ευρέως τον καιρό του Ιησού Χριστού και των αποστόλων του. Στην Καινή Διαθήκη οι περισσότερες από τις 320 κατά λέξη παραθέσεις από το σύνολο των περίπου 890 παραθέσεων και αναφορών στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη βασίζονται στη Μετάφραση των Εβδομήκοντα.

Σήμερα οι Εβραίοι χρησιμοποιούν το λεγόμενο Μασορτικό κείμενο (από το Αραμαϊκό ρήμα *μασάρ* = παραδίδω), μια εργασία Ιουδαίων λογίων που διήρκεσε από τον 6<sup>ο</sup> μέχρι τον 10<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα μ.Χ. Από το κείμενο αυτό προέρχονται όλες σχεδόν οι ετερόγλωσσες (συμπεριλαμβανομένων και των Αγγλικών) μεταφράσεις της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης που κυκλοφορούν σήμερα.

Όπως προαναφέραμε σε προηγούμενο άρθρο μας η μετάφραση των Ο' χώρισε το





βιβλίο του Νόμου σε πέντε τεύχη (Πεντάτευχος) ονομάζοντάς τα κατά σειράν ως *Γένεσις*, *Έξοδος*, *Λευιτικόν*, *Αριθμοί* και *Δευτερονόμιον*, μετονόμασε τις περγαμηνές Α' & Β' Σαμουήλ και Α' και Β' Βασιλέων σε *Βασιλειών Α'*, *Β'*, *Γ'* & *Δ'*, τις Α' & Β' Χρονικών σε *Παραλειπομένων Α' & Β'* και το 'Εσδρας σε 'Εσδρας Β'.

Εκτός όμως από τις αλλαγές στις παραπάνω ονομασίες το κείμενο των Ο' παρουσιάζει διαφορές ως προς το Μασοριτικό:

(α) στον αριθμό των βιβλίων και (β) σε προσθήκες  
Υπάρχουν επίσης κάποιες διαφορές στην διάταξη μερικών στίχων και κεφαλαίων (ιδιαίτερα στους Ψαλμούς).

### (α) Αριθμός βιβλίων

Το Μασοριτικό κείμενο αποτελείται από 39 βιβλία ενώ αυτό των Ο' από 49 (συν ένα παράρτημα, το *Μακκαβαίων Δ'*).

Τα περισσότερα από αυτά τα επιπρόσθετα βιβλία έχουν μεταφραστεί από Εβραϊκά κείμενα τα οποία μέχρι τον 20° αιώνα είχαν θεωρηθεί ως χαμένα, μερικά αποσπάσματα των οποίων βρέθηκαν τελικά στις αρχαιολογικές ανακαλύψεις της Νεκράς Θάλασσας (Κουμράν). Άλλα (π.χ. τα βιβλία των *Μακκαβαίων*) έχουν σαν πρωτότυπη γλώσσα την Ελληνική.

Τα βιβλία αυτά είναι τα εξής:

Α' Έσδρας ή Έσδρας ο Ιερέυς  
Τωβίτ  
Ιουδίθ  
Μακκαβαίων Α'  
Μακκαβαίων Β'  
Μακκαβαίων Γ'  
Σοφία Σολομώντος  
Σοφία Σειράχ  
Βαρούχ  
Επιστολή Ιερεμίου  
Μακκαβαίων Δ' (ως παράρτημα)

### (β) Προσθήκες

Αυτές βρίσκονται στα βιβλία *Εσθήρ* και *Δανιήλ* (*Σωσάννα*, *Προσευχή Αζαρίου* και *Ύμνος των Τριών Παιδών*, *Βηλ* και *Δράκων*).

Τα παραπάνω βιβλία και οι προσθήκες αναγνωρίζονται ως Κανονικά από την Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία, και τοποθετούνται στην φυσιολογική σειρά στην οποία ανήκουν (ιστορικά, σοφιολογικά ή προφητικά), τα περισσότερα (όχι όλα) από αυτά ως Δευτεροκανονικά από τη Ρωμαιοκαθολική (όπου τα βρίσκουμε συνήθως μεταξύ των «πρωτοκανονικών» βιβλίων της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης και της Καινής (intertestamental books), απορρίπτονται δε τελείως ως Απόκρυφα από τους Εβραίους και τις Διαμαρτυρόμενες ομολογίες.

Το επόμενο άρθρο μας θα αρχίσει με την διασάφηση των όρων «Απόκρυφα» και «Ψευδεπίγραφα».



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# News & Events



## Adelaide Ομάδα Youth Retreat

On Friday 14 July 2023, a historical first Ομάδα (Fellowship) Youth Boys Retreat was held in the city of Adelaide. Eighteen high school boys participated in the camp together with their nine leaders from both Adelaide and Sydney.

The theme of this year's Retreat was "I Belong to God", and the boys were split into two groups to further explore this theme. Their two groups were «Προσευχόμενοι» (the prayerful) and «Μελετώντες» (those who study).

The Retreat, which was held at the Mylor Adventure Camp in the Adelaide Hills, was filled with spiritual talks, Bible studies, indoor and outdoor games, common meals, daily morning and evening prayers, and time for spiritual reading and reflection.

The highlight of the Retreat was the Divine Liturgy that was celebrated by His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope and assisted by Fr Jeremy Krieg. After the Divine Liturgy, His Grace spent time with the boys and spoke to them about the beauty of the 'life in Christ'. He expressed that the beauty of the Divine Liturgy and common worship of God makes us something very different, and our aim is to make this last wherever we go. He explained that it is very special to be 'Christ-like' in the things that no one sees, whether it is sacrificing something for another person, or pushing ourselves to pray even though we might be tired.

All who participated in the Retreat returned home feeling inspired to renew their spiritual lives and to struggle towards God.

# Key Dates

## AUGUST

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1</b><br>Tuesday<br><b>Procession of the Holy Cross</b><br>Fast begins | <b>6</b><br>Sunday<br><b>TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD</b>        |
| <b>15</b><br>Tuesday<br><b>DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>                 | <b>24</b><br>Thursday<br><b>Kosmas of Aetolia</b>               |
| <b>27</b><br>Sunday<br><b>Martyr Phanourios</b>                           | <b>29</b><br>Tuesday<br><b>BEHEADING OF JOHN THE FORERUNNER</b> |

## SEPTEMBER

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b><br>Friday<br><b>Ecclesiastical New Year</b><br>Symeon the Stylite | <b>8</b><br>Friday<br><b>BIRTH OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>               |
| <b>9</b><br>Saturday<br><b>Joachim and Anna</b>                            | <b>14</b><br>Thursday<br><b>EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b>      |
| <b>16</b><br>Saturday<br><b>Great Martyr Euphemia</b>                      | <b>23</b><br>Saturday<br><b>Conception of John the Forerunner</b> |



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- (02) 9787 9779
- editor@lychnos.org
- lychnos.org
- @orthodoxjourneyaustralia
- @orthodoxjourney\_australia