

INVINCIBLE GUARDS

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ΑΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL





INVINCIBLE GUARDS



St Paisios of Mt Athos, the newly declared protector and patron Saint of Australia, had an immense love and reverence for the Holy Angels. He once related the following account from his life, when he was seriously ill and bed-ridden during a heavy winter period in a remote hut, with no one around to care for him:

It was a harsh winter, and snow had fallen so that no tree looked like a tree. Everything was smothered in white, the trails were gone, the birds were quiet, clouds and fog obscured Athos. I had no contact with the Monastery of Stavronikita, and I could not live more than a few days since because of the illness I was completely paralyzed. I was expecting the Lord to take my soul and lead it to the mercy of His compassion. I could not even make one cup of tea, nor light the stove, nor did I have water to drink. My life was at the mercy of God. I said: "Behold Lord, in Your mercy I hope. Do not forsake me!"

After a few prayers which I mumbled with great effort, I saw appear in my cell angels and saints, sent by God. The grace of God had visited quickly. I thanked and glorified my Saviour. I cried. One of the angels took care of the stove, another was preparing warm food, they were also bringing fragrant breads. I was in Paradise. What else did I want?

The saints began to encourage me with words of consolation and prayers. And only their vision gave me rest, empowering me and giving me hope. They stayed with me until I was well and able to take care of myself. Then they left. They stayed with me for a week. When after a time I arose and went outside my cell I looked around at nature with different eyes. Everything was illumined with the uncreated light of the Holy

Spirit. I was not worthy, but the infinite goodness of God and his love manifested in this way. In all I felt such grace filling me within that I would say: "Enough Lord. I cannot take anymore. I will burst. Either take me with You or dwindle the grace You have given me. If You give me so much grace now, imagine what is given in Paradise."

However, it is not only St Paisios who has experienced the help of the Holy Angels. St Basil the Great affirms that "everyone who believes in the Lord is attended to by an angel, unless we drive him away through evil deeds." And the evening prayer of the Orthodox faithful contains the following plea to their guardian angel: "take my wretched and feeble hand and lead me along the path of salvation".

God instructed Moses that He would provide an angel of protection for His people on their long journey through the wilderness towards the promised land: "Behold, I send My angel before your face, to keep you in the way and to bring you into the land I prepared for you" (Ex 23:20).

What then is the purpose and task of the Holy Angels in relation to us humans, who like the Israelites, are undertaking the journey of this present life in the face of many dangers? God has entrusted the angels with a twofold task: to protect us from physical dangers, and to minister our spiritual needs.

Angels, being holy, pure and immaterial spirits, full of love and empathy, are sent by God to guard and protect us from visible and invisible enemies. The Bible is full of accounts in which the loving protection of angels is evident. An angel protected the Three Youths in the

furnace, keeping them safe and sound. An angel closed the mouths of the lions, saving Daniel from certain death. An angel accompanied the pious Tobias on his long journey, protecting him from the many dangers he ran into. And that great poet of the Bible, the prophet-king David, affirms that “the angel of the Lord shall encamp around those who fear Him, and He will deliver them” (Ps 33:8). That is, those who fear and respect God will be protected by an entire army of invincible angels camped around them. We also have the vivid narration of the miracle of the freeing of Apostle Peter from prison, in which God sent His angel to free him to continue in the holy ministry of the Gospel (Acts 12:4-19).

Truly if our physical eyes were able to perceive the spiritual world, we would be amazed by the instantaneous and unceasing motion of the angels, who hurry and protect those devoted to God from all kinds of dangers. It is true to say that we aren’t even aware of most of the dangers we face daily. One day however, when “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10) will be revealed, we will come to know how the angels of light delivered us from so many dangerous situations that we will praise God from the depth of our heart for his great and paternal provision.

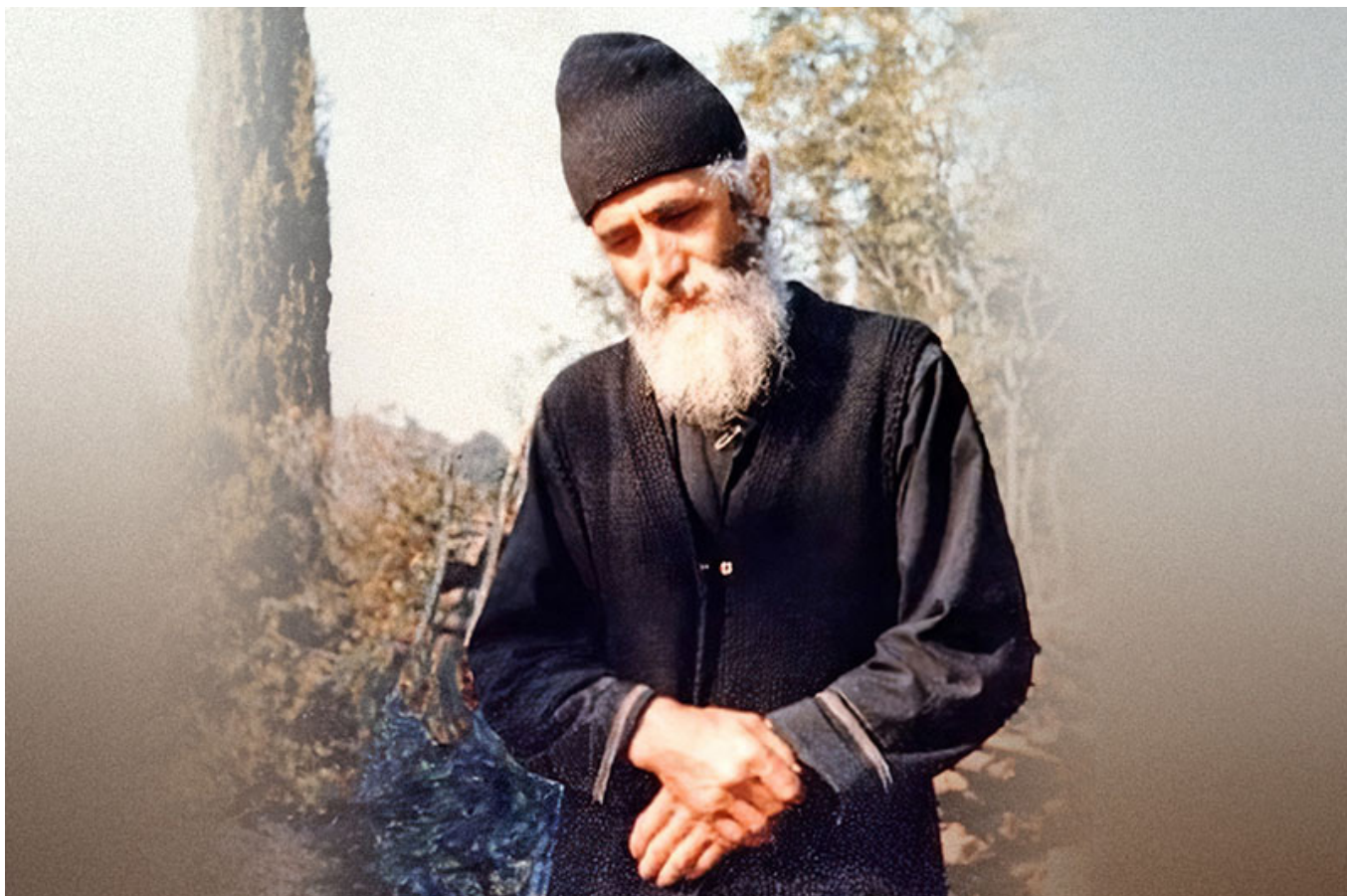
But there is another important work that angels have been tasked with. Apostle Paul expresses it so well

when he affirms that angels are “ministering spirits,” sent by God to minister “for those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14). What a wondrous privilege!

The angels, holy and pure spirits, incomparably more perfect in knowledge than us who, despite standing before the throne of God and continually praising Him, minister to us wretched and sinful people! And yet, those who are destined to inherit salvation! Yes. They, the Holy Angels, stand near us and with affection and untiring care, continually watch over us. They watch over all believers, irrespective of their social standing, knowledge, power, wealth, or glory, even the most unknown and insignificant among us. They watch us in our struggles and strengthen us in our trials. They sympathise with us in our downfalls and rejoice in our victories. They are our unfailing companions and guides when we leave this world and enter the world of heaven.

This great truth is echoed by Saint Basil the Great, as noted earlier, who further adds: “As the smoke drives bees away, and stench the doves, even so our stinking sin drives away from us the angel who protects our life.” This latter point deserves our utmost attention.

May God protect us from all spiritual and physical dangers through the intervention of His Holy Angels.



ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΚΑΙ 28Η ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΥ 1940

Η 28^η Οκτωβρίου 1940 μαζί με την 25^η Μαρτίου 1821, είναι δύο ημερομηνίες βαθιά τυπωμένες στις ψυχές των Ελλήνων όπου γης. Σηματοδοτούν τις δύο μεγαλύτερες στιγμές της νεότερης ιστορίας μας. Και παρότι τόσο διαφορετικές οι συνθήκες, όμως συνταιριάζουν και οι δυο το πάθος του Έλληνα για την ελευθερία μαζί με την πίστη στο Θεό και στην πατροπαράδοτη κληρονομιά μας. Θά'λεγε κανείς πως η μοίρα του Έθνους μας ίσως νά'ταν εντελώς διαφορετική χωρίς το Χριστό και την Εκκλησία Του.

Γιατί η Εκκλησία είναι η απαρχαράκτη κιβωτός της ελευθερίας και της τιμής του ανθρώπινου προσώπου. Είναι η σταθερή εγγύηση της δικαιοσύνης. Και όταν ένας άλλος λαός έρχεται και απειλεί να αφαιρέσει από τα παιδιά της τα ιερά αυτά γνωρίσματα του αυθεντικού ανθρώπου, είναι φυσικό η Εκκλησία να μπαίνει μπροστά και να εμπνέει.

Ακούσαμε το 1821 τους ήρωες να φωνάζουν «Για του Χριστού την πίστη την αγία και της πατρίδος την ελευθερία». Αλλά είδαμε και τον Οκτώβριο του 1940 την εξ ύψους δύναμη να κατεβαίνει από τον ουρανό και να ενισχύει τους Έλληνες στρατιώτες. Αντικρύσαμε την Παναγία Παρθένο να γίνεται Στρατηλάτισσα να οδηγεί, να σκέπει, να σώζει τους μαχόμενους Έλληνες. Για τούτο, μετά το Έπος του Σαράντα, η Εκκλησία μας καθόρισε να γιορτάζεται μαζί και η γιορτή της Αγίας Σκέπης, που την

μετέφερε στην 28η Οκτωβρίου από την 1η Οκτωβρίου που γιορτάζονταν για αιώνες.

Από την απόκριση που δίνει ένας λαός στις προκλήσεις των μεγάλων γεγονότων στη πορεία του, φαίνεται αν είναι λαός υπεύθυνος, ώριμος ψυχικά και πνευματικά. Δεν είναι η δύναμη των όπλων. Είναι η δύναμη του πνεύματος, η ψυχική αντοχή. Αυτές τις αρετές επεξεργάζεται η πίστη των Ελλήνων διά της Εκκλησίας του. Μέσα στην ζωή της Εκκλησίας καθαίρονται και στεριώνουν οι συνειδήσεις των ανθρώπων. Δημιουργείται το πνεύμα της αυταπάρνησης. Σφυρηλατούνται τα ιδανικά για τα οποία αξίζει να πεθάνει κανείς. Ένας λαός που ξέρει να λέει «Ναι» στο θάνατο και «Όχι» στον εξευτελισμό των μεγάλων του ιδανικών – Πίστη και Ελευθερία. Ένας τέτοιος λαός είναι έτοιμος για θυσία. Αυτό πρώτα από όλα, ήταν η 28η Οκτωβρίου 1940 – κλήση για θυσία.

Τι κι αν για τα άλλα έθνη φάνηκε παράλογη η θυσία των Ελλήνων; Ολόκληρη Γαλλία άντεξε για μόνο λίγες μέρες. Τι κι αν τα όπλα των Ελλήνων ήταν φτωχά και λιγοστά; Αυτοί είχαν νικήσει τον πανικό του θανάτου. Και με τις πέτρες ακόμη θα τά'βαζαν ενάντια στους σιδηρόφρακτους επιδρομείς. Και

μέσα απ' αυτή τη θυσία φάνηκαν η αξιοπρέπεια ζυμωμένη με τη Χριστιανοσύνη των προγόνων μας. Η πολιτισμένη και φιλόανθρωπη συμπεριφορά των Ελλήνων στρατιωτών έναντι των αιχμαλώτων Ιταλών μαρτυρεί περί τούτου. Έτσι, αντικρύζουμε το Έπος του Σαράντα. Οι Έλληνες δεν λογάριζαν τον θάνατο γι' αυτό και μεγαλούργησαν.

Πολλά τα διδάγματα για μας τους μεταγενέστερους. Το πιο καίριο; Σε κάθε εποχή στη πορεία των λαών, προβάλλεται το αίτημα της θυσίας. Ανεξάρτητα αν ζούμε στην Ελλάδα, στην Αυστραλία, ή όπου γης. Οι κοινωνίες των ανθρώπων έχουν ανάγκη από ανθρώπους που σε κάθε εποχή - πολέμου ή ειρήνης - (αυτό δεν έχει σημασία), ξέρουν να θυσιάζονται για τον συνάνθρωπο. Έχουμε ανάγκη από ανθρώπους με ευθύνη και αξιοπρέπεια που θα αγωνίζονται για το Θεόδοτο αγαθό της Ελευθερίας.

Σε ένα κόσμο παθιασμένο για ηδονές, για καλοπέραση, για άνεση, που οδηγούν στη δουλεία της ψυχής και του πνεύματος, έρχεται η Εκκλησία που με παρρησία προβάλλει το ύψιστο παράδειγμα θυσίας - το Σταυρό του Κυρίου μας. Μα οι Ορθόδοξοι το ξέρουμε καλά, πως μόνο διά του Σταυρού και της θυσίας έρχεται η Ανάσταση. Αυτήν ακριβώς την Αλήθεια μας επιβεβαιώνουν και οι ήρωες του Έπους του Σαράντα.

**ΖΗΤΩ Η 28Η
ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΥ
1940!**





WITH Fr G. L.

What is a prayer rule and how should I pray?

Prayer is the most basic and most important task of a practicing Christian. Prayer is to the soul what food is to the body. Prayer strengthens and enlivens our whole being. Prayer enables us to maintain a personal relationship with our loving God; through that intimate 'soul to Spirit' dialogue. Prayer softens our will so that we can become more receptive to His will. Without living prayer, the soul becomes anaemic and sick.

There are different ways of praying. The first type is regular private prayer; saying morning prayer and evening prayer, either by oneself or with other family members. Usually, the prayers are read from a prayer book. Such prayer may be accompanied by doing prostrations, or devoting time specifically for the Jesus Prayer, using the prayer rope (κομποσκοίνι). The second type is communal prayer or worship – attending the Divine Liturgy and other Church services. And the third type is continuous prayer (1 Thess 5:17, Eph 6:18, Luke 18:1), where we try to pray to God during the course of the day, e.g. by using the Jesus Prayer. We use all these three types of prayer in our prayer rule.

In a monastery, the prayer rule is a crucial part of the monastic vocation. The abbot or abbess prescribes to each monk or nun which prayer service to read, how many prostrations to do and how much to pray with the prayer rope. Monks typically carry out their prayer rule at designated times of the day, e.g. very early in the

morning, before attending the daily Church service. The spiritual elder uses a lot of discernment to allocate the prayer rule to the monastic.

Whilst we live in the world and are not monastics, abiding by a prayer rule helps to keep us focused in the spiritual life. The prayer rule for the lay person may not be as extensive as the prayer rule for a monastic.

Regardless of this, however, the most important 'ingredient' in the prayer rule is obedience to the spiritual father. The spiritual father (our confessor) is the guide of our spiritual life; he sets and modifies our prayer rule according to our circumstances and our progress. A prayer rule without a spiritual father's guidance will cause more harm than good.

So, how should we pray? Our private prayers should be regular, and this requires discipline. We prepare our hearts before we start, with a few moments of quietness and warming up of the heart.

We do our best to be attentive, and if our mind wanders, we gently bring it back to the act of prayer. We do not rush. We bring the meaning of the words down into our heart. As much as possible, we remove anything that may be a distraction to prayer.

Above all, we pray with upmost reverence and fear of God, being mindful that we are speaking before God Himself.



Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos

The stories of contemporary men and women who achieved great holiness despite living in this 'faithless generation' witness to the abiding truth of Christ's gospel. Especially inspiring to the faithful are the lives of those modern-day strugglers who lived not in monasteries or hermitages, but in the midst of busy cities, serving as shining examples to the laity.

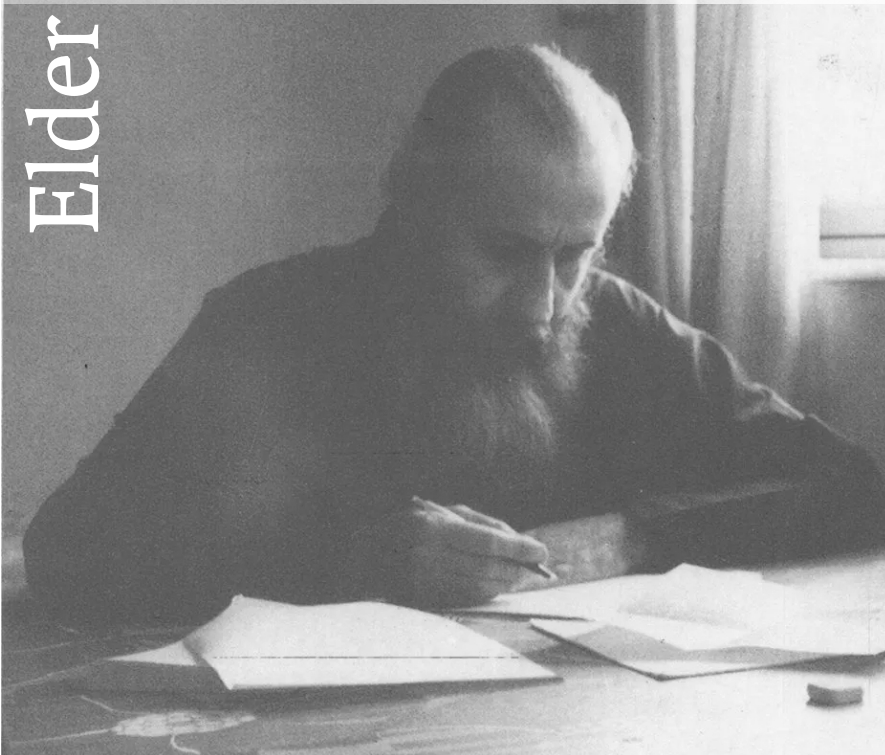
One such example was Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos, a renowned spiritual father who spent his days confessing countless faithful in the chapel of the Three Hierarchs near the bustling Omonoia square in downtown Athens. Despite living in a noisy and disreputable place, through the Grace of God, Elder Epiphanius was able to live an exemplary life of asceticism and self-sacrifice, changing the lives of the many penitents who flocked to him.

Elder Epiphanius, born Eteoklis Theodoropoulos, was from a young age given many talents by God,

and he multiplied them throughout his life. Early on his family knew he was destined for the priesthood. From the age of two he would tell adults that he wanted to become a priest when he grew up and would even act out the liturgy in the home, donning a sheet and reciting the petitions. As a young boy he could be found in the church before the priest had arrived, having fasted and prepared for communion as an adult would. On one occasion his aunt expressed her amazement that the young Eteoklis was not born with a cassock on.

As a young man, Eteoklis was an exceptional student who forced himself to excel in all subjects whether he enjoyed them or not. Achieving the required grades to enroll in the School of Theology at the University of Athens, he did not limit himself to strictly theological studies but would attend classes from other faculties such as law, philosophy and medicine. He so impressed his professors that they suggested he undertake postgraduate studies at well-known universities in Europe.

Nonetheless, the young struggler disdained pursuing his own glory, preferring to become a humble servant of the Church of Christ, 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:3).



At the age of 25 he was ordained a deacon and despite having the opportunity to progress further, he patiently waited until he reached the age of 30 to accept ordination to the priesthood, in accordance with the holy canons. This respect for the canons of the church came to characterise Father Epiphanius, as he would now be known, and when others attempted to play down the importance of strict adherence to the canons, citing the Church's use of leniency, he would reply: 'I prefer to apply exactitude (*ἀκρίβεια*) to myself, and show leniency (*οἰκονομία*) to others.'

As a priest, more educated than most and with multiple publications to his name, he established himself not in a large parish church or important cathedral, but in the humble chapel of the Three Hierarchs near Omonoia square. Preferring to minister to his needs with his own hands (Acts 20:34), he accepted no salary from the church, preferring to live off the small income he would receive by editing books for a Christian publishing company.

Despite Father Epiphanius' reputation as a strict spiritual father, multitudes of faithful came to him to confess their sins. He carried out his ministry with both the fear of God and love for the penitent. Considering his role as a confessor his most important work, he would say: 'There is no greater satisfaction for me

than to remain for hours in the seat of the confessional and to reconcile man to God.'

Father Epiphanius often stressed to his spiritual children the importance of adherence to one's rule of prayer. Once, a couple complained to him that they had no energy for prayer after returning from their work, to which he responded: 'Do you have the energy to eat? As you wouldn't miss your dinner, however tired you may be, even more so you should not miss feeding the soul, which is communication with God.'

He himself knew this struggle intimately. Often, he would return home physically exhausted from his long hours of ministry. As he would climb the stairs to his room, gripping the railing, the evil one would whisper into his ear: 'You are so tired! Why should you say the compline? You won't understand anything you're reading and you'll recite it mechanically.'

Father Epiphanius would respond by saying: 'If I don't pray at all, you will have full victory. However, if I pray, even mechanically, then you will receive only half the victory!'

It was with noble thoughts like these, that the elder would overcome his 'old self' and attain ascetic virtue.

He continued to serve as a confessor for over 25 years, in conjunction with his many added responsibilities

as a trusted church figure. Many times, he was asked to become a hierarch, and each time he denied, preferring humble service as a spiritual father. The results of his ministry cannot be understated. Many Christian couples were formed under his guidance, and he became an advocate for large families. Likewise, many monasteries and Greece and Cyprus were populated by his spiritual children, while others he guided to priestly ministry.

In 1976, the elder founded a monastery in Troizina, in the Peloponnese, for his spiritual sons who were called to monastic struggle. The elder's health began to deteriorate not long after, and in 1982 he was operated on, losing three-quarters of his stomach. Elder Epiphanius' poor health would eventually lead to him to be confined to his bed for the final years of his life, and in 1989, at the relatively young age of 59, he reposed in the Lord, leaving many 'orphans' behind. His funeral was attended by hierarchs, priests, monks, and multitudes of his spiritual children. His final resting place in the monastery of the 'Most Graceful' Mother of God in Troizina, by his own request bears the Pauline inscription:

'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief' (1 Tim 1:15).



Icon of the Presentation of the Theotokos

The presentation of the Theotokos into the temple is one of the twelve great feasts of the Orthodox Church. Much of the information we have comes down to us through Holy Tradition and apocryphal texts like the Protevangelion of James. There are several icons to mark this feast and some of the more detailed ones contain the main historical scenes surrounding the events of the day, presented in such a way to teach us how Mary prepared for her role as the Mother of God.

The first scene of the icon is the procession from the courtyard towards the High priest standing in the Holy place of the temple. Joachim was worried that the three-year-old Mary might turn back, so he organised the procession with the young maidens carrying lamps to accompany Mary into the temple (Proto. James 7:1-3). Mary is not carrying a lamp as she is herself the spiritual lamp who brought forth the light of the world. Moreover, although she is small to indicate her infancy in age, she is already a perfected person and appears as we see her in other icons where she is fully grown.

The second scene is the central scene where we can see Mary with her arms reaching up being presented by her parents, Joachim and Anna, to the High priest Zachariah who is also reaching out to receive her. The scene reminds us of a wedding ceremony where the parents take their daughter to church in the company of a priest and witnesses to present her to her husband. This is accentuated by the maidens in wedding attire and Zachariah in his full priestly robes. But this is not just any wedding. Mary, in clothing of royal magnificence befitting a King's daughter, is offered as the Bride of God to be perpetually devoted to Him.

This is expressed in Psalm 44 (LXX) which is a royal wedding song, or royal epithalamium stating: *"Hear, O daughter... forget your own people and your father's house. Let the king be enthralled by your beauty, honour him for he is your lord..."*

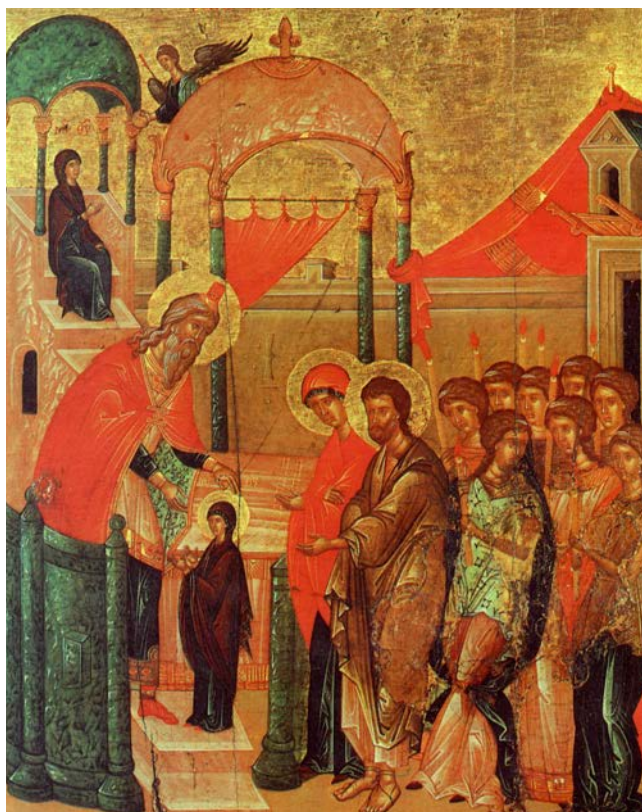
All glorious is the princess within her chamber...In embroidered garments she is led to the king, her virgin companions follow her" (Psalm 44:10-14).

The final scene shows Mary seated on the top step of a staircase which, although not visible, is made up of fifteen steps. These are called the steps of ascent, and lead up from the Holy place of the temple to the Holy of Holies. At the top left we also see an angel ministering to Mary and nourishing her with heavenly food. It reminds us of the manna which sustained the Hebrews in the wilderness for forty years. As this feast falls just six days into the Nativity Lenten period, it also serves to remind us that Christ, who is the bread of life that comes down from heaven (John 6:48-51), will soon be born of Mary.

In addition, the Holy of Holies is represented by the domed structure in the centre of the icon as empty, with the veil pulled to the side, while Mary is seated on the side with a small dome or Kiborium over her. This indicates that Mary is to become the living tabernacle of God, superseding the one made by hands. Actually, everything in the Holy of Holies is fulfilled in the Theotokos. She is the mercy seat between the two Cherubim, the gold vessel containing the manna, the rod of Aaron which budded, the golden censer, and so on.

Finally, hidden within the icon are the three stages of the spiritual life corresponding to the three scenes. The court of the temple (scene 1) is the active life of struggle and renunciation of the world which leads to purification.

The gate where the presentation of Mary occurs is the entry into the Holy place (scene 2) and corresponds to natural contemplation which leads to knowledge of God and illumination. The Holy of Holies (scene 3) represents union with God which leads to theosis. Having ascended to the highest spiritual state, Mary is chosen by God to be His dwelling place, the one full of the grace of God (Ἡ Κεχαριτωμένη), to become the Holy Mother of God, the Theotokos.



VENERABLE NIKON

“ΜΕΤΑΝΟΕΙΤΕ”

The Preacher of Repentance

“Metanoite!” - “Repent!”:

Like the message of St John the Baptist (Mat 3:2) and of Christ Himself (Mat 4:17), “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” this too was the constant cry of St Nikon. Wherever he went, St Nikon would begin his sermons with “Repent,” hence he was known as Nikon Metanoieite or Nikon, the Preacher of Repentance.

St Nikon was born at Pontus (modern North-Eastern Turkey) in c. 930 to a wealthy family. He did not wish to work on the family's estates and so he entered the monastery of Chrysopetro (Golden Stone), where he was given the new name Nikon (his baptismal name was Nicetas) meaning victor, a new life in the Spirit (Rom 7:6) and the birth of the new man (Eph 4:24). A monk is given a new name as he is expected to cease associating himself with his ‘old self’ and former life, and dedicate himself to his ‘new self’, that is devoted entirely to God. This also applies to nuns and the clergy.

At the monastery, he excelled in asceticism. He displayed absolute obedience, humility and patience. He practiced all the holy virtues with zeal and showed great discipline in fasting and prayer.

Saint Nikon had a great gift for preaching. With the blessing of the Abbot, St Nikon left the monastery to preach the Gospel of Christ. His travels took him to places such as Crete, Euboea and the Peloponnese, proclaiming Christ's



Commemorated 26 November

Kontakion

(Plagal 2nd Mode)

Emulating the life of the Angels, you
regarded worldly pleasures as refuse,
showing us the path of repentance,
O God-bearer and righteous Nikon;
therefore, now we celebrate your memory,
for truly you are a fountain of healings.



Κοντάκιον

(Ήχος πλ. β΄. Τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν πληρώσας)
Τὴν Ἀγγελικὴν μιμούμενος πολιτείαν,
κόσμου τὰ τερπνὰ ὡς σκύβαλα ἐλογίσω,
μετανοίας τὴν τρίβον δεικνύων ἡμῖν,
θεοφόρε Νίκων Ὅσιε· διὰ τοῦτό σε
γεραίρομεν, ἐκτελοῦντες νῦν τὴν μνήμην
σου· ὑπάρχεις γὰρ ἀληθῶς, ἱαμάτων
πηγή.

Gospel. Consistent with Christ's own instructions, he took nothing in his travels, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money (Luke 9:3).

His missionary work on Crete was of particular importance, struggling to convert recent converts of Islam

back to Christianity following the occupation of Crete until 961. He cried out to everyone he came across, ‘Repent!’ stressing the urgency of repentance because after death repentance is no longer possible.

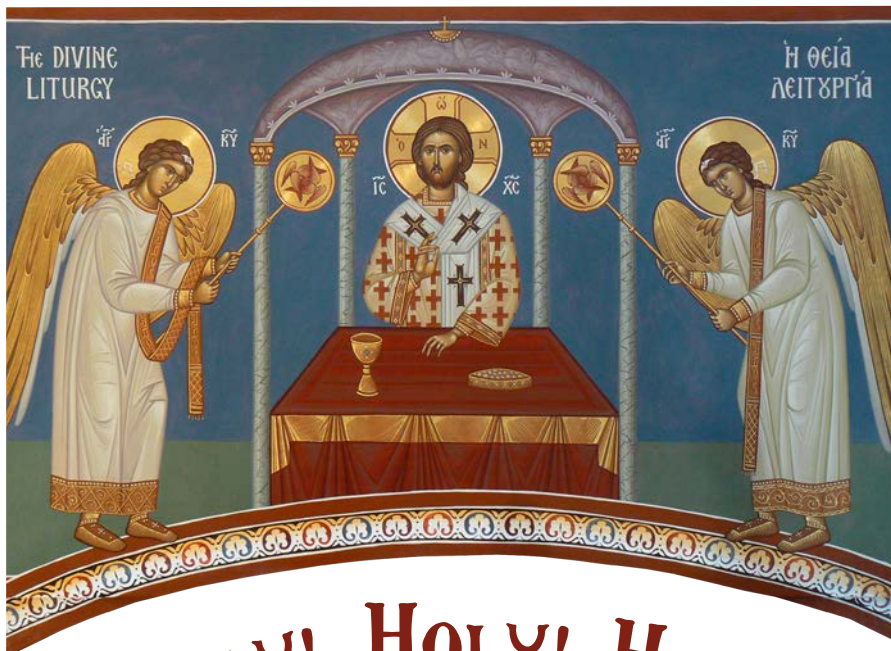
His travels took him as far south as Sparta (c. 970). St Nikon was blessed with miraculous healing powers, and he saved the people of Sparta who were afflicted by a plague “...and protect from afflictions all those who have recourse to you with faith...” (Troparion).

The people of Sparta loved St Nikon – his preaching, miracles, meekness, and warm nature. People would constantly seek him out, to listen to him and to seek healing of spiritual and physical ailments.

While in Sparta, St Nikon built a church dedicated to Christ the Saviour and over time a monastery formed around the church.

St Nikon's message resonates today just as it did when he preached. True repentance for one's sins is achieved by prayer, almsgiving, ascetical efforts and by guidance/confession to one's spiritual Father.

Saint Nikon reposed in peace in c. 998 and was immediately regarded as a Saint by the people of Sparta. He is the patron Saint and protector of Sparta and his relics are venerated there with faith to this day.



HOLY! HOLY! HOLY! LORD OF SABAOOTH!

«Ἅγιος, Ἅγιος, Ἅγιος Κύριος Σαβαώθ»

With the chanting of the liturgical hymn, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest", Orthodox Christians participating in the Holy Liturgy are called to take part in the never-ending, heavenly, angelic praise of the Holy Trinity.

It is derived from two main sources: the Old Testament vision of Prophet Isaiah experiencing the heavenly glory of God on His Throne, taken from Isaiah 6:3, and from the New Testament account of Christ entering Jerusalem to praise and adulation, from Matthew 21:9, which we celebrate on Palm Sunday.

The thrice-hold repetition of "Holy," is a clear reference to the angelic worship of the three members of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, the famous

hymn, "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal..." which had already been added to the liturgy during the 5th century, is itself an expansion of this original Angelic, triumphal thrice-holy hymn, but addresses each person of the Godhead individually.

There is also another allusion to this hymn during the chanting of the Cherubic Hymn, before the Great Entrance, where the chanters on behalf of us all chant aloud, "We who mystically represent the Cherubim, and who sing to the Life-Giving Trinity the thrice-holy hymn..." The hymn reminds us that the Holy Liturgy in which the mystery of the Divine Eucharist takes place, is not a symbolic repetition of a ceremonial rite instituted by Christ during the Last Supper.

This reality is borne out if we briefly examine the place in the Liturgy where this hymn is sung.

The hymn is sung during the part of the Divine Liturgy called the Holy Anaphora, which begins after the recitation of the creed, with the exhortation, "Let us stand well. Let us stand in awe..."

Anaphora refers to the Greek word Αναφορά, which means the offering up of something which has already been given, for a special purpose.

It is the part of the liturgy which leads to the liturgical moment where the Bishop/priest intones the prayer, - "our own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for all" - which calls upon the Holy Spirit to turn the offered gifts of bread and wine into Christ's own Body and Blood.

During this prelude the celebrant directs prayers of thanks to God the Father specifically:

"We thank You also for this Liturgy, which You have deigned to receive from our hands, even though thousands of archangels and tens of thousands of angels stand around You".

The hymn is not just an expression of an eschatological wish, where the baptised faithful are called to look forward to a never-ending Divine Liturgy in the age to come, but rather, a calling to us during the liturgy, to take up the angelic role of eternal praise and thanks to God, just as Prophet Isaiah experienced it in his vision.





In One, Holy, Catholic

and Apostolic Church

Apostolic

"As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles taught, as the Church received, as the teachers set forth in dogma, as the whole world has understood, as Grace has shone forth, as the Truth was demonstrated, as falsehood was banished, as wisdom was emboldened, as Christ has awarded; thus do we believe, thus do we preach Christ our true God and His saints, honouring them in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in temples, and in icons; on the one hand worshipping and reverencing the One as God and Master, and on the other hand honouring the others and apportioning relative worship to them, as genuine servants of the Master of all. This is the faith of the Apostles, this is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Orthodox, this faith has supported the whole world." (From the 'Synodikon of Orthodoxy', read on the Sunday of Orthodoxy)

The Orthodox Church is apostolic not only because she continues to uphold the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, but also because she was historically founded by Christ and His Apostles. To this day, she boasts an undisrupted chain of ordination of hierarchs leading directly back to the Apostles, enabling her faithful to refer to the early church fathers as *"our fathers"*.

Just as Christ breathed on His Disciples, telling them *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20:22), the Holy Apostles in turn – as

the first hierarchs of Christ's Church – continued to pass on this invocation of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands to those ordained to the priesthood after them. Why is it so important that the clergy of the Orthodox Church today are part of this Apostolic succession?

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, our Church's preeminent Apologist and Anti-gnostic father of the second century, outlined in great detail (naming specific individuals), the unbroken succession of bishops in the various church communities in existence at that time. He provides us with an answer: *"In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth."* ('Against Heresies' - Book 3, Chapter 3). This Apostolic succession is a sign that the Orthodox Church is the genuine Church of Christ, unlike other Christian denominations which were founded by men many centuries after Christ.

Furthermore, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, one of the great Apostolic fathers (i.e. ordained by one of the Apostles), writes in his letter to the Smyrnaeans: *"Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist,*

which is [administered] either by the bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it... It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptise or to celebrate a love-feast; but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid."

Writing to the Ephesians (2:20), Saint Paul, the 'Apostle to the Nations', reminds the Gentile Christians there that they have *"been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..."* As Orthodox Christians of today, we too have been built onto this foundation through our Baptism.

Do we live according to this rich inheritance? Does our way of life reveal a harmony and appreciation of the teachings and mindset of Christ and His Apostles?

One and holy. Catholic and apostolic. The four attributes ascribed to our Church in the Creed are inseparably interwoven; each one consolidating the other and highlighting the treasure that is our Orthodox Church.

"We shall not deny you beloved Orthodoxy, nor shall we lie to you, time-honoured («πατροπαράδοτον») [i.e. handed down by the fathers] reverence. We were born in you, we live in you and we shall die in you. And if time shall call us, we shall sacrifice a thousand times our lives for you." (Joseph Vriennios - spiritual father of Saint Mark of Ephesus, 15th century)

OUR CREED | 11

Εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ
ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν.
Ὁμολογῶ ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

In one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins.



Οι όροι «Κανονικά», «Δευτεροκανονικά» (ή «Αναγινωσκόμενα»), «Απόκρυφα» και «Ψευδεπίγραφα» έχουν διαφορετική σημασία στην Παλαιά και Καινή Διαθήκη αλλά και στον Ιουδαϊσμό και στις διάφορες Χριστιανικές ομολογίες.

α) Παλαιά Διαθήκη

1. Τα 39 βιβλία που είναι γραμμένα στα Εβραϊκά αναγνωρίζονται ως «Κανονικά» από τους Ιουδαίους και από όλες τις Χριστιανικές ομολογίες.
2. Τα 10 επιπλέον βιβλία που προαναφέραμε στο προηγούμενό μας άρθρο, οι προσθήκες στα βιβλία «Εσθήρ» και «Δανιήλ» καθώς και ο «Ψαλμός 151ος» χαρακτηρίζονται ως «Κανονικά» από την Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας, 8 από αυτά ως «Δευτεροκανονικά» (ή «Αναγινωσκόμενα») από τους Ρωμαιοκαθολικούς και «Απόκρυφα»

από τους Διαμαρτυρόμενους και τους Ιουδαίους (η Ρωμαιοκαθολική Εκκλησία κατατάσσει σε αυτή την κατηγορία τα «Α' Έσδρας» και «Μακκαβαίων Γ'»).

3. Ψευδεπίγραφα τέλος είναι μερικά βιβλία τα οποία δεν αναγνωρίζονται ούτε από τους Ιουδαίους ούτε από τους Χριστιανούς όλων των ομολογιών. Σύμφωνα με την ιστοσελίδα «Ορθόδοξοι Ορίζοντες» αυτά είναι:

- + Ενώχ, γραμμένο στην αραμαϊκή, μετά το 200 π.Χ.
- + Οι διαθήκες των 12 Πατριαρχών, γραμμένο στην εβραϊκή, 150-100 π.Χ.
- + Ιωβηλαία, γραμμένο στην αραμαϊκή, 150-100 π.Χ.
- + Η διαθήκη Ιώβ, γραμμένο στην αραμαϊκή, 100-50 μ.Χ.
- + Ψαλμοί Σολομώντα, γραμμένο στην εβραϊκή, το 50 π.Χ. περίπου.
- + Το μαρτύριο του Ησαΐα, στην αραμαϊκή, 1ος αιώνας μ.Χ.
- + Παραλειπόμενα του Ιερεμία, γραμμένο στην αραμαϊκή, 1ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.
- + Βίος Αδάμ και Εύας, γραμμένο στην αραμαϊκή, 1ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.
- + Οι βίοι των προφητών, γραμμένο στην εβραϊκή, 1ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.
- + Η ανάληψη του Μωυσή, στην αραμαϊκή, 6-30 μ.Χ.
- + Η Αποκάλυψη του Βαρούχ ή Συριακός Βαρούχ, στην αραμαϊκή, 70-120 μ.Χ.
- + Η Αποκάλυψη του Έσδρα, στην αραμαϊκή, 90-100 μ.Χ.
- + Επιστολή του Αριστέα, στην ελληνική, το 200 π.Χ. περίπου.
- + Τα Σιβυλικά βιβλία (Γ', Δ', Ε'), στην ελληνική, 2ος π.Χ. αιώνας-2ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.

- + Η Αποκάλυψη του Βαρούχ, στην ελληνική, 2ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.
- + Η Αποκάλυψη του Αβραάμ, στην ελληνική, το 100 μ.Χ. περίπου.
- + Η Διαθήκη του Αβραάμ, στην ελληνική, το 100-150 μ.Χ.
- + Σλαυονικός Ενώχ, ή Ενώχ Β', ή Βιβλίο των μυστικών του Ενώχ, 1ος μ.Χ. αιώνας.

Είναι πολύ σημαντικό στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη να γίνεται διάκριση μεταξύ «Αποκρύφων» και «Ψευδεπιγράφων».

β) Καινή Διαθήκη

Τα πράγματα εδώ είναι πιο εύκολα διότι όλες οι Χριστιανικές ομολογίες συμφωνούν στην κανονικότητα των 27 βιβλίων της.

Έχουν κυκλοφορήσει βέβαια και άλλα βιβλία τα οποία η Εκκλησία απέρριψε ευθύς εξ αρχής. Αυτά ονομάζονται «Απόκρυφα» ή «Ψευδεπίγραφα» - βλέπουμε εδώ πως οι δύο παραπάνω όροι είναι ταυτόσημοι. Σύμφωνα με την ιστοσελίδα «Ορθόδοξοι Ορίζοντες» αυτά είναι:

- + Το ευαγγέλιο του Πέτρου: Γράφτηκε στα μέσα του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα και έχει σαν βάση του τα κανονικά ευαγγέλια γραμμένο με αντί-ιουδαϊκό πνεύμα.
- + Το κατά Ματθαίον ψευδευαγγέλιο: Πλαστή μετάφραση του κατά Ματθαίου ευαγγελίου με προσθήκη θαυμάτων του Ιησού κατά την παιδική Του ηλικία.
- + Το κατά Θωμά ευαγγέλιο: Γράφτηκε τον 2ο μ.Χ. αιώνα και εξιστορεί την παιδική ηλικία του



Ιησού από το πέμπτο μέχρι το δωδέκατο χρόνο Του. Παρουσιάζει τον Ιησού να κάνει θαύματα.

+ Το Ευαγγέλιο του Νικόδημου:

Περιλαμβάνει τις πράξεις του Πιλάτου, μια αναφορά του προς τον αυτοκράτορα Τιβέριο για τη δίκη του Ιησού. Γράφτηκε τον 2ο ή 5ο μ.Χ. αιώνα και είναι τελείως φανταστικό.

+ Το Πρωτευαγγέλιο του Ιάκωβου: Εξιστόρηση γεγονότων από τη γέννηση της Παρθένου Μαρίας μέχρι τη σφαγή των νηπίων. Περιλαμβάνει γεγονότα που είχαν αρχίσει να κυκλοφορούν κατά το 2ο μ.Χ. αιώνα. Συμπληρώθηκε κατά τον 5ο μ.Χ. αιώνα.

+ Το Ευαγγέλιο του Ιούδα: Σύμφωνα με μια αναφορά του πατέρα της πρωτοχριστιανικής εκκλησίας Ειρηναίου της Λυών, πρέπει να ανάγεται στα μέσα του δευτέρου αιώνα, γραμμένο στην ελληνική γλώσσα και είναι έργο της γνωστικής αίρεσης των σηθιανών. Σύμφωνα με αυτό, ο Ιούδας δεν πρόδωσε τον Ιησού, αλλά εκτελούσε εντολές του.

+ Το κατά Εβραίους ευαγγέλιο: Γράφτηκε γύρω στο 100 μ.Χ. και περιέχει προσθήκες στα κανονικά ευαγγέλια, με μερικά φανταστικά λόγια του Ιησού.

+ Το ευαγγέλιο των Εβιονιτών: Γράφτηκε ανάμεσα στον 2ο και 4ο μ.Χ. αιώνα και περιέχει αποσπάσματα των ευαγγελίων τονίζοντας τα σημεία εκείνα που οι Εβιονίτες στήριζαν την αιρετική τους διδασκαλία.

+ Το ευαγγέλιο των Αιγυπτίων: Φανταστικές συνομιλίες του Ιησού με τη Σαλώμη. Γράφτηκε μεταξύ 130 και 150 μ.Χ.

+ Το ευαγγέλιο του Ιωσήφ του

Τέκτονα: Γράφτηκε τον 4ο μ.Χ. αιώνα και εμφανίστηκε στην Αίγυπτο με σκοπό να αποδώσει τιμή στον Ιωσήφ.

+ Το Αραβικό ευαγγέλιο της γεννήσεως: Φανταστικές διηγήσεις θαυμάτων που έγιναν την περίοδο της σκλαβιάς των Ισραηλιτών στην Αίγυπτο. Γράφτηκε τον 7ο μ.Χ. αιώνα.

+ Πράξεις του Παύλου: Γράφτηκε στα μέσα του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα. Περιλαμβάνει την υποτιθέμενη χαμένη επιστολή του Παύλου στους Κορίνθιους με σκοπό να διδάξει την εγκράτεια.

+ Πράξεις του Πέτρου: Γράφτηκε στο τέλος του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα και εξιστορεί συναισθηματική περιπέτεια της κόρης του Πέτρου.

+ Πράξεις του Ιωάννου: Εξιστορεί την δήθεν επίσκεψη του Ιωάννη στη Ρώμη. Γράφτηκε στο τέλος του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα.

+ Πράξεις του Ανδρέα: Το βιβλίο στο τέλος του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα, αναφέρει το μαρτυρικό θάνατο του αποστόλου.

+ Πράξεις του Θωμά: Γράφτηκε στο τέλος του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα, και το κείμενό του έχει σκοπό να τονίσει την αποχή από τη σχέση των δύο φύλων.

+ Η αποκάλυψη του Πέτρου: Συμβολικές οράσεις που αποδίδονται στον Πέτρο. Ο Ευσέβιος το αποκαλεί "νόθο".

+ Επιστολή του Πέτρου στον Ιάκωβο: Γράφτηκε στο τέλος του 2ου μ.Χ. αιώνα. Είναι μια φανταστική επινόηση για να στηριχθούν οι αιρετικές διδασκαλίες των Εβιονιτών.

+ Η από Λαοδίκεια επιστολή: Αποτελεί «μάζεμα» διαφόρων φράσεων του Παύλου. Διατείνεται

πως είναι η επιστολή που αναφέρεται στην προς Κολοσσαείς 4:16.

+ Επιστολές του Παύλου προς Σενέκα: Γράφτηκαν τον 4ο μ.Χ. αιώνα, θέλοντας να συστήσουν τον χριστιανισμό στους οπαδούς του Σενέκα.

+ Η γέννηση της Μαρίας: Αφηγείται καθημερινές επισκέψεις αγγέλων προς την Παναγία. Γράφτηκε τον 6ο μ.Χ. αιώνα.

+ Η κοίμηση της Μαρίας: Περιέχει αναφορές θαυμάτων και τελειώνει με την αναφορά της μετάβασης της Παρθένου Μαρίας στον Παράδεισο. Γράφτηκε τον 4ο μ.Χ. αιώνα.

+ Τα γράμματα του Αβγάρου: Πιστεύεται πως τελικά το βιβλίο αυτό να έχει κάποια ιστορική βάση. Το βιβλίο εξιστορεί την ιστορία του βασιλιά της Βέροιας Αβγάρου, ο οποίος όταν αρρώστησε έμαθε για τα θαύματα του Ιησού και του έστειλε γράμμα που Του ζητούσε να έρθει στη Βέροια για να το θεραπεύσει. Ο Ιησούς του απάντησε πως έπρεπε να κάνει όλα όσα ήταν στο θέλημα του Πατέρα και πως μετά θα επέστρεφε στον ουρανό. Θα έστελνε όμως ένα μαθητή Του για τον θεραπεύσει. Λέγεται ότι ο μαθητής αυτός ήταν ο Θαδδαίος.

Ομολογουμένως αρκετές από τις παραδόσεις της Εκκλησίας μας, π.χ. για την Υπεραγία Θεοτόκο, αναφέρονται σε μερικά από τα παραπάνω βιβλία αλλά θα πρέπει να σημειώσουμε πως η παραδόσεις προηγήθηκαν, δηλαδή οι συγγραφείς αυτών το ψευδεπιγράφων απλώς τις κατέγραψαν στα βιβλία τους.



Book Review

The Holy Sacraments by Georgios Psaltakis

Our Orthodox Church accepts that there are seven holy sacraments: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Holy Communion, Ordination, Marriage, and Holy Unction. Participation in each of these sacraments - except for those which are optional such as marriage or ordination - is essential for us to be living members of the Church. Indeed, the holy sacraments are "sources of divine Grace that flow from Christ our Saviour. They are special services of our Church and are based on the unshakable and firm foundation of Holy Scripture".

For many of us, however, our knowledge and understanding of the holy sacraments remains shallow. We know of them, we can briefly describe them, we participate in them, and yet, we do not properly appreciate or understand their significance in our life and in the Holy Church tradition.

Against that context, Georgios Psaltakis' book, *The Holy Sacraments* (174 pages), is an invaluable guide and resource for all Orthodox Christians. Originally published in Greek in 2021, it was translated into English by the

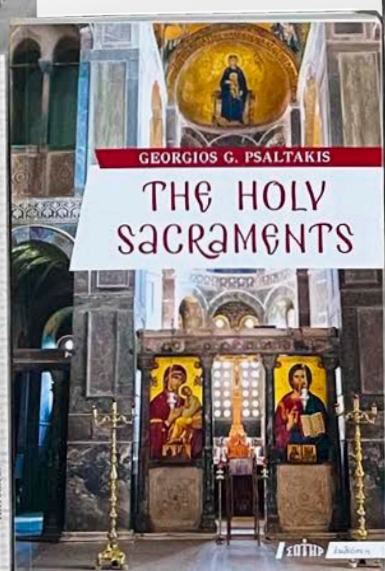
Holy Monastery of Panagia Pantanassa. *The Holy Sacraments* is theologically deep, with appropriate references to Holy Scripture, Church Fathers and other theologians, and yet written in a highly accessible and easy-to-read manner.

The book is structured systematically, focusing on each sacrament individually. In turn, each holy sacrament is considered through the lenses of what the holy sacrament is, how it was established (including through scriptural references), its importance, and what its fruits are. In this way, the reader receives a clear understanding of the role that each holy sacrament plays in our life in the Church.

The Holy Sacraments is, however, more than just educational. Fundamentally, it aims to elevate us in our spiritual life and appreciate the gifts of God that have been given to us. For example, in concluding the section on Baptism, the text provides:

The gate of our Church has opened for each one of us through Baptism and we can now go through this and enter the gate of Paradise. Our soul has been grafted onto the tree of holiness. It is up to us to cultivate it with are and for this holiness to be developed so that we can eat the sweet fruit from this tree both on earth and in heaven. Let us glorify God for His gift and never forget all that we promised during our Baptism. If we were infants then, let us keep the promises in mind now that we have grown up. And let us live accordingly, so that we may always have the grace and blessing of God.

This, and many other examples, demonstrate the richness of the text and its applicability to our modern lives. *The Holy Sacraments* is highly recommended.



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St Paisios the Athonite declared as Patron Saint of Australia

Saint Paisios the Athonite (1924-1994), a great and much-loved Saint of our Church who visited Australia in 1977, has been declared Patron Saint of this continent by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios. The Archbishop made the declaration during his opening address of the 12th Clergy-Laity Congress of the Holy Archdiocese on the 25th September. In the words of His Eminence:

“Because today is a historic day, I want it to be remembered by all and to be engraved in golden letters in the history books of our Holy Archdiocese. Therefore, I ask you to bring to your mind one of our Saints, Saint Paisios the Athonite, who visited Australia together with the former Abbot of the Monastery of Iviron, Father Vasilios. In fact, a miracle of healing a cancer patient performed by Saint Paisios while he was here in Australia is also recorded.



So today, I proclaim Saint Paisios the Athonite, Patron Saint, guardian and protector of Australia and our Archdiocese. On Wednesday we will sing his Apolytikion for the first time, which will be chanted from here on in at every Divine Liturgy, after the Apolytikion of the Church. The Apolytikion of the Saint will be chanted unto the ages of ages here in the fifth continent”

St Paisios expressed his great bond and love for the Orthodox Christians of Australia, saying, amongst others: “In Australia I found holy souls who are struggling, because they have many temptations and have much patience”, and “The Greeks of Australia have approached God more than other expatriates closer to the Motherland, because they were isolated, very far from relatives, without help from anyone, and this distance helped them draw closer to God”

He also characteristically used to say: “If you want to tune in to God so He listens to you when you pray, turn the knob to humility, for on this frequency God always operates, and humbly ask for his mercy”. May the intercessions of St Paisios protect our nation, and help us tune the frequency of our lives closer to God, the source of our salvation.

New Apolytikion of Saint Paisios the Athonite, Protector of Australia
Ἦχος πλ. α' Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον

Αὐστραλίας προστάτην, φρουρόν τε ἀγρυπνον, καὶ
τοῦ Ἁθωνος ὄρους στύλον αἰφῶτον, ἀνυμνήσωμεν
πιστοί, θεῖον Παῖσιον, ἐξαιτούμενοι αὐτοῦ τὰς
πρεσβείας πρὸς Θεόν, κραυγάζοντες ὁμοφρόνως·
ρῦου ὦ πάτερ παντοίων τῶν τοξευμάτων
τοῦ ἀλάστορος.

O Protector of Australia, vigilant guardian and
resplendant pillar of Mount Athos, we the faithful
let us praise the holy Paisios, and beseeching his
intercessions before God, crying out with one voice,
deliver us o father, from all the arrows of the
vengeful one.

News & Events



Sunday School Camp

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, 82 primary school children and 23 camp leaders from across various parishes in NSW participated in this year's Sunday School Camp, organised by the Greek Orthodox Christian Society. The camp took place on 3-5 October at Vision Valley, Arcadia, located 2 hours north of Sydney by coach.

The children had the pleasure of engaging in prepared activities which included archery, canoeing, mountain bike riding and even a high ropes course. They were also active in other activities such as indoor games, Christian songs and hymns.

The camp, whose theme was 'I belong to God' (Gen. 50:19), offered several spiritual benefits to all involved. Participants were split into 6 different groups, each group dedicated to celebrating the life of a Holy Martyr Saint, namely St Catherine, St Eustathios, St Kyriake, St Sebastian, St Thekla and St Xenophon. Each group showcased the life of their Saint by performing a play and chanting his/her Apolytikion.

The highlight of the camp occurred on the final day when the children chanted and participated in the Divine Liturgy, officiated by Geronda Eusebios of Pantanassa Monastery. The children also partook in the Holy Communion, listened to a spiritually edifying talk given by Geronda Eusebios, and received his blessing.

Key Dates

OCTOBER

6  Friday Thomas the Apostle	18  Wednesday Luke the Evangelist
26 Thursday Demetrios the Great Martyr	28 Saturday PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

NOVEMBER

8  Wednesday SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS	10  Friday St Arsenios the Cappadocian
13 Monday John Chrysostom	15  Thursday Fast Begins Thomas the New of Constantinople
21  Tuesday ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS	26  Sunday Stylianios of Paphlagonia St Nikon Metanoite

01 - Sts Kosmas and Damianos
09 - St Nektarios of Pentapolis
14 - Philip the Apostle & St Gregory Palamas
16 - Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist
25 - St Catherine the Great
30 - Andrew the First-Called



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