

*Come, see the
place where the Lord lay*

ΙΑΘΟΥΠΟΣ ΟΠΣ ΑΚΥΤΟΥΡΕ

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

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ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL





Η Ανάσταση του Κυρίου Ζωή των ανθρώπων



Η Αγία και Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή είναι η καρδιά ολόκληρου του εκκλησιαστικού έτους. Όμως το Πάσχα που χαρούμενα γιορτάζουμε οι Ορθόδοξοι είναι η καρδιά της καρδιάς. Είναι η «εορτή εορτών και πανήγυρις πανηγύρεων».

Ο Αναστημένος Χριστός δίνει ζωή στο χρόνο και στην ιστορία των ανθρώπων. Ζωογονεί τον άνθρωπο και τον οδηγεί στη θέωση.

Στις Πράξεις των Αποστόλων που διαβάζουμε στις εκκλησιές μας τη διάρκεια του Πεντηκοσταρίου (50 μέρες μετά την Ανάσταση) περιγράφεται αυτή η «θεωμένη» ζωή όπως την ζούσαν οι Απόστολοι. Είναι η ζωή αυτών που «είδαν» την Ανάσταση. Οι Απόστολοι έζησαν, είδαν τον αναστημένο Κύριο. Σ' αυτούς ο Κύριος «παρέστησεν εαυτόν ζώντα μετά το παθείν» (παρουσιάστηκε ζωντανός ύστερα από το πάθος) και τους προέτρεψε να γίνουν μάρτυρες αυτού του γεγονότος (Πραξ. α' 3). Δεν είναι βέβαια εύκολο για μας τους σημερινούς να περιγράψουμε πώς βίωσαν τον Αναστημένο Κύριο οι μαθητές του. Σίγουρα θα ζούσαν σε μια ατμόσφαιρα γεμάτη από δέος και μυστήριο, κάτι το εξωκοσμικό.

Παρά ταύτα η Ανάσταση του Χριστού είναι ένα ιστορικό γεγονός. Συνέβη σε ορισμένο τόπο και χρόνο. Έγινε «επί Ποντίου Πιλάτου». Η ιστορικότητα δεν καταργεί το μυστήριο και το μυστήριο δεν καταργεί την ιστορικότητα του γεγονότος. Η ανθρώπινη λογική βέβαια αδυνατεί να κατανοήσει και να ερμηνεύσει το θαύμα της Αναστάσεως, ότι

ο Θεάνθρωπος Ιησούς έπαθε και ανέστη. Μπορεί μόνο να το εκφράσει όταν το ζη, το βιώνει η καρδιά.

Η Ανάσταση λοιπόν του Χριστού ενώ ξεπερνά το χρόνο, βιώνεται μέσα στο Χρόνο. Κάθε Θεία Λειτουργία των Ορθοδόξων είναι μυστηριακή βίωση αυτού του γεγονότος. Σε κάθε Θεία Λειτουργία, το Πάσχα είναι παρόν σε μας. Στη Λειτουργία του Μεγάλου Βασιλείου ο ιερέυς – μετά τη Θεία Κοινωνία – ευχαριστεί το Θεό λέγοντας, «έσχομεν του θανάτου σου την μνήμην, είδομεν της Αναστάσεως σου τον τύπον, ενεπλήσθημεν της ατελευτήτου σου ζωής». Δηλαδή, θυμόμαστε το θάνατό Σου, είδαμε την Ανάστασή Σου. Γεμίσαμε από την ζωή Σου που δεν έχει τέλος.

Αυτή την εμπειρία ζωής βίωσαν οι Απόστολοι ζώντας μαζί με τον Αναστημένο Χριστό. Βέβαια με τον ερχομό του Αγίου Πνεύματος, την Πεντηκοστή, απέκτησαν πλήρως την εσωτερική βεβαιότητα για την Ανάσταση και αυτή τη μαρτυρία έδωσαν στον κόσμο.

Στη συνέχεια, όλοι οι Άγιοι – μάρτυρες, ομολογητές, ασκητές, πατέρες, διδάσκαλοι – έστω και αν δεν γνώρισαν σωματικά τον Χριστό αυτή την ίδια μαρτυρία της Αναστάσεως έδωσαν και δίνουν. Είναι η μαρτυρία μιάς ζωής μεταμορφωμένης, ανακαινισμένης.

Να πως ένα σύγχρονος ασκητής (Γέροντας Σιλουανός) περιγράφει αυτή την Πασχάλεια εμπειρία του, «Η ψυχή μου αγαπά τον Κύριο και πώς θα έκρυβα αυτή τη φωτιά

που θερμαίνει την καρδιά μου; Πώς θα μπορούσα να μην μιλώ για το Θεό αφού η ψυχή μου είναι αιχμαλωτισμένη απ' Αυτόν; Πώς να σιωπήσω για τον Θεό αφού το πνεύμα μου φλέγεται μέρα και νύχτα από αγάπη γι' Αυτόν;»

Αυτή η εμπειρία της Αναστάσεως είναι η Ζωή των Ορθοδόξων πιστών. Είναι η αληθινή ζωή όλων των ανθρώπων.

Αυτή τη μαρτυρία της αληθινής ζωής χρειάζεται και σήμερα ο κόσμος μας.

Κουράστηκαν οι άνθρωποι από τα ψεύτικα λόγια των ανθρώπων. Βαρέθηκαν τα ανιαρά σλόγκαν της μεταμοντέρνας εποχής. Και ο ενθουσιασμός για τα επιτεύγματά τους κι αυτός εφήμερος και επιπόλαιος.

Χρειαζόμαστε λόγια αποκαλυπτικά για να γκρεμίσουν τα είδωλα που στήσαμε γύρω μας και μέσα μας.

Χρειαζόμαστε να ακούσουμε τις φωνές των αγίων μας που ζώντας την αναστημένη ζωή της Εκκλησίας μας, έζησαν και ζουν την προσωπική τους Ανάσταση.

Να τρέξωμε και μεις κοντά τους, να αισθανθούμε την ανάσα τους και να ψάλλουμε μαζί τους θριαμβευτικά: «Χριστός ανέστη εκ νεκρών, θανάτω θάνατον πατήσας, και τοις εν τοις μνήμασι, ζώνη χαρισάμενος.»

**Χριστός Ανέστη!
Αληθώς Ανέστη!**



Come, see the place where the Lord lay



(Matt 28:6)



Beloved readers, Christ is risen!

Like so many of the feasts of our Church, the Resurrection invokes awe-inspiring paradoxes. The Lord passed into death, yet is the "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18). The Lord was buried, yet his tomb is empty. The Lord was humiliated on a cross, yet exalted in His ascent from death into life. The Lord is dead, yet appears corporeally, inviting Thomas to touch His side.

However, the power of the Resurrection is not in the challenges it presents about the credibility of the apparently paradoxical evidence but, instead, in its challenge to the paradoxes of our own lives which often fail to reflect the inheritance we have received. The feast places a mirror before us to challenge the very purpose of our lives: "and if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty" (1 Cor 15:14). Saint Paul here teaches us that all is for nothing if Christ was not raised from the dead. This is because, had He not risen, we would remain enslaved to the curse of death. His incarnation, His teaching, His passion and His death would have all been for nought had He not been raised from the dead. For this reason, we live a "new life", we celebrate the "death of death", hastening to Him with "joyful feet" (Paschal Canon). The Resurrection renews and breathes life into us by restoring our fallen nature and defeating death. 'Pascha' of course means 'Passover.' For the

Jews, the celebration recalls the movement from slavery in Egypt to the freedom of the promised land. For the Christian, Pascha means the movement from death to life, from spiritual slavery to freedom and from sin to the embrace of

Have we all gone to see the place where He lay? Have we challenged ourselves to truly witness the Resurrection and to become partakers in this mystery which ought to envelope our whole lives? If so, what change has it made to our life? Has the joy of the Lord's Resurrection made its indelible mark on our hearts?

our heavenly Father. Before the Resurrection, the tyranny of death prevailed. Now, however, we live in the promise of life. But this is

also a challenge for us. It means discovering what it is to be a child of God. It means we must grapple with our very identity and the inheritance that has been left to us by our loving Father. The means to navigate this struggle are the very gifts God has given to us. We have the Church, we have the Word, we have the grace of the Holy Spirit, we have prayer and we have the spiritual guides we have been given.

Have we all gone to see the place where He lay? Have we challenged ourselves to truly witness the Resurrection and to become partakers in this mystery which ought to envelope our whole lives? If so, what change has it made to our life? Has the joy of the Lord's Resurrection made its indelible mark on our hearts? These questions are personal but fundamental and existential. Christ is risen and it was not in vain. Truly He is risen and we are invited to partake with our own, personal resurrection. May we too rise with Him.



Christophoros 'Papoulakos' the Greek Preacher

(1770-1861)

Papoulakos was a Greek monk and preacher who emerged during a time of political upheaval. He was active in the early years of the Greek revolution and became a voice for authentic Orthodox Christianity. He was born in the Peloponnesian village of Armpounas as Christos Panagiotopoulos, living a simple life as a butcher until a life-altering illness at the age of 60.

Upon recovery, he divided his property amongst his siblings and was tonsured a monk at the monastery of Saint Athanasios near the town Filia in Kalavryta, taking the name Christophoros. It was here that he learned to read and write. After some time, he departed the monastery to build a skete dedicated to the Dormition of the Theotokos where he spent many years in solitary living until his faith led him to embark on missionary journeys where he preached the word of God from village to village.

His humility and piety resonated with villagers. Earning the nickname "Papoulakos" (an affectionate form of grandfather) for his humility, he spoke in a simple way, drawing on the Gospels to educate a people oppressed for centuries. He urged parents to raise their children in the faith and educate them using Orthodox books and to be wary of heretical books promulgated by foreign missionaries.

Papoulakos' influence spread and he started preaching further throughout the Peloponnese, usually from makeshift platforms in a simple manner which resonated with the common people. He denounced injustice, theft, which was common place by reason of the 400-year occupation, and the growing sins of the time. He also criticized foreign powers who were attempting to make

Greece more progressive by shutting down over eighty percent of the monasteries and persecuting monastics.

Villagers slowly began to embrace his teachings and started to live with faith in God and hope again. They forgave each other and thefts as well as other crimes declined in his wake. His holiness was apparent to all people, some even sought pieces of his cassock as a blessing.

His fame, however, caused alarm with both civil and Church authorities who tried to restrict his movements. Some bishops supported him, but the government and formal Church hierarchy remained suspicious and fearful of him. They revoked his preaching licence and also attempted to discredit him with other preachers who were sent to criticise him, but this failed as Papoulakos persisted and prevailed by his "holy stubbornness" and ever growing fervour.

Eventually the government bribed one of his close followers, a priest, to betray him, leading to the imprisonment of Papoulakos under harsh conditions in the Rio Castle in Patras. Remarkably, many reported seeing him preaching in the region of Achaia during this time. He was moved from prison to prison until a royal decree declared his innocence and release.

Unfortunately, this did not last as Church leaders were not so relenting. They exiled him to the remote island of Andros where he was confined in the Panachrantos monastery. It was there that Papoulakos finally reposed on the 18 January 1861. His remains were returned fragrant to the skete he had built in Armpounas in 1971 and they are considered to be miraculous.





Orthodox Faith in Today's Society

Since its appearance on earth, the Christian message demanded that every believer, transform his inner self and his external behaviour, according to the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Following the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Christian message was spread to most parts of the Roman Empire by the missionary work of the Apostles and their immediate successors. The early Christians responded to the call of Jesus Christ with enthusiasm and lived their lives adorned with the virtues of the Gospel, because they believed in His message wholeheartedly: "...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

The Gospel delivers to us the Word by which salvation is attained. The question we face is whether we are willing make a *brave decision* ourselves to actually follow Christ by living in accordance with His Gospel. This comes at a cost: "...he who loses [sacrifices] his life for My sake, will find it" (Matt 10:39). Saint Paisios said that "Christianity is for those who are brave (παλληκάρια)!"

The thought of a brave decision may make one resile from his original intention. It is a sign that his Faith has not yet matured. *Faith* is not an idea, it is the power of God that operates in the world, and particularly in the lives of those who possess it. The power to live as faithful Christians will be

provided by Jesus Christ Himself: our contribution will be minimal. We are only expected to provide the willpower to stay the course. This means to maintain the sincere wish to develop the Christian Virtues.

There are many types of virtues but they can be placed broadly into two types of categories:

- A) *Spiritual and invisible* – Love, faith, hope, humility, repentance, patience, reverence, discretion, etc.
- B) *External and visible* – Fasting, vigil, almsgiving, prayer, kindness, gentleness, justice, etc.

Those virtues which are invisible are nurtured by the strong feelings in our hearts, aiming at our salvation. The visible virtues which are usually practised with external conduct, help us support and attain our spiritual virtues. In other words, they lead to the cure of our spiritual weaknesses, whilst the spiritual ones open the door to our eternal salvation. Remember; "*bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things*" (1 Tim 4:7-8).

The Pharisees of the Gospels were the great hypocrites. Proud inside, and cruel in their behaviour towards others. The people despised them, and our Lord condemned them.

We Orthodox make every effort to avoid such hypocrisy by aiming our spiritual and external virtues towards three persons – God, our brothers, and ourselves.

Our behaviour towards God, is as a child; towards our brothers, as a mother; and towards ourselves, as a judge.

Having reviewed the inner qualities of the Christian person, it remains for us to deal with the great message our Lord Jesus Christ left for us in the last moments before His Ascension: "*Therefore, go forth and make disciples of all nations; baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*" (Matt 28:19).

The Christians, like the Apostles, are called to spread the Gospel to the world. To succeed, the preachers must possess the spiritual virtues outlined above. Collectively, they ask those who listen to change, to transform their inner selves, to adopt the commandments of Jesus Christ; their ultimate aim being to imitate the life of Jesus Christ.

There remains the problem that is faced by the Church, worldwide. What do we do with those who admit to being Christian, but their Christianity is confined to some external virtues, without any form of spiritual connection of substance with the Church? Saint Paul says "you which are spiritual, restore such a one..." (Gal. 6:1). That restoration is not done in a spirit of judgement but in a spirit of meekness in love for our fellow brother. It is the responsibility of all Christians to lift up our brothers into closer fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Ἀνάστα, ὁ Θεός



Arise, O God

*Ἀνάστα, ὁ Θεός, κρίνον
τὴν γῆν, ὅτι σὺ
κατακληρονομήσεις ἐν
πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν.*

*“Arise, O God, judge the
earth; for you shall have
an inheritance among
the nations.”*

(Psalm 81:8)



A memorable highlight of Holy Week is the chanting of this hymn at the conclusion of the Epistle reading of the Holy Liturgy of Holy Saturday morning. As the priest triumphantly chants the hymn, he exits the Royal Doors and moves around the whole interior of the church, throwing bay leaves, symbolising Christ’s descent into Hades and destroying the power of the Devil.

What is the significance of the hymn?



History tells us of countless people, rulers, kings, tyrants, good and evil, who passed judgement over others. Some were personages of lesser earthly stature; generals, soldiers. Others were appointed by God, such as the prophets and the apostles. St Eusebius of Caesarea, commenting on Psalm 81 from which the hymn is derived states that, “You must understand that the authority of godly honour is possessed by those who received

it from God rather than from those whom they govern, this being explained by that which God said to Moses, “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet” (Exodus 7:1).

St Eusebius then expands on this theme, “Those who are subjects approach their rulers with reverence and awe, not because of some army, or because of the



a vital difference. As St John Chrysostom explains, “You are the Christ, to Whom the Father gave authority over all people, the authority to judge all” (from his sermon on “Do not judge according to appearance”).

And how did Christ receive this authority?



St Eusebius answers in a rhetorical flourish: “Do not ask who it is who has inheritance over all nations, search the matter and you shall find no other but the Christ of God. To whom it was said by the Father, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession.’” (Psalm 2:7-8).

Christ Himself, being the fulfilment of these Old Testament prophecies reveals the fullness of the power and authority that God the Father has placed in Him: “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgement also, because He is the Son of Man” (John 5:26-27).

Only Christ, being God Himself, could conquer physical death and its ramifications for all humankind. Only Christ, being God, can judge all nations, “For He will come again, to judge the living and the dead” (The Creed).



wealth or lordship of those who rule over them, but because of the honour bestowed on their rulers by God. For Moses’ person was glorified in this manner, as were the Apostles of our Saviour, also the Prophets of God in the past and all those who are true servants of God, who would have remained ingloriously poor in their lives, but were honoured by those who respect God, because of the grace given them by God”.

However, with Christ, we have



Q & A

WITH Fr N. S.

Why do we need Holy Communion?

Do you want the Kingdom of Heaven and an eternal life close to the Lord God? Your Baptism and Holy Communion are keys to the fulfillment of this blessed desire.

God is Holy! His never-ending Kingdom is for the Holy Ones. Who is holy amongst us? Who is worthy? Nobody! How then could we ever be granted eternal life in God's Kingdom? For this reason, God sent His only begotten Son into the world. He became man, and showed us the way into His Kingdom. He paid the price for our sins on the Cross. His blood washes us clean and makes us holy, if we believe in Him.

When we are baptised, we sing "Whoever is baptised in Christ, puts on Christ." It is only when we have "put on Christ", with His Holiness living within us and radiating from us, that we can be at home in that holy place, the Kingdom of Heaven. After putting on Christ at baptism, the rest of our earthly life is spent rejecting sin and receiving Christ, again and again, chiefly in the blessed sacrament of Holy Communion that Jesus Christ left for us when He was here.

At the Last Supper, just before our Lord was crucified, He instituted the blessed sacrament of Holy Communion and instructed us to "do this in remembrance of me".

In the Gospels, our Lord Jesus describes himself as the "True Bread from Heaven" (John 6:32). Then Our

Lord promises to give his flesh and blood, which will give eternal life to all who receive it. He states, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you". Then he continues: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:53-55).

By partaking in Holy Communion, we put Christ God inside us, into our body and into our soul. We "put on" His holiness. It is only His presence in us that can make us holy. With the real presence of God in us, we can taste the Kingdom of Heaven, its warmth, and peace and joy. Having rejected sin, wearing Christ as clothing, having Him live in us, we have what we need to boldly approach His Kingdom, knowing that His love will receive us as one of His own.

What a fearful thought it is, that without His holiness in us, we may be met at the gates of Heaven with the words, "I do not know you".

Knowing this, our Church places the gift of the Eucharist or Holy Communion at the very centre of her life. The life of the Orthodox Christian is a journey of emptying oneself of sin, self worship and worldly pursuits, and at the same time, receiving Christ, with its ultimate fulfilment in His Kingdom.

Glory be to God for all things!





The Αναβαθμοί Hymns of Ascent

In the Orthodox Church, the Matins (or Orthros) service is traditionally chanted immediately prior to the Divine Liturgy. On Sundays, according to a weekly cycle of eight modes, the Matins service is dedicated to celebrating the Resurrection of Christ. Most of the hymns of the Sunday Matins revolve around the Resurrection and sing praise to Christ's victory of death. However, there is a set of hymns during the Matins which may appear to slightly deviate away from Christ's Resurrection – but as we will discuss here, are intricately linked to the Resurrection of Christ, and remind us of our personal involvement in Christ's conquering of death. This set of hymns is called the «Αναβαθμοί», which literally means hymns of ascent.

According to St Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain who wrote an entire book analysing the Αναβαθμοί, the author of these hymns is believed to be St Theodore the Studite (†826). St Theodore was Abbot of the Stoudion Monastery in Constantinople and played an important role in the revival of Orthodox Monasticism in Byzantium. It is believed that St Theodore composed the hymns of the Αναβαθμοί after succumbing to sinful thoughts in a moment of weakness, and these hymns served as an expression of his sincere repentance.

In fact, these poetic hymns provide a beautiful representation of the Christian concept of repentance. They are titled Αναβαθμοί which literally means 'to rise up.' The hymns are intricately linked to a section of Psalms in the Old Testament (Psalms 120-134; known as Psalms of Ascent) which deal with the 'rising up' of the Israelites from the captivity of Babylon to Jerusalem. In our time, these hymns serve to remind us of our personal 'rising up' from sin and towards the upper and heavenly Jerusalem. These hymns are chanted on Sundays because it is only through the Resurrection of Christ that we can reach Paradise, the upper Jerusalem. As described by St Nicodemos, the central theme of these hymns is the 'rising up' of the Christian "from impiety to piety, from evil to virtue, from earth to heaven, from Babylon to Jerusalem".

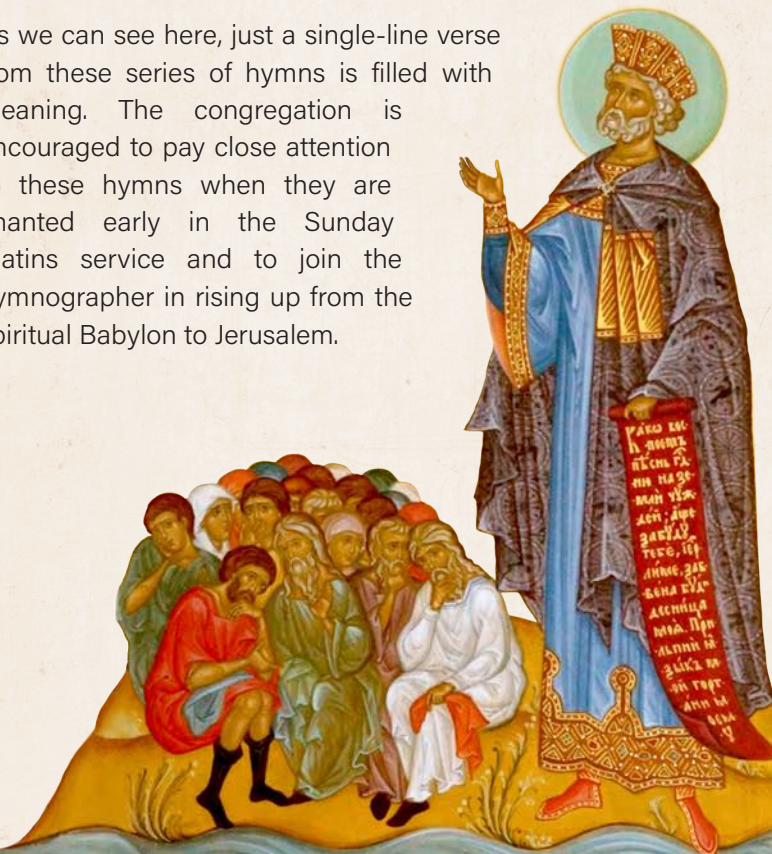
Below is a brief analysis of just a single verse from the Αναβαθμοί.

«Τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν Σιών, σὺ ἐξείλου ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος κάμῃ ἐκ τῶν παθῶν, πρὸς ζωὴν ἔλκυσσον Λόγε.»

“You rescued the captivity of Zion out of Babylon, O Logos; do also draw me up from the passions to life.”

This is the opening hymn of the Αναβαθμοί of Third Mode. The hymnographer here is praying from his heart: 'Lord, just as You freed the Israelites from the captivity of the Babylonians and restored them to Jerusalem, so also free me from the captivity of my passions and drag me up to the city of Jerusalem – a peaceful and blessed life from where I have fallen.' The key verb here is «ἔλκυσσον» which means to drag. To “drag” is more evocative than to “pull” – indicating that whoever has fallen into the depths of sin requires great force to be rescued. The same word is used by Christ: “No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws (ἐλκύση) him” (John 6:44). And what do we ask of Christ? To lead us towards “life” («πρὸς ζωὴν») – life which is according to God's will, life of virtue, life in accordance with the commandments.

As we can see here, just a single-line verse from these series of hymns is filled with meaning. The congregation is encouraged to pay close attention to these hymns when they are chanted early in the Sunday Matins service and to join the hymnographer in rising up from the spiritual Babylon to Jerusalem.



The Life-Giving Spring

An Icon of Healing and Spiritual Renewal

The veneration of the icon of the Life-Giving Spring on the Friday after Pascha each year finds its origins in a story involving Emperor Leo the Great (457 - 474 AD), who assisted in the miraculous healing of a blind man by the grace of the Theotokos. After he became emperor, he built a monastery just outside of Constantinople at the site of the miracle.

Icons of the Spring later emerged around the 14th century in the Cretan style, depicting a unique portrayal of the Theotokos positioned within a cylindrical flask with a conical base, positioned inside a rectangular fountain. Here, she cradles Christ, who holds a scroll and offers a blessing with His right hand. Over time, variations developed, adding details of healings and enriching the symbolism by changing the shape of the fountain.

A prominent variation from the 16th century depicts the Theotokos in a chalice holding Christ, who is now blessing with both hands. The fountain below becomes two-tiered, with a smaller basin overflowing into a larger one. Archangels Michael and Gabriel appear above, each carrying a scroll that declare to the Theotokos "Rejoice, Flow of abundant healing" and "Rejoice, Reservoir of the Living Water". Notably, the background showcases the walls of Constantinople, emphasizing the spring's location outside the city. It was also richly embellished with plants and animals to illustrate the words employed in the Dismissal hymn that the Church at the spring

is "...like the Garden of Paradise, since it pours out healings and cures".

Later versions from the 18th century introduced a wider range of styles for the Theotokos, including the Hodegetria and Theotokos of the Sign (or the Platytera). The vessel holding her started to resemble a Baptismal font or a Holy Chalice, while the fountain itself took the shape of a cross. These changes drew connections to the sacraments, signifying the spiritual significance of Baptism and Holy Communion in achieving eternal life as proclaimed by Jesus Christ in the Gospels. Furthermore, the Theotokos, in giving birth to the source of life, is established as the metaphorical spring through whom Life emerged, offering both physical and spiritual renewal.

Miracles associated with the spring are often depicted in the icon. One is the resurrection of a man from Thessaly after he was washed in the spring's water. He had died on a ship while making his way to the spring to be healed from a serious ailment, and was carried there on a stretcher by the captain of the ship. Another is the healing of a demon-possessed man (wrapped in chains) depicted with an evil spirit exiting his mouth as he drinks of the water. Finally, a woman holding a child is believed to represent a barren empress who had drunk of the water and prayed for an heir to the throne. Actually, there are many miracles attributed to healings of nobles and hierarchs which is why later versions of the icon have the lower section filled with emperors,



Monastery of Odegitria, *The Life-Giving Spring*, 15th c., Crete

rulers and patriarchs honouring the Theotokos and asking for her help.

According to tradition, when the City of Constantinople fell, a monk who was frying fish near the spring was told of the news. He refused to believe the news unless the fish which he was frying returned to life; a miracle which promptly occurred. Due to this miracle, the monastery itself is also known locally by all as Baloukli, meaning "Monastery of the Fish" (Balik in Turkish). This is usually reflected in the icon with the presence of fish in the holy water.

The icon of the Life-Giving Spring is a visual testament to the transformative power of faith and the Theotokos' role as a perpetual, refreshing spring of healing and spiritual renewal. The icon is commemorated on the first Friday after Pascha (Renewal Friday), a day that also marked the consecration of the original church built by Emperor Leo.

*In
the beginning was the Word, and the
Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the
beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without
Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light
of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

John 1:1-5

These astounding verses, selected by our Church to be read in the Divine Liturgy on Holy and Great Pascha, are from the beginning of St John's Gospel. The fact that these powerful words were written by St John, an uneducated fisherman from a poor village in Galilee, demonstrates the divine inspiration and revelation underlying Holy Scripture. Indeed, just the first of these verses is so full of theological depth that St John Chrysostom devotes three lengthy sermons to its analysis.

It is impossible in the limited space that we have to even scratch the surface of these verses, but doing the best we can, let us begin like this: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is "the Word" who was both "with God" and "was God" (v. 1). This encapsulates the core tenet of our trinitarian faith. Jesus Christ, the Word, is His own person in the Holy Trinity, simultaneously being present "with" the other persons (Father and Holy Spirit) whilst also being Himself fully God. In this way, all persons of the Holy Trinity are co-equal and possess the same divine essence.

They are also co-eternal because, as St John continues, the Son "was in the beginning with God" (v. 2). There was never a time that the Son did not exist, and

although the Son was begotten of the Father, He did not come after the Father. Whilst our limited faculties cannot comprehend this, one helpful example given by St John Chrysostom is that of the sun (representing the Father), with its rays of light (representing the Son) and its heat (representing the Holy Spirit). There was never a time when the sun existed without its accompanying rays of light or its heat.

Further emphasising the divine nature of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, St John the Evangelist further explains that "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (v.3). Each of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, although different, are united in one divine essence and undertake all actions in unity. The Word is not merely an instrument to do the will of God but is God Himself. Further, Jesus' work in the divine plan for salvation did not commence upon His incarnation but rather commenced pre-eternally.

St John then turns his attention to us humans, making clear that it is only in "Him" (i.e. in God) that there is "life", and that that "life was the light of men" (v. 4). We can each become children of light (cf Eph 5:8), with that "light shin[ing] in the darkness" such that "darkness

did not comprehend it" (John 1:5). Put differently, the darkness of sin can never overpower or overwhelm the light of Christ.

Having thus begun by extolling the divinity of the Word, St John sets the scene of the amazing divine economy of God's plan for our salvation. The co-eternal God "became flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14) and, more so, accepted suffering, crucifixion and burial for us. This is the love of God (John 3:16). However, after the crucifixion comes His glorious resurrection with the light that will never end.

Through the prayers of the Theotokos and the Saints, let each of us try and embrace the light of Christ and aim to come ever-closer to Him, the Son and Word of God.



Book Review

The Way of a Pilgrim

***"Rejoice evermore.
Pray without ceasing."***

1 Thess 5:16-17

In many Orthodox settings, it is not uncommon to hear that *The Way of a Pilgrim* was the first spiritual book someone had read or that it was their first introduction to the Jesus Prayer. This Russian classic, which sets out the Orthodox approach to prayer, has been recognised by Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike as a masterpiece. It details the pilgrimage that the anonymous author takes across Russia, starting from Siberia with the aim of reaching Odessa, that he might go on to the Holy Land. At the onset of this journey, the pilgrim recalls having heard in church the words of St Paul to the Thessalonians: "Pray without ceasing". These three confronting words led the initially perplexed author to throw himself entirely into the hesychastic tradition with a special focus on the *Philokalia*, a compilation of monastic writings on prayer. Having then received guidance from a local monastic elder (*staretz* in Russia), the pilgrim set out to acquire ceaseless prayer through repeating the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner".

Eventually overcoming the initial pain and struggle involved in acquiring true prayer, the pilgrim writes:

"I grew so used to the prayer that I went on with it all the time. In the end I felt it going on of its own accord within my mind and in the depths of my heart, without any urging on my part. Not only when I was awake, but even during sleep,

just the same thing went on. Nothing broke into it, and it never stopped even for a single moment, whatever I might be doing. My soul was always giving thanks to God and my heart melted away with unceasing happiness."

After his elder's passing, the pilgrim recounts the many journeys and trials he endured in his travels after having set out with nothing but a Bible, a prayer rope, and some dried bread. He describes that in each of these trials, the fire that burned within his heart through invoking Christ's name provided constant solace and peace. He speaks to the people he meets of prayer and the teachings of the *Philokalia*, always displaying humility, discernment and remarkable clarity in describing the steps to acquiring prayer of the heart.

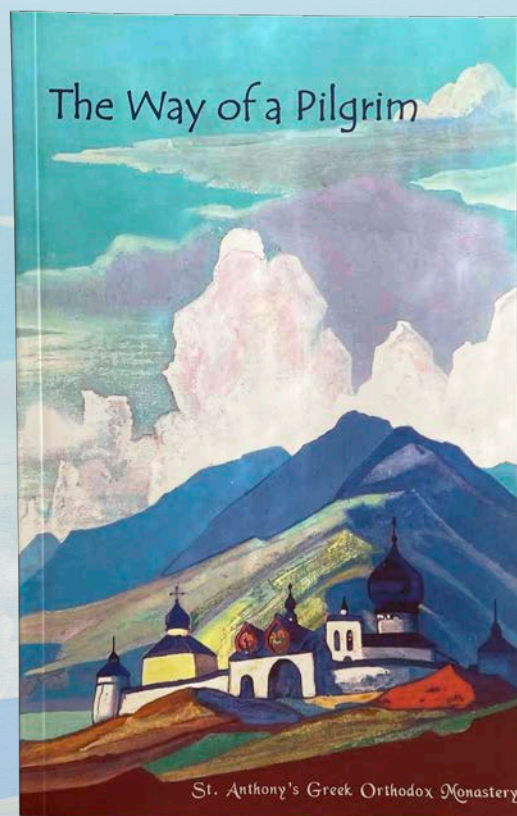
Before being published in Russia in 1884, the manuscript for this remarkable work was initially discovered in the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon on Mt Athos, the same monastic haven in which the *Philokalia* was compiled. It has been noted that *The Way of a Pilgrim* is a foretaste to the depths of the *Philokalia*. The impact of this book and its potential to help those beginning in the way of the Jesus Prayer was recognised by St Joseph the Hesychast, who not only encouraged reading the book but also urged gifting it to others, recognising its potential to kindle the fire of prayer in the inexperienced.

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T H E T H R E E H

In the year 605 BC, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem, plundering the temple and taking the king of Judah and many others hostage.

Upon his capture of the Jews, King Nebuchadnezzar commanded his staff to bring him some of the sons of the leading men of Israel, who were “unblemished young men and handsome in appearance and well versed in all skills and wisdom and sound judgement” (Daniel 1:4). Each day they were to be fed from the royal table and instructed in the language of the Babylonians for three years, after which they were to be presented to the king for service in his royal court.

Among these young men are the prophet Daniel and Three Youths - Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These men lived their faith while in a foreign land, and did not partake of the food and wine of the Babylonians, instead subsisting on just vegetables and water. The Lord rewarded their faithfulness by giving them knowledge in language, literature and every skill, while to Daniel He gave the gift of insight into dreams and visions. This charism results in Daniel being established by King Nebuchadnezzar in the royal court, and in turn Daniel appoints the three youths, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to preside over the province of Babylon.

Many years pass, and King Nebuchadnezzar, who rules over a

vast empire, orders the erection of a statue outside the city of Babylon, standing 27 meters in height and covered in gold. Sending messengers over the whole land to gather all the governors and representatives of the nations under his rule, he demands that they fall down and bow before the statue at the appointed hour, which will be signalled by the sound of an orchestra of musical instruments. This act of Nebuchadnezzar is reminiscent of his ancient



Babylonian predecessors, who constructed the tower of Babel at the same location for the purpose of unifying all the peoples of the earth.

While all the nations quickly obey his command, it comes to the king's attention that certain Jews of his own court refuse to prostrate before the golden image. Those

accused of this are the three young men who have been appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, that is, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednago (the respective Babylonian names of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah). Upon summoning them before his presence, Nebuchadnezzar demands they consent to worship of the golden image, and threatens to cast them into a fiery furnace should they refuse. In response, the Three Youths declare their fidelity to the one God in the heavens, their Lord, and proclaim that He is able to rescue them from the furnace and from the hands of the king.

Hearing their response, the king demands that the furnace be ignited seven times more than its usual heat. The strongest men of his army were commanded to bind and cast the three youths inside. So powerful was the fire, that these soldiers were themselves scorched and killed by the flames. Cast into the furnace, only the iron shackles of the Three Youths were burnt, completely melting from their hands and feet. Miraculously, their bodies remained completely

unharmd, and having been freed of their bonds they were walking within the furnace chanting hymns and praises to God. Then Azariah stood still and prayed, together with his companions, saying,

“Blessed are You O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and glorious is Your name unto the ages.”

O L Y O U T H S

Known as the prayer of Azariah, here begins a hymn of lamentation, with praise to God, and an acknowledgment of God's punishment upon the people of Israel given according to His wise judgement. In this prayer, the youths take responsibility for Israel's sin, and on behalf of their people they make a compunctionate plea for mercy to the Lord.

While this is taking place, the king's servants are continually stoking the furnace, while others below the furnace are feeding it brushwood and fuel. The scriptures describe the flames shooting over 25 meters high from the furnace. At one point, it breaks out of control and burns those standing around it.

While this happened, an Angel of the Lord descended into the furnace with the three men and dispersed the flame, causing it to feel like a cool breeze was blowing around them. Thus the three "by faith...quenched the power of fire" (Heb 11:34).

Seeing this, the Three Youths sing a hymn of praise to God from within the furnace, chanting:

"Blessed are You, O Lord, God of our fathers,
and to be praised and highly exalted for ever;
And blessed is Your glorious, holy name
and to be highly praised and highly exalted for ever"

The hymn then directs all the works of the Lord, to bless, praise and exult Him for ever: the heavens, the

angels, the sun and moon, stars of heaven, the rain, wind, fire and heat, the mountains and hills, seas and rivers, and all the birds of the sky and beasts of the earth. The sons of men, the children of Israel, the priests, servants of the Lord are all to bless the Lord, because He has "rescued us from Hades and saved us from the hand of death, and delivered us from the midst of the burning fiery furnace; from the midst of the fire He has delivered us" (Pr Azar v. 66).

King Nebuchadnezzar, hearing the voices of the Three Youths, was amazed. Suddenly, however, he rises from his throne and asks his counsellors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a Son of God".

Commenting upon this verse, the ancient church writer Hippolytus expresses awe at the vision of the king:

"Tell me, Nebuchadnezzar, when did you see the Son of God, that you should confess that this is the Son of God? ... As the children of Israel were destined to see God in the world, and yet not believe in Him, the Scripture showed beforehand that the Gentiles would recognise Him incarnate, whom, while not incarnate, Nebuchadnezzar saw and recognised of old in the furnace, and acknowledged to be the Son of God" (Scholia on Daniel).

Coming out of the furnace, the three are unharmed in the sight of

the king and all his officials. Their bodies are untouched, their hair unburnt, and their clothes intact. Upon seeing this, the king blesses the Lord God and decrees that any person who blasphemes against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednago shall be torn limb from limb, for there is no other god who can save as theirs.

The first Christians received much courage from the example of the Three Youths, who preferred to suffer martyrdom than deny their faith. As such, depictions of the Three Youths adorn the walls of many catacombs.

Likewise, the Hymn of the Three Youths has been used in the worship of the Church since the earliest days of Christianity, according to multiple early church writers (e.g. St Athanasius the Great and Rufinus). The hymn also contains a resurrectional theme which is revealed in the Son of God, as described by Nebuchadnezzar, entering into the furnace and delivering the youths from 'Hades, and the hand of death'. Every year, on the morning of Holy Saturday, their story is read in the vesperal liturgy as the final Old Testament reading, before the choirs joyfully chant antiphonally the Hymn of the Three Youths.



Early Christian wall painting, found in the third-century catacombs of Priscilla, Rome.



Στο σημερινό μας άρθρο θα ασχοληθούμε με μερικές προφητείες και προτυπώσεις της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης που αναφέρονται στην Ανάσταση του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού Χριστού. Μάλιστα θα επικεντρωθούμε σε παραδείγματα από τα τρία τμήματά της, από τα ιστορικά, τα ποιητικά και τα προφητικά βιβλία.

1)

Στο 49^ο κεφάλαιο της Γενέσεως ο Πατριάρχης Ιακώβ δίνει προφητικές ευλογίες για την κάθε φυλή που θα προέλθει από τους δώδεκα υιούς του. Στον τέταρτο υιό του, τον Ιούδα, που έγινε πρόγονος του Δαβίδ και των διαδόχων του, καθώς και κατά σάρκα του ίδιου του Ιησού Χριστού, λέει μεταξύ άλλων (στον στίχο 9): «σκύμνος λέοντος Ιούδα. Εκ βλαστού, υιέ μου, ανέβης. Αναπεσών εκοιμήθης ως λέων και ως σκύμνος. Τίς εγερει αυτόν;» Δηλαδή «Ιούδα, είσαι ένα μικρό λιοντάρι. Φύτρωσες από μένα παιδί μου σαν βλαστάρι. Ξάπλωσες και κοιμήθηκες όπως κοιμάται το λιοντάρι, ο βασιλιάς των ζώων, κι όπως κοιμάται ένα μικρό λιονταράκι. Ποιος θα τολμήσει να

το ενοχλήσει και να το ξυπνήσει από τον ύπνο;» Σαν να θέλει να πει ότι κανένας άλλος δεν μπορεί να εγείρει τον Ιησού Χριστό, παρά μόνον ο Ίδιος θα εγείρει τον Εαυτό Του. Γι' αυτό και ο Χριστός έλεγε: «Δια τούτο ο πατήρ με αγαπά, ότι εγώ τίθημι την ψυχήν μου, ίνα πάλιν λάβω αυτήν. Ουδείς αίρει αυτήν απ' εμού, αλλ' εγώ τίθημι αυτήν απ' εμαυτού. Εξουσίαν έχω θείναι αυτήν, και εξουσίαν έχω πάλιν λαβείν αυτήν. Ταύτην την εντολήν έλαβον παρά του πατρός μου» (Ιω. 10, 17-18). Δηλαδή «Γι' αυτό λοιπόν με αγαπά ο Πατέρας μου, διότι εγώ μόνος μου και χωρίς κανείς να με αναγκάζει προσφέρω τη ζωή μου σε θάνατο, για να την ξαναπάρω πίσω. Κι έτσι να εξακολουθήσω ως αιώνιος αρχιερέας και μετά την Ανάστασή μου το έργο της καθοδηγήσεως των προβάτων μου και της σωτηρίας τους με τη συνένωσή τους σε μία ποιμήνη και σ' ένα σώμα. Κανείς δεν έχει τη δύναμη να πάρει τη ζωή μου και να με θανατώσει εάν δεν το θελήσω εγώ. Αλλά εγώ από μόνος μου την παραδίδω. Έχω εξουσία να προσφέρω τη ζωή μου, κι έχω εξουσία πάλι να την πάρω πίσω. Αυτή την εντολή πήρα από τον Πατέρα μου, να θυσιάσω τη ζωή μου πάνω στο σταυρό και να την πάρω πάλι με την Ανάσταση. Έτσι θα αναδειχθώ ο αιώνιος αρχιερέας και μεσίτης για τη σωτηρία των προβάτων μου.» Αλλά τί σημαίνει εκείνο που είπε ο Πατριάρχης μιλώντας προφητικώς για τον θάνατο του Μεσσία «αναπεσών εκοιμήθης ως λέων»; Ωραία το ερμηνεύει ο Χρυσόστομος: Όπως ο λέοντας όχι μόνο όταν είναι ξύπνιος, αλλά και όταν κοιμάται είναι φοβερός, έτσι και ο Χριστός, όχι μόνο πριν από τον σταυρό, αλλά και σ' αυτόν τον σταυρό και σ' αυτόν τον θάνατό Του ήταν φοβερός και έκανε τόσο μεγάλα θαύματα. Έκανε, για παράδειγμα



να στρέψει την τροχιά του ο ήλιος, να σχισθούν οι βράχοι, να κλονιστεί η γη, να σχισθεί το καταπέτασμα, να αλλάξει τον Ρωμαίο εκαντόταρχο σε μάρτυρα της πίστεως. Τότε, κατά τον θάνατο του Χριστού, το σκότος ετύλιξε την οικουμένη και φάνηκε η νύχτα κατά την μεσημβρία. Τότε καταλύθηκε η τυραννίδα του θανάτου και αναστήθηκαν πολλά σώματα αγίων (βλ. Ματθ. 27, 51-53). Αυτά τα προείπε από παλαιά ο πατριάρχης και έδειξε ότι και κατά την σταύρωσή Του ο Χριστός θα είναι φοβερός.

2)

Ας πάμε τώρα στον στίχο 10 του 15^{ου} Ψαλμού (του Δαβίδ): «οτι ουκ εγκαταλείψεις την ψυχήν μου εις άδην, ουδέ δώσεις τον όσιόν σου ιδείν διαφθοράν.» Δηλαδή: «Διότι δεν θα εγκαταλείψεις την ψυχή μου για πάντα στον Άδη, ούτε θα επιτρέψεις να υποστεί ο αφοσιωμένος σε σένα την αποσύνθεση του τάφου.» Ο Δαβίδ, φυσικά, καθόλου δεν μπορούσε να πιστεύει ότι δεν θα πέθαινε ποτέ, αλλά αναφέρεται στην ταφή και ανάσταση του Κυρίου, του οποίου το σώμα, τις τρεις ημέρες

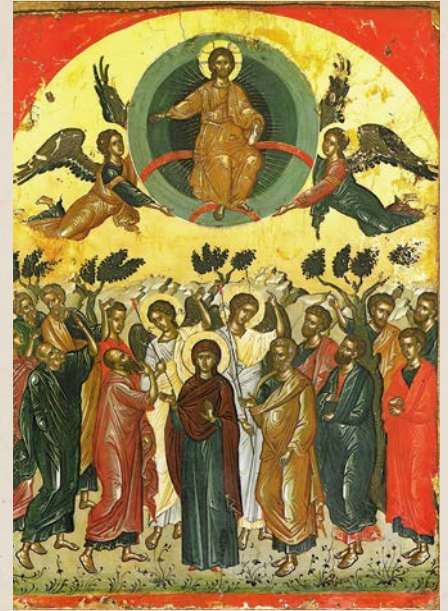


του θανάτου του, ως αδιάσπαστα ενωμένο με τη θεότητά του, δεν γνώρισε αποσύνθεση. Αλλά ο Δαβίδ προχωράει ακόμη περισσότερο, προφητεύοντας και την ανάληψη του Μεσσία απογόνου του στον 1^ο στίχο του 109^{ου} Ψαλμού: «*Είπεν ο Κύριος τω Κυρίω μου. Κάθου εκ δεξιών μου, έως αν θω τους εχθρούς σου υποπόδιον των ποδών σου*». Δηλαδή: «*Είπε ο Κύριος και Θεός στον Κύριό μου (Μεσσία): «Κάθισε στα δεξιά μου, μέχρι να βάλω όλους τους εχθρούς σου νικημένους κάτω από τα πόδια σου*»». Ιστορικά, ο Δαβίδ, ως βασιλιάς, δεν είχε από πάνω του εξουσιαστή ή προϊστάμενο που να τον αποκαλεί «Κύριο». Αλλά η προφητεία εμφανίζει στο προσκήνιο τα δύο πρόσωπα της Αγίας Τριάδας, εκ των οποίων ο Πατέρας απευθυνόμενος προς τον Υιό Του, μετά την ανάληψή Του, Του ζητά να καθίσει στα δεξιά Του, μέχρι να υποτάξει τις εχθρικές ορατές και αόρατες δυνάμεις, στη δύναμή Του.

3)

Το τελευταίο παράδειγμά μας είναι σε όλους μας γνωστό, αφού είναι

και επιβεβαιωμένο από τον ίδιο τον Κύριό μας. Στο 2^ο κεφάλαιο του Ιωνά, στους στίχους 1 και 11 διαβάζουμε: «*Και προσέταξε Κύριος κήτει μεγάλω καταπιείν τον Ιωνάν. Και ήν Ιωνάς εν τη κοιλιά του κήτους τρεις ημέρας και τρεις νύκτας. ... Και προσέταξε Κύριος τω κήτει, και εξέβαλε τον Ιωνάν επί την ξηράν.*» Δηλαδή: «*Στο μεταξύ ο Κύριος είχε προστάξει ένα μεγάλο θαλάσσιο κήτος να καταπιεί τον Ιωνά. Και ο Ιωνάς έμεινε εκεί μέσα στην κοιλιά αυτού του κήτους τρεις ημέρες και τρεις νύχτες. ... Τότε ο Κύριος πρόσταξε το θαλάσσιο κήτος κι εκείνο αμέσως έβγαλε έξω από τα σπλάχνα του τον Ιωνά στη στεριά.*» Στο 12^ο κεφάλαιο του κατά Ματθαίον Ευαγγελίου αναφέρεται πως οι γραμματείς και οι Φαρισαίοι ζητούν σημείο, δηλαδή θαύμα από τον Κύριο, που να μαρτυρεί την αποστολή Του. Και ο Ιησούς τους αποκρίθηκε (στιχ. 39 και 40): «*... και σημείον ου δοθήσεται αυτή ειμή το σημείον Ιωνά του προφήτου. Όσπερ γαρ εγένετο Ιωνάς ο προφήτης εν τη κοιλιά του κήτους τρεις ημέρας και τρεις νύκτας, ούτως έσται και ο υιός του ανθρώπου εν τη καρδιά της γης τρεις ημέρας και τρεις νύκτας.*» Δηλαδή: «*... Αλλά τέτοιο θαύμα δεν θα τους δοθεί, παρά το θαύμα που προτυπωνόταν και προεικονιζόταν από το θαύμα του Ιωνά του προφήτη. Όπως δηλαδή τότε ο Ιωνάς ήταν τρεις ημέρες και τρεις νύχτες μέσα στη κοιλιά*



του κήτους, έτσι θα είναι και ο υιός του ανθρώπου μέσα στον τάφο και τα βάθη της γης επί τρία μερόνυχτα». Να προσθέσουμε εδώ ότι όπως ακριβώς ο Ιωνάς αυτά τα τρία μερόνυχτα στο κήτος, όχι μόνο δεν ήταν ανύπαρκτος και εκμηδενισμένος, αλλά με πλήρη συνείδηση προσευχόταν με δοξολογίες και δεήσεις στον Θεό, έτσι και ο Κύριος, όταν κατέβηκε στον Άδη, δεν ήταν ανύπαρκτος και χωρίς συνείδηση, αλλά αντιθέτως, επετέλεσε το σωτηριώδες και θεϊκό έργο, αυτό της λυτρώσεως των απ' αιώνας νεκρών από τα δεσμά του Άδου και του θανάτου, του οποίου και το κράτος και την εξουσία κατέλυσε. Αυτό το γεγονός γιορτάζει η εκκλησία μας στη πρώτη Ανάσταση.

Η Παλαιά Διαθήκη είναι όντως ένας αξιόπιστος προθάλαμος της Καινής...



St Dorotheos of Gaza on a Paschal hymn



St Dorotheos of Gaza was a monk and abbot of the monastery at Thawata, not far from the city of Gaza in the Palestinian desert, who lived in the 6th century. The following discourse would have been given at the meal after the Paschal service, and refers to a hymn, no longer in current use, which the monks would have chanted, which quotes a sermon on Pascha delivered by St Gregory the Theologian.

Iwould have gladly spoken to you some words about the hymns we just chanted in church, so that you are not carried away by the melody, but that your minds to a proportionate degree collaborate with the power of the words.

So then, what did we just chant? 'It is the day of Resurrection, let us offer ourselves as gifts.'

Since in the old days, the Israelites during their festivals, - their religious celebrations-, would offer gifts to the Lord according to the law, sacrifices, whole burnt offerings, first-fruits and the like, St Gregory strongly advises us also to celebrate just as they did to the Lord, and commands us by saying:

"It is the day of Resurrection", instead of a holy day of celebration, it is a day of divine festivities, the day of Christ's Pascha.

What is the Pascha of Christ? The Israelites created the feast of Pesach (Passover), when they left the land of Egypt. The Passover which Saint Gregory invites us to celebrate today though, is accomplished by the soul which departs from the spiritual Egypt, that being sin.

For when the soul passes over from sin to virtue, it is then when it brings about the Passover to the Lord, as Evagrius has said, 'The Passover of the Lord, is the crossing over from evil to virtue.'

Therefore, today is the Pascha of the Lord, a day of radiant celebration, the day of Christ's resurrection, He who crucified sin and died and rose for us. Let us then also offer gifts to Christ, sacrifices, whole burnt offerings, not of irrational animals, of which Christ does not want. For 'sacrifice and offering of irrational animals You did not want, and in whole burnt offerings of calves and sheep You were not satisfied.' (Hebrews 10:5-6, Psalm 39:7)

And Isaiah says, "'Of what value to me is the abundance of your sacrifices?" says the Lord' (Isaiah 1:11) and the like. But since the Lamb of God sacrificed Himself for our sakes, as the Apostle says, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7), to take away sin from the world, and became a curse for us, as it is

written, "cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree", (Gal 3:13), in order to redeem us from the curse of the law and that we might receive adoption as sons, we also ought to offer to Him some of our gifts which are pleasing to Him.

Hence, what gift or sacrifice ought we offer to Christ on this the day of Resurrection, which will be pleasing to Him, since He does not desire the sacrifice of irrational beasts? Again, the Saint teaches us, because after he said, "It is the day of Resurrection", he added, "let us offer ourselves as gifts," just as Apostle Paul says, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your rational worship" (Romans 12:1).

How then ought we to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, to God?

By not fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, but walking in the spirit, not performing the desire of the flesh. Because this is what putting to death our members which are on the earth signifies. This is a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.



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