



«ΥΛΥΧΝΟΣ ΤΟΙΣ ΠΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ Ο ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΦΩΣ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΙΣ ΜΟΥ» ΨΑΛΜ 118, 105

VOLUME 40 | ISSUE 2 | FEBRUARY-MARCH 2025

THE GREAT FAST | 3

Q&A with the Clergy: How do I put my phone away? | 5

"Cast your cares upon the Lord": A motto for 2025 | 6

NEW SERIES Stories from the Desert: On Repentance | 11

ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL

Η Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία

Μια από τις πιο χαρακτηριστικές ακολουθίες που η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας καλεί να τη ζήσουμε κατά τη διάρκεια της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής είναι και η Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία.

Συνήθως γίνεται το βράδυ της Τετάρτης. Τα φώτα χαμηλωμένα, η ατμόσφαιρα σοβαρή. Η ευωδία του λιβανιού συνοδεύει την επίκληση της Θείας Χάριτος. Οι ύμνοι σε χαμηλούς τόνους, τα μηνύματα βαθιά και πνευματικά. Όλα μαζί οδηγούν το νου και τη ψυχή σε καθαρότερη και γνησιώτερη προσευχή προς τον Ουράνιο Πατέρα μας.

Οι ψυχές των πιστών αισθάνονται περισσότερο την ανάγκη για ειλικρινή μετάνοια και πνευματική αναγέννηση. Ακόμα και τα σώματα των πιστών με τις πολλαπλές μετάνοιες στο «κατευθυνθήτω η προσευχή μου» όπως και η γονυκλησία τους στο ιερό πέρασμα του Βασιλέως Χριστού - από τη δεξιά πύλη του Ιερού στην Ωραία Πύλη- συντείνουν ώστε όλος ο άνθρωπος «**ψυχή τε και σώματι**» να βιώνει τα μυστήρια της Λειτουργίας των προηγιασμένων δώρων.

Και όταν στο «μέτα φόβου Θεού, πίστεως και αγάπης προσέλθετε», οι κατάλληλα προετοιμασμένοι Χριστιανοί πλησιάζουν και κοινωνούν Σώμα και Αίμα Χριστού, τότε ολοκληρώνεται και ο πρωταρχικός σκοπός της Ακολουθίας, που δεν είναι τίποτα αλλά παρά η συχνότερη Θεία Κοινωνία.

Έτσι ενισχύονται οι πιστοί πνευματικά και συνεχίζουν τον αγώνα τους εναντίον των πονηρών δυνάμεων του κόσμου τούτου. Σκοπός να φτάσουν αισίως στην Αγία και Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα όπου πάνω στο Γολγοθά ο Κύριος μας θα συντρίψει τη κεφαλή του αρχέκακου διαβόλου.



Η Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων Δώρων αντικατοπτρίζει τη σοβαρή διάθεση των πιστών για μετάνοια που είναι από τους βασικούς σκοπούς της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής.

Το θέμα της μετάνοιας επαναλαμβάνεται συχνά-πυκνά κατά τη διάρκεια της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής. Τα Κυριακάτικα αναγνώσματα από τη περίοδο του Τριωδίου ακόμα, μας εισαγάγουν στη σπουδαιότητα της μετάνοιας, όχι απλά σαν ένα μεμονωμένο γεγονός, αλλά σαν κατάσταση Χριστιανικής ζωής και πολιτείας. Η μετάνοια είναι το επίκεντρο του Χριστιανικού βιώματος. Δημιουργεί στις ψυχές των πιστών το κατάλληλο κλίμα όπου καλλιεργείται η μεγάλη αρετή της ταπείνωσης.

Ο κόσμος μας γύρω καυχάται για τις επιτυχίες του. Η κοινωνία μας γεμάτη από υπερηφάνεια και εγωκεντρισμό. Οι άνθρωποι επικεντρωμένοι στον εαυτό τους. Πουθενά λόγος για πνευματική ενατένιση, για εγκράτεια, για συγχωρητικότητα. Γι' αυτό και το άγχος αυξάνεται, η αδιαφορία για τον συνάνθρωπο περισσεύει, ο άνθρωπος σαν πρόσωπο φθείρεται, τα ήθη ξεπέφτουν και οι αμαρτίες νομιμοποιούνται.

Να γιατί χρειαζόμαστε την πνευματική κατεύθυνση της Εκκλησίας μας. Για να χύσει βάψαμο στην καρδιά μας, να γαληνέψει τις ψυχές μας, να ρίξει φώς στο σκοτάδι του κόσμου. Ζώντας σε ένα τέτοιο κόσμο παθιασμένο με τα υλικά και τις χαοτικές συνέπειες του κοσμικού φρονήματος, οι Ορθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί βρίσκουμε παρηγοριά και καταφύγιο μέσα σ' αυτές τις πνευματικές ευκαιρίες που μας δίνει η Εκκλησία μας. Η ψυχή μας ησυχάζει, το πνεύμα μας αναπαύεται και η ζωή μας παίρνει δύναμη και νόημα με την αγιαστική χάρη που στο μέσον της εβδομάδος μας προσφέρει η Ορθόδοξη Λατρεία μας.

Αν πράγματι νοιώσουμε αυτή την καλή αλλοίωση που επιτελείται μέσα μας βιώνοντας τις ακολουθίες της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, τότε οι ψυχές μας αυθόρμητα ζώντας την ταπείνωση, τη μετάνοια, την εξομολόγηση και τη Θεία Κοινωνία, θα κινήσουν τα χείλη μας στον ωραιότατο ύμνο της Προηγιασμένης Θείας Λειτουργίας «**Γεύσασθε και ίδετε ότι χρηστός ο Κύριος**». (Δοκιμάσετε και σεις και διαπιστώστε έμπρακτα ότι ο Κύριος είναι καλός και ευεργετικός) Ψαλ. 33:9.

Καλή Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή.

THE GREAT FAST

"The stadium of the virtues has opened"

"The stadium of the virtues has opened" and Great Lent, the great fast, has begun. Lent is a dedicated period each year with the primary purpose to prepare for Holy Week and Christ's Resurrection. To assist and cultivate our spiritual senses in this period, the Church calls the faithful to refrain from eating certain foods, primarily meat and dairy products, from the start of Great Lent until the day of Pascha. With the discipline of fasting, we offer ourselves a chance to approach Christ in prayer and repentance, in preparation for Pascha.

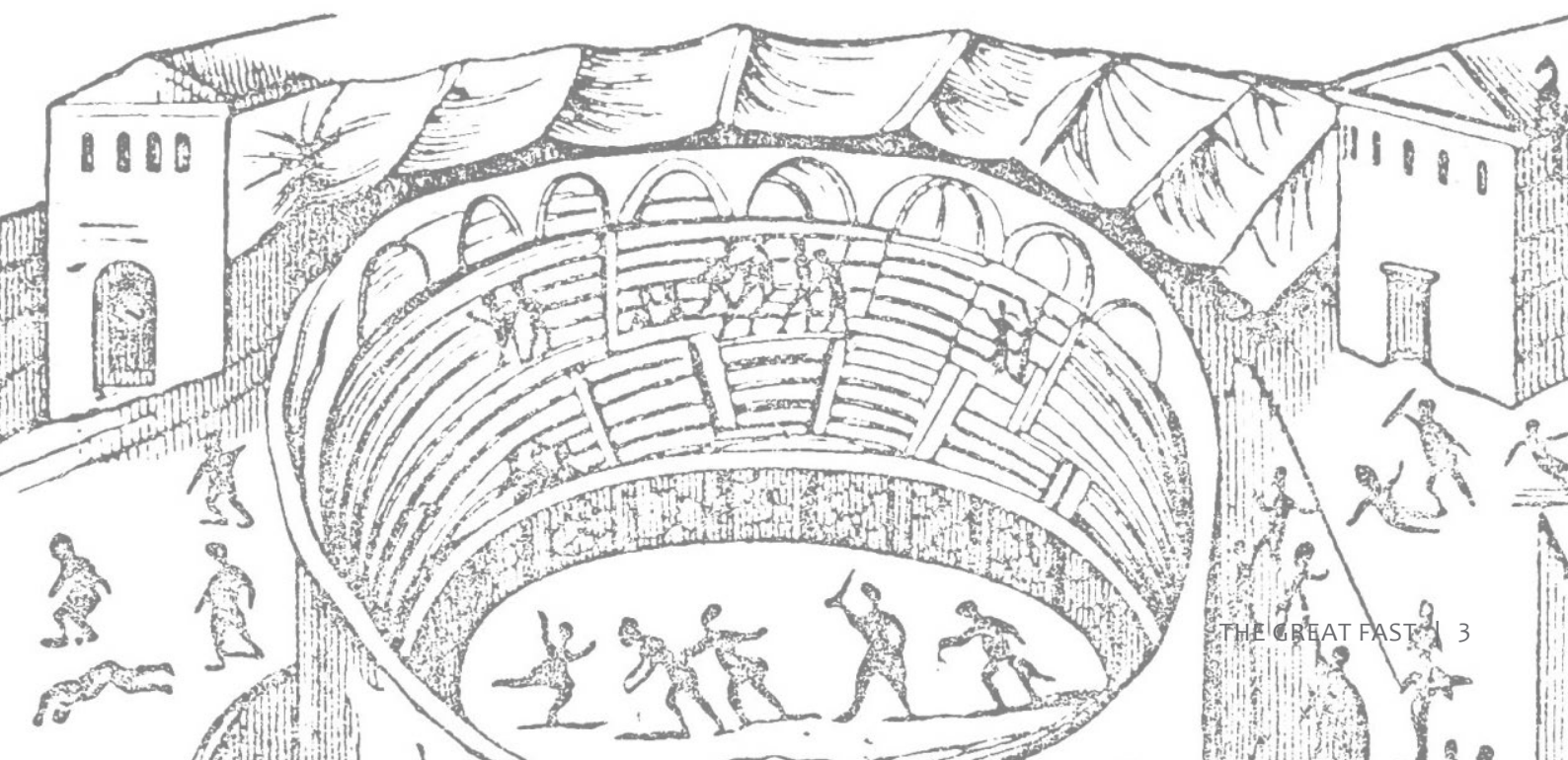
The events of Holy Week are the culmination of Christ's earthly ministry. We know that Christ prepared by fasting from food and water for forty days in the desert. Our Lenten fast attempts to mirror this preparation. In doing so, Great Lent is not simply abstaining from certain foods. Rather, we try to imitate Christ. We attempt to resist temptation as He did in the desert. We pray as He did. We reduce worldly distractions and obligations.

The church assists in this struggle by offering additional services intended to encourage us to reflect on our spiritual state and turn to God. In this way, we view the physical fast as a catalyst for spiritual change; stripping away the darkness within us to receive the light and joy of the Resurrection. As St Gennadios Scholarios writes:

"Fasting frees us from the temptations of the demons; it sends them away ashamed; it crowns us co-victors together with the Lord"

We must be mindful of the spirit in which we undertake Great Lent and fasting in particular. After all, Christ criticised the Pharisees for fasting while continuing to judge their neighbours. The fast encourages us to come to the Church for spiritual healing but also to approach our neighbours in love, just like the Good Samaritan. In the parable, we read of the priest and Levite ignoring the plight of the man who was attacked. The priest and Levite undoubtedly would have fasted from certain foods twice a week, but were not spiritually cultivated and failed to help their neighbour lying half-dead and beaten on the street. The great fast, if undertaken in the right spirit, can result in the cultivation of virtues. The Christian becomes the fertile ground on which the Lord plants the seeds of virtue by His Grace. By the end of the fast, the ground is filled with the fruits of prayer and repentance.

Finally, it is no coincidence that Lent takes place in the northern spring. The rebirth of nature associated with this season reminds us of the ultimate renewal of human nature through Christ's death and resurrection. Let us take the opportunity of the Great Fast to focus on spiritual renewal, self-control, and preparing for the feast of Pascha. Seizing the opportunity requires effort but the rewards are plentiful.





Register for Sunday School 2025!



Scan here to
register or visit
[sundayschool.
lychnos.org/
registration/](https://sundayschool.lychnos.org/registration/)



What is Sunday School?

Sunday School provides a friendly and nurturing environment in which children can begin to appreciate the beauty of their Orthodox Christian Faith and a life in Christ. We play games, learn Christian songs and hymns, and engage in lessons on various aspects of our Orthodox Faith.



For children K-12 at most Parishes in NSW

Sunday School operates at 23 Parishes in NSW, with 100 teachers across 70 classes, usually broken up into Infants, Primary and High School groups.

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, Sunday School will recommence March 2nd, 2025.

When?

Straight after Holy Communion. Classes finish coinciding with the end of the Liturgy.

Where?

During the liturgy, children usually sit together for the Liturgy and then follow their teachers to the church hall.

For more information

Please contact your parish priest, Sunday School coordinator or email sundayschool@greekorthodoxchristians.com.



Pentecost: The Birth of the Church?

Christian & Secular Ethics
How can I progress in prayer?

God is with us

Christmas 2024: Spiritual or Secular?
The prophetic Mission of
the Gospels for the 21st Century

ΛΥΧΝΟΣ
A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL

Dear reader, we would like to hear from you.

Please scan the QR code or visit the
link below to share your thoughts on
the Lychnos periodical.

Thank you for your feedback,
Lychnos Team

forms.office.com/r/ggT3zY8tU0



Q & A

WITH Fr G. L.

How do I put my phone away?

At the cutting of the Vasilopita this year, our spiritual shepherd, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, urged; “for 2025, I ask you every morning when you wake up, before you pick up the mobile phone, to make the sign of the cross”.

He then elaborated that doing this simple act will significantly change our spiritual lives as it helps us orient ourselves correctly at the beginning of the day.

How is this? What is the significance of the mobile phone? Mobile phones are highly addictive. According to a recent study, 56.9% of respondents admitted to being addicted to their mobile phone, and 89% of respondents checked their phones within the first 10 minutes of waking up.¹ The study found that people on average checked their phones 144 times per day. In other words, mobile phones, especially ‘smartphones’ that can access the internet, are extremely powerful at capturing our attention and our senses. We very easily become engrossed in the material we access, which is extremely worldly. It becomes a very powerful distraction to our spiritual lives, and captures our hearts. And thus, instead of praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), we are scrolling without ceasing.

Our prayer life and hence our spiritual life becomes ineffective. The material that we access can be highly sexualised and materialistic, and this erodes at the purity of our hearts, and makes us more worldly.

Also, our brains get fatigued from ingesting all this less-than-useful material; it affects our ability to be productive in our daily lives.

So, how do we manage this? Here are some suggestions.

1. Firstly, ask yourself a question: Do I really need a phone, especially with all the latest features? Can I make do without a mobile phone? Countless generations made do without a mobile phone, so in many cases, convincing ourselves that we need a phone can be a bit indulgent. Can I use a simpler phone that only has calling features, and without internet?

2. If you do have a phone, make a conscious decision to check the phone as little as possible. Do your cross and say a prayer before accessing the phone. Use it as a communication tool or a reference tool, and avoid looking at your phone unless you have a specific task to complete. Avoid mindless scrolling. Turn off notifications.

3. Avoid having the mobile phone in your room. At night, turn it off and ensure it is stored or charged in a common area.

In the Lord’s prayer we ask God to “lead us not into temptation”. The phone is a massive temptation. Being able to control our phone, rather than being controlled by it, means that we do our bit to avoid temptation, and this then attracts God’s grace to help us avoid temptation altogether.

¹ <https://www.reviews.org/mobile/2023-cell-phone-addiction/>



Cast your cares upon the Lord

Psalm 54:23



ΣΥΝΘΗΜΑ 2025

A motto for 2025

Each year, the Greek Orthodox Christian Society appoints a 'motto' or 'synthima' to guide and inspire for the year ahead. For 2025, the motto adopted is from Psalm 54:23:

"Cast your cares upon the Lord"

«Επίρριψον ἐπὶ Κύριον τὴν μέριμνά σου»

As is often the case, a closer look at the original Greek can often provide more colour to the English translation. The direct translation of the Greek words are as follows:

- 'Επίρριψον means 'to cast'
- ἐπὶ Κύριον means 'upon the Lord'
- τὴν μέριμνά σου means one's anxieties, or worries, or cares

We begin with the reflection - what do we identify as our burdens or cares? Of course, we can see them as tests, temptations and sins we fall into. They also relate to problems we face with work, family, financial issues or our health.

One common, modern concern is a sense of deprivation; many people may feel denied something they either need or want. Oftentimes, we can get confused between what we really need as opposed to what we



want. Of course, our daily needs are food, water, shelter, clothing and sleep. Even though this is universally acknowledged, we find ourselves putting all our efforts in trying to attain things which are not needed.

We might desire the latest and greatest, not realising that they simply add more stress in our lives. These stresses then become extra burdens we carry on our shoulders and weigh us down.

The motto this year reminds us that it is a good thing to let our burdens go and pass them on to the Lord. He will take care of all our burdens. Even the things we need to survive.

We are challenged to demonstrate our trust in the Lord, to be at peace, and to let go – even the things that are essential in our life.

Christ Himself reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount, “do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”. (Matt 6:31,33)

This is an interesting passage that can create some confusion, and we should consider it carefully. Christ is not asking us to disregard our lives or be irresponsible in looking after our general daily needs. Instead, we should avoid being overly concerned or caught up with things that do not allow the space and time for Christ in our hearts.

You may rightly reflect that worries and concerns are interwoven into the fabric of our fallen human nature. We live in an age of heightened awareness, anxiety and risks. This shows, however, that truly blessed is the person who does not have worldly concerns or cares! The motto highlights that even more blessed is the person who *does* have fears and worries, and then shares them with the Lord.

If we look at our motto this year, a very powerful word is used to guide us in the correct approach to tackle our worldly concerns.

The Greek word used is ἑπιρριψον (“Epiripson”) which literally means to ‘throw over’ or ‘throw upon’. It can mean ‘to discard’ or ‘throw away violently’.

The English word used in the passage is ‘cast’. The Greek word hints that we should read ‘cast’ in an active, deliberate way. It reminds us of casting a rod when

fishing. The special action of casting requires a violent snap. A movement, high in energy over the head, to hurl the fishing line with bait as far away from us as possible! This is the action we are requested to carry out. To take drastic action and expel our concerns and worries by passing them onto the Lord. In this way, we are set free to approach Him.

But how can we cast our cares and burdens upon the Lord? If we look at a prayer from the Divine Liturgy, we are asked to “*commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God*”. The commitment to ‘commend ourselves’ means to offer ourselves to Christ, to entrust to Him our lives and make room for Him to fit in our hearts. In this way, whatever we do is placed in God’s hands.

The motto this year allows us to reflect on the real meaning of ‘letting go’, that is, giving Christ all our worries. Learning to stand before Him in our daily prayers and laying before Him the things that are creating a barrier between us and the Lord. If we can achieve this, we will experience the blessing of living a life free from worries or concerns. A beautiful example is from the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Although Lazarus clearly suffered throughout his life, he patiently endured everything that came his way. St Paul is another excellent model. He totally devoted his life to the Lord and famously expressed that “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). Everything we have is from God.

The motto this year asks to delve a little deeper inside ourselves. With the help of our spiritual father, we can find the burdens that weigh us down and take drastic action to expel them violently, casting them as far away as possible. There is one catch – we can’t do this on our own – we need Christ! Only by casting them upon the Lord can we successfully eliminate these burdens.

The motto this year requires courage to take such drastic action as well as faith – to be able to totally trust the Lord and cast all our cares upon Him! Are we up to the challenge?



Το Σύνθημά μας για το 2025

Το νέο έτος συνηθίζεται να φέρνει την ευκαιρία για νέα όνειρα, νέα ξεκινήματα αλλά και πιο σημαντικά, την ευκαιρία να αναλογιστούμε την εσωτερική μας κατάσταση, να ψάξουμε με ειλικρίνεια την καρδιά μας, και να καταλάβουμε την πραγματική μας σχέση με τον Θεό και τον συνάνθρωπό μας.



Ένα από τα μεγαλύτερα προβλήματα που βιώνουμε σχεδόν όλοι οι άνθρωποι είναι το άγχος. Λόγω των πολλών ζητημάτων που μας προβληματίζουν, ή μερικές φορές χωρίς να το επιθυμούμε, μας κατακλύζει το άγχος. Και καθώς μας ταλαιπωρεί το άγχος, η ζωή μας και η ζωή των γύρω μας δυσκολεύονται.

Γιατί είναι τόσο διαδεδομένο το άγχος στις μέρες μας και γιατί όλοι επιδιώκουμε να απαλλαγούμε από αυτό;

Μήπως η ύπαρξη του άγχους ή των ποικίλων προβλημάτων και μερίμνων της καθημερινής ζωής, είναι ένα καινούργιο φαινόμενο;

Φυσικά όχι. Αλλά αν σκεφτούμε για την εμπειρία των προηγούμενων γενιών, τί έλεγαν στις δύσκολες στιγμές, στα προβλήματα, στις στενοχώριες τις ζωής; “Έχει ο Θεός”.



‘Η, για ό,τι συνέβαινε, “Δόξα σοι ο Θεός”. Παρομοίως, για ότι προγραμματίζανε, πάντα “Πρώτα ο Θεός.”

Αυτές οι εκφράσεις αντλούν από την παράδοση του λαού μας και αποτελούν απόσταγμα της Ορθόδοξης πίστης μας.

Αυτή η πεποίθηση, να αφήνουμε τα πάντα στα χέρια του Θεού, αποτελεί την έμπνευση πίσω από το Σύνθημα της Χρονιάς 2025,

«Επίρριψον ἐπὶ Κύριον τὴν μέριμνάν σου»

Αυτά τα λόγια από τους ψαλμούς του Δαβίδ, μας καθοδηγούν να ρίξουμε τις έγνοιες και τις στεναχώριες μας επάνω στον Κύριο- να τις αφήσουμε στα χέρια Του για να τα φροντίσει όπως Αυτός γνωρίζει.

Το «ἐπίρριψον» σημαίνει όχι απλώς να παραδώσουμε τις ανησυχίες μας, αλλά να βασιستούμε με πλήρη εμπιστοσύνη στην πρόνοια του Θεού. Ο Θεός, η πηγή κάθε αγαθού, γνωρίζει καλύτερα από όλους μας τις ανάγκες και τις επιθυμίες της καρδιάς μας. Η πρόνοιά Του είναι πάντοτε σοφή και αγαθή, ακόμα και αν εμείς δεν μπορούμε πάντα να κατανοήσουμε τα σχέδιά Του.

Η λέξη ‘μέριμνα’ σημαίνει οι αγωνίες, έγνοιες, ανησυχίες, οι στεναχώριες, το άγχος μας, οι φόβοι, τα προβλήματά μας. Όλοι έχουμε ανησυχίες και φροντίδες και στεναχώριες. Και όταν μιλάμε για έγνοιες, ανησυχίες, βάρη, ή μέριμνες, τί εννοούμε;

- **Πρώτα** - είναι οι δοκιμασίες, οι δυσκολίες, οι πειρασμοί και οι αμαρτίες μας
- **Αλλά, εννοεί επίσης** και τα καθημερινά μας προβλήματα, που όλοι αντιμετωπίζουμε - προβλήματά με τα παιδιά μας, τα εγγόνια, οικογενειακά προβλήματα, άγχος στην εργασία, θέματα υγείας και οικονομικά ζητήματα.

Στο Ευαγγέλιο διαβάζουμε *“πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιρρίψαντες ἐπ’ αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν”*. Ο Χριστός μας υπενθυμίζει στους μακαρισμούς, *“Μη οὖν μεριμνήσετε λέγοντες τί θὰ φάγωμεν ἢ τί πῖωμεν ἢ τί περιβαλλόμεθα ἀλλὰ...ζητεῖται πρῶτα τὴ βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὰυτὰ πάντα προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν»* και επίσης στην προσευχή που μας άφησε, *“Πάτερ ἡμῶνγεννηθήτω τὸ θέλημά Σου. ”*

Στη Θεία Λειτουργία λέμε *“πασαν νυν βιοτικὴν ἀποθῶμεθα μέριμνα”* - όλα της ζωής μας τα αφήνουμε στα χέρια Σου. Και παλι *“Σοὶ παρακατατιθέμεθα τὴν ζωὴν ἡμῶν ἀπασαν καὶ τὴν ἐλπίδα Δέσποτα φιλάνθρωπε”*.

Γιατί πολλές φορές δυσκολευόμαστε να παραδοθούμε στο θέλημα του Θεού;

Γιατί τελικά δεν εμπιστευόμαστε την ζωή μας σε Εκείνον, αλλά αντιθέτως, προσπαθούμε μόνοι μας να λύσουμε τα προβλήματα μας; Μήπως είναι γιατί αναζητούμε τη λύση των προβλημάτων μας σε λανθασμένο τόπο - στο διαδίκτυο, στις εφημερίδες, στην επιστήμη, στις κυβερνήσεις, στους προέδρους, δηλαδή στα κοσμικά και ανθρώπινα;

Ο Χριστός είναι έτοιμος να πάρει το φορτίο μας και να μας αναπαύσει, αρκεί εμείς να παραδώσουμε τη ζωή μας στο θέλημα Του. Σ’Αυτόν βρίσκεται η πραγματική ανάπαυση, σε Αυτόν βρίσκουμε πραγματική ειρήνη. Έτσι, η προσευχή μας θα πρέπει να είναι να γίνει φανερό το θέλημά Του στη ζωή μας.

Το Σύνθημα μας είναι διαχρονικό και απολύτως επίκαιρο, διότι μας καλεί να αναγνωρίσουμε την ανάγκη να αφήσουμε όλες μας τις μέριμνες και ανησυχίες στον Θεό, πιστοί στην αλήθεια ότι Εκείνος είναι ο μόνος που μπορεί να τις μεταμορφώσει και να μας ανακουφίσει.

Το να αναθέτουμε την μέριμνα της ζωής μας στον Θεό, δεν σημαίνει να αδρανήσουμε και να εγκαταλείψουμε τις ευθύνες μας. Αντιθέτως, σημαίνει να εμπιστευτούμε τις αποφάσεις μας και την πορεία μας στην καθοδήγηση του Θεού, να αναγνωρίσουμε την περιορισμένη ανθρώπινη γνώση μας και να αποδεχθούμε την ανώτερη σοφία Του. Όταν αφήνουμε τις ανησυχίες μας στα χέρια Του, η ψυχή μας βρίσκει την αληθινή ειρήνη και την εσωτερική γαλήνη, διότι ξέρουμε ότι Εκείνος είναι πάντα παρών, πάντα πρόθυμος να μας στηρίξει και να μας καθοδηγήσει.

Η πρόνοια του Θεού είναι παντοδύναμη και απέραντη. Σε κάθε στιγμή της ζωής μας, ακόμη και στις πιο σκοτεινές ώρες, ο Θεός είναι κοντά μας, προσφέροντάς μας την ελπίδα και τη δύναμη να προχωρήσουμε. Αν εμείς Του παραδώσουμε τις ανησυχίες μας, θα μας φέρει την ειρήνη Του. Αυτή η ειρήνη δεν είναι η απουσία των προβλημάτων, αλλά η βεβαιότητα ότι είμαστε στα χέρια Του, που μας αγαπούν και μας προστατεύουν.

**As βιώσουμε τὴν πρόσκληση τῆς καινούργιας χρονιάς
«Επίρριψον ἐπὶ Κύριον τὴν μέριμνάν σου»**

REJOICE, O BRIDE UNWEDDED



This phrase is heard frequently in our church's hymns to the Theotokos. It is the refrain to the beloved kontakion for the feast of the Annunciation (Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ), and is repeated many times in the Akathist Service to the Mother of God, chanted on Friday evenings during Lent. This majestic service combines a canon of hymns chanted by the choirs with poetic verses read by the priest, called salutations. The theme of these verses is the great mystery of incarnation of the Word of God through the Virgin Mary. We give glory to the Mother of God for her role in our salvation, addressing her in each line with the word "rejoice."

Rejoice (Χαῖρε)

"Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you." (Lk. 1:28) The word "rejoice" in Greek is used as a greeting between two people, and was the first word spoken to the Virgin Mary by the angel Gabriel. Here, God is the visitor, offering His greeting through His angel.

This word is the beginning of the Gospel (Εὐαγγέλιον), a term which means "good news" or "joyful announcement." It was the moment when God's plan for us, hidden since the beginning of time, is first revealed.

Through this salutation, our sorrow is reversed. A sorrow which all people experience as the consequence of our fall. The Theotokos becomes our redeemer from Eve's tears by accepting God's plan to dwell amongst us. Now, in turn, we offer this greeting back to the Theotokos in endless thanks and glorification to her.

O Bride (Νύμφη)

The Theotokos is called "Bride" because of her complete and loving union with God. In Psalm 44, the bridegroom calls: "Hear, O daughter, and see, and forget your people, and the king shall desire your beauty."

The Theotokos responded to this

call, leaving the world and her parents behind at a young age to devote herself in service to the Lord.

The image of the Theotokos as the Bride also signifies the Church itself, for she embodies the ideal response to God's love: obedience, purity, and devotion. All Christians are called to be faithful in this same way as we await the return of our Bridegroom.

Unwedded (Ἀνύμφευτε)

The paradox of the title "Unwedded" reveals the mystery of the Virgin Birth. Mary is called the Bride, yet she remains unwedded, having conceived Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, not through natural means. This title is a testimony to her ever-virginity throughout her earthly life, a truth upheld by the Orthodox Church. Not only was the Mother of God ever-virgin, but she was completely unstained by sin and passion, 'uncorrupted giving birth to God the Word.' The virginity of the Mother of God is mentioned frequently in our hymns, not only to remember our Lord's miraculous birth, but also to praise His Mother's complete devotion and willing abstinence from sin.

Every verse from the salutations contains profound meaning, setting forth poetically what the Most-Holy Theotokos did for humanity. Many pious Christians keep the tradition of reading the salutations to the Theotokos during their compline prayers. The Akathist Services of Great Lent are an opportunity for us to hear and reflect on these things, allowing us to give worthy praise to the Theotokos, who is the cause of our joy.

ON REPENTANCE

STORIES FROM THE DESERT



This story, from the *Gerontikon*, shows the power and importance of being active in our repentance, even if small steps are all that we can offer.



A brother fell to temptation; that is, to sin. So great was the sorrow that he suffered, that he abandoned his monastic rule. And though he wanted in principle to repent, he was impeded from so doing by his sorrow, saying within himself: "How can I restore myself to what I was before?" Being thus remiss and negligent, he did not have the power to take up his monastic work.

So, he visited an Elder and confessed all that had befallen him.

The Elder, on listening to the matters which were tormenting the monk, related the following example to him in the form of an instructive parable:

"A man," he began by saying, "had a field. On account of his neglect of it, it became fallow and was

overrun by weeds and brambles. After some time, this man thought about attending to his field and cultivating it. So, he ordered his son to clean it up. And, indeed, his son went to clean the field; but as soon as he saw that it was full of thorns, he was discouraged and said to himself: 'I would never be able to uproot all that and to clean this field.' So he lay down and went to sleep.

"After a bit, he awakened and, gazing again on the vast number of brambles, became depressed by it all and lay on the ground, sometimes sleeping and sometimes rolling over from one side to the other, the way a door swings on its hinge, as in the proverb: 'As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed. The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth' (Proverbs 26:14-16). He spent several days thusly, without working and inactive.

"In the meantime, his father came along to check what he had done to the field. Finding his son idle and indecisive, he said to him: "'Why

have you done nothing up to now, my child?'

"The son answered: Father, as soon as I started to work and saw this mass of wild weeds and brambles, I lost my desire to work, lay down, and fell asleep. And so right up to today I have still done nothing.'

"Do not worry, my son,' the father replied, 'every day you can clear an area the width of your bed, and thus your work will progress without inactivity crushing you.' Indeed, the son followed his father's advice, and in a short time he had cleaned the field of brambles and weeds.

"And in this way, my brother, you can work little by little, without risking the danger of being negligent. And God, seeing your desire to work, will restore you to your former rank."

The monk carefully listened to these suggestions, persisted with patience, and applied the directions of the Elder.

And indeed, by the Grace of God, he attained to the peace which he had sought.

St Philoumenos

Feast Day: November 29

St Philoumenos the New Hieromartyr is a twentieth century saint. He is also known as St Philoumenos of Jacob's Well.

Twins Philoumenos and Elpidios were born in 1913 in Orounta, of the Morphou region in North West Cyprus. Their family relocated to Nicosia where they ran a bakery and inn. The twin brothers had prayerful dispositions from a young age; they would wait for their siblings to fall asleep and then begin to pray earnestly. Their love for the Church and the saints was modelled by their mother, Magdalene, and grandmother, Alexandra, who would read them the lives of the saints.

At 14 years of age Philoumenos and Elpidios joined the monastery of Stavrovouni, one of the monasteries founded by Saint Helene. Here they were taught and practised the ascetic life. Their love for prayer was cultivated.

The two brothers then travelled to the Patriarchate in Jerusalem where they finished their schooling. From there, the twins' journeys diverged: Elpidios went on to Alexandria, Athens and Mt Athos to serve as a priest, and Philoumenos remained in the Church of Jerusalem. Even though Philoumenos was offered many opportunities outside Jerusalem, he was drawn to the spiritual needs of the people of Palestine. He became fluent in Arabic, both to converse with locals and to serve the liturgy in the local



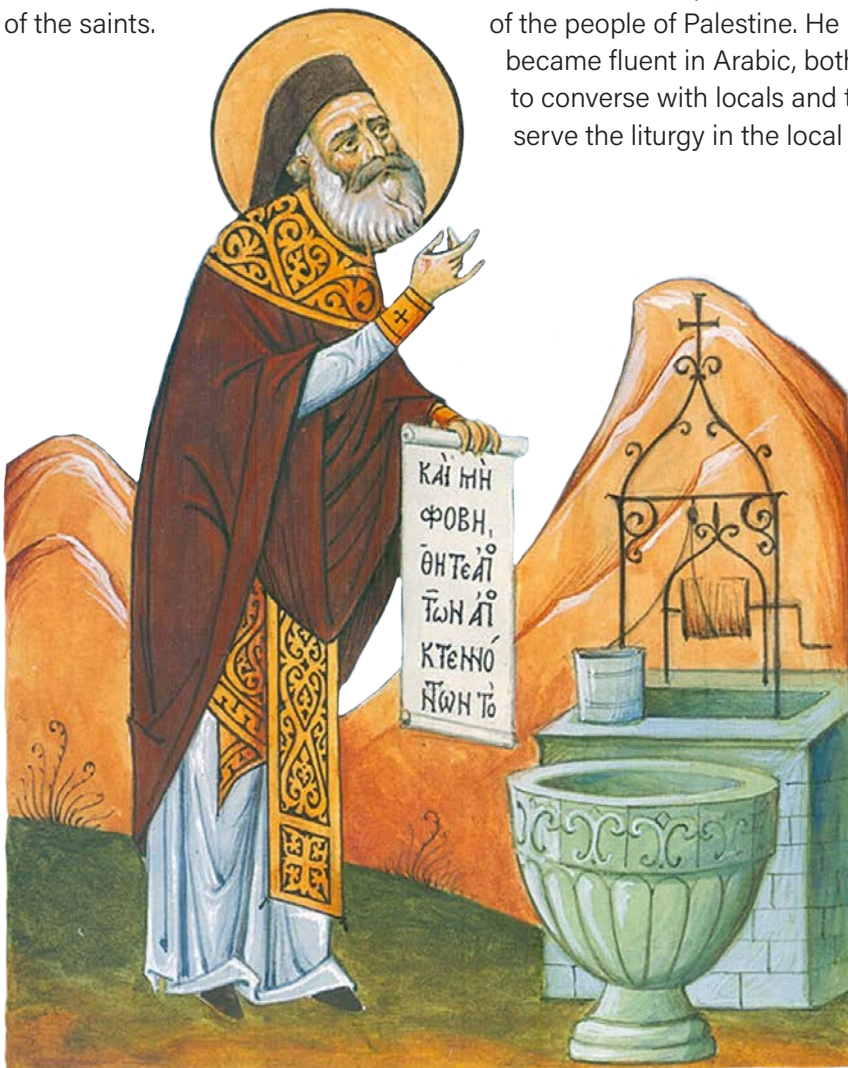
language. He was tonsured a monk and then an archimandrite.

Philoumenos was someone who did not utter an immodest word. He had a conscientious manner and kept vigil in every way. Guarding the traditions of the Church was important to him, and he worked humbly in service to the Church for 45 years.

In 1979, Philoumenos was appointed as the caretaker of the historic church at Jacob's Well near the city of Samaria. At that time there were increased tensions in the region following international recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Groups of Zionist Jews would visit the church to taunt and harass St Philoumenos. One evening in November 1979, St Philoumenos was preparing to serve Vespers when one of these fanatical Jews entered and slaughtered the holy man.

Reflecting the immutable bond of twins who shared so much, at the time of his martyrdom, Fr Elpidios heard the voice of his brother crying out to him.

The Church of Jerusalem canonised St Philoumenos in 2009. The Holy Martyr has interceded for many unwell people and is especially venerated in Cyprus where many accounts of the faithful have been collected.



the Lenten Spring

by Fr Thomas Hopko

There are few modern Orthodox writers with the widespread profile and reputation of Fr Thomas Hopko. A priest of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), Fr Tom – as he is known – was a prolific author and speaker right to his death in 2012. His works are characterised by their ability to reconcile the patristic and traditional ethos of Orthodoxy to the modern world and the daily lives familiar to all.

In the book "A Lenten Spring", Fr Tom provides forty 'reflections' on the period of Great Lent. They are relatively short, able to be read on a regular basis. His style is thought-provoking and reflective, tying together the writings of the early church and hymnology to help guide the approach to the Lenten Season.

The title itself, "A Lenten Spring", betrays its Northern Hemisphere origin but itself has a significance. In the northern hemisphere, Lent and Pascha take place during Spring. The author aligns the Lenten spirit with the images of Spring – it is a period of awakening and growth.

This counters the often-misunderstood nature of Great Lent. It is easy to consider Lent as a time of deprivation, of abstinence, trudging along the

long road looking forward only to the glorious feast of the Resurrection. Christ himself warned against this attitude, saying "and when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

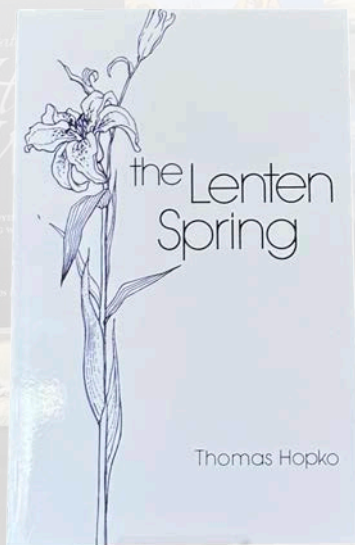
Fr Tom, through his reflections, encourages a more active and positive engagement with the Lenten season. He writes,

"the Lenten spirit in the Church is one of splendour and delight. It breathes with the exhilaration of those girding up to 'fight the good fight' for the One who loves them. It's the invitation to a spiritual adventure. The Church welcomes the Lenten spring with the spirit of exultation!"

Each reflection is based on a specific theme, loosely aligned to the Church calendar during the lent period.

For example, reflections 6 and 7 relate to the Last Judgement, which is the theme of the last Sunday prior to Great Lent. In this way, the book allows the reader to take a 'journey' through the various messages and reminders that the Church places throughout the Lenten period.

As a companion to the faithful Orthodox Christian during the Lenten period, this book is a valuable supplement for a demanding period of the year. It helps set the right framework and attitude, allowing for a truly joyful experience of the Resurrection.



ORTHODOX
MISSION
BOOKSTORE

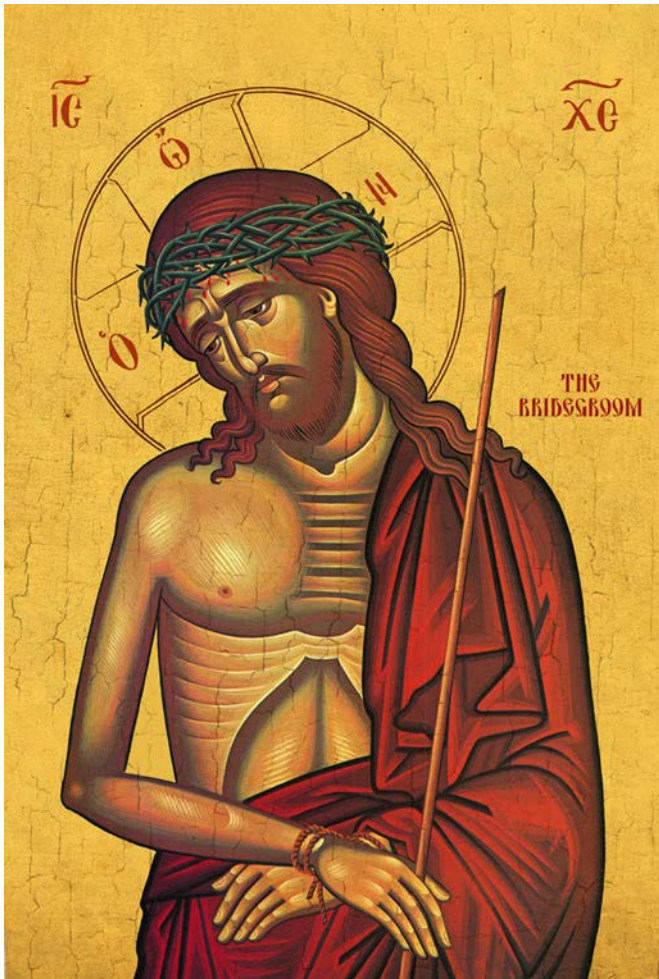


217 Bexley Rd, Kingsgrove, Sydney NSW 2208
(02) 9787 9779

Browse more books in store
Monday – Saturday
10am – 2pm

Or on our website:
orthodoxbookstore.org.au





Christ Himself epitomises this contest in this icon. His crown, however, has thorns. His kingship brings pain and suffering as the thorns dig into His flesh and draw blood. He shows us what a true king is: willing to suffer on behalf of His people. He subverts modern, indulgent and superficial notions of marriage, and shows us the self-sacrifice required for a true marriage.

THE BRIDEGROOM SHOWS US THE HUMILITY AND SELF-SACRIFICE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO TRULY LOVE

The binding of Christ's hands also reminds us of the wedding ceremony, where the hands of the bride and groom are joined together. In the Greek tradition, the crowns worn during the ceremony are also tied together. These emphasise the unbreakable bond between Christ and us, His people, and that we are to unite ourselves to Christ with the same love, humility and self-sacrifice that a husband and wife have in joining themselves together in marriage.

THE ICON OF THE BRIDEGROOM

The icon of the Bridegroom (Nymphios), which is carried around in procession around the church on Palm Sunday evening, does not depict your typical groom or wedding. The icon of the Bridegroom does not depict a flowery celebration, but the martyrdom that a bride and groom aspire to upon marriage.

In the marriage service, the bride and groom wear crowns ('stefana'). This crowning marks the creation of a new dominion: they become heads of their own kingdom, their new family. During the service, we chant, "O holy Martyrs, who have contested well and have been crowned". The Church is telling us that in order to be crowned, we must contest well, we must "fight the good fight" (Tim 6:12).

The reed that Christ holds reminds us of the humiliation that Christ faced. Instead of a strong sceptre showing His authority, he holds a weak reed which bends – emphasising His humility. However, this shows the viewer that Christ's *"strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Cor 12:9) and that His kingdom is not of this world.

Finally, the red robe that He wears is symbolically significant because red is the traditional colour of royalty. But these robes are not luxurious robes that you'd expect a king to wear. They only cover half of His chest, with the rest open to remind the viewer of Christ's humanity and the forthcoming suffering on the Cross.

The Bridegroom shows us the humility and self-sacrifice necessary in order to truly love, and to be unified with Him who is Love.



News & Events



In Memory of Dr George Abouyanni

On 18 February 2025, Dr George Abouyanni, our beloved brother and co-worker in the Church, reposed in the Lord after a long and courageous battle with sickness. Dr George was an active member of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society. He served for decades as a Sunday School teacher at the Church of the Archangel Michael, Crows Nest, regularly contributed to *Lychnos*, delivered numerous lectures on various topics from his beloved Old Testament, and inspired many with his love for God and his fellow man. Dr George will be remembered for his zeal for the faith which he lived genuinely and without guile. His readings from the prophecies in various church services throughout the year, which he delivered with distinctive passion, will be missed. Dr George is survived by his wife, Helene, his son, Sotiri, his daughter-in-law, Jessica and his granddaughter, Alyssa. May his memory be eternal and may the Lord give rest to his soul in the land of the living.



Blessing & Commencement of the 2025 Sunday School Year

On Sunday, 23 February 2025, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of our Lady in Redfern in the presence of all the Sunday School teachers of NSW. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence blessed the commencement of Sunday Schools for the upcoming year with a Blessing of the Water, "Agiasmo" service.

Addressing the teachers, His Eminence expressed his gratitude to them for conducting the important Ecclesiastical and Apostolic work of Sunday Schools as a spiritual "diakonia" of the Church through the Greek Orthodox Christian Society and with the blessings of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia. His Eminence highlighted that the goal of the Sunday School is to "sow the seed" and for the fruit to blossom after many years. He likened the work of Sunday School to a spiritual investment – an investment in our Faith, Church, language, and traditions. He also stressed to the teachers who have the



responsibility for teaching the Word of God to the children, to ensure that everything they teach passes through the "filter" of the Gospel and the Holy Canons of the Church. His Eminence reminded the teachers that the children may not remember the content of the lessons they hear but they will remember that their teacher was genuine, caring and understanding. He also emphasised that a teacher must teach through their example and way of life so the children can feel the presence of Christ and the presence of the saints.

The day prior, His Grace Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis, representing His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, attended the opening meeting of all Sunday School teachers at the Orthodox Mission Centre of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society in Kingsgrove. His Grace shared personal memories of attending Sunday School himself and told the teachers to be conscious of the responsibility they carry in bringing children closer to God.

Sunday School classes began on Sunday 2 March 2025.

News & Events



Annual Men's Retreat

The annual retreats of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society provide the opportunity for Christian friendship, prayer and spiritual renewal.

This year, 110 men gathered at Bethshan Centre, Wyee from 31st January to 2nd February for an edifying retreat. The lessons centered on this year's synthema "Cast your cares upon the Lord" (Psalm 54:23), with inspiring talks on Christian virtues and the compassionate providence of God.

The highlight of the retreat was the Divine Liturgy officiated by Fr Eusebios, the Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery in celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. The participants felt uplifted by the retreat's spiritual atmosphere and became closely united by a strong sense of brotherhood.



Annual Omatha Youth Camps

This year the Orthodox Boys and Girls Youth Groups (Ομάδες) held their annual camps from the 7th to 12th and the 13th to 17th of January, respectively. The Sydney youth were blessed to be joined by interstate youth from Adelaide and Melbourne who enthusiastically participated in the retreats. Both camps were guided by the powerful theme "Cast your cares upon the Lord" (Psalm 54:23), inspiring the children to grow in virtue and develop a personal relationship with Christ.

The boys camp was blessed by the virtual attendance of his Eminence Archbishop Makarios and the girls camp was blessed



by a visit from Metropolitan Iakovos of Ireland. Both spiritual leaders expressed their paternal love for the children and their desire for the Ομάδες to produce Australia's Orthodox Christians of the future.

The camps were filled with joy and zeal during talks, bible studies, prayer, sport, games, communal meals, singing, spiritual reading and other recreational activities. The highlight of both retreats was the Divine Liturgy services officiated by Fr Eusebios, the Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery, which spiritually uplifted the camp participants. The genuine friendships and spiritual atmosphere of the camp will remain with treasured memories for years to come.



«ΛΥΧΝΟΣ» is a bimonthly publication of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.

Phone: (02) 9787 9779
Email: editor@lychnos.org
Website: lychnos.org
Facebook & Instagram:
[@greekorthodoxchristiansociety](https://www.facebook.com/greekorthodoxchristiansociety)