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ΑΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL

Σταυρός και Ανάσταση

Λέγεται ότι η Ορθοδοξία είναι Εκκλησία της Αναστάσεως. Και αυτό είναι αλήθεια. Οι ολόφωτοι ναοί μας, οι αναστάσιμοι ύμνοι μας, που κάθε Κυριακή όλο το χρόνο μας μεταφέρουν στην Ανάσταση και την μετά την Ανάσταση περίοδο. Ακόμα και όταν κοινωνούμε Σώμα και Αίμα Χριστού, Πάσχα κάνουμε. Κι όμως, παρότι δεν ακούγεται τόσο συχνά, η Ορθοδοξία μας είναι και Εκκλησία της Σταυρώσεως. Η Ανάσταση δεν καταργεί τη Σταύρωση, μάλλον την προϋποθέτει.

Η Ανάσταση μας οδηγεί, μάλλον ανήκει στην αιωνιότητα. Η Σταύρωση όμως, είναι για το σήμερα. Μας δίνει το χαρακτήρα αυτής εδώ της ζωής. Και τούτη η ζωή, είναι γεμάτη κόπο, μόχθο και δάκρυα. Είναι ζωή σταυρωμένη. Στην καθολική του επιστολή ο Απόστολος Πέτρος μας θυμίζει και τονίζει σαν καθήκον μας ότι «ο Χριστός έπαθεν υπέρ ημών υμίν υπολιμπάνων υπογραμμών ίνα επακολουθήσετε τοις ίχνεσιν αυτού» (Α΄Πετρ. 2,21). Δηλ. Ο Χριστός έπαθε για χάρη σας χωρίς αυτός να πταίσει σε τίποτε και άφησε σε εσάς παράδειγμα τέλει προς μίμηση για να ακολουθήσετε ακριβώς πάνω στα χνάρια Του. (Ερμ. κ. Π. Τρεμπέλα)

Στις μέρες μας τα λόγια αυτά ακούγονται κάπως παράξενα. Γιατί σήμερα οι άνθρωποι λαχταρούν για την καλοπέραση τους. Φτάσαμε σε τόσο μεγάλο βαθμό αποστασίας από το Θεό, που δεν μπορούμε να δούμε το μεγάλο και βαρυσήμαντο νόημα, που έχει για τη ζωή μας ο Σταυρός του Κυρίου μας. Δηλαδή την υπομονή στις θλίψεις, την αντίσταση στους πειρασμούς, την προθυμία να κακοπαθήσουμε - έστω και για λίγο - για την αγάπη και τη χάρη του Θεού.

Ο Σταυρός του Χριστού μιλεί στις ψυχές μας για την ιερότητα του πόνου, το χρέος της συγχώρεσης, τη θυσιαστική αγάπη για τον αδελφό μου. Μα οι σημερινοί άνθρωποι είμαστε βιαστικοί, ανυπόμονοι και απομονωμένοι από τους γύρω μας. Ποιός είναι πρόθυμος να υποφέρει για να δώσει τη μαρτυρία της πίστης του σε καιρούς τέτοιου πνευματικού σκοταδισμού;

Παρά ταύτα, ο Θεός εξακολουθεί να δρα μέσα στη ζωή μας. Η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας, με την Αγία και Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή που οδηγεί στη Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα των



Παθών του Κυρίου μας - που κορυφή έχει το Πάσχα – δεν κάνει τίποτε άλλο από το να διακηρύττει αυτήν ακριβώς την αλήθεια: πως δεν είναι δυνατόν να υπάρχει Ανάσταση χωρίς να προηγηθεί η Σταύρωση. Εννοούμε τη σταύρωση των παθών μας, των κακών μας επιθυμιών, των αμαρτωλών συνηθειών μας.

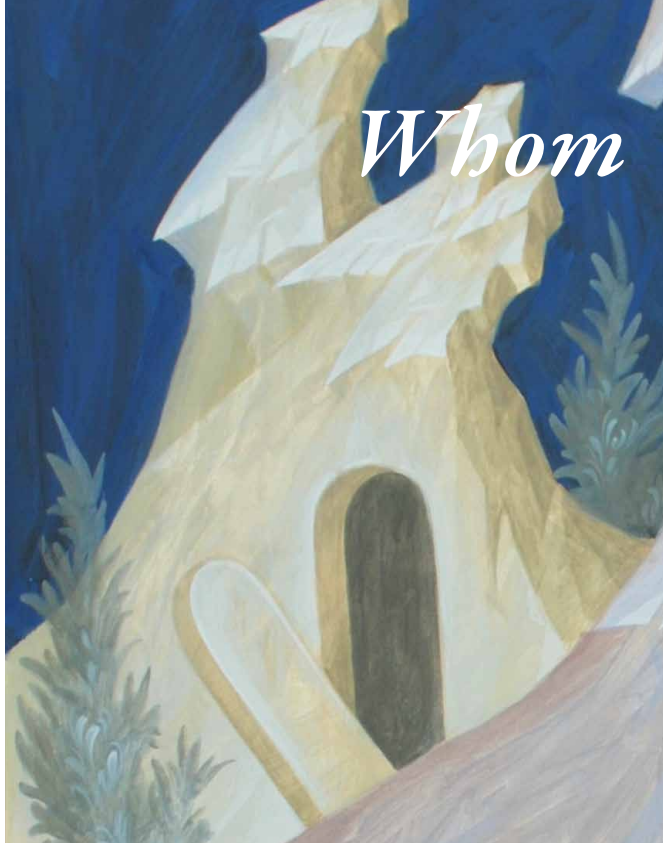
Μας είχε προειδοποιήσει ο Χριστός, πως θα περάσουμε θλίψεις σε τούτο τον κόσμο. Αλλά μας βεβαίωσε πως θα τις νικήσουμε, θα τις νικήσουμε με τη δική Του βοήθεια.

Η εποχή που ζούμε δεν βρίσκει κανένα νόημα στις θλίψεις. Όχι πως ο Χριστιανός θα πρέπει να κυνηγά τις θλίψεις. Αυτό δεν είναι σωστό. Αλλά χρειάζεται να τις υπομένει με γενναίο φρόνημα, με παλικάρισιο θάρρος και φιλότιμο, αγόγγυστα και με καρδιά ανδρωμένη από τη χάρη του Αγίου Πνεύματος.

Πρέπει επιτέλους οι Ορθόδοξοι να κατανοήσουν πώς η Εκκλησία μας είναι Εκκλησία σταυροφόρων. (Καμία σχέση με εκείνους της Δύσεως στην Βυζαντινή περίοδο). Εμείς θεωρούμε το Σταυρό του Κυρίου μας σαν καύχημα και σημείο αναφοράς σε όλες τις φάσεις της επίγειας ζωής μας. Αναγνωρίζουμε την άφατη αγάπη του Εσταυρωμένου Κυρίου μας. Ξεπερνούμε τις θλίψεις και τους πειρασμούς μας, στηριζόμενοι πάνω στο Σταυρό του Κυρίου μας.

Δεν μας συγκινούν πια οι παγίδες και οι έλξεις του κόσμου, με την άγνη λογική τους. Στήνουμε τα αυτιά της ψυχής μας στις νοητές καμπάνες της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας μας που δειλά-δειλά στην αρχή, πιο δυνατά στη συνέχεια και τελικά εκκωφαντικά θα σημάνουν την ημέρα της Ανάστασης,

«ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!»



Whom do you seek?

In a world of countless fleeting and ultimately unsatisfying aspirations — wealth, status, pleasure and fame — the human heart is on a quest for something that will provide purpose, truth, fulfillment and belonging. This is precisely the point where the question of Jesus is seeking our personal response. It is about recognising His significance in our lives. Are we seeking something temporary and transient or something that is eternal? In seeking Jesus, we are invited into a relationship that will transform us. When we turn our gaze toward Him, He is able to offer all things in their truest and most enduring form.

The empty tomb of Christ is not merely the physical absence of a body; it is the profound declaration that death has been defeated. Jesus' resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, for it confirms that He is who He claimed to be — the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. His victory over the grave means that sin no longer has the final word, and death is no longer the end.

The empty tomb also marks the beginning of a new era. The resurrection of Christ brings hope to a broken world. It signals that no matter how dark or difficult life may seem, there is always the hope of resurrection, restoration, and redemption. For the believer, the empty tomb is a powerful reminder that Christ's victory is our victory. Just as He rose from the dead, we, too, can experience the power of new life in Him.

The resurrection challenges us to seek Jesus not just in times of crisis or despair, but in every aspect of our lives. It calls us to follow Him, to trust in His promises, and to embrace the transformative power of His resurrection in our daily actions and decisions.

To truly seek Christ is to live by the values He taught: love, forgiveness, generosity, and compassion. It means being bearers of hope in a world that desperately needs it. It means asking yourself daily: whom do you seek? A question which will lead to a deeper understanding of who Christ is by reminding us that the empty tomb is a symbol of hope, renewal, and the victory of life over death. It is a reminder that, in seeking Jesus, we find the very source of life itself.

BLESSED RESURRECTION TO ALL!

As Christians around the world celebrate Pascha, they are reminded of one of the most profound and awe-inspiring events in the history of humanity — the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the heart of this momentous occasion is the empty tomb, a powerful symbol of victory over sin and death which invites all the faithful to reflect on its significance and its impact on our lives.

As dawn broke on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other women made their way to the tomb of Jesus. In the stillness of the early morning, they carried spices prepared to anoint the body of their beloved teacher. Still grieving from the shock of His death, they arrived and were met with a sight both perplexing and wondrous. The stone which sealed the tomb had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John. The two disciples hurried to the tomb, found it empty, and left, unsure of what had happened. But Mary remained, weeping outside the tomb. It is in this moment of grief and confusion that Jesus, speaking to Mary, asks the crucial question: "Whom do you seek?" (John 20:15).

On the surface, the question seems simple enough. Mary was seeking the body of Jesus. But on a deeper level, the question speaks to every person searching for meaning, hope, and truth in a world that often feels dark and uncertain. It is a question that transcends time and circumstance, a question that beckons each of us to confront our own hearts and consider what, or who, we are truly seeking.



How do we keep the joy of the Resurrection?

The Feast of Pascha, the glorious Resurrection of Christ, is the pinnacle of the Orthodox Christian calendar and life. We celebrate it with triumphant hymns, processions and feasting, proclaiming, «Χριστός Ανέστη!» - "Christ is Risen!" for forty days after Pascha until the Ascension of Christ into the Heavens.

Unfortunately, as the days pass, the initial joy of the Resurrection may fade in our lives, and we find ourselves returning once again to the struggles, difficulties and burdens of everyday life.

How then do we keep the joy of the Resurrection alive in our hearts throughout the year? For us as Orthodox Christians, the Resurrection of Christ is not simply a historical event; it is an ever-present and ongoing reality. Every Sunday, the Church gathers to celebrate Divine Liturgy, the 'Little Pascha,' reminding us that we live in the light of Christ's victory over death. We are no longer slaves to sin and death, but redeemed and invited into eternal life (Romans 6:22). Keeping the joy of the Resurrection means carrying the awareness of Christ's victory with us daily.

Our connection to the joy of the Resurrection is strengthened through prayer and participation in the life of the Church, in particular the Sacraments. The Divine Liturgy immerses us in the presence of the Risen Christ, and through the Eucharist, we receive His Body and Blood. Personal prayer, whether through the Jesus Prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner'), the Psalms, or other prayers written by Saints, keeps our hearts focused on Christ. The more we commune with Christ, the more His joy fills us.

Reading the Scriptures is also key to keeping this joy. The Gospels recount the numerous encounters of the risen Christ with His disciples. St Paul exhorts us to live as those who have been raised with Christ (Colossians 3:1). By regularly reading Scripture, we keep the truth of the Resurrection in our minds and hearts, allowing it to transform us and to heal us.

Gratitude also opens our hearts to the joy of Christ. When we acknowledge God's mercy and love in our lives, we naturally experience joy. Even

in the most difficult circumstances and trials, we can rejoice in the knowledge that Christ has conquered death and sin. As St Paul writes, nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38). Purposefully pausing to thank God throughout the day helps us cultivate this joy.

Ultimately, Christ's Resurrection calls us to love and serve others, sharing the joy we have received.

Deliberate acts of kindness, forgiveness and generosity are vital to the new life we have in Christ. The more we give of ourselves in love, the more we experience the joy of the Resurrection.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the joy of the Resurrection is not meant to be fleeting, but a lasting reality. By living in the light of Christ's Resurrection, staying grounded in prayer and communion, Scripture reading, gratitude, and acts of love, we keep this joy alive in ourselves. Let us then carry Christ's light and joy into the world each day.

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!





On the Friday evening of Holy Week, in front of the Holy Tomb of Christ, we chant the triumphant Lamentations, exclaiming the "Life in the Tomb" (Η Ζωή εν τάφω).

This eager expectation is followed later by a reading from the Prophet Ezekiel, commonly referred to as the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones:

Again the hand of the Lord came upon me, and brought me by the Spirit of the Lord, and set me in the midst of the plain, which was full of human bones.

Here we are faced with a stark and confronting vision. We imagine a valley filled with bones. As if a site of a great battle, where the many casualties were left to decay into the Earth.

The Lord challenged Ezekiel with the question "Can these bones live?" The natural response would be 'certainly not! For how can dry bones, decayed and desolate, once again live?'

The image of dry bones represents more than just skeletons of those who are long dead. It represents

loneliness, hopelessness, anguish. We may even say that we see 'dry bones' everywhere – even within ourselves – where we live absent from the spirit of God. Later in the reading we hear the lament:

Our bones are dry, our hope has perished, and we are lost.

This is the consequence of sin and living a life away from God. Such a life is 'dry' - brittle and thirsting. As we read in Psalm 142 "My soul thirsts for you like a parched land."

Yet God does not abandon his people. God instructs Ezekiel to speak to these bones, to send them the word of the Lord. Remarkably, on hearing this word, the bones connected and were covered again in flesh and muscle. But they were not yet alive, until again Ezekiel sought the Lord in another prophecy:

Thus says the Lord: "Come from the four winds and breathe upon these dead men; and let them live."

Now, filled with the Spirit of the Lord, these bones are truly alive. Life itself is a gift received from God, through His Spirit. We also see the life-giving impact of

speaking the word of the Lord to others. God asks us to speak of His word in the same way as his prophet. It is only through hearing God's Word that these same desolate bones can once again be given life.

At the end of the reading, God instructs Ezekiel to make another prophesy:

'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will open your tombs, bring you up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your tombs to lead you, My people, up from their graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live; and I will place you in your own land.'

This is a direct reference to Christ's Resurrection, and an example of God's Providence. Through Christ's Resurrection we are granted the hope of our own resurrection – first from the passions (which is a type of death or separation from God), but also our physical death.

We live in the age of the Resurrection, and we rejoice in God's providence. In some ways, we see so many examples of a world filled with 'dried bones' – divisions, wars, hunger, environmental catastrophe, political and social division and unrest.

And yet the Resurrected Christ transforms these bones into living bodies, granting them His Spirit and life. Let us participate in our own resurrection, grateful to God for His mercy and always seeking life in Him.

ΛΟΓΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΜΦΙΛΟΧΙΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΙΚΟΝΙΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΝ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ

Εύχαριστήσωμεν καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν καὶ προσενέγκωμεν αὐτῷ τὰ μῦρα καὶ τοὺς ὕμνους ὡς δῶρα μετὰ φόβου καὶ εὐλαβείας καὶ ταπεινώσεως· φιλόανθρωπος γάρ ἐστι καὶ συμπαθὴς ὁ δεσπότης, καὶ πάντα προσδέχεται εἰ καὶ μικρά· εἰσι καὶ εὐτελεῖ τὰ παρ' ἡμῶν αὐτῷ προσαγόμενα. Ἀγαπήσωμεν, ἀδελφοί μου, τὸν ἀγαπήσαντα κύριον κατὰ χάριν ἡμᾶς, ἀποθάνωμεν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν δωρεάν, πορευθῶμεν ὀπίσω τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ ἐντολῶν, «καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος», προσάξωμεν τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν πράξεις ἀγαθὰς, πίστιν, ἀγάπην, ἐλπίδα, ὑπομονήν, συντριμμὸν καρδίας, κατανύξεως δάκρυα, συνειδήσεως κάθαρσιν, νέκρωσιν πάσης ἁμαρτίας καὶ ἐπιθυμίας κακῆς· δουλεύσωμεν τῷ κυρίῳ μετὰ συνέσεως καὶ καρτερίας καὶ ἐπιμονῆς, ἐνστερνισώμεθα τὸ φίλτρον τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, ᾧ σωμεν αὐτῷ ᾄσμα καινόν, πάντες ᾧ σωμεν, κροτήσωμεν ψαλμικῶς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἀλαλάξωμεν τῷ θεῷ ἐν φωνῇ ἀγαλλιάσεως ὅτι «κύριος ὕψιστος φοβερὸς βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν». «Μέγας κύριος καὶ τῆς μεγαλοσύνης αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστι πέρας», μέγας κύριος καὶ μεγάλη ἡ ἰσχὺς αὐτοῦ· κατήγγησε γὰρ καὶ ἐπάταξε τὸν ἐχθρὸν καὶ διάβολον, καὶ τὸν θάνατον κατεπάτησε, καὶ πάντας ἀνέστησε ζωὴν αἰώνιον δωρησάμενος. Εἰσέλθωμεν χαίροντες εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, ὡς δοῦλοι εὐγνώμονες ἀπολαύσωμεν πάντες τῶν ἀγαθῶν χαρισμάτων ταύτης τῆς καλῆς πανηγύρεως, ἄρχοντες καὶ ἀρχόμενοι, δοῦλοι καὶ ἐλεύθεροι, ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες, πρεσβύτεροι καὶ νεώτεροι. Δοξάσατε κύριον τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν, καὶ τὴν λαμπρὰν ταύτην ἡμέραν ὑμνήσατε καὶ μεγαλύνετε καὶ θαυμάσατε, νηστεύοντες καὶ μὴ νηστεύοντες εὐφράνθητε σήμερον, ἐγκρατεῖς καὶ ράθυμοι τὴν ἡμέραν τιμήσατε, πλούσιοι καὶ πένητες μετ' ἀλλήλων χορεύσατε. Ἡ τράπεζα γέμει, τρυφήσατε πάντες· ἡ τράπεζα γέμει, μηδεὶς ἐξέλθῃ πεινῶν καὶ στερούμενος·

πάντες ἀπολαύσατε τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος, ὅτι «τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός», πάντες ἀντλήσατε ἐκ τῆς ἀκενώτου πηγῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος θεοῦ καὶ εὐφράνθητε· «γεύσασθε καὶ ἴδετε ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος» θεὸς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὃς καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἡμῖν.

Μηδεὶς θρηνεῖτω τὰ πταίσματα, συγγνώμη γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ τάφου ἀνέτειλε· μηδεὶς φοβείσθω τὸν θάνατον, ἡλευθέρωσε γὰρ ἡμᾶς ὁ τοῦ σωτῆρος θάνατος· ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ Ἰαίδου ἐρρύ- σατο· ἐξήρπασεν ἐκ τῆς καταδυναστείας τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ τῆς δουλείας αὐτοῦ ἡλευθέρωσεν.

Ἐπικράνθη ὁ Ἰαίδης γευσάμενος τῆς τιμίας καὶ ἁγίας σαρκὸς τοῦ δεσπότη, καθὼς Ἡσαΐας προ- ανεφώνησεν «ὁ Ἰαίδης» λέγων «ἐπικράνθη συναντήσας σοι κάτω». Ἐπικράνθη ἐπειδὴ κατηγγήθη· ἐπικράνθη ἐπειδὴ ἐνεπαίχθη· ἐπικράνθη· καὶ γὰρ ἐδεσμεύθη· ἔλαβε σῶμα καὶ θεῷ περιέτυχεν, ἔλαβεν ὅπερ ἔβλεπε καὶ πέπτωκεν ὅθεν οὐκ ἔβλεπε. Κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ἀγνοῶν, καταπιὼν δὲ ἔγνω ὃν κατέπιε· κατέπιε ζωὴν, κατεπόθη δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς· κατέπιε τὸν ἕνα μετὰ πάντων, ἀπώλεσε δὲ διὰ τὸν ἕνα τοὺς πάντας· «ἥρπασεν ὡς λέων», συνεθλάσθη δὲ τοὺς ὀδόντας. Διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος ἴσχυεν, ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ δὲ ἁμαρτίαν μὴ εὐρὼν ἀνενέργητος ἔμεινε.

«Ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;
ποῦ σου, Ἰαίδη, τὸ νῆκος;»

Ἀνέστη Χριστὸς καὶ σὺ καταβέβλησαι· ἀνέστη Χριστὸς καὶ χαίρουσιν ἄγγελοι καὶ πεπτῶκασιν δαίμονες· ἀνέστη Χριστὸς καὶ φθορᾶς ἐλυτρώθημεν καὶ κατάρας ἐρρύσθημεν· ἀνέστη Χριστὸς καὶ ἡμεῖς συνανέστημεν καὶ ζωῆς ἤξιώθημεν. «Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστὰς ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἐγένετο»· αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.



ORATION OF ST AMPHILOCHIOS BISHOP OF ICONIUM ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Let us give thanks, and let us worship, and let us offer to Him the myrrh and hymns as gifts with fear, reverence, and humility. For the Master is compassionate and merciful, and He accepts everything from us, even if they are small and humble offerings.

Let us love, my brothers, the Lord who has loved us by grace; let us die for the One who died for us freely. Let us follow His holy commandments: "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," let us offer to our God good deeds, faith, love, hope, patience, contrition of heart, tears of compunction, a purified conscience, and the mortification of all sin and evil desire.

Let us serve the Lord with understanding, perseverance, and steadfastness. Let us embrace the love of our true God and Savior. Let us sing to Him a "new song"; let us all sing, let us "clap our hands" as the psalm says, and let us "shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the Lord Most High is awesome, great, King over all the earth." "Great is the Lord, And His greatness has no end."

Great is the Lord, "and mighty is His power," for He abolished and defeated the enemy, the devil, and He trampled down death, and He raised all, granting eternal life. Let us enter joyfully into the joy of our Lord. As grateful servants, let us all partake of the good gifts of this blessed celebration—rulers and subjects, servants and free, men and women, elders and youth.

Glorify the Lord our God, sing hymns, magnify, and marvel at this radiant day. Whether fasting or not, rejoice today, whether disciplined or lax, honour the day, rich and poor, join together in dance. The table is full—feast, all of you! The table is full—let no one go away hungry

or deprived! Everyone, partake of the riches of His goodness, for "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Draw from the inexhaustible spring of the Saviour God and rejoice! "Taste and see that the Lord is good," God, Jesus Christ, who has appeared to us.

Let no one mourn their sins, for forgiveness has risen from the tomb. Let no one fear death, for the death of the Savior has set us free. He saved us and delivered us from Hades. He snatched us from the tyranny of the devil and freed us from his bondage.

Hades was embittered when it tasted the precious and holy flesh of the Master, as Isaiah had foretold: "Hades was embittered when it encountered You below." It was embittered because it was abolished; it was embittered because it was tricked; it was embittered; and so was it bound. It took a body and stumbled upon a God; it took what it saw and fell because of what it could not see. Death swallowed Him ignorantly, but in swallowing Him, it recognized whom it had consumed. Death swallowed life and was in turn consumed by life. It swallowed up One more after all the rest, and lost all those through that very One. It seized Him like a lion but had its teeth shattered. Death had power through sin, but in Christ, finding no sin, it became powerless.

"O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" Christ rose, and you are overthrown. Christ rose and the angels rejoice, and the demons are cast down. Christ rose, and we have been freed from corruption and delivered from the curse. Christ is rose, and we have risen with Him and have been made worthy of life. "Christ, having risen from the dead, has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep." To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.



W O K E

All would be familiar with the social movement known as 'woke' or the 'woke agenda'. Broadly speaking, it refers to a social 'consciousness', alerting people to prejudice and discrimination.

It has its roots in the civil rights movements and the increasing black political consciousness of the early twentieth century. Among the earliest uses of the term is from Jamaican philosopher and social activist Marcus Garvey who wrote in 1923, "Wake up Ethiopia! Wake up Africa!"

Over the subsequent decades, the term took on its more common meaning as being "well informed" or "aware". From the 2010s, it became a much larger political concept. According to The Economist, as the term woke and the #Staywoke hashtag began to spread online, the term "began to signify a progressive outlook on a host of issues as well as on race".

As the use of the word spread internationally, it was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2017, given the definition "aware of social and political issues and concerned that some groups in society are treated less fairly than others".

Over time, it can be said that "woke" became a much broader and more insidious ideology. Under the pretence of 'woke', we witness the continual marginalisation of traditional values and ethos in public discourse. The university campus, long the bastion of free speech and intellectual rigour and debate, is now banning speech and cancelling presentations from those who are not ideologically aligned. As an example, we see the dismissal of classic texts like Homer and the need to 'reimagine' history.

Like most social theory unmoored by faith in God, in wokeism we see a movement that does not seek the

Truth, but instead creates truths that distort identities – national, religious and personal. The intent is not about building a world with principles, but a world filled with the triumph of the rights of the individual only!

In more recent years, we can see a more pronounced backlash against these principles and ideologies.

As with all political and social ideologies, the Christian should exercise caution and much care. Despite its roots in social justice and the supposed 'care' for the other, there are many elements of this ideology that are dangerous to the practicing Christian. These include, but are not limited to:

- The division of humanity through self-determined, proliferating and transient identities of the individual, which St Paul guards us against (Gal 3:28)
- Its aggressive, unforgiving nature is against the order of true Christianity
- Its performative nature, known commonly as 'virtue signalling'. True love for your neighbour is not found in grandiose statements or protest movements, but in actions and works, like we see in the parable of the Good Samaritan
- The dismantling of the roles of men and women (gender theory) which is contrary to the teachings of the Church
- Support of sexual freedom without attention to biological, emotional, and ultimately spiritual consequences.

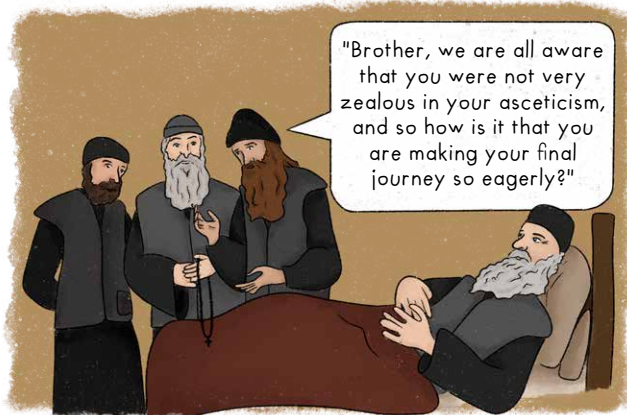
The effect of 'woke' beliefs and actions is a suffocating loss of hope in other people, and in God's goodness, manifest in His Creation. Let us strive to repel these effects, by becoming beacons of Christ's light and live the joy of a true Christian life.



TWO STORIES ABOUT JUDGING OTHERS

FROM THE
DESERT

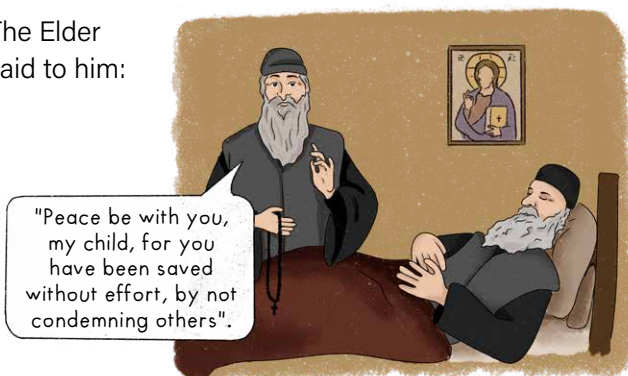
Near a certain Elder there dwelt a negligent brother who had lived in asceticism for only a short time. When he was about to die, some of the brothers came to sit beside him in order to comfort him, while the Elder, seeing him departing from the body cheerfully and joyfully, and wishing to edify the brothers who were present, said to him:



The brother replied: *"Believe me, Father, what you say is true. Nevertheless, since I became a monk, I am not conscious of having judged or harboured a grudge against anyone. And if I ever did have a disagreement with anyone, I immediately reconciled with him..."*



The Elder said to him:

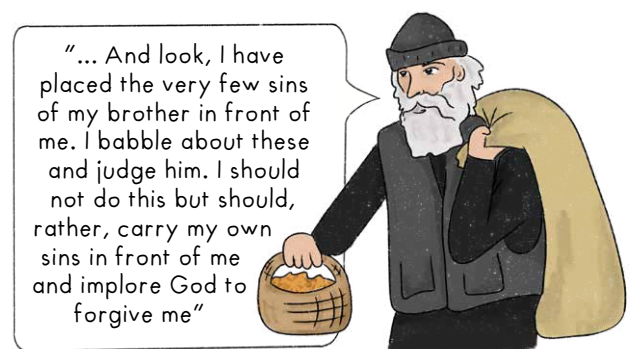


There once took place a meeting in Sketis concerning a brother who had sinned; the Fathers spoke and gave their opinion, while Abba Pior remained silent.



Later on, he got up and went out. He took a sack, filled it with sand, and carried it on his shoulder behind him; he also took a small basket, put a little sand in it, and carried it in front of him.

He thusly entered the place where they were meeting. When asked by the Fathers what these items meant, he said: *"This sack, which contains a large amount of sand, is my sins, which are many, even innumerable; I have put these behind me, so as not to see them, labour to get rid of them, or weep over them..."*



The Fathers stood up and said:





ST MATRONA



St Matrona of Moscow (†1952), celebrated on the 2nd of May, is a contemporary saint of the Orthodox Church, whose life was a continuous miracle. Remaining grateful to God amongst many personal sorrows and in dark times of persecution, her inspiring story is a witness to the power of grace.

St Matrona was born in Russia in 1881 to extremely poor parents. She was blind from birth, having no eyes - only empty sockets behind the eyelids. As a child the saint was teased by the other children in her village, who would strike her with stinging nettles. On one occasion they cruelly placed Matrona into a pit, so they could watch her try to crawl out and find her way home.

Faced with these injustices, St Matrona became withdrawn from childhood, preferring to stay at home. She spent her time in prayer with God and His Mother, receiving from them the strength to endure her difficulties.

She would say, "There is a spiritual reason as to why I am blind. I do not know it, but God does, and I accept His will. I will not fight against His will. I know that He loves me and will always provide whatever I need".

By her virtue and constant prayer, she received from God the gifts of spiritual vision and healing from the age of 7. Her gifts soon became widely known, and ailing people from all over the region would come to her family home to receive healing through her prayers. She

OF MOSCOW



was also able to provide spiritual guidance and consolation, and in this way touch their souls.

At the age of 17, St Matrona became paralysed in her legs. Without vision or the use of her legs, she lived for the rest of her life sitting cross-legged on her bed, surrounded by icons. In the daytime she would receive visitors joyfully, consoling them and providing guidance with her soft voice, while at night she would pray.

“Come close, all of you, and tell me of your troubles as though I were alive! I’ll see you, I’ll hear you, and I’ll come to your aid.”



St Matrona was 36 when the October Revolution of 1917 occurred, bringing Russia under communist rule. The Church entered a period of extreme persecution, with millions dying for their faith. St Matrona, who had predicted the revolution, would continue to support her countrymen in these difficult years, bringing them consolation through her prayer and sanctity. Despite her ability to see into their souls, St Matrona would never judge anyone, saying that the sins of others do not lessen our own.

When asked why God had allowed her to suffer so much she would

reply, “Why do these things happen to me? Maybe so that others around me can be helped. If they see others who are suffering more and are not complaining but rather praising God, they will realise that they should be thankful for what God has given them.”

In 1925, at the age of 44, her mother died and her brothers had by this time turned to communism. It was no longer safe for St Matrona to remain in the village, and so she moved to Moscow.

In the city, the saint was in danger of the communist authorities who sought to arrest her and thereby suppress her influence on the people. The Lord, in His providence, granted St Matrona the foresight to know in advance when the authorities would be coming for her. She would thus be moved quickly from place to place, welcomed secretly into the homes of faithful Christians.

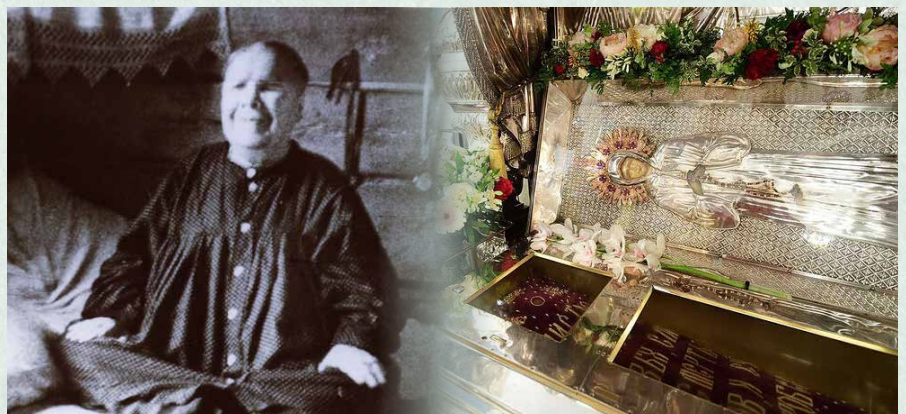
When asked if she felt afraid, she replied “If it is God’s will that I die today then there is nowhere you can take me to be safe. If it is His will that I live, He will provide for me.”

At the end of her life, in 1952, St Matrona was mystically informed that she would repose in three days’ time. She gave instructions that only fresh flowers be brought to her grave, and that she be buried in the courtyard of her church so she could still hear the services after her death.

Before falling asleep, she cried out, “Come close, all of you, and tell me of your troubles as though I were alive! I’ll see you, I’ll hear you, and I’ll come to your aid.”

St Matrona’s story reminds us that each person is called to a life of holiness. She was not a monastic or preacher, nor a scholar who left us with books and writings. To the world, she was a tragic peasant woman, blind and paralysed. In her weakness, however, God’s strength was made perfect, and St Matrona became a fountain of grace and healing for innumerable people during her life and thereafter.

May St Matrona, an icon of humility and love, intercede for all of us.



The Church in the Home

In this new series "The Church in the Home", we examine practical ways that we can encourage spiritual cultivation and growth in our homes and with our families.

Do you have a question on parenting or family life? Send your question to editor@lychnos.org



At the heart of Orthodox life at home is our own experience of God, our own relationship with God.

If we would like our home life to be God centred and God filled, we first begin with our own relationship with God. Our faith in God needs to be cultivated and needs to grow, otherwise both us and the children will quickly tire of the spiritual life and we risk becoming 'mechanical', acting out our religious duties without a deep understanding. We see this image in the parable of the sower, where the seed falls on the hard ground and fails to take root. We risk the same happening with our efforts at home if we don't seek and cultivate a genuine relationship with God.

In this way, our children and members of our family will have an example of what it really takes to live life seeking God, and this will give them strength later when they are challenged themselves.

Our homes are places where our families find a sanctuary from the world we live in. It is a place where we are nurtured and where we nurture.

St Paul says to parents regarding children: "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4). On the one hand St Paul uses the word 'nurture', which evokes comfort and love. On the other hand, he uses the word 'admonition', which suggests firmness and discipline. Paul is emphasising that the home is both a place of rest, and also of spiritual struggle.

In a similar way, St John Chrysostom describes our home as "a tournament and an arena of virtue." In other words, our training as Christian athletes begins in the home, or in fact the Church in our home. This prepares us to live in this world, to know how to behave and respond as Christians in all aspects of our life – be it studies, or work, or engagement with our communities.

The training that occurs in the 'arena' of our home should emphasise self-sacrifice, humility, patience, forgiveness, obedience, charity and love.

We see opportunities to exercise all the virtues in our home life. However, we often see that it is more difficult to be virtuous within one's own family, our familiarity is often a barrier to these virtues. Hence, we remember the words of St Paul and St John Chrysostom and remain vigilant and careful in our home environment.

If we would like our home life to be God centred and God filled, we first begin with our own relationship with God. Our faith in God needs to be cultivated and needs to grow.



THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE KING of GLORY

*The Amazing History and
Sublime Mystery of the*
PASSION

Eugenia Scarvelis
Constantinou, PhD

Jesus' final week on Earth.

It is a tale which begins with tragedy. The death of Lazarus on Lazarus Saturday. Then exaltation on Palm Sunday, betrayal on Holy Wednesday, intense grief and pain at the Crucifixion on Holy Friday. Finally, a wonder to surpass all wonders: the Resurrection on Pascha.

What week touches, opens and fills our hearts like Holy Week?

The book *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory* helps us relive the intense experiences of Holy Week and walk in Christ's footsteps, treading the dust of ancient Jerusalem behind Him. It is for anyone who has ever read the story of Christ's Crucifixion and wondered: what really happened?

Dr Jeannie Constantinou is a Professor of Theology and lectures in Biblical Studies. She combines her knowledge of history, theology, law and the Bible to bring the events leading to Christ's Resurrection to life.

However, this is not a dry academic or theological tome. It is vivid, filled with stories and pathos, intensely focused on Christ's life and suffering.

It is also deeply Orthodox, understanding that every grief of Christ's led to the greatest glory of all: His Holy Resurrection.

Dr Constantinou does not rush over any part of the Lord's trials. She unfolds each element carefully in its historical Jewish and its spiritual Orthodox context, addressing doubts that atheists and modern historians have, and providing proof for every seemingly fantastical element of Christ's final week.

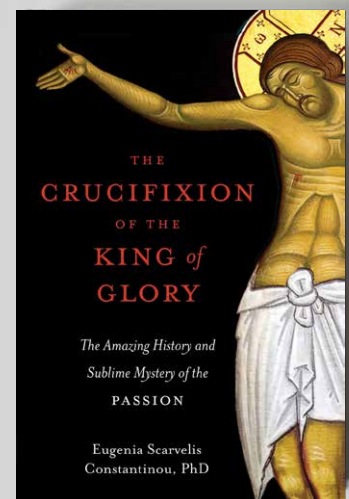
As an example, she says that the "great darkness" and "earthquake" recorded in the Bible have been understood by many readers to be mythological elements added to the story of Christ.

Yet, when Dr Constantinou examined the historical evidence of writers from other countries at the time of Christ's Crucifixion, it became very clear that the

darkness and earthquake were a real phenomenon with multiple witnesses - not just stories from a group of faithful Jews in Jerusalem.

This book is for those who have ever wondered:

- *Why the crowd welcomed Christ with open arms on Palm Sunday, then shouted "Crucify Him!" a few days later?*
- *Why Christ cried "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" on the cross?*
- *How Christ fulfilled all the prophecies of the Messiah?*
- *Why the Gospel writers differ in their accounts of the Crucifixion?*



Dr Constantinou invites us to walk together with Christ in this gripping book. Having lived through His Glorious Resurrection, this book is the perfect companion to help us understand the amazing events of Holy Week.

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St Athanasios Hamakiotis



St Athanasios Hamakiotis was born George Hamakiotis in 1891 in the mountain village of Turlada, near Kalavryta in Greece. From a young age, he exhibited a deep love for God, praying constantly. At 15, he embraced monasticism at the Holy Lavra Monastery near Kalavryta, a historic monastery. After finishing seminary studies, he was tonsured a monk in October 1913, taking the name Athanasios.

St Athanasios was ordained a priest in 1921, and in 1931 had to move to Athens to serve as a priest for health reasons. In 1936, he became the parish priest of the Panagia Neratziotissa Church in Maroussi, where his pastoral work made the church renowned throughout Athens and the region.

His services were marked by their profound beauty. A Metropolitan, who experienced the Divine Liturgy

with St Athanasios, said: "Such was his piety and devotion to the Divine Liturgy, that even if snakes bit him, he would not notice". During the preparation of Holy Communion, he insisted on being left alone, sending all the altar boys out of the sanctuary. With tears streaming down his face, he would cry, "Forgive me, forgive me," a truly compunctious plea that accompanied every Divine Liturgy he served.

It is difficult to summarise the life of a Saint but there is a particular story that speaks to his deep love and charity. Near his church lived an old woman who suffered from paralysis and had no one to take care of her. Surprisingly, however, those who visited her saw that her house was clean and well-kept, and her clothes were washed and ironed. Puzzled by this, they asked the paralysed woman how this could be, but she remained silent.

Curiosity led some to investigate. They soon discovered that the one tending to her needs was none other than St. Athanasios himself. Under the cover of night, he would take his staff and quietly make his way to her home. There, he swept, cleaned, tidied, and cooked for her. When finished, he would return to his cell, taking her unwashed clothes with him. He washed and ironed them, returning them the next day—never seeking recognition for his humble service.

The Saint had given strict orders to the paralysed woman not to tell

anyone. When his spiritual children eventually discovered the truth, St Athanasios was deeply saddened and strictly forbade them from speaking of it until after his death.

In the last four years of his life, he resided in the Panagia Faneromeni Monastery in Rodopolis, Attica, which he founded. It was also there that he was buried after his repose on 17 August 1967. However, even in death, St Athanasios continued to be for the faithful a wellspring of comfort and miracles. When his relics were translated in 2014, a sweet fragrance emanated from them – a miracle that can still be experienced by those who venerate his body today.



The Ecumenical Patriarchate officially canonised St Athanasios on November 16, 2023, designating August 17 as his feast day, commemorating his repose, and October 23 for the translation of his holy relics.

Αυτές που αγάπησαν πάρα πολύ τον Χριστό



Οι Μυροφόρες γυναίκες είναι οι πρώτες που συναντούν τον Κύριο. Είναι οι πρώτοι μάρτυρες της Αναστάσεώς Του. Δεν ήταν τυχαίο αυτό. Προηγούνται γιατί αγάπησαν πολύ τον Χριστό. Ήταν έτοιμες να Τον δουν γιατί τον αγάπησαν αληθινά, σταυρικά, θυσιαστικά. Θέλησαν να Τον συναντήσουν μέσα από την καρδιά τους και έτσι, πρωί πρωί, ξεκίνησαν να πάνε στον τάφο Του.

Η αγάπη τους τις βοηθά να ξεπεράσουν τον φόβο, τον κίνδυνο και τη δυσκολία. Γίνονται ανδρείες και αψηφούν τον φόβο των Ιουδαίων, που είχε κάνει τους άνδρες μαθητές να κλειστούν στο σπίτι. Οι Μυροφόρες ξεπερνούν το αδιέξοδο του τάφου. Η αγάπη τους τις βοηθά να ξεπεράσουν τη δυσκολία, και η αγάπη γίνεται πίστη.

Μας διδάσκουν οι Μυροφόρες γυναίκες για μια γενναία αγάπη, αφοσίωση και πίστη. Δεν είχαν ακολουθήσει τον Κύριο για ένα βόλεμα ή για μια ασφάλεια. Για αυτές, ο Κύριος Ιησούς Χριστός παρέμεινε μια ζωντανή πραγματικότητα, και έτσι δεν έχασαν τη διάθεση αγάπης που είχαν για την αλήθεια, για τη ζωή. Συνέχισαν να αναζητούν τον Θεό, και μέσα τους υπήρχε η διάθεση να επιμένουν στην προσευχή και στην

αναζήτηση του Θεού, έστω και αν ο Χριστός ήταν νεκρός.

Η καρδιά τους δεν λύγισε από την απελπισία. Δεν παραδόθηκαν στην απογοήτευση που γεννά την άρνηση, αλλά έμειναν σταθερές στην πίστη τους. Έτσι στην προσωπική σχέση τους με τον Θεό έδειξαν την ανδρεία που δίνει τη δυνατότητα στον άνθρωπο να επιμένει να Τον ζητά, γιατί είχαν μέσα τους το κριτήριο της αγάπης. Η αγάπη υποκινεί τον άνθρωπο στη διάθεση να υπερβεί τις δυσκολίες και τον φόβο.

Είχαν, επίσης, μια τέτοια πίστη, που τους έδωσε ευκαιρία για μια αληθινή προσωπική σχέση με τον Θεό. Ζούσαν για τον Θεό και για τον πλησίον. Όλες οι ενέργειές τους είχαν προβολή στο αιώνιο. Αγώνιζαν για τον Παράδεισο και έτσι οι ενέργειές τους είχε αιώνια αξία. Σε αντίθεση με τη νοοτροπία του σύγχρονου ανθρώπου που πάντα ενεργεί με σκοπιμότητα: 'Μου φέρθηκε καλά και χαίρομαι γι' αυτό. Δεν μου φέρθηκε καλά, άρα θα τον αποφεύγω.' Τέτοια σχέση βασίζεται στον φόβο.

Ο φόβος εγκλωβίζει τον άνθρωπο που είναι δεμένος στα εφήμερα και στα προσωρινά. Ο φόβος παραλύει τον άνθρωπο, οδηγεί σε ακηδία, και τον κάνει να βαριέται τη ζωή

και να μη χαίρεται. Ο φόβος δεν τον αφήνει να βρει τον καλό εαυτό του. Ο Θεός θέλει να βρούμε μέσα μας το καλό που έχουμε. Να καταλάβουμε ότι έχουμε ανάγκη από ταπεινώση, υπομονή, άσκηση, εγκράτεια και προσευχή.

Να συνειδητοποιήσουμε ότι έχουμε τεράστιες δυνατότητες μέσα μας, αλλά χρειάζονται να κινητοποιηθούν. Και αυτό θα γίνει όταν αφήσουμε τον καλό εαυτό μας ελεύθερο. Να μην είμαστε πια εγκλωβισμένοι στα εφήμερα και στα προσωρινά, όπου όλες οι συσκέψεις εκεί εξαντλούνται. Τέτοιες ενέργειες είναι φθαρτές, και εκεί η αγάπη είναι ψεύτικη.

Μπορεί ο εγκλωβισμένος άνθρωπος να γευτεί στιγμές ευχαρίστησης και ενθουσιασμού, αλλά χωρίς να έχει βάθος η αγάπη του, δεν θα μπορέσει να υπομένει την αδικία, ούτε θα μπορεί να μεταποιήσει την αδικία σε ευλογία. Όποιος ζει εγκλωβισμένος στον φόβο, δεν θα γευτεί ποτέ την πραγματική χαρά. Μόνο εκείνος που εμπιστεύεται τον Χριστό και βλέπει πέρα από τα εφήμερα μπορεί να βιώσει την αληθινή ελευθερία και το φως της Αναστάσεως.¹

¹Π. Βαρνάβα Γιάγκου, *Αμαρτωλών Εκκλησία*, Αρχονταρίκι, 2016, σ.41-55

News & Events

March 25: The Annunciation of the Theotokos and Greek Independence Day celebrated with splendour at the Cathedral and in Sydney CBD

With due ecclesiastical splendour and in the presence of a large congregation, the Great Vespers for the feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos was celebrated on Monday, 24 March 2025, with His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, officiating, at the Cathedral of Sydney. Joining His Eminence Archbishop Makarios in co-officiating were His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Sevasteia, and Their Graces, Bishop Prodhomos of Toliara and Southern Madagascar, Bishop Elpidios of Perth, Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis and Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, Chief Secretary of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese of Australia. Participating in the Service were the Chancellor and Cathedral Dean, Archimandrite of the Ecumenical Throne Christophoros Krikelis, Hieromonk Fr. Antipas, Elder of the Iviron Cell of St. Anna in Karyes on Mount Athos, and a number of clergy from the city of Sydney.

His Eminence emphasised the obedience shown by the ever-virgin Mary to the will of God.



He pointed out that, unlike Eve, who through her disobedience drove the human race out of Paradise, the Virgin Mary, as the “new Eve,” reopened the doors of Paradise with her response: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.”

Archbishop Makarios highlighted the primary role played by the Orthodox faith in the uprising and liberation of the enslaved Greeks. Referring to the testimony of the Chief General of the National Revolution, Theodoros Kolokotronis himself, “we said first for faith and then for the country”, His Eminence urged everyone not to forget this historical truth, which formed the foundation for the subsequent course of the Greek nation. “When we forget this,” he emphasised, “we do not lose our faith – because faith will exist for ever and ever – but we lose our Greek identity. There can be no Greek identity without Orthodox faith. There can be no Hellenism without the Gospel. There can be no Greece without Christ. And if we try to separate Hellenism from faith in Christ in the name of modernism, progress and all that is said from time to time, then we will fail. The Church will exist, but our Nation, our country, our language, our traditions, our morals and customs will be lost.”

Source: Vema



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Phone: (02) 9787 9779
Email: editor@lychnos.org
Website: lychnos.org
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