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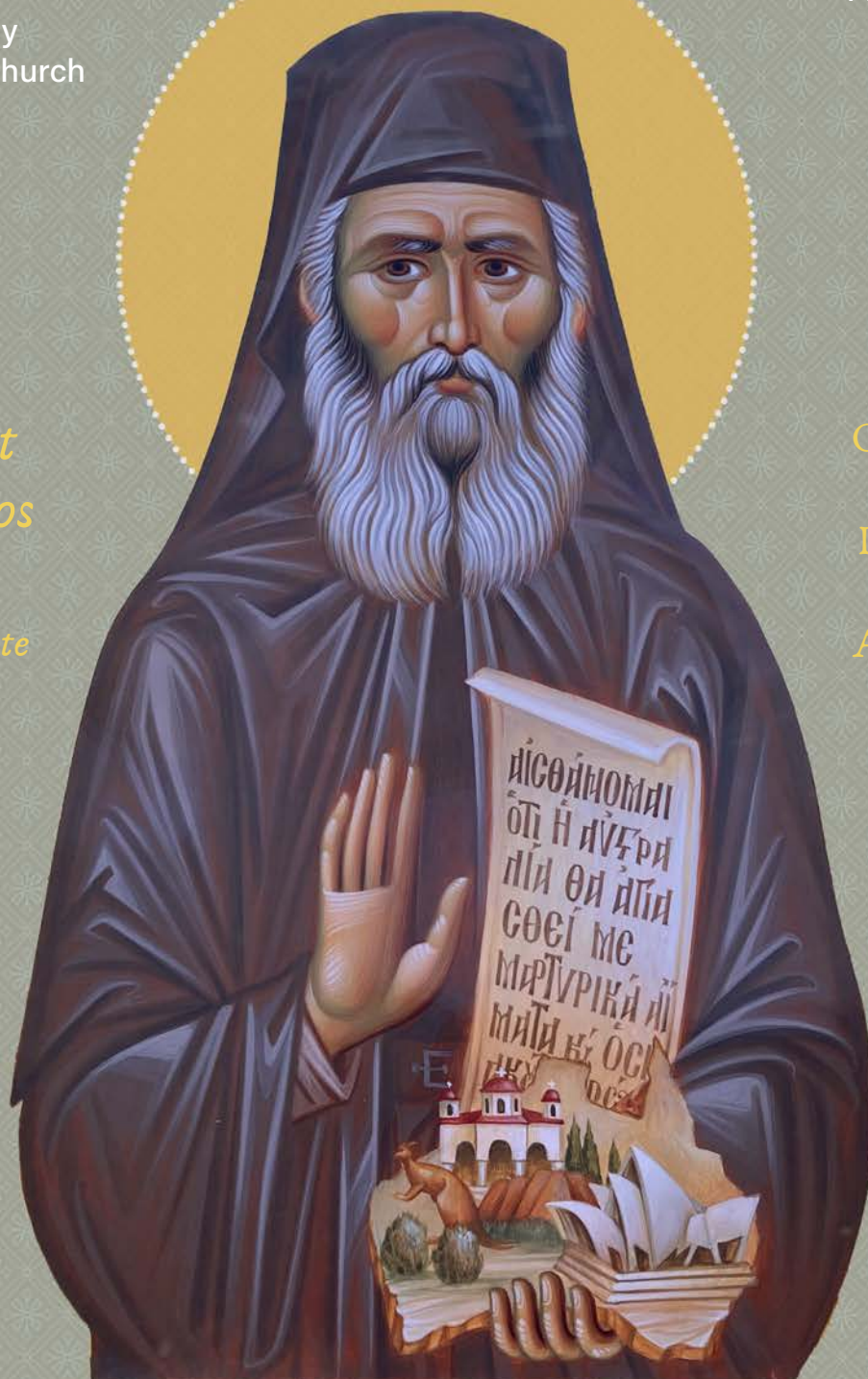
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*Saint
Paisios
the
Athonite*

*Guardian
and
Protector
of
Australia*



MEMORIES OF SAINT PAISIOS

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME

ΛΑΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



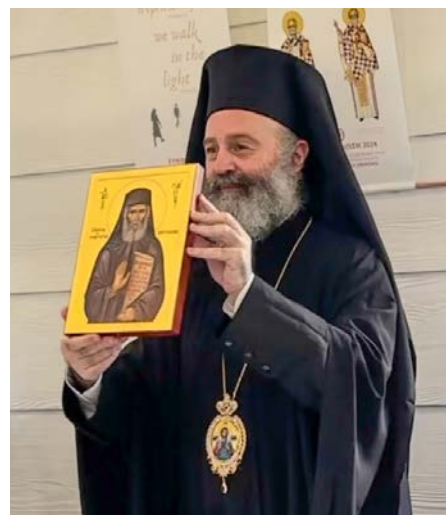
OUR SAINT, OUR STORIES:

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY of the canonisation of Saint Paisios the Athonite, our patron saint and protector of Australia. On this occasion, we have been given the great blessing to share, for the first time, the previously unpublished experiences of one of our own faithful of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia with Saint Paisios. We pray these recollections strengthen whoever reads them and brings them closer to our patron saint.



“I remember seeing the venerable monk Paisios, as a teenager, when I went to high school in Konitsa, around 1962. He had nothing special that distinguished him, except his modesty, which I deeply respected. Father Paisios had twice invited me and a friend to go with him for a vigil at the monastery of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, in Stomio. Very willing, I followed him along with my friend. As we walked along the road, at various points, he told us about the various miracles he had experienced. He told us that once his wooden Crucifix



His Eminence Archbishop Makarios at an Omatha boys retreat with an icon of St Paisios

had fallen down the river and had not fallen into the water but on a rock. How he came down to get the cross, and how he went up, he didn't know; the only thing he remembered was that he grabbed it when he came down and had it tightly embraced when he had climbed up the very steep slope. When we arrived at the monastery, he showed us the grave he had built some time ago for himself, because the Virgin Mary had told him to prepare his grave.



St Paisios in Australia, 1977

Many years later, when I was in Australia, in Sydney, in April 1977, I had heard that, with the blessing of Archbishop Stylianos, Abbot Vasileios of the Iviron Monastery had come from Mount Athos, together with a monk, Father Paisios. I wondered if it was the same Father Paisios whom I had met in my teenage years in Konitsa. When I met him, I knew it was him. He was just like when I remembered him, very invisible, humble – head bowed, modest, peaceful. He had come to Parramatta with the Abbot, Father Vasileios, who was confessing and speaking with the faithful. Father Paisios told Father Nikolaos Tsouloukidis, the parish priest at the time, that he wanted to meet all the people of Konitsa. And indeed, Father Nikolaos took him to

MEMORIES OF SAINT PAISIOS

PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME

with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32

all the people in the area. Father Paisios knew many of these people since he was a layman. Most of them had come to Australia between 1961 and 1972. He was still in Konitsa at the time when this great migration to Australia took place. He also understood the pain of being an exile - he was sad when he was forced to leave Stomio - he had so many common memories, especially with refugee families from lower Konitsa. Many of them were forced to emigrate for the second time from their homeland. But Australia was a long way away, and so this migration was unavoidably final - it would be hard for most to ever return to their beloved homeland.

When it was my turn to receive him, we sat for two and a half hours and spoke. While we were discussing various things, someone passed by outside. This person was a vagrant with long hair, torn clothes, barefoot.

As he passed by, Father Paisios said to me, *'Do you see him?'*

I was thinking to myself, what does Father Paisios want to tell me? He said to me, *'I am worse than him.'*

He was so humble and considered himself worse than everyone else. And then, when I offered to fix his teeth, as I'm a dentist and I saw that he had a lot of damaged teeth, he said to me, *'My child, I have many things to fix first before I fix my teeth.'*



Learning about St Paisios at Sunday School camp



St Paisios brought the relics of St Arsenios the Cappadocian to Australia

He said that the soul is what we should be more interested in than the body, but that too, we should not let it be destroyed.

After many years, we realised that we had been visited by a Saint. Whereas then, and before that, as a teenager in Konitsa, I felt something, but didn't understand his holiness. A lot has happened in my life. And in the most difficult moments, and in critical hours, I felt that his intercession and his prayer were by my side, and he never left us helpless. In 2019, when my wife and I visited his grave, our emotion was immense, not only for the many good things we felt and he had given us, but to see so many souls with so much reverence and heartache kneeling before his grave. And talking to him on their knees - of every age and race - others crippled, with crutches, strollers, others driven by their children, others seemingly healthy, others well. Pain and gratitude painted on their faces."



Ο ΚΑΡΠΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ

Ο Απόστολος Παύλος, στην επιστολή του προς τους Γαλάτες, μας παρουσιάζει τον «καρπό του Πνεύματος»:

**«Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ Πνεύματος
ἐστὶν ἀγάπη, χαρά, εἰρήνη,
μακροθυμία, χρηστότης,
ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις,
πραότης, ἐγκράτεια»**

(Γαλ. 5,22-23)

Δεν μιλάει για «καρπούς» – πληθυντικό – αλλά για καρπό στον ενικό. Αυτό δεν είναι τυχαίο: ο καρπός είναι ένας, ενιαίος και πολυδιάστατος. Είναι το αποτέλεσμα της ζωντανής σχέσης του ανθρώπου με το Άγιο Πνεύμα, που την ζει κάθε Χριστιανός μέσα από τα μυστήρια της Εκκλησίας μας καθώς και μέσα από την προσευχή και την μετάνοια.

Αυτός ο καρπός δεν είναι αποτέλεσμα ανθρώπινης προσπάθειας. Δεν είναι ηθικά επιτεύγματα ή συναισθηματικές καταστάσεις. Είναι η ζωή του Χριστού μέσα μας. Καρποφορούμε δια του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος γράφει: «Ὅπου Πνεῦμα Ἅγιον, ἐκεῖ ἀλλοίωσις ψυχῆς, ἐκεῖ φῶς, ἐκεῖ καρποφορία» (Ομιλία στο Κατά Ιωάννην). Η παρουσία του Αγίου Πνεύματος μεταμορφώνει τον άνθρωπο από μέσα προς τα έξω – όχι μόνο στη συμπεριφορά, αλλά κυρίως στην ύπαρξη. Δεν είναι απλά μια εξωτερική αλλαγή αλλά μια εσωτερική αλλοίωση. Αυτή την επίδραση έχει το Άγιο Πνεύμα στη ζωή των ανθρώπων.

Η πρώτη όψη αυτού του καρπού είναι η αγάπη. Δεν είναι μια απλή συναισθηματική διάθεση, αλλά σταυρική αγάπη, θυσιαστική, όπως η αγάπη του Χριστού για τον κόσμο. Ο Άγιος Μάξιμος ο Ομολογητής λέει πως η αγάπη είναι η αληθινή εικόνα του Θεού στον άνθρωπο. Είναι η ρίζα όλων των άλλων καρπών.

Η χαρά του Αγίου Πνεύματος δεν εξαρτάται από εξωτερικές συνθήκες. Είναι χαρά βαθιά, που γεννιέται

από τη βεβαιότητα της παρουσίας του Θεού, ακόμα και μέσα στην ακαταστασία, τις ανησυχίες και τον πόνο. Η ειρήνη δεν είναι απλώς απουσία συγκρούσεων και πολέμων, αλλά εσωτερική ησυχία, η «ειρήνη του Θεού ή υπερέχουσα πάντα νοῦν» (Φιλιπ. 4,7).

Η μακροθυμία σημαίνει υπομονή με αγάπη και δείχνει πνευματική ωριμότητα. Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης της Κλίμακος γράφει: «Μακροθυμία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλίσσα τῶν ἀρετῶν». Η χρηστότητα και η αγαθωσύνη εκφράζουν την επιθυμία του ανθρώπου να γίνει με κάθε τρόπο χρήσιμος στον συνάνθρωπό του με μια γενναιοδωρία και καλωσύνη που πηγάζουν από μια καρδιά που μέσα της βασιλεύει ο Χριστός.

Η πίστη εδώ δεν είναι μια απλά δογματική πεποίθηση αλλά δηλώνει πιστότητα και εμπιστοσύνη στον Θεό, που εκδηλώνεται με σταθερότητα και αφοσίωση. Η πραότητα, όπως ο Κύριος λέει «μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτος εἰμι» (Ματθ. 11,29), είναι δύναμη ψυχής που εκφράζεται με αυτοκυριαρχία και εσωτερική ειρήνη. Και τέλος, η εγκράτεια είναι κυριαρχία επί των παθών, και το επιστέγασμα της πνευματικής ζωής.

Ο καρπός του Πνεύματος, τελικά, είναι η εικόνα του Χριστού μέσα μας. Δεν αποκτάται με καταναγκασμούς, πιέσεις, ή μόνο με εξωτερικούς κανόνες, αλλά με άνοιγμα στη χάρη του Θεού, με προσευχή, μυστηριακή ζωή και καλλιέργεια της σχέσης με τον Θεό. Είναι έργο ζωής, είναι πορεία, είναι, συν Θεώ, καρποφορία.

Ο καθένας μας καλείται να γίνει «καλή γῆ» (Ματθ. 13,23) για να δεχθεί τον σπόρο του Αγίου Πνεύματος και να φέρει καρπό «ἐν ὑπομονῇ». Στον κόσμο μας, όπου κυριαρχεί η ταραχή, ο ατομισμός και η πνευματική ξηρασία, η παρουσία ενός ανθρώπου που φέρει αυτόν τον καρπό είναι φῶς για τον κόσμο, παρηγοριά στον συνάνθρωπο και μαρτυρία Θεού.

Ας γίνουμε κι εμείς τέτοιοι φορείς του Πνεύματος, για να λάμψουμε «ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ» (Φιλιπ. 2,15).

Q & A

WITH Fr D. K.

How do I stay focused in Church and during prayer?

This is a very good question. If our prayer life improves, a lot of other aspects of our lives will also improve and be sanctified. An early step in growing in prayer and in getting more out of the worship of our Church is to be more attentive.

The late Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, in his introduction to the book "The Art of Prayer", talked about the three elements of man: body, mind, and spirit. Each have their own way of knowing: the body through the senses, the mind through intellectual reasoning, the spirit through a mystical perception that transcends man's ordinary rational processes. Similarly, there are three forms of prayer: oral (or bodily) prayer, prayer of the mind, and prayer of the heart. The first can occur when we recite the words of the prayer, but the mind is distracted with other thoughts – this is not prayer. The second category refers to mind being attentive to the words of the prayer – this is "sort of" prayer. The third and highest form of prayer has to do with feeling the words of the prayer, resonating with them, and to a higher state that is difficult to explain in words, an experience, a foretaste of the Kingdom, an experience of Grace!

The question has to do with a very common problem. We may be praying, or attending a Church Service, but become distracted, indeed we may even be thinking about something that seems like a good idea. St Paisios put it as follows: "The devil is cunning. During prayer he may bring you solutions to some problem. If the devil wanted what was good for you, he would bring these thoughts to you at other times, not while you are praying... Thus, as David says, "let his prayer be counted as sin." (Psalm 109 (108): 7).

How we can stay focused and attentive during prayer and during Church Services? This needs to be our

asceticism and our struggle. We need to be vigilant so when other thoughts come, we force them away. St John of Kronstadt put it as follows: "Labour, great and repeated effort, is needed to attain this end. 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force' (Matthew 11:12)... When praying, we must every moment force ourselves to pronounce each word with power, truly from the heart... We must say the words of the prayer in such a way that they persuade ourselves: if they are persuasive to us, they will also be persuasive to God; but without persuading yourself do not think to persuade God by your prayer... Think well before whom you stand, with whom you converse, be wholly in God, belong to him alone, pray with all your heart... He who prays in a hurry, without whole-hearted understanding and feeling, reviles God by his inattention and the indifference of his heart to prayer. 'God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,' (John 4:24) - not hypocritically".

A practical tip, that many, though not all, Orthodox Christians find helps during Church Services is following the service in a book or via the "Digital Chant Stand" app (<https://dcs.goarch.org/goa/dcs/dcs.html>).

Similarly, using an Orthodox Christian prayer book for morning and evening prayers and on other occasions is very good. Of course, it is also very special to as well pray without words, to be in stillness before God, aware of His presence, in gratitude, in repentance.

Other aides to prayer include Byzantine icons, a prayer rope and prostrations. St Paisios said that reading from the Scriptures and from an Orthodox Christian book prior to either morning or evening prayer "warms up the heart and creates an appetite for prayer and spiritual work". A very good book on these topics is "Saint Paisios the Athonite, Spiritual Counsels, Volume 6 – On Prayer".

*Labour,
great and repeated
effort, is needed to
attain this end.*

St John of Kronstadt

+



1700 Years Anniversary - The First Ecumenical Synod

The First Ecumenical Synod convened in Nicaea in 325 AD by Emperor Constantine the Great. It was a pivotal moment in Christian history, bringing together bishops from across the Oikoumene (that is, the Roman Empire) to address theological disputes and establish doctrinal unity within the Church.

By the early fourth century, Christianity had emerged from periods of intense persecution, following Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 AD), which declared religious freedom for all. However, theological divisions threatened the unity of the Church, particularly the Arian controversy. Arius, a priest from Alexandria, argued that Jesus Christ was not co-eternal with God the Father, but rather a created being. This view gained traction, and led to widespread conflict among the Christians.

Saint Constantine, who had recently become sole emperor uniting the Eastern and Western regions into one Empire, could not bear to see the Christians fragmenting the Empire into Christian factions. He therefore convened the council of Nicaea, gathering around 318 bishops with a goal to achieve doctrinal unity with "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). The most significant outcome of the council was the Nicene Creed, a declaration of faith affirming the age-old question posed by Jesus Himself, "Who do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27). It stated that Jesus Christ is "begotten, not made, of one essence (gr. ὁμοούσιος) with the Father", directly countering Arianism. The Nicene Creed was expanded in the second council in Constantinople (hence called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) and is still recited today serving as a foundational statement of faith for Orthodox Christians worldwide. The council's decisions established and continue to shape Orthodox theology, reinforcing the belief in the Holy Trinity as a cornerstone of Orthodox belief.

Additionally, the council addressed other secondary

matters given that all the bishops were present. The most notable discussion regarded the date of Pascha. At the time, Pascha had been celebrated on separate days in the East and West around the date of the Jewish Passover (14 Nisan) which was seen to be the precursor to the Lord's Pascha. In the East some persisted in celebrating on the same day of the Jewish Passover regardless of the day of the week, while in the West they insisted on transferring it to the following Sunday which was the day of the resurrection.

To resolve this, a uniform date for Pascha was set at the council of Nicaea to unite the Church, which also emphasised Christianity's distinct identity from Judaism. It stated that Pascha should be celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the Spring equinox. The differences in the date of Pascha that exist today between Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Church arose when the Latins adopted the Gregorian Calendar, which has a different day for the Spring Equinox.

Finally, the council also specified twenty canons, or rules, to address issues pertaining to Church discipline, ecclesiastical authority, the handling of heretics, the structure of Church governance and emergence of the Pentarchy, why we ought to stand in prayer on Sundays and others.

For the Orthodox faithful, the council of Nicaea is not merely a historical event, it is a spiritual milestone which shaped the theological foundations of the Church. Its decisions continue to influence Christian doctrine, ensuring doctrinal unity and reinforcing the faith's core beliefs. It also affirmed the Church's ability to define doctrine guided by the Holy Spirit using a Synodal model (the term "synod" can be translated literally as "to walk the same path") which is used to govern Church affairs up to the present day.

The Great Command:



GO FORTH

If you were to scan the spectrum of the animal world, you cannot help but notice an impressive fact – how they move in a continuous and productive manner. Each one performs its task in its own way, doing so for the benefit of the group as a whole. For instance, ants and bees are busy gathering food for the winter months; while larger animals are forever on their feet, looking for a meal. That is the task assigned to each of them by mother nature.

If survival means constant movement and constant work, how important is work, effort and sacrifice, for our Spiritual life? For the Christian, the life of the Spirit is the only life worth living. We see that idleness (αργία, laziness) is to be avoided at all costs. In a prayer we use during Lent, we hear “Lord and master of my life, do not allow me to develop a spirit of idleness” and so on. Idleness is the first among the four sins mentioned there! The ancient lawgiver, Solon, tells us, “Idleness is the mother of all evil”, and St. John Chrysostom fully supports the idea! The Apostle Paul advises us “And whatever work you do, do it with all your heart [as though you do it for the Lord]” (Colossians 3:23).

The Philokalia, a collection of sayings of fathers of the Church, teaches “Blessed is the one who rejoices in his salvation, but even more blessed is the one

who rejoices in the salvation of the other”. St. John Chrysostom emphasises the same idea: “I do not believe in the salvation of anyone, who does not try to save others”.

The concept of saving others is not well developed among many Christians. What is the reason? We allow ourselves to be overcome by spiritual idleness and laziness. Excessive social and material cares smother our personal spiritual world. A recent survey by the Pew Research Centre (a nonpartisan think tank that provides information on wide range of social and political issues), showed that the lack of people of moral conviction as role models leaves our society with insufficient numbers of Christian soldiers necessary to produce and sustain moral quality. We shouldn't take this to mean that teaching, preaching and helping others are less important. Rather, it proves that carrying the message of Jesus Christ is paramount, as we are commanded: “Go forth and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19).

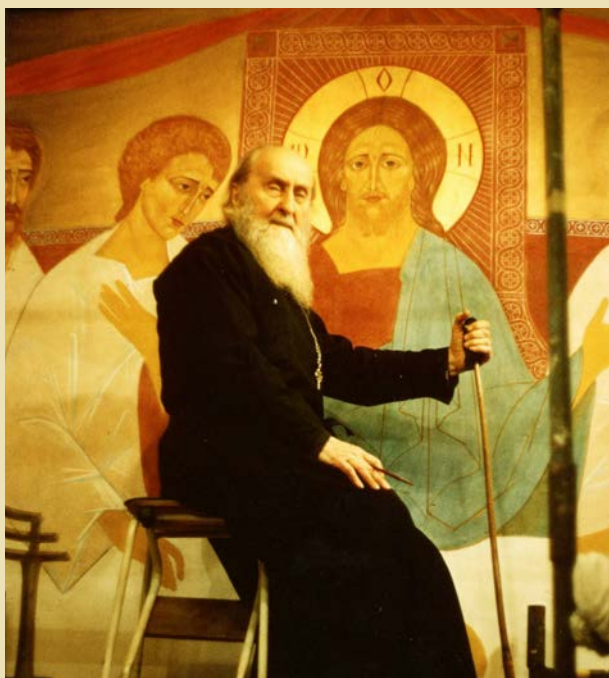
As you read these statements, you might wonder what they mean for me, a Christian of the 21st century. They are important, very important. In fact, we see that the other person

is my saviour. The lifepath of our own salvation runs through our fellow man. Towards them I express and practice my love and charity, support them in times of trials, and make every effort to attract them to the faith and life of Jesus Christ and His Church. My efforts for them lead to the road of salvation, whilst at the same time I show my obedience to our Lord, complying with His command to all Christians: “By this, all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

All the above can be achieved! What we need is an active spiritual life and participation in the life of the Church. It takes work. We maintain the firepower of the Spirit, and the saving Grace of God, through participation in the sacraments of the Orthodox Church.

Some may say it is not easy, but a minority say it is! The latter are not only the saints, but also those who believe in humility that God is calling them to the task. They rely wholeheartedly in the words of Jesus Christ: “be of good cheer, I have conquered the world” (John 16:33).

In this work they start as novices, and continue in sincerity till the end of their life. They are not necessarily called saints. It does not matter. They end up in the Kingdom of God, anyway!



Saint Sophrony of Essex

Commemorated 11 July

St Sophrony Painting Christ at the Last Supper, early 1980s

Born Sergei Sakharov in 1896, to a pious Orthodox family in Moscow, St Sophrony had attracted the grace of God from his youth. While only a child, he was able to pray for extended periods, and had even experienced grace as the uncreated light described in the scriptures.

Later, however, Sergei's faith began to waver. As a young man, he witnessed the dramatic events of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, and became deeply concerned with the problem of human suffering. Seeking answers to his questions on the meaning of life and death, he began to doubt the faith of his childhood, eventually withdrawing from the church.

At about the age of eighteen, while a student at the Moscow School of Fine Arts, Sergei began to explore alternative religions and became involved in eastern spirituality and

the practice of meditation. He lived in this way for a number of years, eventually moving to Paris where he worked as an artist.

On Holy Saturday of 1924, the Lord reached out to Sergei, granting him a perceptible visitation of grace in the form of light. He remained in this state of grace for three days, after which the course of his life shifted dramatically.

Setting aside his artistic career and repenting of his errors, he wholeheartedly returned to the faith, and enrolled in the Saint Sergius Theological Institute in Paris. Not satisfied with mere academic knowledge of God, however, Sergei soon withdrew from his studies and left for the Holy Mountain in Greece. In 1925, he arrived at the Russian monastery of Saint Panteleimon, where he was tonsured into monasticism with the name Sophrony. Here,

he was granted another profound experience, which he deemed one of the most important events in his life: an encounter with a saint.

At Saint Panteleimon monastery lived St Silouan the Athonite, an unassuming monk who worked at the monastery's mills. One day in 1930, after Fr Sophrony had been ordained a deacon, St Silouan approached him for the first time. He recognised that the young deacon received special visitations of grace, and decided to share his own spiritual experience with him for the sake of edification.

St Silouan recounted how after fifteen years of wrestling with demons, one evening he was filled with such despair that he turned to the Lord saying: 'Lord, teach me what to do so that the demons no longer torment me.' Then he heard the following response of the Lord in his heart: 'Keep your mind in hell and despair not.'



St Sophrony and St Silouan

These words profoundly affected Fr Sophrony, revealing to him the secret of the spiritual life - humility. In the advice of St Silouan, he saw a way to preserve the grace he experienced in prayer, which he noticed would depart from him after just one harmful thought. From this time, the two monks kept a close relationship, which Fr Sophrony considered the greatest blessing of his life.



St Silouan painted by St Sophrony

Seeing that Fr Sophrony was a fellow struggler who would not misunderstand his writings, St Silouan entrusted him with a collection of his notes, scribbled on odd scraps of paper, which were later edited and published in the book 'Staretz Silouan'.

After St Silouan's death in 1938, Fr Sophrony received permission to leave the monastery in order to pursue the life of a hermit in the desert of Mount Athos.

During this time, which coincided with the Second World War, he prayed fervently and with great anguish for peace in the world. By God's providence, the abbot of St Paul's monastery was informed of a holy deacon living as a hermit, and became convinced that this would be the right person to serve as a spiritual father to the monastery. Despite his reluctance to abandon a life of silence, Fr Sophrony humbly accepted this as the will of God, and was ordained to the priesthood in February of 1941. His ministry as a spiritual father would soon expand to include the monasteries of Simonopetra, Gregoriou and Xenophontos.

After a number of years, and facing deteriorating health, Elder Sophrony asked for a blessing to leave Mount Athos. Returning to Paris, he worked hard to self-publish the biography and writings of St Silouan. In Paris,

the elder began to receive people who were seeking monastic life. Eventually, he was compelled to seek a place suitable for the establishment of a monastery. With the help of some friends, a vacant rectory was found in rural England.

Upon obtaining permission from the British government, Elder Sophrony arrived in England in 1959 with a small group of people ready to set up his community. There, in Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, he founded the first Orthodox monastery in the United Kingdom since the Great Schism, which he dedicated to St John the Baptist.



St John the Baptist Monastery, Essex

For the next two decades, Elder Sophrony focused his efforts towards the building of the monastery. Despite not having worked as an artist for thirty-six years, he began to paint masterful icons and frescos for the monastery church.

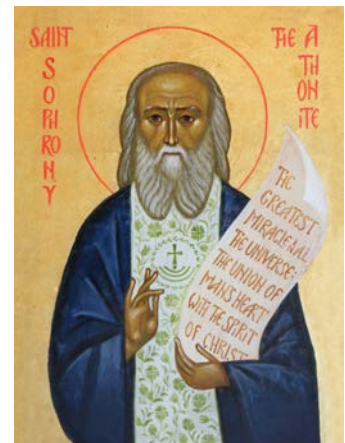


As the community grew, Elder Sophrony dedicated himself to the ministry of confession for an increasing number of laypeople. Despite his renown as a profound theologian and author, he was

simple and natural in his personal style, his words having the power to touch the heart.



When St Sophrony perceived his end was drawing close, he asked to see the brethren of the monastery individually, giving a final word to each. Having taken to his bed in his final days, he departed from this life on the 11th of July, 1993, while the fathers were celebrating the Sunday liturgy. In the days that followed, the monastery was permeated by an atmosphere of intense sorrow, coupled with an inexplicable peace and joy. One priest declared, 'If Father Sophrony is not a saint, then there are no saints!'



St Sophrony of Essex left a legacy as prolific author, brilliant theologian, master iconographer, and man of prayer; but most importantly, he was the beloved spiritual father to a multitude of monks, clergy, and laypeople. His books, available in English, are a source of inspiration for new generations of Orthodox Christians, expounding on the spiritual life in a profound and intellectual way.

“Strange words, strange dogmas, strange teachings”

From Matins & Vespers of the Holy Spirit

"And they all began to speak with strange words, strange dogmas, strange teachings of the Holy Trinity". With these words end many of the hymns of the Matins and Vespers services of Holy and Great Pentecost and the Monday of the Holy Spirit (Lauds and Kekragaria). The hymns beautifully tell of the events of Pentecost; how the Holy Spirit descended in the form of fire, how a sound was heard like the rush of a mighty wind, and how the Apostles of Christ began to speak in strange words, strange dogmas and strange teachings of the Holy Trinity. In another of the hymns we hear, "strange to hear, strange to see, fire distributed for the apportioning of gifts". What is so strange about these events?

The word 'strange' is a translation of the Greek word *Xenoi* which literally means 'foreign'. Indeed, the Apostles spoke in foreign tongues, however, their teaching was also foreign to both themselves and to their audience of Jews. The Apostles were uneducated fishermen in the morning, and, on the descent of the Spirit, they were given "knowledge and wisdom in everything" (Dismissal Hymn of Pentecost). They were also given the gift of tongues so as to spread the new teachings to all of the nations.

But why were the teachings new or foreign? Although Jesus had revealed Himself as the Christ, the descent of

the Holy Spirit, the fulfilment of God's promise, illumined the Apostles and confirmed their faith so that from that day they had knowledge of the Holy Trinity to preach to the whole world. Christ had promised to send them the Comforter and, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles recognised Him as God. The teaching of the Holy Spirit and of the Holy Trinity was foreign to men previously. New dogma was revealed on this day.



Until this time, men were confused and ignorant. The Apostles still lived in fear, not understanding what to do with themselves after Christ's Ascension. By the grace of the Holy Spirit all was mystically revealed. Not because they read books or attended schools, but because they received the grace of illumination, knowledge and wisdom from God Himself. The Holy Spirit was poured out on them and they became vessels of God's salvific plan.

Thus, guided by this Light which we have inherited from the Apostles, we also, to this day, worship the Holy Trinity as God. This strange dogma and foreign teaching is the cornerstone of our Orthodox faith and the truth which nourishes the Church. This revelation of the Godhead is proclaimed throughout the hymns of the feast and so it is only right that we refer to the feast of Pentecost as the feast of the Holy Trinity.

St Kallinikos

Metropolitan of Edessa,
Pella and Almopia

By Metropolitan of Nafpaktos **Hierotheos**

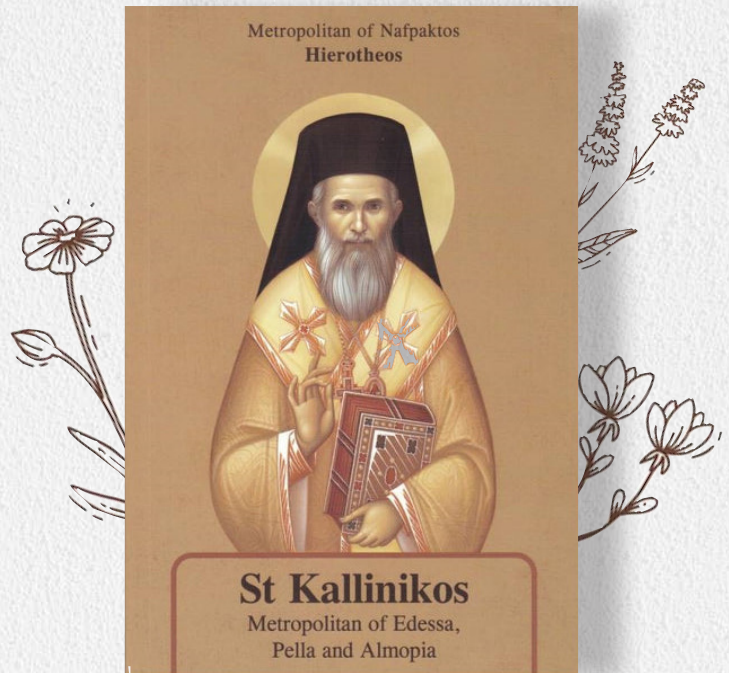
The last fifty years has produced so many amazing saints such as St Paisios, St Porphyrios, St Sophia of Kleisoura... and St Kallinikos of Edessa, Pella and Almopia, a holy Archbishop and Saint of God!

In his will, St Kallinikos said his greatest gifts were to be born to Orthodox parents, and to be baptised a Christian. He was born in Agrinio in 1919, the fourth of eight children, and the grandchild of the village priest, Papa-Thanassi.

He performed well in his studies as a child and at university, and the professors noticed him. One in particular wanted him to study overseas and become a great academic. But another famous professor of the day, Professor Trembelas, said: "Leave the wildflower alone. He would wither abroad." Bishop Hierotheos, the author of this book, said that for his whole life he remained a wildflower - that is, an innocent village boy, with a pure desire to serve the Church.

The story of the wildflower Kallinikos is a truly awe-inspiring tale of a young Christian man whose pure love for God guided him, like a star guides a sailor through many difficult periods of his life. This thoughtful and moving book covers his journey from village-boy, to soldier, to theologian, to secretary, to lay-preacher, founding a radio station, organising religious activities for prisons, teaching Sunday Schools and catechism classes... then as a priest, as a bishop, as an Archbishop... and finally, as a very sick patient in hospital where he ended his days.

He was just one man. Yet he proved himself a vessel of the Holy Spirit and an ardent servant of the Church.



He always worked beyond his strength, because he loved God and people so much! In his ordination speech as Bishop of Edessa and Pella, he asked the people to "Pray for me that I may burn like a candle for the glory of Jesus Christ crucified..." He would repeat this phrase for the rest of his life.

Yet this book is far from a historical recount of dates, times and places. The personality of St Kallinikos is the true treasure within the pages. It was written by his disciple Bishop Hierotheos, who as a young deacon, followed him everywhere and spent every waking moment together with him. He was even by his side nursing him during the final months of his life in hospital.

We must use the old cliché: this book is a must-read! Why? We are blessed to have a portion of St Kallinikos' relics in Sydney, Australia, at the Church of All Saints in Belmore. Therefore since St Kallinikos has "visited" us, we should all do him the honour of reading his life. And what an amazing life!

No one will finish this book without being deeply moved by the life of this Saint who lived in our day and age, and who was a living, breathing, working, holy man of God.

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The Icon of Sts Peter and Paul



Figure 1 – Icon of St Peter and Paul with Christ
(Catacomb of Saint Marcellinus and Peter, 4th Century)

The Apostles Peter and Paul are beloved pillars of our Orthodox Church. Their icon depicting them side by side finds its earliest expression in Christian iconography dating back to the 4th century. In fact, Saints Peter and Paul are shown more often together than individually in early Christian iconography. Early examples include the Catacomb of Saint Thecla and the Catacomb of St Marcellinus and Peter (see Figure 1), both in Rome dating from the 4th century.

The icon, as we know it today, depicts them flanking the Church on either side. One of the earliest known examples of this specific composition (see Figure 2) has been attributed to Nikolaos Ritzos, one of the founders of the greatly influential Cretan school of iconography, in the 15th century.

St Peter, placed on the left, is painted with curly hair and a full beard distinguishing him from the other disciples, and honouring him as a wise, strong and zealous leader. The colour of his vestments, typically deep blue and gold, are telling of his character and position amongst the disciples. The deep blue of his inner vestments symbolizes divine wisdom and heavenly authority, reflecting his role as the foundation of the Church and the one entrusted with the power to "bind and loose" sins (Matthew 16:19). The gold of his outer vestments symbolises heavenly glory.

St Paul, on the right, is honoured for his extensive missionary labours and writings. His fourteen epistles form the bulk of the New Testament, and lay the foundations of our faith. While his receding hairline and beard follow iconographic tradition based on early accounts of his appearance, a receding hairline more

importantly conveys wisdom and great intellect, as seen in icons of church fathers such as the Three Hierarchs. Conversely, St Paul's green undergarment, symbolic of life, represents his spiritual rebirth, while his red outer garment is a testament to his martyric life and death.

It is important to recognise that whilst St Peter is regarded as preeminent among the Twelve, the early Christians felt it was prudent to honour both St Peter and St Paul equally. St Clement of Rome, writing in the 1st century, extols them as "the greatest and most righteous pillars [of the church]." Their respective missions established the complete foundation of Christian witness – St Peter to the circumcised (the Jewish Christians) and St Paul to the uncircumcised (the Gentile nations) (Galatians 2:7-8). The icon thus serves as a statement about the nature of the Church itself as being built upon the dual labours of these great Apostles.

O foremost of the Apostles and teachers of the inhabited earth, intercede with the Master of all to grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.



Figure 2 – Saint Peter and Saint Paul (Nikolaos Ritzos, 15th century)

EPISTLE READING OF THE SYNAXIS

OF THE HOLY APOSTLES

1 CORINTHIANS 4:9-16

The Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians 4:9-16, often heard on the feast days of the Holy Apostles, provides a striking glimpse into the life, struggle, and spiritual perspective of the early Church.

St Paul begins with a vivid image: "God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men." Writing to the Church in Corinth, a community troubled by division and sin, St Paul highlights the contrast between the self-sacrifice of the Apostles and the complacency of the Corinthians. According to St John Chrysostom, St Paul's intent was not to shame them but rather to awaken their conscience. By associating them with the Apostles, St Paul aimed to uplift them while also confronting their lack of participation in the spiritual struggle.

To be a "spectacle" means that the Apostles were constantly on display, suffering publicly before the world, witnessed invisibly by angels, and judged by people. Their hardships were not hidden. To the world, their lives appeared pitiful, yet before heaven, their trials were cause for celebration.

St Paul deepens the comparison: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ." He contrasts the true humility of the Apostles with the false security of the Corinthians. To be a "fool for Christ" is to embrace ridicule, to choose the narrow path, and to suffer for truth without worldly reward. The Corinthians, in contrast, appeared "wise" because they were respected, but their honour was hollow. St Paul exposes the tension between worldly strength and spiritual weakness, prompting reflection: are we comfortable Christians, or are we engaged in the struggle?

The description continues with harrowing honesty: hunger, thirst, poor clothing, homelessness, and hard labour. These were the marks of Apostolic life, not symbolic imagery, but daily realities.



Yet St Paul says this is done "to the present hour", emphasising the constant nature of Christian commitment. Their poverty reflected their deep yearning for God and a detachment from the comforts of this world.

Most powerful, perhaps, is St Paul's depiction of how the Apostles responded to mistreatment: "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate." St Paul speaks not only of suffering, but of how suffering is transformed by love and humility. To be "the refuse of the world" is to accept humiliation as Christ did, not with resentment, but with grace.

St Paul's purpose is revealed in the final verses: "I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children." He reminds the Corinthians, and us, that Christian correction must come from love like a father guiding his children. He affirms his role as their spiritual father, not merely a guide. His appeal is simple yet remarkable: "Be imitators of me." For us today, it is an invitation to action, to leave behind comfortable belief and step into the real, costly discipleship of Christ.

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



Our Orthodox Inheritance

Orthodoxy survived in Greece during the Turkish Occupation and in Russia during the Communist regime, not because it was taught in schools or sponsored by the state, but because it was safeguarded in the home and within the community. Many homes maintained the use of icons, family prayer time, fasting, reflection on the lives of saints, remembrance of the dead. The sacred traditions of Orthodoxy were safeguarded and supported in the home - this is also part of the heroism of the Greek Orthodox.

What is our obligation in the diaspora? We can reflect on our own obligation to nurture and support our Orthodox inheritance in our homes, to preserve it, and to encourage it to grow in our children and their children.



Discernment

Discernment is a highly prized and valuable virtue that we must practice in the home. On the one hand, we want to encourage our children in their faith. On the other hand, if we are too fervent on our own path to God, we fall into the mistake of lacking discernment regarding our children who have not yet experienced what we are enthusiastic about. For example, we may enforce family prayer beyond

the capabilities of our children. In the longer term, this may prove damaging.

This is why discernment is so highly regarded in the Orthodox Church. To support this, we have the crucial role of the spiritual father, who acts as a guide and counsel on these matters. We should cultivate a deep relationship with a spiritual father, as a family, so that they know us and our children. He will then be best placed to advise us – when to begin confession for children, when to begin fasting, what books to read, how to conduct prayer in the home. Later, he will support us with the inevitable issues arising from adolescence and support our children themselves as they grow.

This is a true and priceless inheritance; our children, having grown up with a spiritual father, will themselves seek advice on all the critical issues and decisions of their life.



Family time

We all acknowledge the importance of spending quality time together, and this is especially pertinent in our increasingly busy lifestyle. We should reflect both on the quantity and quality of family time. It is not enough to be in the same house, or even the same room, if we are not engaged and truly present with each other.

It is ideal if we can share family meals. We can try implementing a technology 'blackout' to give space to truly engage with members of our family. We should aspire to time spent together engaging the natural beauty of the world – through family holidays, bushwalks or picnics.

Often we lament “who is raising our children?”. When we spend time with our children, listen to them and share experiences with them, we can have a more accurate understanding of what is influencing and shaping them. As understand their hearts and minds.

We should reflect both on the quantity and quality of family time, it is not enough to be in the same house, or even the same room, if we are not engaged and truly present with each other.



A STORY ABOUT OBEDIENCE



**ST JOHN
THE
DWARF**



St John the Dwarf lived in the desert of Scetis, Egypt in the mid-to-late 300s. One day, his spiritual father, Abba Poemen, gave him a piece of dry wood and told him to “Take this wood, plant it and water it”



The nearest water source was 19 kilometers away, but nevertheless, in the burning heat and the freezing cold, St John obeyed perfectly and would water the stick twice a day. For three years, St John continued with this task, not once complaining about it.



Three years later...

After three years, the stick took root and blossomed into a tree bearing fruit. His Abba took some of the fruit and shared it amongst all the elder monks at the Church saying:



All the monks marvelled at this great miracle.

A STORY ABOUT MEEKNESS ST MACARIUS THE GREAT



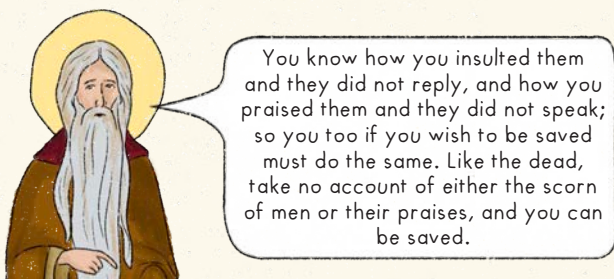
A brother once came to see St Macarius, asking "Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved". The old Saint replied, "Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead".

So the brother went to the cemetery, abused the dead and threw stones at them, and then returned and told the Saint about it.

Saint Macarius asked him, "Did they say anything to you?". He replied, "No". The old Saint said, "Go back tomorrow and praise them". So the brother went away and praised them, calling them, Apostles, saints and righteous men. He returned to St Macarius and said to him, "I have complimented them".



And the Saint asked him, "Did they answer you?". The brother said "no". St Macarius said to the brother,



News & Events



Patriarchal and Synodal Divine Liturgy at the Phanar commemorating the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea

The Holy Great Church of Christ honoured, on Sunday, 1 June 2025, the 1700th anniversary of the convening of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, with the celebration of a Patriarchal and Synodal Divine Liturgy. Our Archbishop Makarios also took part, as a member of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. *Source: Vema*



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