

OPFANON OEFAC XAPITOC

Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος κατέχει μοναδική θέση στη σωτηριολογική πορεία της ανθρωπότητος. Δεν είναι μόνο ο τελευταίος των Προφητών, είναι η γέφυρα μεταξύ Παλαιάς και Καινής Διαθήκης. Είναι «φωνή βοώντος έν τη ερήμω», προφήτης, ασκητής, κήρυκας μετανοίας, και τελικώς<mark>,</mark> μάρτυρας της Αληθείας. Η Εκκλησία μας τον αποκαλεί «ὑπερ πάντας τοὺς προφήτας» και «έγκαινιστὴν τής Χάριτος». Πάνω απ'όλα, η μαρτυρία του Ίδιου του Κυρίου μας «αμήν

λέγω υμίν ουκ εγήγερται εν γεννητοίς γυναικών μείζων Ιωάννου του βαπτιστού» (Ματθ. 11:11) Δηλ. Αλήθεια σας λέγω, δεν έχει αναφανεί μεταξύ των ανθρώπων που γεννήθηκαν ως τώρα από γυναίκες άλλος μεγαλύτερος από τον Ιωάννη τον βαπτιστή. (ερμ. Π. Τρεμπέλα)

Η χάρις του Θεού δεν του

δόθηκε μόνον κατά την ενήλικη ζωή του. Ο ίδιος ο Ευαγγελιστής Λουκάς καταγράφει το θαυμαστό γεγονός της σκίρτησης του Αγίου Ιωάννου εν κοιλία, όταν η Παναγία επεσκέφθη τὴν Ἑλισάβετ. «Έσκίρτησεν το βρέφος εν τη κοιλία αύτῆς» (Λουκ. 1,41). (Δηλ. Επήδησε το βρέφος μέσα εις την κοιλία της). Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς ερμηνεύει το γεγονός αυτό ως προφητική ενέργεια- ήδη από την εμβρυϊκή του ηλικία, ο Ιωάννης αναγνωρίζει και προσκυνεί τον Σωτήρα Χριστόν

.Ο Ιωάννης δεν έζησε ποτέ μέσα στον κόσμο. Η ζωή του ήταν νηπτική και ασκητική, ήδη «έκ νεότητος», με ένδυμα τραχύ, διατροφή πτωχική και τόπο διαμονής την έρημο. Δεν έκανε

θαύματα, ούτε έψαλλε ύμνους, το θαύμα του ήταν ο ίδιος του ο λόγος. Λόγος μετανοίας και επιστροφής προς τον Θεό. Καθώς σημειώνει ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος: «Έκείνος ποτὲ ούχ ὑπεχώρησε τοις ανθρώποις άλλ' έλεγχε την αλήθειαν άδιακρίτως, είτε πτωχός ήν ο αμαρτάνων, εΐτε βασιλεύς». (Δηλ. Δεν υποχωρούσε σε κανέναν. Έλεγε την αλήθεια χωρίς διακρίσεις είτε φτωχός, είτε βασιλειάς ηταν αυτός που αμάρτανε).



Ήταν όργανο της Χάριτος όχι μόνο διότι προετοίμασε τον δρόμο του Κυρίου, αλλά και διότι ὁ λόγος του συγκλόνισε συνειδήσεις. Το βάπτισμα που προσέφερε, ήταν βάπτισμα μετανοίας, μία πράξη που δεν έφερε ακόμη την πλήρη αναγέννηση του Αγίου Πνεύματος, αλλά άνοιγε τον δρόμο για αυτήν.

Το τέλος του Ιωάννου είναι και η σφραγίδα της αποστολής του: μαρτυρικός θάνατος για την Αλήθεια του Θεού. Δεν δίστασε να ελέγξει δημόσια τον βασιλέα Ηρώδη για την παράνομη σχέση του με τη γυναίκα του αδελφού του. Και, όπως πολλοί προφήτες πριν απ' αυτόν, πλήρωσε με τη ζωή του την αγάπη του προς την αλήθεια. Η Εκκλησία τον τιμά ως μάρτυρα, παρόλο που δεν μαρτύρησε «επ' ονόματι Χριστού»διότι ο λόγος του υπήρξε προφητικός και Χριστοκεντρικός.

> Ο Αγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος είναι και σήμερα πρότυπο για κάθε πιστό. Μαρτυρεί οτι η Θεία Χάρις δύναται να ενεργήση από τα βάθη τῆς άνθρώπινης ὑπάρξεως, άπὸ κοιλίας μητρός. Μας διδάσκει τη σημασία της μετάνοιας, της ταπείνωσης και της καθαρής καρδιάς. Όπως ο ίδιος είπε: «εκείνον δει αυξάνειν, εμὲ δε ελαττούσθαι» (Ίω. 3,30) (Δηλ. Εκείνος – ο Χριστός – πρέπει να αυξάνει σε επιρροή και δόξα, εγώ δε να μικραίνω ώστε όλοι να μην ακολουθούν πια εμένα αλλ' Εκείνον) μία φράση που συνοψίζει τη ζωή του, απόλυτη και ολοκληρωτική προσφορά στον Χριστό, χωρίς προσωπική προβολή.

Ο Αγιος Ιωάννης ο Πρόδρομος μάς καλεί να γίνουμε κι εμείς όργανα της Χάριτος· να ετοιμάζουμε την καρδιά μας και τον κόσμο γύρω μας για τον ερχομό του Χριστού – όχι μόνο μία φορά στην ιστορία, αλλά συνεχώς, μέσα στην καρδιά κάθε συνανθρώπου μας που Τον ζητά με ειλικρίνεια.

THE CROSS: POWER OF GOD

niversally recognised as a symbol of the Christian faith, the cross adorns our churches, is found on emblems and flags, and is the sign by which we bless ourselves every day. It is a daily reminder of God's love for mankind, for whom He gave His only Son.

Though we all admire the sign of the cross as a symbol, its true significance for our lives often remains unappreciated. Our Lord taught us that "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27)

What does it mean to bear one's cross? Simply put, it is the struggle to keep the commandments of God.

Every person will experience the cross in their own way. Common to all of us are temptations, weaknesses, trials, suffering, and failure. Bearing our cross represents any form of asceticism, self-denial, patience, and sacrifice that we make in order to serve God, and abide by His commandments.

Here, the cross represents our death. While it may be harsh to hear, killing our 'old selves' is the duty of every Christian from the moment of their baptism. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:24).

Each time we deny ourselves and resist our passions, we suffer a small crucifixion. This is mystically alluded to in the Psalms, where it states 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter! (Psalm 43:22)

Yet, the cross also represents our life. Not just in the age to come, but in our present time here on earth.

Because the way of the cross, which is death to our sins and passions, is the means by which we are granted the grace of the life-giving Holy Spirit. This formula is clearly stated by the Evangelist John: "Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." (1 John 3:24)

As the Church has always taught, and as the lives of the

saints have consistently shown, the Holy Spirit is given to the one who sheds blood for the sake of Christ.

While the way of the cross seems unnatural and unappealing to the world (as it is referred to biblically, a "stumbling block"), the true Christian knows that great power is hidden behind the ascetic struggle to keep the commandments.

The grace of the Holy Spirit is a power like no other. Grace can work miracles, comfort us, grant peace to our souls, give us energy in our daily struggle, kindle within us greater love for God and our fellow man, and in general it is the fuel which powers a Christian.

The way of the cross, which is death to our sins and passions, is the means by which we are granted the grace of the lifegiving Holy Spirit.

As David joyously declares in Psalm 102, the Lord can renew one's youth like the eagle, and His mercy is everlasting on those who remember His commandments to do them.

When we consider the deeper meaning of our Christian calling as the struggle to keep Christ's commandments, the cross remains no longer a symbol but becomes our way of life.



"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)



This gospel reading tells the remarkable story of how four fishermen were called by Jesus to become His disciples: namely Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, and their fishing partners James and John, the sons of Zebedee. The account describes how Jesus came across two boats along the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret. The fishermen were next to the boats washing their nets. Their hearts were heavy, as they had been out all night and had not caught even a single fish. Because a huge crowd was pressing around Jesus, wanting to hear from him His teachings, Jesus sat in one of the boats and began to preach. When He had finished, he said to Peter: "launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch" (Luke 5:4). Peter was astonished, pointing out that they had been out all night and had not caught anything,

"nevertheless at Your word, I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). Because of their obedience, the fishermen became the recipients of a great miracle from God! No sooner did they cast down their nets that so many fish filled them, their nets were tearing with the weight. In fact, both boats became so heavy with fish, they almost sank. The four were so astonished at the size of the catch, that when they brought their boats back to the shore, "they forsook all and followed Him" (Luke 5:11).

This moving story shows us the incredible power of obedience to God's word. Many times, we feel despair when things go wrong and not in accordance with our hopes and dreams. We may plan and prepare to our own abilities and feel like we can go it 'alone'. From these experiences, we may feel that

we have no need of God. Yet Jesus Christ calls us to "launch out into the deep and let down your nets", that is, search the depths of your heart and struggle against the sins lurking there; have unshakeable faith in Him and you will receive much grace.

Through their obedience, the four simple fishermen were now called to be Apostles and "fishers of men". From now on, their lives would be filled with purpose and fulfilment, grace and miracles, unspeakable joy, blessings and peace. We too, through our daily obedience to God's word, can also share in such divine blessings, climbing the peaks of faith and virtue. Like the fishermen, we should daily launch out into the deep, casting down our

The First Sunday of Luke this year is September 28.

RIGHTEOUS

RUTH

Ruth was the great-grandmother of King David. She is one of only three women to have a Biblical book named after her, and one of the few women and non-Jews named in St Matthew's genealogy of Jesus.

Her story begins in Bethlehem with a man named Elimelech, who was married to Naomi, and had two sons. When famine struck, the family travelled to the idolatrous country of Moab to live. The Fathers teach that we are like Elimelech when, due to temptations and difficulties, we leave the Church to find haven, to find a more comfortable life, in other places. In Moab, Elimelech's sons married Moabite women - one married Ruth and the other married Orpah. Suddenly, Elimelech and his two sons passed away, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law desolate.

Naomi, seeing these deaths as punishment for leaving Bethlehem, decides to return to Bethlehem. Naomi, Ruth and Orpah prepare to journey to Bethlehem, but Naomi turns to her daughters-in-law and tells them to return to their mothers' houses, and grants permission for them to re-marry. Orpah and Ruth weep, sharing the grief of their mother-in-law. Orpah bids goodbye, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi and says,

"Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16).

In sacrificing her easy life in Moab, the Fathers teach that Ruth represents us when we take steps to abandon our sins.

The pair arrive in Bethlehem and Naomi feels keenly that God has abandoned her; she feels great shame in her losses. Ruth seeks Naomi's blessing and works hard every day in the fields to obtain bread for herself and Naomi. Ruth's work is fruitful, and the other workers observe her humble perseverance in a foreign land, and her loyalty to Naomi. The owner of the fields is Boaz, an Israelite who loves God and obeys His commandments. Boaz notices Ruth and admires her sacrifices for Naomi.



BLESSED BE THE LORD, WHO HAS NOT LEFT YOU THIS DAY WITHOUT A REDEEMER: AND MAY HIS NAME BE RENOWNED IN ISRAEL.

+ Ruth 4:14

Eventually, Boaz and Ruth marry and have a son, Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.

In this way, a woman from an idolatrous nation played an important role in the history of Israel. Ruth was not afraid of the afflictions of widowhood or of being an outsider in Bethlehem. She was focused on the person of Naomi and showed deep respect and love for her. Ruth embraced God's invitation in her compassion for Naomi and did not waver in her new way of life. She proved herself to be a hardworking and obedient daughter filled with humility. With her virtue, Ruth transformed the outlook of Naomi's life and set out the course for the incarnation of Christ world. May we emulate her.



We pray to the Most-Holy Mother of God, our Panagia, because She is the Mother of all Christians, continually interceding on our behalf to Her beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. In Scripture, this truth is perhaps made clearest in the wedding of Cana in Galilee, where Panagia noticed that the hosts had run out of wine and brought this to Her Son's attention. Despite His initial response: "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4), Panagia "overrode" Her Son, saying to the servants "Whatever He says to you, do it" (v. 5). As a result of Her intervention, Jesus performed His first miracle, turning water into "good wine". Christ's 'hour' came directly through the intercession of His Most-Holy Mother, the Panagia!

St Paisios (+1994), the patron Saint of all Australia, is greatly revered for his profound insights into the deepest spiritual truths with his most simple teachings.

A zealous Protestant once said to him:

"You Orthodox Christians, especially here on Mount Athos, venerate the Panagia as if she were God, forgetting that she is a simple woman. You also venerate icons and believe they can perform miracles! And even worse, you treat the relics of your saints, which often still have incorrupt flesh, without disgust, and kiss them! All of this shows that you Orthodox are in great delusion!" St Paisios replied sternly:

"What can I say, my poor man, it's not your fault for all these vile things you say, but it's your mother's fault for giving you such an upbringing!"

Hearing the Elder's reference to his mother, the man became angry and replied:

"Listen, monk, don't mention my mother, because you are not worthy to reach her!"

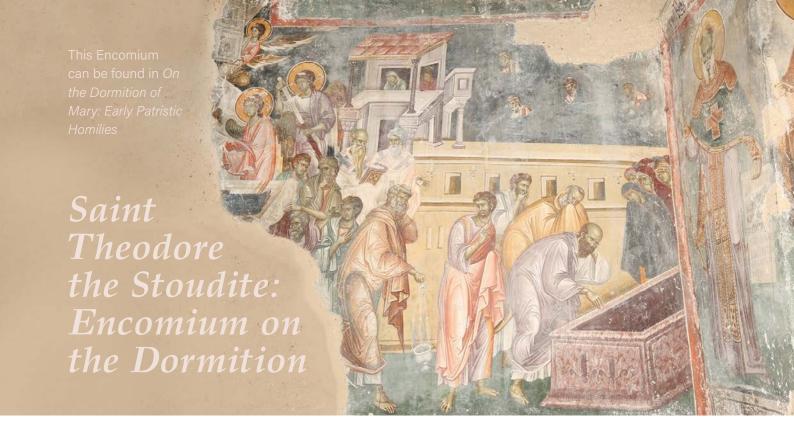
St Paisios, unperturbed, as if he was waiting to hear exactly that, said to him:

"You see, you were offended because I offended your mother! Shouldn't our Lord and we be offended when you insult our Mother, our Panagia, as you did before? But let me ask you something else: If your mother asked you to do her a favour and you could fulfil it without difficulty, would you agree to do it or not?"

"Of course, I would agree to do it!" said the Protestant. "Well, exactly the same thing happens with our Panagia. We ask our Panagia to intercede to Her Son and our Lord, to save us. We do the same with the Saints, since they too have been given boldness towards God."

After the Saint had spoke to him in this very beautiful way, the Protestant could not contradict anything and left very troubled. St Paisios greatly revered and loved Panagia, saying that when we pray 'Most Holy Theotokos, save us!', it is as if we are pulling Her by the hem of Her dress until She does our will!

May we too leap for joy, just like St John the Baptist when he sensed that Panagia was near while he was still a baby in the womb (Luke 1:41-45), comforted that Panagia, our Most-Holy Mother, is hearing and responding to our heartfelt prayer: 'Most Holy Theotokos, save us'!



The Encomium on the Dormition by St Theodore the Stoudite (759-826) stands as a tribute to the Theotokos, offered by one of the Church's great confessors. This homily not only honours the falling asleep of the Mother of God but inspires love and devotion to the Theotokos, affirms her role in salvation, and strengthens the faithful in their veneration of her.

St Theodore begins his homily with reverence and humility, recognising that his voice is not worthy to praise her but that he is "moved by the prayers" of those who asked him to speak. He tells the faithful to exchange their clothes for "robes of virtue" to properly celebrate the feast, a truly spiritual celebration. The homily then contemplates the unique holiness of the Theotokos, where St Theodore proclaims: "Now the Mother of God shuts her material eyes, and opens her spiritual eyes towards us like great shining stars that will never set, to watch over us and to intercede". He continually praises the Theotokos and her role in the Incarnation, through which

humanity was saved, and reflects on her unceasing protection.

After this contemplation, St Theodore brings the faithful back to the time of the Dormition, including a final dialogue, composed by St Theodore to emphasise the virtues of the Mother of God, between the Apostles and the Theotokos as she was about to "go from here to a safe dwelling-place... where I will see the delights of the Lord". The Apostles respond with 12 salutations (one for each Apostle there), much like those chanted in the Akathist Hymn.

St Theodore then takes the listener to the mystical celebration of the funeral of the Theotokos, where "bodiless spirits celebrated their invisible liturgy, while the Apostles used their bodily voices to sing the praises of God's greatness". He concludes the homily by asking for the intercessions of the Theotokos.

The entire homily is marked by humility, with St Theodore expressing a deep sense of unworthiness in delivering it. He

acknowledges that the matters he is extolling are beyond human comprehension and praise, saying "in this present festival our words are weak, lifeless, inaccurate, obviously off the mark. For you are beyond us, you exceed our powers; you incomparably surpass in height and greatness the summit of heaven". It is this humility that makes this homily so accurate in capturing the essence of the Theotokos, for it was this virtue that marked her whole life.

At the same time, St Theodore weaves into his homily a subtle yet distinct affirmation of the theology of icons, significant given that he lived and suffered during the iconoclast controversy. He extols the Theotokos as one whose "light shines through her painted image, and she offers it to the people for the life-giving kiss of relative veneration, even if the heretics are unwilling".

St Theodore's Encomium is a call to the faithful to honour the Theotokos with heartfelt devotion, to seek her aid, and to rejoice in the mystery of her Dormition.

A Blessed Brotherhood

The Legacy of Saint Joseph and his disciples



Left to right: Fr. Athanasios, Elder Ephraim of Arizona, Elder Arsenios the Cave-Dweller, Elder Joseph of Vatopedi, St Joseph the Hesychast, Fr. Theophylactos, and Elder Haralambos of Dionysiou

The year 1963 marked the 1,000th anniversary of the establishment of monasticism on Mount Athos. However, many who attended the commemoration at the time joked that it would have been more fitting to call it the funeral of Mount Athos. Indeed, at that time, the Holy Mountain faced many serious issues: the average age of the monks was increasing, the number of new monks were few, and the spirit of asceticism appeared to be fading. Mount Athos appeared to be in terminal decline.

Yet, less than fifty years later, this situation had been almost completely reversed. The number of monks had grown close to 2,000, the number of new monks being tonsured was rising, and many of the major monasteries had been rejuvenated under the leadership of spiritually zealous new elders.

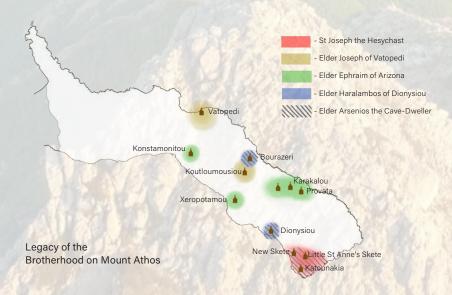
How did such a drastic turnaround take place?

To find at the very least part of that answer, we would need to go back

to the 1940s and look to the crags of Little St Anne's Skete (Σκήτη μικρή Αγία Άννα), where we would find a small but spiritually blooming brotherhood.

It is from this brotherhood that many of the great modern ascetics would emerge, among them Elder Joseph of Vatopedi, Elder Ephraim of Arizona, Elder Haralambos of Dionysiou and Elder Arsenios the Cave-Dweller. However, each of these elders would have been the first to say that their spiritual lives were shaped and defined by the sanctifying presence of their spiritual father, Saint Joseph the Hesychast.

It is not possible to adequately describe the asceticism and holiness that blossomed from within this small group of monks. However, it can be said that two things were central to their everyday life and struggle to come closer to Christ: love for their spiritual father and unceasing prayer.



There is an old Athonite saying, "Have you pleased your elder? Then you have pleased God." This saying encapsulated the spirit of this brotherhood and the unwavering love they held for their elder, St Joseph. Elder Ephraim of Arizona writes, "In my life I have seen that when a disciple tries to obey his elder's requests, the blessing of God abides with him because it is completely impossible for a disciple who with humility pleases his spiritual father to fail in his spiritual life."

And perhaps no command from Saint Joseph was more foundational than the call to unceasing prayer. The first thing he would ask of someone who wanted to join the brotherhood was to observe silence and to pray. "The prayer, my child - I want to hear you saying the prayer and not talking idly." And so it was in the brotherhood that even while they worked during the day, the only noise a person would be able to hear was the words, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Then, at night, the monks would keep a personal vigil, meaning that every night they would spend between ten and twelve hours praying the Jesus Prayer.

In the years after Saint Joseph's repose, his disciples would spread out to the major monasteries of the Holy Mountain and begin a movement of spiritual renewal, looking to the teachings of their elder as the focal points for the monastic life. In beholding the fruits of their labour today, all we can possibly conclude is that truly this was a blessed brotherhood.

"Love Jesus, say the prayer unceasingly and it will illumine your path."

An Elder was sitting in the desert. His cell was about twelve miles from water. One time, as he was going to fetch water from the spring, he became resentful and said to himself:



Scarcely had he thought this, than he sensed that someone was following him. He turned around and saw that the one who was following him was measuring his paces. The Elder then asked him:



When the Elder heard this, he took courage, became more eager, and withdrew deeper into the desert by another five miles; that is, after he settled in his new abode, he was now seventeen miles away from the spring.





Saints Adrianos & Natalia

Commemorated on August 26

Saints Adrianos and Natalia lived in Nicomedia in the fourth century. Adrianos, a Roman officer at the outset of the Great Persecution under Diocletian, took part in the arrest of twenty-three Christians. These confessors endured cruel tortures with such steadfastness that Adrianos was moved to ask of them the secret to their courage. They replied: "We are enduring all this in order to receive the delights reserved by God for those who suffer for Him; delights that ear cannot hear nor tongue express."

Illumined by divine grace, Adrianos ordered the scribes to add his name to the list of prisoners, declaring: "It would be for me a joy to die with them for the love of Christ!" He was immediately bound in chains and cast into prison.

When his wife Natalia heard of his arrest, she feared it was for some crime and wept. But upon learning it was for confessing Christ, she rejoiced, for she had been a Christian in secret. Clad in festive garments, she rushed to the prison, embraced his chains, and exhorted him to remain firm.

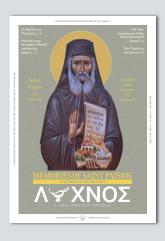
Adrianos was soon sentenced to death. Granted leave to visit his wife and tell her the day of his execution, he arrived free of chains. Natalia, thinking he had denied Christ, shut the door on him and rebuked him with Christ's words: "He who denies Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father" (Matt. 10:33). When he explained the truth, they embraced with joy, and Natalia continued to strengthen him in his resolve.

Brought again before the Emperor, Adrianos was scourged and struck so violently in the abdomen that he was wounded severely. Natalia whispered to him: "Do not fear the tortures. The suffering will be short, but the rest will be eternal."

The Emperor then ordered all the martyrs' legs be clamped in vices until they surrendered their souls to God. When Adrianos' turn came, Natalia held his hand on the block on which it was severed. The saint at once departed to the Lord. The Emperor commanded their bodies to be burned, but a sudden rain extinguished the flames. A Christian named Eusebios carried their relics to Argyropolis near Byzantium for burial.

Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra teaches, "Marriage is a journey through sorrows and joys... It is a joining together, a bond with Christ, who assures us that he will lead us to heaven, to be with him always. Marriage is a bridge leading us from earth to heaven."

United in faith and in love, Saints Adrianos and Natalia show that Christian marriage is more than companionship but a shared struggle towards salvation. They bore the cross together, encouraged one another, and kept their eyes fixed on Christ, even unto death.



Dear reader, we would like to hear from you.

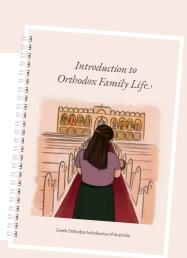
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Thank you for your feedback, Lychnos Team



BOOK REVIEW:

Introduction to Orthodox Family Life



This booklet is intended for parents to get a glimpse of what the Church offers families. According to the foreword by Archbishop Makarios, it "concisely" yet "elegantly" explains "the fundamental values that constitute family life as experienced and lived within our Orthodox Christian faith."

It begins with a brief explanation of the important services that a child and its family experiences during the first year of its life: the Eighth day blessing, the Forty Day Blessing (Saranta), and the Baptism service. It then briefly covers the major physical and emotional changes of parenthood, particularly motherhood, within those same first twelve months. It is a guide on when things are going well, and how to seek support for when things are not going so well!

The book explains the fundamental values that constitute family life as experienced and lived within our Orthodox Christian faith.

However, it is not only for first time parents. It also provides important commentary on the lived experience of parents, going through the daily demands of life with children, including discipline, resilience and education.

A very significant aspect of this booklet is its ability to combine the practical and the spiritual. For instance, it features both practical tips on bringing the Church into our home through the practices of the icon corner, vigil lamp, and the routine of daily family prayers, and also provides some prayers that every parent will need at different points in their new journey: prayer for a sick child, prayer of the parent, and prayer for the child.

The section on bringing children to Church beautifully illustrates the combination of practical tips for "making it happen", and a higher spiritual goal for the parents to consider.

Lastly, there is an extended Reference section with further reading on any of the introductory points mentioned in the booklet, for those who wish to explore faith in family life further.



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The book may be purchased in store or online via the QR code: orthodoxbookstore.org.au

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THE FIRST HYMN OF THE VESPERS SERVICE OF THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Πρὸ τοῦ σοῦ Σταυροῦ Κύριε, ὄρος οὐρανὸν ἐμιμεῖτο, νεφέλη ως σκηνή έφηπλοῦτο. Σοῦ μεταμορφουμένου, υπὸ Πατρὸς δὲ μαρτυρουμένου, παρῆν δ Πέτρος σὺν Ἰακώβω καὶ Ἰωάννη, ως μέλλοντες συνεῖναί σοι, καὶ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς παραδόσεώς σου, ἵνα θεωρήσαντες τὰ θαυμάσιά σου, μη δειλιάσωσι τὰ παθήματά σου, ἃ προσκυνήσαι ήμᾶς, ἐν εἰρήνη καταξίωσον, διὰ τὸ μέγα σου ἔλεος.

Before Your crucifixion, O Lord, the Mount became like heaven, the cloud was like the Tent. When You were transfigured and the Father bore witness to You, Peter, James and John were there, since they would also be with You when You were betrayed; so that by seeing these wonders of Yours now, they would not be frightened by Your sufferings later. Grant that we may venerate Your Passion in peace, because of Your great mercy.

An often overlooked detail of the Gospel account of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord, which we hear on the feast day proper, August 6, concerns what Christ tells his disciples as they are descending Mt. Tabor following the awesome experience they had just witnessed.

Christ says, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (Matt. 17:9). St. Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch, explains in his Oration on the Transfiguration that it was "because the Firstborn from the dead had first to rise, confirming the resurrection by deed; and then the common resurrection of all was to be made known through testimony. For who would have believed sayings which even the foremost of the apostles disbelieved?"

Up until the point of His Transfiguration, Christ had appeared and behaved amongst the people who saw Him and heard Him as the perfect man that He was. He had performed many supernatural feats and miracles - healed all sorts of infirmities, showed His command over the laws of nature, cast out demons and so on. However, similar signs and wonders had been performed by the revered prophets and Kings of the Old Testament: Moses parted the Red Sea, Prophet Elijah raised the widow's son from the dead and countless other deeds.

But none of these luminaries or indeed any one before Christ had publicly stated that they themselves would rise from the dead. Twice in the Gospel of John Christ declares this truth. In John 2:19-22, He declared, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And in John 10:17–18, He said "I lay down My life... I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again." Indeed, after Peter's confession at Caesarea

Philippi, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus began teaching the disciples that He must be killed and "after three days rise" / "be raised" (Mark 8:31; Matthew 16:21; Luke 9:22).

> occurred before the Transfiguration. So, Christ proceeds to take three of His select disciples to confirm the truth of His words to them and as St Anastasius explains, that, "after the resurrection of the Firstborn they publicly and with boldness proclaimed the resurrection of all, and the change from grosser bodies to spiritual ones, enjoining all that just as 'Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more, and death no longer has dominion over Him,' so also He will make us conformed to His glory and will transform our bodies to

what is spiritual and incorruptible."

All these declarations are known to have

The Vesperal hymn explains this succinctly, "Peter, James and John were there, since they would also be with You when You were betrayed; so that by seeing these wonders of Yours now, they would not be frightened by Your sufferings later." And we hear likewise in the Kontakion of the feast, "and Your disciples beheld Your glory as far as they were able, O Christ our God; so that when they would see You crucified they might understand that Your Passion was voluntary."

The Transfiguration was not some flashy display of divine omnipotence. It was done out of love for His disciples and by extension, for us, so that the truth of Christ's voluntary passions and glorious Resurrection would be planted in the hearts of those who first spread His Word.

παρουσία των προφητών της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης στη λατρεία μας είναι έντονη. Κάθε μήνα γιορτάζουμε τουλάχιστον ένα η δύο προφήτες. Επίσης στις ακολουθίες της εκκλησίας διαβάζονται περικοπές από τα βιβλία τους. Οι Προφήτες είχαν ιδιαίτερο κάλεσμα από το Θεό, επικοινωνούσαν με το Θεό και ήταν ο τρόπος με τον οποίον μπορούσε να επικοινωνήσει ο Θεός με το λαό Του. Έζησαν τον 7ο και 8ο αιώνα πριν, κατά τη διάρκεια, και μετά από την αιχμαλωσία των Ισραηλιτών στη Βαβυλωνία.

Τα μηνύματα των προφητών ήταν παρόμοια. Περιγράφανε τις αμαρτίες του λαού, προειδοποιούσαν το λαό ότι οι αμαρτίες τους είχαν συνέπιες, περιγράφανε τη κρίση, καλούσανε το λαό σε μετάνοια και έδιναν υπόσχεση για σωτηρία.

Οι μεγάλοι προφήτες μας είναι πολύ γνωστοί, ο Ησαΐας, ο Ιερεμίας, ο Ιεζεκιήλ και ο Δανιήλ. Οι μικροί προφήτες, οι οποίοι ονομάζονται μικροί γιατί τα βιβλία τους είναι πιο μικρά και μπορεί να μη τους γνωρίζουμε τόσο καλά, είναι ο Αμώς, ο Ώσηέ, ο Μικαίας, ο Ναούμ, ο Αβακούμ, ο Σοφονίας, ο Αγγαίας, ο Ζαχαρίας, ο Μαλαχίας, ο Οβδίος, ο Ιωήλ και ο Ιωνάς.

Το καιρό που έζησαν οι προφήτες το περιβάλλον ήταν πολυθεϊστικό. Οι εθνικοί πίστευαν σε πολλούς θεούς. Ο Γεχβέ ήταν ένας από τους πολλούς θεούς στους οποίους πίστευαν οι Ισραηλίτες.

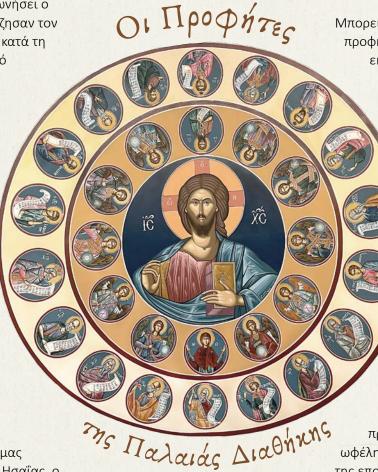
Οι προφήτες όμως ήταν αυστηροί μονοθεϊστές μέσα σαυτό το πολυθεϊστικό περιβάλλον. Συνέχιζαν τη μονοθεΐα των Πατέρων και ο κάθε προφήτης ήταν σημαντικό κρίκο στη μονοθεϊστική αλυσίδα, η οποία άρχισε από το καιρό του Αβραάμ και έφτασε μέχρι το Χριστό όταν η πολυθεΐα καταργήθηκε. Οι προφήτες ήταν

το λαό και όχι τυπολατρίες γιατί εκεί βρίσκεται η σωστή επίγνωση το Θεού. Με αυτό το τρόπο η ηθική που κήρυτταν οι προφήτες γίνεται ευαγγελική, αιώνες πριν την εμφάνιση το Ευαγγελίου. Δηλαδή πριν γραφτεί το Ευαγγέλιο, οι Προφήτες συνδέουν το Θεό με την αγάπη. Έναν Θεό που αγαπά τα απομακρυσμένα παιδιά του και περιμένει τη μετάνοιά τους.

Μπορεί να βλέπουμε τους προφήτες σαν τους καλύτερους εκπρόσωπους της θρησκείας στη Παλαιά Διαθήκη γιατί στην εποχή τους ήταν οι πιο φωτισμένοι

> άνθρωποι στο νου, οι πιο θερμοί στη καρδιά και οι πιο τολμηροί στη βούληση να ελέγχουν τα πάντα. Το σπουδαίο είναι όμως ότι δεν ήταν μόνο άνθρωποι με φωτισμένες θρησκευτικές ιδέες για την εποχή τους αλλά ήταν πραγματικές θρησκευτικές

προσωπικότητες γιατί δεν ωφέλησαν μόνο τους ανθρώπους της εποχής τους αλλά στερεώνουν την πίστη όλων των πιστών όλων των αιώνων μέσω της προφητείες τους. Οι κραυγές των προφητών αγγίζουν τις καρδιές του κάθε χριστιανού ο οποίος απομακρύνεται από το Θεό με την ανυπάκουή του στο θέλημά Του.



δυνατοί εφόσον μπορούσαν και αντιστάθηκαν το άμεσο και ευρύτερο άπιστο περιβάλλον και υπέφεραν συχνά στα χέρια του λαού.

Εκτός από τη δύναμη χαρακτήρων που έδειξαν οι προφήτες στη σταθερότητα της πίστης, βλέπουμε στα έργα τους να επεξεργάζονται το κέντρο της πίστης και της λατρείας. Στα έργα τους θέτουν, σαν κέντρο της θρησκείας και της πίστης, την ηθική στη καρδιά και όχι στα ολοκαυτώματα. Ζητάνε έλεος από

Answers to The Ouiz

7. St Raphael the new martyr - of Sts Raphael, Nicholas and Irene 8. Papa-Dimitri Gagastathis 4, St Elizabeth/Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna 5, St John Cassian 6, Gerondissa Makaria Desipri 7, St John Cassian 6, Gerondissa Makaria Desipri 1. St Luke the Evangelist 2. St Arsenios, St Euphemia, St Lucillian... etc. 3. St Gabriel, fool for Christ of Georgia

The Church in the Home

In this 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



e often hear the phrase "from little things, big things grow". The saying holds true for our spiritual lives, and in the way we instil spiritual habits in our families. Here are some basic, yet fundamental, practices that we can implement as a family.

Going to Church

Attendance at the Church is a foundational, fundamental aspect of the Christian life. Our frequent participation in the Church services cultivates our spiritual roots and helps our children develop into strong Christians.

We should be sensitive to our attitude to Church attendance. Firstly, we should consider attendance on Sunday as nonnegotiable. If we have fallen out of the habit of attending Church on Sundays as a family, then we should focus on this as a priority.

We should be careful not to 'fill' our Sunday mornings with excuses not to attend Church - for example through organised sport or social events. The message we indirectly send our children is that God is not so important in our lives.

Similarly, we should be open to participating in the broader Church community. This helps us build friendships within the Church, and strengthen our bonds with other like-minded Christians. We can extend our hospitality by inviting them for a coffee, showing our children an example of philoxenia.

Family iconostasis and prayer time/incense/prayer books

Our homes should be very clearly 'Christian'. An icon corner placed centrally and beautifully arranged, with incense holder and lamp lit each evening is important for our home. The icon table reminds us of God's presence in our home and becomes the centre for family prayer time.

Prayer time with young children can often be difficult but it is an important example of Christian practice. Our children can take it in turns to read the morning and afternoon prayers and to light the lamp and the incense, we can also say special prayers for different occasions like when someone is sick, or someone has died or at the beginning of the school year, or the night before we receive Holy Communion.









Reading the Bible and Lives of the Saints

It is important to find time for each child and it is important to read to your child, so what better way than to find time each evening and share a Bible story or a story from the lives of the saints?

We communicate God's love so that the child associates your love, your time, your loving attention with God's love. This is how they first learn and feel God's love.

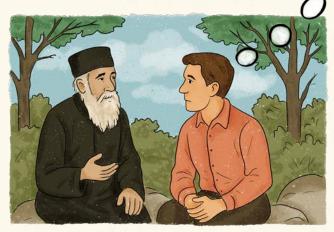
The Bible in the Orthodox Church is given the highest respect. It is enthroned on the altar in Church, it is decorated in gold and precious gems, it is raised high above the head of the priest in the Little Entrance. So, the Bible should be looked after in our homes as well and read regularly. There are many illustrated Bibles designed for children, and these are a great help.

We communicate God's love so that the child associates your love, your time, your loving attention with God's love. This is how they first learn and feel God's love.



An Elder said:

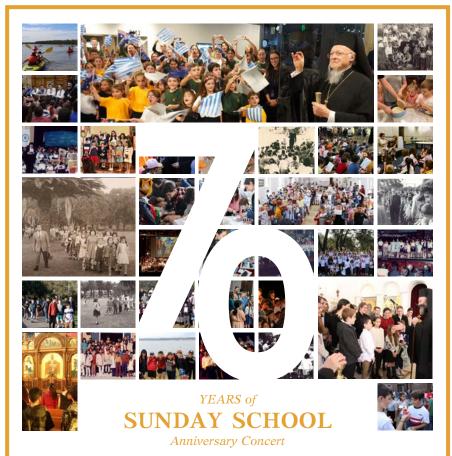
"Whoever goes into a perfume shop, even if he buys nothing, will without fail take upon himself its fragrance.



In this manner exactly, one who visits the Fathers is benefited.



If he should wish to work, they show him the path of humility, which becomes for him a protective wall repelling the incursion of the demons."



«Με το Χοιστό και τους Αγίους Του» "With Christ and His Saints"

With the blessing and in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, all the faithful of our Holy Archdiocese are invited to celebrate this special milestone.

Sunday 14 December 2025 5pm

Sports & Performing Arts Centre St Spyridon College Senior Campus 1130 Anzac Pde, Maroubra



The QUIZ + Saints' Edition +

- 1. Who was the first iconographer of the Church?
- 2. Name three saints that appeared to St Paisios.
- 3. Which saint burned a portrait of Lenin in the town square?
- 4. I am the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom, and my statue is in Westminster Abbey. Who am I?
- 5. Which saint celebrates on 29th February?
- 6. Who discovered the relics of St Ephraim of Nea Makri in 1950?
- 7. Which saint did the people of Mytilene think was a ghost?
- 3. Which saint was canonised in July 2025?

Answers on page 13

News & Events



Annual Winter Retreats

The Orthodox Boys and Girls Youth Groups ($O\mu\dot{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\varsigma$) as well as the young Mens and Womens Groups ($K\dot{\omega}\kappa\lambda$ o) of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society ($Ev\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$) held their midyear retreats over the winter months. The retreats were an opportunity for spiritual renewal, Christian friendship, prayer, learning and much singing. The highlight of the retreats was the Divine Liturgy officiated by Fr Eusebios, the Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery.

Weekly Gatherings (Enosi & Kyklo) occur at the Orthodox Mission Centre most Saturdays of the year – for ladies, Saturday afternoon from 4–5pm; for men, Saturday evening from 8–9pm. The Youth Groups (Omathes) for teenagers run weekly on Friday nights at various parishes in Sydney.





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