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BEHOLD THE QUEEN OF ALL

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

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ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL



BEHOLD, THE QUEEN OF ALL



The Dormition and Resurrection of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

While our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the Cross, He spoke seven times. The first three of these sayings reveal His self-emptying love, His concern for those around Him even in the midst of His Passion: He prayed for His Father to forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34), and comforted the repentant thief (Luke 23:43). The third word ensured the care of His Holy Mother:

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."
(John 19:26-27)

The claim that the Theotokos bore other children after Christ is refuted by this passage, as our Lord would not have entrusted her to John as her new son if she had other children with whom to live, as was the custom of the time.

The life of the Virgin Mary after the Gospels is not recorded in Scripture, but has been handed down as sacred tradition in the writings of the Church Fathers.

According to these accounts, Mary continued in prayer and fasting while the apostles preached throughout the world. Remaining at Jerusalem in the house of John, she endured attacks and afflictions on account of her Son, yet prayed for her adversaries and for the whole world at the tomb of Christ. She supported the Church by comforting the disciples with the example of her Son's Passion, and praying fervently for them when they were arrested and persecuted.

When the time came for her to conclude her life on earth, the Archangel Gabriel brought her news that her Son would take her to Himself, into immortal life.

The Mother of God received this news with joy and went up to the Mount of Olives to pray. As she ascended, the trees bowed down to her in reverence, as though they were living creatures.

Returning home to Jerusalem, she revealed to the women disciples that she would soon pass from this life. They were distressed, but she assured them that from the heavens she would always watch over them and the whole world.

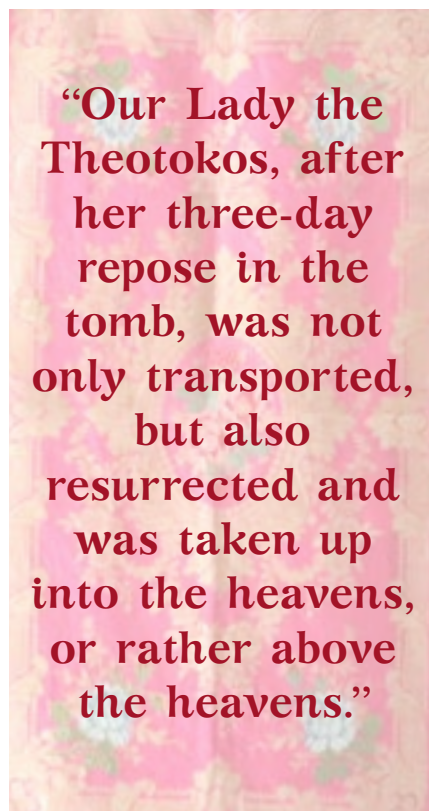
As she spoke, there came a sound of thunder, and many clouds appeared. Borne upon them were the apostles from the ends of the world, with Dionysios the Areopagite, his teacher Hierotheos, the Apostle Timothy and many other hierarchs. Learning why they had been so strangely gathered, they mourned and wept.

But the Theotokos comforted them and gave instructions on how she wished to be buried. Last of all, tradition tells us, the Apostle Paul appeared, who fell at her feet and exclaimed: "Rejoice, O Mother of Life and the very subject of my preaching. For although I did not see your Son bodily on earth, yet in seeing you it was as if I saw Him."

She then bid farewell to all and lay upon the funeral bier, praying to her Son for the peace of the world. Blessing all those present, the Virgin surrendered her all-pure soul into the hands of her Son and God. The apostles lifted up the bier and, singing hymns, escorted the body to Gethsemane, while angels sang

from the heavens.

Certain of the Jewish leaders, unable to bear the sight, incited some men to hurl the bier to the ground; but they were at once blinded by a miraculous power. One, more insolent than the rest, laid his hands on the bier and was left with his severed hands hanging from it, cut off by a divine sword.



Here the Virgin is shown to be the fulfilment of the Ark of the Covenant, which Uzzah dared to touch and was struck down by the Lord (2 Kingdoms 6:6-7).

The man believed with all his soul and was healed. Taking a piece of the Virgin's garment, he placed it upon the blinded men, and they too were healed of their blindness and unbelief.

When the apostles reached the village of Gethsemane, they buried the all-pure body of the Virgin

Mary, and remained there three days, hearing without ceasing the voices of the holy Angels.

By God's will, the Apostle Thomas was not present for the burial, but arrived on the third day, greatly grieved. The apostles agreed to open the tomb so that he might see her one last time; but on opening it they were astonished to find it empty.

Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain gives the following explanation:

"Our Lady the Theotokos, after her three-day repose in the tomb, was not only transported, but also resurrected and was taken up into the heavens, or rather above the heavens."

This belief is also expressed in the writings of Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Kosmas the hymnographer, Gregory Palamas, and Mark of Ephesus.

The following verses are given in the Menaion for the 15th of August:

"It is no wonder that the world-saving Maiden should die, since the very Maker of the world died in the flesh. The Mother of God lives forever, though she died on the fifteenth."

In Greece the feast of the Dormition is popularly known as the Summertime Pascha, an allusion to its resurrectional character. Not only is the repose of our Panagia commemorated, but her bodily translation and resurrection, which prefigures our own.

Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ



Η εορτή της Μεταμορφώσεως του Σωτήρος στο όρος Θαβώρ είναι από τις σημαντικότερες δεσποτικές εορτές της Εκκλησίας μας. Αν και το γεγονός της Μεταμορφώσεως πραγματοποιήθηκε λίγες ημέρες πριν από το εκούσιο Πάθος του Κυρίου, οι Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας όρισαν να εορτάζεται στις 6 Αυγούστου, ώστε να αναδεικνύεται το βαθύτερο θεολογικό του μήνυμα. Ο Χριστός δεν αποκάλυψε απλώς τη δόξα Του στους μαθητές, αλλά τους προετοίμασε για το μυστήριο του Σταυρού και της Αναστάσεως.

Ωστόσο, μόνο μετά την Ανάσταση και την επιφοίτηση του Αγίου Πνεύματος κατά την Πεντηκοστή μπόρεσαν οι μαθητές να κατανοήσουν πλήρως το νόημα της Μεταμορφώσεως. Όπως μαρτυρεί ο Απόστολος Πέτρος (Β' Πέτρ. 1, 16-18), τότε αντιλήφθηκαν ότι ο Ιησούς είναι ο Υιός του Θεού, ο οποίος χαρίζει τη σωτηρία του κόσμου με το εκούσιο Πάθος και την ένδοξη Ανάστασή Του. Η εμπειρία του Θαβώρ έγινε γι' αυτούς η βεβαίωση ότι ο Εσταυρωμένος είναι ο ένδοξος Κύριος της ζωής και του θανάτου.

Η εμπειρία αυτή αφορά και τον σύγχρονο άνθρωπο. Παρότι ζούμε στη χάρη της Πεντηκοστής, συχνά παραμένουμε δέσμιοι του εγωισμού, της αυτάρκειας και των συνεχών μεταπτώσεων της ψυχής μας. Αντί να ζούμε τη χάρη του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού Χριστού, την αγάπη του Θεού και Πατρός και την κοινωνία του Αγίου Πνεύματος, όπως προσεύχεται η Εκκλησία στη Θεία Λειτουργία του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Χρυσοστόμου, εγκλωβιζόμαστε στη μικρότητα του προσωπικού μας θελήματος και αδυνατούμε να δούμε τη ζωή με τα μάτια της πίστεως.

Ο Χριστός, όμως, με την άπειρη αγάπη Του, καλεί κάθε άνθρωπο να εξέλθει από την απομόνωση του εγωκεντρισμού και να εισέλθει σε κοινωνία μαζί Του. Όταν δεχόμαστε το φως της Μεταμορφώσεως, η λάμψη του ακτίστου φωτός του Χριστού φωτίζει την ύπαρξή μας και διαλύει το σκοτάδι της αμαρτίας. Το φως που έλαμψε στο Θαβώρ δεν είναι κτιστό ή αισθητό, αλλά η άκτιστη δόξα και ενέργεια του Θεού, όπως δίδαξε ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς. Με τη μετάνοια, την προσευχή, τη μυστηριακή ζωή και τη συνεργασία με τη θεία Χάρη, ο άνθρωπος αξιώνεται να μετέχει σε αυτό το άκτιστο φως, το οποίο τον μεταμορφώνει, τον αγιάζει και του χαρίζει την αληθινή ειρήνη.

Έτσι πραγματοποιείται η «ἀλλοίωσις τῆς δεξιᾶς τοῦ Ὑψίστου» (Ψαλμ. 76, 11), η εσωτερική ανακαίνιση που χαρίζει ο Θεός σε όσους ανταποκρίνονται στην αγάπη Του και αγωνίζονται να ζουν σύμφωνα με το άγιο θέλημά Του.

Οι τρεις μαθητές έγιναν μάρτυρες της θεϊκής δόξας του Κυρίου «καθώς ἠδύναντο», δηλαδή σύμφωνα με το μέτρο της πνευματικής τους δεκτικότητας. Μέσα στη φωτεινή νεφέλη άκουσαν τη φωνή του Πατέρα: «Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός» (Ματθ. 17, 5). Στη Μεταμόρφωση φανερώνεται ολόκληρη η Αγία Τριάδα και αποκαλύπτεται ότι ο Χριστός είναι ο Μονογενής Υιός και Λόγος του Θεού.

Με την Ενανθρώπηση, το εκούσιο Πάθος, την Ανάσταση και την Πεντηκοστή μάς χαρίστηκε η χάρη της υιοθεσίας. Διά του Αγίου Πνεύματος γινόμαστε κατά χάριν τέκνα του Θεού και μπορούμε να ομολογούμε μαζί με τον Απόστολο Παύλο: «Αὐτό τὸ Πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμέν τέκνα Θεοῦ» (Ρωμ. 8, 16). Η βεβαιότητα αυτή δεν αποτελεί θεωρητική διδασκαλία, αλλά ζωντανή εμπειρία της Εκκλησίας, που ανανεώνεται σε κάθε πιστό ο οποίος ζει εν μετανοία και εν κοινωνία με τον Χριστό.

Γι' αυτό ο ιερός υμνογράφος μάς καλεί να ανέβουμε στο πνευματικό όρος της θεωρίας του Θεού, ώστε να αντικρίσουμε τη δόξα της Μεταμορφώσεως και να λάβουμε φως από το άκτιστο φως του Κυρίου.

Ας ανταποκριθούμε και εμείς σε αυτή την πρόσκληση, ώστε, φωτιζόμενοι από τη χάρη του Αγίου Πνεύματος, να μεταμορφώνεται καθημερινά η ζωή μας και να δοξάζουμε πάντοτε τον Πατέρα, τον Υιό και το Άγιο Πνεύμα, την Αγία και Ομοούσιο Τριάδα, εις τους αιώνες. Αμήν.



Heaven will speak

The Church celebrates the feast of the recently canonised **Saint Kallinikos of Edessa** on 8 August. The Saint was born Dimitrios in the village of Sitaralona, Agrinio, on 26 January 1919. Tonsured a monk in 1957 at the Holy Monastery of the Entrance of the Theotokos in Myrtia, the Saint was given the name Kallinikos. Although he did not receive his monastic formation on the Holy Mountain, he would often say, *"I am an Athonite at heart"*.

The Saint was ordained a hieromonk and after years of devoted ministry in the Metropolis of Aetolia and Akarnania, he was elected Metropolitan of Edessa, Pella and Almopia in 1967. As bishop, Saint Kallinikos' pastoral efforts were countless. He zealously prepared the clergy under his care, emphasising the need for the clergy to embrace holiness as caretakers of their

flocks. He established a boarding school for young students, founded a nursing home for the elderly, encouraged missionary activity, and revived monastic life by restoring the Monastery of the Archangel Michael in Edessa. His preaching was spiritually energetic and his living example lent credibility to every word he spoke.

Behind the dignity of the episcopal office was a monk who possessed almost nothing. The Saint never accumulated wealth, freely giving away his salary to those in need. Often, by the end of the month, he had no money left from his modest salary and even had to borrow funds to travel to meetings of the Holy Synod.

After completing his military service in 1948, the Saint had returned home with nothing more than a simple folding army camp bed. For all the years he served as a priest and preacher, this narrow camp bed was where he rested each night. When he was elected Metropolitan, he wished, in his humility, to take the same camp bed with him to the bishop's residence. His family, who were conscious of the dignity of the Saint's new office, quietly intervened before his enthronement and replaced it with an iron bed frame and mattress. His family later remarked, *"What changed with Kallinikos when he became Metropolitan? Only that he exchanged the camp bed for an iron one"*. Becoming a bishop did not alter his way of life. He sought neither comfort nor privilege, believing that whatever could be spared belonged instead to the poor. His asceticism was the natural expression of a heart detached from possessions and wholly devoted to Christ. The Saint's few possessions, empty

wallet, quiet prayer, and patient silence proclaimed the Gospel in a world that values comfort, status, and self-promotion.

The Saint's humility was reflected in the simplicity of the faith he held in the providence of God. As with many other holy people, he was frequently unjustly criticised and slandered. While others urged him to defend himself, he would simply reply, *"Θα λαλήσει ο ουρανός"*; Heaven will speak. Rather than justify himself, he entrusted both his reputation and his ministry to God's providence. Those words, so often repeated during his lifetime, found their ultimate fulfilment in the Church's recognition of his sainthood.

When the Saint was in hospital, shortly before his passing, for a whole day he kept repeating *"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Col. 3:4). In these words, the Saint embodied the joyful hope of Christ's plan for us, to be sanctified and adorned in the splendour of Christ's glory. This joyful hope radiated from the Saint throughout his life. People would often remark that to be in the Saint's presence was always a joyful experience.

When he reposed on 8 August 1984, after patiently enduring a seven-month illness, he left behind no property or savings, only the remainder of that month's salary. At his own request, he was buried in the public cemetery of Edessa so that he might remain close to the flock he had served.

Saint Kallinikos is yet another example of the holiness that exists in modern times. His life testifies that holiness is not confined to the annals of history, but flourishes in Christ's Church even today.

HOPE IN GOD'S PROMISE



Does God keep His promises?

Throughout Scripture, God continually makes promises to His people. He promises Abraham that his descendants will number more than the stars. He promises David that his house will endure forever. Even just before His Ascension, Christ promises His disciples that: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20).

As Orthodox Christians, we would say that it is a fundamental truth that God keeps His promises. But why? Not because He is bound by some external obligation or oath, but because of who He is.

The late Fr Thomas Hopko, former dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, taught that to the extent that we can speak about who God is, it is right to say that God is faithful.

This may seem a little confusing. After all, when we speak about being faithful in a religious context, it is usually in terms of being faithful to God. Who, then, is God faithful to?

Fr Hopko answers: *'God is completely and totally faithful to what He has created.'*

Not just in certain moments, not just when He feels like it, but always. God is always faithful to us.

During times of family difficulties, pressures at work, stress of exams, strained relationships, or when we cannot discern God's will for our lives, it can be easy to feel that He, who is meant to always be there, has left us and, in doing so, has failed to keep His promises.

Yet the Church does not leave us to deal with these questions and thoughts alone. She provides us with examples of many holy people, whose lives are the unmistakable testament of God's faithfulness to His creation. Among them are the righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, who remind us that God's promises are not fulfilled in accordance with worldly plans but according to His providence.

'God is completely and totally faithful to what He has created.'

Saints Joachim and Anna endured tremendous pain in their lives. For many years they remained childless. In Jewish society, barrenness was often seen as a sign of God's displeasure and, as a result, childless couples were frequently shamed and rejected by their community.

Not only did Joachim and Anna wrestle with the temptation to believe that God had abandoned them, but they also had to endure the cruel judgement of those around them who believed the very same thing.

Yet they did not lose hope in God's promise or cease to trust in His faithfulness. In His own time, God fulfilled what had once seemed impossible, granting them a daughter who would become Mary, the Theotokos and Mother of God.

It is easy to reduce the lives of Saints Joachim and Anna to being merely another classic Christian story of 'problem, prayer, solution.' However, to do so, would be to miss the point. After all, there are many times that we pray, and we do not receive an answer or solution.



What then do the examples of St Joachim and Anna mean for us?

The answers to our prayers may not always come as we expect or when we ask but like Saints Joachim and Anna, we must remember that God always keeps His promises and is always faithful.

Firstly, we need to see how they responded during times of tribulations. When Joachim's sacrifice was refused at the temple, a deeply humiliating and shameful experience, what was his response? Joachim went into the desert for forty days, fasting and in constant prayer.

When Anna had heard of the humiliation her husband suffered, she did not despair but, in an unwitting imitation of Joachim, began to pray with great pain and humility.

Often in our lives, when we are faced with these moments of hardship, our instinct is to step away from God. Particularly in today's age, it is easy to turn to technology as a quick escape and a way to bury our sorrow under distraction. However, these moments are, in a way, opportunities from God to show that we rely upon Him and to express our hope in Him. Joachim and Anna teach us that our trials can become occasions not for self-pity and despair, but for deeper prayer, greater dependence and renewed hope.

Secondly, we need to see that Joachim and Anna's faith was not just expressed in certain moments. It was evident in the way they lived every day.

St Paisios would say, *"My thoughts tell me that Christ would have descended earlier to earth, if there was a pure couple, such as were Saints Joachim and Anna."*

Joachim and Anna lived with such purity in everything they did – they were not attached to the things of the world, they bore injustice without complaint and they constantly prioritised their relationship with God.

Through their way of life and how they lived, God blessed them to be part of His plan for the incarnation of His Son and our salvation.

The answers to our prayers may not always come as we expect or when we ask but like Saints Joachim and Anna, we must remember that God always keeps His promises and is always faithful.

When we turn to Him in moments of pain, when we choose to prioritise Him in our everyday life and when we do not cease to hope in Him, this is when we show our faith too.

As the Prophet Jeremiah writes, *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jer. 17:7).*

God's promises are not fulfilled in accordance with worldly plans but according to His providence.





What draws people to Orthodox Christianity?

If we are to look at the usual makeup of the congregations in the Greek Orthodox Church in Sydney, most of the worshippers are 'cradle Orthodox,' i.e. worshippers who are Orthodox because they were born into the faith. Converts are a small minority.

However, that is not the case everywhere. There are pockets of Orthodox missions in developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia, which are blossoming. There are also pockets of Orthodox Churches in the United States whose congregations have a significant proportion of converts to Orthodoxy.

Books written by converts, such as *Thirsting for God in a Land of Shallow Wells* by Matthew Gallatin, very captivantly describe their journey to Orthodoxy. There is a common theme in many of these accounts. On the whole, the converts grew up in Protestant or other Christian denominations. They were bothered by the possibility that their church did not believe and worship in the way that the early Church did. They went on a mission to find whether there are any remnants of the early Church surviving today, and they came across Orthodox Christianity.

They discovered that the Orthodox Church was the truly apostolic Church that has kept faith and worship unadulterated since apostolic times. One such convert, Fr Andrew Stephen Damick, puts it this way:

"I examined both the Scriptures and the early history of Christianity, and I became convinced that the only church that matches them both is Orthodoxy. Particularly formative for me were the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch, a disciple of the Apostle John. The church life he described was definitely not what I saw in Evangelicalism. Since he was someone who learned

how to be a Christian from the Apostles themselves, I wanted to be in his church.

Orthodoxy takes history seriously and doesn't gloss over the hard stuff. It also doesn't pick and choose from early Christian witness to develop a streamlined "system" of theology that is easy to swallow. Rather, because Orthodoxy is truly the community descended from the Apostles, within its theological memory are centuries of dogma, doctrine and theological reflection. Not all of it is totally consistent or easy to sort out, but it is nevertheless one great river of truth with an overall unified direction."

These accounts ought not make us complacent or boastful. After all, all missionary work is a response to Jesus' commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:18-20). It is a serious and essential part of Church life. Church without mission is lifeless. And perhaps we have not done enough in proclaiming the message of the Scriptures to the nations. Upon His Eminence Archbishop Makarios' arrival in Australia on 18th June 2019, he stated at his airport address that now is perhaps the right time for our Church to provide its witness to wider Australian society; to share its gifts and its treasures.

In essence, what draws receptive people to Orthodox Christianity is the Holy Spirit. And when people are illumined in such a way, it is a responsibility for the Church and for each of its living members to receive them with love, and to guide and support them appropriately. Then through a genuine life in Christ, and with bold and discerning witness, we are called to continue to inspire others in Christ, into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is Orthodox Christianity.



The Seven Holy Maccabees

With their mother Solomone
and their teacher Eleazar

COMMEMORATED ON AUGUST 1

In the year 332 BC, Judea was conquered by Alexander the Great. He respected the Jews, and allowed them to continue in their worship, as did his successors for more than a century and a half, until the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

When a conflict arose in Jerusalem over a corrupt high priest, Antiochus mistook this for a full-fledged rebellion against his rule. In his rage he initiated a campaign of brutal suppression against the Jews. Within three days eighty thousand men, women, and children were lost,

with forty thousand cut down by his soldiers, and as many again sold into slavery. He then blasphemed against God by dedicating the great Second Temple of Jerusalem to Olympian Zeus. The Jews were not permitted to worship, to follow the Law, nor even to confess their faith.

In these days, many Jews were martyred. Two women who had circumcised their children were paraded around the city with their babies, before being thrown off the city walls. Another group who had secretly kept the Sabbath were burned alive. One of the senior scribes, a man named Eleazar, had his mouth forced open in order to make him eat swine's flesh, but he spat the meat out and willingly embraced his death on the rack.

The king then seized a family of seven brothers, known as the Seven Holy Maccabee Martyrs, along with their mother, Solomone. The family were ordered to defy the Law and eat pork. The eldest brother spoke first, proclaiming that they were all ready to die before transgressing the Law of their fathers. The king first cut out his tongue, then his limbs, and then he was thrown into a giant frying pan.

One by one, the other brothers were ordered to break the Law, and they each refused, being tortured and killed in the same way as the eldest. When the time came for the youngest brother, Antiochus entreated him. He offered him great worldly gifts and power above other men. When the youth refused, the king turned to their mother, asking her to convince him.

Solomone pretended to agree, then turned to her son and spoke in the language of their fathers, urging him to follow in the footsteps of his older brothers. The youth scorned the king, warning him that he would come under the judgement of God, and offered up his own body. Antiochus was enraged; he inflicted on him even more brutal tortures than on his brothers. Finally, their mother, described in the scriptures as "marvellous above all" for her courage, was killed.

These Athletes of the faith became one of the great inspirations for the Maccabean struggle, which eventually resulted in the retaking of Judea from the pagans. May the Seven Holy Maccabee Martyrs, Saint Solomone, and Saint Eleazar give us the strength to proclaim the Lord always, and to defeat all idolatry within ourselves.

KEY THEMES FROM THE

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Born to a Heavenly Hope

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Tested for Genuine Faith

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, ¹¹searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹²To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things

which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

Be Holy

¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;



¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” ¹⁷And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like

silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. ²⁰He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Love Each Other

²²Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, ²⁴because

*“All flesh is as grass,
And all the glory of man as the
flower of the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
²⁵But the word of the Lord
endures forever.”*

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

Desire Christ

2 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ²as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The New Priesthood

⁴Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

*“Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by
no means be put to shame...”*

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

The First Epistle of Peter is one of the most encouraging and practical books of the New Testament. Written to Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor who were facing trials, persecution and social rejection, the letter offers guidance for believers seeking to live faithfully in a world that does not always share their values.

One of the central themes of the epistle is the Christian identity as a pilgrim and stranger in the world. Apostle Peter reminds the faithful that they are “sojourners and pilgrims” whose true citizenship is in the Kingdom of God. This perspective is deeply rooted in Orthodox spirituality. While Christians participate fully in society, they are called to remember that their ultimate home is not an earthly city but the heavenly Jerusalem. This awareness helps believers maintain a proper spiritual focus amid the distractions and temptations of daily life. The epistle challenges us to examine our daily habits, relationships, and choices. It urges us to conduct ourselves honourably among others so that our good works may glorify God.

Another key theme is holiness. The Apostle echoes the command given to Israel in the Old Testament: “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Holiness is not reserved for monastics or clergy alone; it is the vocation of every baptised Christian. In the Orthodox tradition, holiness is the fruit of synergy — our cooperation with divine grace. Holiness is not merely a matter of words but of a life visibly shaped by the Gospel. Humility, kindness, obedience, and self-control become powerful testimonies to the presence of Christ in our life. Through prayer, fasting, participation in the Holy Mysteries, and acts of charity, believers are transformed by divine grace and become more like Christ.

“Be holy, for I am holy”

(1 Peter 1:16).

The last theme naturally leads into the idea of the priesthood of believers, which is expanded by the Apostle Peter where he describes the Church as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” This does not diminish the sacramental priesthood but highlights the dignity of every baptised Christian. To be part of this royal priesthood means offering our life as a spiritual sacrifice. It means witnessing to Christ in a world that often rejects the Gospel. Here, the apostle

instructs Christians to be ready to give a reason for the hope within them, doing so “with meekness and fear” so that their lives may reflect the purity and mercy of God before the world. This identity is renewed each time we experience the Divine Liturgy, where heaven and earth meet and the faithful participate as a congregation.

Through prayer, fasting, participation in the Holy Mysteries, and acts of charity, believers are transformed by divine grace and become more like Christ.

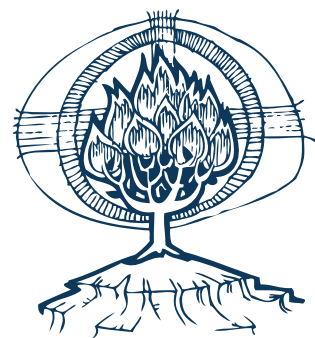
The epistle also emphasises the redemptive value of suffering. Apostle Peter does not minimise the hardships faced by Christians. Instead, he teaches that trials can become opportunities for spiritual growth. He reminds believers that trials refine faith “more precious than gold” so that when our suffering is united to the suffering of Christ, it becomes a path toward holiness. This theme invites us to reflect on how we bear our own hardships. The Lord Himself endured rejection, humiliation, and the Cross before entering into His glory. In the same way, Christians are called to endure difficulties with faith, patience, and hope.

To be part of this royal priesthood means offering our life as a spiritual sacrifice. It means witnessing to Christ in a world that often rejects the Gospel.

Finally, the epistle points believers toward hope. The letter begins by praising God for the “living hope” given through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This hope sustains Christians through every challenge because it is grounded not in worldly success but in Christ’s victory over death. As we journey toward the Kingdom, 1 Peter offers a timeless message — our final destination, holiness in daily life, our calling in Christ, hope in suffering and steadfast trust in Him. These themes remain vital for all Christians navigating a world that often mirrors the challenges of the early Church.

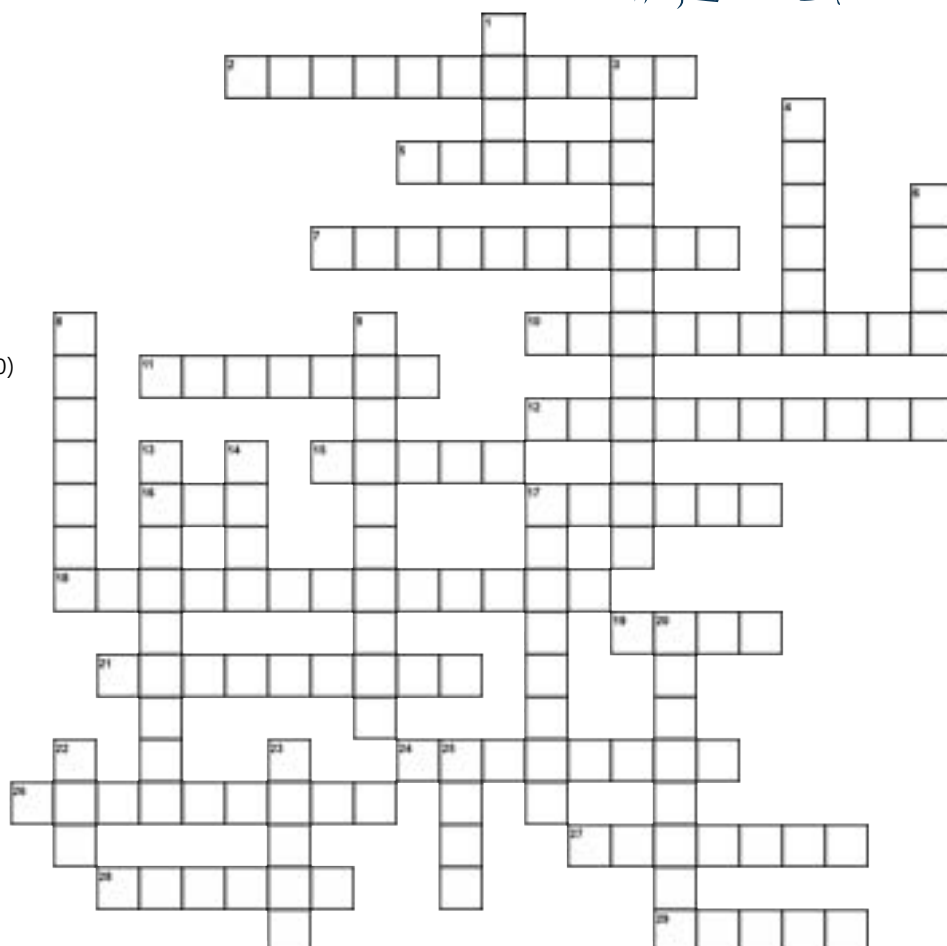
The *Life of the Panagia*

Crossword Quiz



ACROSS

2. Translation of Gorgoepikoos to English? (5,2,4)
5. Fill in the correct word of Isaiah's prophecy: "Behold, the ____ shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel." (6)
7. What did the Archangel give to her when he informed her of her repose? (10)
10. Which hymn was written by the Archangel Gabriel to Panagia? (10)
11. At what age was Panagia visited by the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation? (7)
12. Where was Panagia buried? (10)
15. At what age did Panagia enter the Temple? (5)
16. Panagia is often referred to as the new ____? (3)
17. How did the Apostles travel to Panagia's funeral? (6)
18. Where was Panagia visited by Archangel Gabriel who informed her of her repose? (5,2,6)
19. Where was Christ's first miracle performed, thanks to Panagia? (4)
21. Whose home did Panagia visit after the Annunciation? (9)
24. The feast of Panagia's birthday is called the "____ of the Theotokos." (8)
26. The feast of Panagia's falling asleep is called the _____. (9)
27. What item is Panagia holding in some icons of the Annunciation? (7)
28. In which monastery is the icon of Panagia traditionally covered, as an Emperor wanted it never to be seen by anyone? (6)
29. Which Ecumenical Council proclaimed the title "Theotokos" for Panagia? (5)



DOWN

1. On how many occasions were the words of Panagia recorded in the Bible? (4)
3. The feast where Archangel Gabriel appeared to Panagia is called the _____. (12)
4. Which Apostle was not present at the Dormition of Panagia? (6)
6. In whose home did Panagia live after the Crucifixion? (4)
8. Who was Panagia's father? (7)
9. On which island do snakes traditionally appear on the Dormition of Panagia? (10)
13. Which icon of Panagia did St Paisios say looked the most like her? (9)
14. Which famous relic of Panagia is currently held at Vatopaidi Monastery? (4)
17. In hymns Panagia is called more honourable than the ____? (8)
20. The ____ Hymn is sung to the Theotokos on Fridays during Great Lent. (8)
22. What was the first word of Panagia recorded in the Bible? (3)
23. On which island do pilgrims traditionally crawl from the port to the icon of Panagia? (5)
25. Who was Panagia's mother? (4)

THE ICON OF THE TRANSFIGURATION



Each year on 6 August, the Church keeps the feast of the Transfiguration. This great feast is when Christ took Peter, James and John up a high mountain, Mt Tabor and *"was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light"* (Matthew 17:2).

The icon of the Transfiguration does not simply illustrate that moment; it interprets it, drawing us into the theology the Fathers found there.

Christ stands at the centre, robed in dazzling white, set within the oval shaped mandorla, the great circle (often enclosing a geometric star) that represents the "bright cloud" and the divine glory streaming from Him. Rays of light reach out to the disciples below. The Fathers insist that this light is not created or merely physical. As St Gregory Palamas taught, God is called Light "not according to His essence, but according to His energy". What the apostles saw on Tabor was the uncreated glory of the Godhead itself, shown to

them, as the feast's hymns say, "according to their ability" to bear it.

To either side of Christ stand Moses and Elijah, in conversation with Him. Moses, holding the tablets of the Law, represents the Law. Elijah represents the Prophets. Together, the whole of the Old Testament bears witness to Christ. The Fathers add that Moses, who died, stands for the dead, while Elijah, taken up alive in a chariot of fire, stands for the living. Christ is Lord of both.

Below, the three disciples are overwhelmed. Peter kneels and raises a hand against the light, John falls forward with his back to the radiance, and James topples backward, emphasising the fact that these were men who "fell on their faces and were greatly afraid". Yet they were not merely dazzled. By a change in their senses, the Fathers say, the disciples passed "from the flesh to the Spirit", seeing with bodily eyes a glory beyond the created world.

The scene is also a revelation of the Holy Trinity. The Father's voice speaks from the cloud, saying, *"This is My beloved Son"*, while the Holy Spirit is present in the luminous cloud overshadowing the mountain. The uncreated light that shines from Christ is the divine glory of the Kingdom, revealing Him as the eternal Son of God.

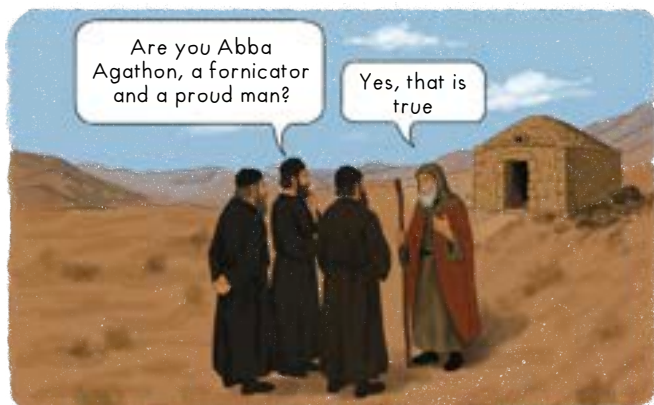
Finally, the feast looks forward. This same light is a foretaste of the Kingdom and of Christ's coming again in glory. And it was given for a reason, so that when the disciples later saw their Master crucified, they would know that the Passion of the very splendour of the Father was freely, willingly embraced.

ON DISCERNMENT

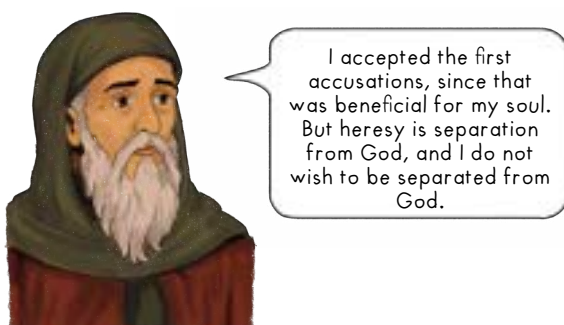
STORIES FROM THE DESERT

Saint Agathon of Egypt, a contemporary of Saint Makarios the Great, lived in asceticism in a skete in Egypt in the 5th century. He was distinguished by exceptional meekness, accounting himself the most sinful of men.

On one occasion, monks who had heard of his discernment came to Saint Agathon to see if they could make him lose his temper. They asked him:



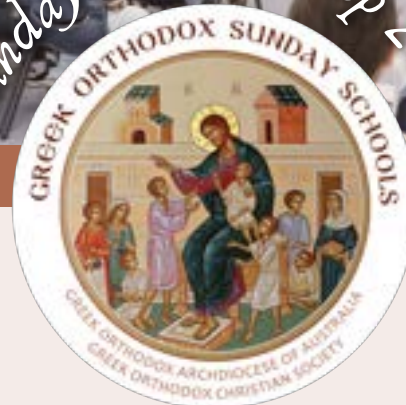
They asked the saint why he agreed with them when they accused him of vices, but then denied this last charge. Agathon replied:



Astonished at his discernment, they returned to their monastery, edified.



Sunday School Camp 2026



An

ORTHODOX ADVENTURE

for children in years 4 - 6

Tuesday 6 - Thursday 8 October 2026

CRU Galston Gorge Camp & Conference Centre

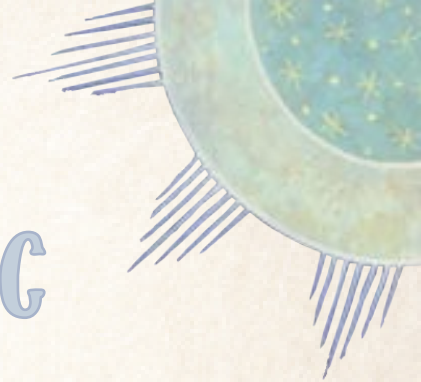


Scan here to complete the online registration form, or visit: sundayschool.lychnos.org/camp



For more information contact your Sunday School coordinator or email sundayschool@greekorthodoxchristians.org

ΟΙ ΜΙΚΡΟΙ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΕΣ - Ο ΙΩΝΑΣ



Η ιστορία του Ιωνά είναι πολύ γνωστή. Είναι ένας από τους μικρούς προφήτες και το όνομά του σημαίνει «περιστέρι». Μαθαίνουμε στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο του βιβλίου του ότι ήταν γιος του Αμαθί (Ιων. 1, 1). Αν κοιτάξουμε στο 4ο βιβλίο των Βασιλειών θα δούμε ότι αναφέρεται ένας προφήτης που λέγεται Ιωνάς, γιος του Αμαθί, ο οποίος καταγόταν από τη Γεθχοφέρ της Γαλιλαίας και προανήγγειλε στον Ιεροβοάμ Β΄ την αποκατάσταση των συνόρων του Ισραήλ. Ο Ιεροβοάμ ήταν βασιλιάς του Ισραήλ το 783 – 743 π.Χ.

Οι περισσότεροι ερμηνευτές της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης θεωρούν ότι αυτός είναι ο προφήτης που έστειλε ο Θεός στη Νινευή. Αυτό σημαίνει ότι έζησε τον 8ο αιώνα π.Χ. και ήταν σύγχρονος του Αμώς και του Ωσηέ.

Το βιβλίο του Ιωνά έχει τέσσερα κεφάλαια:

1. Ο Ιωνάς λαμβάνει την εντολή του Θεού να πάει ανατολικά στη Νινευή, για να κηρύξει στους κατοίκους της την καταστροφή που θα έστελνε ο Θεός εξαιτίας της διαφθοράς τους. Ο Ιωνάς προσπαθεί να αποφύγει την αποστολή αυτή, φεύγοντας με πλοίο προς τη Θαρσίς, και ως συνέπεια κινδυνεύει η ζωή του όταν στη θάλασσα πέφτει τρικυμία.
2. Ένα μεγάλο κήτος καταπίνει τον Ιωνά, και εκείνος περνάει τρεις ημέρες στην κοιλιά του προσευχόμενος στον Θεό, ο οποίος τον σώζει.

3. Φτάνει στη Νινευή και τη γυρίζει όλη κηρύττοντας τη μετάνοια. Με ειλικρινή μετάνοια οι κάτοικοι της Νινευής σώζονται.
4. Ο Ιωνάς θλίβεται για τη ματαίωση της τιμωρίας των κατοίκων της Νινευής και παραπονιέται στον Θεό, ο οποίος τον επιτιμά με το παράδειγμα της κολοκυθιάς.

Το βιβλίο του Ιωνά διαφέρει από τα άλλα προφητικά βιβλία. Δεν είναι απλώς μια συλλογή από προφητείες, αλλά ένα πνευματικό προσκύνημα. Φανερώνει την αγάπη του Θεού για τον άνθρωπο που επαναστατεί, καθώς και τη συγχώρηση και το έλεος που δείχνει και στους Εβραίους και στα Έθνη. Δεν είναι μόνο Θεός των Ιουδαίων αλλά και Θεός των ειδωλολατρών.

Το βιβλίο του Ιωνά προετοιμάζει το δρόμο για το Ευαγγέλιο. Ο συγγραφέας προβλέπει την επιστροφή του ειδωλολατρικού κόσμου, η οποία δεν θα γίνει με την εκπλήρωση νομικών διατάξεων ή με προσφορές και θυσίες, αλλά με εσωτερική μετάνοια. Δηλαδή η προφητεία της επιστροφής των εθνών γίνεται μέσα από το παράδειγμα της μετάνοιας των κατοίκων της Νινευής. Η αποστολή του Προφήτη στη Νινευή μαρτυρεί την πραγματικότητα της κλήσης των εθνών.

Για τους Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας ο Ιωνάς είναι τύπος Χριστού. Ο ιερός Αυγουστίνος έγραψε ότι «ο Ιωνάς πήγε από το ξύλινο καράβι «στην κοιλιά» του ψαριού για τρεις μέρες και ο Χριστός πήγε από το ξύλινο σταυρό στον τάφο για τρεις μέρες». Ο Ματθαίος μας γράφει ότι ο ίδιος ο Χριστός πρόβαλε την τριήμερη διαμονή του Ιωνά στην κοιλιά του κήτους ως πρότυπο της τριήμερης ταφής και αναστάσεώς Του (Ματθ. 12, 40), ενώ ο Λουκάς αναφέρει το «σημείο του Ιωνά» για τη γενεά εκείνη (Λουκ. 11, 29-30).

Η επιστροφή του εθνικού κόσμου τον καιρό του Ιωνά είναι προανάκρουσμα της Καινής Διαθήκης και της μετάνοιας κάθε αμαρτωλού ανθρώπου. Γι' αυτό διαβάζεται ολόκληρο το βιβλίο στη Λειτουργία της Πρώτης Αναστάσεως, το Μέγα Σάββατο.

*Η Εκκλησία γιορτάζει τον Προφήτη
Ιωνά στις 21 Σεπτεμβρίου.*



News & Events



Sunday School High School Boys Football 'World Cup'

On Sunday 9 August, over fifty High School boys from Sunday Schools across Sydney gathered to compete in the High School Boys Sunday School World Cup.

After beginning the day with prayer, the boys split into their teams and squared off against each other in a round robin style format. The day culminated in the grand final between the alliance of All Saints Belmore and St George Rosebay, against St Stylianos GyMEA and St Nicholas Marrickville. With nothing being able to separate the two teams in regular time, the match proceeded to extra time, where the All Saints and St George alliance scored the winning goal and emerged victorious, claiming the title of the High School Boys Sunday School World Cup Champions of 2026!

We would like to express our thanks to all who attended, supported and took part. Days like this are a reminder of the joy and enthusiasm that springs forth from true Christian fellowship and of the importance of the relationships formed in the Sunday Schools of our churches.



Annual Winter Retreats for all ages

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the Greek Orthodox Ladies Group (Kyklo), Men's Group (Enosi) and the Youth Omatha Girls and Omatha Boys Groups held their annual 3-day winter retreats at various campsites in the Central Coast and the Royal National Park.

The synthema for 2026 "do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2) guided the various talks, Bible studies, discussions and activities conducted on the retreats. Participants young and old formed and grew Christian friendships, and developed a personal relationship with Christ in His Church.

The retreats coincided with feasts in the Church calendar -



St Paisios the Athonite, the Holy Martyr Paraskeve. The ladies camp was held during the beautiful season of the Fast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, as well as the feast day of St Kallinikos of Edessa. Experiencing these blessed days together was spiritually uplifting and will be treasured by all.

The highlight of all retreats was the Divine Liturgy services officiated by Fr Eusebios, the Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery.



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