

Orthodox Heritage

So therefore, brethren, persevere, and grasp the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by our epistle [2 Thess. 2:15]

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Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε, καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε, εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν [Θεσσ. Β' 2:15]

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MAN IS SENTENCED TO IMMORTALITY

By the Blessed Father St. Justin (Popovich), Archimandrite Of Chelije (+1979).

Man sentenced God to death; by His resurrection, God sentenced man to immortality. In return for a beating, He gives an embrace; for abuse, a blessing; for death, immortality. Man never showed so much hate for God as when he crucified Him; and God never showed more love for man than when He arose. Man even wanted to reduce God to a mortal, but God by His resurrection made man immortal. The crucified God is risen and has killed death. Death is no more. Immortality has surrounded man and all the words.

By the resurrection of the God-Man, human nature has been led irreversibly onto the path of immortality, and has become dreadful to death itself. For before the resurrection of Christ, death was dreadful to man, but after the resurrection of Christ man has become more dreadful to death. When man lives by faith in the risen God-Man, he lives above death, out of its reach; it is a footstool for his feet: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (I Cor 15:55) When a man belonging to Christ dies, he simply sets aside his body, like clothing, in which he will again be vested on the day of dreaded judgement.

Before the resurrection of the God-Man, death was the second nature of man: life first, death second. But by His resurrection, the Lord has changed everything: immortality has become the second nature of man, it has become

natural for man; and death is now unnatural. As before the resurrection of Christ, it was natural for men to be mortal, so after the resurrection of Christ, it is natural for men to be immortal.

By sin, man became mortal and transient; by the resurrection of the God-Man, he became immortal and perpetual. In this is the power, the might, the all-mightiness of the resurrection of Christ. Without it, there would have been no Christianity.

Of all miracles, this is the greatest miracle. All other miracles have it as their source and lead to it. From it grow faith, love, hope, prayer, and love for God. Behold: the fugitive disciples,



having run away from Jesus when He died, return to Him because He is risen. Behold: the centurion confessed Christ as the Son of God when he saw the resurrection from the grave. Behold: all the first Christians became Christian because the Lord Jesus is risen, because death was vanquished. This is what

no other faith has; this is what lifts the Lord Christ above all other gods and men; this is what, in the most undoubted manner, shows and demonstrates that Jesus Christ is the One True God and Lord in all the worlds.

Because of the resurrection of Christ, because of His victory over death, men have become, continue to become, and will continue becoming Christians. The entire history of Christianity is nothing other than the history of a unique miracle, namely, the resurrection of Christ, which is unbrokenly threaded through the hearts of Christians from one day to the next, from year to year, across the centuries, until the dreaded judgement.

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Orthodox Heritage may, at times, bring up issues or present articles that some consider controversial. Such material is presented so that a distinction is made between salvation and the 20th century heresy of ecumenism. These are confusing times for the Orthodox faithful, and political correctness must be sacrificed so that His truth be brought forth.

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Man is born, in fact, not when his mother brings him into the world, but when he comes to believe in the risen Christ, for then he is born to life eternal, whereas a mother bears children for death, for the grave. The resurrection of Christ is the mother of us all, all Christians, the mother of immortals. By faith in the resurrection, man is born anew, born for eternity.

"That is impossible!" says the skeptic. But you listen to what the risen God-Man says: *All things are possible to him that believeth!* (Mk 9:23). The believer is he who lives, with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his being, according to the Gospel of the risen Lord Jesus.

Faith is our victory, by which we conquer death, faith in the risen Lord Jesus. Death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin. The Lord has removed the string of death. Death is a serpent; sin is its fangs. By sin, death puts its poison into the soul and into the body of man. The more sins a man has, the more bites through which death puts its poison in him.

When a wasp stings a man, he uses all his strength to remove the sting. But when sin wounds him, this sting of death, what should be done? One must call upon the risen Lord Jesus in faith and prayer, that He may remove the sting of death from the soul. He, in His great loving-kindness, will do this, for He is overflowing with mercy and love. When many wasps attack a man's body and wound it with many stings, that man is poisoned and dies. The same happens with a man's soul, when many sins wound it with their stings: it is poisoned and dies a death with no resurrection.

Conquering sin in himself through Christ, man overcomes death. If you have lived the day without vanquishing a single sin of yours, know that you have become deadened. Van-

quish one, two, or three of your sins, and behold: you have become younger than the youth which does not age, young in immortality and eternity. Never forget that to believe in the resurrection of the Lord Christ means to carry out a continuous fight with sins, with evil, with death.

If a man fights with sins and passions, this demonstrates that he indeed believes in the risen Lord; if he fights with them, he fights for life eternal. If he does not fight, his faith is in vain. If man's faith is not a fight for immortality and eternity, then tell me, what is it? If faith in Christ does not bring us to resurrection and life eternal, then what use is it to us? If Christ is not risen, that means that neither sin nor death has been vanquished, than why believe in Christ? For the one who, by faith in the risen Lord, fights with each of his sins there will be affirmed in him gradually the feeling that Christ is indeed risen, has indeed vanquished the sting of sin, has indeed vanquished death on all the fronts of combat. Sin gradually diminishes the soul in man, driving it into death, transforming it from immortality to mortality, from incorruption to corruption. The more the sins, the more the mortal man. If man does not feel immortality in himself, know that he is in sins, in bad thoughts, in languid feelings. Christianity is an appeal: Fight with death until the last breath, fight until a final victory has been reached. Every sin is a desertion; every passion is a retreat; every vice is a defeat.

One need not be surprised that Christians also die bodily. This is because the death of the body is a sowing. The mortal body is sown, says the Apostle Paul, and it grows, and is raised in an immortal body. (I Cor 15:42-44) The body dissolves, like a sown seed, that the Holy Spirit may quicken and perfect it. If the Lord Christ had not been risen in body,

what use would it have for Him? He would not have saved the entire man. If His body did not rise, then why was He incarnate why did He take on Himself flesh, if He gave it nothing of His Divinity?

If Christ is not risen, then why believe in Him? To be honest, I would never have believed in Him had He not risen and had not therefore vanquished death. Our greatest enemy was killed and we were given immortality. Without this, our world is a noisy display of revolting stupidity and despair, for neither in Heaven nor under Heaven is there a greater stupidity than this world without the resurrection; and there is not a greater despair than this life without immortality. There is no being in the world more miserable than a man who does not believe in the resurrection of the dead. It would have been better for such a man never to have been born.

In our human world, death is the greatest torment and inhumane horror. Freedom from this torment and horror is salvation. Such a salvation was given the race of man by the Vanquisher of death—the risen God-Man. He related to us all the mystery of salvation by His resurrection. To be saved means to assure our body and soul of immortality and life eternal. How do we attain this? By no other way than by a Theanthropic life, a new life, a life in the risen Lord, in and by the Lord's resurrection.

For us Christians, our life on earth is a school in which we learn how to assure ourselves of resurrection and life eternal. For what use is this life if we cannot acquire by it life eternal? But, in order to be resurrected with the Lord Christ, man must first suffer with Him, and live His life as his own. If he does this, then on Pascha he can say with Saint Gregory the Theologian: *Yesterday I was crucified with Him, today I live with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him, today I rise with Him.* (Troparion 2, Ode 3, Pascha Matins)

Christ's Four Gospels are summed up in only three words. They are: Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen! In each of these words is a Gospel, and in the Four Gospels is all the meaning of all God's worlds, visible and invisible. When all knowledge and all the thoughts of men are concentrated in the cry of the Paschal salutation, "Christ is risen!", then immortal joy embraces all beings and in joy responds: "Indeed He is risen!..."



When a person does not sharpen his mind thinking about God, but instead spends his time plotting and sharpening various schemes, he surrenders himself to the devil. It would have been better for him to have lost his mind completely. Then, at least, he would have some extenuating circumstances on the day of judgment.

Elder Paisios the Athonite

THE FEAT OF REFRAINING FROM JUDGING

By Fr. Inok Vsevolod (Filipiev).

The venerable Maximilian the Confessor says: "Should we not be horrified and trembling... for God the Father, not judging anyone, *but hath committed all judgment unto the Son Himself* (Jn 5:22), the Son: *Judge not, lest ye be judged.* (Mt 7:1); *Do not judge and you will not be judged* (Lk 6:37), and likewise an Apostle: *Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes.* (1 Cor 4:5) and also: *...for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself...* (Rom 2:1), when I say it, it is so: people, crying about their sins, took judgment from the Son's hands and began to judge and condemn one another, as if they were sinless! Heaven is horrified by this, and the earth trembles." (*Christian life on The Philokalia*, Harbin, 1930).

Centuries pass, but still people stand before the very same unassailable wall of condemnation and cannot overcome it. Adam in Paradise, justifying himself before God, condemned Eve; Cain, having condemned his brother Abel in his soul, killed him; the crime of condemnation brought the Jews to the killing of the Messiah; and for us, the new Canaanites and Pharisees, condemnation pushes us to the daily spiritual murder of our brothers.

Condemning tortures even those very ones who condemn, denies them peace, forces them to constantly monitor the actions of those around them and poisons their souls with bitterly venomous suspicion.

One modern elder said: "Getting up onto the path of salvation is easy: one must just firmly resolve to never judge anyone from this moment forth." The mind can understand these words, but how to put them into effect? For this it is absolutely necessary to understand where the reason for the condemnation lies. And the reason is in our false self-appraisal: those who judge others consider themselves to be in the right, place themselves about their brother, and see themselves as being rid of those sins which they accuse those around them of. **He who has not acknowledged his own personal spiritual corruption will never cease condemning his neighbors.**

However, we are all infected with sin, aren't we? There is no person who could live and not sin—we all languish in the prison of our own flaws, all pray for relief in the life of the next era, and all need Godly aid. Again, many know this in theory, but when it comes down to it, withholding judgment becomes painfully difficult; we are driven to condemn. Why? Because condemnation has become our passion, and like any passion, it brings us a great reward, a fascinating, thinly-veiled pleasure. How "nice" it is to condemn someone in a friendly conversation, laugh at

someone's shortcomings, harbor malicious sentiments and engage in similar innuendo... But surely we don't disbelieve the Bible warning us that someday we will have to answer for every single word, and thus even for this false joy, intent to condemn.

The battle with the passion of condemnation, as with any other passion, cannot be theoretical; it must be every minute of every day, for all our lives; it must be based on tight self-discipline and on being attentive of our words and thoughts. In other words, without smart behavior, without spiritual feats, one cannot succeed here. What, in this case, must the said behavior and feats consist of? They must consist of attentive servitude in all facets of life. We will also definitely notice that during the course of the day the paths to condemnation, veritably invisible underwater rocks, surround us on all sides and threaten to shipwreck our soul. With God's help, we can gradually learn to avoid encounters with these submarine rocks; in those places where we used to be overcome with irritation and annoyance, we will be calm; where we used to be angry, we will be silent, where we tried to justify ourselves, we will be calm.

Where we judged our neighbors—we will pray for them and for ourselves, so that we do not fall into similar sins. Very quickly we will notice that our souls are not weighed down with condemnation, that they experience genuine spiritual happiness and lightness of being; and we are wiser—the chains and fetters of other's sins no longer anger us.

And as judging others brings with it other forms of corruption: anger, discord, and murder, so will victory over condemnation reveal the true path to those who would do good: clean prayer, peace, harmony, full awareness of one's sins. It is for this very reason that all manner of demons try to catch the soul in a net of condemnation and barriers to the cleansing of this passion. In turn, and for the same reason, we do not have the right to put down the fight with condemnation, but must immediately begin carefully watching after ourselves.

“Watching after ourselves” is the golden rule of Christian morality, but so often scorned by Christians. How much effort we exert on external affairs, and how little strength we leave for our own selves. But without these internal affairs, nothing on the outside could possibly lead to salvation...

Let's say that Russian Orthodox patriots fight for the rebirth of Orthodox tsarist Russia, and this is good; but at the same time we cannot forget that the rebirth of Russia and the tsar will not bring the light of Christ into our souls if we are weighed down by corruption. Can one imagine a sadder ending: in Russia there would rule an Orthodox tsar, but in our hearts become a hellish dusk! But this is exactly what will happen to those Christians, even if they

are patriots, who do not watch after themselves, do not lead invisible battles with their own passions, and do not care for their souls.

The Most Holy Seraphim of Sarov said that the goal of Christian life is reaching for the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is in fact called the Heavenly King. Both are confirmations in our souls of the power of this King and it should be our top priority. For this it is necessary to step onto the path of smart action, the path of spiritual conflict with passions; and to conquer them one by one, with God's help. And the battle can begin with the very passion of condemnation and judging.

In conclusion, I will once more repeat the wise words of the elder: **“Getting up onto the path of salvation is easy: one must just firmly resolve to never judge anyone from this moment forth.”**



Our holy God lets temptations come upon those who love Him in order to teach them the art of war. The grace of God withdraws and then clouds of temptation rise and one reaches the point of saying, “See! God has abandoned me!” Then he has myriads of thoughts, strangulation of soul, and darkness and lapses everywhere!

Holy Wisdom, our holy God, causes all these, and we learn that only God is able to save us and that without God all our own works are rubbish and chaff, which all scatter with the slightest wind of temptation, and it becomes apparent that we are rusty things, feeble and unable to face any temptation whatsoever without the aid of our holy God's grace.

Through such things the grace of divine providence teaches us the lesson of self-knowledge; that is, of true, cognizant, solid, bedrock humility; for without it, it is impossible to build a spiritual house. He abandons us to the point of despair, so that we are compelled to cry out to Him mournfully and lamentably, so that our mouth and heart may be sanctified.

Temptations, therefore, bring about all these things. Indeed, let us pray that God will protect us from temptations, but when they come, we must pass through them with patience and wisdom to profit from them. Therefore, have patience in all things and thus save yourself.

Elder Ephraim of Filotheou
From “Counsels from the Holy Mountain”, the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim

CONSCIENCE: THE VOICE OF GOD IN MAN

By ROCOR Bishop Alexander (Mileant) of Buenos Aires and South America (+2005).

The Action of Conscience in Man

One woman, by reason of poverty, took something from a store and carried it away surreptitiously. No one saw her. But from that moment a certain unpleasant feeling gave her no peace. She had to go back to the store and return what she had taken. Having done this, she came home with a feeling of relief. Such cases, in which people are forced to act contrary to their advantage or their pleasure, are impossible to enumerate.

Each individual is acquainted with his inner voice which at times reproaches and persecutes him as it were, and at other times encourages and gladdens him. This refined, innate moral feeling is called conscience. Conscience—it is a kind of spiritual instinct which differentiates between good and evil more quickly and more clearly than the mind. He who follows his conscience will not regret his actions.

In the Holy Scriptures the conscience is also referred to as the heart. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus Christ likens the conscience to the eye, by means of which a person sees his moral state: *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.* (Mt 6:22). He also likens it to an adversary with whom a man must make peace before he appears before the Judge: *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.* (Mt 5:25). This last comparison reveals the distinguishing characteristic of the conscience: to oppose our bad actions and intentions.

Our personal experience likewise proves that this inner voice, called the conscience, is located outside our (fallen human) control and expresses itself independently, quite apart from our desire. Just as we cannot convince ourselves that we are full when we are hungry, or that we are rested when we are tired, so, too, we cannot convince ourselves that we have done something good when our conscience tells us that we have done something bad.

Some see in Christ's words concerning the worm that dieth not, which will torment sinners in the life to come, a reference to the gnawing of the conscience: *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* (Mk 9:44).

Similar torments of the conscience were expressively and colorfully described by A. S. Pushkin in his dramatic work, *The Avaricious Knight*: "Conscience—A clawed beast, scraping the heart; conscience is an uninvited guest, a tiresome interlocutor, a churlish creditor; it is a witch, before whom the moon and the tombs grow dim." And further the knight with terror recalls the pleading and the tears of all those whom he pitilessly robbed.

A Common Natural Law

The presence of the conscience gives evidence that indeed, just as the Bible relates, in the very process of creating man, God placed within the depths of his soul His image and likeness: *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* (Gen 1:26). For this reason it is customary to call conscience the voice of God in man. As a moral law written directly on man's heart, it acts in all people, independent of age, race, upbringing and level of development.

Anthropologists who study the morals and customs of various underdeveloped and primitive peoples testify that to this day they have yet to find, even among the wildest savages, a people lacking some form of an understanding of good and evil. Furthermore, many tribes not only place a high value on good and despise evil, but for the most part their views agree on the essence of the one and the other. Many even primitive tribes stand just as high in their understanding of good and evil as many cultured peoples. Even among those tribes which place a positive value on certain deeds which are unacceptable according to prevailing opinion, there is in general a marked consensus in the moral consciousness of all people.

In the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul writes in some detail concerning the actions of the inner moral law in man. The Apostle reproaches the Jews who, knowing the written law of God, often transgress it, whereas the pagans, which have not the [written] law, do by nature the things contained in the law: *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.* (Rom 2:14-15).

Apostle Paul also explains how this law of conscience sometimes rewards and at other times punishes a man. Each person, therefore, no matter who he may be, Jew or Gentile,



has a feeling of uneasiness, of distress and oppression, when he does something wrong or indulges in licentiousness; an inner feeling gives him to know that such actions will incur God's punishment: *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* (Rom 1:32). At the coming Dreaded Judgment, God will judge people not only according to their faith, but also according to the witness of their conscience. For this reason, as the holy Apostle Paul teaches, the faithful may attain salvation if their consciences bear witness before God of a life of good deeds.

The conscience has a highly refined sense of good and evil. If man were not marred by sin, he would have no need of the written law. His conscience could rightly guide all his actions. The need for a written law arose after the Fall, when man, darkened by passions, ceased to hear clearly the voice of his conscience. But in essence, both the written law and the inner law of the conscience speak about the same thing: *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.* (Mt 7:12).

In our daily relations with people we subconsciously place greater trust in a man's conscience than in written laws and rules. After all, one cannot track down every violation, and even in matters of the law "something drew a breath, you turn around, it's gone." Whereas the conscience contains in itself the eternal and immutable law of God; and because of this, normal relations between people are possible only as long as people have not lost within themselves the voice of conscience.

Examples of the Action of the Conscience Described in the Bible

No book explains so precisely all the various manifestations of the conscience in man as does the Bible. We shall cite here some cases in which the conscience is most apparent.

In examining negative examples we see how evil deeds evoke in man feelings of shame, fear, grief, guilt and even despair. Adam and Eve, for example, having tasted the forbidden fruit, felt ashamed and hid with the intention of concealing themselves from God: *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons... and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.* (Gen 3:7-8).

Cain, having killed his younger brother Abel out of jealousy, afterwards began to be afraid that some passerby would kill him: *Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.* (Gen 4:14).

King Saul, persecuting the innocent David, wept from shame on learning that David, instead of taking revenge, had defended his life (I Kgs 26). The proud Scribes and Pharisees, who brought to Christ the woman caught in adultery, began to depart in shame when they saw their own sins written by Christ in the ground (Jn 8). When Christ chased the merchants and money-changers out of the temple, they left without protesting, knowing that it was wrong to turn the temple into a market-place (Jn 2).

Sometimes the pangs of conscience become so unbearable that a man prefers to cut short his life. The clearest example of this sharp gnawing of the conscience we see in the traitor Judas, who hung himself after he had betrayed Christ to the chief priests of the Jews (Mt 27:5). In general, sinners—both believers and unbelievers—subconsciously feel responsible for their actions. Thus, according to Christ's prophetic words, before the end of the world sinners, seeing the approach of God's righteous judgment, will ask the earth to swallow them up and the hills to cover them (Lk 23:30; Rev 6:16).

It sometimes happens that a man compassed about by anxieties does not hear the voice of his conscience. But later, when he comes to himself, he feels its pangs with double intensity. Thus:

—The brothers of Joseph, having fallen onto hard times, remembered how they had sold their younger brother into slavery and understood that they had been justly punished for this sin (Gen 42:21).

—King David, carried away with the beauty of Bathsheba, understood his sin of adultery only after he had been called to account by the prophet Nathan (II Kgs 12:13).

— Out of fear the fiery Apostle Peter renounced Christ, but upon hearing the cock crow he recalled Christ's prophecy and wept bitterly (Mt 26:75).

— The wise thief, hanging on the cross next to Christ, understood only just before he died that sufferings were sent to him and his comrade for their previous crimes (Lk 23:40).

—The publican Zaccheus, moved by Christ's love, remembered how he had offended people through his greed and resolved to recompense all those whom he had cheated (Lk 19:8).

On the other hand, when a man knows he is innocent, he finds in the clean witness of his conscience an unshakable support for hope in God. The righteous Job, for example, knew that the reason for his cruel suffering lay not with him but in the higher designs of God, and he hoped in God's mercy (Job 27:6). Similarly, when the righteous King Hezekiah lay dying from an incurable disease, he began to entreat God to heal him for the sake of those good deeds which he had earlier performed, and he became well (II Kgs 20:3). Apostle Paul, whose life was dedicated to God and the salvation of others, not only did not fear death, but, on

the contrary, he desired to depart from his perishable body in order to be with Christ (Phil 1:23).

There is no greater relief or happiness for the sinner than to receive forgiveness of sins and peace of conscience. The Gospel is filled with such cases as the sinning woman who with gratitude washed Christ's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair (Lk 7:38).

On the other hand, disdain for the voice of the conscience and repeated falls into sin darken the soul to such an extent that a man can expect, as the Apostle Paul warns, the *shipwreck of his faith* (I Tim 1:19); i.e., he can become irrevocably immersed in evil.

The Psychological Side of the Conscience

Psychology is concerned with the study of the nature of conscience and its relation to man's other moral capabilities. Psychology, when applied properly, tries to ascertain two things:

(a) Is conscience a natural human trait innate to man, or is it the result of upbringing and conditioned by those circumstances of life which affect man's formation?

(b) Is conscience a manifestation of the mind, the senses or the will of man, or is it a manifestation of some independent power?

In answer to the first question, a careful observation of the presence of the conscience in man convinces us that the conscience is not the fruit of upbringing or physical instincts, but possesses a higher, inexplicable origin.

For example, children give evidence of having a conscience before receiving any [moral] instruction from adults. If physical instincts dictated the conscience, it would prompt people to do what was pleasant and to their advantage. The conscience, however, very often forces a person to do precisely that which appears unpleasant and to his disadvantage. No matter how much the wicked may revel if they go unpunished, or how much good people may suffer, the conscience tells everyone that there exists a higher justice. Sooner or later each will receive a reward according to his deeds. For this reason, the most convincing argument for many people in support of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul is the presence of a conscience in man.

Concerning the mutual relationship of the conscience and man's other faculties—his mind, senses and will—we see that not only does the conscience tell a man what in and of itself is morally good or bad, but it obliges him to do without fail what is good and to avoid what is bad, accompanying the good deeds with a feeling of joy and blessedness, and wrong doings with a feeling of shame and torment. In these actions, which are proper to the conscience, are manifest rational, sensual and volitional aspects.

Of course, on its own the mind cannot discern some actions as morally bad and others as morally good. The mind can only distinguish between which of our or another's

actions are intelligent or stupid, expedient or inexpedient, advantageous or disadvantageous, and that is all. Meanwhile, for some reason the mind sometimes urges us to oppose the most seemingly intelligent or advantageous opportunities with morally good actions, to condemn the first and approve the latter. It deters in certain of man's actions not only a calculation or mistake, similar to an error in mathematical calculations, but also something vile, criminal. May we not therefore conclude that the conscience, acting upon the mind, sets before it purely moral reasons, independent from it in essence?

In turning to the manifestations of the conscience in the area of the will, we see that in and of itself the will is the ability in man to desire something, but that this ability does not command a man what to do. The human will, inasmuch as we know it in ourselves and in others, very often struggles against the moral law and strives to tear itself loose of its binding fetters. If the commanding power of the conscience were merely a manifestation of man's will, this struggle would not exist. Whereas the summons of the moral law certainly weigh upon our will. Inasmuch as it is free, the will can refuse to fulfill these summons, but never is it able to renounce them. However, even in its non-fulfillment of the demands of the moral law, the will does not go unpunished.

Finally, the sensory power of the conscience also must not be regarded solely as the sentient faculty of man's heart. The heart seeks pleasant feelings and turns away from what is opposed to these. Meanwhile, violations of the demands of the moral law are frequently accompanied by the most severe torments which cause the heart to be rent in two, and from which we can in no way escape, no matter how much we want or try. Clearly, the sentient power of the conscience also must not be regarded solely as a manifestation of the normal sensual faculty.

In view of all this, should we not acknowledge that the conscience appears to be a power independent of us, standing higher than man and reigning over his intellect, will and heart, although it is both contained and lives within him?

On Preserving Purity of Conscience

Keepest thine heart with utmost care; for out of it are the issues of life. (Prov 4:23). With these words the Holy Scriptures summon man to preserve his moral purity.

But what is a sinful man to do? Having sullied his conscience, is he forever doomed? Fortunately, no! An enormous advantage that Christianity has over other religions lies in the fact that it opens the way and provides the means to a complete purification of the soul. This way consists in a repentant laying down of one's sins before the mercy of God, with the sincere intent to change one's life for the better. God forgives us for the sake of His Only-begotten Son,

Who on the Cross offered the redeeming sacrifice for our sins. In the Mystery of Baptism, and again in the Mystery of Confession and Holy Communion, God completely cleanses the conscience of a person from dead works (Eph 9:14). This is why the Church attaches such great significance to these Mysteries.

In addition, Christ's Church possesses that grace-giving power which gives the conscience the possibility to perfect itself, to become highly refined and manifest itself with great clarity. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God* (Mt 5:8). Through a clean conscience God's light begins to operate, ruling man's thoughts, words and deeds. In this blessed light a man becomes a vessel of God's Providence. Not only does he perfect himself spiritually and attain salvation, but he also contributes to the salvation of others, those who have contact with him. We recall Sts. Seraphim of Sarov, John of Kronstadt, Elder Ambrose of Optina and saints like them.

Finally, a clean conscience is a source of inner joy. People with clean consciences are calm, pleasant, desiring the good of others, thinking well of others. People with clean consciences have a foretaste already in this life of the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven!

Neither greatness of authority, instructs St. John Chrysostom, nor wealth of riches, nor extensive power, nor physical might, nor a sumptuous table, nor elegant clothes, nor anything else a man may possess can give joy and peace of soul; this comes only from spiritual well-being and a good conscience.



IOCC SHOULD RECONSIDER SENATOR PAUL SARBANES AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN

By Ronda Wintheiser.



From the Editor: We applaud the position taken by an Orthodox housewife on the atrocious act of abortion and the politically motivated appointment of Mr. Paul Sarbanes as the honorary chairman for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC).

Mr. Sarbanes is well known for his strong pro-abortion position and the many associated pro-death votes he cast as an influential Washington, DC politician. Abortion supporters have no business in the governance of the Orthodox Church or any of Her organizations.

We hope that Orthodox faithful will express similar dismay to the governance of the IOCC (and the Archdiocese) on this and any other similarly motivated position that stands in such strong contradiction with the dogma and the canons of His Church.

† † †

Dear Mr. Triantafilou, board of directors, and the staff at IOCC:

I did finally receive a response to the e-mail and the letter I wrote recently asking you to reconsider your selection of Senator Sarbanes as an honorary chairman for the upcoming gala planned for May 8th. Thank you for it.

The letter read, in part, that: "Senator Sarbanes was selected as an honorary co-chairman for the event for his steadfast commitment and support for IOCC's ongoing humanitarian mission. While we recognize that you do have concerns about his participation, we hope you will not allow it to overshadow a 20-year legacy of positively impacting the lives of so many people."

I'm sure you hoped that such a carefully crafted letter would smooth this over and make me go away. But it's Great Lent, and one of the Scripture readings selected by the Church for Clean Monday just happens to be a warning from God about coming to worship Him with blood on our hands (Isaiah 1) — and I take that very seriously.

Do you realize that the argument made in the letter written by Rada Tierney for why I should continue to support IOCC is the same argument used to defend Planned Parenthood? "So what if they are the largest abortion provider in the world? They do so much good! Why allow your concerns about abortion to overshadow their legacy of positively impacting the lives of so many people?"

In Romans 16, St. Paul admonishes Christians to "associate with the lowly". As far as I can tell, there are none as lowly as unborn children, nor as needy, isolated, and vulnerable, and as we are about to celebrate on March 25th, Christ deigned to become an unborn Child Himself.

It isn't my choice to overshadow your "20-year-legacy" with the spectre of abortion—it's yours. You have made it clear it doesn't matter to you whether Senator Sarbanes supports killing unborn children as long as he keeps giving his money to you. That makes it painfully obvious that you prefer to associate with rich, powerful, politically correct figures than with lowly unborn children — or with nobody housewives like me, for that matter.

You have Senator Sarbanes' support, so you surely don't need mine; therefore, I am writing to request a refund of the \$100 check I wrote to IOCC on February 5th during the Super Bowl of Caring drive. It's not very much; I'm sure you won't miss it, and if you do, perhaps Senator Sarbanes will make up the difference.

Lord, have mercy on me, and on you all as well.

Ronda Wintheiser

ST. MARY OF EGYPT: AN INSPIRATION TO ALL

Adapted from various sources and articles.

From the Editor: There are a few of the many saints of our Church whose lives shine as great examples for all to follow. Studying them aids us in acquiring the motivation and ability to strive in our life-long struggle towards the attainment of salvation. This is the case with the breathtaking life story of St. Mary of Egypt. We “remember” her twice per year, once on her feast day (April 1st) and once on the fifth Sunday of Great Lent. Her life story is one that leaves us all with a great hope and understanding that some day, by the grace of God, we too can be saved, in spite of our sinful and unworthy state. She, against any and all reasonable odds, tamed and transformed the desert from a place of death to a place where everlasting life was attained. She truly is a spectacle before us all; she is there to remind all of what can be accomplished if prayer and fasting and labor are applied. May she serve as an inspiration to all of us and, through her intercessions, may we all achieve the desired fruit of salvation.

† † †

St. Mary's Life Story



One day she saw the crowds of pilgrims preparing to go to Jerusalem, to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. She went along, announcing to her fellow travelers, “I have a body and that will serve as both fare and food for me.”

The trip was an eventful one, as Mary explored the outer limits of lust and passion with her companions (both those who were willing and those who were not). In Jerusalem, when the day of the Feast came around, Mary too set off for the church, drawn by the energy of the crowds thronging to venerate the True Cross. At the doors of the church, at its very threshold, Mary was driven back “by some kind of force.” Trying with all her might, she could not enter, although those around her went in with no difficulty at all. Then she understood: It was her own self that prevented her entrance, the sinfulness of her life that held her captive outside the church.

Scared and praying fervently to the Virgin Mary, with her heart open and clear, Mary begged forgiveness and again sought entry at the church. Guided then by a vision of the Theotokos, Mary left at once for the desert beyond the Jordan River, for there, her vision told her that she would find rest. On the way, she stopped at a church built on the river banks; there she was baptized and partook of Holy Communion. From there, she came to the desert, led still by the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The desert became her home, the place where she found her rest. Her conversion and turn to the life of solitude were unknown to any other living being, until after forty-eight years the priest Zosimas came and found her. When Zosimas first found Mary he did not know who she was, and she had never seen him. But she knew him before he had even spoken to her, and addressed him by name, “Father Zosimas, forgive me.”

The priest was struck with dread: was she an angel? Mary, for her part, was alarmed because of her nakedness (her clothes had worn along time ago...), and begged him to lend her his cloak so that she could stand in modesty before him. He was alternately terrified and wonderstruck as he watched and listened to her.

She knew all about him—about his life as a priest and the monastery in which he lived, and she clearly understood it all better than himself. When she prayed she levitated. Although illiterate and unschooled in Christianity (she had, after all, fled to the desert as soon as she converted) she was able to quote scriptural proofs for her teachings. But most of all, there was the enormity of her story.

Zosimas drew out from her (much against her will) the details of her former life and her conversion; and he questioned her closely on the hardships of her desert life through those many years. She described her harlotry openly, as well as her life in the desert; how hard it had been, the suffering from cold and heat, hunger and thirst, temptation, longing for company and comfort; and yet her determination to live out her repentance in a manner suitable to her sin. She did not see, though Zosimas could, that **she had attained a degree of sanctity that could only be measured by the degree of sinfulness she had known. For unlike him, she had no illusions about her accomplishments. She knew only the truth of God, and her love for Him.**

Then she asked a favor, for she understood that the Lord had sent Zosimas for a purpose. She asked him to return to his monastery and tell no one about her, but in a year's time return to her on Holy Thursday, the night of the Last Supper, and bring her the Eucharist, of which she had not partaken of since her conversion many years ago. Reluctantly, Zosimas left her presence in the desert for the monastery. At last he returned at the appointed time, yearning for her presence. She came to him, walking on water to cross the Jordan while he again gave way to awe. As he knelt to reverence her she reproved him saying, “What are you doing, Father Zosimas, you who are a priest of God and carrying the holy mysteries?” And at once he obeyed her, resuming to his priestly duties with fumbling fervor.

Mary received the life-giving gifts of the sacrament, groaning and weeping with her hands held up to heaven, and she cried out, *Lord now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word: for my eyes have seen your salvation.*

Again she sent him away, to return again the following year at the same time. But when the time came and Zosimas hastened on his journey, he found his beloved guide dead, with a letter to him written in the sand beside her body. From this he learned that she had died within an hour of receiving the sacrament the previous year—the fulfillment of her hope. He learned, also, for the first time her name: she signed herself “Mary the sinner.” Grieving and marveling, Zosimas buried the holy woman helped by a lion who came to venerate the body of the saint. Then, he went back to the world to give the gift of her story to others, just as she had given it to him.

St. Mary’s Significance to the Orthodox Faithful

Nothing is impossible for anyone of us, if prayer and fasting and labor are applied. This we know thanks to the example, the spectacle, before us of holy mother Mary of Egypt—a woman that knew whom Zosimas was from afar, who knew God’s will for Zosimas to fulfill one last wish of hers that she would have the Mysteries the following year; a woman who, when she prayed, stood in the air. We can’t even lift up our eyes to heaven, and she was standing in the heavens when she prayed. She walked upon water as if on dry land. And she called herself a miserable sinner.

She struggled for many, many, many years. She spent a total of 17 years in great, terrible struggles after she had repented. She had lived a life of total, complete debauchery and depravity. Her modesty precluded her from completely fulfilling the command of Zosimas and she couldn’t tell him everything that she did, but suffice it to say that she was a most wretched and sinful one. Everything that is possible to do to defile one’s self she did. But when she repented, she understood something that we would do well to understand.

Labor! This is the key to the Christian life: *Laboring in Christ*. And the church understands this. The church makes the connection between St. Mary and the sinful woman who was also a prostitute, a repentant prostitute of whom our Savior would later say, *The harlots and the tax-collectors are coming into heaven before you* (Mt 21:31), when speaking to the Pharisee.

He is in the home of the Pharisee and a prostitute comes in, and she begins to anoint his feet with her tears, and with ointment. Why? Because of love. Because previously she

had been forgiven. She knew this in her soul. It changed her. She lived with this reality. And she was thankful in the depths of her being. That’s what made her anoint His feet. Love. But this anointing, this coming to the house—is labor! **Without labor you can’t be saved.** Without demeaning yourself and remembering what God has done for you, you won’t be saved.

St. Mary of Egypt realized what God had done, and what the Mother of God had done, by praying to her Son, and helping her. She spent her repentful years in the desert alone, coldness, nakedness, hunger, longing, desire that could not be fulfilled. She said she would even go and bite the ground and lay on the ground until these feelings would go away from her. Oh, yes, she still had impure feelings, for many, many years. But she had great love, and labored because of this love. Just like this woman who anointed our Lord’s feet.

This is the key to the Christian life. This is why the Church presents this woman, great among women, and St. Mary of Egypt, great among the saints, as examples for us. And we’ve been given everything they’ve been given. Read what our Savior says about *he who has little forgiven, loveth little, but he who has much forgiven loveth much.* (Lk 7:77). Then He refers to the sinful woman.

We can take this two ways. If you have very little forgiven, then you don’t have much to be thankful for. We have little forgiven if we do not repent and strive to learn the commandments, and live the Christian life. But when you realize what’s been done for you, then you realize that you have had much forgiven. For really everyone,

everyone—has had much forgiven them. And so he should love much. He should turn to His Savior. But a man who doesn’t turn to our Savior is not a Christian whether he calls himself a Christian or not. I don’t care about all the “trappings”—I don’t care how many hymns you know—I don’t care about any of that. It’s all part and parcel of the life of the church. It’s critical for our salvation—but the knowledge of things doesn’t save. **Action based on knowledge: that’s what saves.**

So when a man knows what Christ has done for him, he loves much. When a man doesn’t care, when he’s all filled up with pride, or filled up with the life that he’s living, or filled up with lust or avarice or whatever else, then how can he love? He has no room in his heart to love. He’s already chosen the object of his love. And he will have his reward,



right here, such as it is: *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?* (Mt 5:46). And even the richest man is a pauper, compared to the lowest in the kingdom of heaven.

This woman and St. Mary sealed their repentance by action, by activity. St. Andrew compares Leah and Rachel to activity and contemplation. (St. Andrew makes a reference to Gen 29:16-30, 31-40: *Because of his crying need the Patriarch endured the scorching heat of the day, and he bore the frost of the night, daily making gains, shepherding, struggling, slaving, in order to win two wives. By the two wives understand action and direct knowledge in contemplation: Leah as action, for she had many children, and Rachel as knowledge, which is obtained by much labor. For without labors, my soul, neither action nor contemplation will achieve success.*) He said that without activity and contemplation you cannot be saved. This woman who anointed our Lord's feet, she contemplated what our Lord had done for her; He had forgiven her. Perhaps she was the one who had been caught in adultery and was about to be stoned (Jn 8:4-11). Perhaps she was just another nameless, faceless prostitute that saw Divinity and cleaved to it and changed. And when she contemplated what He had done her heart was filled, and this is what caused the activity, action, desire, longing to be with her Savior, to caress him, to kiss his feet, to be close to Him, to be in His presence.

Do we have this longing? If we don't then we should fear greatly for our souls. The church presents us extravagance here, extravagant repentance, and without it we can't be saved. For there exist no such thing as partial repentance. If you have something that ails you, then you must lament it, you must pound your breast about it. You must prostrate with tears over it. You must do whatever you have to do, labor in order to eradicate it, and in the process of doing that, at the same time, you must renew yourself with Who God is.

St. Mary of Egypt knew. This was a woman who could neither read nor write. This was a woman who, the only time she had darkened the door of the church was at her baptism, save two other times, the day she saw the holy cross, and received the holy mysteries at the monastery of the Forerunner before she went into the desert. And in the end of her days, she knew the entire scripture by heart, and she lived the entire scripture by heart. The church speaks of her as an angel. She had so transcended the flesh that she previously had lived with in such a base way. None of us probably can claim to have been as sinful as she was. That's the truth. But none of us can claim to have one tiny grain of repentance compared to her.

The Christian life is simple. If you know that which you've been forgiven of, you should love much, but the only way to know is to open your eyes and to pray with your heart. God

will fill you. He will show you. You will be overwhelmed by it. You won't want anything but ... Christ. The key to the Christian life is thus to constantly contemplate what God has done for you, and act upon it.

These women are the examples we have before us today. But what does the world tell us? It tells us all manner of garbage. Probably all of us have had this secular saying said to us, when one or the other of our parents said, "I don't care what the other kids do. You don't do it that way." The world tells you so many things, and the church says, "I don't care what the world tells you. God your Savior tells you to do something else." In fact, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said this to His apostles, didn't he, when they had been jousting about who would be greatest? (Mk 9:33). They had forgotten Who He was. He tells them a very important saying: *He who will be greatest must be the servant.* But before then what did He say? He described the way the world is, how the greatest, the chiefest among people are the ones who grind people in the mud, and lord things over people, and the boastful pride of life in the extravagance of power and authority. And then He said that it *shall not be so among you.* (Mt 20:25-27). Instead, the church gives us the example of the sinful woman, formerly sinful woman—two formally sinful women, the unnamed woman who is great among the saints, and Mary, who is great among the saints.

Don't listen to the world. Listen to what the church says. Be renewed!



And then, you also want not to have woes? It can't be. God loves us, but we often do not understand it. If we enjoy everything here on earth, then we will forget God. God gives us opportunities to know Him, if only we take hold of the messages. He finds a thousand ways to make us come to know Him. St. Basil says somewhere, *Make weakness material for virtue.* No matter what evil comes upon us, if we have patience, it is possible that what we see as evil, will guide us to virtue. The greatest evil is to become estranged from God.

In all things have measure. Only have humility without measure. Do not leave off prayer. No matter how tired you are, you can pray for half an hour. **Feed your body as if you were going to live a hundred years, but feed your soul as if she were going to die tomorrow.**

Elder Ieronymos of Aigina

CASES OF CHILDLESSNESS

From the Book: "Family Life" by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece – 2002, translated by Fr. Luke Hartung – The Dalles, OR.

—Geronda, a husband and wife that both have *Mediterranean anemia*⁽¹⁾ asked us if they should try to have children. We told them to ask their spiritual father.

—Spiritual fathers should not tell such couples not to have children. They must guide them in *philotimo*⁽²⁾, so as to struggle in abstinence (to abstain), and with discernment grant them *economia*.

—Geronda, there are couples who, although they live very spiritually and want to have children, are not able.

—The reason God does not give children to some is so that they will love all the children of the world as their own and help in their spiritual rebirth. There was once a man without children but, when he would walk out of his house, all the children of his neighborhood would run to him and surround him with such love. They wouldn't let him leave and go to his job. See, God didn't give him his own children but graced him with the blessing of loving all the children of his neighborhood as a father and in his own way to help them spiritually. The judgments of God are fathomless.

In addition, God may not give children so that an orphaned child might be helped. I once met a good Christian man who was a lawyer. Once, when I passed through the city he lived, I paid him a visit and in his great kindness he forced me to stay over and receive hospitality at his house. I also met his spouse who likewise resembled him in virtue. And, while from the wife I learned of the spiritual life of her husband, from the husband I learned of the spiritual state of his wife. Later, I learned about the both of them from many other Christians who know them well and whom they have helped. This man of God honorably worked as a lawyer. If he saw that someone was deceitful not only would he not take his case but he would sharply renounce them in hopes that they would come to their senses. If he saw someone who was guilty but repentant, he would try somehow to reconcile things or to reduce the sentence. If he saw a poor man unjustly accused, he wouldn't take any money and would try to vindicate him in court. He lived very simply and therefore the little money he made was enough for him with enough left over to help poor families. The house of this faithful lawyer was literally a spiritual oasis in the Sahara of the city. The poor, wounded, unemployed, and those with domestic problems would gather there and he would support them all as a good father. He had acquaintances in different places so that, whomever he called on the phone with a need—to help with those who were sick, etc.—never told him 'no,' because everyone loved and honored him. His wife also worked in her own way. She would help poor children or children who had difficulties

in their studies. They thought of her as a mother. She once, however, expressed to me a complaint. "Father, when we married" she told me, "I resigned my job as a professor because I said I'd now become a good mother. I even asked Christ to give me twenty children, but unfortunately He didn't even give me one." Then, I told her: "Sister, you have more than five-hundred children and still you are complaining? Christ saw your good intention and will reward you. Now that you're helping with the spiritual rebirth of so many children, you've become a better mother than many other mothers and have passed up even mothers of many children."⁽³⁾ You will also have a greater reward, because with the spiritual rebirth the children are reassured eternal life." In the meantime they had adopted a little girl and had signed over their inheritance to her. She cared for them in their old age and, when they reposed, went off to a monastery—although their house was like a monastery, reading all the services as they did. For vespers and compline they had other brethren in Christ but midnight office and orthros the three read themselves.

These blessed souls gave rest to so many suffering souls. May God also grant them rest. That's why I say that the greater and better parents of big families are those who were spiritually reborn and who help in the spiritual rebirth of children all over the world, to ensure their souls in Paradise.

—Geronda, some people who aren't able to have children of their own, think about adopting a little child.

—Yes, it's better to adopt. They shouldn't insist on their own will (i.e., persisting in the hope that the mother will one day conceive). That which man wants is not always the will of God.

—Geronda, should the adoptive parents tell the child that they adopted him at a certain age?

—It is better to tell the child once he is old enough. But what matters is to love the child greatly and appropriately. There are children who live with their actual parents but who love other people more because their own parents don't have love.

† † †

(1) *Mediterranean anemia* (also known as *thalassemia*) is a genetic (inherited) blood disease, particularly prevalent among Mediterranean peoples. In Europe, the highest concentrations of the disease are found in Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Crete.

(2) *Philotimo* (also spelled *filotimo*) (Greek *φιλότιμο*) is a Greek noun translating to "friend of honour" or "love of honour." However, *philotimo* is almost impossible to translate sufficiently as it describes a complex array of virtues.

(3) A family with many children (Greek *πολύτεκνη οικογένεια*) in Greece is seen as greatly blessed. As is said in the Orthodox sacrament of marriage: "Bless this marriage, granting to Your servants long life, purity, mutual love in the bond of peace, enduring prosperity, the blessing of children and the unfading crown of glory".

Τὰ οναστήρια καὶ ἡ Παλιγγενεσία

Τοῦ Σαράντου Καργάκου.

Ἄν δὲν ὑπῆρχαν μοναχοὶ σὰν τὸν Νεκτάριο Τέρπο καὶ τὸν Πατροκοσιμᾶ—ποὺ ἔβαλαν τὸ κεφάλι τους στὸν «ντορβά»—δὲν θὰ βλέπαμε ποτὲ λευτεριά.

Τὰ μοναστήρια καὶ οἱ μοναχοὶ ἔπαιξαν ρόλο καθοριστικὸ στὴν πνευματικὴ προετοιμασία τοῦ Ἀγώνα τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Παλιγγενεσίας. **Πρῶτον**, διότι ὅτι γινόταν ἐκεῖ δὲν ἦταν ἄμεσα ὁρατό. Πολλὰ γίνονταν ἐν κρυπῶ, ἐξ οὗ καὶ ἡ παράδοση γιὰ τὸ «Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο». **Δεύτερον**, τὰ περισσότερα ἦσαν σὲ μέρη ἀπρόσιτα. **Τρίτον**, διότι ἐκεῖ αἰῶνες εἶχαν συγκεντρώσει μεγάλους πνευματικούς θησαυρούς (σπάνια βιβλία, χειρόγραφα κ.ά.). **Τέταρτον**, διότι κάποιοι ζωηροὶ νέοι, ποὺ ἤθελαν νὰ ξεφύγουν ἀπὸ τὴν ραγιαδοσύνη, γίνονταν μοναχοὶ (Διάκος, Παπαφλέσσας). **Πέμπτον**, διότι σπουδαῖοι δάσκαλοι, ὅπως ὁ Ἀναστάσιος Γόρδιος ἀπὸ τὰ Βρανιανὰ τῶν Ἀγράφων καὶ ἄλλοι πολυμαθεῖς μοναχοὶ εἶχαν καταφύγει σὲ δύσβατες περιοχές καὶ εἶχαν δημιουργήσει περιώνυμες σχολές (π.χ. Μονὴ Φιλοσόφου στὴ Δημητσάνα). Ὡς σημειωθεῖ ἀκόμη ὅτι δύο σχολές, πανεπιστημιακοῦ θὰ λέγαμε ἐπιπέδου, ἦταν σὲ μοναστήρια: ἡ Ἀθωνιάς καὶ ἡ Πατιμιάς. **Χωρὶς σπιθα παιδείας, κανεὶς λαὸς δὲν ὁραματίζεται καὶ δὲν ἀγωνίζεται γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία.**

Ἀκόμη, πολλὰ μοναστήρια εἶχαν γίνει μεγάλες μονάδες παραγωγῆς καὶ ἀπετέλεσαν βάσεις ἀνεφοδιασμοῦ τοῦ ἐπαναστατικοῦ στρατοῦ. Μερικὰ στὴ διάρκεια τοῦ Ἀγώνα λειτούργησαν ὡς θεραπευτήρια, ὅπως ἡ Μονὴ Προυσοῦ στὴν Εὐρυτανία.

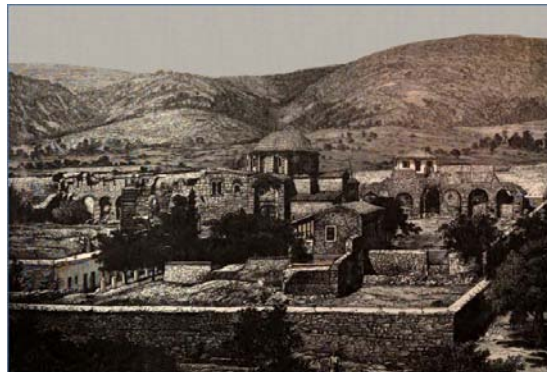
Ἐνα χρόνο πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν κήρυξη τῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως, ὅλοι οἱ ἠγούμενοι καὶ διακεκριμένοι μοναχοὶ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν μοναστηριῶν εἶχαν μνηθεῖ στὴν Φιλικὴ Ἐταιρεία. Κανεὶς δὲν πρὸδωσε τὸ μυστικὸ, παρόλο ποὺ κάποιοι εἶχαν ἕναν δικαιολογημένο σκεπτικισμό. Εἶχαν ὑποστει τὰ πάνδεινα στὰ Ὀρλωφικὰ καὶ στὴν περίοδο τῆς Ἀλβανοκρατίας.

Κατὰ τὴν Ἐπανάσταση, ὅπως φαίνεται ἀπὸ τὸ Ἀρχεῖο Ἀγωνιστῶν τοῦ 1821, περίπου 2000 μοναχοὶ συμμετείχαν στὶς συγκρούσεις. Πολλοὶ βέβαια ἦσαν ἱερεῖς, ὅπως ὁ γιγάντιος Παπα-Τούρτας, ὁ μπροστάρης τοῦ Παπαφλέσσα, ποὺ σήκωνε γιὰ σημαία ἕναν τεράστιο σταυρό. Ρόλο ἀρνητικὸ ἔπαιξε μόνον ἕνας μοναχός, ὁ Γεράσιμος ἀπὸ τὴν Καλαμάτα, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸς γιὰ λόγους θεωρητικο-θεολογικοὺς θεωροῦσε, ὅπως κάποιοι «μοντέρνοι» ιστορικοί, τὴν Ἐπανάσταση «ἔργο τοῦ Διαβόλου». Διότι, ὅπως ἔγραψε στὸ

δυσεύρετο βιβλίό του, «μᾶς ἔβγαλε ἀπὸ τὸν παράδεισο τῆς Ὀθωμανικῆς αὐτοκρατορίας!»...

Στὰ περισσότερα μοναστήρια ὑπῆρχαν πρὸ τοῦ 1821 πλούσιες βιβλιοθήκες. Μετὰ τὴ λήξη τοῦ Ἀγώνα, σὲ ὅλα σχεδὸν τὰ μοναστήρια τῆς Ρούμελης καὶ τοῦ Μορηᾶ, εἶχαν ἐλάχιστα βιβλία—κυρίως λειτουργικά. Τὰ ἄλλα, καθὼς καὶ πολύτιμα χειρόγραφα, εἶχαν χρησιμοποιηθεῖ γιὰ τὴν κατασκευὴ «χαρτουσιῶν», δηλαδὴ φυσεκίων.

Ὡς ἔλθουμε, ὅπως ἐνδεικτικά, καὶ στὴν πολεμικὴ δράση. Ἀπὸ τὸ Ἅγιον Ὄρος—κυρίως ἀπὸ τὴν Μονὴ Ἐσφιγμένου, ξεκίνησε ἡ Ἐπανάσταση στὴν Μακεδονία μὲ τὸν Ἐμμ. Παπᾶ. Στὴν Μονὴ Δοβροᾶ, κοντὰ στὴ Βέροια, εἶχαν οἱ Μακεδόνες ἀγωνιστές (Καρατάσος, Γάτσος κ.ά.) τὴν μεγαλύτερη στρατιωτικὴ τους ἐπιτυχία. Καὶ τὸ σημαντικότερο κατ' ἐμέ: Ὅταν ἡ Ἐπανάσταση εἶχε σβῆσει παντοῦ, ὁ Καραϊσκάκης εἶχε σκοτωθεῖ, ὁ στρατός του τὴν ἐπομένη τῆς θανῆς του εἶχε καταστραφεῖ στὸν Ἀνάλατο (24 Ἀπριλίου 1827)



καὶ ὁ Θεόδ. Κολοκοτρώνης μὲ τὰ δόντια ἀγωνιζόταν στὸν Μορηᾶ νὰ κρατήσει τὸν Ἀγώνα, δίνοντας μάχες συνεχεῖς κατὰ τοῦ Ἱμπραήμ, τότε σ' αὐτὲς τὶς τραγικὲς στιγμὲς εἶχαμε ἕναν στρατιωτικὸ θρίαμβο ποὺ παρορᾶται ἀπὸ πολλοὺς ἱστορικοὺς, ἴσως διότι ὀφείλεται σὲ μοναχοὺς.

Τὸ Μέγα Σπήλαιο καὶ οἱ πέριξ αὐτοῦ λόφοι εἶχαν μεταβληθεῖ σὲ φρούριο. Ὁ Ἱμπραήμ ἀπὸ τὴ Μονὴ τῆς Σάλμαινας (μετόχι τοῦ Μ. Σπηλαίου) κάλεσε μὲ ἐπιστολὴ τοὺς μοναχοὺς νὰ παραδοθοῦν. Αὐτοὶ ἀπάντησαν ἀρνητικά. Τοὺς κτύπησε μὲ τὸ πεζικὸ καὶ πυροβολικὸ του στὶς 24 Ἰουνίου 1827. Τὴν Μονὴ καὶ τοὺς γύρω χώρους ὑπεράσπιζαν 600 παλληκάρια ὑπὸ τὸν Νικόλα Πετμεζᾶ. Μικρὴ ἐνίσχυση ἔστειλε καὶ ὁ Κολοκοτρώνης ὑπὸ τὸν Φωτάκο. Στὶς δυνάμεις αὐτὲς προστέθηκαν καὶ 100 ὄπλοφόροι μοναχοί, ποὺ ἔβγαλαν τὸ ρᾶσο καὶ φόρεσαν τὴν συνηθισμένη Ἑλληνικὴ στολὴ. Ἡ μάχη κράτησε ὅλη τὴν ἡμέρα καὶ ἦταν πεισματικὴ. Ὁ Ἱμπραήμ ἀπέτυχε καὶ ντροπιασμένος ὑποχρεώθηκε νὰ ἀποσυρθεῖ. Τὸ Μέγα Σπήλαιο ἔμεινε ἀπάτητο. Αὐτὸ ἔδωσε νέα πνοὴ στὸν Ἀγώνα. Πολλὰ χωριὰ ξεπροσκύνησαν καὶ ὁ Κολοκοτρώνης συνέχισε μὲ νέο σθένος τὴν ἀγωνιστικὴ του προσπάθεια.

Στὴν Ἀχαΐα ὑπάρχει ἀκόμη καὶ μία ἄλλη μονὴ μὲ τεράστια προσφορά. Εἶναι τῆς Παναγίας τῆς Χρυσοποδαρίτισσας, ποὺ κάνει θαύματα πολλὰ. Μακάρι νὰ ἔκανε καὶ τώρα τὸ θαῦμα, νὰ μᾶς δώσει μὲ τὸ χρυσὸ ποδάρι της μιὰ γερὴ ...κλωτσιά!

Ὁμιλία πρὸς Γυμνασιόπαιδες

Τοῦ Γέρου τοῦ Μορηᾶ, Θεόδωρου Κολοκοτρώνη.

Παιδιά μου!
Εἰς τὸν τόπο τοῦτο, ὅπου ἐγὼ πατῶ σήμερα, ἐπατοῦσαν καὶ ἐδημηγοροῦσαν τὸν παλαιὸν καιρὸ ἄνδρες σοφοί, καὶ ἄνδρες μὲ τοὺς ὁποίους δὲν εἶμαι ἄξιος νὰ συγκριθῶ καὶ οὔτε νὰ φθάσω τὰ ἴχνη των. Ἐγὼ ἐπιθυμοῦσα νὰ σᾶς ἰδῶ, παιδιά μου, εἰς τὴν μεγάλη δόξα τῶν προπατόρων μας, καὶ ἔρχομαι νὰ σᾶς εἰπῶ, ὅσα εἰς τὸν καιρὸ τοῦ ἀγῶνος καὶ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὕστερα ἀπ' αὐτὸν ὁ ἴδιος ἐπαρτήρησα, καὶ ἀπ' αὐτὰ νὰ κάμωμε συμπερασμοὺς καὶ διὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν εὐτυχίαν σας, μολονότι ὁ Θεὸς μόνος ἠξεύρει τὰ μέλλοντα. Καὶ διὰ τοὺς παλαιοὺς Ἑλληνας, ὁποίας γνώσεις εἶχαν καὶ ποία δόξα καὶ τιμὴν ἔχαιραν κοντὰ εἰς τὰ ἄλλα ἔθνη τοῦ καιροῦ των, ὁποίους ἤρωας, στρατηγούς, πολιτικοὺς εἶχαν, διὰ ταῦτα σᾶς λέγουν καθ' ἡμέραν οἱ διδάσκαλοί σας καὶ οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι μας. Ἐγὼ δὲν εἶμαι ἀρκετός. Σᾶς λέγω μόνον πὼς ἦταν σοφοί, καὶ ἀπὸ ἐδῶ ἐπήρασαν καὶ ἐδανείσθησαν τὰ ἄλλα ἔθνη τὴν σοφίαν των.

Εἰς τὸν τόπον, τὸν ὁποῖον κατοικοῦμε, ἐκατοικοῦσαν οἱ παλαιοὶ Ἑλληνες, ἀπὸ τοὺς ὁποίους καὶ ἡμεῖς καταγόμεθα καὶ ἐλάβαμε τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο. Αὐτοὶ διέφεραν ἀπὸ ἡμᾶς εἰς τὴν θρησκείαν, διότι ἐπροσκυνοῦσαν τὲς πέτρες καὶ τὰ ξύλα. Ἀφοῦ ὕστερα ἦλθε στὸν κόσμον ὁ Χριστὸς, οἱ λαοὶ ὅλοι ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ Εὐαγγέλιόν του, καὶ ἔπαυσαν νὰ λατρεύουν τὰ εἰδῶλα. Δὲν ἐπῆρε μαζί του οὔτε σοφοὺς οὔτε προκομμένους, ἀλλ' ἀπλοὺς ἀνθρώπους, χωρικοὺς καὶ ψαράδες, καὶ μὲ τὴ βοήθεια τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἔμαθαν ὅλες τὲς γλώσσες τοῦ κόσμου, οἱ ὅποιοι, μολονότι ὅπου καὶ ἂν ἔβρισκαν ἐναντιότητες καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς καὶ οἱ τύραννοι τοὺς κατέτρεχαν, δὲν ἠμπόρσε κανένας νὰ τοὺς κάμη τίποτα. Αὐτοὶ ἐστερέωσαν τὴν πίστιν.

Οἱ παλαιοὶ Ἑλληνες, οἱ πρόγονοί μας, ἔπασαν εἰς τὴν διχόνοια καὶ ἐτρώγονταν μεταξύ τους, καὶ ἔτσι ἔλαβαν καιρὸ πρῶτα οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι, ἔπειτα ἄλλοι βάρβαροι καὶ τοὺς ὑπόταξαν. Ὑστερα ἦλθαν οἱ Μουσουλμάνοι καὶ ἔκαμαν ὅ,τι ἠμποροῦσαν, διὰ νὰ ἀλλάξῃ ὁ λαὸς τὴν πίστιν του. Ἐκοψαν γλώσσες εἰς πολλοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλ' ἐστάθη ἀδύνατο νὰ τὸ κατορθώσουν. Τὸν ἕνα ἔκοψαν, ὁ ἄλλος τὸ σταυρὸ του ἔκαμε. Σὰν εἶδε τοῦτο ὁ σουλτάνος, διόρισε ἕνα βιτσερὲ [ἀντιβασιλέα], ἕναν πατριάρχη, καὶ τοῦ ἔδωσε τὴν ἐξουσία τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ λοιπὸς



κληρὸς ἔκαμαν ὅ,τι τοὺς ἔλεγε ὁ σουλτάνος. Ὑστερον ἔγιναν οἱ κοτζαμπάσηδες [προεστοὶ] εἰς ὅλα τὰ μέρη. Ἡ τρίτη τάξη, οἱ ἔμποροι καὶ οἱ προκομμένοι, τὸ καλύτερο μέρος τῶν πολιτῶν, μὴν ὑποφέροντες τὸν ζυγὸ ἔφευγαν, καὶ οἱ γραμματισμένοι ἐπήρασαν καὶ ἔφευγαν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλλάδα, τὴν πατρίδα των, καὶ ἔτσι ὁ λαὸς, ὅστις στερημένος ἀπὸ τὰ μέσα τῆς προκοπῆς, ἐκατήντησεν εἰς ἀθλίαν κατάστασιν, καὶ αὐτὴ αὐξάνει κάθε ἡμέρα χειρότερα· διότι, ἂν εὐρίσκετο μεταξὺ τοῦ λαοῦ κανεὶς μὲ ὀλίγην μάθησιν, τὸν ἐλάμβανε ὁ κληρὸς, ὅστις ἔχει προνόμια, ἢ ἐσύρτετο ἀπὸ τὸν ἔμπορο τῆς Εὐρώπης ὡς βοηθὸς του ἢ ἐγίνετο γραμματικὸς τοῦ προεστοῦ. Καὶ μερικοὶ μὴν ὑποφέροντες τὴν τυραννίαν τοῦ Τούρκου καὶ βλέποντας τὲς δόξες καὶ τὲς ἡδονὲς ὅπου ἀνελάμβαναν αὐτοὶ, ἄφηναν τὴν πίστην τους καὶ ἐγίνοντο Μουσουλμάνοι. Καὶ τοιοῦτοτρόπως κάθε ἡμέρα ὁ λαὸς ἐλίγνευε καὶ ἐπτώχαινε.

Εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν δυστυχισμένην κατάστασιν μερικοὶ ἀπὸ τοὺς φυγάδες γραμματισμένους ἐμετάφραζαν καὶ ἔστελναν εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα βιβλία, καὶ εἰς αὐτοὺς πρέπει νὰ χρωστοῦμε εὐγνωμοσύνη, διότι εὐθὺς ὅπου κανένας ἄνθρωπος ἀπὸ τὸ λαὸ ἐμάνθανε τὰ κοινὰ γράμματα, ἐδιάβαζεν αὐτὰ τὰ βιβλία καὶ ἔβλεπε ποίους εἶχαμε προγόνους, τί ἔκαμεν ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς, ὁ Ἀριστείδης καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ παλαιοὶ μας, καὶ ἐβλέπαμε καὶ εἰς ποίαν κατάστασιν εὐρισκόμεθα τότε. Ὅθεν μᾶς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ νοῦ νὰ τοὺς μιμηθοῦμε καὶ νὰ γίνουμε εὐτυχέστεροι. Καὶ ἔτσι ἔγινε καὶ ἐπροόδευσε ἡ Ἐταιρεία.

Ὅταν ἀποφασίσουμε νὰ κάμωμε τὴν Ἐπανάστασιν, δὲν ἐσυλλογισθήκαμε οὔτε πόσοι εἴμεθα οὔτε πὼς δὲν ἔχομε ἄρματα οὔτε ὅτι οἱ Τούρκοι ἐβαστοῦσαν τὰ κάστρα καὶ τὰς πόλεις οὔτε κανένας φρόνιμος μᾶς εἶπε «ποῦν πᾶτε ἐδῶ νὰ πολεμήσετε μὲ σιταροκάραβα βατσέλα», ἀλλὰ ὡς μία βροχὴ ἔπεσε εἰς ὅλους μας ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς ἐλευθερίας μας, καὶ ὅλοι, καὶ ὁ κληρὸς μας καὶ οἱ προεστοὶ καὶ οἱ καπεταναῖοι καὶ οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι, μικροὶ καὶ μεγάλοι, ὅλοι ἐσυμφωνήσαμε εἰς αὐτὸ τὸ σκοπὸ καὶ ἐκάμαμε τὴν Ἐπανάστασιν.

Εἰς τὸν πρῶτον χρόνον τῆς Ἐπαναστάσεως εἶχαμε μεγάλη ὁμόνοια καὶ ὅλοι ἐτρέχαμε σύμφωνοι. Ὁ ἕνας ἐπῆγεν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὁ ἀδελφὸς του ἔφερε ξύλα, ἡ γυναῖκα του ἐζύμωνε, τὸ παιδί του ἐκουβαλοῦσε ψωμὶ καὶ μπαρουτόβολα εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον καὶ ἐὰν αὐτὴ ἢ ὁμόνοια ἐβαστοῦσε ἀκόμη δυὸ χρόνους, ἠθέλαμε κυριεύσει καὶ τὴν Θεσσαλίαν καὶ τὴν Μακεδονίαν, καὶ

ἴσως ἐφθάναμε καὶ ἕως τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη. Τόσον τρομάξαμε τοὺς Τούρκους, ὅπου ἄκουγαν Ἑλλήνα καὶ ἔφευγαν χίλια μίλια μακρὰ. Ἐκατὸν Ἑλληνες ἔβαζαν πέντε χιλιάδες ἐμπρός, καὶ ἓνα καράβι μίαν ἀρμάδα...

Ἐγώ, παιδιά μου, κατὰ κακὴ μου τύχη, ἐξ αἰτίας τῶν περιστάσεων, ἔμεινα ἀγράμματος καὶ διὰ τοῦτο σὰς ζητῶ συγχώρηση, διότι δὲν ὀμιλῶ καθὼς οἱ δάσκαλοί σας. Σὰς εἶπα ὅσα ὁ ἴδιος εἶδα, ἤκουσα καὶ ἐγνώρισα, διὰ νὰ ὠφεληθῆτε ἀπὸ τὰ ἀπερασμένα καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ κακὰ ἀποτελέσματα τῆς διχονοίας, τὴν ὁποίαν νὰ ἀποστρέψετε, καὶ νὰ ἔχετε ὁμόνοια. Ἐμᾶς μὴ μᾶς τηρᾶτε πλέον. Τὸ ἔργο μας καὶ ὁ καιρὸς μας ἐπέρασε. Καὶ αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς γενεᾶς, ἡ ὁποία σὰς ἀνοιξε τὸ δρόμο, θέλουν μετ' ὀλίγον περάσει. Τὴν ἡμέρα τῆς ζωῆς μας θέλει διαδεχθῆ ἡ νύκτα τοῦ θανάτου μας, καθὼς τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀσωμάτων θέλει διαδεχθῆ ἡ νύκτα καὶ ἡ αὐριανὴ ἡμέρα. Εἰς ἐσᾶς μένει νὰ ἰσάσετε καὶ νὰ στολίσετε τὸν τόπο, ὅπου ἡμεῖς ἐλευθερώσαμε· καί, διὰ νὰ γίνῃ τοῦτο, πρέπει νὰ ἔχετε ὡς θεμέλια τῆς πολιτείας τὴν ὁμόνοια, τὴν θρησκεία, τὴν καλλιέργεια τοῦ θρόνου καὶ τὴν φρόνιμον ἐλευθερία.



Τὸ Χέρι τοῦ Παπᾶ

Τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Ἀχρίδας Ἁγίου Νικολάου Βελμιρόβιτς.

Ὁ ἱερέας σας μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι μόλις 25 χρονῶν. Μὰ ἡ ἱεροσύνη του εἶναι ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου. Ὄταν, λοιπόν, τοῦ ἀσπάζετε τὸ χέρι, προσκυνᾶτε τὴν ἱεροσύνη του, ποὺ φθάνει διαδοχικὰ ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους μέχρι τὸν ἱερέα σας.

Ὄταν φιλάτε τὸ χέρι τοῦ παπᾶ σας, φιλάτε ὀλόκληρη τὴν ἀλυσίδα τῶν ὁσίων καὶ ἁγίων ἱερέων καὶ ἱεραρχῶν, ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἀποστόλους μέχρι σήμερα. Ἀσπάζετε καὶ προσκυνᾶτε τὸν Ἅγιο Ἰγνάτιο τὸν Θεοφόρο, τὸν ἅγιον Νικόλαο, τὸν ἅγιον Βασίλειο, τὸν ἅγιον Σάββα καὶ ὅλους τοὺς «ἐπίγειους ἀγγέλους καὶ οὐρανίους ἀνθρώπους», πού, ὅταν ἦταν στὴ γῆ, κοσμοῦσαν τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ τώρα στολίζουν τὸν οὐρανό. Εἶναι φίλημα ἁγίων, ὅπως γράφει στοὺς Κορινθίους ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος. Νὰ ἀσπάζετε, λοιπόν τὸ χέρι τοῦ ἱερέα ποὺ σὰς εὐλογεῖ. Εἶναι εὐλογημένο ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Μὲ τὴν χάρη τῆς ἱεροσύνης. Μὲ τὴν χάρη τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος. Νὰ τὸ φιλάτε τὸ χέρι τοῦ ἱερέα σας. Ὅσο νέος καὶ ἂν εἶναι. Καὶ νὰ τὸν ἀκοῦτε.

Θούριος Ὀρμητικὸς Πατριωτικὸς Ὕμνος

Ρήγας Φεραῖος (1757-1798).

Ὁ Ρήγας Φεραῖος, ὁ ἐπονομαζόμενος Βελεστινλῆς, θεωρεῖται ἔθνομάρτυρας καὶ πρόδρομος τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἐπανάστασης τοῦ 1821.

Τὸ πραγματικὸ του ὄνομα ἦταν Ἀντώνιος Κυριαζῆς, ὁ ἴδιος ὑπέγραφε ὡς Ρήγας Βελεστινλῆς ἢ Ρήγας Ὁ Θεσσαλός. Ὁ Ρήγας καὶ ἑπτὰ σύντροφοί του, μὲ συνοδεία τῶν Αὐστριακῶν ἀρχῶν, παραδόθηκαν στίς 10 Μαΐου 1798 στοὺς Τούρκους τοῦ Βελιγραδίου καὶ φυλακίστηκαν στὸν πύργο Neboisa, παραποτάμιο φρούριο τοῦ Βελιγραδίου. Ἐκεῖ, ὕστερα ἀπὸ συνεχῆ βασανιστήρια, στίς 24 Ιουνίου τοῦ 1798, στραγγαλίστηκαν καὶ τὰ σώματά τους ρίχτηκαν στὸν Δούναβη.

† † †

Ὡς πότε παλικάρια νὰ ζοῦμεν στὰ στενά,
Μονάχοι σὰ λιοντάρια, σταῖς ράχαις στὰ βουνά;
Σπηλαιὶς νὰ κατοικοῦμεν, νὰ βλέπωμεν κλαδιά,
Νὰ φεύγωμ' ἀπ' τὸν Κόσμον, γιὰ τὴν πικρὴ σκλαβιά.
Νὰ χάνωμεν ἀδέλφια, Πατρίδα, καὶ Γονεῖς,
Σοὺς φίλους, τὰ παιδιὰ μας, κι' ὅλους τοὺς συγγενεῖς.
Καλλιῶναι μίας ὥρας ἐλεύθερη ζωή,
Παρὰ σαράντα χρόνοι σκλαβιά, καὶ φυλακή.

Σί σ' ὠφελεῖ ἂν ζήσης, καὶ εἶσαι στὴ σκλαβιά,
Στοχάσου πὼς σὲ ψένουν καθ' ὥραν στὴ φωτιά.
Βεζύρης, Δραγουμάνος, Ἀφέντης κι' ἂν σταθῆς,
Ὁ Σύρανος ἀδίκως, σὲ κάμει νὰ χαθῆς.
Δουλεύεις ὄλ' ἡμέρα, σὲ ὅ,τι κι' ἂν σοὶ πῆ,
Κι' αὐτὸς πασχίζει πάλιν, τὸ αἷμα σου νὰ πιῆ.
Ὁ Σουτζος, κι' ὁ Μουζούρης, Πετράκης, Σκαναβῆς,
Γύγκας, καὶ Μαυρογένης, καθρέπτης, εἶν' νὰ ἰδῆς.

Ἄνδραιοὶ Καπετάνοι, Παπάδες, λαϊκοί,
Σκοτώθηκαν κι' Ἀγάδες, μὲ ἄδικον σπαθί.
Κι' ἀμέτρητ' ἄλλοι τόσοι, καὶ Σοῦρκοι, καὶ Ρωμιοί,
Ζωήν, καὶ πλοῦτον χάνουν, χωρὶς καμιὰ φορμῆ.
Ἐλάτε μ' ἓναν ζῆλον, σὲ τοῦτον τὸν καιρόν,
Νὰ κάμωμεν τὸν ὄρκον, ἐπάνω στὸν Σταυρόν.

Συμβούλους προκομμένους, μὲ πατριωτισμόν,
Νὰ βάλλωμεν εἰς ὅλα, νὰ δίδουν ὀρισμόν.
Οἱ νόμοι νάν' ὁ πρῶτος, καὶ μόνος ὁδηγός,
Καὶ τῆς πατρίδος ἓνας, νὰ γένη Ἀρχηγός.
Γιατί κ' ἡ ἀναρχία, ὁμοιάζει τὴν σκλαβιά,
Νὰ ζοῦμε σὰ θηρία, εἶν' πλιὸ σκληρὴ φωτιά.
Καὶ τότε μὲ τὰ χέρια, ψηλὰ στὸν Οὐρανόν,
Ἄς ποῦμ' ἀπ' τὴν καρδιά μας, ἐτοῦτα στὸν Θεόν.

† † †

**Ἐδῶ σηκώνονται οἱ Πατριῶται ὀρθοί,
καὶ ὑψώνοντες τὰς χεῖρας πρὸς τὸν Οὐρανόν,
κάμνουν τὸν Ὄρκον κατὰ τῆς Τυραννίας...**

Ἡ Μυρωδιά τοῦ Λιβανιοῦ

Τοῦ Σπύρου Χιόνη, ἀναδημοσίευση ἀπὸ τὴν «Ἁγία Ζώνη».



Ἦταν πολὺ κουραστικὸ αὐτὸ τὸ ταξίδι. Εἶχε, ἐξάλλου, πολὺ καιρὸ νὰ τὸ κάνει. Θυμόταν τὸν ἑαυτό του στὸ Λύκειο, ὅταν πῆγε νὰ ἐπισκεφτεῖ γιὰ τελευταία φορὰ τὴν γιαγιά του, τὴν κυρὰ-Θοδόσαινα στὰ Τρόπαια τῆς Γορτυνίας. Καὶ τώρα, τριτοετῆς φοιτητῆς τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς, νὰ ποῦ ξαναπαίρνει τὸν ἴδιο δρόμο. Τί τὸν ἔκανε νὰ φύγει ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀθήνα, τὴ

«Βαβυλώνα τὴ μεγάλη»; Οὔτε καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ἤξερε.

Πάντως ἓνα εἶναι σίγουρο, πὼς πνιγόταν. Πνιγόταν ἀπὸ τοὺς φίλους, τὰ μαθήματα, τοὺς γονεῖς, ἀπ' ὅλους. Ἐνιωθε πὼς κανεὶς δὲν τὸν καταλάβαινε, κανεὶς δὲν μποροῦσε νὰ γίνε κοινωγὸς στὴν ἀναζήτησή του γιὰ πλέρια ἀλήθεια καὶ γνησιότητα. Κι αὐτὴ ἀκόμη ἢ χριστιανικὴ του παρέα τὸν ἔπνιγε. Ὅλοι τοὺς ἦταν τακτοποιημένοι, ὅλοι τοὺς εἶχαν ταμπουρωθεῖ πίσω ἀπὸ κάποιες συνταγές, κάποιες ρετσέτες σωτηρίας καὶ δὲν ἔλεγαν νὰ κουνηθοῦν ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ. Μὰ αὐτός... Αὐτὸς ἦταν διαφορετικὸς.

Δὲν βουλευόταν σὲ σχήματα καὶ σὲ κουτάκια. Ἦθελε νὰ βιώσει τὸν Χριστιανισμὸ ἀληθινά, ὄχι κιβδηλα. Νὰ μπεῖ στὸ νόημα παρευθὸς καὶ ὄχι νὰ καμαρώνεται τὸν εὐσεβῆ. Ἐξάλλου, τοῦ φαινόταν τόσο ἀπλοῖκὸ καὶ ἀνόητο νὰ υἱοθετήσῃ μιὰ τυποκρατικὴ καὶ εὐσεβιστικὴ χριστιανικὴ βιωτὴ τὴ στιγμὴ ποῦ ἢ ἴδια του ἢ ἐπιστήμη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἢ ἔμφυτη τάση του γι' ἀναζήτησι, γιὰ ψάξιμο καὶ ψηλάφησι τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ τὸν ὠθοῦσε πρὸς μιὰ ἄλλη ζωὴ.

Μά, πόσο δύσκολο ἦταν, Θεέ μου! Πόσο βασανιζόταν! Κάποια στιγμὴ ἔνιωσε πὼς εἶχε φτάσει στὸ ἀπροχώρητο. Τὸ κεφάλι του πῆγαινε νὰ σπάσει...

Πάω στὴν γιαγιά μου στὰ Τρόπαια, φώναξε μιὰ μέρα στὸ σπίτι καὶ ἀφήνοντας πίσω του φωνὲς γιὰ μαθήματα καὶ ἐξετάσεις, μῆτε ὁ ἴδιος ξέρει πότε, βρέθηκε στὸ λεωφορεῖο. Καὶ νὰ ποῦ ζύγωνε στὸ σπίτι τῆς γιαγιάς του. Ντάλα ὁ ἥλιος πάνω ἀπὸ τὸ κεφάλι του κι ἀπὸ παντοῦ νὰ ῥχονται χίλιες εὐωδιὲς ἀπὸ τὴν ἀνοιξιὰτικη, ἀρκαδικὴ φύση. Δὲν πρόλαβε ὅμως ὁ ἄμοιρος νὰ ρουφήξῃ λίγο βουνίσιο ἀέρα, ὅταν ἀκούστηκε ἢ γνῶριμη τσιριχτὴ φωνὴ τῆς γειτόνισσας:

- Μαριγώωωω! Τρέξε καλέ, ἦρθε ὁ Ἀλέκος!

Τὴν ἐπόμενη στιγμὴ εἶδε νὰ ξεπροβάλλει ἀπὸ τὸ πλινθόκτιστο σπιτάκι ἢ γιαγιά του σκουπίζοντας τὰ παχουλά της χέρια στὴν ποδιά της καὶ λέγοντας:

- Καλῶς τὸν πασά μου, καλῶς τὸν γιόκα μου, καλῶς ἦρθες, Ἀλέκο μου! Κι ἀμέσως βρέθηκε στὴν ἀγκαλιά της.

Τί ἦταν αὐτός; Σὰ νὰ μπῆκε σὲ λιμάνι ἀπάνεμο, σὰ νὰ τοῦ ἔφυγε ὅλη ἢ ἀντάρα τοῦ μυαλοῦ του. Ξαφνικὰ

ἀδείασε καὶ τὴν ἀγκαλιάσε κι αὐτός.

- Καλῶς σὲ βρῆκα, γιαγιά.

- Κοπίασε, γιέ μου, νὰ ξαποστάσεις.

Μόλις μπῆκε στὸ χαμηλοτάβανο σπιτάκι, τὸν συνεπῆρε ἢ μυρωδιὰ τῆς σπανακόπιτας καὶ τοῦ λιβανιοῦ. Σίγουρα ἢ γιαγιά εἶχε φουρνίσει ἀπὸ τὸ πρωὶ ἀκόμη καὶ εἶχε λιβανίσει τὸ σπίτι τρεῖς- τέσσερις φορές.

- Πάλι λιβάνι γιαγιά;

- Ἄ! Ὅλα κι ὄλα, ἅμα δὲν κάνω τὰ θεοτικά μου τρεῖς φορές τὴν ἡμέρα, δὲν μπορῶ νὰ κοιμηθῶ.

- Καὶ σὰν τί λές;

- Μνήστητί μου, Κύριε! Ὅ,τι λέει ἢ Σύνοψη.

- Καὶ τὰ ἐννοεῖς;

- Γιέ μου, αὐτὰ εἶναι μυστήρια τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποιὸς νὰ τὰ ἐννοήσει; Ἀλλὰ μὴ γνοιάξῃσαι, σὰ δὲν καταλαβαίνω ἐγώ, νογὰ ὁ Θεὸς καὶ βλέπει τὸν κόπο μου, νογὰ κι ὁ Διάλογος καὶ καίγεται.

- Χμ, καλὰ τὰ λές, εἶπε συγκαταβατικά.

- Στάσου, νὰ σοῦ φέρω λίγη σπανακόπιτα, μόλις τὴν ἔβγαλα ἀπὸ τὸ φούρνο. Κι ἔφυγε ἀμέσως γιὰ τὴν κουζίνα, τὸ βασιλεῖο της.

Ὁ Ἀλέκος ἔμεινε μόνος του στὸ καθιστικὸ. Αἰσθανόταν ἄνετα καὶ ζεστὰ ἐκεῖ, μοιλονότι ἤξερε πὼς, ἐὰν ἔκανε τὴ ζωὴ τῆς γιαγιάς του σὲ τοῦτο τὸ χωριό, σίγουρα θὰ τρελαινόταν. Ἡ καημένη! Δὲν ἤξερε πολλὰ γράμματα, ἀλλὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο δὲν ἔλεγε νὰ τὸ ἀφήσει ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια της. Μέρα - νύχτα τὸ διάβαζε. Ὅταν λέει «γιαγιά Μαριγὼ» τοῦ ῥχεται πάντα ἢ ἴδια εἰκόνα στὸ μυαλό: Μιὰ γριουλά παχουλή, μὲ σφιχτοδεμένο κότσο νὰ κάθεται στὴν πολυθρόνα καὶ νὰ διαβάξει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο ψιθυριστά. Δυστυχῶς, ἢ γιαγιά δὲν ἤξερε τίποτα ἀπὸ Φιλοσοφία. Θυμᾶται μιὰ φορὰ ποῦ τῆς ἀνέφερε τὸν Heidegger. Τὸν κοίταξε μὲ τρόμο στὰ μάτια καὶ εἶπε:

- Παναγιά μου, οἱ Γερμανοί, ὁ Θεὸς νὰ φυλάει τὴν Ἑλλάδα μας!

Ἡ καημένη ἦταν ἀδαῆς. Δὲν ἀναζητοῦσε καμιά ἀλήθεια. Δὲν σκοτιζόταν γιὰ καμιά ψυχολογικὴ σχολή.

Ὁ Ἀλέκος ἔριξε μιὰ ματιὰ στὸν τοῖχο, ἀμέτρητες εἰκόνες. Ἡ γιαγιά εἶχε μαζέψει ὅλους τοὺς Ἁγίους τῆς οἰκογένειας.

- Γιαγιά, τί τίς θές τόσες εἰκόνες;

- Μνήστητί μου, Κύριε! Καὶ πὼς θὰ παρακαλέσω τὸν Ἁγιαλέξανδρο, σὰν δὲν ἔχω τὴν εἰκόνα του; Ἄσε τὸ ἄλλο, κάθε φορὰ ποῦ γιορτάζει Ἅγιος μὲ εἰκόνα, τὸ σπίτι ἔχει πανηγύρι. Ἄσε ὅμως αὐτὰ, πές μου τὰ δικά σου, παλικάρι μου.

Καὶ τότε, ἄγνωστο γιατί, ὁ Ἀλέκος ἀνοιξε τὴν καρδιά του ὅπως δὲν τὴν εἶχε ἀνοίξει ποτέ, οὔτε στὸν πνευματικὸ του, οὔτε καὶ στοὺς γέροντες στὸ Ἅγιο Ὅρος ὅπου βρισκόταν συχνὰ - πυκνὰ. Τῆς εἶπε γιὰ τίς ἀγωνίες του, τὴ βασανιστικὴ του πορεία γιὰ ἀνεύρεση τῆς ἀλήθειας, τὴν προσπάθεια ἐλευθερώσεως τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ του ἀπὸ τὰ

δεσμιὰ τῆς συμβατικότητος καὶ τοῦ ἠθικισμοῦ, ὥστε νὰ ῥθει σὲ κοινωνία ἀληθινὴ μὲ τὸ πρόσωπο τοῦ πλησίον. Τῆς εἶπε ἀκόμη γιὰ τὴν ἀδυναμία του νὰ σταθεῖ μπροστὰ στὸ Θεὸ χωρὶς τὴ μάσκα τοῦ εὐσεβῆ πού τὸν στοιχειώνει ἀπὸ τὰ παιδικὰ του χρόνια. Τῆς εἶπε, τῆς εἶπε, τῆς εἶπε ... καὶ τί δὲν τῆς εἶπε. Ἀκολούθησε μία μεγάλη παύση. Ἡ κυρὰ-Θοδόδαινα ἔκανε τὸν σταυρὸ τῆς ἀργὰ - ἀργὰ καὶ εἶπε:

- Μνήσθητί μου, Κύριε! Δὲν κατάλαβα γρὶ. Μπερδεμένα μου τὰ λές, ματάκια μου. Καὶ θαρρῶ πὼς τὰ ἔχεις καὶ στὸ μυαλό σου μπερδεμένα. Εὐαγγέλιο διαβάξεις;

- Ὅριστε;

- Ἐκκλησία πᾶς;

- Δὲν καταλαβαίνω ...

- Τὴν προσευχὴ σου τὴν κάμεις;

- Τί ἐννοεῖς, γιαγιά;

- Τὸν πλησίον σου τὸν συντρέχεις;

- Θαρρῶ πὼς δὲ μὲ κατάλαβες.

- Ἄχ παιδάκι μου, ἐσὺ ἐννοεῖς νὰ καταλάβεις πὼς τὰ πράγματα τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι ἀπλά. Δὲ χρειάζονται πολλές θεωρίες μήτε ἀξημέρωτες συζητήσεις. Μονάχα τοῦτο χρειάζεται, νὰ ξαστερώσεις ἀπὸ τὶς φιλοσοφίες καὶ νὰ πιαστεῖς ἀπὸ τὸ ροῦχο τοῦ Χριστοῦ σὰν ἐκείνη τὴ γυναῖκα στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, νὰ δεῖς πὼς τὴ λένε ... τὴν ξέχασα, δὲν πειράζει. Τὰ ἄλλα ὅλα θὰ τὰ κανονίσει ὁ Χριστός. Εἶναι δικές Του δουλειές. Ἄσε Τον. Ξέρει τί κάνει.

Δὲν κάθισε πολὺ στὰ Τρόπαια, στὸ σπίτι τῆς γιαγιάς του. Μία - δυὸ μέρες. Ἦταν ἀρκετές. Εἶδε πράγματα πού θὰ τὸν συνόδευαν γιὰ πολὺ καιρό. Εἶδε τὴ γιαγιά του νὰ κάνει ἀτελείωτες μετάνοιες. Τὴν εἶδε νὰ συντρέχει τὴ χήρα μὲ τὰ τρία βυζανιάρικα παιδιά. Τὴν εἶδε νὰ μαζεύει στὸ σπίτι τῆς κάθε λογιῆς κουρασμένο στρατοκόπο καὶ νὰ ἀποθέτει στὰ χέρια τῶν φτωχῶν ὀλάκερη τὴ σύνταξη τοῦ μακαρίτη. Τὴν εἶδε νὰ κοινωνᾷ τὴν Κυριακὴ καὶ νὰ λάμπει σὰν τὸν ἥλιο ὅλη τὴ μέρα. Μυστήρια τοῦ Θεοῦ!

Σὰν ἔφυγε μὲ τὸ λεωφορεῖο γιὰ τὴν Ἀθήνα, στριμωγμένος σ' ἓνα κάθισμα, κρατώντας κεφτεδάκια (πεσκέσι τῆς γιαγιάς), σκεφτόταν ὅσα ἔζησε τοῦτες τὶς λίγες μέρες. Μία μυρωδιὰ λιβανιοῦ τοῦ ῥθε στὴ μύτη καὶ μία φωνὴ νὰ τοῦ ὑπενθυμίζει: «Τὰ πράγματα τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι ἀπλά».

- Λὲς νὰ ἴναι ἔτσι; Μνήσθητί μου, Κύριε!



Ὅταν καλλιεργοῦμε τὴν προσευχὴ, χρειαζόμαστε ὅπωςδήποτε τὸν σωματικὸ πόνου πού προξενεῖ ἡ νηστεία, ἡ ἀγρυπνία καὶ τὰ παρόμοια»

Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς

Ἡ Νέα Τουρκοκρατία

Τοῦ κ. Δημ. Νατσιοῦ, Δασκάλου.

Κρίση. Μικρὴ λέξη, δυσύλλαβη, ἡ ὁποία κρύβει στὸ κέλυφός της τρομακτικὴ καὶ τρομερὴ δύναμη. Οἱ περισσότεροί ἐννοοῦμε ὑλικὴ κατάρρευση καὶ οἰκονομικὴ χρεωκοπία. Ὅμως μιᾶς ὑλικῆς κατάρρευσης προηγεῖται μιὰ πνευματικὴ ἥττα.

Ἡ κρίση εἶναι πνευματικὴ, ἠττηθήκαμε κυρίως στὸ θέμα τῆς Παιδείας, πού κατάντησε στείρα καὶ ἄγονη Ἐκπαίδευση. «Ἐκπαίδευση εἶναι νὰ μαθαίνεις τὰ πράγματα. Παιδεία εἶναι νὰ τὰ ἐρωτεύσαι. Ἡ πρώτη ὁδηγεῖ στὸ θάνατο τοῦ πνεύματος. Ἡ δευτέρη ὁδηγεῖ στὴ ζωὴ τοῦ πνεύματος», γράφει ὁ Χρ. Μαλεβίτσης.

Ἡ Παιδεία εἶναι ζωή, φῶς καὶ «Φῶς Χριστοῦ πού φαίνει πᾶσι». Ὅμως: «Ἀπὸ πολλὰ τώρα χρόνια γίνεται συστηματικὴ προσπάθεια, διαρκῶς αὐξανόμενη, νὰ πολεμηθεῖ ἡ πίστη. Νὰ βγεῖ ἀπὸ τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ σχολεῖα ὁ Χριστός. Νὰ διαστρεβλωθεῖ ἡ ἱστορία μας. Νὰ εὐτελισθεῖ ἡ σημασία τῶν μεγάλων ἐορτῶν τῶν Χριστουγέννων καὶ τοῦ Πάσχα, πού τόσο ζεῖ ὁ λαός μας. Νὰ παύσει ἡ Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία νὰ ἐπηρεάζει τὴ ζωὴ τοῦ Γένους μας, δηλαδὴ νὰ παύσει ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ Γένους μας νὰ ζωογονεῖ τὸ εἶναι μας. Νὰ μείνει ὁ λαός ἀπροστάτευτος, ἔκθετος, ἀναμικτός, ἔτομη λεία καὶ τροφὴ ὁποιοῦδήποτε αἰσθητοῦ ἢ νοητοῦ θηρίου». (περιοδικὸ «Σύναξη», 10/1984).

Τὸ σιωπηλὸ καὶ ἡσύχιον Ἅγιον Ὅρος ἔκρουσε τὸν κώδωνα τοῦ κινδύνου ἀπὸ παλιά. Πλὴν εἰς μάτην. Ποιὸς ἀκούει τοὺς καλόγερους...

Παιδεία εἶναι καὶ γλῶσσα, πού διαβάζουνε οἱ ἀγράμματοι κι ἀγιάζουνε. Ἡ γλῶσσα μας, φυλακτῆριο τῶν τιμαλφῶν ἀξιών τοῦ Γένους μας. Ὅμως: «Ὅλα γίνονται στὴν Ἑλλάδα σὰ νὰ μᾶς κινεῖ ἓνα θανάσιμο μῖσος γιὰ τὴ λαλιά μας. Τὸ κακὸ εἶναι τόσο μεγάλο πού μόνο σὰν ἓνα φαινόμενο ὁμαδικῆς ψυχοπάθειας θὰ μποροῦσε κανεὶς νὰ τὸ ἐξηγήσει. Ἴσως, ποιὸς ξέρει, οἱ ἀπωθήσεις, πού προκάλεσε μιὰ δασκαλοκρατία πολλῶν αἰώνων, ἔπρεπε νὰ καταλήξουν στὶς σημερινές μας νευρώσεις. Στὰ χρόνια μας, πρέπει νὰ μὴ τὸ ξεχνᾶμε, τὸ ζήτημα δὲν εἶναι πῶς ἂν θὰ γράφουμε καθαρεύουσα ἢ δημοτικὴ. Τὸ τραγικὸ ζήτημα εἶναι ἂν θὰ γράφουμε ἢ ὄχι Ἑλληνικά, ἂν θὰ γράφουμε Ἑλληνικά ἢ ἓνα ὁποιοῦδήποτε Ἑλληνόμορφο ἔσπεράντο. Δυστυχῶς ὅλα γίνονται σὰ νὰ προτιμοῦμε τὸ ἔσπεράντο. Σὰν νὰ θέλουμε νὰ ξεκάνουμε μὲ ὅλα τὰ μέσα τὴ γλῶσσα μας» (Γ. Σεφέρης).

Παιδεία εἶναι καὶ μνήμη: «Μνήμη τοῦ λαοῦ μου σὲ λένε Πίνδο καὶ σὲ λένε Ἄθω» (Ἐλύτης). Ὅμως: «Τέτοια κληρονομιά πού μᾶς ἔχει ἀφήσει ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἔχουμε δικαίωμα νὰ τὴν ἐξαφανίσουμε στὶς μέρες μας. Θὰ δώσουμε λόγο στὸ Θεό. Ἐμεῖς, τὸ μικρὸ

αὐτὸ ἔθνος, πιστέψαμε στὸν Μεσσία, μᾶς δόθηκε ἡ εὐλογία νὰ διαφωτίσουμε ὅλον τὸν κόσμο. Ἡ Παλαιὰ Διαθήκη μεταφράσθηκε στὴν Ἑλληνικὴ γλῶσσα ἕκατὸ χρόνια πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἔλευση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Οἱ πρῶτοι Χριστιανοὶ τί τράβηξαν! Κινδύνευε συνέχεια ἡ ζωὴ τους. Τώρα τί ἀδιαφορία ὑπάρχει!... ἐνῶ ἀνώδυνα σήμερα, χωρὶς νὰ κινδυνεύει ἡ ζωὴ μας μποροῦμε νὰ διαφωτίσουμε τὰ ἔθνη, νὰ γινόμαστε πῶς ἀδιάφοροι;

Ἄν σήμερα ἔχουμε λιγάκι εἰρήνη, ξέρεις τί ἔχουν τραβήξει οἱ παλιοί; Ξέρεις πόσοι θυσιάστηκαν; Τώρα τίποτε δὲν θὰ εἶχαμε, ἂν δὲν θυσιάζονταν ἐκεῖνοι. Καὶ κάνω μία σύγκριση, πῶς τότε, ἐνῶ κινδύνευε ἡ ζωὴ τους, κρατοῦσαν τὴ πίστη τους, καὶ πῶς τώρα, χωρὶς καμμία πίεση, ὅλα τὰ ἰσοπεδώνουν! Ὅσοι δὲν ἔχουν χάσει τὴν ἐθνικὴ τους ἐλευθερία, δὲν καταλαβαίνουν. «Τοὺς λέω! Ὁ Θεὸς νὰ φυλάξῃ νὰ μὴ ἔρθουν οἱ βάρβαροι νὰ μᾶς ἀτιμάσουν! Καὶ μοῦ λένε: Καὶ τί θὰ πάθουμε; Ἀκοῦς κουβέντα; Ἄντε νὰ λείψετε, χαμένοι ἄνθρωποι! Τέτοιοι εἶναι οἱ ἄνθρωποι σήμερα. Δῶσ' τους χρήματα, αὐτοκίνητο, καὶ δὲν νοιάζονται οὔτε γιὰ τὴν πίστη, οὔτε γιὰ τὴν τιμὴ, οὔτε γιὰ τὴν ἐλευθερία» (Γέροντας Παῖσιος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης).

Παιδεία εἶναι καὶ παράδοση ποὺ σημαίνει παραλαβή. Παράδοση σημαίνει συνέχεια. Εἶναι μία λαμπαδηφορία, κατὰ τὴν ὁποία ἡ μιὰ γενεὰ παίρνει τὴν φλόγα ἀπὸ τὴν προηγούμενη, γιὰ νὰ συνεχίσει τὴν δική της πορεία μέχρι νὰ τὴν παραδώσει στὴν ἄλλη. Ἡ λαμπάδα αὐτὴ τῆς παράδοσής μας ἔπεσε ἀπὸ τὰ χέρια μας, ὅταν γίναμε κράτος, τὸ λυμφατικὸ Ἑλλαδικὸ κρατίδιο τῶν «Μπαναρέζων».

Ἀπὸ τὸ 1453 μέχρι σήμερα διαπιστώνουμε ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ στὴν ἱστορία σημαδεύεται ἀπὸ μία παραδοξότητα. Ἡ δουλεία, παρὰ τὸ καταθλιπτικὸ της βάρος, δὲν ἐπέφερε τὴ νέκρωσή του. Γιατί, ὅπως ἀποδείχτηκε, τὸν ὑπέταξε μόνο σωματικά. Οἱ ψυχὲς καὶ τὸ φρόνημα ἔμειναν ἀδούλωτα. Ἀντίθετα, ἡ ἀπελευθέρωση ἀπέδειξε ὅτι ἡ ἐλευθερία μπορεῖ νὰ φανεῖ καταστροφικὴ, ἂν ἡ ψυχὴ χάσει τὴν αὐτοσυνειδησία της καὶ τὸ φρόνημα ἀλλοτριωθεῖ.

Σὲ στιγμὲς συναισθηματικῆς ἑξαερσης ἀπὸ τὴ διαπίστωση αὐτὴ σημείωνε ὁ στρατηγὸς Ἰ. Μακρυγιάννης στὰ Ἀπομνημονεύματά του: «Ἄν μᾶς ἔλεγε κανένας αὐτὴν τὴ λευτεριά, ὅπου γευόμαστε, θὰ περικαλοῦσαμε τὸν Θεὸν νὰ μᾶς ἀφήσει εἰς τοὺς Τούρκους ἄλλα τόσα χρόνια, ὅσο νὰ γνωρίσουν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τί θὰ εἰπεῖ πατρίδα, τί θὰ εἰπεῖ θρησκεία, τί θὰ εἰπεῖ φιλοτιμία, τί ἀρετὴ καὶ τιμιότη».

Ὁ Μακρυγιάννης ἄφησε νὰ ἀκουστεῖ ὁ σπαραγμὸς τῆς καρδιάς του, ὅταν εἶδε νὰ κινδυνεύει τὸ Γένος, νὰ χάσει στὴν ἐλευθερία ὅ,τι δὲν ἔχασε στὴ δουλεία, ἀποβαίνοντας μεταπρατικὸς χῶρος τῶν δυνάμεων ἐκείνων, ποὺ μὲ τόση ἀποτελεσματικότητά εἶχε

ἀποκρούσει στὴ δουλεία. «Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Στρατηγοῦ Μακρυγιάννη εἶναι μία βαρὴ ὑπόμνηση, ποὺ ὁ σημερινὸς Ἑλληνισμὸς, δὲν μπορεῖ ποτὲ νὰ παραβλέψει» (π. Γεώργιος Μεταλληνός).

Θυμᾶμαι ὁ Μάνος Χατζιδάκης ὀνόμαζε τὴν Εὐρωπαϊκὴ Ἑνωσι, μιὰ νέα μορφή Τουρκοκρατίας καὶ μακάριζε ἐαυτόν, διότι δὲν θὰ βίωνε τὴν νέα καὶ ὑπουλὴ σκλαβιά. Λοιπόν. Ἐφ' ὅσον ἡ «εὐρωπαϊκὴ» Τουρκοκρατία μᾶς ἀπειλεῖ ἀπροκάλυπτα καὶ κινδυνεύουμε νὰ βουλιάξουμε μέσα σ' αὐτὴν τὴν βαρβαρότροπη χοάνη, ὁ μόνος τρόπος γιὰ νὰ ἐπιβιώσουμε ὡς λαὸς ἱστορικός, εἶναι νὰ ἀναστήσουμε τὴν Παιδεία, μὲ τὴν ὁποία παίδευε τὰ Ἑλληνόπουλα τὸ ἐν αἰχμαλωσίᾳ Γένος μας. Νὰ ξαναγράψουμε τὸ ἐκπαιδευτικὸ μοντέλο, μὲ τὸ ὁποῖο μόρφωνε τὰ παιδιά του ὁ λαὸς μας τὴν περίοδο τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας.

Ἐπειδὴ κάποιοι «προοδευμένοι» ἐνδέχεται νὰ παρανοήσουν, ἐξηγῶ. Δὲν θὰ κλείσουμε τὰ αὐτιά μας καὶ τὰ μάτια μας, σ' ὅλα ὅσα συμβαίνουν στὰ πεπολιτισμένα ἔθνη. «Ὅ,τι καλὸν ὅ,τι χρήσιμον» τό νόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ οὐσία (ἢ φιλοσοφία) ὅμως τῆς Παιδείας μας θὰ ἐξετάζει, θὰ «βλέπει τί ἔχασε, τί ἔχει, τί τῆς πρέπει». Ἐξω «μαυροφῶρ' ἀπελπισιὰ» καὶ «χειροπιαστὸ σκοτάδι» καὶ μέσα «στὴ θολόκτιστη ἐκκλησιὰ», τὰ σχολεῖα τῆς πατρίδας μας, θὰ θεριεύουν τὴν «ἀποσταμένη ἐλπίδα».



Εἰς τῶν Φράγκων ὑποσχέσεις μὴ στηρίζετε ἐλπίδας, Ἐμπορος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἀγοράζει καὶ πωλεῖ! Εἰς τῶν τέκνων σας τὰς λόγχας καὶ ἀσπίδας καὶ κοπίδας, Εἰς αὐτά, αὐτὰ καὶ μόνον ἡ ἐλπίς ἄς στηριχθεῖ.

Ἀπὸ τοὺς ἀγροίους Τούρκους καὶ τοὺς πονηροὺς Λατίνους Ὅσο δυνατοὶ κι ἂν εἴσθε δεινοὺς τρέχετε κινδύνους...

Κ. Σαρδέλη

«Ἡ Ρωμηοσύνη καὶ ὁ Φῶτης Κόντογλου»



Παρακαλοῦμε τοὺς ἀναγνώστες μας νὰ μὴ λησμονοῦν τὴν παραβολὴ τῆς ἐτήσιας συνδρομῆς πρὸς κάλυψη τῶν σχετικῶν ἐξόδων γιὰ τὴν ἐκδοσὴ τοῦ παρόντος φυλλαδίου. Ἐπίσης, ὅσοι ἔχουν τὴν οἰκονομικὴ εὐχέρεια, ἄς συνδράμουν, ἂν θέλουν, στὴν ταπεινὴ προσπάθειά μας ἀποστέλλοντες κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ τῶν 24 δολλαρίων πρὸς ἐνίσχυση τῆς ἀδελφότητος «Ὅσιος Ποιμῆν».

Ὁμιλία 25^{ης} Μαρτίου

Αὐτὰ τὰ λόγια ἀπηύθυνε ἓνας φωτισμένος δάσκαλος στοὺς μαθητές του, στὸ 2^ο ΕΠΑΑ Ἀχαρνῶν, γιὰ τὴν ἐπέτειο τῆς 25ης Μαρτίου... Ἀπολαύστε καὶ σεῖς αὐτὰ ποὺ εἶπε σὲ 17χρονα παιδιὰ καὶ κάντε τὶς συγκρίσεις...

Σκέφτηκα νὰ σοῦ μιλήσω γιὰ τὸν Καραϊσκάκη, ἀλλὰ τὸ μῦθό σου θὰ πάει στὸ γῆπεδο. Σκέφτηκα νὰ σοῦ μιλήσω γιὰ τὸ 21, ἀλλὰ ὁ νοῦς σου θὰ πάει στὴν Ὁριζιναλ.

Συλλογίστηκα πολὺ, γιὰ νὰ καταλήξω ἂν ἀξιῖζει νὰ σὲ ταλαιπωρήσω γιὰ κάτι τόσο μακρινό, τόσο ξένο. Δυὸ αἰῶνες πίσω κάποια γεγονότα. Τὶ νὰ λένε σὲ σένα; Σὲ ἐσένα ποὺ νοιάζεσαι νὰ φύγεις, νὰ πᾶς γιὰ τσιγάρο, γιὰ καφέ ἢ γιὰ κάτι ἄλλο.

Θὰ σοῦ μιλήσω λοιπὸν προσωπικά.

Ἐγὼ ὁ δάσκαλος ποὺ δούλεψα ἓνα χρόνο σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ σχολεῖο καὶ σὲ δεκαπέντε μέρη φεύγω γιὰ ἄλλοῦ, σὲ ἐσένα ποὺ εἶσαι ἐδῶ ἓνα, δυό, τρία ἢ καὶ περισσότερα χρόνια, θὰ σοῦ μιλήσω σταράτα, γιὰ νὰ σοῦ ἐκφράσω δυὸ σκέψεις μου.

Οἱ μᾶθητές ποὺ συνάντησα μέσα στὶς τάξεις, οἱ μᾶθητές ποὺ δίδαξα φέτος, στὴν συντριπτικὴ τους πλειονότητα μὲ σεβάστηκαν, ἂν καὶ δὲν ἀνταποκρίθηκαν στὶς ἀπαιτήσεις τοῦ μαθήματος.

Πολλοὶ ὅμως ἀπὸ τοὺς ὑπόλοιπους μᾶθητές δὲ μὲ σεβάστηκαν, μὲ προσέβαλαν κατ' ἐπανάληψη. Μὲ ἔργα, μὲ λόγια, μὲ ὕβρεις, δείχνοντας ἓνα χαρακτήρα καὶ ἓνα ἦθος ποὺ μὲ σόκαρε, ποὺ μὲ ἔβαλε σὲ μελαγχολικὲς σκέψεις.

Αὐτὸ τὸ φαινόμενο ἀποδεικνύει πὼς κάτι σάπιο ὑπάρχει σὲ αὐτὸ τὸ σχολεῖο, πὼς ἐκτὸς τοῦ γνωστικοῦ ἐλλείμματος, τὸ συγκεκριμένο σχολεῖο χωλαίνει δραματικά.

Καὶ στὸ ἠθικοπλαστικὸ του ἔργο, στὴ διαμόρφωση δηλαδή τῶν μαθητικῶν ψυχῶν καὶ πνευμάτων. Καὶ ἡ εὐθύνη γιὰ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀποτυχία εἶναι εὐθύνη ἀποκλειστικὰ δική μας, τῶν δασκάλων σας καὶ τῶν γονιῶν σας. Δὲν ἔχουμε κατορθώσει νὰ σᾶς δείξουμε πὼς χωρὶς ἀρχὲς ἢ ζωὴ σας αὔριο θὰ εἶναι μία κόλαση, πὼς χωρὶς ὄνειρα καὶ στόχους θὰ χρειαστεῖτε ὑποκατάστατα, θὰ καταφύγετε πιθανὸν σὲ ἐπιλογὲς ποὺ θὰ σᾶς ξεφτιλίσουν, θὰ σᾶς κάνουν νὰ σιχαίνεστε τὸν ἑαυτό σας, θὰ σᾶς γεμίσουν τὴ ζωὴ πλήξη καὶ κούραση, θὰ σᾶς γεράσουν πρόωρα.

Ἄν ὅμως θέλετε μία συμβουλή ἀπὸ ἓνα δάσκαλο, σκεφτεῖτε τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ Μακρυγιάννη, ποὺ ἔφτασε ἀγράμματος μᾶχρι τὰ πενήντα σχεδόν, γιὰ νὰ καταλάβει τότε πὼς ἢ μόρφωση, ἢ καλλιέργεια, ἦταν τὸ ὄπλο ποὺ ἔλειπε ἀπὸ τὴν προσωπικὴ του θήκη. Καὶ κάθισε μὲ πολλὴ δυσκολία καὶ χωρὶς δάσκαλο καὶ ἔμαθε πέντε κολλυβογράμματα, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς πεί τὴν

ἱστορία τοῦ βίου του, τὸ παραμῦθι τῆς ἐπανάστασης τῶν ὑπόδουλων Ρωμιῶν.

Αὐτὸ τὸ παράδειγμα εἶναι γιὰ σένα τὸ πιὸ κατάλληλο, καὶ μπορεῖς τριάντα χρόνια νωρίτερα ἀπὸ τὸν στρατηγὸ Μακρυγιάννη νὰ ἀκολουθήσεις τὸ δρόμο ποὺ ἐκεῖνος ἔδειξε, τὸ μονοπάτι τῆς καλλιέργειας, τὸ δρόμο τῆς παιδείας, τὴ λεωφόρο τῆς προσωπικῆς σου προκοπῆς.

Δὲν εἶστε σὲ τίποτε λιγότερο ἱκανοὶ ἀπὸ τὸν μπάσταρδο γιὸ τῆς καλογοριᾶς, τὸν Ἀρβανίτη Γιώργη Καραϊσκάκη. Ἦταν κι αὐτὸς ἀθυρόστομος σὰν κι ἐσᾶς, ἀλλὰ εἶχε αὐτὸ ποὺ ἀπὸ τὰ ἀλβανικὰ μάθαινε σὰν μπέσα, ἦταν πάνω ἀπ' ὅλα μπεσαλῆς.

Αὐτὸ θὰ 'θελα νὰ ἔχετε κι ἐσεῖς. Ὑπευθυνότητα, μπέσα, τσίπα. Νὰ ἀναλαμβάνετε τὶς εὐθύνες σας, νὰ ἀπεχθάνεστε τὴν ὑποκρισία, νὰ σιχαίνεστε τὸ συμφέρον, νὰ μίσητε τὸ ψέμα καὶ τὴν εὐθυνοφοβία.

Ἡ ἀγάπη γιὰ τὸν τόπο του, ἢ λατρεία γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα του ἦταν αὐτὸ ποὺ χαρακτήριζε τὴ ζωὴ τοῦ Νικήτα Σταματελόπουλου, τοῦ Νικηταῖ. Ἀγωνίστηκε στὴ διάρκεια τῆς ἐπανάστασης, συνέβαλε στὴν ἀπελευθέρωση τῆς πατρίδας του κι ἔπειτα φυλακίστηκε, γιὰ νὰ χαθεῖ σ' ἓνα στενοσόκακο τοῦ Πειραιᾶ, σχεδὸν τυφλωμένος, πάμπτωχος καὶ ἐγκαταλειμμένος ἀπὸ ὄλου δὲ ζήτησε τίποτε ἀπὸ τὴν ἐλεύθερη Ἑλλάδα, κι ὅταν οἱ γύρω του τὸν παρακινούσαν νὰ ἀπαιτήσῃ ἀπὸ τὴν κυβέρνηση μία πλούσια σύνταξη, ἀπαντοῦσε πὼς ἢ πατρίδα τὸν ἀμείβει πολὺ καλά, λέγοντας ψέματα, γιὰ νὰ μὴν προσβάλλει τὴν πατρίδα του.

Εἶναι δύσκολο, τὸ κατανοῶ, τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ Νικηταῖ. Ἀλλὰ νομίζω πὼς κι ἐσεῖς εἶστε ἱκανοὶ γιὰ τὰ δύσκολα, μπορεῖτε νὰ ἀκολουθήσετε τὸ δρόμο τῆς ἀξιοπρέπειας, νὰ προσπαθήσετε τίμια καὶ μὲ ἀγωνιστικότητα γιὰ ἐσᾶς καὶ γιὰ τὸ μέλλον τῆς οἰκογένειας ποὺ αὔριο θὰ κάνετε.

Ξέρω, καταλαβαίνω, ἀντιλαμβάνομαι πὼς σᾶς προτείνω μία διαδρομὴ ζωῆς δύσκολη καὶ ἀπαιτητικὴ, ὅταν δίπλα σας κυριαρχεῖ ὁ εὐκόλος δρόμος τῶν γονιῶν, τῶν δασκάλων, τῶν πολιτικῶν, τῆς ἐποχῆς στὴν ὁποία μέγαλώνετε.

Ὅμως κάθε ἐποχὴ ἐλπίζει στοὺς νέους της, περιμένει ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς νὰ σηκώσουν ψηλὰ καὶ μὲ ἐπιτυχία τὴ σημαία τοῦ ἀγῶνα καὶ νὰ ὀδηγήσουν τὴν πατρίδα τους, τὸν τόπο τους σὲ καλύτερες μέρη, σὲ πιὸ φωτεινὲς σελίδες.

Κι ὅταν βλέπω τὴν ἐποχὴ μας, νὰ μᾶραζώνει χωμένη στὴν ἀλλοτρίωση, νὰ ξεψυχᾷ ἀπὸ τὴν τηλεοπτικὴ ἀνία, νὰ μοῦχλιάζει ἀπὸ τὸ κυνήγι τῆς εὐκολίας, μόνο σὲ ἐσᾶς ἐλπίζω, στὴν εἰλικρινή σας διάθεση νὰ ἀγωνιστεῖτε, νὰ ἀντισταθεῖτε, νὰ πολεμήσετε, νὰ νικήσετε.

Μὴ μᾶς ἀπογοητεύσετε...

Ἡ Ἄδικία θὰ τοῦ Γίνει Δόξα!

Τοῦ Μοναχοῦ Μωυσέως Ἀγιορείτου, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐφημ. «ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑ».



Ἡπροφυλάκιση τοῦ ἡγούμενου Ἐφραὶμ δημιουργεῖ σοβαρὰ καὶ μεγάλα προβλήματα καὶ ἐρωτήματα. Εἶναι ἄσχετο τ' ὅτι ὑπουργοποιήθηκαν ὅλοι οἱ ὑπουργοὶ ποὺ ἀναμείχθηκαν στὴν ὑπόθεση Βατοπεδίου; Γιατί, γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ ἀπὸ τὴν σύσταση τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ κράτους, ἔχουμε

ὑφυπουργὸ Δικαιοσύνης; Ὁ συγκεκριμένος ὑφυπουργὸς ἔχει ἀσχοληθεῖ μὲ τὴν ὑπόθεση τῆς Μονῆς ἀρνητικά. Πῶς μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι στὴ θέση αὐτή;

Ὁ ἡγούμενος Ἐφραὶμ εἶναι ὁ πλέον ὕβρισθεις, γλευασθεις, εἰρωνευθεις καὶ διαπομπευθεις Νεοέλληνας. Γιατί; Ἀποδείχθηκε ἡ ἐνοχή του; Ὁ ἡγούμενος κατέστρεψε τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ οἰκονομία; Πρόκειται γιὰ τὸ πιὸ ἄθλιο ὑποκείμενο τῆς Ἑλλάδος; Ἐνας Ἀγιορείτης ἡγούμενος ἱστορικῆς Μονῆς μὲ πλούσια προσφορὰ καὶ 120 μοναχοὺς ἄξιζε αὐτῆς τῆς τύχης;

Ἐμεῖς δὲν θέλουμε νὰ κρίνουμε καὶ νὰ κατακρίνουμε τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ δικαιοσύνη. Πιστεύουμε στὴν ἀκριβοδικία τῆς δικαιοσύνης, στὸ ὕψος καὶ τὴν ἀξιοπιστία της. Ὅμως ὀρισμένες φορὲς μᾶς λυπεῖ, μᾶς στεναχωρεῖ καὶ μᾶς προβληματίζει. Δὲν μιλοῦμε συναισθηματικά. Ἀνώτατοι δικαστικοί, ἔγκριτοι νομικοὶ μιλοῦν γιὰ «δικαστικὸ πραξικόπημα». Γιατί νὰ προφυλακιστεῖ ὁ ἡγούμενος; Μόνο αὐτὸς ἔφταιγε, ἂν ἔφταιγε; Ὁ ἡγούμενος ἦταν κάποιος αἰσχρὸς κακοποιὸς καὶ μεγαλοπατεώνας; Νὰ ἔλθουν νὰ τὸν συλλάβουν δεκάδες ὄπλοφόροι ἀστυνομικοί; Νὰ καταπατηθεῖ ἀπὸ ἐκπροσώπους τοῦ νόμου ὁ Καταστατικὸς Χάρτης τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὅρους ἐπιτρέπεται; Ἦταν τόσο ἐπικίνδυνος ὁ ἡγούμενος κι ἔπρεπε ἅμεσα νὰ προφυλακισθεῖ; Παραμονὴ τῶν Χριστουγέννων ἔπρεπε νὰ γίνεῖ κάτι τέτοιο; Μήπως ἤθελαν νὰ καλύψουν μία τῆς προηγούμενης ἡμέρας ἀπόφαση τῆς γερμανικῆς δικαιοσύνης γιὰ πρώην ὑπουργό;

Μὲ τὴν προφυλάκιση τοῦ ἡγούμενου ἐπῆλθε ἡ κάθαρση; Λύθηκαν τώρα ὅλα τὰ προβλήματα; Γιὰ ἄλλη ὑπόθεση κατηγοροῦνται δικαστικοὶ γιατί ἔκαναν τὸν καθῆκον τους. Ἄρα συμβαίνει ἡ ἐπιρροὴ τῶν πολιτικῶν στοὺς δικαστικούς; Ἄλλοι θὰ εἶχαν προφυλακιστεῖ νωρίτερα. Γιατί τόσο μένος; Μήπως θεώρησαν ὀρισμένοι ἰθύνοντες πῶς θ' ἀνεβάσουν τὰ χαμηλὰ ποσοστὰ τους μὲ τὴν προφυλάκιση αὐτή; Πάντως κατάφεραν νὰ τὰ μειώσουν περισσότερο αὐτὰ τὰ χαμηλὰ ποσοστὰ. Ἄνθρωποι ποὺ εἶχαν ἐπηρεασθεῖ

ἀρνητικὰ ἀπὸ τὰ μέσα ἐνημερώσεως γιὰ τὸν ἡγούμενο ἄλλαξαν γνώμη. Μήπως χρειάζεται ἀναθεώρηση;

Ἐπῆρξε μία ἀντίδραση πολλῶν προσώπων καὶ προσωπικοτήτων. Ἀνώτατων καὶ ἀνωτέρων κληρικῶν, ἡγουμένων, μοναχῶν καὶ λαϊκῶν. Ἐκπρόσωποι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Κύπρου, τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τῆς Σερβίας, τῆς Βουλγαρίας, τῆς Ρουμανίας, τῆς Οὐκρανίας καὶ τῆς Ρωσίας καὶ ἄλλοι. Δὲν πρόκειται γιὰ ἄπρεπη παρέμβαση, ἀλλὰ γιὰ συγκινητικὲς φωνὲς συμπαράστασης καὶ δικαιολογημένης διαμαρτυρίας. Δύο μὲ τρεῖς ἱεράρχες—πρόκειται, λένε, γιὰ ὑποψήφιους ἀρχιεπισκόπους—ἔκαναν ἀρνητικὲς δηλώσεις. Φυσικὰ εἶναι δικαίωμά τους. Δὲν γνωρίζω πόσο εἰλικρινεῖς, φιλάδελφες καὶ θεάρεστες εἶναι. Μήπως ὑπάρχει κάποια σκοπιμότητα;

Πολλοὶ ἄνθρωποι χάρηκαν ἰδιαίτερα γιὰ τὸ σχετικὸ ἀνακοινωθὲν τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, καθὼς καὶ γιὰ τὴν ὁμόφωνη ἐπιστολὴ συμπαράστασης τῆς Ἱερᾶς Κοινότητος.

Δὲν θὰ θέλαμε νὰ ἔχουμε ὑποψίες, πικροὺς λογισμοὺς καὶ ἀμφισβητήσεις. Δυστυχῶς ὅμως τὰ ὅσα συμβαίνουν τελευταῖα στὴν καψερὴ πατρίδα μας μᾶς κάνουν νὰ ἐπιβεβαιώσουμε τὶς ὑποψίες μας. Κατηγοροῦνται οἱ ξένοι ποὺ κατέθεσαν διαμαρτυρίες γιὰ τὴν προφυλάκιση. Δὲν ἀκούγεται λέξη γιὰ ὅσους ἐνοχλήθηκαν ἀπὸ τὶς διαμαρτυρίες; Γιατί; Γιατί μεροληπτοῦν τὰ μέσα ἐνημερώσεως; Πλὴν ἐλαχίστων ἐξαιρέσεων.

Ὁ ἡγούμενος Ἐφραὶμ προφυλακίστηκε. Ταπεινά, καρτερικὰ καὶ ἐλπιδοφόρα παραμένει στὸ κελὶ τοῦ Κορυδαλλοῦ. Ἡ ἀδικία θὰ τοῦ γίνεῖ δόξα. Ἄν σὲ κάτι ἔφταιξε μὲ τὸν τρόπο του ἦταν γιὰ φυλάκιση; Τότε θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ εἶναι φυλακισμένοι ὅλοι οἱ Ἕλληνες γιὰ κάποια λάθη τῆς ζωῆς τους. Δὲν ἀποδείχθηκε ἐσκεμμένη ἀπάτη. Κατηγορηθήκαμε γιὰ τὴν ὑποστήριξή μας. Δὲν πειράζει. Εἶναι χαρούμενοι καὶ μὲ γαλήνιο ὕπνο ὅσοι συνήργησαν γι' αὐτὴ τὴν προφυλάκιση; Καὶ μάλιστα γνωστοὶ ρασοφόροι.

Εἶναι σημαντικὰ αἰσιόδοξο μήνυμα ἡ σύμπτωση τῆς πλειοψηφίας τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ἱεραρχίας. Δὲν γνωρίζω ἂν εἶναι ἓνας ἅμεσος πόλεμος τοῦ μοναχισμοῦ καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἐνας πάντως τρόπος ὑπουλῆς πολεμικῆς σαφῶς εἶναι. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία εἶναι πανάρχαιος, δυνατὸς καὶ ἐνοπιὸς θεσμός. Ὁ μοναχισμὸς ἔχει πολὺτιμη προσφορὰ ἔργων ἀρετῆς, ἀγιότητος, φιλοκαλίας καὶ ἱερότητας. Τὸ Ἅγιον Ὅρος ὁπωσδήποτε θέλει μία ἄλλη ἀντιμετώπιση. Εἶναι κρίμα γι' αὐτὴ τὴν κατάπτωση, τὴν ἀποϊεροποίηση τῶν πάντων. Λαθεύω, ὑπερβάλλω ἢ ἀστοχῶ; Νὰ μὲ συγχωρεῖτε ποὺ ἐπιμένω. Ἐχω μία διαίσθηση ὅτι αὐτοὶ ποὺ θέλησαν νὰ διαβάλουν τὸν ἡγούμενο Ἐφραὶμ τοῦ ἔκαναν τὸ μεγαλύτερο καλὸ ἀπὸ πνευματικῆς ἀπόψεως.

Αὐτὸ ἔχει καὶ τὴ μεγαλύτερη σημασία. Δὲν νομίζετε;

PALM SUNDAY

By St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov).

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; proclaim it aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, the King is coming to thee, just, and a Savior; he is meek and riding on an ass, and a young foal. [Zech 9:9]

The prophet of God pronounced this prophecy over four hundred years before the event that we commemorate and celebrate today. Having completed His preaching on the earth, our Lord Jesus Christ made His triumphant entry into the royal city of Jerusalem, into the city where the true God was worshipped, a city in most ways Godly. The Lord made this entry as the King and victor, in order to finish His service by a decisive exploit: destroying death by death; removing the curse from the human race by taking this curse upon Himself. He made His entry into the royal city on the colt of an ass, *whereon yet never man sat* (Lk 19:30), in order to restore to mankind the royal dignity which our forefather had wasted; to restore this dignity by ascending the cross.

The unbroken colt was tamed beneath the wondrous Rider. The Apostles placed their garments upon the colt; great multitudes of people ran ahead to meet the Lord and walk alongside Him, shouting in their

ecstasy, *Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he [the king (Lk 19:38)] that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.* (Mt. 21:9) The Lord is proclaimed King in the name of the Lord at His own beckoning—not accidentally, and not by conscious human will. In the course of four days, those same people who that day proclaimed Him King will cry, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him... We have no king but Caesar!* (Jn 19:15)

What is the significance of the Lord's riding into Jerusalem on an unbroken colt? According to the explanation of the holy fathers, this has a deep, prophetic meaning. The all-seeing Lord already saw the Jews' approaching final apostasy from God. He announced this apostasy even back when the Law was given to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai, through the lips of the inspired Law-giver. *They have sinned*, said Moses of the Jews' future sin against the God-Man, as if he were speaking of something already done. *They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus recompense the Lord? (Deut. 32:5–6) It is a nation that has lost counsel, neither is there understanding*

in them. They had not sense to understand: let them reserve these things against the time to come. (Deut 32:28–29) For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and their vine-branch of Gomorrha. (Deut 32:32). While to the contrary: Rejoice, ye heavens, with Him—the Son of God—and let all the angels of God worship Him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with His people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in Him. (Deut 32:43).

Thus, the entry into Jerusalem upon an unbroken colt is a repetition of Moses' prophecy—not in words, but in symbol. Moses foretold that the Gentiles would rejoice in the Lord, but the Jews would be rejected. Here, the unbroken colt, *whereon yet never man sat* (Lk 19:30), is an image of the Gentiles. The Apostles' garments are Christ's teachings by which they would instruct the Gentiles, and the Lord seated Himself spiritually upon the Gentiles, making them God. He led them into Jerusalem, to the bosom of the Church, to the eternal city of God not made by the hands of men, to the

city of salvation and blessedness. The rejected Jews were also present there. With their lips they cried, "the King of Israel," but in their soul, their Sanhedrin, they had already resolved to kill the Savior.

Here is another meaning of the *colt of an ass*. It is an image of every person who is led by irrational desires, deprived of spiritual freedom, attached to the passions and habits of fleshly

life. Christ's teaching looses the ass from its attachment; that is, from fulfilling its sinful and fleshly will. Then the Apostles lead the ass to Christ, place their garments upon it; the Lord seats Himself upon it and makes His entry upon it into Jerusalem. This means that the person who has left his sinful life is led to the Gospels, and is clothed as if in apostolic vestments, in the most detailed and refined knowledge of Christ and His commandments. Then the Lord seats Himself upon him by spiritually appearing to him and spiritually abiding in him, as it was His good will to promise: *He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. (Jn. 14:21) And My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. (Jn. 14:23)*

The Lord's coming is accompanied by peace surpassing words and comprehension; peace that is full of grace, and worthy of the one Who grants it—the Lord. This peace is not to be compared with the natural rest of fallen man, who may feel rest and pleasure from fleshly delights, and who



may consider his own insensibility, his own eternal death, to be rest. The Lord is seated upon the natural qualities of the person who has submitted to Him and has assimilated His all-holy teachings; and He leads that person into the spiritual city of God, the city of peace—into the Jerusalem created by God, and not by man.

The soul that upholds the Lord is greeted by the Holy Spirit, Who offers that soul spiritual joy which is incorruptible and eternal. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion*, the daughter of the Holy Church—because you belong to no one but God. *Proclaim it aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, the King is coming to thee, just, and a Savior; he is meek and riding on an ass, and a young foal* (Zech 9:9). You have felt the grace-filled peace of Christ, and become a daughter of this peace; you have been renewed with spiritual youth and have come to know Christ's Kingdom by experience. The passions are tamed in you by the grace-filled power of our Lord Who steers you; your natural qualities cannot break their natural laws, they cannot go beyond their boundaries and be transformed into uncontrolled passions!

Taking all your thoughts, feelings and actions from the Lord, you can and must proclaim the Name of the Lord to your brethren, and hymn Him *in the midst of the Church*. (Pss 21:22) As one born of the Holy Spirit and a daughter of the Spirit, you are able to behold the spiritual procession of your King, you are able to behold the righteousness of your King. *He is meek and lowly in heart* (Mt 11:29), and *He will guide the meek in judgment, He will teach the meek His ways* (Pss 24:9). Our God is a Spirit which is incomparable to any created spirit, as He is in all aspects infinitely different from all creatures. The holy created spirits are His thrones and chariots. He is seated and rides upon the Cherubim; He is seated and rides upon those blessed human souls who have submitted to Him and brought all their natural qualities to Him as a whole burnt offering. The King rides upon such souls, and enters the holy city of God, bringing holy souls into it also. *Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh.*

Amen.



If the truth of something has been revealed in the Word of God, has been investigated and explained to us by the Divinely enlightened mind of the saints whom God has glorified, and has been recognized by the heart in its light and life-giving effect, then it is a great sin and diabolical pride of the intellect and heart to doubt it and to be perplexed about it.

St. John of Kronstadt

TWO KINDS OF FAITH

By Rev. John S. Romanides (+2001).

Human beings can have two kinds of faith. The first kind of faith, which has its seat in the mind, is the reasonable faith of acceptance. In this case, a person rationally accepts something and believes in what he has accepted, but this faith does not justify him. When Holy Scripture says, *man is saved by faith alone* (Eph 2:8), it does not mean that he is saved merely by the faith of acceptance. There is, however, another kind of faith, the faith of the heart. It is referred to in this way because this kind of faith is not found in the human reason or intellect, but in the region of the heart. This faith of the heart is a gift of God that you will not receive unless God decides to grant it. It is also called *inner faith*, which is the kind of faith that the father of the young lunatic in the Gospel asked Christ to give him when he said, *Lord, help my unbelief*. (Mk 9:24). Naturally, the father already believed with his reason, but he did not have that deep inner faith that is a gift of God.

Inner faith is rooted in an (empirical) experience of grace. And since it is an experience of grace, what would this make inner faith as far as an Orthodox Christian is concerned? Inner faith is noetic prayer. When someone has noetic prayer in his heart, which means the prayer of the Holy Spirit in his heart, then he has inner faith. Through this kind of faith and by means of prayer, he beholds things that are invisible. When someone has this kind of vision, it is called *theoria*. *Theoria*, in fact, means vision.

As a rule, there are two ways for vision to take place.

When a person has not yet attained to *theosis*, it is still possible for him to see by means of the prayer that the Holy Spirit is saying within his heart. After attaining to *theosis*, however, he can see by means of *theosis*, in which both this inner faith (i.e., prayer of the heart) and hope are set aside, and only love for God remains (as a gift of God). This is what St. Paul means when he says: *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away*. (I Cor 13:10 & 13:13). Note that since faith and hope have fulfilled their purpose and man has reached the point of seeing God, the source of his faith and hope, he now simply knows and loves the One Who is Love.

When the perfect is come, faith and hope are thus done away, and only love remains. And this love is *theosis*. In *theosis*, knowledge comes to an end; prophecy is set aside; tongues, which are in noetic prayer, cease; and only love remains. St. Paul says this in passages of great clarity and beauty. The Church Fathers in turn offer interpretations of these subjects that are indisputably correct. These interpretations are found throughout the entire Philokolia.

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Paschal Epistle of St. John Maximovitch, 1940, translated by Nun Cornelia (Rees).

Pascha, 1940, Shanghai: A large Russian diaspora, forced to leave behind their homeland; many had lost their dear ones, and everything they owned, and now lived in want, in a foreign land. But God gave them a saintly bishop to comfort them, and keep them in remembrance of the grace and strength of Holy Orthodoxy.

A member of St. John's Shanghai flock, Nicholas Feodorovich Tsepitov, of Revda, Russia, preserved this Paschal Epistle all his life, even after his return to the Soviet Union in 1947. It gave him comfort there also, where more trials awaited him. He gave this epistle for publication to the Fund for the Canonization of St. John Maximovitch in Russia, and it is presented here, in English translation, as a comfort to all.

† † †

Let us arise in the deep dawn,

And instead of myrrh offer a hymn to the Lord.

We forestall the rising of the sun, and hasten in the depth of night to meet the Sun of Righteousness.

The present night is not an ordinary night! Brighter than day, it fills our souls with light! The rays of the Sun of the world illumine us and the whole universe, enlightening all who come to His light. The warmth poured out through His rays penetrates all our members, filling our souls with deep peace, even healing our bodily illnesses. This warmth melts away our sorrows, and our passions are burned away as by fire.

Enmity and hatred disappear from us, we forget our bitterness, and we do not feel our impoverishment. The whole world becomes different in this holy and only night!

All nature is changed, and everything is filled with warmth and light. Just as birds of prey hide at the rising of the sun, and wild beasts disappear into their dens, so does evil flee from every heart illumined today by the Light which radiates from the tomb.

Like the morning dew, now are our tears dried away! As blossoms unfold at the onset of day, enlivened by the sun's rays, so do virtues return to us as the Sun rises upon us this morning.

Let us strive to be wholly illuminated by this wondrous light! When spring comes, we open all the windows and doors of our homes, that the warmth may enter and dry the dankness within. Now the Divine Light can also enter; but it cannot shine within souls that have closed themselves, and do not want to be illumined by that Light.

Let us open our souls and hearts! Let us hasten with the myrrh-bearers, *let us come bearing our lamps to Christ, Who has come forth from the tomb!* Even if you are burdened by sins, do not turn away; for today even *those in the bonds of hell hasten to the Light with joyful feet.* Even if you are poor

and haven't the means to buy candles and myrrh, do not turn away. Let our hearts and souls burn in place of candles. There is no impoverishment in the world!

In these past days, we were all called to bring our material offerings and bodily ascetic labors as myrrh. Now we all are called to partake of spiritual joy. *This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

Instead of myrrh and material offerings, *let us bring a hymn to the Lord.* Let us sing the praise of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God!

Let us open now the doors and windows of our souls and hearts, that they might be warmed by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness!

From the outermost border of heaven is His going forth, and His goal is unto the outermost part of heaven, and there shall no man hide himself from His heat (Pss 18:6). Now all things are filled with light: heaven and earth and the nether regions (Ode 3 of the Paschal Canon). Only we are impenetrable if we do not want Him!

If you do not feel this radiant joy today, seek the reason within yourself only.

It would be insane for a man to claim that the sun does not exist, only because he does not see it from within his tightly closed and shuttered dwelling. Pitiably is the blind man who keeps telling everyone that there is no such thing as light, only because he does not see it! It would look very foolish for a man to insist that spring has not come, only because no warmth has penetrated into his locked cellar!

We praise the gentle light, the holy glory of the immortal Heavenly Father—the Resurrected Lord, crying out to Him from the depth of our souls, *meet it is for Thee at all times to be hymned!*

Then the light of Christ that enlightens all will enlighten even us, and we shall behold Christ the Sun of Righteousness, Who shines upon all life!

Christ is Risen!

The Bright Resurrection of Christ,

+ JOHN, Bishop of Shanghai



The perfect man will certainly become the equal of the angels, as the Lord affirms; but He will do so in the resurrection of the dead, and not in this present world. Even then the perfect will not be angels, but *equal to the angels* (Lk 20:36). This means that men cannot forsake their own nature, though like angels they can become changeless through grace and released from all necessity, free in everything they do, possessing ceaseless joy, love of God, and all that *the eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard.* (I Cor 2:9).

St. Peter of Damaskos

DAVID NOW HAS A VOICE...

Printed with permission from Judy Charest, Nashville, TN.

I know there is a law against coerced abortions... on the books anyway. This is my story of what happened to me in April of 1972. I know there are countless others, who like me, have been forced into an abortion. My story is unfortunately not unique.

I was a 16 year old girl from Nashville in a long term relationship with my boyfriend Steve, and living with my mother and step father. My mother was very ill and my stepfather made all the family decisions. When I found out I was pregnant, I knew my stepfather would force me to have an abortion. But Steve and I had a plan. We hid the pregnancy until I was past the stage for abortions, or so we thought. We managed to hide it until I was 5 1/2 months along. Just as we thought, my step father took me to a doctor for an abortion. He told my father I was too far along so we thought our baby was safe.

When I was 7 1/2 months, I was awakened at 4:00 AM and driven in the dead of night to a hospital in Cookeville, TN. I knew this had something to do with the baby but he was kicking, rolling and very much alive. There was nothing they could do now!

I was wrong... a nurse came in to listen for a heartbeat, and found a very strong heartbeat. What music to a mother's ears to hear the heartbeat of her baby! But this would be the first and last time I would hear his heartbeat. No one would answer my questions about what was going on. I was becoming very agitated and scared.

Finally a doctor came in and explained in a harsh voice that he was going to perform a salt saline abortion. I became uncontrollably upset, I said NO, I screamed NO, I tried to make the deal that if they would just let my baby live I would give him up at birth, I tried to get off of the bed, I did all a 16 year old could until they sedated me and started the procedure. My labor was 12 painful hours of knowing what was happening to my baby.

When I gave birth to my son, I begged to hold him but I was denied even that. Before they took his little burned body away, I caught a glimpse of his little leg and foot. That is all I saw of my son. He was dead...

Less than 24 hours later I was taken back to Nashville to inform my boyfriend they had killed our baby; that I couldn't save our son. I was consumed with guilt and sorrow. Being denied the opportunity to mourn, I was told this was my fault and I must never tell anyone about this; no one would

understand or ever love me if they knew what "I" had done... I believed what they told me.

I left Nashville a pregnant teenager, I returned a broken woman, girlfriend, sister, friend, daughter, but most of all a broken mother.

Steve and I named our son David.

As time passed my world grew darker, the relationship didn't make it, I spiraled down into my very own private hell. Years passed and the birthdays and dreams of what David could have been haunted me. The maternal instinct that longed to hold and protect him never left me.

In 2009, after much prayer, I made the decision to find a way to heal. I wanted to acknowledge that my son existed, even if for a short time. God was in control and I was headed for the journey of my life.

God's perfect timing... the journey begins.

My research on the issue of abortion led me to TN Right to Life. There I met so many remarkable people who were dedicated to the cause of life and helping women and men just like

me. As I became more involved, I found out that their legislative liaison was working on a piece of legislation along with two great sponsors called "Freedom from Coercion Bill" sponsored by Representative Susan Lynn and Senator Jack Johnson. This legislation would require specific signs in facilities performing abortions that no one was allowed to coerce a woman into an abortion against her will regardless of her age and



there is help for them.

Many are unaware that there is a law against coercion to protect a mother when she said NO to abortion. This was all about what happened to me and my son! I was so excited and wanted to be a part of this historic event. What better way to heal than to educate the public and legislators about the need for this bill. I was now bold enough to go public.

I became concerned about finding David's father and informing him of my actions. I realized that this bill and my story might get attention in the media. I knew reading about this in the papers might cause him pain. I had looked for him over the years without success but amazingly found him just in time on Facebook. We spoke for the first time in over 30 years, I was able to tell him my plans for the upcoming bill and my planned involvement. I told him I wanted to give our son a voice... a voice that had been denied him and save other babies from the horrible death he had suffered against the wishes of his own parents. To my relief, he told me that he supported me 100% and would stand with me though the process!! We would stand together for our son.

For the next 3 months we walked the halls of the Legislative Plaza and told our story to anyone who would listen. We sat through countless meetings in the House and Senate to follow this bill. I went to many county chapter meetings of Right to Life to tell our story and encourage their work. I spoke at their annual Rally for Life reliving the story I hid for years...the time was right. The story must be told and the truth uncovered. Finally I felt I was able to act on behalf of my son.

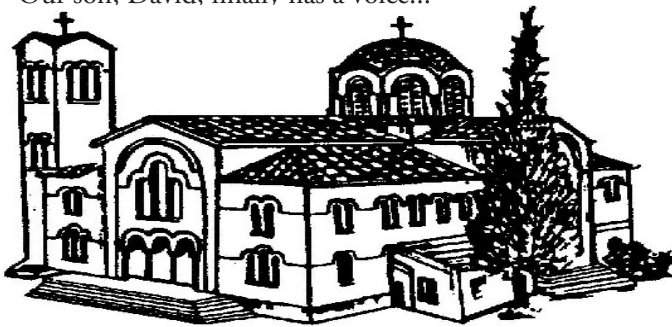
On March 31st, 2010 both the House and the Senate passed the Freedom From Coercion Act in a historic vote!

For the first time in 37 years Steve and I felt that we had given a sort of rebirth to our son. David's voice had been heard! On April 19th, two days after the date of David's birth and death, the TN Governor signed the bill into law.

David's voice will now be heard in every abortion facility, doctor's office and hospitals that perform abortions. As women read the required sign that...

It is against the law for anyone, regardless of the person's relationship to you, to coerce you to have an abortion. By law, we cannot perform an abortion on you unless we have your freely given and voluntary consent. It is against the law to perform an abortion on you against your will. You have the right to contact any local or state law enforcement agency to receive protection from any actual or threatened criminal offense to coerce an abortion.

Our son, David, finally has a voice...



If a fierce storm of tribulations fall upon us, let us not be terror stricken as if we had to overcome the disaster in our own strength; both our counsel and our strength is Christ, and through Him we can do all things, and without Him nothing. It is He Who, to confirm the preachers of the Gospel and the ministers of the mysteries, says, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* (Mt 28:20). And again He says: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:33).

Thus, the promises, which are as plain as they can be, we ought not to let any causes of offense to weaken, lest we should seem ungrateful to God for making us His chosen vessels, since His assistance is powerful as His promises are true.

St. Leo the Great

BEARING THE " FEAR OF SHAME" IN CONFESSION

From the book, "Remember Thy First Love" by Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou.



Question: In taking the steps which you have presented to us, the most difficult thing, I think, is to overcome the fear of shame. This is what I try to do in my parish. People will not come to confession although

their souls are burdened and things are driving them crazy, because they cannot overcome the shame to admit their sins. How do you lead people in this direction?

Answer: I think that the strength to bear shame is a gift from God. When I was a young and inexperienced spiritual father, Elder Sophrony told me to encourage the young people to confess precisely the things of which they are ashamed, for if they learn to do so, shame is transformed into strength against the passions, and they will overcome sin.

This is precisely what occurred in the person of Zacchaeus. He bore shame voluntarily, and the Lord, Who was on His way to Jerusalem in order to suffer the Cross of shame, saw Zacchaeus bearing shame for His sake and recognized in him a kindred spirit. Zacchaeus had put himself prophetically in the way of the Christ, in the way of the Cross, and in a prophetic way the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ was activated in the heart of Zacchaeus. His heart was enlarged and he was able to enter into the power of faith. Christ has saved us through the Cross of shame, so when we suffer shame for His sake He considers this as gratitude, and in return He transmits to us His grace which regenerates our life.

This is exactly what happens in confession. Those who confess sincerely and take upon themselves the same for their sins are regenerated. But those who shrug their shoulders and say, "Nothing special, the usual things...", they do not bear any shame, their heart remains unmoved, and they hardly receive any benefit. But those who, with shame and a contrite heart, strip their souls naked before God and before another mortal, *of like passions* (Acts 14:15) with them, that shame of theirs really finds the heart, humbles it and brings it to the surface. This then, opens the heart to receive the grace of regeneration, of consolation.

We see this in the life of many that come to us: the greater the shame they bear with contrition, accusing themselves before God, the greater the grace they receive to amend their lives and make a new beginning.

THE CUP OF CHRIST

By St. Ignatii Brianchaniov, from "Saint Ignatii Brianchaniov, vol. 1, p. 544 [re-printed by request—originally published in the April 2005 issue of "Orthodox Heritage"].

Two beloved disciples asked the Lord for thrones of glory.
He gave them His cup: *Ye shall drink indeed of my cup.*
(Mt 20:23)

The Cup of Christ is suffering. To those who drink from it on earth, the Cup of Christ grants participation in Christ's Kingdom of grace; it prepares for them the thrones of eternal glory in heaven.

We stand in silence before the Cup of Christ; no man can complain about it or reject it; for He who commanded us to taste it, first drank of it Himself.

O tree of the knowledge of good and evil! You killed our ancestors in Paradise, you deceived them by the delusions of sensual pleasure and the delusions of reason. Christ, the Redeemer of the fallen, brought His Cup of salvation into this world, to the fallen and to those who are exiled from Paradise. The bitterness of this Cup cleanses the heart from forbidden, destructive and sinful pleasure; through the humility flowing from it in abundance, pride of understanding on the carnal level is mortified. To him who drinks from the Cup with faith and patience, the eternal life which was and still is lost to him by his tasting of forbidden fruit will be restored.

I will accept the Cup of Christ, *the cup of salvation.* (Pss 116:13). The cup is accepted when a Christian bears earthly tribulation in the spirit of humility learned from the Gospel. St. Peter turned swiftly with a naked sword to defend the God-Man, who was surrounded by evil doers; but the meek Jesus said to Peter: *Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* (Jn 18:11). So you too, when disaster surrounds you, should comfort and strengthen your soul, saying: *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

The Cup is bitter: at first sight all human reasoning is confounded. Surmount reason by faith and drink courageously from the bitter Cup: it is the Father who gives it to you, He who is all good and all wise. It is neither the Pharisees, nor Caiaphas, nor Judas who prepared the Cup; it is neither Pilate nor his soldiers who gave it! *The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

The Pharisees think evil, Judas betrays, Pilate orders the unlawful killing, the soldiers of the government execute his order. Through their evil deeds all these prepared their own

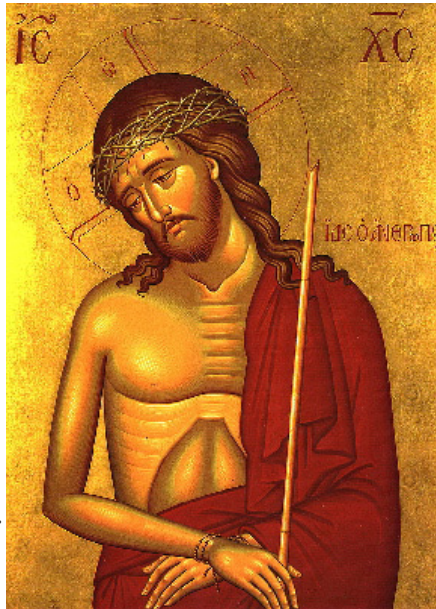
true perdition. Do not prepare for yourself just such perdition by remembering evil, by longing for and dreaming of revenge, and by indignation against your enemies. The heavenly Father is almighty and all-seeing: He sees your afflictions, and if He had found it necessary and profitable to withdraw the Cup from you, He certainly would have done so.

The Lord, as the Scriptures and Church history testify, has often allowed afflictions to befall His beloved, and often warded off afflictions from them, in accordance with the unfathomable ways of Providence. When you are faced with the Cup, turn your gaze from the people who give it to you; lift your eyes to Heaven and say: *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

I will take the cup of salvation. I cannot reject the Cup, the promise of heavenly and eternal good. The apostle of Christ teaches me patience when he says: *...we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.* (Acts 14:22). How can one reject the Cup which is the means of attaining this Kingdom and growing within it? I will accept the Cup the gift of God. The Cup of Christ is the gift of God. The great Paul writes to the Philippians: *For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* (Phil. 1:29).

You receive the Cup which seemingly comes from the hand of man. What is it to you whether the bearer of the Cup acts righteously or unrighteously? As a follower of Jesus, your concern is to act righteously; to receive the Cup with thanksgiving to God and with a living faith; and courageously to drink it to the dregs. In receiving the Cup from man, remember it is the Cup of Him who is not only innocent but all-holy. Thinking on this, remind yourself and other suffering sinners of the words that the blessed and enlightened thief spoke when he was crucified on the right hand of the crucified God-man: *for we receive the due reward of our deeds... Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy Kingdom.* (Lk 23:41-42). And then, turning to the people, you will say to them: *Blessed are you who are instruments of the righteousness and of the mercy of God, blessed are you henceforth and forever more!* And if they are not in a fit state to understand and receive your words, do not cast your precious pearls of humility under the feet of those who cannot value them, but say these words in thought and heart. By this alone will you fulfill the commandment of the Gospel which says: *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you...* (Mt 5:44).

Pray to the Lord, on behalf of those who have insulted and outraged you, that what they have done for you should be



repaid by a temporal blessing and eternal reward of salvation, and that when they stand before Christ to be judged, it should be counted to them as if it had been an act of virtue. Although your heart does not wish to act in this way, compel it to do so: because only those who do violence to their own heart in fulfilling the commandments of the Gospel can inherit Heaven. If you have not the will to act this way, then you have not the will to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look deep within yourself; consider searchingly: have you not found another teacher, the teacher of hatred the devil and fallen under his power?

It is a terrible transgression to offend or to oppress one's neighbor; it is a most terrible transgression to commit murder. But whoever hates his oppressor, his slanderer, his betrayer, his murderer, and whoever thinks ill of them and takes revenge on them, commits a sin very near to their sin. In vain does he pretend to himself and others that he is righteous. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer of man, proclaimed Saint John, the beloved disciple of Christ: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* (I Jn 3:15).

A living faith in Christ teaches one to receive the Cup of Christ, and the Cup of Christ inspires hope in the heart of him who receives it; and hope in Christ gives strength and consolation to the heart. What torment of hell to complain or to murmur against the pre-destined Cup from above! Murmuring, impatience, faintheartedness and especially despair are sins before God; they are the ugly children of sinful disbelief.

It is sinful to complain of neighbors when they are the instruments of our suffering; still more sinful is it when we cry out against the Cup that comes down to us straight from Heaven, from the right hand of God. He who drinks the Cup with thanksgiving to God and blessings on his neighbor, achieves holy serenity, the grace of the peace of Christ. It is as if already he enjoys God's spiritual Paradise. Temporal suffering has no importance in itself; we lend it significance because of our attachment to the earth and to all corruptible things, and through our coldness towards Christ and eternity.

You are prepared to bear the bitter and repellent taste of medicines, the painful amputation and cauterization of your limbs, the long drawn out suffering of hunger, and prolonged seclusion in your room; you are prepared to bear all this to restore lost health to your body, which after it is healed will certainly become ill again, and will certainly die and become corrupt. Bear then the bitterness of the Cup of Christ which brings healing and eternal beatitude to your immortal soul.

If the Cup appears to you to be unbearable, deadly, then it reveals that, although you bear Christ's Name, you do not belong to Christ. For the true followers of Christ, the Cup of Christ is the Cup of joy. Thus the holy apostles, after having

been beaten before the gathering of the elders of the Jews, went out from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of the Lord Jesus: *And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* (Acts 5:40-41).

The righteous Job heard bitter news. Tiding after tiding came to pierce his steadfast heart; the last of these was the hardest all; his sons and daughters had been struck down suddenly by a cruel and violent death. In his great sorrow, the righteous Job rent his clothes and sprinkled his head with ashes. And then, in submissive faith, he fell down upon the ground, and worshipped the Lord saying: *I myself came naked from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, the Lord taketh away: as it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass; blessed be the name of the Lord.* (Job 1:21).

Entrust your heart in simplicity to Him by whom all the hairs of your head are numbered. He knows the measure of the healing Cup that you should be given. Look often on Jesus standing before those who put Him to death; He was delivered to death, to be slain as a defenseless sheep. Do not take your eyes from Him, and your suffering will be transformed into heavenly spiritual sweetness. The wounds of your heart are healed with the wounds of Jesus. *Suffer ye thus far,* said the Lord to those who wished to defend Him in the garden of Gethsemane, and He healed the ear that had been struck off. (Lk 22:51). *Thinkest thou,* replied the Lord to him who had tried to take the Cup from Him, *that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?* (Mt 26: 53).

In the time of misfortune do not seek the help of man; do not lose precious time. Await help from God: by His command and in His own time will people come to your help. The Lord remained silent before Pilate and Herod, He made no attempt to justify Himself. You must imitate His holy and wise intention of certain conviction.

Whether the cup comes to you as a gradual gathering of clouds, or as suddenly as a furious whirlwind, say to God, *Thy will be done.* You are a disciple, follower and servant of Jesus. Now Jesus said: *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.* (Jn 12:26). But Jesus spent His life on earth in sufferings; He was persecuted from His birth to the grave; from the time of His swaddling clothes malice was preparing for Him a violent death. Nor was malice satisfied by achieving such an aim, but tried to uproot the very remembrance of Him from the earth.

In following Him, all the chosen of our Lord pass by the road of temporary suffering to blessed eternity. While bodily pleasures dominate us, it is impossible that a spiritual state

should also prevail in us. That is why our Lord ceaselessly offers His Cup to those He loves, so as to keep them in deadness to the world and to enable them to live the life of the Spirit.

St. Isaac the Syrian said: *The man who is sent unceasing sorrow is known to be especially under God's care.* Pray to God, that He may avert all calamities and every trial from you; but when sorrows come of themselves, do not be afraid of them, do not think that they have come by chance, or by force of circumstance. No, they are allowed by the inscrutable Providence of God. Filled with faith, and the fortitude and magnanimity born of it, swim fearlessly amidst the darkness and howling storm into the peaceful harbor of eternity; the unseen hand of Jesus Himself will guide.

With reverent and deep reflection, learn the prayer which our Lord offered to His Father in the garden of Gethsemane during the heavy hours of suffering that came to Him before His Passion and Death on the Cross. With this prayer, meet and conquer every sorrow. *O my Father, prayed our Savior, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* (Mt 26:39) Pray to God to avert misfortunes, and at the same time renounce your own will, as being a sinful, blind will; entrust those nearest to your heart to the all-holy and all-wise will of God. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* (Mt 26:41) When you are surrounded by afflictions, pray more often, that you may draw the special grace of God towards you. Only with the help of special grace are we able to surmount temporal misfortunes.

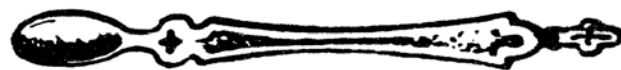
When you receive from Heaven the gift of patience, be attentive and vigilant over yourself, so as to hold and keep within yourself the grace of God, lest sin should creep unnoticed into your soul or body and drive away this grace. But if with carelessness and inattention you let sin enter within you, and particularly the one sin to which your weak flesh is specially addicted, and which stains the body and soul, then grace will depart leaving you stripped and lonely. Then sorrow, given to you for your salvation and perfection, will trample heavily on you, will crush you with sadness, depression, despair, and like someone who holds the gift of God without due reverence to the gift.

Hasten to bring back your heart to purity in true and resolute repentance, and through purity to the gift of patience, since this gift of the Holy Spirit reposes only in the pure. The holy martyrs sang a song of joy in the midst of the fiery furnace, when walking on nails, on sharp swords, sitting in cauldrons of boiling water or oil. So also will your heart rejoice when by prayer you have drawn to yourself the comfort of grace, and kept it within by constant watch over yourself. Then your heart will sing amidst misfortunes and terrible misery, with a joyful song of praise and thanksgiving to God.

The mind, purified by the Cup of Christ, is endowed with spiritual vision; it begins to see the all-embracing Providence of God, invisible to the carnal mind; to see the law of corruption in all things mortal; to see near at hand the immensity of eternity; to see God in His great works, in His creation and re-creation of the universe. The earthly life then comes to seem like a quickly-ending pilgrimage, whose events are dreams, whose blessings are but brief visual delusions, short-lived because of the perilous misconceptions of the mind and heart.

What fruit does temporary suffering bear for eternity? When Heaven was shown to the Apostle John, with an innumerable gathering of bearers of light dressed in white and celebrating their salvation and blessedness before the throne of God, one of the dwellers in Heaven asked him: *What are these arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, says Saint John the Divine, my Lord, Thou knowest.* Then the dweller in Heaven answered St. John, *These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* (Rev 7:13-17)

Withdrawal from God is eternal torment in hell, eternal contact with the devil and devilish people; with flames, bitter cold, the gloom of Gehenna; that is what may be truly described as suffering. That is torment, great, terrible and insupportable. Over-indulgence in the sweetness of earthly pleasures leads to great eternal suffering. The Cup of Christ saves from this torment whoever drinks from it with thanksgiving and praise to the all-blessed God who, through the bitter Cup of temporal suffering, gives man His boundless and eternal mercy.



The four affections of the soul (anger, desire, pleasure, and fear) are like four horses that are unmanageable when the chariot begins to move. Similarly the soul, weighed down by its perishable body, hardly knows herself. It is as if brute beasts seized control of a chariot, and its powerless occupant, amid flying fears, is hurled and jolted about until the bodily passions are taken in hand and calmed by the power of the Word. This foresight of the Word is like that of a skilled driver; without it the soul, although not in itself liable to death, can experience difficulties from disturbance in the mortal body conjoined to it.

St. Ambrose of Milan

HIEROMARTYR GREGORY V OF CONSTANTINOPLE (+1821)

Commemorated April 10th.

St. Gregory V, Archbishop of Constantinople was the 234th Patriarch of Constantinople and occupied the Patriarchal throne three times (1797-1799, 1806-1808, 1819-1821 AD). During this time Greece was under the harsh Turkish yoke, but many Greek patriots lived in the hope of winning national independence. They found a brave champion for freedom, the Holy Patriarch Gregory V.

In 1818, St. Gregory became a member of the *Filiki Eteria* (Friendly Society) that was preparing for a revolt against the Turkish rule. However, when Alexander Ypsilantis crossed the Prut River, starting the Greek revolt in Romania, Gregory felt it necessary to excommunicate him to protect the Greeks of Constantinople from reprisals by the Ottoman Turks.

For modern Greece, March 25th is both the Feast of the Annunciation and Greek Independence Day. A review of archives for American accounts of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 uncovered quite a few reports from various newspapers and journals; the single event, however, that received the most attention seems to have been the martyrdom

of Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople. This took place at the very outset of the Greek Revolution, and was a direct Turkish response to the initial rebellion.

Patriarch Gregory was murdered on Pascha, in April, but the news didn't start to trickle into the United States until the summer. Here's the first report discovered, from the Connecticut Gazette (7/11/1821): "*Constantinople is a scene of disturbance and massacre. The grand Seigneur, to revenge the insurrection in his northern provinces, has had recourse to the most dreadful reprisals. The Greek Patriarch has been strangled, and four Archbishops have been massacred.*"

The Religious Intelligencer (8/4/1821) soon published a fuller report. This account was sent from Vienna on May 17th, and later appeared in several other American periodicals.

Letters from Constantinople on the 25th April, give a deplorable picture of the state of things there. On Pascha Sunday, April 23rd, when Gregory, the patriarch of Constantinople, 74 years of age, was just going to serve Liturgy in the Patriarchal Chapel, he was seized by order of the Sultan, and hanged at the door of the temple; a mode of death which in the eyes of all the Greeks is the most infamous, and must therefore excite boundless hatred.

The letters inform that all the Archbishops and Bishops who were in the Church on account of the celebration of Easter, were either executed or thrown into prison. The congregation fled out of the Church to the neighboring houses of the priest, but many were murdered by the enraged populace.

The cruel fate of the Patriarch appears to be less merited, as he had, only on the 21st of March, solemnly proclaimed in the Chapel, "encouraging" the ban of the Church against all the Greeks who attempted to withdraw from the Turkish yoke. In the formal anathema published on this occasion, he had (by compulsion) made use of the Holy Gospel to impress upon the Greeks that their Turkish Governors were appointed by God.

Nothing particular was proved respecting the motives for the execution of the Patriarch. But as Bishop Nicholas, of Trepolis, in the Moria, leader of the Greeks and Maniotes there in arms against the Turks, is brother to the murdered Patriarch, it is supposed that the Turks also suspected the venerable old man. But it is certain that this execution would excite the utmost desperation among the Christians throughout Greece. It is worthy of remark, that all the Greek bishops who concurred in signing the anathema, languished in prisons, and several shared the fate of their Patriarch.

A note that follows the letter adds, "*Several have since done so, and the Greek churches at Constantinople have been destroyed.*" According to the official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, "*For three days, his [Gregory's] body rested thus hanging, receiving the mockings of the angry crowd. A group of Jews bought the corpse and circulated it round the city, before throwing it in the Ceratius gulf. Fortunately, captain Nicholas Sklavos, found his relic in the sea, and*



The sealed gate at the Phanar, also known as "Kin Kapisi" (the Grudge Gate). The gate was sealed in memory of Patriarch Gregory V who was hanged front of it in 1821. The next Patriarch declared: "Until a Turkish sultan or statesman or Seyhulislam (religious leader) is hanged from of it, this gate shall remain sealed."

transferred it secretly to Odessa, where it was buried in the Greek Church of the Holy Trinity.” In 1871, Gregory’s relics were translated to Athens.

On October 5th, the Christian Register printed a July 20th letter from Paris, offering some background on Patriarch Gregory:

Gregory, the pious and venerable Patriarch of Constantinople, who lately fell a victim to the infatuation and revenge of the populace, in the 74th year of his age, was a native of Peloponnesus. He was first consecrated to the Archbishopal See of Smyrna, where he left honourable testimonials of his piety and Christian virtues. Translated to the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople, he occupied it at three distinct periods, for under the Musselman [Muslims] despotism was introduced and perpetuated, the anti-canonical custom of frequently changing the head of the Greek clergy.

During his first Patriarchate he had the good fortune to save the Greek Christians from the fury of the Divan, who had it in contemplation to make the people responsible for the French expedition into Egypt. He succeeded in preserving his countrymen from the hatred of the Turks, but he was not the better treated for his interposition; the Turkish government banished him to Mount Athos. Recalled to his See some years after, he was again exposed to great danger in consequence of the war with Russia; and on the appearance of an English fleet off Constantinople, the Patriarch was exiled anew to Mount Athos, and once more ascended his throne, on which he ended his career.

This Prelate invariably manifested the most rigid observance of his sacred duties; and in private life he was plain, affable, virtuous, and of an exemplary life. To him the merit is ascribed of establishing a patriarchate press. He has left a numerous collection of pastoral letters and sermons, which evince his piety and distinguished talents. He translated and printed in modern Greek, with annotations, the Epistles of the Apostles. He lived like a father, among his diocesans, and the sort of death he died adds greatly to their sorrow and veneration for his memory. This Prelate had not taken the least share in the insurrection of the Greeks; he had even pronounced an anathema against the authors of the rebellion; an anathema dictated indeed, by the Musselman’s sabres, but granted to prevent the effusion of blood, and the massacre of the Greek Christians.

The dates of these reports give a sense of the state of global communications in the early 19th century. Patriarch Gregory was killed in April, but news didn’t reach the US until July. The May 17th report from Vienna wasn’t published in America until August 4th; the July 20th Paris letter made its

first appearance on October 5th. Another bit of news, dated September 12th and sent from St. Petersburg in Russia, was published in the Washington Gazette on December 4:

The Court Gazette of today contains a long recital of the solemn interment of the Patriarch of Constantinople. It concludes with these words: — “It is in this manner that by order of Alexander I, Emperor of all the Russias, the last duties of Christian faith and charity, have been rendered to a holy Patriarch of the orthodox oriental Greek Church, Gregory, who suffered martyrdom.” This declaration formally denies the assertion of the [Turkish] Porte, in its answer to the Russian ultimatum, that the Patriarch was guilty of treason.

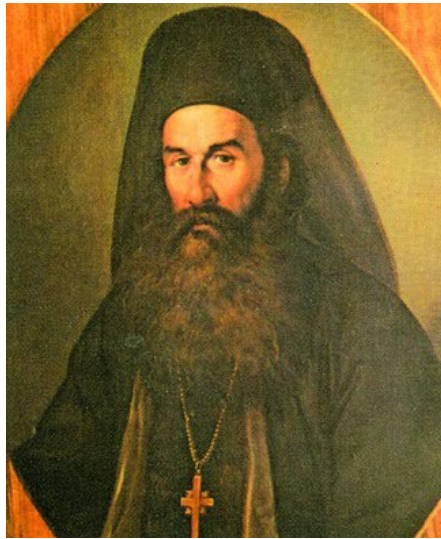
The American media — particularly the various Protestant journals—often held the Orthodox in rather low regard, viewing them as superstitious, backward idolators. I was somewhat surprised, then, to see Patriarch Gregory treated with such respect and admiration. I have not found a single

American account of the Patriarch which was critical of him, or decried his role as a hierarch, or anything.

It is noteworthy that, when some tried to convince him to flee Constantinople to save himself, the good shepherd responded: “They are trying to get me to flee. A sword will be drawn at the loins of Constantinople and the rest of the cities of Christian eparchies. You wish however that, vested, I take refuge in a ship or be locked in a house and never be a beneficial Ambassador, that I would then hear how the executioners hacked apart the abandoned people. Never! For this I am Patriarch, that I may save my

Nation, but never however will they perceive anything other than the faith portrayed on my face. The Greeks, the men of battle, will fight with greater zeal, until they soon will be granted victory; of this I am certain. Look with patience if what I am saying comes true. Today (Palm Sunday) we will eat fish, but after a few days and likely this week the fish will eat us...Yes, why shouldn’t I become food for animals, I will never accept fleeing to Odessa, or Kerkyra or Ancyra, passing among people pointing their fingers saying: “Here comes the killer Patriarch.” If my Nation is saved and triumphant, then I will accept incense of praise and honors, for I paid my debt...I go wherever my nous, the great people of the Nation and Heavenly Father call me, the martyr of human deeds.”

Patriarch Gregory was hanged just a few days after this statement over the gate of the Phanar, the Patriarchal church. The gate was welded shut after Gregory’s death, and it remains sealed to this day, a memorial to the martyred Patriarch.



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ON THE GREAT FAST

By St. Theodore the Studite.

Brethren and fathers, fasting is good if it possesses its own special characteristics, which are to be peaceable, meek, well-established, obedient, humble, sympathetic and all the other forms of virtue. But the devil hurries to suggest the opposite to fasters and to make them insolent, angry, bad-tempered, puffed up, so as to produce hurt more than gain.

But let us not be ignorant of his plans, but continue our path peaceably, gently, meekly and steadfastly bearing with one another in love, knowing that this is what is acceptable to God; for though you bend your neck double like a hoop and smother yourself with sackcloth and ashes, if these qualities are lacking to you, you would not be well-pleasing to him. Because while fasting batters and wastes the body, it clears the soul and makes it flourish. For as much as our outer nature is perishing, by so much the inner is being renewed day by day. And our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.

Thus, looking at the reward, let us bear the toils of virtue with long-suffering, giving thanks to the God and Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

Do we not commune each day of his immaculate body and blood? What could be sweeter and more filled with enjoyment

than this, since those who partake with a pure conscience will obtain eternal life? Do we not converse each day with the godly David and the other Holy Fathers through taking in the readings? What could bring greater consolation to the soul? Have we not broken off contact with the world and with our relatives according to the flesh?

Again is anything more blessed or higher than this? For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to Himself. And so, my brothers, let us rejoice and be glad as we repudiate every pleasure.

All flesh is grass, and all human glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withered and the flower faded, but the work of virtue endures for ever.

Is anyone among you suffering? As the brother of God says, let him pray. Is anyone sad? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone tempted by evil passion (since the tempter is always at work)? Let him endure patiently as he listens to the one who says: *Let us recall that blessed is the one who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.* And, if you know these things, **blessed are you if you do them**, said the Lord, to whom be glory and might, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever and to the ages of ages.

Amen.