

# 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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## VICTORY OVER DEATH

By Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) of New York (+1985).

The holy Church teaches us that of all of God's creation, man is the most exalted; he alone was created immortal. *God made not death*, the Holy Bible tells us (Wis 1:13). As God is possessed of immortality, in the words of the Apostle, so He created man, in His image and likeness, immortal, but warned him that if he violated the commandment of His Creator, he *would surely die*; that is, he would lose immortality and thus become mortal.

Ever since the first-created people broke the commandment and heard the dread pronouncement of God, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return*, death has stood as an ominous specter before sinful humanity. *I weep and lament when I think of death*, says the Church in sending up prayer on behalf of a dead person and accompanying him to the grave. When confronted by the gloom and coldness of the grave, the horror of corruption and the disintegration of the human body, philosophy is powerless and all man's attempts to reconcile himself to the fact of death are in vain. Man turns from it in terror and tries to forget about it, despite its alarming inevitability. For thousands of years there was no relief, no comfort, until One came Who uttered the wondrous

words: *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

What righteous, what boundless spiritual power and what infinite love fill these hallowed words! In these words of the Lord men are promised freedom from fear of death and its dominion, the triumph of life over death is promised. And behold! He Who gave these promises has sealed their truth through His own Resurrection from the dead! If,



in promising men resurrection and life everlasting, He Himself had remained in the grave, who would have believed His words? But He did arise, and thereby showed that He indeed has within Himself resurrection and life, and furthermore, as almighty Master and Lord, He has the power to bestow this resurrection and life upon the human race

which He fashioned.

The Resurrection of Christ is the victory of life over death, the triumph of righteousness over falsehood. And however weak, infirm and sinful a man may be, he cannot but rejoice in this victory. Therein he sees the triumph of a higher justice, the victory of the heavenly law of love over human vanity and error. Only the person who has utterly given himself over to evil and falsehood, like the devil—the father of lies, does not sense the joy of the radiant Resurrection of Christ. And the soul, even if sinful and flawed, if it still has not altogether

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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 20<sup>th</sup> 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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extinguished within itself good principles and impulses, joyfully responds to the glorious news of the Resurrection, for it senses how the highest expectations and Christian truths quicken within it...

How splendid, how magnificent is the feast of the Resurrection of Christ. How joyously and solemnly the Church celebrates it! Can any other celebration in the world compare with the magnificence of the paschal service? His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anthony, in agreement with the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church of old, points out that the special and particular joy of Pascha, which the soul of the believer experiences on that radiant night, is, as it were, a foretaste of that everlasting, unfading blessedness spoken of in the final words of the Symbol of Faith: *the life of the age to come...* Would that all children of the Orthodox Church might enter into that joy, that everlasting blessedness, of which the eternal and just Judge will say to His faithful: ***Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.***



It is the day of Resurrection, so let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us speak, brothers and sisters, also to those who hate us, and in the Resurrection let us forgive everything, and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling on death by death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.

*Stichera of the Paschal Service*

## WHAT DOST THOU BELIEVE

*A quotation from a Paschal encyclical of Vladyka Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Metropolitan of Kiev and Galicia (1934)*

The present age is rich not in ascetical feats of piety and confession of faith, but in cheating, lies, and deceits. It is noteworthy that several hierarchs and their flocks, have already fallen away from Ecumenical unity, and to the question: *What dost thou believe?*<sup>1</sup> reply with references to self-proclaimed heads of all sorts of schisms in Moscow, America, and Western Europe. It is clear that they have ceased to believe in the unity of the Church throughout the whole world and do not wish to admit it, attempting to bear calmly the refusal of the True Church to have relations with them, and imagining that one can supposedly save one's soul even without communion with Her... Those who have cut themselves off from Her deprive themselves of the hope of salvation, as the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council teach concerning this, having recognized the renegades as being totally devoid of grace, according to the word of Christ: *But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* (Mt 18:17).

Unfortunately, some Orthodox laymen, even, alas, many priests (and hierarchs) have subjected themselves to this state of gracelessness, although still retaining the outward appearance of the church services and the apparent performance of the Mysteries.

† † †

<sup>1</sup> *The question solemnly posed to a bishop at his consecration, to which he must reply publicly, declaring his confession of the Orthodox Faith and pledging to uphold the canons and teachings of the Church.*

## MAN'S FALL AND RESURRECTION

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos.

**From the Author:** The subject of the fall and resurrection is the basis of *soteriology* (the “art-science” of salvation, the study of religious doctrines of salvation; from σωτηρία—*salvation*, and λόγος—*word*, *Ed.*). If we do not examine it scientifically, we shall never be able to understand and live the life which the Church has. I ought to mention that the question of “what is the fall of man” has been analyzed in other books of mine, and I do not want to repeat it. I shall merely emphasize a few points. The reader can find an extensive analysis in my book “Orthodox Psychotherapy,” and in “Time to Act,” in the chapter “Traditional Catechism.”

† † †

We usually think of the fall in juridical terms, in meanings which have been taken from the law courts. We consider that Adam's sin was simply a transgression of a law, an external one, and that this transgression created great guilt in man, with the result that this guilt has been inherited in Adam's descendants.

But this view of sin is not Orthodox. In Orthodoxy we regard sin as an illness of man. Man fell ill and this illness had an effect on the whole human race. St. Cyril of Alexandria uses the image of the plant. When

the root of the plant has become ill, then the branches also fall ill. We can interpret Adam's sin in this way as well.

St. Maximos, speaking of the fall of man and his restoration, puts them on a theological basis. He says that at the creation of the world and of man there were five divisions. The division between uncreated and created, noetic and tangible, Heaven and earth, Paradise and world, male and female. Adam, by the grace of God, but also by his personal struggle, an expression of his freedom, would have to overcome these divisions and reach communion and unity with the uncreated. To be sure, this last division, that between created and uncreated, could not be abolished, but the created would attain unity with the uncreated. Moreover, in the Church we say that there is no division between physical and metaphysical things, as philosophy claimed, but between created and uncreated. And further, we accept that the uncreated enters into the created, and thus man himself, as St. Maximos the Confessor says, also becomes uncreated by grace.



Adam failed to transcend these divisions. And not only did he fail to transcend the division which we mentioned, but he also lost the purity which existed between the two sexes, with the result that decay and mortality entered into nature, that he wore the coats of skin and decay and mortality. Therefore now man's way of conception, gestation, birth, etc., is a result of the fall, it is what the Fathers called coats of skin, which he wore after the fall.

The transcending of the five divisions took place in Christ. By His incarnation, by His birth from a Virgin, by the union of divine and human nature, he united the uncreated with the created, the heavenly with the earth, the noetic with the sensible, Paradise with the world, and he even transcended the division between male and female. Thus, man's restoration was successful and every person was given the possibility that in Christ he too could transcend all the divisions and achieve his salvation.

If we want to look more concretely at the matter of the fall we will say that, as St. John of Damaskos teaches, the fall in reality is darkness of the image, loss of the divine life and putting on the coats of skin. The darkness of the image is nothing else but the darkening of the nous. The nous was darkened and could not have communion and unity with God. Of course it must be said that according to the anthropology of the Fathers, man's soul is rational and noetic.

This means that man has two centers of functioning. One is the reasoning mind, which is connected with his nervous system, and the other his nous, which is connected with his heart. Adam's fall, then, is the darkening of his nous, the loss of its noetic function, confusion of the nous with the functions of reason and its enslavement to the passions and to the environment. Instead of moving according to nature and above nature, instead of moving towards God and being mindful of God, man's nous is turned towards the created things and the passions. That is why in the Church we speak of repentance, which is not simply a change in the head, as some theologians say, but a change of the nous. The nous must break away from the created and the passions and turn towards God.

A result of the darkening of his noetic energy is that man's relationship with God and his fellow man is upset. Because of his darkened nous, man does not find meaning in life, he turns his attention to the external things, with the result that he comes to blows with men, and he has no inner peace. This

is analyzed in a wonderful way by St. Gregory Palamas. Fallen man uses God to safeguard his individual security and regards his neighbor as an object for predatory exploitation. He cannot have selfless love, because all his expressions and all his love contain the element of self-seeking, which is to say that man is characterized by self-seeking love. So the darkening of the nous has drastic social consequences. Sociology cannot be regarded as independent of theology.

In this sense (and only in this sense) we can speak of inheritance of sin and of the ancestral sin, which man inherits at birth. In this sense too we can speak of the catholicity of the fall of man.

What Adam failed to do, Christ, who is called the new Adam, succeeded in doing. By His incarnation Christ deified human nature and became the strongest medicine for men, in the sense that He gave every man the possibility of achieving his *theosis* (*deification*). In this light we can interpret the phrase from the troparion that Christ raised up *Adam with the whole human race*.

At this point I would like to look at two passages in St. John of Damaskos which will help us to understand in some way the mystery of the incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It must of course be emphasized that this too is a subject not of rational understanding but of spiritual experience, yet we can say something about the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God.

St. John of Damaskos, repeating a passage from St. Gregory the Theologian whom he calls his spiritual father, says that Christ took on the whole human nature, because **what is not assumed is not cured**. St. John of Damaskos goes on to say that the ruling centre of the soul and the flesh is the nous, which is the purest part of the soul, but also that the ruling centre of the nous is God Himself. When God acts, then the nous manifests its own authority, and then *it is under the control of the stronger and follows it, doing those things which the divine will desires*. The Son and Word of God has united with the flesh *by means of the nous*, which is midway between the purity of God and the grossness of the flesh. So the nous became the place of its personal union with divinity. The saint writes characteristically: *The nous becomes the seat of the Divinity which has been hypostatically united to it*. This has great importance, because it shows that man's salvation begins and works in the nous and then extends to the whole body. Thus we understand **the great importance of the neptic tradition of our Church**.

The other point from the teaching of St. John of Damaskos which is useful to us here is that by His incarnation, the Word of God did not assume the human nature *that is understood in pure theory*, that is to say, he did not assume a simple nature, that which is seen externally, because then it would not have been incarnation, but an illusion and fiction of incarnation. Also He did not assume this nature *regarded as a species*, but

that which is seen in the individual, which at the same time belongs also to the species, because Christ assumed the whole mixture of what was our own from the beginning. This is important because, as St. John of Damaskos again says, human nature rose from the dead and sat at the right hand of the Father *not implying that all human persons arose and sat at the right hand of the Father, but that our entire nature did so in the Person of Christ*. That is to say that human nature has been deified in the Person of the *Logos*. So human nature has been deified in the hypostasis of the *Logos*, but our own human hypostases must be deified as well.

Therefore, the catholicity of Adam's fall has the meaning of the illness of human nature and the catholicity of the resurrection through the New Adam, Christ, it again has the meaning of the cure. Christ cured human nature, He Himself became the strongest medicine towards the cure, and he gives every man the possibility of being cured. Thus we can maintain that **Christ is both the physician as well as the medicine; He is man's cure and his health**.



**B**rethren and fathers, at Christ's resurrection creation too, putting away its winter gloom, like a deadness puts out fresh shoots and as it were comes to life again. And yes, we see the earth wearing green, the plants flourishing, the animals skipping around, the sea tamed and everything being changed for the better. But I must explain why I have said this. If inanimate and irrational creatures are made radiant and lovely by the resplendent resurrection, how much more ought we, who have been honored with reason and the image of God, make ourselves bright by our life and give off sweet fragrance by the spirit. For one who strives after virtue is truly the sweet fragrance of Christ, and the Apostle bears witness to this when he says, *For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ for God among those who are being saved and those who are perishing, for the latter a scent of death leading to death, for the former a scent of life leading to life.* 2 Cor 2,15-16.

St. Theodore the Studite



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## GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY: CHRIST ON THE CROSS

By Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (+1983).

From the light of Holy Thursday we enter into the darkness of Friday, the day of Christ's Passion, Death and Burial. In the early Church this day was called *Pascha of the Cross*, for it is indeed the beginning of that Passover or Passage whose whole meaning will be gradually revealed to us, first, in the wonderful quiet of the Great and blessed Sabbath, and, then, in the joy of the Resurrection day.

But, first, the Darkness. If only we could realize that on Good Friday darkness is not merely symbolical and commemorative. So often we watch the beautiful and solemn sadness of these services in the spirit of self-righteousness and self-justification. Two thousand years ago bad men killed Christ, but today we—the good Christian people—erect sumptuous Tombs in our Churches; is this not the sign of our goodness? Yet, Good Friday deals not with past alone. It is the day of sin, the day of evil, the day on which the Church invites us to realize their awful reality and power in “this world.” For sin and evil have not disappeared, but, on the contrary, still constitute the basic law of the world and of our life. And we, who call ourselves Christians, do we not also assume the same logic of evil which led the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers and the whole crowd of Jews to hate, torture and kill Christ? On what side, with whom would we have been, had we lived in Jerusalem under Pilate?

This is the question addressed to us in every word of Holy Friday services. It is, indeed, the day for this world, and it is real and not symbolical; it serves as a pragmatic, non-ritual condemnation and judgment on our life... It is the revelation of the true nature of the world which preferred then, and still prefers, darkness to light, evil to good, death to life. Having condemned Christ to death, “this world” has condemned itself to death and inasmuch as we accept its spirit, its sin, its betrayal of God—we are also condemned... Such is the first and dreadfully realistic meaning of Good Friday—a condemnation to death...

But this day of evil, of its ultimate manifestation and temporary triumph, is also the day of redemption. The death of Christ is revealed to us as the saving death for us and for our salvation.

It is a saving death because it is the full, perfect and supreme sacrifice. Christ gives His death to His Father and He gives His death to us. He gives His death to His Father because

as there is no other way to destroy death, and as such, save man from it; and it is the will of the Father that man be saved from death. And Christ gives His death to us because in reality Christ dies instead of us. Death is the natural fruit of sin, an imminent punishment. Man chose to be alienated from God, but having no life in himself and by himself, he dies. Yet there is no sin and, therefore, no death in Christ. He accepts to die only by and as the result of His immense love for us. He wants to assume and to share our human condition to its end. He accepts the punishment of our nature, as He assumed the whole burden of human predicament. He dies because He has truly identified Himself with us, has indeed taken upon Himself the tragedy of man's life. His death is the ultimate revelation of His compassion and love. And because His dying is love, compassion and co-suffering, in



His death the very nature of death is changed. From punishment it becomes the radiant act of love and forgiveness, the complete and absolute end of alienation and solitude. Condemnation is transformed into forgiveness...

And, finally, His death is a saving death because it destroys the very source of death: evil. By accepting it in love, by giving Himself to His murderers and permitting their apparent victory, Christ reveals that, in reality, this victory is the total and decisive defeat of evil itself. To be victorious, evil must annihilate the Good, it must prove itself to be the ultimate truth about life, discredit the Good and, in one word, show its own superiority. But throughout the whole Passion, it is Christ and He alone Who triumphs. Evil can do nothing against Him, for it cannot make Christ accept evil as truth. Hypocrisy is revealed as hypocrisy, murder as murder, fear as fear, and as Christ silently moves towards the Cross and the end, as the human tragedy reaches its climax, His triumph, His victory over the evil and His glorification become more and more obvious. And at each step this victory is acknowledged, confessed, proclaimed—by the wife of Pilate, by Joseph, by the crucified thief, by the centurion. And as He dies on the Cross having accepted the ultimate horror of death: absolute solitude (*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!?*); nothing remains but to confess that *truly this was the Son of God!*... And, thus, it is this death, this love, this obedience, this fullness of Life that destroy what had made death the universal destiny. *And the graves were opened...* (Mt 27:52). Already the rays of resurrection appear...

Such is the double mystery of Holy Friday, and its services reveal it and make us participate in it. On the one hand there

is the constant emphasis on the Passion of Christ as the sin of all sins, the crime of all crimes. Throughout Matins during which the twelve Passion readings make us follow step by step the sufferings of Christ; at the Hours (which replace the Divine Liturgy; for the interdiction to celebrate Eucharist on this day means that the sacrament of Christ's Presence does not belong to "this world" of sin and darkness, but is the sacrament of the *world to come*); and finally, at Vespers, the service of Christ's burial the hymns and readings are full of solemn accusations of those, who willingly and freely decided to kill Christ, justifying this murder by their religion, their political loyalty, their practical considerations and their professional obedience.

But, on the other hand, the sacrifice of love which prepares the final victory is also present from the very beginning. From the first Gospel reading (Jn 13:31) which begins with the solemn announcement of Christ: *Now is the Son of Man glorified and in Him God is glorified* to the *stichera* at the end of Vespers—there is the increase of light, the slow growth of hope and certitude that *death will trample down death...*

*When Thou, the Redeemer of all,  
hast been laid for all in the new tomb,  
Hades, the respecter of none, saw Thee and crouched in fear.  
The bars broke, the gates were shattered,  
the graves were opened, the dead arose.  
Then Adam, thankfully rejoicing, cried out to Thee:  
Glory to Thy condescension, O Merciful Master.*

And when, at the end of Vespers, we place in the center of the Church the image of Christ in the tomb, when this long day comes to its end, we know that we are at the end of the long history of salvation and redemption. The Seventh Day, the day of rest, the blessed Sabbath comes and with it the revelation of the Life-giving Tomb!



Many indeed are the wondrous happenings of that time: God hanging from a Cross, the sun made dark, and again flaming out; for it was fitting that creation should mourn with its Creator. The Temple veil rent, blood and water flowing from His side: the one as from a man, the other as from What was above man; the earth was shaken, the rocks shattered because of the Rock; the dead risen to bear witness of the final and universal resurrection of the dead. The happenings at the Sepulchre, and after the Sepulchre, who can fittingly recount them? Yet not one of them can be compared to the miracle of my salvation. A few drops of Blood renew the whole world, and do for all men what the rennet does for milk: joining us and binding us together.

St. Gregory the Theologian

## ON REPENTANCE

*From the "Ladder of Divine Ascent."*

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility. Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions.

Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously. And assuredly the angel who guards you will honor your patience. While a wound is still fresh and warm it is easy to heal, but old, neglected and festering ones are hard to cure, and require for their care much treatment, cutting, plastering and cauterization. Many from long neglect become incurable. But with God all things are possible.

We must carefully consider whether our conscience has ceased to accuse us, not as a result of purity, but because it is immersed in evil. A sign of deliverance from our falls is the continual acknowledgment of our indebtedness.

Nothing equals or excels God's mercies. Therefore he who despairs is committing suicide. A sign of true repentance is the acknowledgment that we deserve all the troubles, visible and invisible, that come to us, and even greater ones. Moses, after seeing God in the bush, returned again to Egypt, that is, to darkness and to the brick-making of Pharaoh, symbolical of the spiritual Pharaoh. But he went back again to the bush, and not only to the bush but also up the mountain. Whoever has known contemplation will never despair of himself. Job became a beggar, but he became twice as rich again.

The forgetting of wrongs is a sign of true repentance. But he who dwells on them and thinks that he is repenting is like a man who thinks he is running while he is really asleep...



A spiritual person is expected to face an injustice in a spiritual manner; he must face all things with divine justice, by looking to see what will benefit the other person. For when one is weak and makes a mistake, then he is somewhat entitled to a little leniency. But when one who is in a better spiritual condition doesn't display any understanding, then he will be at greater fault. What would happen if spiritual people faced things just like everybody else, in a worldly manner, with the worldly human justice? They would be constantly going to worldly courts. This is why people are tormented.

St. Paisios the Athonite (+1994)

## TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW CHRIST

*St. Innocent of Alaska.*

The first duty of a Christian, of a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, is to deny oneself. To deny oneself means: to give up one's bad habits, to root out of the heart all that ties us to the world... to be dead to sin and the world, but alive to God.

A Christian's second duty is to take up one's cross. The word "cross" means sufferings, sorrows and adversities. To "take up one's cross" means to accept without complaint everything unpleasant, painful, sad, difficult and oppressive that may happen to us in life. In other words, to bear all laughter, scorn, weariness, sorrow and annoyance from others; to bear all poverty, misfortune, illness, without regarding yourself as offended. And if, when you are bearing your cross according to the will of God, a proud thought suggests to you that you are not weak like others, but that you are firm, pious and better, root out such thoughts as far as you can for they ruin all your virtues.

Now there are "external" crosses and "interior" crosses. All the above mentioned "crosses" are external and the Lord will not let the man perish who struggles to bear them wisely. The Holy Spirit will strengthen and guide him and lead him further. But in order to become holy and be like Jesus Christ, merely external crosses are not enough. Outward crosses without interior ones are of no more use than exterior prayer without interior prayer. Outward crosses are borne not only by Christians, but by everyone! There is not a man on earth who hasn't suffered in some way or another. But whoever wants to follow Jesus must bear interior crosses as well.

Interior crosses can be found at all times, and more easily than exterior ones. Direct your attention to yourself with a sense of penitence, and a thousand interior crosses will spring up! For instance, consider: How did you come to be in this world? Do you live as you ought to? Ask yourself these questions sincerely and you will see that you are the creation and work of God and that you exist solely in order to glorify Him with all your acts, your life, your whole being. But not only do you not glorify Him, but you anger and dishonor Him by your sinful life!

Then consider: What awaits you on the other side of your grave? On which side will you stand at the time of Christ's judgment, on the left or the right? Have you even thought of the eternal separation from God that is Hell? Have you

scarcely given one thought to Paradise which the Lord has prepared for you? Have you ever thought that you are depriving yourself of its eternal blessings through carelessness and stupidity? If you begin to reflect in this way, you will undoubtedly begin to be alarmed and disquieted. Don't try to drive away such thoughts through empty worldly diversions and entertainments for they are profitable for you. In fact, you will find still more crosses!

We can never see the state of our soul in all its nakedness without the special help and grace of God because the interior of our soul is always hidden from us by our own self-love, passions, worldly cares, and delusions. What little we see is only superficial and no more than what reason and conscience can show us. The enemy, Satan, tries to keep us blind to ourselves so that we will be prevented from running to God and seeking salvation. But if he cannot discourage us from seeking God, the devil tries another trick. He tries to show us our soul in all its weakness and sin in order to tempt us to despair, for he knows that few of us would stand firm if we saw the really extremely dangerous condition of our souls.

Now when the Lord leads us to knowledge of ourselves, we will certainly be filled with fear and sorrow because we have for so long stubbornly closed our ears to His gentle voice calling us to the Kingdom of God. But the Lord will not tempt us with despair, for any sin can be erased through repentance. But as the Lord reveals to us the state of our souls, what interior crosses we must bear!

Just as not all people have the same virtues and the same sins, so interior crosses are not the same for all. For some they are more oppressive, and for others less; for some they come in one way, and for others quite differently. Everything depends on the person's state of soul, just as the length and method of curing a physical illness depends on the patient's condition. It is not a doctor's fault if he must sometimes use very powerful medicine for a prolonged period to cure an illness which the patient himself may have irritated and increased. Whoever wants to be well will consent to bear everything!

Such interior crosses sometimes seem so heavy that no consolation can be found anywhere. Should you find yourself in such a state, or whatever sufferings of the soul you may feel, do not despair or think that the Lord has abandoned you. No! He will always be with you and strengthen you even when it seems to you that you are on the very brink of perdition. He will never allow you to be tempted more than He sees fit. Don't be afraid, but with full submission surrender to Him,



have patience and pray. For He is always our Father, and a very loving Father. And if He leads a person into sufferings or lays crosses upon him, it is in order to make him realize his own weakness and to teach him never to trust in himself and that no one can do anything good without God. It is only to heal his soul, to make him like Jesus Christ, to purify his heart, so that it will be a fit dwelling for the Holy Spirit.

Blessed, a hundred times blessed, is the person whom the Lord grants to bear interior crosses because they are the true healing of soul, a special favor of God, and they show His care for our salvation. Blessed is that man, for he has attained a state of grace impossible to attain without God's assistance, and which we, to our harm, do not even consider necessary!

If you bear your sufferings with submission and surrender to the will of God, He will not abandon you and will not leave you without consolation. And if the Lord grants you such peace and consolation, allowing you to experience the sweetness of His grace, do not think this is given because you have attained sanctity. Such thoughts come from pride and can make their appearance even when a person has the power to work miracles! These consolations are the mercy and grace of God alone, Who grants you to taste what He has prepared for those who love Him. And it is so that you will be strengthened for fresh troubles and sufferings and so that you will seek Him with greater zeal.

The third duty of a disciple of Christ is to follow Him. To follow Jesus means to act and live as He did upon the earth.

Jesus always gave thanks and praise to God, His Father, and prayed to Him. We, too, must praise Him and love Him both openly and privately.

Jesus honored His immaculate Mother and His foster-father. In the same way we should honor and obey our parents and teachers, not irritating them or grieving them by our behavior.

Jesus loved everyone and was kind to all. So too, we should love our neighbor and endeavor, as far as possible, to be on good terms with all (without compromising our faith) and do good to them by word, deed, or thought.

Jesus willingly surrendered Himself to suffering and death. So too, we should not avoid the sufferings of life, or allow them to drive us to despondency, but we should bear them with humility and surrender to God.

Jesus forgave His enemies all that they did to Him. He did them every kind of good and prayed for their salvation. By bearing wrongs without complaint, without revenge and with love you will act as a true Christian. (Mt. 5:44).

Being humble in heart, Jesus never sought or desired praise from others. And we should never pride ourselves on anything at all. For example, if you do good to others, give alms, if you are more pious than others, more intelligent, wealthier, etc., this has absolutely nothing to do with you, but has come as

a gift of God—only sins and weaknesses are your own, and all the rest is God's.

To follow Jesus means to obey the word of Jesus Christ. We must listen to, believe and practice what we hear in the Gospel without pretense and in simplicity of heart. Only if we listen intently to His word and struggle to carry its directives in our lives will we become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

And so this is what it means to deny oneself, to take up one's cross and follow Jesus Christ. This is the true straight way into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the way by which Jesus Himself went while He lived on earth, and by which we Christians must go. **There never was and never will be another way.**

Certainly this way is rough, narrow and thorny, and seems especially so at the beginning. But on the other hand, it leads straight to Paradise, to the Heavenly Kingdom, to God Who is the Source of all true life. Sorrowful in this way, yet for every step we take along it thousands of spiritual rewards lie ahead, of which the world knows nothing. The sufferings on this way are not eternal, and one can say that they are even no more than momentary, whereas the rewards for them are unending and eternal, like God Himself. The suffering will become less and lighter from day to day, while grace will increase from hour to hour, throughout infinite eternity.

And so, do not be afraid to follow Jesus Christ. Follow Him, hasten and do not delay! Go while the doors of the heavenly Kingdom remain open to you. And even while you are still a long way off, our heavenly Father will come to meet you on the way, will kiss you, will put on you the best garment, and will lead you into His Bridal Chamber where He Himself dwells with all the holy Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and all the Saints, and where you will rejoice with true and eternal joy. Amen!



Without a constant and conscious spiritual struggle even the best Orthodox life or community can become a "hothouse," an artificial Orthodox atmosphere in which the outward manifestations of Orthodox life are merely "enjoyed" or taken for granted, while the soul remains unchanged, being relaxed and comfortable instead of tense in the struggle for salvation. How often a community, when it becomes prosperous and renowned, loses the precious fervor and oneness of soul of its early days of hard struggles! There is no "formula" for the truly God-pleasing Orthodox life; anything outward can become a counterfeit; everything depends on the state of the soul, which must be trembling before God, having the law of God before it in every area of life, every moment keeping what is God's in honor, in the first place in life.

Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) of Platina (+1982)



## HOLY WEEK

By the Protopresbyter Andrew Morbey.



From palms and branches, as we pass from divine Feast to divine Feast, let us believers make haste together to the solemn and saving celebration of the Sufferings of Christ. Let us look upon

Him as He undergoes voluntary suffering for our sake and let us raise a fitting hymn of thanksgiving to Him crying out, *Source of compassion and harbour of salvation, O Lord, glory to Thee!* (From the *aposticha* at Vespers on the Leave-taking of the Feast of Palms).

This verse marks the transition in our journey from the celebration of Palm Sunday to the gathering darkness of Holy Week. The Great Fast came to an end on Friday. On Saturday we recalled our Lord Jesus Christ weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, how He raised Lazarus from the dead. Today we have joined the children of the Hebrews in their joy, acclaiming Him as He enters Jerusalem. We held high our palms and pussy-willows: *Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!*

And yet this feast is ephemeral, this celebration lasts but a day. Some terrible darkness descends. The Lord is abandoned, condemned and vilified. In the course of this week things move inexorably to betrayal, abuse, crucifixion.

For Orthodox Christians, Holy Week is an extraordinary time. We can hardly bear to be at work or at school. We want to be in the church following the Gospel accounts and the hymns and prayers that provide the teaching and commentary we need to hear. In our homes we try to create a certain quiet, a reverence and respect. Holy Week is the Big Thing and all else is distraction. It is something we participate in. It is as if we enter *into* Holy Week, stepping out of time as we usually experience it, and are ourselves caught up in the sacred drama.

Of course, it can be difficult to make the time to attend to Holy Week with the full attention it calls for. Each person will do his or her best to participate in the mystery of the week and honour this most special time of the year.

On Holy Thursday we hear the Lord say to His disciples in the garden at Gethsemane, *Wait with me*. Is it so much to ask?

On the one hand, it seems we do a lot of waiting in life. On the other, we are always in a hurry. And so waiting infuriates us, for we are busy people, the centre of our universe.

The disciples could not wait and watch with the Lord, and they were not even in a rush. They just fell asleep. Perhaps they were exhausted. Perhaps they needed to give themselves some “me-time.” But was it so much for the Lord to ask them to wait with Him on this night?

When someone we love is dying everything seems to be in a rush—this appointment, that appointment, these things to be picked up, those things to be scheduled—but then..., then there is the waiting. And when we have done everything there really is nothing left to do but wait. Death comes on its own time-table. Our beloved says to us: *please, will you stay with me?* Of course we will! How could we do otherwise? Or?

To wait, to keep vigil, is not easy. It is hard. We are so busy, we have so much to do... But why is it that the slumber of the disciples—their inability to wait with the distressed and suffering Lord, even though He asks them repeatedly, pointedly—why do we find this moment in the garden so sad, so charged with emotion? Why do we want to shake them and even shame them—*can't you even watch with Him for a little while?* Is it our conscience that recognizes something of ourselves in them?

Can't we spare some time from our busy lives on this of all weeks to be with Him?



He gave not up His life by compulsion, nor was He put to death by murderous violence, but of His own accord. Hear what He says: *I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again: I yield it of My own choice to My enemies; for unless I chose, this could not be.* He came therefore of His own set purpose to His passion, rejoicing in His noble deed, smiling at the crown, cheered by the salvation of mankind; not ashamed of the Cross, for it was to save the world.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

For what principle did the Blood of His Only-Begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded of Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honor of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much we have said of Christ; the greatest part of what we might say shall be revered with silence.

St. Gregory the Theologian

## THE LORD DESCENDS INTO HELL

*An Ancient Homily on Holy Saturday, from the Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Pentecostarion, Fr. David and Mother Gabriela, editors, HDM Press, Rives Junction, MI, 1999 pp. 160-161.*



Something strange is happening—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised

up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: *My Lord be with you all.* Christ answered him: *And with your spirit.* He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: *Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.*

*I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.*

*For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.*

*See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image. On my back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your*

*back. See my hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.*

*I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell. The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.*

*Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.*



The candles burning on the altar represent the non-created Light of the Trinity, for the Lord dwells in an unapproachable light. They also represent the fire of Divinity which destroys our ungodliness and sins.

The candles lit before the icons of the Saviour signify that He is the *True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (Jn 1:9); at the same time, He is a Fire which engulfs and revives our souls and bodies.

The candles lit before the icons of the Theotokos are a symbol of the fact that She is the Mother of the Unapproachable Light, and also of Her most pure and burning love for God and Her love for mankind.

The candles lit before icons of saints reflect their ardent love for God for Whose sake they gave up everything that man prizes in life, including their very lives, as did the holy apostles, martyrs and others. These candles also mean that these saints are lamps burning for us and providing light for us by their own saintly living, their virtues and their ardent intercession for us before God through their constant prayers by day and night. The burning candles also stand for our ardent zeal and the sincere sacrifice we make out of reverence and gratitude to them for their solicitude on our behalf before God.

St. John of Kronstadt

## ON THE END TIMES

*From a Letter of the Optina Elder [and New Martyr] St. Anatoly the Younger (+1922).*

Heresies will spread everywhere and deceive many people. The enemy of the human race will act with cunning in order to draw into heresy, if possible, even the elect.

He will not begin by crudely rejecting the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the virtue of the Theotokos, but he will begin imperceptibly to distort the teachings and statutes of the Church and their very spirit, handed down to us by the Holy Fathers through the Holy Spirit. Few will notice these wiles of the enemy, only those more experienced in the spiritual life. Heretics will seize power over the Church and will place their servants everywhere; the pious will be regarded with contempt. He (the Lord) said, *by their fruits ye shall know them*, and so, by their fruits, as well as by the actions of the heretics, strive to distinguish them from the true pastors. These are spiritual thieves, plundering the spiritual flock, and they will enter the sheepfold (the Church), climbing up some other way, using force and trampling upon the divine statutes.

The Lord calls them *robbers* (cf. St. John 10:1). Indeed, their first task will be the persecution of the true pastors, their imprisonment and exile, for without this it will be impossible for them to plunder the sheep.

Therefore, my son, when you see the violation of patristic tradition and the divine order in the Church, the order established by God, know that the heretics have already appeared, although for the time being they may conceal their impiety, or they will distort the Divine Faith imperceptibly, in order to succeed better in seducing and enticing the inexperienced into the net. The persecution will be directed against not only pastors but against all servants of God, for all those ruled by heresy will not endure piety.

Recognize these wolves in sheep's clothing by their proud dispositions and love of power. They will be slanderers, traitors, everywhere sowing enmity and malice; therefore the Lord said that by their fruits you will know them. True servants of God are humble, love their neighbor and are obedient to the Church.

Monastics will be greatly oppressed by the heretics and monastic life will be scorned. Monasteries will become scarce, the number of monastics will decline, and those who remain will endure violence. These haters of monastic life, however, having only the appearance of piety, will strive to attract the monks to their side promising them protection and worldly goods, and threatening those who oppose them with expulsion. These threats will cause great despair among the fainthearted, but you, my son rejoice that you have lived until that time, for then the faithful who have

not shown any other virtues, will receive crowns merely for standing firm in the faith, according to the word of the Lord (cf. St. Mt 10:32).

Fear the Lord my son. Fear to lose the crown prepared (for you), fear to be cast by Christ into the outer darkness and eternal torment. Stand bravely in the faith, and if necessary, endure persecution and other sorrows, for the Lord will be with you... And the holy martyrs and confessors, they will look upon you and your struggle with joy.

But woe to the monks in those days who will be bound with possessions and riches, who because of love of peace will be ready to submit to the heretics. They will lull to sleep their conscience, saying, "We are preserving and saving the monastery and the Lord will forgive us." The unfortunate and blind ones do not at all consider that through heresy the demons will enter the monastery and then it will no longer be a holy monastery, but merely walls from which grace will depart. God, however, is more mighty than the enemy, and He will never leave His servants. True Christians will remain until the end of this age, only they will choose to live in secluded, deserted places. Do not fear sorrows, rather fear pernicious heresy, for it strips us of grace and separates us from Christ.

This is why the Lord commanded us to consider the heretic as a pagan and a publican. And so my son, strengthen yourself in the grace of Jesus Christ. Hasten to confess the faith, to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Tim 2:13), Who has said, *Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* (Rev 2:10). To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honor, glory and dominion unto the ages of ages. Amen.



Humble yourself and reproach yourself. Do not justify yourself, even if you are absolutely right, for self-justification is not conducive to the healing of our spiritual illness.

My daughter, try to please the Eldress, and the spirit of God will overshadow you. Become a humble bride of Christ. The egotist is abominable to the most beautiful Bridegroom Christ. The Bridegroom is humble and meek; will the bride be a proud, ill-tempered soul?

If you want to be fragrant, embrace a humble, simple, obedient, and meek spirit. Despise egotism as a stench and stupidity. You do very well to reproach yourself in everything. This path is most true to the Fathers. Yes, my child, implant this manner of life deeply within your dear little soul and you will benefit enormously.

**From Counsels from the Holy Mountain—the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim**

## UNLOCKING THE MYSTERIES

By St. Nikolaj (Velimirovic), Pascha, 1934; Ochrid, Yugoslavia.



Each Christian feast raises hundreds of questions and gives hundreds of answers. The questions are from men, the answers come from God through the feasts. This is especially true with the feast of Christ's Resurrection. Here He opens for us, with His keys, hundreds of locked doors. For God has more answers than man has questions; He has more

keys than man has mysteries. Let us, then, consider a few such questions.

Here is a mystery: Why did Christ rise from the dead?

The key: Because Life could not remain in the grave. A thousand years before, the Prophet foretold concerning Christ: *...nor wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption* (Pss 15:10). Christ revealed the living God, the Father, to the world; He revealed the heavens, the living realm of angelic hosts; He revealed life after death and the eternal heavenly kingdom. Would, then, the Restorer of life remain in the darkness of the grave and the embrace of death? Christ raised Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Nain and Lazarus of Bethany. Would He Who raised others not raise up Himself? Truly He arose; He could not do otherwise by virtue of His essence, His power, His greatness. Weak is the force of death that aspired to hold down the Giver of Life in its abyss. Small is the mouth of death that aspired to strangle the Bestower of resurrection. Only in the light of the Resurrection can one comprehend Christ's deeds on earth, His love for men and His divinity.

Here is another mystery: How has the belief in the Resurrection of Christ been preserved through so many centuries?

The key: In the same way that a well rooted tree withstands the winds, as light is preserved in darkness and as truth is preserved amidst lies.

A third mystery: Is the Resurrection of Christ still felt today?

The key: It is powerfully felt, throughout the entire world. Gazing with the eyes of the spirit at the resurrected Lord, the weak are strengthened, the sorrowful are comforted, the sad rejoice, sinners repent, the wicked are corrected, the impure are cleansed, the persecuted are encouraged, the despondent hope, sufferers pray, and those on their deathbeds no longer fear death: *Today the Master spoiled hell and*

*raised the prisoners from all ages whom it had held in bitter bondage.* (From the Paschal canon).

A fourth mystery: What are the conditions for our own resurrection?

The key: To imitate here on earth Christ and His Apostles and all the righteous ones who pleased God, according to one's strength and God-given talents. To be humble, modest, compassionate, merciful, just, peace loving and persistent in every virtue. To pray to God, to repent of our sins, to constantly correct ourselves. To read and listen to the joyous news, that is the Gospel of Christ, to accept every word of the Lord as sacred and to treasure it as a pearl, every word, every word. To believe all that Christ said, confessed or promised. And so we cannot but have hope that we will rise up in this life from spiritual death, and in the life to come from eternal death. Thus spoke the resurrected Lord: *I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.* (John 11:25-26)

Let us, therefore, believe in Him, for in Him we shall find all the conditions for our resurrection. And so, let us fervently say: *I believe, O Lord, help my weak faith.* And with joy let us greet one another, brother to brother: **Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!**



Why do we not see miracles? Let him who can, answer otherwise, but to me it seems that we are of necessity brought to this answer: We do not see miracles, or we see them rarely, either because they are invisible to us as unworthy of trust, or because they are not even accomplished, through unbelief or want of faith.

How can miracles be accomplished in us by prayer, when our prayer is short, cold, inattentive, and offered up, not so much in faith and filial love to God, as in a sort of involuntary submission to His law?

How can a spiritual word work miracles in us, when our heart, like a field wild with tares, is thickly sown with idle words, and overgrown by carnal desires and unlawful thoughts?

How can the Holy Mysteries work miracles in us, if we approach them but from absolute necessity, without a careful previous purification, without an ardent aspiration to be united to God?

Let us, my brethren, call upon the Lord Who is unceasingly working miracles unto our salvation, and both each for all and all for each, let us cry to Him with the Apostles, *Lord, increase our faith.* (Lk 17:5).

St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow (+1867)

## Ὁ Βασανιστικός Θάνατος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ

*Συνέντευξη τοῦ γνωστοῦ ἱατροδικαστῆ Φίλιππου Κουτσάφτη στὸν δημοσιογράφο Δημήτρη Ριζούλη.*

**Ο** Φίλιππος Κουτσάφτης περιγράφει βήμα βήμα τὶς ἐπιπτώσεις τῶν Παθῶν (μὲ ἕξι ἀνακρίσεις καὶ τέσσερις βασανισμούς) καὶ ἐξηγεῖ πῶς προήλθε ὁ θάνατος τοῦ Χριστοῦ στὸν Σταυρό.

Ὁ Φίλιππος Κουτσάφτης εἶναι ὁ προϊστάμενος τῆς Ἱατροδικαστικῆς Ὑπηρεσίας Ἀθηνῶν καὶ ἴσως ὁ πιὸ διάσημος ἱατροδικαστὴς τῶν τελευταίων δεκαετιῶν. Ἔχει κληθεῖ νὰ μελετήσει καὶ νὰ ἀποφανθεῖ γιὰ τὰ μεγαλύτερα σύγχρονα ἐγκλήματα καὶ οἱ ἐκθέσεις του προσέφεραν πολὺτιμα στοιχεῖα στὶς Ἀρχές. Αὐτὴ τὴ φορὰ ὅμως ἐκλήθη νὰ κάνει μία διαφορετικὴ «νεκροψία» καὶ «ἐκθεση», γιὰ τὸ μαρτύριο καὶ τὸν θάνατο τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Ὁ κ. Κουτσάφτης ἔχει κάνει μία βαθιὰ μελέτη (συστηματικὰ ἐδῶ καὶ καιρὸ) γιὰ τὸ θέμα, ἐξετάζοντας ὅλες τὶς πηγές καὶ ἀναλύοντας τὰ πάθη καὶ τὸν θάνατο τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μὲ ἐπιστημονικὸ τρόπο. Σήμερα ἀναλύει τὰ αἷτια θανάτου τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τὴν ἐπίπτωση κάθε βασανιστηρίου ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ψυχοσωματικὴ κατάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τέλος, ἀπαντᾷ γιὰ τὴν καταρρίπτονται ὅλες οἱ θεωρίες ποὺ ἀμφισβητοῦν ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς πέθανε πάνω στὸν Σταυρὸ, μὲ τελικὸ σκοπὸ νὰ ἀμφισβητηθεῖ ἡ Ἀνάστασή Του.

† † †

**- Κύριε Κουτσάφτη, τὰ στοιχεῖα ποὺ ἔχουμε στὰ χέρια μας ἀπὸ τὶς Γραφές, τὴν παράδοση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὶς ἱστορικὲς πηγές μᾶς δίνουν μία πλήρη εἰκόνα γιὰ τὰ μαρτύρια τοῦ Χριστοῦ;**

- Βεβαίωτα. Ξέρουμε πάρα πολλὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ θὰ ἔλεγε κανεὶς ὅτι μπορούμε νὰ βγάλουμε ἓνα πόρισμα. Ἐλπίζω νὰ μὴν ἀκούγεται ἀσεβὲς αὐτὸ τὸ τόλμημα σὲ ὀρισμένους, γιὰ τὸ τόλμημα εἶναι. Πρέπει νὰ γίνει κατανοητὸ ὅτι τὸ Θεῖο πάθος εἶναι ἐκούσιο. Ὁ Κύριος μὲ τὴ δική Του θέληση δέχτηκε τὰ πάντα, γι' αὐτὸ ἀκόμα καὶ τὴν ὥρα ποὺ τὰ καρφιά ἔσκιζαν τὶς σάρκες του καὶ τρυποῦσαν τὰ ὀστά Του Αὐτὸς προσευχόταν γιὰ τοὺς σταυρωτὲς Του, πράγμα πρωτοφανές.

**- Ποιὰ ἦταν λοιπὸν ἡ ἐπίπτωση τῶν Παθῶν;**

- Αὐτὸ ποὺ πρέπει ὅλοι νὰ γνωρίζουν εἶναι ὅτι τὰ Πάθη εἶναι ψυχοσωματικά. Ὁ Χριστὸς, ὅταν φεύγει ἀπὸ τὸν Μυστικὸ Δεῖπνο καὶ πορεύεται γιὰ νὰ προσευχηθεῖ, ἀφήνοντας λίγο πιὸ μακριὰ τοὺς τρεῖς μαθητὲς (Πέτρο, Ἰάκωβο καὶ Ἰωάννη), ἐμφανίζεται μὲ βάση τὶς Γραφές ἐκστατικὸς σὰν κάτι δυσάρεστο νὰ περιμένει. Στὸ τέλος (ἐνῶ οἱ μαθητὲς δὲν ἔχουν ἀντιληφθεῖ τί συμβαίνει) ὁ Ἰησοῦς προσεύχεται γιὰ τρίτη φορὰ καὶ τρέχει ἀπὸ τὸ μέτωπό του ἰδρώτας καὶ αἷμα.

Αὐτὸ τὸ σημεῖο τῆς διήγησης περὶ «αἱματηροῦ ἰδρώτα» ἀμφισβητήθηκε πολὺ ἔντονα γιὰ αἰῶνες. Ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς ὅμως γράφει κάτι ποὺ ἦταν ἀδιανόητο καὶ πρωτοφανές, χωρὶς νὰ τὸν νοιάζει ἂν θὰ τὸν ἀμφισβητήσουν ἢ ἂν θὰ ποῦν ὅτι γράφει φανταστικὰ πράγματα. Πράγματι, λοιπὸν, τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο 2000 χρόνια μετὰ δικαιώθηκε, καθὼς ἡ Ἱατρικὴ πρόσφατα ἀποφάνθηκε ὅτι ὑπάρχει ἓνα σπάνιο συννοδὸ σύμπτωμα τοῦ ὄργανισμοῦ μὲ αὐτὰ τὰ χαρακτηριστικὰ ὅταν κάποιος βρεθεῖ σὲ μεγάλη ψυχοσωματικὴ ἔνταση. Ξέρουμε πλέον ἀπὸ τὴ σύγχρονη ἐπιστήμη ὅτι οἱ ἰδρωτοποιοὶ ἀδένες εἶναι διάσπαρτοι στὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ οἱ πολυπληθέστεροι βρίσκονται στὶς παλάμες, στὰ πέλματα, στὸν ἀγκύρα, στὶς παρειές καὶ στὸ μέτωπο. Ὅταν ὁ ἄνθρωπος βρεθεῖ σὲ μεγάλη ἔνταση, εἶναι δυνατὸν νὰ γίνει αὐτόματη ρήξη μεγάλου ἀριθμοῦ τριχοειδῶν ἀγγείων στὸ σπείραμα τῶν ἀδένων. Τὸ αἷμα ποὺ ἀπελευθερώνεται ἀναμειγνύεται μὲ τὸν ἰδρώτα, τὸν βάφει κόκκινο καὶ στὴ συνέχεια τὸ παραχθὲν μείγμα ἀναβλύζει στὸ δέρμα.

Δηλαδή ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Λουκᾶς ἔγραψε τὴν ἀλήθεια. Καταλαβαίνει, ὅμως, κανεὶς σὲ πόσο μεγάλο βαθμὸ ἔντασης βρισκόταν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πρὶν ἀκόμα ἀπὸ τὴ σύλληψή Του. Τὴν ἄλλη μέρα ἤξερε ὅτι θὰ ἀναλάβει τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ἁμαρτία ὡς ἀντικαταστάτης τοῦ πεσόντος ἀνθρώπου καὶ θὰ ἀντιμετωπίσει πάνω στὸν Σταυρὸ τὴ Θεῖα δικαιοσύνη. Δὲν ἤθελε νὰ χάσει τὸ βλέμμα τοῦ πατέρα Του ποὺ ἦταν στραμμένο πάνω Του. Δὲν ἦταν ἡ ἀγωνία Του οὔτε γιὰ τὴ μαστίγωση οὔτε γιὰ τὰ καρφιά.

**- Τὰ μαρτύρια πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴ Σταύρωση ποῖα ἦταν καὶ ποῖα ἐπίπτωση εἶχαν;**

- Μετὰ τὴ σύλληψη ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέρασε ἀπὸ ἕξι ἐξαντλητικὲς καὶ κακόπιστες ἀνακρίσεις. Ἀπὸ τὸν Ἄννα, τὸν Καϊάφα, τὸ Συνέδριο, τὸν Πιλάτο, τὸν Ἡρώδη καὶ ξανὰ ἀπὸ τὸν Πιλάτο. Στὰ μεσοδιαστήματα κακοποιήθηκε μὲ τέσσερις πολὺωρους καὶ βάρβαρους βασανισμούς. Μεταξὺ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων καὶ τῶν βασανισμῶν σύρθηκε ἀλυσσοδεμένος καὶ δερόμενος ἕξι φορές. Ἡ ἀπόσταση ποὺ διήνυσε μὲ τὶς ἀλυσίδες ἦταν περίπου ἕξι χιλιόμετρα. Καὶ ὅλα αὐτὰ νησιτικὸς, διψασμένος καὶ ἄπνους.

**- Οἱ πιέσεις τὶ ρόλο ἔπαιξαν;**

- Τοῦ ἀσκήθηκε ἔντονη ψυχοσωματικὴ βία, Τὸν ἔγδυσαν τρεῖς φορές, Τὸν ἔντυσαν ἄλλες τόσες, Τὸν μαστίγωσαν, Τοῦ φόρεσαν τὸ ἀκάνθινο στεφάνι καὶ Τοῦ φόρτωσαν τὸν βαρὺ Σταυρὸ. Στὶς ἀνακρίσεις Τὸν διέσυραν καὶ Τὸν ἐξευτέλισαν. Ἦθελαν μὲ κάθε τρόπο νὰ Τὸν κάνουν νὰ λυγίσει.

**- Μεταξὺ ἄλλων, μαστιγώθηκε.**

- Ναί. Ἡ μαστίγωση γινόταν μὲ φραγγέλιο, ποὺ εἶχε λουριὰ μὲ ἀπολήξεις σφαιρίδια καὶ ἄκρες ἀπὸ

κόκκαλα. Κάθε φορά που έπεφτε στο σώμα το μαστίγιο αυτά τα αντικείμενα έμπαιναν μέσα στις σάρκες και όταν το τραβούσε ο βασανιστής για να ξαναχτυπήσει έσκισαν το δέρμα. Οι πληγές που προκάλεσαν ήταν φοβερές σε όλη την οπίσθια επιφάνεια και την πλάγια κοιλιακή και θωρακική χώρα, που πρέπει να ήταν καταματωμένη. Πρέπει να έχασε πολύ μεγάλη ποσότητα αίματος ο Χριστός μόνο από αυτό.

- **Ός προς τον Σταυρό που κουβάλησε;**

- Όταν ο Κύριος φορτώθηκε τον Σταυρό έπρεπε να κουβαλήσει ένα ξύλο που δεν ήταν πλανισμένο (όπως το βλέπουμε στις άγιογραφίες). Ήταν δύο κορμοί γεμάτοι σκληρό φλοιό και ρόζους και καταλαβαίνετε τι έγινε όταν πέταξαν πάνω στην πλάτη Του το όριζόντιο τμήμα. Την ήδη καταματωμένη πλάτη από τη μαστίγωση. Αυτός ο βαρύς κορμός μπήκε μέσα στις πληγές προκαλώντας άφορητο πόνο. Στη συνέχεια ο Ήσους κυριολεκτικά σέρνει τα βήματά Του και

μπορούν να συγκρατήσουν το βάρος.

Άν, πάντως, το καρφί μπήκε ανάμεσα στα δύο κόκκαλα, κερκίδα και ώλένη, έχουμε τραγικό πόνο γιατί τραυματίστηκε το μέσο νεύρο. Σκεφτείτε ότι αν άκουμπήσουμε ελάχιστα το νεύρο του άγκώνα νιώθουμε έντονο πόνο. Φανταστείτε να περάσει καρφί από αυτό το νεύρο. Ός προς το κάρφωμα των ποδιών οι δύο έκδοχές είναι ότι σταύρωναν τα πόδια και το καρφί περνούσε από το ένα πόδι στο άλλο ή ότι καρφώθηκαν παράλληλα. Εύρηματα του 1968 σε τάφους στην Ανατολική Ιερουσαλήμ μάς δείχνουν ότι υπήρχαν και άλλοι που σταυρώθηκαν στα πόδια με τον πρώτο τρόπο.

- **Ο θάνατος τελικά από τι επήλθε; Γνωρίζουμε;**

- Μπορούμε να πούμε ότι ήταν ένας θάνατος άργος και λίαν βασανιστικός. Με την ανύψωση του Σταυρού ο Χριστός αντιμετωπίζει μια σειρά από δυσμενείς παράγοντες:



υποφέρει. Πλέον δεν έχει ανάσες και άρκετο όξινογόνο. Το αίμα Του λιγοστεύει και κάποια στιγμή λυγίζουν τα γόνατά Του και είναι αδύνατον να προχωρήσει.

- **Περιγράψτε μια κατάσταση που σχεδόν δεν αντέχεται με βάση τα ανθρώπινα μέτρα.**

- Ναί. Πιστεύω, αν δεν ήταν ο συγκεκριμένος εκεί θα είχε πεθάνει. Κανονικά, με βάση τη λογική, εκεί (στην πορεία προς τον Γολγοθά) θα έπρεπε να είναι το τέλος.

- **Όστόσο, ο Χριστός φτάνει τελικά μέχρι τη Σταύρωση. Εκεί τι ακριβώς γίνεται;**

- Εκεί οι σταυρωτές ξαπλώνουν τον Ήσους πάνω στον Σταυρό και Του καρφώνουν τα χέρια και τα πόδια. Για το ακριβές σημείο του καρφώματος υπάρχουν δύο έκδοχές: το έσωτερικό της παλάμης, που φαίνεται και σε πολλές εικόνες, ή το κέντρο της έσω επιφάνειας των καρπών. Η πρώτη έκδοχή είναι για μένα ή πιό προσιτή. Η παλάμη έχει μικρό πάχος, μεγάλη επιφάνεια και λόγω των τενόντων και των περιτονιών δεν σκίζεται το δέρμα. Υπάρχουν και τα μετακάρπια όστια, που

Υποχρεωτική όρθοστασία, που Του δημιουργεί όρθοστατική υπόταση.

Υποχρεωτική ακινησία, που δεν δίνει τη δυνατότητα στο φλεβικό αίμα να επιστρέψει στην καρδιά.

Ειδική στάση του θώρακα, με το βάρος του σώματος να είναι σε μόνιμη έκπτυξη και να δυσκολεύει φοβερά την αναπνοή. Δεν μπορεί να κάνει έκπνοη παρά μόνο εισπνοή. Αυτό συντόμευσε τον θάνατό Του.

Επιπλέον αντιμετωπίζει επιπλοκές τραυμάτων, αιμορραγία, αφυδάτωση, πείνα, δίψα και εξάντληση.

- **Το τελικό «πόρισμα»;**

- Επρόκειτο για πολυπαραγοντικό θάνατο. Πολλά πράγματα έδρασαν για την κατάληξη, με τελικό αίτιο την άσφυξία μαζί με την κυκλοφορική ανεπάρκεια. Μία σημαντική λεπτομέρεια είναι και η επιδρομή των σαρκοφάγων έντόμων. Το αίμα φέρνει από πολύ μακριά έντομα που κόβουν κομμάτια από τις πληγές ενός άκινήτου ανθρώπου! Οι πιό φοβερές στιγμές για Τον Κύριο ήταν μετά το κάρφωμα στον Σταυρό.

- Πώς εξηγείτε την άντοχή που έδειξε;

- Ο Χριστός δεν πέθανε πριν από τη Σταύρωση γιατί υπήρχε λόγος. Υπερέβη τα ανθρώπινα μέτρα και για μένα τὸ ὅτι ἄντεξε καὶ ἀνέβηκε στὸν Σταυρὸ εἶναι ἀκόμα ἓνα δείγμα τῆς Θεότητάς Του.

- Μπορείτε νὰ μᾶς περιγράψετε τὶ αἰσθανόταν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φορώντας τὸ ἀκάνθινο στεφάνι;

- Πρῶτα πρῶτα, νὰ σᾶς πῶ ὅτι εἶναι πρωτοφανῆς τρόπος ἀντιμετώπισης. Ποτὲ πρὶν δὲν εἶχε γίνει κάτι τέτοιο καὶ ποτὲ ξανὰ δὲν ἐπαναλήφθηκε. Ἐπρόκειτο γιὰ φρίκη! Τὸ κατασκεύασαν ἀπὸ μιὰ τζιτζιφιά, εὐλύγιστο φυτὸ ποὺ εὐδοκμεῖ στὴν περιοχὴ, μὲ πολλὰ μεγάλα καὶ σκληρὰ ἀγκάθια. Μέχρι τότε τὰ στεφάνια τῶν καταδίκων ἦταν σιδερένια καὶ προσαρμόζονταν μὲ βάση τὴ διάμετρο τοῦ κρανίου. Ἐδῶ ἦταν βασανιστήριο. Τὸ τριχωτὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς εἶναι ἀγγειοβριθέστατο. Ἔχει πολλὴ καλὴ αἰμάτωση καὶ εἰδικὴ νεύρωση. Ἡ αἰμορραγία, λοιπόν, ἦταν μεγάλη καὶ ἀφόρητος ὁ πόνος ἀπὸ τὰ ἀγκάθια στὰ νεῦρα.

- Κατὰ καιροὺς ἔχουν ἀκουστῆ θεωρίες ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἶχε πεθάνει στὸν Σταυρὸ καὶ ὅτι ἔτσι δικαιολογεῖται (λογικὰ) ἡ Ἀνάστασή του. Κατὰ τὴ γνώμη σας, αὐτὸ μπορεῖ νὰ στέκει;

- Τυχαία ἔγινε, νομίζετε, ὁ λογισμὸς τῆς πλευρᾶς; Καθόλου τυχαία. Αὐτὸ τὸ γεγονὸς εἶναι τὸ πιστοποιητικὸ τοῦ θανάτου. Ἡ λόγχη τρύπησε τὴν πλευρὰ καὶ βγήκε «αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ». Ἀπὸ ὅποια πλευρὰ καὶ νὰ ἔγινε ὁ λογισμὸς, μὲ αὐτὸ τὸ βαρὺ ὄπλο τῶν δύομισι μέτρων, δὲν ὑπάρχει περίπτωση ὁ ὁποιοσδήποτε νὰ μείνει ζωντανός. Μὲ τίποτα!

- Ἄρα καταρρίπτονται ὅλα;

- Φυσικά. Οἱ ἀρνητὲς βέβαια λένε ὅ,τι θέλουν, ἀλλὰ δὲν καταλαβαίνω γιατί ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ Τὸν Χριστὸ ἀφοῦ γι' αὐτοὺς δὲν ὑπάρχει.



Όταν κάποιος πρόκειται νὰ οἰκοδομήσῃ ἓνα σπίτι, ποὺ χάλασε, βγάζει πρῶτον τοὺς ἐνοίκους. Μετὰ γκρεμίζει τὸ σπίτι καὶ στὴν συνέχεια χτίζει λαμπρότερο... Ὁ Θεὸς θέλει νὰ κατασκευάσῃ νέα οἰκοδομὴ. Διαλύει τὸ σῶμα μας καὶ τὴν ψυχὴ, ποὺ κατοικεῖ μέσα στὸ σῶμα, τὴν βγάζει πρῶτα ἔξω (τὴν στιγμὴ τοῦ θανάτου) καὶ ὕστερα κατασκευάζει λαμπρότερο σπίτι (μὲ τὴν ἀνάσταση τῶν σωμάτων) καὶ ξαναβάζει μέσα τὴν ψυχὴ, μὲ ἀπείρως τώρα πὺ μεγαλύτερη ἄνεση καὶ δόξα. Ἄς μὴ προσέχουμε, λοιπόν, τὸ γκρέμισμα, ἀλλὰ τὴν μελλοντικὴ λαμπρότητά μας.

Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου

## Τὸ Οἰκουμενικὸ Μήνυμα τοῦ 1821

Κωνσταντῖνος Χολέβας, Πολιτικὸς Ἐπιστήμων.

Καθὼς ἐορτάζουμε τὴ διπλὴ ἐορτὴ, τὸν Εὐαγγελισμὸ τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση, εἶναι χρήσιμο νὰ συνειδητοποιήσουμε ὅτι τὸ 1821 ἦταν ταυτοχρόνως μιὰ ἐθνικὴ καὶ μιὰ οἰκουμενικὴ, πανανθρώπινη ἐπανάσταση. Ἦταν πρωτίστως ἐθνικὴ ἐξέγερση μὲ σύνθημα «**γιὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν Πίστη τὴν ἁγία καὶ τῆς Πατρίδος τὴν Ἐλευθερίαν**». Ὁρθόδοξη Πίστη, ἀντιστασιακὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ, κοινοτικὴ αὐτοδιοίκηση, κρυφὰ καὶ φανερὰ σχολεῖα, ἡ ἱκανότητα τοῦ ἔθνους μας στὸ ἐμπόριο καὶ στὴ ναυτιλία, αὐτὰ ἦσαν τὰ κυριώτερα θεμέλια τῆς ἐθνικῆς ἀνεξαρτησίας. Ὑπάρχει, ὅμως, καὶ ἡ οἰκουμενικὴ διάσταση τοῦ Ἀγῶνος. Τὸ 1821 ξεπέρασε τὰ σύνορα καὶ συγκίνησε πολλὰ ἔθνη ἀνὰ τὴν Ὑφήλιο.

Ἀραβόφωνοι Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί, οἱ Ροῦμ Ὁρτοντόξ τοῦ Λιβάνου, ξεσηκώθηκαν μαζί μας κατὰ τῶν Τούρκων. Ὁ Χατζημιχάλης Νταλιάνης κατέβηκε ἀπὸ τὴ Βόρειο Ἡπειρο γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ἐνσωματώσῃ στὴν κοινὴ προσπάθεια. Ἀκόμη καὶ σήμερα στὰ σπίτια τῶν Ρωμῶν Ὁρθοδόξων τοῦ Λιβάνου καὶ τῆς Συρίας βρίσκεις εἰκόνες τοῦ Ἁγίου Κοσμᾶ τοῦ Αἰτωλοῦ, ἂν καὶ ὁ ἴδιος οὐδέποτε ἐπισκέφθηκε τὴν περιοχὴ αὐτὴ.

Κατὰ τὸ Α΄ Ἐπιστημονικὸ Συνέδριον τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου γιὰ τὶς ἱστορικὲς πηγὲς τοῦ 1821 (κυκλοφορεῖται ἤδη ὁ σχετικὸς τόμος) κατατέθηκαν μαρτυρίες γιὰ τὴ συμβολὴ τοῦ 1821 στὴν ἐπαναστατικὴ διάθεση τῶν Ἰταλῶν τοῦ 19<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνος καὶ στὴν ἐνοποίηση τῆς Ἰταλίας. Ἀντιθέτως μὲ ὅσα διαδίδουν ὀρισμένοι ξενομανεῖς, ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση ἀφύπνισε τοὺς Ἰταλοὺς ἐπαναστάτες καὶ δὲν συνέβη τὸ ἀντίθετο.

Οἱ Ἠνωμένες Πολιτεῖες συγκινήθηκαν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ ἐξέγερση καὶ ἔστειλαν πολλοὺς φιλέλληνες ὅπως ὁ ἱατρὸς Σάμουελ Γκρίντλεν Χάου. Ὁ Διονύσιος Σολωμὸς στὸν Ὕμνον εἰς τὴν Ἐλευθερίαν τονίζει ὅτι μὲ τὴν Ἐθνεγερσίαν τῶν Ἑλλήνων «**καρδιακὰ ἐχαροποιήθη καὶ τοῦ Βάσιγκτον ἡ γῆ**», ἡ χώρα τοῦ Τζῶρτζ Οὐάσιγκτων, δηλ. οἱ ΗΠΑ. Στὴ Λατινικὴ Ἀμερικὴ πολλὲς ἐξεγέρσεις ἐντοπίων κατὰ τῶν ἀποικιοκρατῶν ἐμπνεύσθηκαν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴ Ἐπανάσταση.

Στὴ Δυτικὴ Εὐρώπη ὁ Φιλελληνισμὸς ἐπηρέασε τὸν λαὸ καὶ τοὺς διανοητὲς. Ὁ Γάλλος ζωγράφος Ντελακρουὰ ἀπεικόνισε συγκλονιστικὰ τὴ σφαγὴ τῆς Χίου, ἐνῶ γιὰ τὸ ἴδιο γεγονὸς ὁ Βίκτωρ Οὐγκῶ ἔγραψε τὸ περίφημο ποίημα «Τὸ Ἑλληνόπουλο». Στὴ Ρωσία ἐξ ἄλλου ὁ Πούσκιν ἔγραψε ἔργα σχετικὰ μὲ τὸ 1821. Ἡ Ἐξοδος τοῦ Μεσολογγίου προκάλεσε διαδηλώσεις φοιτητῶν στὸ Παρίσι καὶ στὸ Λονδίνο.

Ἀθάνατο 1821, Ἑλληνικὸ καὶ πανανθρώπινο!

## Σήμερον Κρεμάται ἐπὶ Ξύλου, Ὁ ἐν Ὑδασι τὴν Γῆν Κρεμάσας

Δημοτικό μοιρολόγι γιὰ τὰ Πάθη τοῦ Χριστοῦ.



Σήμερα μαῦρος Οὐρανός, σήμερα μαύρη μέρα,  
σήμερα ὅλοι θλίβονται καὶ τὰ βουνὰ λυποῦνται,  
σήμερα ἔβαλαν βουλή οἱ ἄνομοι Ὅβραῖοι,  
οἱ ἄνομοι καὶ τὰ σκυλιὰ κι' οἱ τρισκαταραμένοι  
γιὰ νὰ σταυρώσουν Τὸ Χριστό, Τὸν Ἀφέντη Βασιλέα.

Ὁ Κύριος ἠθέλησε νὰ μπεῖ σὲ περιβόλι  
νὰ λάβει Δεῖπνον Μυστικὸν γιὰ νὰ τὸν λάβουν ὅλοι.  
Κι' ἡ Παναγιά ἡ Δέσποινα καθόταν μοναχὴ της,  
τὰς προσευχὰς της ἔκανε γιὰ Τὸ Μονογενὴ της.

Φωνὴ τοὺς ἦρθ' ἐξ Οὐρανοῦ ἀπ' Ἀρχαγγέλου στόμα:  
-Φτάνουν κυρά μου οἱ προσευχές, φτάνουν κι' οἱ μετάνοιες,  
Τὸ Γυιό σου Τὸν ἐπιάσανε καὶ στὸ φονιά Τὸν πάνε  
καὶ στοῦ Πιλάτου τὴν αὐλὴ ἐκεῖ Τὸν τυραγνᾶνε.

-Χαλιὰ-χαλιὰ, φτιάσε καρφιά, φτιάσε τρία περόνια.  
Καὶ κείνος ὁ παράνομος βαρεῖ καὶ φτάχνει πέντε.

-Σὺ Φαραεῖ, ποὺ τὰ «φτιασες πρέπει νὰ μᾶς διδάξεις.  
-Βάλε τὰ δυὸ στὰ χέρια Του καὶ τ' ἄλλα δυὸ στὰ πόδια,  
τὸ πέμπτο το φαρμακερὸ βάλε το στὴν καρδιά Του,  
νὰ στάξει αἷμα καὶ νερὸ νὰ λιγωθεῖ ἡ καρδιά Του.

Κι' ἡ Παναγιά σὰν τάκουσε ἔπεσε καὶ λιγώθη,  
σταμνὶ νερὸ τῆς ρίξανε, τρία κανάτια μόσχο  
γιὰ νὰ τῆς ἔρθ' ὁ λογισμός, γιὰ νὰ τῆς ἔρθει ὁ νοῦς της.  
Κι' ὅταν τῆς ἦρθ' ὁ λογισμός, κι' ὅταν τῆς ἦρθ' ὁ νοῦς της,  
ζητᾶ μαχαίρι νὰ σφαγεῖ, ζητᾶ φωτιὰ νὰ πέσει,  
ζητᾶ γκρεμὸ νὰ γκρεμιστεῖ γιὰ Τὸ Μονογενὴ της.

-Μὴν σφάζεσαι, Μανούλα μου, δὲν σφάζονται οἱ μανάδες  
Μὴν καίγεσαι, Μανούλα μου, δὲν καίγονται οἱ μανάδες.  
Λάβε, κυρὰ μ' ὑπομονή, λάβε, κύρα μ' ἀνέση.

-Καὶ πῶς νὰ λάβω ὑπομονή καὶ πῶς νὰ λάβω ἀνέση,  
ποῦ ἔχω Γυιὸ Μονογενὴ καὶ κείνον Σταυρωμένον.

Κι' ἡ Μάρθα κι' ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ τοῦ Λαζάρου ἡ μάνα  
καὶ τοῦ Ἰακώβου ἡ ἀδερφή, κι' οἱ τέσσερες ἀντάμα,  
ἐπῆραν τὸ στρατὶ-στρατί, στρατὶ τὸ μονοπάτι  
καὶ τὸ στρατὶ τοὺς ἔβγαλε μὲς του ληστῆ τὴν πόρτα.  
-Ἄνοιξε πόρτα τοῦ ληστῆ καὶ πόρτα τοῦ Πιλάτου.

Κι' ἡ πόρτα ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο της ἀνοίγει μοναχὴ της.  
Τηράει δεξιὰ, τηράει ζερβά, κανέναν δὲν γνωρίζει,  
τηράει δεξιώτερα βλέπει τὸν Ἀϊγιάννη,  
Ἄγιέ μου Γιάννη Πρόδρομε καὶ βαπτιστῆ Τοῦ Γυιοῦ μου,  
μὴν εἶδες τὸν Ὑγιόκα μου καὶ Τὸν Διδάσκαλόν σου;

-Δὲν ἔχω στόμα νὰ σοῦ πῶ, γλώσσα νὰ σοῦ μιλήσω,  
δὲν ἔχω χεροπάλαμα γιὰ νὰ σοῦ Τόνε δεῖξω.  
Βλέπεις Ἐκείνον Τὸ Γυμνὸ, Τὸν Παραπονεμένο,  
ὅπου φορεῖ πονκάμισο στὸ αἷμα βουτηγμένο,  
ὅπου φορεῖ στὴν Κεφαλὴ ἀγκάθινο στεφάνι;  
Αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ Γυιόκας σου καὶ μὲ ὁ Δάσκαλός μου!

Κι' ἡ Παναγιά πλησίασε γλυκὰ τὸν ἀγκαλιάζει.  
-Δὲ μοῦ μιλᾶς Παιδάκι μου, δὲ μοῦ μιλᾶς Παιδί μου;  
-Τὶ νὰ σοῦ πῶ, Μανούλα μου, ποῦ διάφορο δὲν ἔχεις  
μόνο τὸ μέγα-Σάββατο κατὰ τὸ μεσονύχτι,  
ποῦ θὰ λαλήσει ὁ πετεινὸς καὶ σημάνουν οἱ καμπάνες,  
τότε καὶ σύ, Μανούλα μου, θάχεις χαρὰ μεγάλη!

Σημαίνει ὁ Θεός, σημαίνει ἡ γῆ, σημαίνουν τὰ Οὐράνια,  
σημαίνει κι' ἡ Ἅγια Σοφία μὲ τὶς πολλὲς καμπάνες.  
Ὅποιος τ' ἀκούει σώζεται κι' ὅλποιος τὸ λέει ἀγιάζει,  
κι' ὅποιος τὸ καλοφουγκραστεῖ Παράδεισο θὰ λάβει,  
Παράδεισο καὶ λίβανο ἀπ' τὸν Ἅγιο Τάφο!



## Πρώτη ή Θεοτόκος Είδε τὸν Ἀναστάνα Κύριο

*Ἀπόσπασμα ὁμιλίας τοῦ Ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ.*

**Μ**υροφόρες εἶναι οἱ γυναῖκες ποὺ ἀκολουθοῦσαν τὸν Κύριο μαζί με τὴ Μητέρα Του, ἔμειναν μαζί της κατὰ τὴν ὥρα τοῦ σωτηριώδους Πάθους καὶ φρόντισαν νὰ ἀλείψουν με μύρα τὸ Σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου.

Ὅταν δηλαδὴ ὁ Ἰωσήφ καὶ ὁ Νικόδημος ζήτησαν κι' ἔλαβαν ἀπὸ τὸ Πιλάτο τὸ Δεσποτικὸ Σῶμα, τὸ κατέβασαν ἀπὸ τὸ Σταυρό, τὸ περιέβαλαν σὲ σινδόνια μαζί με ἐκλεκτὰ ἀρώματα, τὸ τοποθέτησαν σὲ λαξευτὸ μνημεῖο κι' ἔβαλαν μεγάλη πέτρα πάνω στὴ θύρα τοῦ μνημείου, παρευρίσκονταν θεωρώντας κατὰ τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴ Μάρκο ἢ Μαρία ἢ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία ποὺ καθόταν ἀπέναντι τοῦ τάφου. Ἄλλη Μαρία ἐννοοῦσε ὅπωςδήποτε τὴ Θεομήτορα. Δὲν παρευρίσκονταν μόνο αὐτές, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλὲς ἄλλες γυναῖκες, ὅπως ἀναφέρει καὶ ὁ Λουκᾶς.

Ἡ Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου εἶναι ἀνανέωση τῆς ἀνθρώπινης φύσεως καὶ ἀνάπλαση καὶ ἐπάνοδος πρὸς τὴν ἀθάνατη ζωὴ τοῦ πρώτου Ἀδάμ ποὺ καταβροχθίσθηκε ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατο λόγω τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου ἐπανήλθε πρὸς τὴ γῆ ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποία πλάσθηκε.

Ὅπως λοιπὸν ἐκείνον στὴν ἀρχὴ δὲν εἶδε τὸν Ἀδάμ κανεὶς ἄνθρωπος νὰ πλάττεται καὶ νὰ παίρνει ζωὴ, ἀφοῦ δὲν ὑπῆρχε κανεὶς ἄνθρωπος ἐκείνη τὴν ὥρα, μετὰ δὲ τὴ λήψη τῆς πνοῆς ζωῆς με θεῖο ἐμφύσημα πρώτη ἀπὸ ὅλους τὸν εἶδε μία γυναῖκα, γιατί μετὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὸν πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἦταν ἡ Εὐά. Ἐτσι τὸν δεύτερο Ἀδάμ, δηλαδὴ τὸν Κύριο, ὅταν ἀναστήθηκε ἀπὸ τοὺς νεκρούς, κανεὶς ἄνθρωπος δὲν τὸν εἶδε, ἀφοῦ δὲν παρευρισκόταν κανεὶς δικός Του καὶ οἱ στρατιῶτες ποὺ φύλαγαν τὸ μνήμα ταραγμένοι ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο, εἶχαν γίνε σὰν νεκροί μετὰ δὲ τὴν Ἀνάσταση, πρώτη ἀπ' ὅλους τὸν εἶδε μία γυναῖκα.

Ἐπάρχει κάτι συννεκασμένο ἀπὸ τοὺς εὐαγγελιστές, τὸ ὁποῖο θὰ ἀποκαλύψω στὴν ἀγάπη σας. Πραγματικὰ πρώτη ἀπ' ὅλους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὅπως ἦταν σωστὸ καὶ δίκαιο, εἶδε τὸν Ἀναστάνα καὶ ἀπόλαυσε τὴν ὁμιλία Του καὶ ἄγγισε τὰ Ἄχραντα Πόδια Του, ἔστω καὶ ἂν οἱ εὐαγγελιστές δὲν τὸ λέγουν φανερά, μὴ θέλοντας νὰ φέρουν ὡς μάρτυρες τὴ μητέρα, γιὰ νὰ μὴ δώσουν ἀφορμὴ ὑποψίας στοὺς ἀπίστους. Ἐπειδὴ τώρα ὁμιλῶ πρὸς πιστοὺς θὰ διευκρινίσω τὰ σχετικὰ.

Ἀφοῦ λοιπὸν οἱ μυροφόρες ἐτοίμασαν τὰ μύρα καὶ τὰ ἀρώματα, κατὰ τὴν ἐντολή, τὸ Σάββατο ἠσύχασαν. Ὁ Λουκᾶς ἀναφέρει: «*Τὴ πρώτη τῆς ἑβδομάδος, ὄρθρο βαθύ, ἦρθαν στὸ μνήμα ἢ Μαρία Μαγδαληνὴ, ἢ τοῦ*

*Ἰακώβου, ἢ Ἰωάννα καὶ ἄλλες μαζί τους.*» Ὁ Ματθαῖος λέγει: «*Ἀργὰ τὸ Σάββατο, ξημερώνοντας τὴν πρώτη τῆς ἑβδομάδος καὶ δυὸ μυροφόρες προσήλθαν.*» Ὁ Ἰωάννης λέγει: «*Τὸ πρωὶ, ἐνῶ ἦταν σκοτεινὰ καὶ ἦταν μόνο ἢ Μαρία Μαγδαληνὴ.*» Ἐνῶ ὁ Μάρκος ἀναφέρει: «*Πολὺν πρωὶ τῆς πρώτης ἑβδομάδος καὶ ἦταν τρεῖς οἱ προσερχόμενες μυροφόρες.*»

Πρώτη τῆς ἑβδομάδος ποὺ ἀναφέρουν ὅλοι οἱ εὐαγγελιστές εἶναι ἡ Κυριακὴ. Ἀργὰ τὸ βράδυ, ὄρθρο βαθύ, πολὺν πρωὶ καὶ πρωὶ ἰσκοτεινὰ ἀκόμη, ὀνομάζουν τὸ χρόνο γύρω ἀπὸ τὸν ὄρθρο, ἀναμικτὸ ἀπὸ φῶς καὶ σκοτάδι. Φαίνονται βέβαια νὰ διαφωνοῦν κάπως οἱ εὐαγγελιστές μεταξύ τους, τόσο γιὰ τὴν ὥρα, ὅσο καὶ γιὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸ τῶν γυναικῶν.

Οἱ μυροφόρες ἦταν πολλὲς καὶ ἦλθαν στὸν τάφο ὄχι μία φορὰ, ἀλλὰ καὶ δυὸ καὶ τρεῖς φορές, συντροφιά μὲν, ἀλλ' ὄχι οἱ ἴδιες. Κατὰ τὸν ὄρθρο μὲν ὅλες, ἀλλ' ὄχι τὸν ἴδιο χρόνο ἀκριβῶς.

Ὅπως ἐγὼ ὑπολογίζω καὶ συνάγω ἀπὸ ὅλους τοὺς εὐαγγελιστές, πρώτη ἀπ' ὅλους ἦλθε στὸν τάφο τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἢ Θεοτόκος, ἔχοντας μαζί της τὴ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία. Τὸ συμπεραίνω ἀπὸ τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴ Ματθαῖο. Γιατὶ λέγει, «*ἦλθε ἢ Μαγδαληνὴ Μαρία καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία*», ποὺ ἦταν ὅπωςδήποτε ἢ Θεομήτωρ, «*γιὰ νὰ δοῦν τὸν τάφο. Καὶ ἔγινε μεγάλος σεισμός, γιατί ἄγγελος Κυρίου ἦλθε, σήκωσε τὴ μεγάλη πέτρα ἀπὸ τὸ μνημεῖο καὶ κάθησε πάνω της. Ἦταν ἢ μορφὴ του σὰν ἀστραπὴ καὶ τὸ ἐνδυμὰ του λευκὸ σὰν χιόνι καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ φόβο τοὺς ταραχθήκαν οἱ φύλακες καὶ ἔγιναν σὰν νεκροί.*»

Νομίζω ὅτι γιὰ τὴ Θεοτόκο ἀνοίχθηκε ὁ ζωηφόρος τάφος (γιατὶ γι' αὐτὴ πρώτη καὶ μέσω αὐτῆς ἔχουν ἀνοιχθεῖ σ' ἐμᾶς ὅλα, εἴτε στὸν οὐρανὸ εἴτε στὴ γῆ)· γι' αὐτὴν ἄστραψε ὁ ἄγγελος νὰ δεῖ τὸν ἄδειο τάφο καὶ τὸ μέγα θαῦμα τῶν ἐνταφίων χωρὶς τὸν Ἀναστάνα Κύριο. Καὶ προφανῶς ὁ εὐαγγελιστὴς αὐτὸς ἄγγελος ἦταν ὁ Ἀρχάγγελος Γαβριήλ, ποὺ ἀνάφερε τὴν Ἀνάσταση δείχνοντας τὸ κενὸ μνημεῖο καὶ λέγοντας στὶς μυροφόρες νὰ τὴν ἀναγγείλουν στοὺς μαθητές. Καὶ τότε «*ἐξήλθαν με φόβο καὶ χαρὰ μεγάλη*».

Ἐγὼ νομίζω καὶ πάλι ὅτι τὸν φόβο ἔχει ἀκόμη ἢ Μαρία Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ οἱ ἄλλες γυναῖκες, ἐνῶ ἢ Θεομήτωρ ἀπέκτησε τὴ μεγάλη χαρὰ, γιατί κατενόησε τὰ χαρμόσινα λόγια τοῦ Ἀρχαγγέλου τὰ ὁποῖα πίστευσε καὶ ἀπὸ τὰ τόσα ἀξιόπιστα γεγονότα, τοῦ σεισμοῦ, τῆς μετάθεσης τοῦ λίθου, τοῦ ἄδειου τάφου, τῶν ἄλυτων ἐνταφίων, ἀδειανῶν ἀπὸ τὸ Σῶμα.

Καὶ τέλος πρώτη ἢ Θεοτόκος ἀναγνώρισε τὸν Ἀναστάνα καὶ προσέπεσε στὰ Πόδια Του καὶ ἔγινε ἀπόστολος πρὸς τοὺς Ἀποστόλους, ὅταν ἐπιστρέφοντας ἐμφανίσθηκε ὁ Ἰησοῦς στὶς μυροφόρες, λέγοντας τὸ: «**Χαίρετε**».

## Τὸ Ἀμφισβητούμενον Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο

Τάσου Γριτσόπουλου, Ἱστορικοῦ – Συγγραφέως.

**Φεγγαράκι μου λαμπρό,  
φέγγε μου νὰ περπατῶ,  
νὰ πηγαίνω στὸ Σχολεῖο,  
νὰ μαθαίνω γράμματα,  
γράμματα σπουδάγματα,  
τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ πράγματα...**

**Ο**ρθῶς ἀμφισβητεῖται λειτουργία Κρυφοῦ Σχολείου. Διότι δὲν μαρτυρεῖται στὶς πηγές, ἀφοῦ μάλιστα οἱ Τούρκοι δὲν ἀπαγόρευαν τὴν λειτουργία σχολείων μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν. Ἀλλὰ καὶ φανερῶν σχολείων λειτουργία κατὰ τὸν 15<sup>ον</sup> καὶ 16<sup>ον</sup> αἰώνα, ἐκτὸς τῆς Πατριαρχικῆς Σχολῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως δὲν μαρτυρεῖται.

Ἄν λειτούργησε Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο, ποῦ, ἀπὸ πότε καὶ ἀκόμη ποιὸς ἦταν ὁ φορέας λειτουργίας σχολείων κατὰ τὴν περίοδο τῆς δουλείας τοῦ Ἑθνους, εἶναι προβλήματα, ποὺ συνεξετάζονται καὶ κακῶς ἀπομονώνεται καὶ καταδικάζεται ἀμειλικτα τὸ Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο.

Αἰφνιδιάσθη τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν Ἑθνος τὸ 1453 καὶ μὲ τὰ γεγονότα ποὺ ἀκολούθησαν σχεδὸν διελύθη. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία στήριξε τὸ Ἑθνος. Ἡ ἀπάνθρωπη βία τῶν κατακτητῶν καὶ ὁ πανικὸς τῶν ὑπόδουλων μὲ τὴν ἀναστάτωση τῆς ζωῆς δημιούργησαν κῦμα φυγῆς. Τὸ ὀλιγότερο ποὺ εἶχαν νὰ σκεφτοῦν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἦταν

λειτουργία σχολείων. Οἱ κατακτητὰι παρεχώρησαν Προνόμιον, Ἑθνάρχης ὁ πρῶτος Πατριάρχης Γεννάδιος Σχολάριος, ἴδρυσεν τὴν Πατριαρχικὴ Σχολή. Στὶς Ἐπαρχίες σιωπή, φόβος, ἀπελπισία. Συνοψίζει ὁ Ἐθνικὸς Ποιητῆς, ὅλα τὰ ἴσχυε ἢ φοβέρεα καὶ τὰ πλάκωσε ἢ σκλαβιά.

Ἐνῶ συνεπληρώνοντο 50 χρόνια ὑποταγῆς, ἡ Ἐκκλησία ἔλαβε μία μεγάλη ἀπόφαση. Εἶναι γνωστὴ ἡ Τοπικὴ Συνόδος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως 1593. Παρόντες οἱ Πατριάρχες Ἱερεμίας Β΄ ὁ Τρανός, Ἱεροσολύμων Σωφρόνιος Καρκαλᾶς, Δημητσανίτης, τρῶφιμος τῆς Μονῆς Φιλοσόφου, Ἀλεξανδρείας Μελέτιος ὁ Πηγᾶς, Ἀντιοχείας Ἰωακείμ, πλῆθος ἀρχιερέων. Ἄν ὅλοι αὐτοὶ ἦσαν σπουδασμένοι καὶ ἐφοίτησαν σὲ διάφορα σχολεῖα φανερά, δὲν παραδίδεται, πάντως γράμματα ἐγνώριζαν καὶ τοῦτο ποιὸς μπορεῖ ν' ἀμφισβητήσει;

Στὸν ζ' κανόνα αὐτῆς τῆς Συνόδου περιέχεται ἡ ἀπόφασις. Κάθε ἐπίσκοπος στὴν ἐπαρχία του ὄφειλε νὰ

φροντίζη καὶ ν' ἀναλαμβάνη τὴν ἀπαιτούμενη δαπάνη, γιὰ νὰ διδάσκονται τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἱερὰ γράμματα, Ἀλλὰ καὶ νὰ παρακινῶνται ὅσοι ἐπιθυμοῦν νὰ μαθαίνουν καὶ δὲν ἔχουν τὰ μέσα.

Ἀσφαλῶς, τὴν ἐπομένη τῆς ἀποφάσεως δὲν ἦταν στὶς ἐπαρχίες ἔτοιμα διδασκῆριο, διδάσκαλοι, μαθηταί, βιβλία, κλπ. Δὲν ὑπῆρχαν προφανῶς αὐτὰ προηγουμένως, ἄλλως τε πρὸς τὴν ἀπόφασιν, ἂν ὑπῆρχαν. Ἀλλὰ δὲν ὑπῆρχαν καὶ προηγουμένως, πρὸ τῆς συμφορᾶς, κοινὰ καὶ δημόσια καὶ φανερὰ σχολεῖα, γιὰ τὴν Παιδείαν κατοικοῦσε στὰ μοναστήρια καὶ ἐκεῖ λειτουργοῦσαν πάσης κατηγορίας παιδευτήρια καὶ ἐργαστήρια καὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἰδρύματα.

Τὸ 1593 ἐδόθη σύνθημα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας πρὸς τοὺς ἐπισκόπους. Μέχρι τότε τὴν ἐγένετο καὶ τὴν ἀκόμῃ ἐγένετο καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀπόφασιν μέχρις ὅτου φέρη ἢ ἔρουναι στοιχεῖα λειτουργίας φανερῶν σχολείων;

Ἀνατρέχοντας στὰ διάφορα δεδομένα τῆς ὑπόδουλης ζωῆς, ἃς ποῦμε μετὰ τὴν πρώτη εἰκοσαετία ἀπὸ τὴν ἐθνικὴν συμφορὰ καὶ μὲ πλήρη ἐγκαθίδρυση τοῦ Ὀθωμανικοῦ κράτους, θὰ διαπιστώσωμε—ὅτι ἐφ' ὅσον παρέμενε στὴν ζωὴ ἡ παλαιὰ λογία φρουρὰ ἀνὰ τὴν ὑπόδουλη Ἑλλάδα καὶ ναοὶ λειτουργοῦσαν καὶ συνήθεις συναλλαγῆς καὶ γραπτὴ ἐπικοινωνία δὲν ἔλειψαν. Ὑστερα τὴν ἐγένετο, δὲν ὑπῆρχε κανεὶς ἀγράμματος; Οἱ Ἱερεῖς λειτουργοῦσαν



ἐμπειρικῶς. Τὰ σωζόμενα δικαιопρακτικὰ ἔγγραφα, ἤδη πρὸ τοῦ τέλους τοῦ 15<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνος καὶ μετὰ ἀπ' αὐτὸν ποιὸς τὰ συνέτασσε καὶ οἱ μάρτυρες ποῦ θέτουν τὴν ὑπογραφή τῶν πῶς τὸ κατόρθωναν;

Ὅμολογουμένως ἡ περίοδος ἦταν ἢ χειρότερα ἀπὸ ὅσες ἐτέρασε τὸ Ἑθνος μας.

Ἐν τούτοις ἀπὸ καταβολῆς Βυζαντίου τὰ μοναστήρια ἦσαν ἐστῆς μελετῶν καὶ φιλανθρωπίας. Ἐκεῖ ἀνεδείχθησαν κωδικογράφοι καὶ ἀγιογράφοι καὶ σχεδιασταί. Ὑπέστησαν τὴν βίαιαν θύελλα τοῦ κατακτητοῦ. Μερικὰ ἐσώθησαν καὶ ἄλλα ἐγκαίρως ἀναδιωργανώθησαν. Ἦταν πολλὸ φυσικόν νὰ προστρέξουν οἱ ταλαιπωρούμενοι Χριστιανοὶ γιὰ παρηγοριά. Καὶ τὰ παιδιὰ γιὰ νὰ γλυτώσουν ἀπὸ τὸ φοβερὸν παιδομάζωμα. Καὶ ὅσοι ἤθελαν νὰ γίνουν ἱερεῖς. Καὶ ὅσοι ἤθελαν νὰ τοὺς διαβάσῃ ἓνας μοναχὸς γράμμα ξενιτεμένου. Καὶ Ἀκολουθίαι παρακολουθοῦσαν καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα συλ-

λάβιζαν και ἀπεστήθιζαν και λέξεις, φράσεις, περιόδους ἐμάθαιναν νὰ διαβάξουν, ἀλλὰ και νὰ γράφουν. Αὐτὰ ποίος μπορεῖ νὰ τ' ἀμφισβήτηση;

Γιὰ τὴν ἴδρυση και λειτουργία Κρυφῶν Σχολείων ἐξεδόθησαν τόσο σουλτανικά διατάγματα ὅσα ἐξεδόθησαν και γιὰ τὰ φανερά Σχολεῖα. Κανείς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἰσχυρισθῆ ὅτι ἰδρύθησαν ἢ ἐλειτούργησαν οἰουδήποτε τύπου σχολεῖα στὰ μοναστήρια και ἔφεραν τὸν τίτλο Κρυφὰ Σχολεῖα.

Ἀλλὰ κανείς δὲν δικαιούται ν' ἀμφισβήτηση ὅτι μοναχοὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ἐξεταζόμενη χρονικὴ περίοδο ἦταν λόγοι και κατέλαβαν ἀρχιερατικές ἐδρες και ἔγιναν Πατριάρχες. Βασικὸ και κλασσικὸ παράδειγμα ἢ μονὴ Φιλοσόφου τῆς Δημητσάνας, ἢ ὁποῖα ἔδωκε ἀπὸ τοὺς κόλπους τῆς σειράς Πατριαρχῶν ἀκριβῶς αὐτὴν τὴν ἐποχὴ και σειρά ἀνωτάτων κληρικῶν σὲ καταπληκτικὴ συνέχεια ἀπὸ τὰ μέσα τοῦ 16<sup>ου</sup> αἰῶνος και ὕστερα, μετὰ τὸν πρῶτον μαρτυρούμενον Οἰκουμενικὸν Πατριάρχην Διονύσιον Α' (1466-1472). Ὁ λαός, ποὺ ἔβλεπε ἢ ἐμάθαινε πὼς σ' αὐτὸ τὸ μοναστήρι συνεχίζετο ἢ μακρὰ πρότερα παιδευτικὴ παράδοσις, κάποια στιγμὴ ὠνόμασε αὐτὸ τὸν μοναστηριακὸν χώρον Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο. Δὲν μπορεῖ κανείς νὰ βεβαίωση ὅτι τὸ τοπωνύμιον ἐγεννήθη στοῦ Φιλοσόφου, στὸ Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο. Ἀλλὰ τὸ πράγμα ἐπανελήφθη και σ' ἄλλα μὲ παρόμοια περίπτωσι μοναστήρια. Ἴσως κάτὶ ἤξερε ὁ Ἑλληνικὸς λαός. Πάντως κατὰ τὴν μετεπαναστατικὴν περίοδο ἴσως τὸ τοπωνύμιον ὑπῆρχε.

Εἶναι βέβαιον, ὅτι ἀπὸ τοὺς λογάδες τοῦ ἐλευθέρου Ἑθνους ἐδημιουργήθη και μᾶλλον ἐκαλλιεργήθη ἢ Ἑθνικὴ Παράδοσις σὲ πανελλήνια ἔκτασι, ὅτι τὸ Ἑθνος δὲν ἔμεινε ἀναλφάβητο κατὰ τὰ δύσκολα χρόνια χάρις στὰ Κρυφὰ Σχολεῖα, ποὺ δὲν ἐνεφανίσθησαν ποτὲ μὲ συγκεκριμένη λειτουργικὴ μορφή. Βέβαιον εἶναι, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ἐναντίον τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐχθρικὴ ἐπίθεσι τοῦ Γερμανοῦ Φαλμεράνερ, εἶχε ἐκσλαβισθῆ, ἐξηγέρθη ἢ Ἑλληνικὴ—και ἢ ξένη ἀκολουθῶς—ἐπιστήμη, γιὰ ν' ἀποδείξῃ τὴν συνεχὴ και ἀδιάκοπη παρουσία τῆς Ἑλλάδος στὴν Ἱστορία μὲ ἀδιάσειστα ἐπιχειρήματα. Ἀπόηχος τῆς δικαιολογημένης ἐκείνης ἀντεπιθέσεως τῆς διανοούμενης Ἑλλάδος φαίνεται πὼς ὑπῆρξε και τὸ γνωστὸν ποῖημα τοῦ Πολέμη «Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο» και ὁ περίφημος πίναξ τοῦ Γκύζη «Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο». Ἄν ἢ ἐμφάνισις ἐνὸς Ποιητοῦ και ἐνὸς Ζωγράφου στὸν γενικώτερον συναγεμῶ ἐπιστήμης και λαοῦ, ἔγινε κατὰ παραγγελίαν τῶν κατασκευαστῶν λειτουργίας Κρυφοῦ Σχολεῖου, ὅπως ὑποστηρίζεται δὲν ἀποδεικνύεται ὅσον πιστοῦται ὅτι ὁ ποιητὴς και ὁ καλλιτέχνης ἀπηχεῖ ζωντανὴ Παράδοσι τοῦ Ἑθνους.

Τὰ γεννώμενα προβλήματα δὲν ἐξιχνιάζονται μὲ δογματικὴς καταδίκες και μὲ ἐνθουσιώδεις θαυμασμούς. Τὸ γιὰ αὐτὰ τὰ ἄτυπα σχολεῖα τῆς πρώτης περιόδου δουλείας ἀποκαλοῦνται Κρυφὰ δὲν ἔχει ἀνάγκην ἀποδείξε-

ως, γιὰτὶ δὲν λογοδοτεῖ ὁ Λαός, δημιουργὸς ἐνὸς τοπωνυμίου. Ὡστόσο ὅμως αὐτὴ ἢ ψυχολογικὴ φοβία ἐνὸς καταποντισμένου λαοῦ μετὰ τὴν ὑποταγὴν τοῦ στοὺς βαρβάρους ἔχει τὸν λόγο τῆς και ὡς πραγματικὴ κατὰστασις ἐναντι τρομοκρατῶν και ὡς ποιητικὴ ἔκφρασις, ὁποτεδήποτε και ἂν ἔγινε ἔκφρασις.

Διὸ λόγοι ὑπάρχουν. Πρῶτον ὅτι σὲ μεγάλον βαθμὸ οἱ κάποιες ἐλευθερίες τοῦ Προνομίου Μωάμεθ τοῦ Πορθητοῦ πρὸς τὸ ὑπόδουλον Ἑθνος μὲ τρομερὰ ἀνταλλάγματα εἶχαν κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον θεωρητικὸν χαρακτήρα, συνωδεύτο μάλιστα ἀπὸ τόσους περιορισμούς, ὥστε ἐξεμηδενίζοντο. Νὰ λειτουργοῦν οἱ ναοί, ἀλλὰ νὰ μὴ ψάλλουν μεγαλοφώνως, νὰ μὴ κτυποῦν δυνατὰ καμπάνες, νὰ μὴ ἀνάβουν ζωηρὰ φῶτα και τὰ παράθυρα νὰ εἶναι πολὺ μικρὰ. Οἱ ἄδειες ἐπισκευῆς ναῶν δὲν εἶχαν ἰσχὺν χωρὶς ἐξαγορὰ τῶν περιφερειακῶν ὀργάνων (ἀργυρώνητοι οἱ Τοῦρκοι, τοῦτο ἦτο κανὼν). Τὸ Προνόμιον δὲν ὑπάρχει ἐνδείξεις ὅτι περιελάμβανε δικαίωμα λειτουργίας σχολείων. Ἴσως τὸ δικαίωμα ἢ Ἐκκλησία τὸ ἀπέκτησε μετὰ τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ 1593 μόνῃ τῆς.

Ὁ ἄλλος λόγος χαρακτηρίζει τὴν ἠθικὴν πλευρὰ τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ζωῆς. Κάποια στιγμὴ ἢ λαϊκὴ εὐαισθησία παρήγαγε ἓνα τρυφερὸ ποιημάτιον, πασίγνωστον, τὸ «Φεγγαράκι», πρὸς τὸ ὁποῖον στρέφεται ὁ νέος νὰ φέγγῃ, γιὰ νὰ περπατᾷ, νὰ πηγαίνῃ στὸ σχολεῖο, νὰ μαθαίνει γράμματα. Σύλληψις τοῦ στιχοῦργοῦ εἶναι κίνησις σχεδὸν συνωμοτικὴ, νυκτερινή, ἃς ποῦμε Κρυφή. Τὸ γιὰτὶ νύκτα, δὲν σχολιάζεται. Σχολιάζεται ὅμως τὸ ὅτι τὸ «Φεγγαράκι» δὲν εἶναι δημιούργημα λογίου, εἶναι λαϊκὸ, δὴλ. **προῖον πολλῶν**, ὅπως ὅλα τὰ λαϊκὰ πνευματικὰ δημιουργήματα ὁμαδικὰ και κατὰ παράδοσιν. Δὲν βάλλεται τὸ «Φεγγαράκι» ἀπὸ τοὺς διώκτες τοῦ Κρυφοῦ Σχολεῖου, γιὰτὶ τὸ παραδίδει ξένος φιλέλλην συλογεύς, ὁ Πάσσωβ. **Καὶ φαίνεται πὼς ἔχει κάποια σπουδαία—καὶ ἴσως ἄκρως στενὴ—σχέσι τὸ «Φεγγαράκι» μὲ τὸ Κρυφὸ Σχολεῖο...**



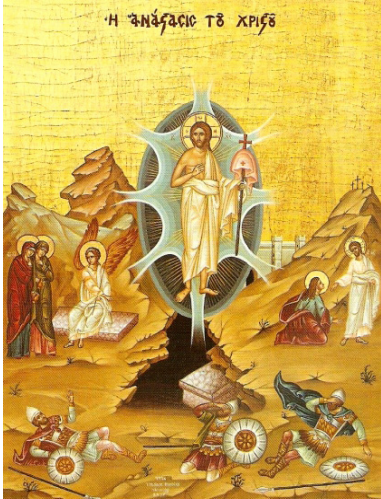
**Μ**ὴ ἀναβάλλῃς ποτὲ τὸν καιρὸν εἰς τὴν ἀπόκτησιν τῶν ἀρετῶν οὔτε ἡμέρας οὔτε ἐβδομάδας οὔτε μῆνας οὔτε χρόνους. Ἀλλὰ σχεδόν, πάντοτε ἀγωνίζου, ὡσὰν νὰ ἐγεννήθῃς τώρα, και ὡς νέος στρατιώτης, πολέμα διηνεκῶς και περιπάτει εἰς τὸ ὕψος τῆς τελειότητος τῶν ἀρετῶν. Καὶ μὴ σταθῆς κἂν μηδεμίαν στιγμὴν. Διότι, τὸ νὰ σταθῆς εἰς τὸν δρόμον τῶν ἀρετῶν και τῆς τελειότητος, δὲν εἶναι τὸ νὰ λάβῃς ἀναπνοὴν και δύναμιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ νὰ στραφῆς ὀπίσω ἢ νὰ ἀδυνατήσῃς περισσότερον.

**Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Σιναΐτου**

## Νὰ «Σκιρτᾶς» ἀπὸ Χαρά!

**Σοὺ εὐχομαί νὰ «σκιρτᾶς» ἀπὸ χαρά, κοπάζοντας πίσω σου τὸ χάος ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο μᾶς πέρασε ὁ Ἀναστάς Κύριος...**

*Λόγοι Ἁγίου Γέροντος Πορφυρίου, ἀπὸ τὸν Γεώργιο Παπαζάχο, καθηγητὴ Ἱατρικῆς, ἀναδημοσίευση ἀπὸ τὸ περιοδικὸ «Σύναξη», Πάσχα 1994.*



Ἀντὶ ἄλλης Πασχάλιας εὐχῆς θὰ σᾶς μεταφέρω τὰ χαρμόσινα ἀναστάσιμα βιώματα τοῦ μακαριστοῦ μου Γέροντα Πορφυρίου, ὅπως τὰ ἔζησα μία Τρίτη τῆς Διακαινησίμου στὸ κελᾶκι του.

Πῆγα νὰ τὸν δῶ σὰν γιατρός. Μετὰ τὴν καρδιολογικὴ ἐξέταση καὶ τὸ συνηθισμένο καρδιογράφημα, μὲ

παρακάλεσε νὰ μὴν φύγω. Κάθισα στὸ σκαμνάκι κοντὰ στὸ κρεβάτι του. Ἐλαμπε ἀπὸ χαρὰ τὸ πρόσωπό του. Μὲ ρώτησε:

-Ἐρεῖς τὸ τροπᾶριο ποὺ λέει «Θανάτου ἐορτάζομεν νέκρωσιν...»;

-Ναὶ Γέροντα, τὸ ξέρω.

-Πές το.

Ἄρχισα γρήγορα-γρήγορα. «Θανάτου ἐορτάζομεν νέκρωσιν, Ἄδου τὴν καθαίρεσιν, ἄλλης βιοτῆς, τῆς αἰωνίου, ἀπαρχὴν καὶ σκιρτῶντες ὑμνοῦμεν τὸν αἴτιο, τὸν μόνον εὐλογητὸν τῶν πατέρων Θεὸν καὶ ὑπερένδοξον».

-Τὸ κατάλαβες;

-Ἀσφαλῶς τὸ κατάλαβα. Νόμισα πὼς μὲ ρωτᾷει γιὰ τὴν ἐρμηνεία του. Ἐκανε μία ἀπότομη κίνηση τοῦ χεριοῦ του καὶ μοῦ εἶπε:

-Τίποτε δὲν κατάλαβες βρὲ Γιωργάκη! Ἐσὺ τὸ εἶπες σὰν βιαστικὸς ψάλτης... Ἄκου τὶ φοβερὰ πράγματα λέει αὐτὸ τὸ τροπᾶριο. Ὁ Χριστὸς μὲ τὴν Ἀνάστασή Του δὲν μᾶς πέρασε ἀπέναντι ἀπὸ ἓνα ποτάμι, ἀπὸ ἓνα ρῆγμα γῆς, ἀπὸ μία διώρυγα, ἀπὸ μία λίμνη ἢ ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐρυθρὰ θάλασσα. Μᾶς πέρασε ἀπέναντι ἀπὸ ἓνα χάος, ἀπὸ μία ἄβυσσο, ποὺ ἦταν ἀδύνατο νὰ τὴν περάσει ὁ ἄνθρωπος μόνος. Αἰῶνες περιμένε αὐτὸ τὸ πέρασμα, αὐτὸ τὸ Πάσχα. Ὁ Χριστὸς μᾶς πέρασε ἀπὸ... τὸν θάνατο, στὴ Ζωή. Γι' αὐτὸ σήμερον «Θανάτου ἐορτάζομεν νέκρωσιν, ἄδου τὴν καθαίρεσιν». Χάθηκε ὁ θάνατος. Τὸ κατάλαβες; Σήμερον γιορτάζουμε τὴν «ἀπαρχὴν» τῆς «ἄλλης βιοτῆς, τῆς αἰωνίου» ζωῆς κοντὰ Του.

Μίλαγε μὲ ἐνθουσιασμὸ καὶ βεβαιότητα. Συγκινήθηκε. Σιώπησε λίγο καὶ συνέχισε πιὸ δυνατὰ:

-Τώρα δὲν ὑπάρχει χάος, θάνατος καὶ νέκρωση, Ἄδης. Τώρα ὅλα χαρὰ, χάρις καὶ Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας.

Ἀναστήθηκε μαζί Του ἡ ἀνθρώπινη φύση. Τώρα μπορούμε καὶ μεῖς νὰ ἀναστηθοῦμε, νὰ ζήσουμε αἰῶνια κοντὰ Του... Τὶ εὐτυχία ἡ Ἀνάσταση! «Καὶ σκιρτῶντες ὑμνοῦμεν τὸν αἴτιον». Ἔχεις δεῖ τὰ κασικᾶκια τώρα τὴν ἄνοιξη νὰ χοροπηδοῦν πάνω στὸ γρασίδι, νὰ τρῶνε λίγο ἀπὸ τὴ μάνα τους καὶ νὰ χοροπηδοῦν ξανά; Αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ σκίρτημα, τὸ χοροπήδημα.

Ἔτσι ἔπρεπε κι ἐμεῖς νὰ χοροπηδοῦμε ἀπὸ χαρὰ ἀνείπωτη γιὰ τὴν Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ τὴν δική μας. Διέκοψε πάλι τὸ λόγο του. Ἀνέπνεα μία εὐφρόσυνη ἀτμόσφαιρα.

-Μπορῶ νὰ σοῦ δώσω μία συμβουλή; συνέχισε. Σὲ κάθε θλίψη σου, σὲ κάθε ἀποτυχία σου νὰ συγκεντρώνεσαι μισὸ λεπτὸ στὸν ἑαυτό σου καὶ νὰ λές ἀργά-ἀργά αὐτὸ τὸ τροπᾶριο. Θὰ βλέπεις ὅτι τὸ μεγαλύτερο πρᾶγμα στὴ ζωὴ σου—καὶ στὴ ζωὴ τοῦ κόσμου ὅλου—ἔγινε. Ἡ Ἀνάσταση τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡ σωτηρία μας. Καὶ θὰ συνειδητοποιεῖς ὅτι ἡ ἀναποδιὰ ποὺ σοῦ συμβαίνει εἶναι πολὺ μικρὴ γιὰ νὰ χαλάσει τὴ διάθεσή σου.

Μοῦ ἔσφιξε τὸ χέρι λέγοντας:

-Σοὺ εὐχομαί νὰ «σκιρτᾶς» ἀπὸ χαρὰ, κοιτάζοντας πίσω σου τὸ χάος ἀπὸ τὸ ὁποῖο μᾶς πέρασε ὁ Ἀναστάς Κύριος, «ὁ μόνος εὐλογητὸς τῶν Πατέρων»... Ψάλλε τώρα καὶ τὸ «Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη».



Ἐκεῖνος «κατέλυσε τῷ Σταυρῷ Του τὸν θάνατον», ἔκατεπάτησε διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τὸν θάνατον «χαρισάμενος ζωὴν τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι» ἀνοίξας ταυτοχρόνως τὴν ὁδὸν πρὸς τὴν αἰωνιότητα καὶ γεφυρώσας τὸ χάσμα μεταξὺ Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων. Ἐκτοτε ὁ θάνατος δὲν ἀποτελεῖ τὸ τρομερὸν προ-χριστιανικὸν γεγονός, οὔτε ὁ τάφος τὸ ἀνήλιον καὶ σκοτεινὸν ὑπόγειον, ἀλλὰ ἀποτελοῦν τὴν παρενθεσιν τῆς ζωῆς. Ἀποτελοῦν τὴν σύραγγα εἰς τὴν ὁποίαν θὰ καταδυθῆ μὲν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὄχι διὰ νὰ παραμείνῃ ἐντὸς αὐτῆς, ἀλλὰ διὰ νὰ ἐξέλθῃ δι' αὐτῆς εἰς μίαν παραδεισιακὴν κοιλάδα, ὅπου ἡ ζωὴ συνεχίζεται πολὺ καλύτερα καὶ ἀνώτερα. Δικαίως, λοιπόν, οἱ πιστοὶ κατὰ τὴν νύκταν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως, ἀναφωνοῦν ὅτι «ὁ Ἄδης ἐπικράνθη» καὶ «ποῦ σοῦ θάνατε τὸ κέντρον, ποῦ σοῦ ἄδη τὸ νίκος;». Δικαίως οἱ ἄνθρωποι περιμένουν μὲ κάποια ἀνυπομονησίαν τὸν ἐρχομὸν τῆς ἐορτῆς τοῦ Πάσχα, διότι κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν αὐτὴν ἔγινε «ἡ ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων» καὶ ἐδόθη εἰς τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος ἡ μεγάλη ὑπόσχεσις τῆς συμμετοχῆς του εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον ζωὴν καὶ τὴν μακαριότητα.

**Ἐξ ἀωνύμου Πασχαλινῆς ὁμιλίας**

## ST. MARY OF EGYPT: AN EXAMPLE & INSPIRATION FOR ALL

*Adapted from various sources and articles.*

*From the Editor: There are a few of the many saints of our Church whose life story direct us and shine hope and motivation for 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 1<sup>st</sup>) and once on the fifth Sunday of the 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 the desert and converted it 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 and, through her intercessions, may we all achieve the desired fruit of salvation.*

† † †

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.

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 a long 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 of 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 it as “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.

Today we see indeed, that this state of spirituality can indeed prevail to any of us, **as long as true prayer, humility, fasting and labor are applied.** We see this because we have before us this great example, this *spectacle*, our holy mother St. Mary of Egypt. She knew who Zosimas was from afar, and she also knew God’s will for Zosimas: to fulfill one last wish of hers that she would have the Mysteries the following year. St. Mary had become 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 years. She spent many years in great, terrible struggles after she had repented. She had lived a life of total and 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.

*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 years in the desert all 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.* (cf. 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 is 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 (cf. 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.* We read the great canon during Lent. (The complete Great Canon, and the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, is always read in the matins service for 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday of Great

Lent. This service is usually served Wednesday evening. Furthermore, St. Andrew compares Leah and Rachel to activity and contemplation. (St Andrew makes a reference to Gen 29:16-30,31:31-40: *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*—Clean Monday or the 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday of Great Lent: The Great Canon, Ode 4 *Troparia* 7, 8). He said, without these two you cannot be saved. This woman who anointed our Lord's feet, 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 (cf. 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. *Without it we cannot be saved.* Not 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 or 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. This is indeed the key to the Christian life: contemplating what God has done for you, and acting 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? (cf. 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 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). *But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant Instead, the church gives us the example of the 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.**



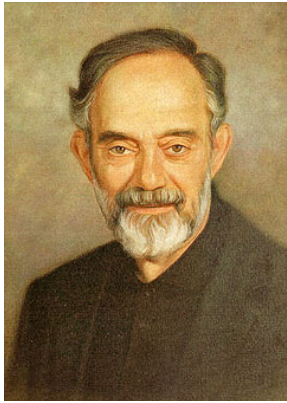
It's only in our voluntary crucifixion, denial, constraining that we come therefore to know in depth the unity of the God-Man, the Incarnation, and the Mystery and His bond to us, our unity to Him.

To know yourself is **much greater** than to see angels. But you will come to know yourself through suffering, through the Cross, and death on the Cross, by crucifixion. That which you come to know through suffering and crucifixion for the sake of the Kingdom (of God), for the sake of the love of our Saviour, that which you come to know on Golgotha, **never** will be obliterated. In the worst of sins, that experience and knowledge is right in the marrow of the bone. Therefore, it is so necessary to deny ourselves in a heroic spirit. We are to be crucified through the cutting (off) of the will, obedience, struggles, love of God, patience and long-suffering.

Holy Elder Joseph the Hesychast (+1959)

## ON DIVINE INSPIRATION

Source: "Patristic Theology," the University Lectures of Fr. John Romanides.



Today Protestants and Roman Catholics are under the impression that *God* gave Holy Scripture to the Church. This idea has so greatly influenced modern Orthodox thought that the Orthodox even agree with Protestants and Roman Catholics on this point. Moreover, Orthodox and Roman Catholics agree that God also gave Sacred Tradition to the Church. With respect

to Tradition, the Protestants are showing some signs that they are reconsidering their position.

But now the Orthodox Church has to face a certain paradox. When you read the Old Testament, the New Testament, and even writings from Tradition, you will run across opinions that science proved to be false at least 150 years ago, especially on account of the breakthroughs in research made by the exact sciences. Naturally, this creates a serious problem for someone who does not fully grasp what the Fathers mean when they speak about divine inspiration. This problem mainly applies to the study of the Bible.

In their tradition, the Franks (Roman Catholics, *Ed.*) followed Augustine in identifying revelation with the revelation by God of concepts to man. In fact, they identified revelation not only with concepts, but also with the expressions, that is, terms and words, that conveyed these concepts. But if you accept this opinion, then you have already subscribed to the so-called literal divine inspiration of the Bible. This means that God manifests Himself in order to dictate, as it were, expressions and concepts to the writers of the Bible. Once you adopt this train of thought, however, you inevitably reach the conclusion that God is really the author of the Bible rather than the prophets and evangelists. Since Western theology followed this way of thinking, the appearance of modern science created a serious problem when it overturned certain positions found in the Bible. It was as if science were proving that God is a liar, since He Himself had earlier dictated or said something else.

It is now a commonly held opinion that the work of divine inspiration is restricted exclusively to what is documented in the Bible. When we say *divine inspiration*, the Bible, the prophets, and the Apostles immediately come to mind. Now if you are also a conservative, you will bring to mind some ecumenical council outside of Holy Scripture, since a conservative Orthodox Christian believes that the decisions of the ecumenical councils are also divinely inspired.

If you are even more conservative, you will bring up the Church Fathers. If you are even more conservative still, you will point to canon law, the liturgical life, and even priestly robes and head coverings. In the last case, you are completely conservative. On a scale from 50 to 100, you have hit 100. You are one hundred percent conservative.

But what is important in all of this is that most believers suppose that divine inspiration extends over large segments and many facets of life in the Church, if not over the entirety of life in the Church. Contemporary Orthodox theology is quite confused on this point. There is confusion as to what divine inspiration is, what it means, and where it is found.

All Christians, Orthodox and heterodox alike, can agree that the Bible is divinely inspired. Of course, we are not looking at any definitions for divine inspiration or making any qualifications about which portions of the Bible are really divinely inspired. For the time being, we simply assert that Holy Scripture is divinely inspired.

Since Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, what Holy Scripture says holds true, including Christ's promise to His Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit Who would guide them into *all truth*. (Jn 16:3). So it is the person of Christ Who sends the Holy Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit Who guides into *all truth*. Nevertheless, the question is raised: to whom in particular does Christ give the Holy Spirit and whom in particular does the Holy Spirit guide into *the fullness of truth*?

The Roman Catholic answer to this question is that the Holy Spirit was originally given to the Apostles and that when they consecrated the bishops, the bishops also received the Holy Spirit. As for the priests, they also participate in the Holy Spirit after a fashion. This conviction of the Roman Catholics can be clearly seen in their service for the consecration of a bishop when the consecrating bishops say to the candidate being consecrated, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This gives the impression that the person being consecrated has lived his entire life until this time without the Holy Spirit Whom he now receives at the moment of his consecration.

There is no doubt that the act of interpreting the Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Who guides interpreters to interpret Holy Scripture correctly. But how does this guidance take place?

When medical scientists claim that a given drug treats a particular disease, they usually know from previous studies how that drug acts therapeutically within the human body. In every science, when we observe a specific phenomenon and say that something happens or takes place, we can usually determine what that something is. In our case, the question is: how does the Holy Spirit lead someone, whom does He lead, and of what does this leading consist.



Furthermore, some people say that when an ecumenical council decides something, that decision is infallible, because ecumenical councils are divinely inspired, and so forth. It is as though they want to force us to accept as an infallible teaching whatever an ecumenical council has decided and proclaimed. Of course, they are right. An ecumenical council is infallible. Yes, it teaches infallibly and contributes to our faith. But how did it become infallible? What makes it infallible? Why is it infallible? Why are its decisions infallible?

Modern Orthodox theology speaks a great deal about divine inspiration. But as far as I can tell from what I have read, Orthodox theologians talk about divine inspiration, but I have not found any description of this divine inspiration that they are discussing. We have already noted that the Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants agree that the Bible is divinely inspired. But what does divine inspiration mean? What characterizes the state that can be described as divinely inspired? And if this state survives somewhere, where does it survive? Someone may well say, so were the prophets and the Apostles the only human beings who were divinely inspired? After the Apostles, are there no more divinely inspired people? Do we have no divinely inspired texts outside of Holy Scripture? Do we possess no divinely inspired writings by other writers who were likewise divinely inspired? If our answer is yes, who are these divinely inspired people? And if they exist, how do we know that they are divinely inspired? We know that the prophets were divinely inspired. We similarly know that the Apostles were divinely inspired. Leaving the prophets and Apostles aside, who else was or is divinely inspired? Moreover, what are the different stages of this divine inspiration and how can they be distinguished? How does God inspire someone? How do we know that someone is inspired by God and not by the devil or by hallucinations?

When Christ said that He would give us the Holy Spirit Who will guide us into *all truth*, He was not speaking about ecumenical councils. He did not say that this would take place in the Church's ecumenical councils. This new teaching about the infallibility of the ecumenical councils is not contained within Holy Scripture. Christ simply said that the Holy Spirit is the Person Who will guide us into the fullness of the truth. Before saying this, however, He said, *If you have love for each other, I and my Father will*

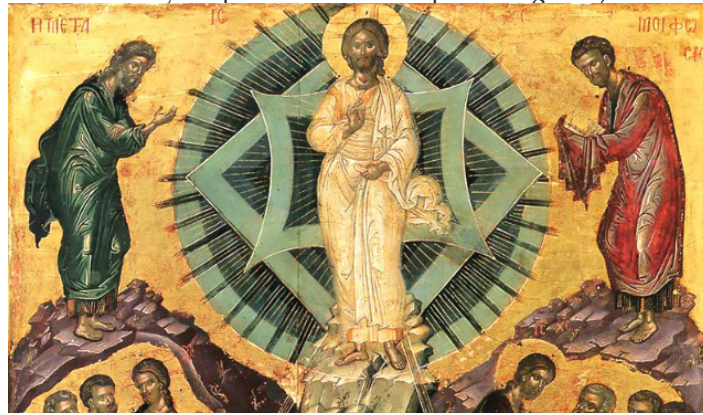
*come and dwell in you. (Jesus answered and said unto him. If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. Jn 14:23). He also said, now you see Me, but later you will not see Me. But if you have love, you will see Me. And the Spirit will come and dwell in you and will guide you to all truth. A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father. (Jn 16:16).*

Christ made all these statements in those chapters from St. John's Gospel that are read by the priests on Great Thursday and are quite basic. But why are these chapters so basic? Why is Christ's high priestly prayer so very important? Why did Jesus pray for the unity of the Apostles? What kind of union was He praying for? Was He praying perhaps for the union of the churches? What is this union? When Christ says that the Spirit *will guide you into all truth*, He certainly means for it to be understood within a certain context. What is that context?

Chapters 14-17 of the Gospel according to St. John go into great detail on the relationship between love and the Apostles' spiritual state. They also refer to the outcome of love. However, the fullest expression of love is revealed in the experience of *theosis*. *Theosis* is the fullest expression of love. This love that wells forth from the experience of *theosis* completely heals the human person.

When the Holy Spirit enters the human heart, this love is awakened and the believer becomes a dwelling place or temple of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in man, He brings with Him both the Father and the Son. Then, the entire Holy Trinity dwells in the believer. But how does the believer know that he has become *a temple of the Holy Spirit*? How is this determined? A genuine spiritual father can recognize when his spiritual child has received the Holy Spirit and become *a temple of the Holy Spirit* because there are specific Patristic criteria on this subject. What are they?

When Christ speaks about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church and on the faithful, He is not speaking in the abstract. This outpouring does **not** imply that He will send the Spirit to the entire Church in general. It also does not mean that the entire Church as a whole will receive the Spirit because of apostolic succession in the ordination of bishops and priests. This outpouring also does not mean that the Holy Spirit is somehow guaranteed to dwell permanently within the hierarchy on account



of the consecration of bishops, because the presence of a bishop does not guarantee that the Holy Spirit will be active in the midst of a council. Proof of this is the existence of many bishops within the Church who have been condemned as heretics. If these bishops possessed the Holy Spirit, they would not have fallen into heresy. Therefore, consecration to the episcopacy neither proves nor guarantees that the Holy Spirit dwells in a particular bishop. Hence, the grace of the episcopacy is not what leads the Church into *all truth*.

In this passage from St. John, Christ is speaking about something else. The Fathers clearly teach that in this passage Christ is referring to two states. In one section, He refers to *illumination* while in another He refers to *theosis*. When Christ says, *that all may be one* to whom is He referring? Naturally, He is speaking about the Apostles. He asks the Father that the Apostles become *one as We are one*. Note that Christ does not use the masculine form of the word ‘one’ (*eis*), but the neuter form (*en*). So how are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit one(*en*)?

The answer is that They are **united as one by glory** (energy) and **by essence**, but not in their Persons or *Hypostases*. They are not united through Their Persons, because the Fathers teach that with respect to each other, the Persons in the Holy Trinity are *akoinonita*—they cannot be merged or reduced to a common entity or person. What is common in the Holy Trinity is the essence and the natural energy of the essence or glory. How then can we become one(*en*) as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one (*en*)? What is this oneness (*en*) and what kind of oneness can we and the Holy Trinity share? What is this common trait? The answer is that we can also become one (*en*) in glory.

As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in glory, because They have glory in common, so we will likewise become one when we all participate in the glory of God. We will become one when all of us, or at least those of us who are accounted worthy, become partakers of the grace of the Holy Spirit and behold the uncreated Light. When someone is glorified, he becomes a communicant of the uncreated glory of the Holy Trinity. Then he is united with both the Holy Trinity and his fellow believers who are also united with the glory of God at that particular moment.

So at the mystical supper, Christ prays first of all for the purification of the believers, then for their *illumination*, and finally for their *theosis*. Consequently, when Christ says that the Holy Spirit will *guide you into all truth* He is not referring to all people in general, but specifically to those who will share in the experience of *theosis*. Only when a person reaches *theosis* will he be *guided into all truth*. Consequently, *all truth* (about God, but not about the created order) is known only in the experience of *theosis*.

All the Fathers have had this experience or similar experiences, since some of them were in a state of *illumination* while others were in a state of *theosis*. This is why they all approached Holy Scripture in precisely the same way and likewise interpreted fundamental passages in Holy Scripture and texts by the other Church Fathers in the same way.

What can we conclude from all of this? When the Fathers were in a state of *illumination* or *theosis*, were they or were they not divinely inspired? Naturally, they were divinely inspired. After all, what does divine inspiration mean? It means that someone is inspired by God in contrast to being inspired by the devil or demons. In the latter case, that person would be diabolically inspired or demonically inspired. In terms of divine inspiration, the highest form of revelation and the supreme illustration of *theosis* were experienced by the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. **Pentecost is the key to Orthodox theology regarding divine inspiration.** If you grasp the meaning of Pentecost in the Patristic tradition, at least you will know what theology is and what a theologian is, even if you are not a theologian. Just as you do not need to be a doctor to know what medicine is and what a doctor is, in the same way, you can know what theology is and what a theologian is and who is making theological remarks, without personally being a theologian or making theological remarks.



Does “contemporary” Orthodox theology enable us to detect a genuine doctor and to distinguish him from a quack? In other words, if we were to take a group of spiritual fathers today, would we be able to discover who is genuinely a spiritual father in a position to heal others? Or to put it differently, are we able today to spot a saint within a crowd? It seems difficult.

Today, Christians have reached the point where it is difficult to separate spiritual doctors from quacks. And we have reached this position because we have replaced experiential [empirical] Patristic theology with a textbook theology of dogmas that can be classified with Western [Papist] theology and that does not guide the soul to *purification* from the passions. We have driven out the hesychastic tradition and replaced it with [mere] dogmas and morality (or moralism).

**Protopresbyter John Romanides (+2001)**

## LET US PURIFY OUR SENSES

*From the Russian periodical "Kormchi," Moscow, April 13, 1913.*

*Let us purify our senses from everything earthly, and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say, Rejoice!, as we sing the hymn of victory.*

[Paschal Troparion]

† † †

The mysterious stillness of the Paschal night... the heart is seized by a familiar joy in anticipation of *meeting Christ*. The air is cool, the streets deserted... A gentle light like the dawn descends upon the soul and a pleasant warmth embraces the heart. There, the candles grow brighter, illumining the faces. It seems as if one actually hears the distant song of the angels in heaven. Closer and closer their singing inclines towards the earth: *The angels in heaven O Christ our Saviour, sing of Thy Resurrection.*

Trembling with unearthly rapture, the soul strains to approach Christ... And then a new song loudly bursts forth, a song of victory: *Christ is risen from the dead...*

The angels in heaven sing and people on earth join their voices: *Grant that we, too, on earth may with pure hearts glorify Thee!*

All genuine, exalted and holy joy related to the glorification of God is possible only where the heart is pure. From a pure heart the angels glorify God; from the depths of a pure heart the Most Holy Theotokos cried out: *My soul doth rejoice in God my Saviour!* (Lk 1:47).

Do we have such purity of heart that we can rejoice in the Lord's Resurrection and fittingly glorify Him? Alas! At one time our soul was clothed in a divinely woven garment of absolute cleanliness and purity, but of our own free will we ripped, soiled and flung aside this bright vesture, and our soul was darkened, our heart became sullied with sins and passions, our vision became clouded; cast down, and no longer reflected that radiant joy.

It is true that deep within the soul, like a precious treasure, there remain traces of its pristine beauty and innocence; but even these are constantly being forfeited, scattered along the road of life. Set amidst the world's deceptions, our life is like a sea agitated by a storm; now our passions, now the evil spirits, rise over us like raging waves in a mighty effort to engulf our soul and deprive us of that precious treasure of the heart. It is a rare individual who has not suffered shipwreck in this world and whose "treasure" has not been destroyed.

But the unfailing love of the Heavenly Father for the sake of the Redeemer extends to us a helping hand; and, having granted us purity and innocence in the Mystery of Holy Baptism, restores them again and again in the Mysteries of Confession and Communion through which we are united in the most intimate way possible with Christ our Saviour.

The Divinely-wise Fathers of the Church also call the feast of Pascha *Mystery*. On this feast we spiritually and even bodily, as it were, partake of the joy of the Resurrected Christ; when the cleansing and renewing grace of God makes itself felt in the soul, awakening in us pure feelings and exalted actions from the heart; when we must make a special effort to glorify the Lord *from pure hearts*, i.e., to strive with angelic, childlike purity of heart to meet Him coming forth from the grave.

But again and again we ask ourselves: how is it possible to acquire that blessed purity of heart when we are constantly

sinning, constantly defiling ourselves, constantly faced with our moral corruption? *Who shall be pure from uncleanness?* asked the righteous Job, and then answered: *Not even one; if even his life should be but one day upon the earth.* (Job 14:4). *We are all unclean!* cries out the Prophet Isaiah. (Isa 64:6). The pure eye of the All-Holy God detects perverseness even in the pure and holy angels. (cf. Job 4:18). What then can we say about ourselves who *drink iniquity like water!* (Job 15:16). Where can we obtain purity of heart? How can



we acquire it here on earth when even the angels in heaven do not possess it in full measure? It cannot be that the Lord would demand from us what is impossible, when, for example, He says, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* (Mt 5:8). This means that to achieve purity of heart is possible for us.

In the Paschal troparion we sing: *Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the inaccessible light of the Resurrection,...*

It is difficult for us to thoroughly cleanse our heart and soul from all sinful impurity. Nevertheless, on this Bright Feast we can—we must—*purify our senses* in some measure, so as *to behold Christ*, to see Him in the glorious light of the Resurrection, to sense in our hearts that grace-filled brightness.

*Let us purify our senses!* Here we have in our hearts malice, pride, envy, vainglory and the like. Let us cast them out of our souls, at least during this Light-bearing Festival; let us forget about these dark feelings; let us unburden ourselves of

the heaviness that comes with the remembrance of wrongs; and let us feel how pleasant, how joyous and bright the soul becomes without them! Then Christ will be resurrected in our souls, and we shall hear His greeting, *Rejoice!* And then we shall truly behold Him in the wondrous light of His Resurrection.

*Let us purify our senses!* How easy it is to do this, especially now when the mysterious grace-filled power of the Feast and the wondrous enchantment of the Paschal service wholly embrace our souls, transport our hearts to heaven and raise us up to God. Who has not experienced this paschal feeling? Whose soul has not been carried far from earth into the ineffable paschal night? Whose heart has not been melted by the divine paschal service? Who has not forgiven his brother at the time of paschal greeting? It is not in vain that this Light-bearing Feast makes such a deep impression upon the soul during childhood, preserving itself through the period of youth and reviving in old age. And with the remembrance of this Feast, one is always seized with wonderment, as if the angels are singing in heaven, and a holy joy fills the heart.

*Let us purify our senses!* On the Feast of the Resurrection of Christ let us experience that grace-filled state, which comes with a pure heart, and let us try to recapture this feeling at other times in our life; let us chase away from our souls malice, cunning, jealousy, and other evils; and let us cleanse our hearts from movements of the passions. In so doing, we shall approach Christ—with each day, each hour, until, on that day when we depart from this earth, He greets us with the word, *Rejoice!* And later says to us, *Thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord.* (Mt 25:12). Amen.



### “BECOMING THEOLOGY” BY LIVING THE TEACHINGS OF THE HOLY FATHERS

*By Elder Vasileios, Abbot of the Iviron Monastery on Mount Athos.*

The living patristic word is conveyed whole, full of life, as it passes from generation to generation through living organisms—altering them, creating “fathers” who make it their personal word, ... a wealth which increases as it is given away... Offering the words of the Fathers to others means that I myself live, that I am changed by them. And so my metabolism has the power to change [those words], so that they can be eaten and drunk by the person to whom I am offering them. This change of the word within man—and the change in himself resulting from it—preserves unchanged the mystery of personal and unrepeatable life, which is “patristically” taught and given. It is like the food the mother eats: it nourishes her and keeps her alive; and, at the same time,

becomes, within her, mother’s milk—the drink of life for the stomach of her baby.

How beautiful it is for a man to become theology. Then whatever he does—and, above all, whatever he does spontaneously, since only what is done spontaneously is true—bears witness and speaks of the fact: that the Son and Word of God was incarnate; that He was made man through the Holy Spirit and Ever-Virgin Mary. It speaks silently about the ineffable mysteries, which have been revealed in the last times.

This theological life and witness is a blessing which sweetens man’s life. It is a food which is cut up and given to others; and drink poured out and offered in abundance for man to consume and quench his thirst. In this state one does not talk life, one gives it. By contrast, scholastic theology and intellectual constructions do not resemble the Body of the Lord, the true food; nor His Blood, the true drink. Rather, they are like the stone one finds in one’s food. This is how indigestible—and inhumanly hard—the mass of scholasticism seems to the taste and mouth of one accustomed to the liturgy of the Church; and it is rejected as something foreign and unacceptable.

Our words are often untuned and weak. For the word to be passed on and give life, it has to be made flesh. When, along with your word, you give your flesh and blood to others, only then do your words mean something. Words without flesh—which do not spring from life and do not share out our flesh, which is broken, and our blood, which is shed—mean nothing. That is why, at the Mystical Supper, the Lord summarized the mystery of His preaching by saying: *Take, eat My Body, and drink My Blood.*

Fortunate is the man who is broken in pieces, who is poured out and given to others to drink. When his time of trial comes, he will not be afraid. He will have nothing to fear. He will have already understood that, in the celebration of love, by grace: man is *broken and not divided, eaten and never consumed.* By grace, he has become Christ, and so his life gives food and drink to his brother. That is to say, he nourishes the other’s very existence and makes it grow.



Never put any trust in suspicions, for a wrong premise leads right reasoning to a wrong conclusion. Suspicions are falsehood and blind your mind. Even if my thoughts suggested to me about the sun: this is the sun; or about darkness: this is the darkness, I would not believe them. Nothing is more serious than suspicion, nothing brings the mind so much blindness, because if we entertain them for a while they begin to persuade us, until we are convinced that we have seen things which do not exist and never could exist.

**Abba Dorotheos of Gaza**

## THE ORTHODOX FAMILY

By Metropolitan Philaret (Voskresensky) of New York (+1985).

The basic task of Orthodox Christianity is to teach people to live according to God's will so that, through it, they will be brought to eternal blessedness. Some people vainly wish to reduce Christianity to a mere narrowly-individualized sphere of religious experiences. Christianity, however, is life; it is a new seal on all the vital relationships of people. No impartial person would doubt or contradict the fact of its influence on life. It is sufficient to point out that even though life and the behavior of people on earth have not strayed far from Christian ideals, nevertheless, their concepts and views were formulated on the Christian type. The work of many of the best artists and scientists bears a clearly Christian imprint upon them. Further, such consoling phenomena as the disappearance of slavery, the appearance of a whole series of institutions of charity and enlightenment, and much else, are undoubtedly obligated to Christianity for their beginnings. But perhaps the transforming and elevating influence of Christianity has been experienced most of all by the first cell of the order of social life—the family.

The great responsibility for an Orthodox Christian person is to choose a friend for life. God's word says of the Christian marriage, *be two in one flesh*, that is, in marriage two people form one organism, one common life. An Orthodox Christian wife thinks first of all about her husband, and then about herself. Likewise, the husband first cares for his wife, then for himself. The Lord tempered such a Christian marital union by His Divine word, *What God unites, let man not separate*. It is noteworthy that in such a Christian marriage, the love of the partners has that very same selfless, self-denying character by which purely Christian love is distinguished. With good reason, Apostle Paul compares the marital union with the union of Christ and the Church, and he says, *Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her*. In Christian marriage, the unification of loving personalities becomes so all-comprehensive and full, the mutual dedication of the spouses so deep and absolute, that they resemble each other in everything, and sometimes (in old age) they even come to resemble each other externally. And their life passes in full accord, in full dedication to the will of Christ the Savior and His Holy Church.

But it becomes so heavy in our own days to see the precipitous, thoughtlessly careless and completely un-Christian disposition of contemporary youth to this most serious question. One must now repeatedly observe how marriages are concluded not through a serious, deep, examined feeling of love, but through enamorousness, a feeling which is not deep, and is very low in moral relationship. Often, the content of such an enamoured state is, alas, in essence only animal passions, only an "agitation of young blood" (and sometimes not young, but old and dirty). Together with this, in the pre-wedding time of such marriages, one constantly observes deceit and self-embellishing of both body and soul, a hypocritical desire not to be, but to seem to be better and more beautiful. Life, however, can be built only on truth; it cannot survive on falsehood. From this, there ensues the disenchantment of spouses with each other and the aberration of divorces.

Christian marriage is a single life lived by two in unification. With the years, marital life only strengthens, becomes deeper, more spiritual. Of course, passionate love, connected with each person's natural sexual inclination and purely physical attraction, also enters into Christian marital love. In a truly Christian marriage, however, such passionate love enters into the attachment only incidentally, and never has such a significance and strength as in non-Christian marital unions.

In the lives of saints, we see a multitude of examples in which Christian spouses, through mutual agreement, renounced sexual life, either from the very beginning of the marriage or even after forty years. It is noteworthy that in such a marriage, when the ascetic-spouses live *as brother and sister*, their mutual love is distinguished by a special strength of devotion, all-embracing fidelity and mutual respect. Thus does Christianity consecrate, elevate and transform a marriage union.

In a Christian family, not only the relationship of husband and wife is considered, but also that of children and parents. Christianity again places its imprint on this inner relationship.

In each good family there must, without fail, be a single family life. "Our" must always take precedence to the personal "my" in such a relationship. It is not in vain that all members of the family bear one common surname, for they must live a common, cordial life. The head of the family is the husband. The well-being of the family is formed on



him and on his toils. The family is his first duty. Of those who do not look after their own family, Apostle Paul says bluntly and quite clearly. *If anyone does not care for his own, and especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* (1 Tim 5:8).

It often happens that, in directing their children to one or another path, parents act so strongly against the will of a child's inclinations and heart's desire that they are generally unjust. Apostle Paul speaks against this, pointedly saying: *Parents, do not anger your children so that they do not despair, but raise them in the Lord's teaching and instruction.* (Col 3:21; Eph 6:4). To demand of children what exceeds their strength only plunges them into despondency. There is an even greater injustice: for a child, the father is the highest authority, and woe if their authority betrays that feeling of trust, a feeling which is far stronger in a child than in an adult. This is followed by a situation which is simply inescapable for the child. It is even worse, however, when the parents spoil their children too much, are too condescending toward them and often leave them without supervision. The child can receive a great moral ruin from this; as we have seen, God's word orders parents to raise and instruct children in the Lord's law.

The matter of raising children falls primarily on the mother. This is natural, since no one else is so close to the soul and heart of the child as its mother. It is not without reason that a child runs directly to its mother, crying, "Mama" when it is hurt. There is a great task before the mother: to raise a son or daughter as a believing Christian, good, responsive, work-loving, useful to the Church and society, and to raise the child thus by word and example and love and strictness. This is the sanctuary of her service to the Lord; her work is no less important than the husband's work for the family. Shame and dishonor to those mothers who shirk from the raising of their children and give them over to be cared for by hired persons, forgetting that it is so easy to ruin or soil the child's soul. Moreover, can anyone really replace a child's mother?

But children must understand their responsibilities no less than the parents. Everyone knows the fifth commandment of God's law, about honoring the parents. Apostle Paul enjoins children to *submit to your parents in the Lord, for justice requires this.* And, of course, this requirement is brought forth precisely by justice. For, children are obligated in all things to their parents who take care of them, loving, toiling, denying themselves in much, raising their children by their own love, often helping them even when they have already become adults and independent people.

How often, though, is the fifth commandment violated among us! Even those children who are convinced that they sincerely and deeply love their parents, often do not heed them, which means that they do not honor them. Love

is always united with obedience. And the older children become, the more self-willed they become, alas, affronting their parents, reproaching them to their face for their "backwardness" and not considering their authority in anything. Is this respect for parents?

Thus, in its basic sense, the fifth commandment speaks of honoring parents. Nevertheless, it also speaks in consideration of all those who occupy similar positions for a Christian: teachers, educators, etc; and especially, the representatives of lawful authority who preserve the order of society. Apostle Paul directed us to pray: *for rulers and all those in authority,* and in many places in his epistles, he taught to submit to the authorities. More important, of course, for the Christian, is the honoring of Church authorities—the pastors of the Church, especially the bishops, and also the pastor who is his spiritual father and answers before God for his soul. Apostle Paul says, *Submit yourselves* (to your spiritual instructors,) *for they watch over your souls and must give account.* And the Lord Himself said to His apostles, and in their persons to the pastors of the Church, *Whoever listens to you, listens to Me, but whoever does not listen to you, does not listen to Me.*



Parents must teach their children from their earliest days. They must teach them the fear of God, must cut their bad impulses and faults, and they must not fawn upon them or satisfy their bad desires or appetites. The small child is like the soft candle that you shape as you like, and which accepts whatever seal you put upon it.

Whatever letters you write on a clean sheet of paper will remain imprinted. In the same way, whatever the small child learns when he is small will remain imprinted until old age.

When the tree is small, if the wind blows, it bends. If we put a pole next to it, then it becomes straight. If we don't put up a pole, and it becomes bent, it will always remain bent. If, when it is grown up and well rooted, we want to straighten it, it breaks and is cut down. It is the same with our children. Let us support them in the Faith and in the fear of God when they are small. Let us fence them in and surround them with walls of instruction and good examples, until they get rooted in virtue—when they won't fear any danger.

**Blessed Elder Philotheos of Paros, (+1980)**

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## PARENTAL COUNSEL

*By St. Porphyrios Kafsovalyites (+1991).*



What saves and makes for good children is the life of the parents in the home. The parents need to devote themselves to the love of God. They need to become saints in their relation to their children through their mildness, patience and love. They need to make a new start every day, with a fresh outlook, renewed enthusiasm and love for their children. And the joy that

will come to them, the holiness that will visit them, will shower grace on their children.

Generally the parents are to blame for the bad behavior of the children. And their behavior is not improved by reprimands, disciplining, or strictness. If the parents do not pursue a life of holiness and if they don't engage in spiritual struggle, they make great mistakes and transmit the faults they have within them. If the parents do not live a holy life and do not display love towards each other, the devil torments the parents with the reactions of the children. Love, harmony and understanding between the parents are what are required for the children. This provides a great sense of security and certainty.

A psychological state is created in a child as a result of its parents that accompanies it throughout its life. Its later behavior and its relationships with others are directly connected with the experiences that it carries with it from its childhood years. The child grows up and develops, but in reality the change is not there. This is manifested even in the smallest expressions of life. For example, you get a craving for food and want to eat. You take something and eat it, then you see something else and you want that. You feel hungry and think that if you don't eat you'll feel faint and you'll start to tremble. You're afraid you'll lose weight. This is a psychological state that has its explanation. Perhaps you never knew your father or your mother, and you feel deprived and hungry, poor and weak. And this psychological reality is expressed byway of reflex as a weakness of the body.

Parents, especially the mother, often cause harm to a child for some act of misbehavior by scolding it excessively. The child is then wounded. Even if you don't scold the child outwardly but bristle with anger inwardly or look fiercely at the child, the child understands. The child believes that its mother doesn't love it and asks, "Do you love me, Mummy?" The mother answers, "Yes, dear," but the child is not convinced. It has been wounded. The mother loves it, she'll caress it later, but the child will pull its head away. It refuses to be caressed, regarding this as hypocrisy because it has been wounded.

Another thing that harms children is over-protectiveness, that is, excessive care or excessive anxiety and worry on the part of the parents.